Evaluation of the Bologna Process Implementation in Finland

Part I Evaluation of the Degree Reform

Part II The Implementation of the Bologna Reforms in Finland from an International Perspective

Publications of the Finnish Higher Education Evaluation Council
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When the higher education degree reform was launched in Finland in 2002 as part of the Bologna Process, the plan included an evaluation of the reform from the very beginning. Initially, national evaluation of the feasibility of the new degree structure was scheduled to take place in 2008. Now that the evaluation has been completed in 2010, it has become apparent that the evaluation of certain sub-objectives took place too early to be meaningful. The timespan of degree education is long, and changes take time to embed.

The starting point for the evaluation was the original Europe-wide and national objectives set for the Bologna Process. In addition, some of the Finnish higher education institutions (HEIs) involved incorporated their own specific objectives in the reform process. The aim of the evaluation has been to utilise all existing prior information. Several surveys and studies on the degree reform process have been carried out in the past few years or are currently in progress, and there is a wealth of statistical information available. Therefore, the goal was to target the evaluation surveys and interviews at issues that had not been covered by previous studies.

As can be expected in the case of a reform of this magnitude, some of the set objectives have not been achieved. Moreover, some of the objectives have formally been achieved, for example on the level of legislation, but are lacking practical implementation. The work is, in other words, still in progress. When looking back in ten years, we might also notice that some of the objectives were perhaps unrealistic to begin with, or they were such that they could not have been achieved with the tools available. Some of the priorities have increased in importance only later as the Bologna Process has evolved. A good example of this is the new emphasis on learning outcome-orientation in all education: we are looking at a core content analysis of curricula with very different eyes in 2010 than we did in 2003.
Having a realistic view of the current situation is a prerequisite for future development. Significant development work was undertaken during the degree reform within both sectors of higher education in Finland. As this shows, a great deal was achieved, thanks above all to the active and dedicated work of the HEIs. The way the reform work was organised departed from earlier similar processes and the model adopted has widely been hailed as highly successful.

The evaluation itself can also be understood as a national self-evaluation, without an explicit comparison between the Finnish implementation of the Bologna Process and the implementation in other Bologna-countries. In order to get a broader view of it in the European context, FINHEEC decided to invite Professor Ulrich Teichler from the University of Kassel to conduct an analysis on the report from an international perspective. Professor Teichler’s thorough expert view opens up the relationship of the Finnish degree reform with similar reforms in other European countries. Many things that from the national perspective look country-specific are in fact common across the Bologna countries.

The analysis of the achievement of the objectives provides a solid foundation for continuing the work and taking it in directions that are felt to be appropriate. According to the principles of enhancement-led evaluation, I hope that this report will be used by HEIs internally as well as in the national-level degree development work. The English translation of the report with Professor Teichler’s analysis will also serve international cooperation in higher education sector.

On behalf of the Finnish Higher Education Evaluation Council, I would like to warmly thank the higher education institutions in Finland for their contribution in the evaluation of the degree reform. I would also like to thank the evaluation team and Professor Teichler for their expert work and dedication.

Riitta Pyykkö, Professor
Chair of the Finnish Higher Education Evaluation Council, FINHEEC
Part I

**Evaluation of the Degree Reform**

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The evaluation team

1 **Introduction**

2 **Evaluation process**
   2.1 Project planning
   2.2 The aims of the evaluation
   2.3 The focus and scope of the evaluation
   2.4 The implementation of the evaluation
      2.4.1 The preliminary study on the degree reform
      2.4.2 HEI-level survey
      2.4.3 Field-specific questionnaire
      2.4.4 Themed interviews

3 **The Bologna Process and the degree reform in Finland**
   3.1 Background information on the Finnish education system and degrees
      3.1.1 Education system in Finland
      3.1.2 University degrees and studies
      3.1.3 University of applied sciences degrees and studies
      3.1.4 Statistical data on higher education
   3.2 The objectives of the Bologna Process and the national aims for the degree reform
   3.3 Degree reform in the university sector
   3.4 Degree reform in the UAS sector
   3.5 Further actions to promote the objectives of the degree reform

4 **The objectives and organisation of the degree reform**
   4.1 An assessment of the objectives of the degree reform and their attainment
      4.1.1 Awareness of the national objectives
      4.1.2 The attainment of national objectives
      4.1.3 HEI-specific objectives and their attainment
   4.2 Assessments of national support and co-operation within fields of study

---

Contents
9.3 Economics 110
9.4 Natural sciences, bio- and environmental sciences, forestry and agriculture 113
9.5 Music 117
9.6 Engineering 119
9.7 Law and social sciences 122

10 Field-specific conclusions in the university of applied sciences sector 126
10.1 Humanities and Education 126
10.2 Culture 128
10.3 Natural Sciences 130
10.4 Natural Resources and the Environment 133
10.5 Tourism, Catering and Domestic Services 135
10.6 Social Services, Health and Sports 138
10.7 Technology, Communication and Transport 140
10.8 Social Sciences, Business and Administration 143

11 Summary of the evaluation results 147
11.1 Strengths of the degree reform and degree structure 149
11.2 Recommendations for the development of the degree structure 151

Bibliography 159

Appendix: Themed interviews related to the degree reform evaluation in 2010 162

Part II
The Implementation of the Bologna Reforms in Finland from an International Perspective

The international expert 164

Introduction: Aims and implementation of the international analysis 165

The Implementation of the Bologna Reforms in Finland from an International Perspective 166
1 The character and tone of the Finnish self-evaluation report 166
2 The option to undertake a "Bologna" evaluation 168
3 Evaluation approach and procedures 169
4 The European and national reform objectives 172
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Chapter</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>The degree structure and reform</td>
<td>175</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bologna and &quot;ammattikorkeakoulu&quot;</td>
<td>181</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Specific Finnish objectives</td>
<td>184</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The degree reform and international student mobility</td>
<td>188</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>New substantive approaches to study programmes in the wake of the degree reform</td>
<td>191</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Concluding observations</td>
<td>195</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Bibliography**

**Appendix:** Themed interviews on 23 January 2012 related to the international analysis

- Bibliography: 199
- Appendix: Themed interviews on 23 January 2012 related to the international analysis: 200
Part I

Evaluation of the Degree Reform
The evaluation team

Professor Jari Niemelä is the Dean of the Faculty of Biological and Environmental Sciences of the University of Helsinki. He has chaired and served as a member of the steering group for the University of Helsinki quality assurance since 2005. He has also contributed as an expert and member in the steering group to the internal evaluations of the administration and teaching at the University of Helsinki. He has served as a member of the national ERASMUS expert body, a national promoter of the SOCRATES programme and the chair of the University of Helsinki SOCRATES committee. He has also gained evaluation experience as the vice-chair in the audit of the quality assurance system of the University of Turku, an evaluation team member in the evaluation of teaching of biological science in Latvian and Swedish universities, as well as the chair of the evaluation team for the Swedish Research Council Formas.

Adjunct Professor Sakari Ahola, D.Soc.Sc., works as a senior researcher at the Research Unit for the Sociology of Education, RUSE. He has headed several research projects on higher education, including the follow-up study on the Bologna Process, launched in 2005 and funded by the Ministry of Education, in which the reform of the degree structure has been approached specifically from the student perspective. He has also been a member of the Finnish National team of Bologna experts since 2004. In 2003–2004 he served as a rapporteur for the Ministry of Education producing a proposal on the transfer to a joint online application system for universities. Ahola coordinates quality assurance processes in his own unit and in his role as the deputy director of RUSE participated in the audit of the University of Turku quality assurance system. He has written several articles on the Bologna Process published both in Finland and internationally.
Carita Blomqvist, D.Sc. (Admin.), works as the head of the Recognition and International Comparability of Qualifications unit at the Finnish National Board of Education. She chairs the Bureau of the Intergovernmental Lisbon Recognition Convention Committee and is a deputy member of the European Qualifications Network advisory group. In these roles she has participated in drawing up criteria for degree recognition and followed up the implementation of the Bologna Process in several countries. She has served as a secretary for the Ministry of Education committees for the Qualifications framework (2005) and the National framework for qualifications and other learning (2009). She has also served as member in the Committee on recognising prior learning and credit transfer in higher education institutions and the Finnish National team of Bologna experts.

Helena Juusola, M.A., has served as an advisor for the Union of Students in Finnish Universities of Applied Sciences (SAMOK), where her field of responsibility included international studies, mobility, co-operation with international organisations and development co-operation. Juusola has also served as a member of the Board of the University of Oulu Student Union and the Department Council of the University of Oulu's Department of Art Studies and Anthropology. She has also served as a member of the Finnish National team of Bologna experts and the Europass steering group as well as the vice-chairman of the board for the Student Research Foundation (Otus). She is currently working as the coordinator of international affairs at the HAAGA-HELIA University of Applied Sciences.

Merja Karjalainen, Ph.D., works as a lecturer of the Finnish language at the University of Oulu. Since 1998, she has chaired the development group for Finnish language education. She has served as a member of the planning groups for the education committee, faculty council and Master's degree programme for the Faculty of Humanities. She has also served as a member and deputy member of the steering groups for the university language centre, IT centre and learning centre. Karjalainen has participated in several national and University of Oulu working groups in connection with the development of the virtual university. In her role as a lecturer, Karjalainen supervises Bachelor's and Master's theses and doctoral dissertations.
Juha-Pekka Liljander, D.Ed., is the Director of the Lahti unit of Palmenia Centre for Continuing Education and the Vice-Director of the whole Palmenia organisation. He has served as the Vice-Rector for Stadia University of Applied Sciences in 2005–2007 and as the Rector in 2007–2008. He has gained research experience as, for example, the Research Director of Lahti University of Applied Sciences and the Vice-Director of its innovation centre and as a researcher for the Finnish Institute for Educational Research at the University of Jyväskylä. As a rapporteur for the Ministry of Education, Liljander was responsible for drawing up the report on the position of universities of applied sciences within the European higher education and research area. Liljander has also served as a member in the audit teams of Savonia University of Applied Sciences and Central Ostrobothnia University of Applied Sciences.

Ida Mielityinen, M.Soc.Sc., works as the acting head of the education and employment policy unit at the Academic Engineers and Architects in Finland organisation (TEK), responsible for general lobbying for higher education policy issues and the development of education in engineering sciences in collaboration with other stakeholders. In 2003–2005 she worked for the University of Joensuu developing the degree structure reform and quality assurance system and in 1999–2002 as an Educational Officer for the National Union of University Students in Finland (SYL), responsible for issues linked to, for example, the Bologna Process. Mielityinen has also served as a member in the evaluation team for student guidance and counselling, the steering group for the evaluation of student admissions in universities and the FINHEEC Board of Professional Courses.

Kerttu Oikarinen, Ph.D., Lic. Health Science, has worked at the Rovaniemi University of Applied Sciences as the Director for Social Services, Health Care and Sports Studies since 2002, heading the competence-based curricular reforms for the welfare sector UAS degrees and UAS Master’s degrees. The degree programme in nursing headed by Oikarinen was awarded the status of a Centre of Excellence for 2008–2009. Oikarinen also serves as a member of working groups in the Lapland University Consortium and the network of universities of applied sciences in the field of health care, and she participated in the evaluation work of the centres of excellence in universities of applied sciences in 2000.
Secretaries

Sirpa Moitus, Chief Planning Officer, FINHEEC

Johanna Mattila, Senior Advisor, FINHEEC
1
Introduction

When national planning of the two-cycle degree structure was first started in Finland, the idea of evaluating the feasibility of the new structure was incorporated into the planning work from early on. The Committee for the development of university degree structure proposed in its report (2002:39) that “in 2008, when the first higher education degrees within the new degree structure will be completed, a national evaluation of the feasibility of the first phase of the reform be carried out”.

Planning of the evaluation concerning the degree reform implementation was included in the Finnish Higher Education Evaluation Council’s (FINHEEC) 2008–2009 action plan. The execution of the evaluation was rescheduled through mutual agreement between FINHEEC and the Ministry of Education\(^1\) to 2010.

When planning the evaluation project, it became apparent it was still premature to evaluate the development work related to the degree reform in all its aspects in the 2010 evaluation. The number of graduates under the new degree structure is as yet too small to allow for an evaluation of the competencies and the labour market relevance of the degrees from the perspective of the learning outcomes. For this reason, the planning group proposed that a second-stage evaluation be carried out four to five years after the first round of evaluation. This would allow assessing to what degree the National Qualifications Framework has been achieved, how well the Bachelor’s and Master’s degrees match

\(^1\) The Ministry of Education became the Ministry of Education and Culture on 1 May 2010. As the text refers to issues that took place before 2010, the former name is being used in the report.
with the needs of the labour market and the implementation of the principles of life-long learning and, related to this, the recognition of prior learning. The decision on the possible second-stage evaluation of the degree reform will be made by FINHEEC.

According to the higher education internationalisation strategy for 2009–2015, “the Finnish Higher Education Evaluation Council will evaluate the international study programmes in the higher education institutions and services offered to students within them in connection with the evaluation of degree structure reform in 2010”. During the preliminary discussions on the evaluation in summer 2009, representatives of the Ministry of Education and FINHEEC concurred it was feasible to evaluate international degree and Master’s degree programmes in conjunction with the degree reform evaluation only from the perspective of the overall degree structure, mobility between degree programmes and interfaces between the two degree cycles, but not from the perspective of the structure or content of the Master’s degree programmes. It is stated in the FINHEEC Plan of Action 2010–2013 that “since the theme is pivotal in terms of the internationalisation of higher education institutions, a separate thematic evaluation was deemed necessary, and the planning of the evaluation will begin in autumn 2011 and the project will be concluded in 2012”.
2 Evaluation process

2.1 Project planning

FINHEEC launched the planning process for the degree reform evaluation on 17 June 2009 and appointed a planning group for the project, assigned to deliver a proposal to FINHEEC by 31 December 2009 on the aims, focus, perspective and the scope of the evaluation together with grounds for the proposal.

The planning group was chaired by Professor Riitta Pyykkö, Chair of FINHEEC from the University of Turku, the other members being Marita Aho, Senior Advisor from the Confederation of Finnish Industries EK; Päivi Aronen, project manager from the University of Helsinki; Henna Juusola, senior advisor in charge of international affairs from the Union of Students in Finnish Universities of Applied Sciences (SAMOK); Outi Kallioinen, Development Director from Laurea University of Applied Sciences; Risto Kimari, Director of School from the Oulu University of Applied Sciences; Juuso Leivonen, Educational Officer from the National Union of University Students in Finland (SYL); and Matti Manninen, Dean from the University of Jyväskylä. The secretary of the planning group was Sirpa Moitus, Chief Planning Officer from FINHEEC.

During the planning work, the planning group interviewed representatives from universities’ academic administration, experts from the universities of applied sciences2 (UAS) sector on the degree reform, researchers of the degree reform and study processes, experts in higher education statistics and

2 These institutions in Finland have adopted the term university of applied sciences (UAS), while the Ministry of Education and Culture uses the term of polytechnic. FINHEEC adheres to the term used by the institutions.
national-level experts of the degree reform. The insights gained through the interviews, when applicable, were taken into account in the project plan, which was approved by FINHEEC in its meeting on 17 December 2009. At the same time, FINHEEC appointed an evaluation team of eight members for the practical execution of the project.

2.2 The aims of the evaluation

The point of departure for the evaluation project was the original European-wide objectives set for the Bologna Process and the original national objectives set for the degree reform, the achievement of which were now evaluated.

- The key European-wide objective for the Bologna Process was the adoption of an internationally comparable two-cycle degree structure. The objective of the current evaluation is to assess how well this objective has been achieved by forming an overall view of the implementation of the degree reform in Finnish universities and universities of applied sciences.
- evaluating changes that the degree structure has undergone and their impact
- evaluating the feasibility and clarity of the two-cycle structure from the perspectives of HEIs, students, the labour markets and the degree system as a whole.

Finland set national objectives for the degree reform. The current evaluation also seeks to assess how well these objectives have been achieved by examining

- the change in the status of the Bachelor’s degree
- the profiling of UAS Master’s degrees
- the increase in international and domestic mobility
- the measuring of student workload
- the strengthening of a learning outcome oriented approach in degree requirements.

The task of the evaluation project is to support universities and universities of applied sciences in developing degree education and improving mobility, issue recommendations to support the development of the degree structure, identify best practices and critical points in the degree reform, and to steer HEIs towards continually evaluating and improving the quality of degree education.
2.3 The focus and scope of the evaluation

The evaluation project covers the degree reform in both the university and UAS sector. The main focus of the evaluation is the two-cycle degree structure, in other words, the Bachelor’s and Master’s degrees awarded by universities and universities of applied sciences. The evaluation also covers the interface between the first and second-cycle degrees.

The evaluation of the degree reform is focused on three main themes and their sub-themes:

1 The feasibility of the degree structure

- Status of Bachelor’s and Master’s degrees as separate degrees, including Master’s programmes\(^1\)
- The status of UAS Master’s degrees
- Opportunities for and obstacles to graduating in target time
- The clarity of the degree structure
- The change in the degree content (the share of compulsory and elective studies and multidisciplinary content)
- The role of the Bachelor’s and Master’s thesis in the degree structure
- Degree reform objectives set by individual HEIs
- The monitoring of and reporting on the national objectives by individual HEIs.

2 Mobility

*Domestic mobility*

- Progressing from a Bachelor’s degree programme to a Master’s degree programme
- Mobility within and between higher education sectors and fields
- Opportunities for and obstacles to domestic mobility created by the degree structure

\(^1\) In this evaluation, Master’s degree programme refers to the Master’s programmes approved by the Ministry of Education and Culture as well as the other Master’s programmes referred to in Decree 1359/2006 of the Ministry. Master’s degree programme refers to education which is based on a Bachelor’s degree or education corresponding to it and which leads to the Master’s degree, organised as a degree programme that has a separate selection process.
**International mobility**
- The quantitative development in international mobility following the degree reform
- Opportunities for and obstacles to international mobility created by the degree structure
- The impact of the degree reform on co-operation in mobility between Finnish and foreign HEIs

**3 Competencies provided by degrees in relation to labour markets**

**Education planning**
- Considering learning outcomes and employment in the planning of education
- Practicality of the ECTS system and measuring student workload the content reform of degrees (field-specific harmonisation, profiling)

**Implementation of education**
- Supporting students’ study and career planning (benefiting from the two-cycle structure, flexible study paths, personal study plans)
- Co-operation and partnerships with employers (e.g. traineeships, projects, theses)

**Evaluation of education**
- Follow-up of the workload of degrees and students’ use of time
- Follow-up of degree quality and graduate competencies and the utilisation of this information in developing education

The objectives of the Bologna Process which are not directly linked with the degree reform, or in terms of which the Bologna Process is still in progress or on which there exists prior, comprehensive national-level evaluation data, were excluded from the present evaluation.

The themes thereby excluded were:
1. Teacher and researcher mobility
2. The social dimension
3. The European Higher Education Area in the global operating environment
4. Qualifications framework
5. The third cycle of university education, i.e. doctoral degrees
The exclusion of these themes was based on the following grounds:

1. Teacher and researcher mobility is an important theme, but it is not directly linked with the degree reform in Finland.

2. The social dimension as it is understood in the Bologna Process, meaning equal opportunities in access to higher education and student financial benefits, has been realised relatively well in Finland, and has therefore been excluded from the evaluation.

3. The European Higher Education Area in the global operating environment is primarily to do with strengthening national competitiveness, which is not directly linked with the degree reform in Finland.

4. A proposal for national qualifications framework has only recently been completed (Ministry of Education 2009:24) and its implementation is still in its initial stage. The same applies to the recognition of prior learning. Progress in these themes can be evaluated only in four to five years’ time. However, the theme of the learning outcome-oriented curriculum planning could be included in the present evaluation.

5. In terms of the third cycle, the implementation of the Bologna Process is still underway, so including doctoral degrees in the present evaluation was not justified. Furthermore, the FINHEEC evaluation of doctoral education in Finland was completed in 2006 and its follow-up evaluation is scheduled to be conducted in 2011.

6. Life-long learning is an extensive theme, which would require a separate evaluation of its own. Some aspects of lifelong learning could, however, be included in the present evaluation to the extent it was raised in the evaluation material produced by HEIs and other actors.

The European dimension of quality assurance is of particular interest on the European level to the European Association of Quality Assurance in Higher Education (ENQA) and the European Commission. In Finland this task falls under the remit of FINHEEC, which carries out audits on the quality assurance systems of HEIs. In the evaluation project, the quality assurance aspect is included through the perspective of how HEIs monitor the quality of their degree programmes and how they utilised this information in developing their operations.
2.4 The implementation of the evaluation

The evaluation material was gathered through a survey, a field-specific questionnaire and themed interviews covering the various aspects of the degree reform implementation. Prior to the actual evaluation, a preliminary study was carried out by Opiskelijajärjestöjen tutkimussäätiö Otus (the Student Research Foundation). Table 1 presents in more detail the information gathering and evaluation methods, actors and participants by stage.

Table 1. Methods employed in the evaluation

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Data gathering and evaluation methods</th>
<th>Actors / participants</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Preliminary study on existing research material on the degree reform</td>
<td>Student Research Foundation (Otus)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Survey on the implementation of the degree reform</td>
<td>All universities, incl. NDU (N=17) and universities of applied sciences (N=25)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Field-specific questionnaire</td>
<td>University faculties (N=23) and UAS fields of study (N=28) selected by field</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Themed interviews</td>
<td>Interviewees called by the evaluation team (N=67)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. Evaluation report to be published in the FINHEEC publication series</td>
<td>The evaluation team</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. International analysis</td>
<td>A group of international experts / an international expert appointed by FINHEEC</td>
</tr>
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</table>

Each university and UAS named a contact person for the evaluation project who was responsible for information dissemination and the practical organisation of the data gathering required for the project within their HEI.

The data gathering and evaluation progressed accumulatively so that each stage was always based on the data gathered in the previous stage. The following chapters will introduce the evaluation methods in chronological order.
2.4.1 The preliminary study on the degree reform

A wealth of research, survey and statistical material had been produced prior to the present degree reform evaluation and the implementation of the Bologna Process, providing information on a number of targets and themes for the degree reform evaluation. For this reason, FINHEEC commissioned a preliminary study from the Student Research Foundation (Otus) with the aim of producing background information for the three main evaluation targets and of identifying to what extent national-level follow-up information was not as yet available.

The evaluation team supervised the compilation of the preliminary study. The contact persons at universities and universities of applied sciences were also offered the opportunity to comment on the preliminary study. The preliminary study\(^4\) was published as an electronic publication in Finnish in the Otus publication series on 31 March 2010.

2.4.2 HEI-level survey

The degree programme evaluation involved two surveys carried out among HEIs. The first of these were directed at all HEIs and the second one to selected university faculties and UAS fields of study.

Before sending out the questionnaires, the evaluation planning group organised a training event for the contact persons on 18 December 2009 to discuss the objectives and implementation of the project. The main purpose of the event was to provide the contact persons with practical models for carrying out data gathering for the HEI-level and the field-specific surveys. The event was attended by 40 contact persons.

The HEI-level survey was carried out as a Web based survey in March 2010. Some of the questions were the same for both higher education sectors, while some were specifically directed at either universities or universities of applied sciences, and they were issued both in Finnish and Swedish. The questions were either single or multiple choice questions,

open questions or Likert scale questions. Twenty universities and 23 universities of applied sciences responded to the survey. The HEIs were allowed to decide for themselves how to organise the process of responding to the survey. A jointly produced response was, however, preferred by the evaluation team.

The process of producing the response was to be described as part of the response. The descriptions show that two-thirds of the universities and universities of applied sciences first gathered opinions from central reference groups, such as faculties or degree programmes, the academic administration within central administration and the student services within units and in some cases study coordinators, departmental secretaries or representatives of international services. These opinions formed the basis for the joint response. Following this, the HEI’s response was discussed by the management team or the education council headed by the vice-rector in charge of education and study affairs. One-fifth of the HEIs carried out the process with the coordinating body first drafting the answers, which were then commented on by members of various reference groups. In nine HEIs out of 43, students participated in the process of drawing up the response.

In several cases, the contact persons coordinated the response process. Based on the messages received from the contact persons, the degree reform sometimes elicited quite contradictory reactions within the organisation, which in the case of Likert scale questions meant that while one faculty deemed that a certain objective for the degree reform had been achieved well, another faculty might give a completely opposite opinion. In such situations, the HEI would have to settle for an average score between the two extremes. The field-specific questionnaire did, however, shed more light on the differences between disciplines.

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5 The respondents included all HEIs under the auspices of the Ministry of Education and Culture as well as the National Defence University (NDU). The three schools of Aalto University as well as the University of Turku and the Turku School of Economics each provided individual answers to the survey, while the University of Eastern Finland and the Tampere University of Applied Sciences only provided one common response each. The Police College of Finland registered for the evaluation but did not participate in the HEI-level survey.
2.4.3 Field-specific questionnaire

The project plan for the evaluation included a preliminary list of those to participate in the field-specific survey. From the university sector, 23 faculties representing 11 fields of study from 17 universities were called to participate in the survey. The particular disciplines were selected so as to allow for as large a sample of each field as possible and so that the participants would represent fields with a large number of students. Disciplines that were excluded from the survey were those that were represented by only one university as well as the faculties of medicine, in which the degree structure is different.

In the UAS sector, it was suggested that the field-specific survey would cover all of the eight fields of study, with 29 degree programmes called to participate. Particularly those universities of applied sciences that have participated in the development of the UAS Master's degree from its launch in 2002 were suggested to be included as field-specific representatives.

FINHEEC posted a letter on 5 February 2010 requesting universities and universities of applied sciences to confirm participation in the field-specific survey. In the university sector, 22 faculties agreed to participate in the survey, as illustrated in Table 2.

Table 2. Participants of the field-specific survey in the university sector

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Field of study</th>
<th>University and the participating faculty</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Humanities and theology *</td>
<td>University of Jyväskylä: Faculty of Humanities</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>University of Oulu: Faculty of Humanities</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Åbo Akademi University: Faculty of Arts</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Education and behavioural sciences</td>
<td>University of Eastern Finland: Philosophical</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Faculty, School of Educational Sciences and Psychology and School of Applied</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Educational Science and teacher education</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>University of Jyväskylä: Faculty of Education</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

6 A field of study is an administrative concept which defines how university and UAS education relate to knowledge, science, society and professional life. Universities offer lower university degrees (Bachelor's) and higher university degrees (Master's) in 21 fields of study, while there are eight fields of study in the UAS Sector. Universities are assigned educational responsibilities, that is, the right to offer teaching and degrees in one or several of these fields by the Decree of the Ministry of Education and Culture. Thus, the university faculties and UAS study fields participated in the survey represent a chosen sample of the HEI education.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Teacher Education</th>
<th>University of Lapland: Faculty of Education University of Tampere: Faculty of Education</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Economics</td>
<td>Aalto University: School of Economics University of Turku: Turku School of Economics University of Vaasa: Faculty of Business Studies HANKEN – Swedish School of Economics and Business Administration</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Natural sciences, bio- and environmental sciences, forestry and agriculture</td>
<td>University of Helsinki: Faculty of Biological and Environmental Sciences University of Eastern Finland: Faculty of Science and Forestry University of Turku: Faculty of Mathematics and Natural Sciences</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Arts</td>
<td>Sibelius Academy: Degree Programme in Music Performance</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Engineering</td>
<td>Aalto University: School of Science and Technology, Faculty of Information and Natural Sciences Tampere University of Technology: Faculty of Business and Technology Management Lappeenranta University of Technology: Faculty of Technology University of Oulu, Faculty of Faculty of Technology</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Law and social sciences</td>
<td>University of Helsinki: Faculty of Law University of Tampere: Faculty of Social Sciences University of Turku: Faculty of Social Sciences</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* The University of Helsinki did not participate in this group.

In the UAS sector all the eight study fields called for the evaluation were represented as presented in Table 3.

Table 3. Participants of the field-specific survey for the degree reform evaluation in the UAS sector

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Field of study</th>
<th>UAS and the field represented in the evaluation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Humanities and Education</td>
<td>DIAK, humanities and education HUMAK, humanities and education MAMK, humanities and education</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Culture</td>
<td>Metropolia, culture KYAMK, culture</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Natural Sciences</td>
<td>TAMK, natural sciences VAMK, natural sciences</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Natural Resources and the Environment</td>
<td>Novia, natural resources and the environment PKAMK, natural resources and the environment Centre for Natural Resources SeAMK, School of Agriculture and Forestry</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tourism, Catering and Domestic Services</td>
<td>HAAGA-HELIA, Tourism, Catering and Domestic Services RAMK, tourism KAJAK, tourism</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Field</td>
<td>Universities/Institutes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-----------------------------------</td>
<td>--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
| Social Services, Health and Sports | Arcada, health care and social services  
Laurea, health services, health and sports  
Metropolia, social services, health and sports  
OAMK, School of Health and Social Care  
TAMK, social services, health and sports  
TURKUAMK, health care |
| Technology, Communication and Transport | HAMK, technology, communication and transport  
JAMK, School of Technology  
Metropolia, technology, communication and transport  
Saimaa UAS, technology  
SAMK, technology, communication and transport  
Savonia, engineering and technology, Kuopio unit |
| Social Sciences, Business and Administration | HAAGA-HELIA, Business Education Unit  
KTAMK, Degree Programme in Business Management  
KPAMK, social sciences, business and administration  
LAMK, social sciences, business and administration |

The field-specific survey was carried out as a Web based survey during April and May 2010. The HEIs were allowed to choose for themselves how to compile their response. Over half of the university faculties and UAS fields of study produced their response through a wide-reaching process gathering comprehensive background information from departments, disciplines and degree programmes. Information was gathered particularly from those who had participated in the implementation of the degree reform, such as professors, and in universities of applied sciences, heads of fields and degree programmes, teachers and personnel in academic administration. Based on this, a summary was drafted, which was then processed in the meeting of the faculty or committee for the field in question.

Approximately one-third of the university faculties and one-third of the UAS fields had appointed a specific working group to produce the response, with representatives of the aforementioned personnel groups. Four university faculties and three UAS fields produced the response so that one person formulated the response on which a number of key personnel then provided comments.
2.4.4 Themed interviews

The evaluation team carried out a total of eleven themed interviews with various groups during September–October 2010. The purpose of the interviews was to supplement the information gathered through the survey and, in particular, to receive the input of business and industry as well as students, from whom information was not gathered through any other systematic method. The themes of the interviews were the three main themes of the evaluation: 1. the feasibility of the degree structure, 2. domestic and international mobility and 3. competencies provided by degrees in relation to the labour markets. The formulation of the questions used in interviews was based on the material accumulated during the previous stages of the evaluation process. Altogether 67 persons were interviewed. The schedule of interviews and the number of participants in each interview have been presented in the appendix.

The questions put forward in the interviews were based on the HEI-level and the field-specific surveys, which the evaluation team analysed prior to the interviews according to an agreed internal division of tasks among the group members. The analysis work conducted by the evaluation team was aided by the Student Research Foundation Otus, which divided responses to open questions into groups and produced graphic presentations on the multiple choice questions. The figures included in this report have been created by Otus.
3

The Bologna Process and the degree reform in Finland

3.1 Background information on the Finnish education system and degrees

3.1.1 Education system in Finland

The Finnish education system is composed of nine years of basic education (comprehensive school), preceded by one year of voluntary pre-primary education; upper secondary education, comprising vocational and general education; and higher education, provided by universities and universities of applied sciences (UASs). Adult education is available at all levels. (See Figure 1 on the next page.)

In Finland, pre-primary education, basic education and upper secondary education and training, complemented by early childhood education and before and after-school activities, form a coherent learning pathway. Both general and vocational upper secondary certificates provide eligibility for further studies at universities and UASs. A student completing one level is always eligible for the next level of studies.

The Finnish higher education system consists of two complementary sectors: universities and universities of

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7 This chapter was not included in the original evaluation report but was added to this translated report version in order to provide the international reader with some useful background information about the Finnish higher education system and degrees. The description applies to the situation in spring 2012. The description is based on the following Internet sources: http://www.minedu.fi/OPM/Koulutus/?lang=en and www.studyinfinland.fi/
FORMAL EDUCATION IN FINLAND

Figure 1. The Finnish education system
applied sciences. Universities, which are academic or artistic institutions, focus on research and education based on research. They confer Bachelor’s, Master’s, licentiate and doctoral degrees. Universities of applied sciences offer work-related education in response to labour market needs. Their task is also to conduct R&D which supports instruction and promotes regional development. The requirement for UAS Master’s programmes is a UAS degree or equivalent, plus a minimum of three years’ work experience in the field concerned. All these degrees qualify for public posts in which the requirement is a higher education degree.

The qualifications of each educational level are governed by a separate Act of Parliament. Additionally, the proposal for the National Qualifications Framework for qualifications and other learning (Ministry of Education 2009:4) includes definitions of the knowledge, skills and competencies to be acquired at each level of degree. Higher education degrees, that is university and UAS Bachelor’s degrees, are placed at level 6, university and UAS Master’s degrees at level 7 and Licenciate degrees and Doctorates at level 8.

3.1.2 University degrees and studies

There are 16 universities in the Ministry of Education and Culture sector; two of them are foundation universities and the rest are public corporations. Higher education in the military field is provided by the National Defence College operating within the Ministry of Defence sector.

Universities award

- Bachelor’s degrees
- Master’s degrees
- Licentiate degrees, which are scientific or artistic intermediate postgraduate degrees
- Doctoral degrees, which are scientific or artistic postgraduate degrees
- Postgraduate specialist degrees in medicine, dentistry, and veterinary medicine.

The total number of Bachelor’s and Master’s degree students in Finnish universities is about 103,000. Universities awarded over 12,000 Bachelor’s degrees, 14,000 Master’s degrees and 1,500 doctorates in 2010.

Higher education studies are quantified as credits (ECTS). One year of full-time study corresponds to 60 credits. The extent of the Bachelor’s level degree in universities is 180 credits and takes three years. The Bachelor’s degree consists
of basic and intermediate studies, language studies, and a Bachelor's thesis.

The Master's degree is 120 credits, which means two years of full-time study on top of the lower degree. In some fields, such as medicine, the degrees are more extensive and take longer to complete. The Master's degree consists of a major subject, minor subjects, general studies, language and communication studies, and a Master's thesis.

Post-Master's level degrees at universities are Licentiate (120–150 ECTS credits) and Doctor's (worth 240 ECTS credits) degrees. The doctoral degree normally requires at least four years of full-time study and consists of doctoral studies and a doctoral thesis.

Universities select their students independently and they decide on the field-specific student intake according to the agreed target number of degrees. The numbers are determined in performance negotiations between the Ministry of Education and Culture and the universities. There is restricted entry, numerus clausus, to all fields of study. As there are many more applicants than there are places available, universities use different kinds of student admission criteria, like the grades attained in the matriculation certificate together with the results of an entrance test; the results of an entrance test only; or the grades attained in the matriculation certificate and in the upper secondary school leaving certificate only.

In addition to the regular Bachelor's and Master's degrees, universities also arrange separate Master's degree programmes with separate student selection, to which the entry requirement is a Bachelor's level degree or corresponding studies. The scope of the programmes is normally 120 ECTS credits, completed with two years of full-time study. The studies are often multidisciplinary and a number of the programmes are offered in English. Some of the programmes are jointly organised by two or more Finnish and/or international universities. The volume of degrees taken in the separate Master's degree programmes is a minority of all Master's degrees taken annually in Finland. Sometimes the degree programme taught in English are referred to in discussion as 'international Masters', but there is no separation between the Master's degrees taken in the regular Master's programme or separate Master's degree programme in the formal Finnish education system. All these degrees are regarded as equal university Master's degrees.
The Finnish higher education institutions offer education in Finnish, Swedish and English. According to the Study in Finland database, higher education institutes offer almost 400 programmes in the English language leading to a Bachelor’s or a Master’s degree. Most of the English-language Bachelor’s degree programmes are offered by UASs, while the majority of the English-language Master’s degree programmes are offered by research universities.

Finnish higher education institutions automatically issue all students with a Diploma Supplement, a document jointly designed by the EU, the Council of Europe and UNESCO to provide information about the studies completed by the student, the status of the degree and the qualification provided by the degree for further studies and employment.

3.1.3 University of applied sciences degrees and studies

There are 25 universities of applied sciences in the Ministry of Education and Culture sector; seven of them are maintained by a municipal consortium, four by one municipal, nine by a company with a majority of municipal-ownership and five UASs are maintained by a privately-owned company or foundation. In addition, there is Åland University of Applied Sciences in the self-governing Province of Åland and a Police College subordinate to the Ministry of the Interior.

UASs are regional, multi-discipline institutions focusing on contacts with working life and regional development. The system of UASs is still fairly new. The first wave started to operate on a trial basis in 1991–1992 and the first were made permanent in 1996. By 2000, all were working on a permanent basis.

Universities of applied sciences award

- UAS (polytechnic) degrees
- UAS Master’s degrees.

The total number of young and mature UAS students is over 130,000. Universities of applied sciences awarded over 20,000 UAS degrees and 1,200 UAS Master’s degrees in 2010.

Degree studies give a higher education qualification and practical professional skills. The extent of UAS degree studies is generally 210–240 credits (ECTS), which means 3.5–4 years of full-time study. They comprise core and professional studies, elective studies and a final project. All degree studies include practical on-the-job learning. The UAS Master’s, which is 60–90 credits and takes 1.5–2 years, is equivalent to a university Master’s in the labour market.
Both universities and universities of applied sciences arrange adult and open education geared to maintaining and upgrading competencies. The teaching arrangements in adult education are flexible and enable mature students to work alongside their studies.

The general requirement for admission to universities of applied sciences is general or vocational upper secondary education and training. In other words, applicants eligible for UAS studies include those who have completed the matriculation examination, general upper secondary school or an upper secondary vocational qualification, or those with a corresponding international or foreign qualification. The requirement for Master’s programmes in universities of applied sciences is a UAS degree or other Bachelors' level degree and at least three years of work experience. The UASs determine the principles of student admission independently. Student admission is based on previous study record and work experience and, in many cases, entrance examinations are also arranged.

Due to the distinction between academic and vocational higher education, Bachelor’s degrees from Finnish UASs/UAS are often less theoretically-oriented than Bachelor’s degrees provided by Finnish universities. Therefore, it may not be possible to continue directly to a university Master’s programme only if the student has completed a Bachelor’s degree at a Finnish UAS. The applicant may, for example, be required to complete some bridging/complementary studies first, or the university can have other specific entry requirements for applicants with a UAS degree. Each institution provides the applicants with detailed information on admissions, and what the exact requirements are.

3.1.4 Statistical data on higher education

Online statistical data, such as that on university and UAS degrees, students and international mobility, has been available by institution and by field in the KOTA and the AMKOTA systems and from 2010 onwards, in the VIPUNEN system. Additionally, statistics on international student mobility

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8 The statistical data on university education was available in Finnish, Swedish and English until 2010 at https://kotaplus.csc.fi/online/Etusivu.do?lng=en and on UAS education at AMKOTA. Since 2010 these two systems have been merged into the VIPUNEN system at http://vipunen.csc.fi/fi-fi/ohjeet/Pages/default.aspx (so far only available in Finnish)
from and to Finland⁹ are maintained by CIMO, the national organisation for international mobility and cooperation.

### 3.2 The objectives of the Bologna Process and the national aims for the degree reform

The original objectives of the Bologna Process according to the Bologna Declaration (1999) were to establish a two-cycle degree structure, easily readable and comparable degrees and harmonised system of credits (ECTS). These objectives formed one set of action lines which aimed at increasing mobility. Other original objectives of the Bologna Process included co-operation in quality assurance and the promotion of the “European dimension” in higher education. The overall objective of the Bologna Process was to establish the European Higher Education Area by 2010.

Finland’s national-level aims for the degree reform took shape when the Government issued its proposal on the amendment of the Universities Act (Government Proposal 10/2004) in 2004. The proposal largely addressed the national-level problems that the Ministry of Education committee for the development of university degree structure had presented in 2002 (Ministry of Education 2002:39). The national aims hereby formulated included the adoption of the personal study plan as well as the international Master’s degree programmes. A year earlier, the Ministry of Education committee on the international strategy of higher education institutions had proposed the adoption of an ECTS-compatible credit system, a degree structure based on the 3 + 2 + 4 model and the development of the UAS degree structure to give UAS Master’s degrees a clear status in the national degree system (Ministry of Education 2001:23). The reform implementation reflected a response to the rapidly changing needs of the labour markets as well as innovation activities and the competitiveness of HEIs. Table 4 illustrates the entire matrix of problems, aims and measures related to the degree reform.

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⁹ Please see statistics on international student mobility at [http://www.cimo.fi/services/statistics/international_mobility_of_students](http://www.cimo.fi/services/statistics/international_mobility_of_students)
Table 4. The national aims for the degree reform as part of the Bologna Process

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Bologna Process objectives/action lines</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Easily readable and comparable degrees</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>- Extended study times and high dropout rate</td>
<td>- Adoption of personal study plans</td>
<td>- Shorter study times</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- Monitoring of study progress</td>
<td>- Lower dropout rate</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Unnecessarily extensive scope of degrees</td>
<td>- Degree reform</td>
<td>- More efficient filling of study places</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- Strengthening the status of the Bachelor's degree</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Low level of mobility</td>
<td>- Two-cycle degree structure ECTS</td>
<td>- Updating of degree content</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Changing needs of the labour markets and responding to them</td>
<td>- Increased co-operation with employers in planning</td>
<td>- Improving international comparability of degrees</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Concern for innovation and competitiveness</td>
<td>- International Master's degree programmes</td>
<td>- Producing new competence for the needs of employers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- Developing researcher training</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>- Strengthening universities' competitiveness</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

3.3 Degree reform in the university sector

Towards the end of the 1980s, internationalisation of education became a priority for education policy in Finland. The international comparability of the degree structure was crucial for mobility and other aspects on international co-operation. Other drivers for the degree reform included the long study times and the high dropout rate, issues which previous reforms had failed to rectify. The idea of a degree reform in the university sector was made more approachable by the fact that since 1994, the trend had been towards re-introducing the two-cycle degree structure, except for the engineering sciences and medicine. Furthermore, the target completion times set for the Bachelor’s and Master’s degrees in the 1994 degree reform were three and five years respectively. The degree structure
was, in other words, already developing towards the European model.

Since there seemed to exist a consensus on the two-cycle degree structure, the Ministry of Education appointed a committee to prepare its implementation. The key proposals provided in the committee report on the development of the two-cycle degree structure (Ministry of Education 2002:39) were included in the acts amending the Universities Act, which has since been repealed, and the Government Decree on University Degrees (794/2004). The provisions of the Universities Act were laid down in Act 645/1997 and its amendments (715/2004 and 556/2005).

The Act as well as the amendments and the Decree, which entered into force on 1 August 2005, formed the central legislation governing the degree reform. The decree (794/2004) lays down provision on the quantification of courses, the extent of studies (ECTS-compatible credits as well the target time for completing the degree), credit transfer, the aims and structure of degrees as well as the requisite components of the degrees and the graduate professional titles. The decree combined the previous 20 field-specific decrees into one while still acknowledging some field-specific issues (such as teacher training). The provisions on degrees were less restrictive than they had been in the field-specific decrees. The appendix of the decree lists all the fields of study and degrees also in English as well as the universities where they can be completed. The transition period, during which degrees could be taken either through the old or the new system, lasted until 2008, with the exception of the engineering fields, in which the transition period ended in 2010. Provisions on degrees, other education and the degree structure, student admission and eligibility for studies leading to a university degree are laid down in the Universities Act (558/2009) that came into force on 1 January 2010 and repealed the previous act. The Government Decree on University Degrees remained in force as provided in the Act on the implementation of the Universities Act (559/2009).

The preparations for implementing the degree reform commenced well before the new legislation entered into force. In addition to structures, the purpose was also to update the content of degrees. The Ministry of Education supported several development projects focusing on teaching and steering activities particularly during 2004–2007. The organisation and implementation of the projects was the responsibility of the universities, which chose their way of action independently.
In 2003–2004, which is when the actual reform of the curricula also took place, national field-specific coordinating groups were working in the fields of the humanities, mathematics and natural sciences, social sciences and social work, economics, education, teacher training, engineering, law and psychology. In keeping with the general principle of the degree reform implementation, the fields were allowed to choose their own ways to proceed.

The most central of all the projects concerning all fields of study were the Five Years, Two Degrees projects (W5W and W5W2 projects) (2004–2006; 2007–2009), which were divided into a number of sub-projects, including ones focusing on the personal study plan, the quantification of courses, study guidance and core content analysis, all with a strong emphasis on the pedagogical development of university education. The Ministry of Education, CIMO and the Finnish National Board of Education organised seminars on the Bologna Process, particularly on themes concerning the degree reform. The task of the Finnish National team of Bologna experts, established by the Ministry of Education in 2004, is to increase awareness of the objectives of the Bologna Process and promote their implementation in Finland. In addition to national-level cooperation, many of the universities had internal “Bologna teams” or implementation committee for the degree reform.

3.4 Degree reform in the UAS sector

In universities of applied sciences, the process of reforming the degree structure and curricula was different to that of the universities, including the schedule in which it was carried out. The main reason for this was that the decision on reforming the degree structure in the UAS sector had to wait for the decision first to be made on the establishment of the UAS Master’s degrees following the completion of the postgraduate degree pilot in 2005. Eventually, the Polytechnics Act (411/2005) was amended so as to allow the completion of UAS Master’s degrees, and for the UAS degree structure to comply with the Bologna model.

The statutory (Act 645/2001) piloting of postgraduate degrees in the UAS sector was launched in 2002, following planning and preparation work that had commenced in 1997. FINHEEC was responsible for evaluating the applications for the UAS postgraduate degree pilots. Subsequently, FINHEEC also evaluated the outcomes of the postgraduate degree pilots.
as based on the Act in 2003–2004 (see Kekäle et al. 2004). The Ministry of Education appointed the monitoring and coordination groups as required by the Act, the tasks of which was to produce follow-up data to support the development of degrees (see Okkonen 2003; 2004; 2005). Based on the evaluation and follow-up data, the guidelines defining the status of UAS second-cycle degrees were prepared. The guidelines were also based on the report on the status of Finnish UAS education in the European higher education area produced by the one-man committee appointed by the Ministry of Education. The report gave opinions on, for example, the two-cycle degree structure and the introduction of the ECTS. (Liljander 2004.)

The development of the degree structure and curricular planning were particularly supported by the Rectors’ Conference of Finnish Universities of Applied Sciences committees appointed for each specific study fields. Following the completion of the postgraduate degree pilot, the development of the new degree was continued among the development network for UAS degrees. The guidelines were further defined as the national framework for higher education degrees was established (Ministry of Education 2005:4).

The reform of the credit system in universities of applied sciences was launched in May 2004. Following this, the Ministry of Education prepared an amendment to the decree which was issued in summer 2004 and according to which the new system was to be adopted as of 1 January 2005. By 1 August 2005 at the latest, all courses had to be designated ECTS credits. The change process in universities of applied sciences was, in other words, briefer than for universities.

Once the process was underway, a national project, Participation of Finnish Universities of Applied Sciences in the European Higher Education Area (titiled as the ECTS project), was launched based on the initiative of the Rectors’ Conference of Finnish Universities of Applied Sciences to support the degree reform, funded by the Ministry of Education. The purpose of the project was to disseminate information about the Bologna Process and the building of the European Higher Education Area. Furthermore, it was to issue recommendations and proposals to universities of applied sciences to enhance their progress in the degree reform.

The project was carried out in two stages. In the first stage in 2004–2005, the project focused on the introduction of the ECTS credit system and the Diploma Supplement as well as outlining the National Qualifications Framework. In the
second stage in 2006–2007, the focus was shifted to supporting the UAS curriculum design, dissemination of good practices, field-specific work, and defining subject-specific competences (learning outcomes). The project also followed up how recommendations pertaining to such issues as the length of the academic year and training periods were implemented. The aims, progress and results of the project are presented in the final report of the project *The Bologna Process and Finnish Universities of Applied Sciences* (2007).

3.5 Further actions to promote the objectives of the degree reform

Following the introduction of the new degree structure, the objectives of the degree reform and the related Bologna Process have been promoted through a number of national working groups, surveys and projects. Most of the issues related to the degree structure have after 2004 been approached from the joint perspective of both the university and the UAS sector. In 2005, the OECD Thematic Review of Tertiary Education, Country Background report for Finland was published, which also discussed issues related to the degree structure.

The 2005 proposal issued by the Ministry of Education committee on the qualifications framework (Ministry of Education 2005:4) provided descriptions of both UAS and university qualifications. This document was significant particularly when UAS postgraduate degrees were juxtaposed with higher university degrees as second-cycle degrees according to the Bologna model. The proposal also described the learning outcomes of the first, second and third cycle and for its part steered HEIs towards learning outcome-oriented approach. In the Ministry of Education report *The national framework for qualifications and other learning* (Ministry of Education 2009:4) learning outcome-oriented approach was taken further by describing in more detail than previously the knowledge, skills and competences to be acquired on each level of degrees. Higher education qualifications were placed on levels 6–8 as based on the cycle model established for the Bologna Process.

Questions of lifelong learning were integrally linked with the flexibility and feasibility of the degree structure particularly from the employer perspective. Lifelong learning specifically in universities was discussed in the report of the committee on lifelong learning in universities (Ministry of
Education 2005:38) and later in both the university and UAS sector in the report Present situation and development needs in adult higher education (Ministry of Education 2008:38). According to the committee, the graduate workforce does not have adequate opportunities for gaining new broad-based competences during their careers or for demonstrating their prior knowledge and skills when completing a degree or continuing further education. The working group proposed new extensive competence modules – special qualifications – to be completed in co-operation with labour market representatives.

One of the objectives of the degree reform was to increase mobility. One key method promoting this is the recognition of prior learning and credit transfer. The committee on recognising prior learning and credit transfer in higher education institutions put forward proposals (Ministry of Education 2007:4) for national principles to be applied by HEIs to the identification and recognition of prior learning. According to the committee, HEIs must have a uniform, reliable and transparent system for recognising prior learning. The system is applied in degree education and in other education provided by HEIs. It also applies to studies completed abroad. The work of the committee has since been continued with the support of the councils of university and UAS rectors and various projects funded by the Ministry of Education. The Strategy for the Internationalisation of Higher Education Institutions in Finland 2009–2015 (Ministry of Education 2009:23) was published in 2009. The five priorities defined in the strategy – “a genuinely international higher education community”, “increasing quality and attractiveness”, “export of expertise”, “supporting a multicultural society” and “global responsibility” – are all either indirectly or directly linked with mobility in particular, although many of the goals are also to do more widely with the overall objectives of the degree reform.
The objectives and organisation of the degree reform

The national objectives for the degree reform, as based on the Bologna Process, were shorter study times, lower dropout rate, strengthening the status of the Bachelor’s degree, enhancing the profiling of UAS Master’s degrees, increasing international and domestic mobility, development of the ECTS credit system and updating degree contents to better meet the needs of employers. The following chapters will assess the level of awareness of these objectives at the beginning of the process and HEIs’ views on their importance and to what extent they were attained. In addition to the national objectives of the reform, HEIs set their own objectives specific to different units. This chapter will also discuss the national-level support offered to HEIs in the implementation of the reform as well as the appropriateness of guidelines provided and the way in which the reform was carried out in each higher education sector and unit.

4.1 An assessment of the objectives of the degree reform and their attainment

4.1.1 Awareness of the national objectives

According to the surveys carried out in conjunction with the evaluation, the original national objectives of the degree reform were relatively widely known in HEIs; the awareness of them was at a slightly higher level in the university sector as opposed to the UAS sector (see Figure 2 below). The responses from some universities of applied sciences revealed that some of the objectives, for example shorter study times, were not
known at the time the process started. This partly explains why approximately one-half of the universities of applied sciences did not give a clear opinion on how well the objectives were known.

There were differences between fields of study in the awareness of the objectives. The national objectives were best known in universities in the fields of law, social sciences and natural sciences. In the UAS sector, the national objectives were best known in the fields of tourism, social sciences, natural sciences and business and administration.

In the survey, HEIs and fields of study were requested to put the national objectives of degree reform in order of importance. Universities and university faculties seemed to agree on the improvement of the ECTS credit system being clearly the most important national objective. The second and third most important objectives according to the university-level responses were the increasing of international mobility and shorter study times, while according to faculties they were the updating of degree contents and the increasing of internationalism. Strengthening the status of the Bachelor's degree was ranked the last but one in the university-level and the last in the faculty-level responses.

Universities of applied sciences and their fields of study prioritised the relevance of degree contents in terms of labour market and the development of UAS Master's degrees and the ECTS credit system. In the field-specific responses, these three objectives were also prioritised above others.
4.1.2 The attainment of national objectives

Based on the evaluation survey, the HEIs held fairly positive views regarding the attainment of the national objectives of the degree reform, although there was some variation between the assessments of different HEIs. Both the university and UAS sectors considered that the objective of developing the ECTS credit system was well attained. The objectives that were also well attained according to universities were the strengthening of the status of the Bachelor’s degree and the increasing of domestic and international mobility (Figure 3).

According to the UAS sector, the three objectives it had prioritised – the labour-market relevance, the development of UAS Master’s degrees and the ECTS credit system – were for the most part well attained.

Both sectors shared the view that shorter study times and lower dropout rate were the objectives most poorly attained.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>National Objective</th>
<th>Average Assessment (1-5)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Development of the ECTS credit system</td>
<td>3.71</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Labour-market relevance of degree contents</td>
<td>3.69</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The status of the Bachelor’s degree</td>
<td>2.91</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Increasing domestic mobility</td>
<td>2.76</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Profiling of UAS Master’s degrees</td>
<td>2.76</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Increasing international mobility</td>
<td>2.67</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lower dropout rate</td>
<td>2.64</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shorter study times</td>
<td>2.64</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Figure 3. Assessments of HEIs on the attainment of national objectives for the degree reform on a scale from 1 = "the objective was not attained at all" to 5 = "the objective was fully attained" (average).
The assessments provided by representatives of HEIs and the Ministry of Education and Culture interviewed by the evaluation team concurred with the assessments presented above. However, the views on the strengthening of the status of the Bachelor’s degree differed from those provided in the written responses of HEIs. HEI representatives responsible for international affairs gave particularly positive assessments on the impact of the degree reform. In contrast, the national objectives and their attainment had remained relatively vague in the opinion of labour market representatives.

4.1.3 HEI-specific objectives and their attainment

Nearly all of the universities (95%) and a large majority of universities of applied sciences (80%) reported setting a host of additional objectives of their own for the degree reform process. Specific objectives in universities were linked with the updating of the curriculum, the reducing of study times (e.g. the periodisation of the academic year\(^\text{10}\), improved monitoring of student progress), development of academic administration (e.g. harmonisation of diplomas) and grading (e.g. the harmonisation of grading criteria). Other such objectives included the improvement of quality of teaching and feedback systems as well as enabling research periods for teachers.

The objectives in the UAS sector were linked with the development of curricular and teaching contents (curricular guidelines, courses with a larger scope, focus on learning outcomes) as well as the assessment of quantification and workloads of degrees. Many universities of applied sciences had also set as its objective the improvement of the quality and profiling of the Master’s degree, while some aimed at introducing the Master’s degree in all its fields of study. One university of applied sciences stated as its objective to increase internal co-operation within fields of study.

Based on their own assessments, the HEIs had attained the objectives they had set for themselves relatively well. Only a few of the objectives were not achieved.

Conclusions

- The national objectives of the degree reform were relatively well known in HEIs, although there was some variation between fields.

\(^{10}\) Periodisation = organising studies into four or five periods per academic year.
The objective best attained was the development of the ECTS credit system, while the one most poorly attained was the reducing of study times.

The institution and field-based organisation of the degree reform made it possible for HEIs to pursue their own specific objectives alongside national objectives, a task in which HEIs in their own opinion succeeded well.

4.2 Assessments of national support and co-operation within fields of study

Universities and universities of applied sciences rated the national-level support offered for the execution of the degree reform as being mainly adequate. In both higher education sectors, co-operation within fields was deemed the most useful way of organising the execution of the degree reform. The second most useful method employed was the national Bologna seminars. When assessing the adequacy of national forms of support, the method least useful according to both higher education sectors was the steering provided by the Ministry of Education. As Figure 4 illustrates, the overall opinion among universities of applied sciences regarding the different forms of support was slightly more positive than that in universities.

![Figure 4. Assessments by HEIs on the adequacy of the support provided for the execution of the degree reform. Average responses to the question “How would you assess the adequacy and appropriateness of the support offered for the execution of the degree reform from the perspective of your own HEI on a scale from 1 = strongly disagree to 5 = strongly agree”.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Support</th>
<th>University</th>
<th>UAS</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Field-specific networks</td>
<td>3.8</td>
<td>3.76</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bologna seminars</td>
<td>3.62</td>
<td>3.35</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>National support and steering</td>
<td>3.62</td>
<td>3.45</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ministry steering</td>
<td>3.2</td>
<td>3.05</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Total: 3.84
The criticism of the steering provided by the Ministry of Education mainly concerned the timing: the universities would have required national guidelines on the ECTS credit system and conversion rates at an earlier stage. As the guidelines were delayed, decisions had to be made independently in universities and within specific fields, which in turn resulted in varied practices and extra work. Furthermore, the decree on university degrees ought to have been prepared at an earlier stage to benefit the development work. Some of the universities would have liked to see more thoroughgoing justification of the degree reform process in general and regretted that universities’ opinions were not taken into account to a greater extent during the process. The art universities also wished that their special character had been better acknowledged.

The shift of universities of applied sciences to the two-cycle degree structure was swifter than that in the university sector, and it took some time for some institutions in the UAS sector to establish what the Bologna process actually meant for them. Some of the universities of applied sciences considered Ministry steering adequate, while others would have required clearer setting of objectives for the degree reform and definition of learning outcomes at the initial stage of the process.

The majority of university faculties and UAS fields of study participated in national field-specific co-operation. Field-specific coordination groups could decide for themselves how they chose to organise their work and what goals they set for it. Therefore, the way development work was organised within specific fields differed greatly from one field to the next, ranging from highly centralised methods to decentralised ones. For example, the National-Level Coordination Project of Degree Programme Development in Teacher Training and the Sciences of Education (Vokke) had numerous sub-projects, while in the field of social sciences the coordination was mainly the responsibility of the faculty heads of academic affairs and in mathematical and natural sciences deans’ meetings and work carried out by officials played a key role. Some of the sub-projects published reports and maintained their own websites.

Based on the evaluation material, organising the execution of the degree reform around fields of study was mainly deemed to have been the right choice. It was considered that allowing independence to the different fields meant that each field was more strongly committed to the development work. One of
the key benefits of field-specific development work was that it resulted in better comparability between degree structures and a more harmonised interpretation of the ECTS credit system within each field. In some fields, the co-operation also strengthened collaboration between faculties in different universities. The benefits of field-specific co-operation are described in greater detail in Chapters 9 and 10.

The interviews also brought to light some of the problems of organising the degree reform work around fields of study. The progress of the work was partly dependent on the management style, for which reason there was only a limited amount of networking within some fields. There were also issues on which no consensus was reached (see Chapter 9). Furthermore, the depth of co-operation within each field could vary, as some of the fields focused mainly on structures and the ECTS credit system, while others went further into the degree contents (e.g. in the fields of humanities and education). On some occasions, the field-specific guidelines were in conflict with university-level guidelines; in these situations faculties seemed to follow the university-level guidelines.

Within many of the fields, co-operation has continued even after the degree reform and issues related to it have been discussed in deans' meetings. However, according to the interviews, field-specific co-operation will continue to be necessary to tackle new challenges. These challenges include the definition of learning outcomes and evaluation criteria, international comparison of degrees and multidisciplinary co-operation.

In the UAS sector, the coordination of the field-specific co-operation, that is, the ECTS project, was the responsibility of the Rectors' Conference of Finnish Universities of Applied Sciences (ARENE). This project resulted in a more systematic and harmonised organisation of work than in the university sector. The co-operation provided a framework for learning outcome-oriented curriculum design and the definition of field-specific learning outcomes, common competencies and core content. Expertise and best practices were efficiently distributed. As a result of the ECTS project, close and effective networking took place between universities of applied sciences, and these networks are currently continuing their work under the degree programme project of ARENE.

The UAS Master's degrees were developed in a co-ordinated manner through national co-operation. The co-operation centred around the UAS second-cycle degree pilot, and following that, the national development network.
Universities of applied sciences considered the co-operation on the development of UAS Master’s degrees successful, because it had a direct impact on the structures and contents of degree programmes.

Some of the universities of applied sciences would, however, have preferred if the work in the ECTS project and the UAS Master’s degree development network had been more closely integrated and there had been a more thorough analysis of the differences in the UAS Bachelor’s and Master’s degrees and specialisation studies when introducing the two-cycle degree structure.

The curriculum design and credit allocation tools produced in the W5W project were considered important forms of support in both higher education sectors. In the university sector, coordination between field-specific projects and the W5W project was enhanced through W5W experts attending the meetings held by coordinating groups and national Bologna seminars as trainers.

The organisation of the Ministry of Education of that time had separate divisions for universities and universities of applied sciences, which was reflected in the differing ways of organising the execution of the degree reform in the respective sectors. As a result, there was an insufficient amount of dialogue and co-operation between the two sectors. According to the evaluation material, only one university reported having engaged in co-operation with the UAS sector, and only two universities of applied sciences had collaborated with universities, in conjunction with the degree reform.

Despite the criticism presented, representatives of both HEIs and the Ministry of Education and Culture deemed the chosen way of organising the degree reform as being successful. An extensive nationwide reform was carried out with a relatively lean structure. The timescale was tight but this also forced actors into working efficiently. From the perspective of HEIs, the process was carried out while respecting their autonomy and it encouraged them to thoroughly examine the decisions made for each HEI, on the one hand, and specific fields, on the other. The valuable outcome of the process for the Ministry of Education and Culture was the dialogue that was created between the Ministry and universities and the way problems were solved as and when they arose.
Conclusions

- HEIs assessed the national support and guidelines provided for the execution of the degree reform as being for the most part sufficient. University faculties found field-specific co-operation particularly beneficial, and this co-operation has since been continued in many fields.
- Faculties expressed the view that it would be useful in future field-specific co-operation to discuss, for example, the learning outcome-oriented approach in a more coordinated and systematic manner.
- Field-specific coordination between the university and UAS sector in the degree structure and degree content planning ought to be intensified.

4.3 The organisation of the degree reform on the HEI level

As on the field-specific level, the organisation of the degree reform on the level of HEIs was the responsibility of the HEIs themselves. Most of the universities managed the execution of the reform centrally and appointed steering groups for the process, usually chaired by the Vice Rector in charge of education. The typical duties of the steering group would include, for example, the preparation of degree regulations, transitional provisions and other guidelines as well as internal communications and organising of seminars. In many of the universities, the degree reform process and co-operation between faculties was coordinated by a full-time coordinator.

One university organised its degree reform process in a slightly different manner, organising joint planning seminars where common principles, goals and timelines were agreed on, with the actual development work then carried out by degree programmes. In another university, the Rector made decisions on the principles of the degree reform and the coordinating planning officer carried out rounds in the faculties.

Heads of academic affairs played a central role in coordinating the degree reform on the faculty level, but the teaching development groups, education committees, department councils or degree reform committees appointed specifically for the purpose also helped define guidelines for faculties while simultaneously following up on the preparation work carried out by national field-specific coordination groups.
In universities of applied sciences, the degree reform process was usually led by a vice rector, development director, the head of academic affairs or the management team. The operative responsibility of the process was given to the fields of study, with directors of education together with degree programme coordinators were in charge of development work in the various units.

It became apparent from the responses of some universities of applied sciences that at the initial stage, the changeover to the new ECTS credit system was largely a technical matter. At the second stage, in 2006–2007, the curricula were changed into competence-based ones according to the ECTS project guidelines. Universities of applied sciences had representatives in field-specific groups for the ECTS project, which is why these representatives played a key role in conveying information within their own organisations. The level of the impact of the degree reform becomes apparent from the fact that at this stage in some universities of applied sciences the educational development organisations were overhauled and the positions of, for example, the education development directors were established or the curriculum design teams were reorganised.

The evaluation survey also looked into how the various groups of actors participated in the practical implementation of the degree reform. In universities, the key actors were members of teaching and research personnel as well as the administrative and support services. Among universities, the degree reform process in the field of music seemed to be slightly more administration-led than in other fields. In universities of applied sciences, the implementation of the reform was clearly more teacher-led than in universities.

The participation of students seems to have been more active in universities than in universities of applied sciences. Student participation was particularly active in the fields of law, social sciences and the humanities, but less active in the field of mathematics and natural sciences. Among the fields of study in universities of applied sciences, the fields with most opportunities for student participation were the natural resources and the environment, the humanities and education fields, and with the least opportunities the fields of technology, communication and transport.

There were clear differences in the employer representation between the two high education sectors. In universities of applied sciences, employer representatives participated in the degree reform in many fields, even to
a greater extent than administrative and support services. According to the universities of applied sciences themselves, the participation of other stakeholders was particularly active in the field of tourism and natural sciences, but less active in the fields of social services and health or culture. In universities, on the other hand, stakeholder representation was less active than that of students, and the most active in the field of economics and the least active or nonexistent in the field of music and mathematics and natural sciences.

Conclusions

- The organisation of the degree reform at the HEI level was successful.
- In universities of applied sciences, the changeover to the two-cycle degree structure was carried out in several stages, which added depth to the competence-based curriculum design. In addition, the Bologna Process at the universities of applied sciences sector was promoted by a strong participation of the teaching staff.
- The inclusion of students in the degree reform was challenging to universities of applied sciences, while in universities, the engagement of the labour market representatives in the degree reform was the least active.

4.4 The international comparison of degrees

The evaluation data revealed that most of the comparison of degree structures and contents promoted by the Bologna Process takes place within bilateral co-operation between Finnish and foreign HEIs. This co-operation also includes student mobility.

Issues regarding the comparability of degrees are relevant in situations where the transfer of credits earned in another HEI has to be decided on. However, there was very little systematic comparison of degree structures and contents in conjunction with curriculum design, particularly at the early stages of the degree reform.

The most important international comparability project for degrees was the Tuning project, which was contributed to by two of the university faculties and two fields of study in the universities of applied sciences participating in the evaluation survey. The field of music participated in the Polifonia project. Other international comparability projects mentioned in the
evaluation data were the benchmarking project involving the fields of study and social services at the University of Lapland, ChemePass in the field of chemical engineering, and the EuroPsy project in the field of psychology. In the UAS sector, the mobility projects included the EUROTOUR project in the field of tourism and the engineering education project headed by SEFI (European Society for Engineering Education).

Representatives of the Ministry of Education and Culture held it increasingly important that the different fields of study are involved in field-specific European networks.

Conclusions

- Systematic international comparisons between degree structures and contents were carried out only to a very limited degree in conjunction with the degree reform. Such co-operation and comparisons should be promoted.
- Finnish HEIs should increase international co-operation leading to joint curriculum design and joint and double degrees. The quality of partner HEIs and the education they provide is a key starting point for their co-operation.

4.5 The follow-up on the degree reform

According to the evaluation survey, HEIs are following up on the progress of the degree reform through, for example, student feedback and in conjunction with the development of the curricula and teaching, by monitoring the study times and student progress and as part of the annual steering of operations. A number of HEIs have also issued degree reform follow-up reports, which have revealed, for example, that the target study times are often not achieved. HEIs also monitor the workloads of degrees and competences provided by them in relation to the demands of the labour market. The Ministry of Education and Culture provides funding for the follow-up studies on the degree reform.

Conclusions

- HEIs have employed several different methods in monitoring the implementation of the degree reform.
- The evaluation of the degree reform should be repeated in 4–5 years’ time. It will then be possible to evaluate, for example, how well the Bachelor’s and Master’s degrees
correspond to the demands of the labour market and the impact of the degree reform after the completion of the 2010 evaluation.
### The feasibility of the degree structure

One of the key points in the evaluation was to establish how feasible the two-cycle degree structure is in the university and UAS sectors. Sixty-five percent of the universities and more than eighty percent of the universities of applied sciences regarded the current degree structure as being feasible. However, of the university faculties who responded to the field-specific survey, only one-third (36%) considered the degree structure feasible as opposed to the clear majority (76%) of the fields of study in universities of applied sciences (Table 5).

Table 5. The responses of the representatives of HEIs and fields to the statement “The two-cycle degree structure is feasible in its current form” (%)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>1 = Strongly disagree</th>
<th>2</th>
<th>3</th>
<th>4</th>
<th>5 = Strongly agree</th>
<th>N</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>UAS</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>76</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>UAS fields of study</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>62</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>29</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>University</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>55</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>University faculties</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>41</td>
<td>36</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>22</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Alongside the general feasibility of the degree structure, other issues targeted by the evaluation were especially the status of the Bachelor’s and Master’s degrees as separate entities, the Master’s degree programmes in universities and the role and feasibility of the UAS Master’s degrees. A more detailed analysis revealed several problems. Furthermore, based on the stakeholder interviews, it would seem that the degree structure may not be as feasible as the above table would suggest.
Particularly the responses to the open questions used in the survey gave an indication that there were certain problems in the current structure. According to a few responses, however, the two-cycle structure was felt to have clarified the study process by providing a clear interim goal to students. The clarity of the degree structure was discussed particularly during the interviews carried out by the evaluation team. The key message from the stakeholders and experts was that from the perspective of legislation, the degree structure may seem clear but in practice this is not the case and the structure does not function in the way it was intended to. It is also sometimes problematic to explain the Finnish degree structure (particularly the role of the Bachelor’s degree) and degrees (particularly the UAS Master’s degree) in international contexts.

5.1 The status of Bachelor’s and Master’s degrees as separate degrees

A central problem in the degree structure according to the university sector is its lack of a genuine two-cycle structure, which leads to several intertwining problems compromising the entire system. The Bachelor’s degree continues to be deemed an intermediary degree forming the foundation for the Master’s degree and is therefore not generally perceived as being adequate as the first degree. Apart from some exceptions, the Bachelor’s degree does not lead to employment, which is partly due to the fact that the Bachelor’s degree still lacks a clear profile of its own. The point of mobility from Bachelor’s degree education to Master’s degree education remains somewhat vague. Students take Master’s level courses while still completing the Bachelor’s degree. Furthermore, the Bachelor’s degree is usually awarded and the certificate issued only shortly before or simultaneously with the Master’s degree certificate. Particularly those who do not themselves work within the system do not see the system as genuinely consisting of two cycles and two separate degrees.

Another problem brought up in the responses was the fact that although it is perfectly possible to enter the job market directly after the Bachelor’s degree, the provisions of the Universities Act regarding the right to study do not take into account the possibility that students might wish to return to university to complete the Master’s degree after a period of employment. It was also mentioned that the current structure does not encourage student mobility and particularly from
the perspective of international mobility, the allocation of ECTS credits has not always been appropriate. In a number of universities, where there is mobility towards the UAS sector, it was deemed that the dual system in its current state was unclear. In general, the quantification of courses is considered skewed in many cases. The English-language titles of UAS degrees and UAS Master’s degrees have in part blurred the division between the two higher education sectors.

To bolster the two-cycle degree structure, and to promote the adoption of a “genuine two-cycle system”, seven of the universities suggested that at the student admission stage, the right to study only up to a Bachelor’s degree be initially awarded. According to these universities, this would help clarify the degree structure and serve as an incentive for speedier progress in studies as students would have a more clearly defined goal. It would give students two distinct options to either enter the labour markets or to continue studies to the Master’s level. Granting the right to study only up to the Bachelor’s level at first would also force planners to map out the first-cycle studies so that they would be truly relevant in terms of employment. This would also require a more harmonised quantification of degrees in relation to UAS degrees.

The thirteen universities that were not in favour of granting the right to study only up to the Bachelor’s level at the first stage justified this view on the fact that the Bachelor’s degree is currently not sufficient to lead to satisfactory employment and on the excessive bureaucracy that the additional admission process for Master’s level studies would cause. A new cut-off point and the new round of student selection could unnecessarily stall the progress of studies and undermine the motivation of students who had the Master’s degree as their goal to begin with. This might also lead to longer study times and increase the risk that some universities would start to produce only Bachelor’s degrees.

From the perspective of university fields of study, the problems are largely the same as for individual universities: the poor employment potential of the Bachelor’s degree and the lack of credibility of the two-cycle system, which becomes evident in that, for example, in certain fields (e.g. for school teachers, psychologists, social workers) the Master’s degree is the minimum qualification requirement, and that in some fields (in law and social sciences and engineering sciences in particular) the Bachelor’s degree cannot in practice be pursued as a separate degree, but must be completed in conjunction
with the Master’s degree. Other problems discussed in the responses submitted by university faculties included those related to the quantification of degrees and study arrangements as well as to the mobility from the Bachelor’s level to the Master's level.

The views of universities on how the degree structure should be further developed focused mainly on the same issues as those that had been raised previously. The failure to fully adopt the two-cycle system was seen as a central problem and the development proposals called for the “implementation of a genuine two-cycle system”. It was suggested that as a rule, this could be achieved by initially granting the right to study only up to the Bachelor’s degree. Of the nine universities that had called for a clearer division of the degree structure into two cycles, seven also favoured limiting the right to study to the Bachelor’s degree only. For the remaining two, the “clearer division” between the two cycles meant, for example, the possibility for the student to work for a period before returning to the university to complete the Master’s degree.

The problem of the lack of two genuine cycles was also frequently mentioned in the stakeholder and expert interviews. No definitive solution was, however, offered to the problem. According to the bolder visions, students could at the first stage be selected for Bachelor’s degree studies only. This would force degree programmes to re-examine the working-life orientation of the degree. A broad-based Bachelor’s degree would also provide the general job market credentials that are a basic requirement for finding employment. From the perspective of measuring student workload, the Bachelor’s and Master’s degrees are separate degrees, consisting of a certain number of credits. A period of employment between the Bachelor’s and Master’s degrees would in this respect not create a problem, and it would not be considered a period that has prolonged studies.

Some of the universities also called for a clearer dual model. On the one hand, the degree profiles of the two higher education sectors should be sufficiently differentiated, and yet harmonised enough to allow for mobility across sector boundaries. The following comment in one of the responses illustrates the situation well: “From the perspective of mobility, the division of study time between the Bachelor’s and Master’s degrees should be 2 + 3, but from the employment perspective 4+1.”

The other development ideas from the university sector were not necessarily linked with the actual degree structure.
The responses would, for example, raise the need to develop more flexible study paths and more comprehensive and stronger modules. Flexibility should also be extended to student admission. The problems related to students transferring from universities of applied sciences and to joint and double degrees ought to be solved, and practices related to, for example, prior learning established. Several of the universities also hoped to see stronger links between the degree structure and the labour market needs.

Universities participating in the field-specific survey were also asked to provide an assessment on the feasibility of the Bachelor’s and Master’s degrees as separate degrees. In addition to the aforementioned problems, responses to this question also raised positive aspects. One such aspect was that the Bachelor’s degree serves as a helpful interim goal for students and gives added structure to studies. The separate degrees were also deemed to enhance student mobility and enable a more broad-based degree, although transitions from one university to another are not always unproblematic. The increased possibilities for internationalisation enabled by the two-cycle system were seen as a positive outcome.

Conclusions

From the formal (legislative) perspective, the two-cycle degree structure is clear, but in practice, it is not fully functioning in the way it was intended, particularly in the university sector. The majority of universities considers the current degree structure problematic and is calling for a “genuine two-cycle degree structure”. However, the lack of recognition of the Bachelor’s degree in the labour markets is seen as the central problem impeding the adoption of a genuine two-cycle system. Several questions and concerns have also been voiced with regard to the student selection taking place at the mobility from Bachelor’s level to the Master’s level.

The university sector should aim towards a genuine two-cycle system by strengthening the status of the Bachelor’s degree by, for example, the following means:

- The right to study should be granted mainly for the Bachelor’s degree only at the initial student admission. The relationship between the Bachelor’s and Master’s degrees may vary from one field to the next based on labour market needs, the special characteristics of a discipline and the general higher education provision in a given field.
The right to study directly for a Master’s degree could in exceptional circumstances be granted in fields that prepare for a profession in which the Master’s degree is a basic qualification. These professions include teachers and professions governed by the Professional Qualifications Directive (e.g. doctors, architects and speech therapists).

The three-year programme (180 ECTS credits) leading to a Bachelor’s degree is to be the basic point of departure, but in some fields exceptions can be made so that the programme lasts from three-and-a-half years (210 ECTS credits) to four years (240 ECTS credits). When determining the length of the Bachelor's degree education, the length of the Master's degree education in the field must also be taken into consideration. The total length of studies should not in any case exceed five years.

As a rule, students for Master’s degree education undergo a selection process, provided they have completed a Bachelor’s degree or corresponding studies.

The selection procedures and criteria are developed so as to keep the process as light, flexible and appropriate as possible based on the focus areas of the given higher education institution. Student selection does not necessarily mean an entrance exam; depending on the degree, it may also be based on the former study record. The selection process is timed so as not to impede students’ progress from the Bachelor’s level to the Master’s level.

The length of Master’s degree education may vary from 18 months (90 ECTS credits) to two years (120 ECTS credits) so that, when taking into account the Bachelor’s degree in the same field, the total length of studies is five years (in certain fields there can be exceptions to this). In situations where the first-cycle degree has been completed in another field or is a vocationally/professionally oriented one, the total length of studies may vary.

Universities are to pay special attention to the quality of the Master’s degree programmes with a foreign language of instruction. In FINHEEC’s forthcoming evaluation of international degree programmes, focus should be placed on assessing, for example, what qualifications the programmes give students regarding postgraduate studies and employment, and more generally, the learning outcomes.
5.2 The position of Master’s degree programmes within the system of degrees

One of the national objectives of the degree reform was to develop Master’s degree programmes\textsuperscript{11} that would increase multidisciplinarity and internationalism in higher education and respond to the new demands of the labour markets and research. The aim is to offer Bachelor’s degree holders alternative educational paths and new opportunities to transfer from one study field to another.

Based on the evaluation surveys, the general objectives of Master’s degree programmes have been relatively well achieved, with half of the universities stating that English-language programmes help attract international students and increase internationalisation in teaching. Universities also emphasised the importance of Master’s degree programmes in promoting multidisciplinary studies and improving contacts with the labour markets. It was seen as positive that Master’s degree programmes are helpful in introducing new perspectives in teaching, reacting rapidly to the educational needs of society, responding to adult education and continuing education needs, promoting mobility between universities and universities of applied sciences and enhancing the teaching profile of universities.

In terms of the degree structure, universities felt that the problem with Master’s degree programmes was particularly their unclear and unestablished position and the wavering definition of the whole concept. It was also hoped that the concept of Master’s degree programmes be assessed. It came out during the interviews that the entire concept requires redefinition, as it appears that the Master’s degree programmes have created an image of two types of second-cycle degrees: the Master’s degree studies and separate Master’s degree programmes. It was also brought to the evaluation team’s attention that several students in Master’s degree programmes have already completed a second-cycle degree and that the programmes are used as a form of extension studies.

Some universities stated that the decree on Master’s degrees was an unnecessarily heavy steering tool. It was not felt to be practical as universities may under current legislation establish Master’s degree programmes irrespective of the decree. Furthermore, the interviewees pointed out the problem with some programmes which are referred to in

\textsuperscript{11} Please see the definition of Master’s degree programmes in Chapter 2.3.
the decree but which in practice have been or will soon be discontinued and with programmes which were planned to be carried through only once to begin with. According to some universities, there are too many Master’s degree programmes, they are fragmented and take up far more resources than “normal” second-cycle education. On the other hand, owing to additional funding available, Master’s degree programmes have been launched in great numbers.

Nearly all the faculties participating in the survey were running Master’s degree programmes. Nearly one-half of the faculties (46%) also had separate Master’s degree programmes falling outside the scope of the Ministry of Education and Culture decree. According to universities, both the Master’s degree programmes referred to in the decree as well as those organised outside the remit of the decree meet the objectives set for Master’s degree programmes well (internationalisation, multidisciplinarity, and improved contacts between the programmes and the labour markets).

Conclusions

- The responses received from universities reflected the situation in which Master’s degree programmes have served as an intermediary stage in the transition towards a genuine two-cycle degree structure. The advantages of Master’s degree programmes mentioned by universities can be expected to be the same advantages that a genuine two-cycle degree structure will have in general. In addition, the fact that universities have chosen to launch Master’s degree programmes outside the scope of the decree is an indication of the advantages of the Master’s degree and that there is no particular need in the universities for decrees as a steering tool for the programmes.

- The evaluation team proposes that the decree issuing process in relation to Master’s degree programmes in universities be abandoned.

- Universities should plan second-cycle degree programmes based on their own needs within their educational responsibilities\(^\text{12}\). The division into separate Master’s degree programmes and other Master’s degree education

\(^{12}\text{Universities are assigned educational responsibilities, that is, the right to offer teaching and degrees in one or several of the study fields by the Decision and Decree of the Ministry of Education and Culture.}\)
will be eliminated, and universities will only have one type of study path leading to a Master’s degree.

5.3 The two-cycle structure in UAS degrees

For universities of applied sciences, the reform of the degree structure meant that the development work on UAS Master’s degrees, which had commenced earlier, now became part of the Bologna Process. One of the objectives of the reform was to secure UAS students an opportunity to continue their studies and to deepen their professional competencies as well as to create opportunities for universities of applied sciences to develop their activities as labour market-oriented higher education institutions. Another objective was to differentiate between UAS and university Master’s degrees and to promote internationalisation in universities of applied sciences. According to the evaluation survey these objectives have been satisfactorily attained.

5.3.1 Key problems and development areas in the two-cycle degree structure in the UAS sector

Like universities, universities of applied sciences identified several problems in the current degree structure. Degree titles elicited the most criticism as they were felt to be confusing and it was considered that they were not in line with university titles of similar level. It was deemed that the titles of UAS Master’s degrees did not adequately describe the

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13 In the Government Decree on Polytechnics (= universities of applied sciences, UASs), the aim of UAS Master’s degrees is defined as providing students with comprehensive and deep knowledge of a specific field of expertise, needed for developing the market in that field, as well as the necessary theoretical knowledge for completing demanding specialist and management tasks in the field. A further, general objective is to provide an in-depth picture of the field of expertise, of its position in the market and its social significance, as well as skills in following and analysing current research and professional practices in the field (Government Decree 423/2005). Applicants are required to have at least a Bachelor-level degree in the field of Master’s degree programme as well as a minimum of three years’ work experience in a field of one’s degree. Master’s degrees in universities of applied sciences are equal to other Finnish Master’s degrees, and give the same qualifications as them.

14 The problem of the UAS degree titles refers to the Finnish degree titles. Please see Chapter 5.3.2.
level of the degree. The comparability of degrees and their prestige and status in relation to university degrees was found to be somewhat poor. The UAS respondents also stated that there are still obstacles in transferring from a university of applied sciences to study at a university. Differences in the quantification of studies were seen as causing problems for international mobility and co-operation in particular.

From the perspective of individual fields of study, the respondents cited as major problems the difficulties for students holding a UAS Bachelor’s or UAS Master’s degree to transfer to universities, the lack of public awareness regarding the UAS Master’s degree and issues surrounding the provision of Master’s degree education, such as the work experience requirement and challenges in combining work and study. The lack of public awareness of UAS Master’s degrees was, however, expected to be remedied over time as an increasing number of students will be graduating with the degree. It was also pointed out in the field-specific discussion that the relationship between the UAS Bachelor’s and Master’s degrees was partly unclear. It was questioned, for example, whether the Master’s degree actually provided a sufficient amount of additional competencies compared to the Bachelor’s degree.

The development suggestions were largely in line with the discussion on the salient problem areas. They did, however, tend to focus more on content-related rather than structural issues. The situation is well summarised in one of the responses from the universities of applied sciences: “The structure is in place, now is the time to discuss the optimum content and workloads of the degree programmes.”

Although questions were raised about the degree titles, only four universities of applied sciences and four fields of study mentioned changing the titles as a priority in development. Based on the evaluation survey, all universities of applied sciences shared the need to harmonise the study paths in continuing education for UAS Master’s degree holders and the varying allocation of credits. Some universities of applied sciences also expressed a need to tailor degree contents and some wished to see a smoother transition for UAS Bachelor’s degree holders to university Master’s degree education. The rest of the development suggestions were either isolated comments on, for example, the need for closer co-operation between universities and universities of applied sciences, low popularity of the UAS Master’s degree education and the position of specialisation studies.
The field-specific development ideas also centred round needs linked to curriculum development and the challenges related to learning outcome-oriented approach. They also reiterated the wish for deeper co-operation between universities and universities of applied sciences.

5.3.2 The feasibility of the UAS Master’s degree within the degree system

The majority of universities of applied sciences considered the UAS Master’s degree as a viable option for a second-cycle degree for UAS Bachelor’s degree holders. Completing the degree has, in fact, improved students’ career opportunities. The respondents deemed it important that universities of applied sciences can offer second-cycle degrees. They also find that the UAS Master’s degree has strengthened the universities of applied sciences as an institution. On the other hand, it was also suggested in one of the responses that a clear division of responsibilities between universities of applied sciences (producing first-cycle degrees) and universities (producing second and third-cycle degrees) might be more feasible than the current one. According to the respondent, the current degree structure has only been in use for a few years, which makes definitive evaluation of it still premature.

The interview material supports the finding that the UAS Master’s degree has established its position. The Master’s degree is available in all fields of UAS education, so the opportunities for deepening vocational skills are good. In this respect, the objectives of the degree reform have been achieved. The Master’s degrees are designed to meet the needs of the labour markets and for this reason they are carried out in close co-operation with employers, which makes this option clearly more labour market oriented than the university Master’s degrees. Therefore the opportunities for universities of applied sciences to develop as labour market-oriented higher education institutions would appear to be good and secured.

Work experience being a requirement for entering UAS Master’s degree education was considered a positive thing; however, it was also pointed out that combining work and studies could be problematic. Owing to rapid changes in the workplace, UAS education should be better able to integrate research, development and innovation activities. It was also hoped that the increased competences of UAS Master’s degree holders would merit higher salaries.
Many of the universities of applied sciences considered it problematic that the status of the UAS Master’s degree and lack of awareness of the competencies it provides in the labour markets are still low. Potential students are also not sufficiently aware of the UAS Master’s degrees. The number of students taking the UAS Master’s degree has so far been so low that it impedes the development and resourcing of education. One university of applied sciences said that the titles were vague and that the content and length of the programmes were still under discussion. The demand and supply in education do not always meet in all parts of the country.

There were a few universities of applied sciences who stated that the path to third-cycle degree following the UAS Master’s degree remains unclear. It was stated that the new Universities Act gives UAS Master’s degree holders the eligibility to apply for doctoral studies but the sceptic attitude of universities to such applicants may lead to such postgraduate study options being unrealistic in practice. In such a situation, students will seek places in foreign universities, which have been more willing to accept Finnish UAS Master’s degree holders into doctoral education programmes.

Some universities of applied sciences thought that the requirement of work experience as a criterion for entering Master’s degree education was particularly problematic from the perspective of internationalisation. Some universities of applied sciences stated that the work experience requirement should be removed or at least it should be observed more flexibly.

Of those universities of applied sciences who were not as such in favour of removing work experience from the selection criteria, fairly many said that the requirements should be less restrictive. According to some respondents, international students should have different selection criteria. The main reasons given in favour of retaining work experience as part of the selection criteria were the unique nature of UAS education and its close links with the labour markets, which sets it apart from university education.

The wish to remove or relax the work experience requirement was mentioned in eight responses in the field-specific survey. Based on the interviews, it would appear that the issue of work experience requirement divides the UAS sector. On the one hand, it is considered as being highly necessary for preserving the unique nature of the UAS Master’s degree, but on the other hand, some would like to remove it for various reasons, for example, the increasing pressure for
internationalisation. There were, however, no clear differences between fields of study, so that one field would regard the work experience requirement as being of extreme importance while other fields would not. The views differed mainly based on the personal opinions of the respondents.

The UAS representatives suggested that the degree title of the second-cycle UAS degree maisteri (AMK), Master (UAS), be adopted. When asked for an opinion on this question, the representatives of the university sector did not express any strong opinions; rather they stressed that “what matters is the content and quality, rather than the title of the degree”. This view was reiterated in the interviews.

Conclusions

- The UAS sector had less time than the universities to build its two-cycle degree system, as the development work could be launched in earnest only in 2005, when the UAS Master’s degree was fully introduced. The two-cycle degree structure is functioning well in its current form in the UAS sector. The requirement of three years’ work experience as a selection criterion for UAS Master’s education is considered necessary on the one hand, while on the other hand it was considered too extensive and one that impedes international mobility.

- The UAS Master’s degree should be further developed as a working-life oriented degree as well as one that contributes to the development of the labour market. The current way of organising UAS Master’s degree education should be retained. A parallel alternative way is suggested, in which the work experience requirement could be interpreted flexibly enabling the completion of the UAS Master’s degree through full-time study. Alternatives are needed particularly for those young people with no work experience and international students.

- Universities of applied sciences should make sure that international students will build contacts with the labour markets and that they obtain similar competences through the degree as Finnish students.

- The title of the higher UAS degree should be in Finnish maisteri (AMK), as it is in English – Master (UAS).
5.4 A degree structure facilitating the completion of degrees in target time

Although a majority (60%) of universities found that reducing the study times was a well-grounded objective of the degree reform, in practice it has not been achieved to any considerable extent. Most of the representatives of the different fields in higher education institutions think that no change has in fact taken place. In addition, one-fifth of universities and one quarter of universities of applied sciences had no clear picture of how the study times might have changed. On the other hand, one-fifth of the fields in universities of applied sciences reported that study times had been reduced. Only one university faculty said the same. The reasons for shorter study times according to the responses were the adoption of the personal study plan and the monitoring of study progress, a more appropriate student workload and the development in the teaching. The reasons for delays in study progress were, for example, students’ personal reasons and combining work and study, as well as increased workloads in degree programmes and mobility during studies.

The opinions of the respondents on the relationship between the degree reform and dropout rates were similar across the board. Most of the respondents stated that there was no change in the matter or that they had no clear picture of the situation. There were more respondents in the university than the UAS sector who believed that the dropout rate had become lower. The responses reflected the underlying reality that factors affecting the number of dropouts are difficult to assess as students who discontinue their studies seldom report their reasons for doing so – and higher education institutions may in fact be unaware of all possible factors. According to the responses, it is necessary to clarify the rules of when studies are considered to have been discontinued, and the dropout statistics should be developed and improved.

In the HEI-level survey, respondents were also asked to assess how large a proportion of students completed their degree in the set target time. University responses were reflecting the vague status of the Bachelor’s degree. Nearly half of the universities estimated that no more than one quarter of students completed the Bachelor’s degree in target time while 25% estimated that one half at most did so. Estimates on the completion times of the Master’s degree in turn illustrated the well-known phenomenon of studies being prolonged. One-third of the universities estimated that no
more than one quarter of students completed the Master’s degree in target time. Only one quarter estimated that one half or more achieved the target time.

The UAS estimates on students achieving the target study times were slightly more positive than those of the universities. Slightly more than one half (56%) estimated that 50–75% of students meet the target time set for completing the degree. Seven universities of applied sciences (28%) thought that no more than one half of the students achieve the target time. Estimates concerning the UAS Master’s degree were divided so that slightly over one-third (36%) estimated that 75–100% of Master’s degree students met the target time. On the other hand, a lightly larger proportion of the respondents (40%) estimated that no more than one half of the students completed their degrees in target time. This probably reflects the nature of the UAS Master’s degree: some are more successful than others in combining work and study. In this respect, the target time must be observed as a guideline only.

According to the responses by faculties and UAS fields of study, the degree programmes were designed in conjunction with the degree reform so as not to hinder the completion of the degree in target time, and therefore this factor cannot explain the prolonged study times. The reasons for students dropping out or prolonging their studies were thought to be more in students’ personal life situations, such as working, uncertainty regarding the choice of career and general well-being. The length and credit allocation of degree programmes is discussed in detail in Chapter 6.2 of this report.

Conclusions

The objective of the degree reform to reduce study times has obviously remained unattained. In some units, the reform was felt to even have expanded the degree programmes, and thereby prolonged study times and increased the number of dropouts. The main reason for discontinuation and prolongation of studies was not, however, deemed to be the degree structure but the personal life situations of students, such as working, well-being, uncertainty on the choice of career and capacity to study. Shortcomings in study guidance and the practical study arrangements were also thought to delay the graduation of some students. To reduce study times, comprehensive measures are required, involving study plans (including personal study plans), guidance and student welfare issues.
The funding model\(^{15}\) should steer HEIs to take more vigorous actions to support the smooth progress of studies and the completion of studies in target time.

The planning of Bachelor’s degrees as independent degrees would clarify the two-cycle degree structure, which in turn could reduce study times and the number of dropouts.

HEIs have insufficient means to follow up student mobility. Problem areas include the lack of information on whether a student has discontinued studies altogether or moved on to another HEI. To afford a better picture of this, clearer definition of when a student is considered to have discontinued his or her studies as well as improved statistics and monitoring are needed.

5.5 The development of the national steering system

Universities made several suggestions concerning the development of the national higher education steering system. The dialogue among universities as well as between universities and the Ministry of Education and Culture should be enhanced and methods and forums should be established where issues such as the educational responsibilities of different universities and other division of tasks can be decided on. The steering conducted by the Ministry should be more interactive than currently is the case.

The development of funding and a better allocation of resources as well as the development of various incentives were also proposed. The role of incentives would be, for example, to support students in completing their studies in target time and finding employment as well as to increase domestic and international mobility. Some universities have suggested that the Bachelor’s degrees should play a stronger role in the funding model employed by the Ministry.

Universities also expressed the necessity of clearer field-specific steering, so that the variation in the degrees and

\(^{15}\)More information about the university funding model is available online at [http://www.minedu.fi/OPM/Koulutus/yliopistokoulutus/hallinto_ohjaus_ja_rahoitus/?lang=en](http://www.minedu.fi/OPM/Koulutus/yliopistokoulutus/hallinto_ohjaus_ja_rahoitus/?lang=en) and about the UAS funding model at [http://www.minedu.fi/OPM/Koulutus/ammattikorkeakoulutus/hallinto_ohjaus_ja_rahoitus/?lang=en](http://www.minedu.fi/OPM/Koulutus/ammattikorkeakoulutus/hallinto_ohjaus_ja_rahoitus/?lang=en)
the length of degree programmes in different fields could be better harmonised. Similarly, assessing the needs of the labour markets and the development of student selection should be incorporated as part of a steering system. It was also considered important that legislation, particularly that governing educational responsibilities, be updated and harmonised to be of a similar level of detail for all fields. In addition, the realisation of decisions to curb study times should be followed up more systematically.

The development of joint national objectives and follow-up and feedback systems was also deemed important. The follow-up and steering activities should make better use of qualitative indicators. It was deemed extremely necessary for the Ministry of Education and Culture to establish a comprehensive, national-level degree and study-right register.

One of the universities suggested that the Ministry assume a more salient and stricter role in steering certain aspects affecting the achievement of the objectives of the degree reform (e.g. student selection, student financial aid, labour market contacts). On the other hand, one university stated that at present the steering activities of the Ministry already were too detailed. A few universities discussed the dual model, which should be either clarified or, if necessary, discontinued.

Like universities, universities of applied sciences put forward several suggestions on the development of the national steering system. Many of them were similar to those presented by universities. They suggested, for example, that the number of seminars and practical steering activities, the dissemination of best practices, communications and the transparency of the steering process be increased. It was also stated that it would be important to integrate the national objectives of the degree reform more deeply into the steering system employed by the Ministry of Education and Culture. Furthermore, it was stated that the steering system should respect the autonomy of HEIs.

Some universities of applied sciences wished that questions concerning the division of responsibilities between universities of applied sciences and universities be discussed in national bodies (including mobility, qualifications, the status of second-cycle degrees).

The regional dimension of steering was also raised and it was hoped that the number of student places be matched with the regional demand: these figures would be something for universities of applied sciences and the Ministry of Education
and Culture to agree on jointly. In addition, it was hoped that the criteria for allocating study places be further defined and made more transparent.

Conclusions

- The wishes of HEIs regarding the national steering system were varied and partly conflicting.
- HEIs should continue their dialogue with the Ministry of Education and Culture in order to further develop the national steering system so that it would offer the best possible support for the adoption of a genuine two-cycle degree structure.
6 Competencies provided by degrees in relation to labour markets

6.1 Curriculum design work linked to the degree reform

One of the objectives of the Bologna Process was to introduce the ECTS credit system and strengthen the learning outcome-oriented approach in curriculum design. As based on the report by the Ministry of Education committee for the development of university degree structure (Ministry of Education 2002:39), a thoroughgoing review of course contents based on core-content analysis was set as a specific target of the degree reform progress.

According to the responses to the evaluation surveys, the reform of the curricula and degrees’ objectives and contents of was recognised as being one of the key aims of the degree reform in both higher education sectors. Nearly all HEIs reported having provided considerable support and systematic guidelines for the curricular design work that the degree reform required. The majority of the university faculties and nearly all universities of applied sciences said their curricula had undergone an extensive overhaul. However, the objectives and the contents of the degrees had eventually changed only little, particularly in universities. While the degree reform resulted in the revision of the curricula in many faculties, the purpose of the development work was not, however, understood to be to bolster the two-cycle degree structure, let alone to increase the labour-market relevance of degrees. Universities of applied sciences focused from the very beginning on strengthening the learning outcome-oriented and labour market-oriented thinking to a much greater extent than the universities. (Figure 5).
Figure 5. Assessments on the curriculum design work linked with the degree reform by faculty (universities) or field of study (universities of applied sciences). The statements were assessed on a scale 1 = strongly disagree – 5 = strongly agree.
The curriculum design work in universities showed significant differences between faculties. There were a few faculties in the fields of humanities, law and social sciences, natural sciences, biological and environmental sciences and agriculture and forestry that made only minor changes to their curricula. In one university of applied sciences, in the field of social sciences, business and administration, no curricular reform work was initiated.

The degree reform introduced a host of new concepts, such as labour-market orientation and relevance, learning outcome-oriented curriculum, generic working-life skills, degree programme-specific competences, core-content analysis, workload calculations, ECTS credit system, degree profiles and personal study plans. In universities, curriculum was not necessarily even in use as a term, and terms such as study guides or degree requirements were used. The evaluation material raised the problem of concept definitions, as universities of applied sciences and universities introduced different terminologies from each other and, in addition, some of the terms have been replaced by others in the course of the degree reform process.

One of the key definitions that was not discussed on the national or HEI-level at the beginning of the degree reform was that of ‘labour-market orientation’. Universities, where there appeared to be no need to develop the Bachelor’s degree as a separate degree preparing students for the labour market, largely overlooked the discussion on how the essential working-life skills will be acquired during studies leading to the Master’s degree. In universities of applied sciences, where the degree programmes were created to serve the labour markets to begin with, the question was whether to base labour-market relevance on providing skills that are currently required in the labour markets or to anticipate future expertise required by employers in the future.

The significance of the learning outcome-oriented approach and the core-content analyses were largely acknowledged, but the practical execution of the core-content analysis remained incomplete according to assessments. The term core-content analysis became well-known in all HEIs, but the actual goal behind it remained more obscure: to form a common view within the education provider community on the objectives of the degree and to prioritise the topics to be included in the overall degree, on the one hand, and in each course, on the other.

The degree reform required a new approach in curriculum design, placing an emphasis on the overall outcome of the
studies, the student and learning perspective as well as the study path as a gradual, accumulative learning process.

The workload ensuing from the degree reform was considered surprisingly heavy, for which reason the support from the management was deemed particularly important. The design and implementation of large, learning outcome-based study modules was felt to require pedagogical leadership and a shift in teaching methods from individual work to teamwork. Adopting new ways of thinking and working required that the entire community on all levels were prepared to learn and were involved in and committed to the curriculum design work. Such development culture and structures supporting it did not exist in all HEIs at the time of evaluation.

The content reform of degrees had been discussed at the Ministry of Education when the 19 field-specific university decrees were amended into one decree. The aim was to define separate competence objectives for the Bachelor's and Master's degrees. At this stage, no national definitions existed, and partly for this reason, general working-life skills were given such prominent emphasis. The working-life representatives said in their interviews that the essential skills expected from university graduates included the skill to analyse and apply information, the ability to work in and utilise networks, and people, process and project management skills. Similarly, graduates from universities of applied sciences were expected to have practical professional competences and general working-life skills in each of the competence areas mentioned. The employer sector also wished that there was more co-operation between secondary vocational education and training and universities of applied sciences.

The definition of competence objectives seems to have started in many universities in earnest only after the actual degree reform work. The necessity to update teaching methods and criteria for competence evaluation became apparent only gradually in many units. Variation between faculties and fields of study in how curriculum design work was eventually carried out appears to have been fairly considerable in the light of all evaluation material. The humanities and education fields engaged in a more profound overhaul of the curricula than other fields on average. Based on the interviews with UAS representatives, the creation of learning outcome-oriented curricula in which the competence evaluation criteria were defined in practical and systematic terms required as many as three rounds of commentary.
The evaluation material revealed that nearly all universities of applied sciences had initiated a shift to competence and learning outcome-oriented curricula in conjunction with the degree reform but that defining evaluation criteria had proved a major challenge. Defining the competence levels to correspond to levels 6 and 7 as based on the European Qualifications Framework (EQF\textsuperscript{16}) and the National Qualifications Network (NQF; cf. Ministry of Education 2009:24), had been problematic. It has been under national-level debate how the evaluation criteria differentiating and describing the different reference levels (1–5) ought to be formulated and the acceptable minimum level of competences defined in order to serve the labour markets.

In universities, content changes have been made by, for example, changing over to module-based degrees throughout the university. This introduced a decrease in electiveness within degree programmes, which was the precise opposite to the desired outcome of the degree reform. Complete freedom in the choice of the minor subject could either be restricted or disappear altogether. Only a small number of universities and universities of applied sciences reported having increased the amount of elective studies or study modules.

Conclusions

- HEIs, and universities in particular, should consider what labour-market orientation means in the Bachelor’s and Master’s degree education in different fields, what the working-life skills are, and how they are acquired in the different stages of the study path.
- The reform of curricula and teaching methods, which has started well in HEIs, should be continued so that labour-market orientation and learning outcome-oriented thinking penetrate all degree programmes.
- Achievement of more labour-market oriented and learning outcome-oriented degree programmes depends largely on how successful the HEI is in the various aspects of curriculum design: core-content analysis, workload calculations, the definition of competence objectives and the evaluation criteria regarding competence levels.
- Stronger pedagogical leadership and staff training in the changes brought by the degree reform is required.

\textsuperscript{16}European Qualifications Framework (EQF) has eight reference levels spanning the full scale of qualifications from basic to advanced. Defining the EQF level is based on a description of the learning outcome.
Key issues in achieving the objective of reduced study times are the ECTS credit accumulation and the assessment of workloads. A great deal of development work in conjunction with the degree reform went into ascertaining that the number of credits allocated for courses corresponded to the real workload of students.

According to the surveys, most of the HEIs identified this question as being central to the degree reform. According to their own assessments, HEIs had succeeded the best in transferring to the new ECTS credit system and the poorest in carrying out core-content analyses, which was felt to be quite challenging. The national guidelines for updating degree contents recommended, however, that these two tasks be carried out simultaneously, as the goal was for HEIs not to carry out the ECTS credit allocation based solely on conversion factors. Regardless of this, nearly half of the universities estimated that the credit allocation had taken place mainly using conversion factors. Since it was obligatory for all HEIs to introduce the ECTS credit system by a certain date, it is understandable that it is generally felt that this task was successfully completed.

However, in the practical planning work, the quantification of studies was considered demanding across the board, and the framework of degrees too narrow for all the content that the degree programmes were expected to include. In universities of applied sciences, the attitude towards credit allocation and curriculum design work was on the whole more positive than in universities. Based on the field-specific survey, the conversion factor has been used more extensively in the universities of applied sciences than in the universities. The reason for this was, according to the responses, the tight schedule. Therefore, the decision was made to convert the credits of all ongoing degree programmes into ECTS credits using the same conversion factor throughout the country and only the new degree programmes would be subjected to core-

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\[17\] Along with the Bologna process and renewal of the first and second cycle degree system, also a credit system was launched in Finland. In the old degree system the scope of the Master’s degree was 160 credit units (opintoviikko). One credit unit comprised of 40 hours of work. The Master’s degree included the Bachelor’s degree. The transition period from the old degree system to the new degree system lasted until end of July, 2008.
content analysis. Nearly all HEIs estimated in the surveys and interviews that the current ECTS credits allocated to courses correspond well with the actual workload of students. Some HEIs had conducted studies on the workloads of students. According to the findings, the early stages of studies are more intensive than the final stage, which was thought to be linked at least partly with students’ study skills. Various studies show that in some fields, students use considerably less time for learning than the guideline of 40 hours per week over 40 weeks would let assume.

Both higher education sectors have monitored the workloads of studies in a similar manner. A successful ECTS credit allocation was considered to be linked to core-content analysis and, more generally, to the quality assurance of the HEI. The number of ECTS credits allocated to a degree programme and the required workload are documented in the curricula. The workload assessments obtained through course feedback, students’ well-being questionnaires, follow-up studies on students’ time management and the monitoring of study times provide data on how successful the quantification of studies has been. The workload calculator has been employed by some HEIs in a systematic manner and by others in small-scale sample studies. Despite the existing tools, it is felt that workloads are difficult to measure because of individual and field-specific variation. There is no one systematic method for gauging the overall workload of the entire degree programme. Some research and development projects (e.g. OPMITKU\(^\text{18}\)) have developed tools for monitoring, evaluating and developing learning processes. The assessment of workloads takes place mainly on the course level, however.

Conclusions

- The ECTS credit allocation is considered to be linked to core-content analysis and, more generally, to the quality assurance of the HEI.
- In some units, the reform was felt to have even expanded the degree programmes and thereby prolonged study

\(^{18}\)For further information on OPMITKU (a project studying time allocation and workloads in learning) is available in Finnish at http://opmitku.turkuamk.fi/. The measuring recommendations issued on 2 February 2010 are available at: http://opmitku.turkuamk.fi/attachments/011_Mitoitussuositus_2.2.2010.pdf
times and increased the number of dropouts. The main reasons for increased workload of studies as well as delayed graduation or discontinuation of studies were considered to be students working alongside studies, students’ well-being, uncertainty over the choice of career and study skills.

- The monitoring of ECTS credit allocation and the workload of degree programmes should be more clearly linked with the setting of competence objectives, as well as the monitoring of the learning process and students’ well-being.

6.3 Supporting study and career planning

Identifying the competence requirements of the labour markets and responding to them requires supporting students’ study and career planning. To facilitate the long-term planning of studies, from 2006 onwards there is a national requirement that each student makes a personal study plan\(^\text{19}\). The surveys confirmed that personal study plans (PSPs) have been widely introduced in HEIs. They were deemed to enhance students’ progress and, when correctly employed, career guidance. Practices varied from one HEI to the next in terms of how extensively PSPs were estimated to have been used in supporting students’ career planning.

According to the surveys, all universities had introduced PSPs in some form as a tool for developing study planning and facilitating study guidance and monitoring. Most universities had issued common guidelines for using and monitoring PSPs. Electronic tools were regarded as highly beneficial. PSPs are usually made at the initial stage of studies by students themselves, but they are utilised in study guidance and monitoring throughout the studies. In some universities, students were granted credits for completing the PSP. One purpose of the PSP could also be to engage students more closely with their studies. The PSP completed by the students and approved by the HEI would serve as a type of contract between the student and the HEI on the expected study progress. The introduction of the PSP has added an element of career planning to study planning and guidance.

\(^{19}\)In personal study plans (PSPs), the student and the institution agree on what studies the student will pursue and in what order. The overall purpose of the PSPs is to support the long-term planning of the studies.
Nearly all universities of applied sciences had also instructed that PSPs should be used and monitored. The instructions were included in study handbooks or it had been named as one of the core processes in the quality assurance system. The majority of universities of applied sciences had already introduced electronic ePSPs and a system for the recognition of prior learning. Group instructors or tutors carry out annual development and guidance discussions with students, in which the ePSPs are completed taking into account students’ career plan, personal life situations, professional growth and the development of identity and competences. When correctly employed, the PSP supports the student in completing the degree in a target time. Some universities of applied sciences said they were in the process of creating an operating model and guidelines for students’ career planning, more tailored study plans and the recognition of prior learning. In some universities of applied sciences, PSPs had been introduced only in special cases such as in connection with an international student exchange or training period, or because of the student’s personal life situation.

Despite the acknowledged importance of students’ study and career planning, it would seem that in practice the PSP system is not used in an optimal way and its potential is not fully used to benefit students’ personal study and career planning. Many of the interviewees raised the question of whether HEIs had adequate insight into what kind of support and guidance students need, how this guidance and support should be adjusted to each individual’s life situation, and how to develop PSPs and the knowledge of the staff more towards supporting career guidance.

An example of development work in this area is the Valtti Project\textsuperscript{20} for developing study and career guidance models, run jointly by seven HEIs. The project seeks study and career guidance models that would support a smooth progress of studies and support students’ entry into the labour market. The project also helps upgrade the guidance skills of higher education teaching staff and students’ knowledge on study and career guidance, with special emphasis on career guidance and coaching. These actions are aimed particularly at supporting students’ timely graduation and entry into the labour markets as well as preventing the prolongation or discontinuation of studies.

\textsuperscript{20}More information about Valtti Project is available online in Finnish at http://valtti.wordpress.com/
Conclusions

- Personal study plans (PSPs) have been widely introduced in HEIs, as they are expected to engage students in completing their studies as planned and thereby enhancing study progress and, at best, as a valuable addition to students’ career planning.
- The majority of HEIs have already introduced electronic ePSPs and a system for the recognition of prior learning.
- The role of the PSP as a tool for career planning and professional growth should be further developed. An example of such development is the national Valtti Project.

6.4 Employer involvement in the planning and implementation of education

The objective of the degree reform to increase co-operation with employers in educational planning was, according to the surveys, an area in which some promising achievements had been attained. There was, however, a clear difference between universities and universities of applied sciences in terms of stakeholder participation in the planning work. According to university respondents, stakeholders took a fairly active part in the curriculum design while in universities of applied sciences they took a very active part in it – one way or another. Despite this, nearly all universities stated that after the implementation of the degree reform, the degrees corresponded at least to some extent better to the competence needs of the labour markets and that they had adequate knowledge of the employer expectations regarding competencies provided by university degrees.

University degree programmes and departments are engaged in regular co-operation directly with employers only rarely. In the interviews with university representatives, views were raised on universities’ role as a producer of innovation for the employer sector. It was held that universities should act as an initiator towards the world of work as a developer and pioneer of innovation activities, attracting employers to seek ideas for development from the university. In favourable circumstances, information and support for development activities would be provided in both directions.

Universities have identified, based on the feedback received from employers, some key competence areas that
require special attention in university education. A number of universities also reported on the results of such development work. Several degree programmes had carried out substantial changes in order to enhance labour market orientation. Examples of the measures taken included courses on labour market orientation, corporate co-operation projects, improvement of entrepreneurial skills, work experience, thesis work commissioned by companies and corporate visits. Feedback from employers had resulted in, for example, the development of language and communication skills to better meet the requirements of the labour markets. Presentation and reporting, teamwork skills as well as information literacy and application skills have been included in degree programmes.

In addition, challenges of international operating environments have been taken into account to a greater degree than previously. The Bachelor’s degree programmes also include several working-life skills studies, such as language, ICT and methodology studies as well as work experience. The reason for this is not, however, to improve the labour-market relevance of the Bachelor’s degree on its own, but rather it has been the result of practical distribution of courses between Bachelor’s and Master’s degree education.

Universities of applied sciences estimated that the degree programmes corresponded to the competence requirements of employers even better than prior to the degree reform, although the situation had in this respect been satisfactory to begin with. UAS representatives stated that they had adequate knowledge of employer expectations and that guidelines for stakeholder participation in curriculum design were in place. Co-operation in curriculum design was said to inform the profiling of degrees, the content of the curricula, the selection of core content and the integration of teaching and research as well as development and innovation activities.

A key benefit of corporate co-operation was deemed to be the increased awareness of UAS degrees. The UAS respondents felt that the UAS Master’s degree has genuine labour market relevance, although the degree and the added competences it provided were relatively poorly known among employers.

One of the objectives of the degree reform was to improve labour-market relevance and learning outcome-oriented approach in higher education. The impact of the reform was assessed on the basis of added versatility in the methods of study, teaching and assessment. The evaluation showed notable differences between the two higher education sectors.
Universities of applied sciences had introduced more versatility in the implementation of education than universities. The interviews with university students revealed that although the competence requirements and the attainment of these requirements were emphasised in tutorials, they were not adequately incorporated into the course content.

Based on the evaluation surveys and interviews, the world of work was seen as a learning environment particularly in the case of the UAS Master’s degree. Employers and various advisory boards may provide assessments on the labour-market relevance and appropriate standard of curricula. Work experience, co-operation in thesis writing and working-life oriented projects serve as an active interface informing planning work. One university of applied sciences provided training for employers on the changes that the degree reform would cause in HEIs.

There were plans in both higher education sectors to develop working-life co-operation. The plans were centred round three themes:

1) Incorporating working-life co-operation into teaching through, for example, developing practical training opportunities, corporate cases, projects, guest speakers, learning projects, contact networking events, the integration of research and development and working-life skills into education.

2) Systematisation of employer feedback through, for example, gathering feedback, tapping into alumni resources in development, participation in curriculum design committees and advisory boards and

3) Strengthening of teachers’ labour-market knowledge particularly in the UAS sector through, for example, on-the-job training for teaching staff, dissemination of working-life knowledge to those providing study guidance, job rotation and appointment of working-life coordinators.

Conclusions

- Stakeholder co-operation, which has started fairly well in universities and very well in universities of applied sciences, should be made an integral part of education planning and implementation.
- Both universities and universities of applied sciences showed good examples of how to acknowledge the competence needs of the world of work in planning their
education. Best practices should be compiled and form a part of the quality assurance systems of HEIs.

- Degree programmes should be more flexible and offer students alternative methods of acquiring competences, including methods that are feasible when combining study and work.

6.5 Follow-up of degree quality and labour-market relevance

Attainment of the degree reform objectives requires the monitoring and development of the degree programmes’ quality in relation to labour-market requirements. The development of comprehensive, transparent and systematic employer feedback processes is already underway in many universities of applied sciences.

The labour-market orientation and quality of degrees is an issue addressed in both higher education sectors. Universities do not as a rule follow up on graduates’ entry into employment. The universities that have monitored this have noticed that the difference in finding employment for Master’s and Bachelor’s degree holders seems to be small. Many responses brought attention to the fact the first-cycle degree made it easier to find better summer and other temporary jobs and made international mobility easier. In both sectors, a host of various labour-market requirements had been identified, creating need for further development of degrees.

Best practices identified by HEIs for monitoring and improving the labour-market orientation of degrees can be divided under three headings: 1) feedback and follow-up, 2) labour-market co-operation incorporated into studies and 3) stakeholder co-operation.

Universities emphasise feedback and follow-up activities, with the career survey for Master’s degree graduates and alumni activities being examples of this. For universities of applied sciences, feedback and follow-up activities consisted mainly of feedback questionnaires and the monitoring of graduates’ access to employment through follow-up surveys carried out by career and recruitment services and feedback from the alumni and student organisations.

HEIs also said they were gaining valuable statistical information through studies and reports on the labour markets. Such reports include SEFE’s (The Finnish Asso-
ciation of Business School Graduates) surveys on the employment of economics graduates, follow-up reports on the competences provided by degrees and Statistics Finland reports. Feedback on thesis writing partnerships was also mentioned, as were the personal employer contacts of the staff. HEIs are using knowledge obtained through graduates’ competence surveys particularly in curriculum design and the development of teaching. Examples of integrating the aspect of labour-market orientation into studies in both higher education sectors included the incorporation of labour-market orientation into competence objectives and education planning as well as working-life co-operation at different stages of studies. Feedback gained on work experience and gathering feedback from students was more commonplace in universities of applied sciences than in universities. Best practices in stakeholder co-operation included the activities of various advisory boards, working groups and co-operation projects. Feedback from stakeholders is also gathered.

In the present evaluation, the development trends in labour markets and competence needs as identified by HEIs can be divided under four headings: 1) societal changes, 2) labour market prospects, 3) changes in competence requirements, and 4) the organisation of education. The universities of applied sciences described the issues related to labour markets in more concrete terms than universities. According to universities, the salient future prospects in the labour markets included the internationalisation and globalisation of labour markets, changing recruitment practices, entrepreneurship and innovation as well as the growing demand for workforce. Universities of applied sciences, however, emphasised the new, more diverse labour-market requirements, lifelong learning, the internationalisation and globalisation of labour markets as well as multiculturalism and the increasing technology-intensiveness and digitalisation in the world of work.

In terms of changing competence needs, both higher education sectors agree that co-operation and communication skills will be key. Universities stressed that in order for us to witness improvement in this area, more teachers are required, while in the UAS sector, respondents emphasised the importance of improving teachers’ expertise and their ability to embrace multiple tasks.

Skills demonstrations, apprenticeship-type training and corporate co-operation were also regarded as good ways to bring the world of work closer to studies, increase students’ motivation and reduce the need for working during studies to
gain the required work experience. Particularly in universities, the need to introduce these types of changes are evident when organising studies and developing teaching culture. Making the educational structures of universities of applied sciences more flexible enabling genuine electiveness was also considered necessary.

Conclusions

■ The trends in labour-market and competence needs affecting the development of the degree structure in the next few years are related to societal changes, the developments in labour markets, changes in competence needs and the organisation of education. Both higher education sectors considered co-operation and communication skills to be an area where better competences are increasingly required.

■ The university Bachelor’s degree should in the future have a more independent and stronger position within the degree structure. The labour-market relevance of the university Bachelor’s degree must be defined according to field and in relation to the UAS degrees in the field.

■ In all university Bachelor’s degrees, attention should be paid, regardless of the field and whether or not the Master’s degree will eventually be pursued, to the systematic acquisition of working-life skills from the very beginning of studies.

■ Information on real labour-market relevance should be gathered by, for example, regular surveys following the graduation, which should then be analysed and used to support development work.
Domestic mobility

One of the objectives of the degree reform was to increase students’ domestic mobility. Domestic mobility refers to the transition from the first to the second-cycle degree studies as well as mobility within higher education sectors and fields and between the two higher education sectors. The evaluation survey respondents were asked to comment on the opportunities for and obstacles to domestic mobility.

7.1 The impact of the degree reform on domestic mobility

Nearly all the HEIs estimated that the opportunities for domestic mobility had improved to some extent following the degree reform, as shown in Figure 6.

![Figure 6. HEI-level estimate on whether the new degree structure provides better opportunities for domestic mobility.](image)

The two-cycle degree structure has provided clearer rules for mobility and made it easier for students to transfer particularly within a higher education sector. The two-cycle degree structure in itself, the harmonised quantification of studies, increased co-operation and agreements between HEIs and fields of study, more efficient steering and various projects aimed at erasing obstacles to mobility are all important factors in enabling domestic mobility.
The two-cycle degree structure has provided clearer rules for mobility and made it easier for students to transfer particularly within a higher education sector. The two-cycle degree structure in itself, the harmonised quantification of studies, increased co-operation and agreements between HEIs and fields of study, more efficient steering and various projects aimed at erasing obstacles to mobility are all important factors in enabling domestic mobility.

The two-cycle degree structure is, however, still at its early stages of development, so the opportunities that the new degree structure could offer have not been utilised to their full capacity. The opinions of HEIs on the benefits and necessity of domestic mobility vary. The opportunities for mobility were seen more as a theoretical rather than a practical option. To the question whether the degree reform had increased domestic mobility, nearly half of the universities responded that no noticeable change had taken place. Only one quarter of the universities of applied sciences estimated that mobility had increased, while nearly half of them said no particular change could be seen.

Estimates on the increase of mobility were clearly more positive in the university sector than among universities of applied sciences. Opportunities for and the volume of mobility had increased considerably more according to university respondents than they had according to UAS respondents. The views of university and UAS respondents differed also when asked to what extent the two-cycle degree structure had increased mobility between sectors: the views of the UAS respondents were clearly more negative. The responses reflect the difficulties that UAS Master's degree holders have experienced when trying to transfer to universities to study. The two-cycle structure does, however, seem to have lowered the threshold for mobility within and between HEIs more in the UAS than university sector.

HEIs were willing to accept students from other HEIs but reluctant to direct their own graduates to pursue a Master's degree or UAS degree elsewhere. Most of the HEIs strongly agreed or mostly agreed with the statement “The HEI seeks to recruit Master's degree students that have completed a first-cycle degree in another HEI.”

Domestic mobility was also estimated to have increased in both sectors in the field-specific survey. Of the university fields, mobility had increased the most in the fields of economics and of the UAS fields, social services and health care.
Conclusions

- The degree reform increased the opportunities for domestic mobility.
- Estimates on the increase in mobility were more positive in universities than in universities of applied sciences.
- The potential for domestic student mobility incorporated in the degree structure has yet to be fully utilised.

7.2 Obstacles to domestic mobility

The perceived obstacles to domestic mobility were largely similar in both higher education sectors, both in terms of changing the field of study or the HEI where studies are pursued. The biggest cause for problems was studies during the transition stage and the selection criteria.

The UAS respondents mentioned more often than university respondents the difficulties in credit transfer when changing either the study field or HEI and in the recognition of prior learning when changing the HEI. The number of credits transferred was considered low and credit transfer practices unsystematic and confusing, while the practices regarding the recognition of prior learning were deemed vague, fragmented and random. Differences in the curricula also presented an impediment for changing the place of study. Moreover, attitudes were also found to prevent flexible credit transfer. According to the university respondents, changing the field of study was impeded the most by the required supplementary studies. One of the problems is the variety in students’ backgrounds: each student has to complete a set of individually tailored supplementary studies. Both university and UAS respondents considered special requirements in language and communication studies, and in Swedish-speaking HEIs also the lack of Swedish skills, as an obstacle to mobility.

Basic educational requirements for professional qualifications were deemed as a specific obstacle to mobility. This concerns particularly the qualifications of subject teachers, lawyers and certain health-care professions. The work experience requirement in the UAS sector could hinder a smooth transition from the Bachelor’s level to the Master’s level for both university and UAS students.

Mobility was also obstructed by social, financial, geographic and students’ other personal reasons. A number
of HEIs also mentioned the lack of information as one of the problems. There was not enough information on the various options or it had to be obtained from various sources. The lack of information was also referred to by many of the interviewees. The interviews also revealed that in fact it has never actually been customary in Finland to transfer from one HEI to another.

Another obstacle to domestic mobility according to the university respondents was the lack of resources in the receiving HEIs, which became evident in the highly restricted student quotas. The sending university, in turn, had concerns about the possible financial losses that might follow if student mobility took place only one way. However, some of the universities reported having very little mobility as there was no or only few other units in Finland providing education in the same field.

Universities of applied sciences proposed that the Finnish titles of the second-cycle UAS degree be changed to maisteri (AMK), Master (UAS), which would make it more transparent and would be more in line with the nature of the degree. Overall, there were a host of problems related to the Finnish-language degree titles, which created obstacles for mobility.

As in the HEI-level survey, the field-specific survey also identified issues with the recognition of prior learning and credit transfer as the biggest obstacle to domestic mobility. Other obstacles to mobility cited were students' personal reasons, such as student welfare issues, life situations, financial reasons, attachment to one's home university etc. Furthermore, there were considerable differences in credit transfer practices between HEIs. The field-specific survey highlighted the fact that in universities, mobility was not particularly encouraged and little information was available on it.

Conclusions

- Flexible student mobility between HEIs is impeded in particular by the supplementary studies required at the transition stage, problems with credit transfer, lack of resources and students' personal reasons.
- There is little tradition in Finland of students taking their Master's degree in a university other than where they took their Bachelor's degree.
7.3 Promoting domestic mobility

A large proportion of universities of applied sciences and universities had implemented general HEI-level guidelines on how prior learning and previously earned credits should be recognised and transferred. The guidelines were provided as part of degree regulations, codes of conduct and agreements between HEIs. Some university responses revealed that only faculty-specific decisions had been made. There were only a few HEIs who reported that they had not issued any HEI-level guidelines on the matter. However, if no general guidelines had been issued, they were being prepared. Although the importance of flexible decision-making was emphasised in many of the responses, there was a clear demand for common national guidelines.

Particularly the universities of applied sciences emphasised the role of various co-operation agreements in promoting mobility. For example the agreement between Laurea and HAMK University of Applied Sciences has shown to have a positive impact on mobility, as was mentioned in one of the interviews. Co-operation was also deemed important in universities, where it is mainly channelled through the Flexible Study Rights, or JOO\(^{21}\), agreement. Based on the agreement, students can apply to other universities to complete, for example, minor subject studies or separate courses.

Both the universities of applied sciences and universities stressed that transparency in credit transfer, and in universities also in complementary studies (courses required from students transferring from other HEIs/degree programmes), would promote mobility. The easiest alternative is to change the field of study or HEI after the completion of the degree. Virtual studies were considered important in promoting mobility, particularly in universities of applied sciences. However, the view was raised during the interviews that virtual studies still suffered from various shortcomings, particular in terms of content production.

\(^{21}\)Flexible Study Rights Agreement (JOO) provides graduate and postgraduate students of Finnish universities the opportunity to include courses from other universities into their degrees. Flexible studies are free of charge for the students. Students need to be enrolled and registered as attending students in their home universities in order to be eligible to apply for flexible study rights and to complete studies in another university.
Some of the responses stressed that the curriculum design and periodisation or modular structure of studies enhanced mobility. Active dissemination of information to students together with encouragement and recruitment efforts were also mentioned in responses. The interviewees also discussed the issue from the perspective of attitudes: students should be able to feel that moving from a university to a university of applied sciences is merely a pragmatic career choice, not a decline in prestige. Some university responses and interviewees mentioned that the Master's degree programmes had a favourable effect on mobility.

The most important channels for providing students with guidelines for mobility are study guidance and personal study plans (PSPs). Information was also provided in study guides and information events including those held in the initial orientation period. In universities of applied sciences, information on mobility was provided also through career counselling and alumni activities. According to the responses, the focus of mobility in universities of applied sciences was usually on second-cycle studies in one's own field. An exception to this was the field of technology, in which engineers are provided information on how to pursue the Master of Science in Technology degree in universities. Websites were also mentioned as a good channel for information on mobility, particularly in university responses. Five universities and seven universities of applied sciences reported no actions with respect to providing guidelines on mobility.

University websites provide fairly comprehensive information on how to access their second-cycle degrees. However, there was no mention anywhere that prior to this, students are free to complete the first-cycle degree in another HEI. Similarly, there was no mention in UAS websites that UAS graduates may continue their studies in universities.

The means to promote mobility mentioned in field-specific university responses included more effective communications and more transparent application systems as well as flexibility in credit transfer and improved attractiveness of mobility. The UAS sector also called for functioning systems for the recognition of prior learning and improved communications as ways to increase mobility. In addition, focusing on meeting particular labour-market requirements could increase the attractiveness of UAS education as an option for university studies.
Conclusions

- There are clear deficiencies in the HEI-level guidelines on student mobility.
- The contents of first-cycle degrees should be altered to allow students to choose their specialisation only after embarking on Master’s level studies. It should, however, be ensured that the first-cycle degree provides adequate readiness to enter either Master’s level studies or employment.
- Guidelines, including field-specific ones, on credit transfer and the recognition of prior learning should be clarified in HEIs.

7.4 Monitoring domestic mobility

The majority of HEIs call for a national register for the monitoring of domestic mobility. Universities in particular considered such a system necessary, and nearly all of the universities justified this with the need for developing statistical information on the matter. Universities of applied sciences expressed slightly less enthusiasm on the issue. However, half of the latter suggested that a joint register such as the AMKOTA database (a database providing statistical data on universities of applied sciences) be established. A couple of universities and seven universities of applied sciences said that a new information search system would not be necessary or that the current system was adequate for its purpose.

The key statistical information needed according to the respondents was the background of transferring students (e.g. which degrees they have completed and where) and the current student status (in which HEI the student still holds a right to study, what minor subject he or she is completing, whether he or she has a valid PSP in one or several HEIs). The surveys also raised the importance of making use of previous information systems and those currently under construction (e.g. the Raketti XDW\textsuperscript{22} subproject jointly developed by the

\textsuperscript{22}RAKETTI-XDW is a data warehouse project run jointly by HEIs and the Ministry of Education and Culture with the purpose of supporting knowledge-based management. The aim is to produce a terminologically harmonised concept model and methods for its maintenance. More information available online in Finnish http://raketti.csc.fi/
Ministry of Education and Culture and HEIs) and the hope that a possible new register would not lead to unnecessary overlaps and redundancy in statistics maintenance.

Statistical data is hoped to provide general knowledge on what the reasons for student mobility and the salient trends in it are: which HEIs seem to attract more students and which tend to lose them. In addition, statistics are expected to reveal what kind of traffic there is between universities of applied sciences and universities.

The field-specific responses (nearly half of the universities of applied sciences and nearly all universities) also called for a national register. Overall, statistical information was needed on students’ backgrounds, for example on their first degree and study rights. Interviews with the representatives of the Ministry of Education and Culture revealed that the need for this type of national register was acknowledged and that one was being developed based on the RAKETTI project. The register will be maintained by HEIs and the Ministry jointly. The register will provide the possibility to monitor student mobility and, for example, restrict rights to study.

Conclusions

- HEIs are currently unable to monitor the mobility of students between fields of study or HEIs.
- A national register enabling the monitoring of student mobility should be developed on the basis of the RAKETTI data warehouse project. HEIs and the Ministry of Education and Culture should be jointly responsible for maintaining the register.
Increasing international mobility is one of the central original objectives of the Bologna Process, and its enhancement has been raised as both a European and national priority. Increasing international mobility was deemed the third most important objective of the degree reform in the universities and the fourth most important in universities of applied sciences. The discussion of international mobility in the present evaluation has been limited to the mobility of Finnish and international students within and between degree programmes. Here, international mobility refers to students leaving Finland and those arriving in Finland through exchange programmes as well as the so-called free movers. International mobility also includes international traineeships when they form part of a degree.

The following chapters will specifically discuss the impact of the degree reform on and the opportunities it has created for international mobility, although it might be difficult to treat these aspects as separate from the general internationalisation taking place in society and education. The year 2009 saw the publication of the Strategy for the Internationalisation of Higher Education Institutions in Finland 2009–2015 (Ministry of Education 2009:21), which was produced in wide-reaching co-operation with various stakeholders led by the Ministry of Education. The five priorities defined in the strategy – “a genuinely international higher education community, “increasing quality and attractiveness”, “export of expertise”, “supporting a multicultural society” and “global responsibility” – are all either indirectly or directly linked with mobility.
8.1 The impact of the degree reform on outgoing international student mobility

Two-thirds of the HEIs considered that the degree reform has to some extent improved the opportunities of Finnish students to participate in international student exchange. As many as 80% of the universities of applied sciences were of this opinion. Half of the universities stated that the degree reform had improved students' opportunities to participate in student exchange, but nearly one-third thought that the reform had not improved these opportunities at all.

Some university respondents pointed out that many felt the structure of studies had become more restrictive since the adoption of the two-cycle degree structure, which made it more difficult to participate in student exchange. Another factor according to the responses that might also impede Finnish students' participation in exchange is the higher age of Finnish students in comparison to those in the host countries.

The UAS respondents thought that the degree structure had improved the comparability of degrees and curricula and thereby enhanced students' opportunities to go on exchange. Both UAS and university respondents mentioned, however, that there were noticeable differences in student exchange options, depending on the study field. The financial situation of students was also a factor affecting students' possibilities to participate in exchange.

HEIs were also asked to estimate the actual volumes of Finnish students participating in student exchange. Slightly under one-third of the universities of applied sciences and nearly half of the universities reported that student mobility had in actual terms increased following the degree reform. However, a significant part of HEIs said that the degree reform had had no effect on the number of Finnish students participating in student exchange: 15% of universities reported that student mobility had, in fact, decreased with the reform.

Concerns voiced at the initial stages of the degree reform that the degree reform would weaken the opportunities of Finnish students to participate in student exchange have been shown unfounded, at least in general. Based on the statistics produced by CIMO, the organisation for international cooperation and mobility, the volume of international student exchange has steadily increased during the period 2005–2009, although during one year (2007) the number of outgoing
exchange students from universities and universities of applied sciences decreased slightly. CIMO statistics covers exchange or traineeship periods that last longer than three months and are organised either independently or through an exchange programme. (CIMO 2010: Kansainvälinen liikkuvuus yliopistoissa ja ammattikorkeakouluissa 2009 (International mobility in universities and universities of applied sciences [in Finnish], 6–7.)

The views submitted in the HEI-level and field-specific evaluation surveys differed from each other quite clearly. According to responses to the field-specific survey, the increase in mobility was deemed to have been much greater than according to HEI-level responses. The biggest increase in student mobility appeared to have taken place in the fields of social sciences and business and administration.

According to nearly all HEIs, the opportunities for Finnish students to go abroad to complete the second-cycle degree have to a large extent or to some extent improved (Figure 7). From the UAS perspective, this is thanks to the international recognition of the UAS Bachelor’s degree and commensurate degrees. Shifting from one higher education sector to another was easier for UAS Bachelor’s degree holders within the international context than in Finland, because foreign universities do not require students to complete complementary studies like Finnish universities do. University respondents mentioned that degrees were now more comparable and the increased awareness of the Bachelor’s degree had had a positive impact on students’ possibilities to complete the second-cycle degree abroad. The tools provided by the Bologna Process to promote mobility, such as the ECTS credit system and the standardised European Diploma Supplement, have in part enhanced international mobility.

The majority of HEIs had, however, no knowledge whether or not the reform had increased the number of students pursuing second-cycles degrees abroad. Half of the universities of applied sciences and nearly one-quarter of universities responded that there had been no change in the matter or that they had no statistics on the subject.

According to CIMO statistics, which are based on the information provided the Social Insurance Institution of Finland ‘s on student financial aid, the number of Finnish students completing a degree abroad has remained relatively unchanged since 2005 (approximately 4,400 students). The figures include only those students who receive student financial aid. Foreign degrees can be completed through, for
example, distance learning so it is likely that the real figure is higher than this.

The interviews with the coordinators of international affairs in HEIs support the above-mentioned findings. The interviews also gave the impression that the staff responsible for international affairs have actively tapped into the opportunity presented by the degree reform and the PSPs, in particular, for students to add an international dimension to their studies.

Figure 7. The responses of HEIs to the question "Does the new degree structure give students better opportunities to complete second-cycle degrees abroad?" (%).

8.2 The impact of the degree reform on incoming international student mobility

According to the evaluation surveys nearly all HEIs were of the opinion that the new degree structure gives international students better opportunities to study in Finland (Figure 8). The same view was reiterated in the interviews with the staff in charge of academic and international affairs.

The responses to the evaluation surveys and interviews cited the same factors directly linked with the degree reform as facilitating access to study in Finland: the increasing use of English as the language of instruction, the commensurate degree programmes (the ECTS credit system) and the clearer degree structure. In quantitative terms, the volume of international students studying in Finland had increased particularly in universities (according to 75% of the re-
In the case of international mobility of students pursuing first and second-cycle UAS studies, the volumes were estimated to have remained at the same level as prior to the degree reform, although one-third of the respondents were of the opinion that the number of international degree students had increased in universities of applied sciences. As for the second-cycle UAS degree, the impediments to studying in Finland included the work experience requirement and blended learning methods. On the other hand, the interviewees also said that there are international students pursuing second-cycle UAS studies who have initially arrived in Finland to work and are currently employed by, for example, the IT industry.

CIMO statistics also show a steady increase in the number of international students in Finland during 2000–2008, although there was a minor decrease in this number during the academic year 2008–2009. The number of international degree students in Finnish HEIs has substantially increased since 2005: in 2009, the number of international students was approximately 14,000, whereas in 2005 it was approximately 9,000. Slightly over 50% of them study at universities of applied sciences and the remaining in universities. The statistics therefore support HEIs' own views that the volume of incoming student mobility has increased, although the estimates of UAS respondents on the number of international degree students was more moderate than that shown by statistics.

Figure 8. Responses by HEIs to the question "Does the new degree structure provide international students better opportunities than previously to study in Finland?" (%)
8.3 The impact of the degree reform on the internationalisation of HEIs and their students

When asked to comment on the impact of degree reform on internationalisation in HEIs, it was stated in over half of the responses that the offering of foreign-language degree education, in particular, had become more diverse. Furthermore, co-operation with foreign HEIs on mobility was considered to have increased. The views on the improvement of students’ internationalisation skills varied to some extent: one-third of UAS respondents strongly agreed that students’ skill had improved, while as many as one half saw no improvement in this area. Of the universities, one-third said that the internationalisation skills of their students had improved to some extent, but nearly half of them had seen no improvement. Universities of applied sciences, in particular, (83%) were of the opinion that the degree reform had made the selection process for international students easier. Of the universities, 40% said that the selection process for international students had become easier while another 40% had noticed no real change in the matter. When asked to provide a yes/no answer to the question whether the shift to the new two-cycle degree structure had increased internationalisation, each one of the interviewees responded “yes”.

Although the overall impression of the impact of the degree reform on internationalisation was highly positive, the written responses and interviews also raised a number of problem areas that had emerged with the degree reform. For example, the quality and continuity of the English-language Master’s degree programmes was a cause for some concern. Overall, the concept of the Master’s degree programmes as separate from normal Master’s degree studies was problematic also in the international context. Co-operation in joint and double degrees continues to be a challenge, although degree structures in different countries are similar.

8.4 Promotion of international mobility in HEIs and on the national level

HEIs have attempted to increase the volume of outgoing international mobility through providing more information on various student exchange options, including a possible period of international study in the curriculum design and PSP discussions and allocating separate funding to student
mobility. In terms of incoming mobility, HEIs have increased the provision of courses taught in a foreign language and focused on international marketing and support services for international students.

In addition to the efforts by individual HEIs to promote internationalism and particularly to increase international student mobility, national measures would also be required. HEIs emphasised the importance of national-level co-operation and networking in enhancing incoming and outgoing international student mobility and expressed the wish that such co-operation be increased in the areas of communications, marketing, support services, organising traineeship placements and in spreading best practices, in general.

Increasing funding and improved bursary systems were deemed the key ways to encourage student exchange participation. The implementation of the funding programme for mobility included in the higher education internationalisation strategy was mentioned in a number of responses. HEIs stressed the need for better funding tools for students’ internationalisation and exchange activities, in particular, but also for those targeted at teachers and other staff. It was suggested in some university responses that student mobility be made a more prominent element in the performance-based funding of universities.

The need to further develop credit transfer practices and the recognition of prior learning was raised as a separate point. Courses planned jointly through international co-operation were also mentioned in a few responses as a way to facilitate easier credit transfer. It was also hoped that such international projects would receive support. Credit transfer is an issue that has received attention in HEIs, but despite this, the respondents reported that some problems still remained. Problems in credit transfer could potentially extend study times and thereby discourage students to participate in international student exchange.

A larger issue also discussed in the responses was the need for the earlier education (basic and secondary education) to provide students with better internationalisation and language skills. The respondents also called for a positive attitude towards internationalisation from society. Similarly, employers should value international experience more and in this way motivate students to participate in international exchange. Many respondents also mentioned that it was difficult to find traineeship placements for foreign students.
Other, isolated suggestions included the establishment of a national application system for international students and, when applying for UAS Master’s degree studies, the removal or shortening of the three-year work experience requirement as well as the adoption of similar academic terms on the European level.

Conclusions

- The number of outgoing Finnish exchange students and incoming international degree students has increased. The number of international exchange students in Finland has also increased, with the exception of a decrease in the number in one year.
- The respondents felt that the new degree structure had improved the opportunities for students to pursue studies abroad after having completed the first-cycle university or UAS degree.
- From the perspective of HEIs, the degree reform seems to have promoted internationalisation in general through increased use of foreign languages of instruction, studies designed in international co-operation and students’ improved internationalisation skills.
- Attention is drawn to the quality of international activities, as some of the HEI representatives expressed the opinion both in written responses and during the interviews that the volume of activities should not be increased at the expense of quality.
- The curricula and PSPs should be designed so as to allow for a period of international student exchange. Credits earned through studies completed abroad should be transferred in full and mainly as part of compulsory studies. This requires flexible curricula, good advance planning of the exchange periods and knowledge of the curricula in the host institutions.
- Degree studies should include modules providing general inter-nationalisation skills.
- The internationalisation skills of mature UAS students can be improved through, for example, intensive internationalisation courses and international group visits.
- International traineeship placement should be further improved both in universities and universities of applied sciences in co-operation with employers.
Universities and universities of applied sciences should engage in closer co-operation in questions regarding internationalisation and jointly organise orientation studies, teaching, marketing, communications, projects and funding applications.
9 Field-specific conclusions in the university sector

9.1 Humanities

In the humanities field, the evaluation survey was taken by the humanities faculties at the University of Jyväskylä, the University of Oulu and Åbo Akademi University\textsuperscript{23}.

In the faculties’ own opinion, the objectives of the degree reform were achieved reasonably well. Dropout rates decreased to some degree, and mobility increased in Finland. The status of the Bachelor’s degree, instead, strengthened only slightly. Hardly any decrease was seen in study times, and the content of studies did not develop to better match the needs of employers.

All the humanities faculties took part in national, humanities-specific co-operation that received good feedback from the faculties. It was used to create practices shared by the entire field and to define, for example, the scope of modules and the compulsory minor for the Bachelor’s degree. On the other hand, no consensus was reached on the grading criteria or on compulsory language studies. The Swedish-language Åbo Akademi University considered it to be a problem that the field-specific material was only available in Finnish.

When comparing the survey responses in different fields, the humanities stood out from the rest in that they found the national forms of support for the degree reform to be more

\textsuperscript{23}As mentioned in Chapter 2.4, the university faculties and UAS fields of study participating in the field-specific survey represent a sample of the whole field. For example, there are altogether eight university faculties providing Bachelor’s and Master’s degrees in humanities.
useful. Field-specific co-operation was mentioned as being the most useful form of support, but the W5W project and Bologna seminars were also considered to be on average more important than was the case in other fields.

The transition from the old to the new degree system went well according to two faculties, while the third found the transition phase to involve some problems. Problems mentioned by one of the faculties included the lack of faculty decisions, as well as technical difficulties related to the conversion of old credits into ECTS credits and to the recognition of courses completed by students who began their studies in the 1980s. As factors promoting the success of the transition phase, one of the faculties listed the broad support for the degree reform, the faculty’s clear instructions and sufficient time for preparations.

In the humanities, the two-cycle degree structure was considered to offer the advantage of improving throughput, since the scope of both degrees is clearly defined. It is also easier to understand the two separate degrees.

According to the faculties, the main problems of the current degree structure are related to the Bachelor’s degree being seen as an intermediate degree, as well as to the recognition of prior learning of students who change field or university, along with the workload resulting from this. As concerns the degree structure, the faculties mentioned the labour-market relevance of the Bachelor’s degree, the restriction of the scope of the Master’s degree, the bigger size of study modules, as well as the development of degrees on the whole to be areas in need of improvement.

All three faculties agreed on study rights: student selection should apply to both the Bachelor’s and Master’s, not only to the Bachelor’s degree. As reasons for this, the respondents mentioned the weak status that the Bachelor’s degree has among employers, the risk of an increasingly heavy student selection system, as well as the qualifications requirements for teachers and speech therapists.

According to the faculties’ responses, studies in the humanities were revised in terms of content and pedagogical approach, the workload was reduced and study guidance was improved. All three faculties felt they had revised their curricula: two of them in the majority of subjects and one in less than half of them.
Assessments varied as to the inclusion of the working life perspective in the Bachelor’s degree. In one of the faculties’ opinion, no new actions were taken. The same applied to teacher training in another faculty. According to one of the universities, in communication studies, much of the working life competencies were handled within the scope of the Bachelor’s degree. According to one university, practical training had been introduced into many disciplines.

Individual examples were given of co-operation with employers and the development of the correspondence between degrees and working life. One of the faculties has developed studies that support the employment of archaeology students, while another recommends minor subject studies in the fields of service business and entrepreneurship. In speech therapy, meetings with stakeholders have become well-established and regular events. In general, the development of stakeholder co-operation was considered a joint development challenge. However, the respondents also pointed out that labour-market relevance in the humanities and social sciences is a science-based view, and narrowly focused vocational training is not considered to belong to the university’s duties in these fields.

According to the faculties’ responses, now that learning outcomes have been included in the curricula, the next challenge is to develop methods for assessing learning outcomes jointly with employers. As a target of development, one of the faculties suggested that the general competencies already included in degrees should be pointed out and made more visible.

The humanities faculties did not have a clear impression of the trend in domestic student mobility. As the main obstacles to domestic student mobility, the faculties mentioned problems related to the recognition of prior learning, the Flexible Study Rights Agreement (JOO) fees, the faculties’ tendency to hold on to their students, as well as the incomplete development of student admission for Master’s degrees. In the faculties’ opinion, domestic mobility could be improved by developing methods for the recognition of studies and by enhancing communication and counselling.

The degree reform apparently did not increase participation in international exchange programmes among Bachelor’s and Master’s students in the humanities field. The same was true of Bachelor’s graduates opting to complete a Master’s degree abroad. Respondents listed student wel-
fare issues and restrictions to study times as obstacles to international mobility. Faculties aim to promote international mobility by signing exchange agreements, improving recognition practices and committing themselves to the advancement of student exchange.

Conclusions

- The faculties of humanities made efficient use of national forms of support and field-specific networks during the degree reform.
- Since the Bachelor’s degree was only felt to be an intermediate degree in terms of labour-market relevance and appreciation, its overall correspondence with working life should be improved.
- Study times could be shortened, for example, by restricting the scope of degrees.

9.2 Education and behavioural sciences

In the field of education and behavioural sciences, the evaluation survey was taken by the faculties of education at the University of Jyväskylä, University of Lapland and University of Tampere, as well as the School of Educational Sciences and Psychology and the School of Applied Educational Science and Teacher Education of the Philosophical Faculty at the University of Eastern Finland.

The degree reform objectives that were best met in the field of education and behavioural sciences were the development of the ECTS credit system and the improvement of content to better match the needs of employers. However, the degree reform did not shorten study times or reduce dropout rates. In teacher training, study times used to be short, but after the adoption of the new degree structure, the study times of class teachers have increased.

All the faculties that participated in the evaluation survey agreed that the steering group, and its subdivisions, for the National-Level Coordination Project of Degree Programme Development in Teacher Training and the Sciences of Education (VOKKE) carried out successful work. It resulted in the creation of policies for the structures of Bachelor’s and Master’s degrees in education, the improvement of content based on a core content analysis, as well as the harmonisation
of the scope of studies. Common basic studies were defined in the field of psychology. This took place as co-operation in Psykonet, a university network of psychology.

However, the faculties felt that the coordination, including the work of subdivisions, took up a great deal of working time. Special problems resulted from the amount of pedagogical and multidisciplinary teacher studies and their place in the degree. Coordination work also brought up issues about differences between and specialisation options in degree programmes: to what degree should faculties be allowed to draw up their own policies? What is positive is that co-operation in the field is ongoing.

The transition from the old to the new degree structure benefited from the recommendations made in the VOKKE project, internal policies of individual universities, as well as the development work carried out between faculties. Challenges resulted from, for example, from the synchronisation of the old and new degree structures.

According to the faculties, the fact that it is now more flexible to go on to the Master’s degree after a university of applied sciences degree and a Bachelor’s degree testifies to the feasibility of the new degree structure. The faculties agree that the right to continue to a Master's degree should be granted in the main student admission, since the Bachelor’s degree confers professional competence only to kindergarten teachers, not teachers or psychologists.

In the faculties’ opinion, wide-ranging Bachelor’s degrees and the harmonisation of the content of pedagogical studies for teachers are areas in need of development as far as the degree structure is concerned. One of the faculties brought up the need to increase practical teacher training in the ECEC (Early Childhood Education and Care) Bachelor’s degree. Another faculty wanted to develop the profiles of the education and behavioural sciences programmes offered by different universities.

All the faculties of education participating in the evaluation survey said that over half of the subjects in their curricula were revised in connection with the degree reform. The outcomes-based approach showed in different ways in the process: two of the faculties made their curricula relatively outcome-oriented, while two said their curricula became only slightly more so. Challenges to curriculum design arose from the new operating culture, as well as from the scope and workload calculations,
selection of core content, implementation of the faculty’s common basic studies and the inclusion of minor subjects in the degree. Based on the faculties’ own assessments, the nature of curriculum design changed permanently in only one faculty.

The faculties use quite versatile procedures to monitor the competence needs of employers: working life representatives have a permanent seat in working groups and at special round-table meetings, in addition to which faculties organise feedback and alumni events, conduct surveys among graduates and alumni, analyse practical training feedback and give learning tasks related to working life. One of the faculties said the goal was to strengthen the labour-market relevance of the degrees in general education and adult education by including a special course in professional growth, along with a portfolio and group meetings, in the Bachelor’s degree.

When asked about development trends in working life, the faculties mentioned the needs of a broad-based teacher profession, internationalisation, increasing demands for co-operation and interaction skills, information and communications technology, as well as the needs for continuing education posed by multidisciplinarity and multicompetence.

Domestic student mobility did not increase much in the fields of education and behavioural sciences. The faculties saw no need for internal mobility, since the Flexible Study Rights Agreement (JOO) already gives students the chance to take minor subjects in other than their home universities. Moreover, nationwide co-education was arranged in psychology. Obstacles to mobility included aptitude tests in teacher training and their timing, the requirements for the completion of basic and intermediate studies, recognition of qualifications and expiry of studies. Key ways to promote domestic mobility include increasing student communication and developing selection criteria.

International mobility had increased among students with a Bachelor’s degree in two faculties, and in one faculty among students with a Master’s degree. According to the faculties’ own assessments, there are numerous obstacles to international mobility: the degree structure is strict and teacher qualifications have been nationally defined. In addition, teacher trainees do not necessarily consider international exchange programmes to bring added value in terms of employment. One of the faculties also mentioned
the high quality of education at its own university. The faculties proposed that international mobility be advanced by developing and increasing exchange agreements and research co-operation, as well as by determining the recognition of qualifications in advance.

Conclusions

- The degree reform progressed quite positively and unproblematically in the field of education and behavioural sciences, and the faculties had good opportunities to monitor competence needs from the perspective of working life.
- Since the obligatory pedagogical studies for teachers (60 credits) resulted in some problems as for their place in the degree, joint policies defined in faculty cooperation would be useful.
- The labour-market relevance and more independent status of the Bachelor’s degree still need to be developed.
- Space should be reserved for international exchange in the degree structure.

9.3 Economics

In the field of economics, the evaluation survey was taken by the Aalto University School of Economics, the Turku School of Economics at the University of Turku, the Faculty of Business Studies at the University of Vaasa, as well as Hanken School of Economics.

In economics, the main objectives of the degree reform included developing the ECTS credit system, increasing international mobility and developing the content of education to better match the needs of working life. According to the respondents, these objectives had been met relatively well. In their view, they did worst in the aim to shorten study times and reduce dropout rates. Previously four years in duration, the degree was extended to five years overall. Consequently, concerns were expressed about the study times lengthening.

All the respondents took part in national field-specific co-operation, the benefit of which three of the respondents considered to be average and one very good. The main advantages of co-operation had to do with the harmonisation of the degree structure: principles were
jointly defined for the scopes of studies and theses common to all, as well as for the compulsory nature of two foreign languages. The most common scope for courses (6 ECTS credits) was also determined. Challenges to co-operation arose from competition between units and from some of the goals of degree structure harmonisation not being met. The respondents also considered it to be a problem that co-operation focused on degree administration issues, leaving degree quality assurance and the quality of learning largely unhandled.

In the field of economics, the transfer to the new degree system went better than average, although it was demanding on the staff and called for additional workforce at times. Success was based on a carefully planned transition phase and well-arranged student communication. Problems, in turn, resulted from the application of transitional provisions and the adoption of ECTS credits.

In the field of economics, the feasibility of the degree structure was evaluated more or less in the same way as in faculties in general. Two of the respondents found it to be of average quality, while one rated it quite good and one quite poor. The main problems were that the Bachelor’s degree is not genuinely two-cycle in nature and that it is not relevant in terms of the labour market.

On average, the idea of first granting only the right to complete the Bachelor’s degree was more positively received in the field of economics than in other university disciplines. Two of the economics respondents said this would make it easier to plan the Bachelor’s degree as an independent degree that would better meet the needs of employers, in addition to facilitating the employment of Bachelor’s graduates, since the study right would effectively end. Moreover, the Bachelor’s degree might actually shorten study times. On the other hand, the respondents expressed their concerns about the transition between the Bachelor’s and Master’s degrees slowing down, two student admissions resulting in a great deal of work and some universities finding themselves only offering Bachelor’s degrees.

Two of the responding units revised the curricula of all degree programmes, while in the other two, the curriculum reform encompassed over half of the degree programmes. In the units’ own opinion, the degree reform resulted in the curricula now being outcomes-based. Two of the respondents said their
curriculum design has permanently changed after the reform. Determining the scope of studies and transferring to ECTS credits were challenging tasks.

In the field of economics, the degrees have traditionally been closely linked with the labour market needs. According to one faculty, the competence-based approach is embedded in the degree structure: interaction and group work skills are emphasised at the beginning of studies, while second- and third-year studies build the professional foundation in the student’s major. The same faculty states that the Bachelor’s degree mainly prepares students for the Master’s degree and provides skills for professional tasks, but not for independent duties that call for adaptive thinking.

The field of economics has several well-established procedures for co-operation with employers, which were used in the degree reform. These included labour relations boards, direct contacts with employers, student exit surveys, member surveys of the Finnish Association of Business School Graduates (SEFE) and other studies. Based on the responses, the identification of skills needed in working life and the development of learning outcomes for degrees continue to be a challenge common to all. Preparations for international accreditation of education were mentioned as a special challenge for quality assurance.

Domestic mobility seems to have increased on average more in economics than in other fields, since three of the respondents were of the opinion that the degree of mobility had risen. Graduates with a Bachelor’s degree are most likely to transfer to the Master’s stage in a discipline or degree programme within their own university. Strict application rules for Master’s programmes, unclear recognition practices and the high workload of supplementary studies were mentioned as obstacles to domestic mobility. One proposed way to promote mobility was to offer graduates with a Bachelor’s degree Master’s programmes in other Finnish universities and universities of applied sciences.

The degree reform was not considered to have affected international mobility, since especially those working on their Master’s degree in economics were very mobile even before the degree reform. Insufficient financial support for exchange studies and the fact that students work while studying were mentioned as obstacles to international mobility. Economics units have promoted international mobility, for example, by setting up clearly defined international study modules.
and negotiating exchange agreements with prestigious international universities.

The degree reform seems to have led to more international students coming to Finland. All the economics units were of this opinion. Reasons for this were the increase in English-language instruction overall, as well as in the number of Master’s programmes designed for international students and their active marketing.

Conclusions

- The strengths of the field of economics include well-established degrees and good contacts with working life, as well as the international nature of the field, which offers a good foundation for future development work.
- The field of economics had the most positive attitude to the Bachelor’s degree on its own and to a genuinely two-cycle degree structure.
- The Bachelor’s degree must be profiled and working life skills defined jointly with universities of applied sciences. This means that the number of students, as well as the degree objectives at different levels and in different sectors, must be reviewed.

9.4 Natural sciences, bio- and environmental sciences, forestry and agriculture

In the natural sciences field, the evaluation survey was taken by the Faculty of Biological and Environmental Sciences at the University of Helsinki, the Faculty of Science and Forestry at the University of Eastern Finland, and the Faculty of Mathematics and Natural Sciences at the University of Turku.

From the perspective of natural sciences, the development of the ECTS credit system was the best attained degree reform objective. Compared to other fields, the objectives of reducing dropout rates and shortening study times were particularly poorly met. According to the faculties’ own assessments, international mobility did not increase either. All in all, the faculties of natural sciences considered that the degree reform objectives had been met more poorly than other fields.
All three faculties had participated in field-specific co-operation. Its benefits included the development of curriculum activities, an agreement on a common framework for the Bachelor’s degree, comparisons of degree content, as well as the harmonisation of structures. Comparisons of content provided information about the solutions adopted by other universities, while harmonised structures facilitated transfers between universities within the same field. As for challenges related to field-specific co-operation, the faculties mentioned differences in the universities’ curriculum design, differences in studies – especially at the Master’s stage, as well as the wide scope of the field, which led to co-operation splitting up on the basis of individual disciplines.

During the transition phase, problems also arose from changes made to the scope and content of courses during the reform, since this made it more difficult for students who had been granted their study right prior to the reform to transfer to the new system. There had also been problems in student communication.

The evaluations of the feasibility of the two-cycle degree structure differed widely. One faculty considered the degree structure to work quite well, another found it to work quite poorly, and the third did not take a clear stand on the question. As problems related to the degree structure, the faculties listed the increase in the number of compulsory studies, the broader scope of degrees, the Bachelor’s degree’s poor relevance to and appreciation in working life, as well as the difficulties to stick to target degree completion times. The improvement of working life skills obtained in the Bachelor’s degree was pointed out as an area in special need of improvement.

None of the three faculties was in favour of only granting the right to complete the Bachelor’s degree in the main student admission. In their view, the change required to adopt such a procedure would lead to additional work in student admissions. However, they did suggest the adoption of some type of qualifying trials to ensure that the students selected for Master’s degree programmes are the most motivated ones. Instead of a two-cycle admission, faculties should be able to revoke a student’s right to complete the Master’s degree if the student decides to study for the Master’s degree at another institution. This would make it easier to estimate the number of actual students.
Two of the three natural science faculties made relatively comprehensive reforms to their curricula. Despite this, the faculties did not consider their curricula to be particularly outcomes-based or the degree objectives to have changed notably. What they found to be especially challenging in curriculum design was the scheduling of courses common to different degree programmes.

When planning Bachelor’s degrees, all the respondent faculties took labour-market relevance into account by surveying the needs of employers and keeping them in mind when setting degree objectives. The faculties also used student guidance and studies supporting working-life orientation to answer the needs of employers. In addition to personal study plan guidance, the faculties use courses that present occupations and their duties. One faculty set up an electronic tool to support students in career planning. The “career profile tool” describes the skills and knowledge that alumni need in their work.

Many of the best practices that faculties use to monitor and develop the labour-market relevance of degrees were presented. Student surveys given by university career services, as well as the faculties’ own surveys for students and employers, have been found useful. Alumni and stakeholder contacts, along with student employment monitoring, are used to keep up-to-date on the needs of employers.

As examples of the main trends in working life and competence needs that will affect degree structure development in the next few years, the faculties mentioned the inclusion of lifelong learning in curricula, the increasingly project-based nature of working life, as well as the growing importance of multidisciplinarity.

According to two of the faculties, no changes were seen in domestic student mobility. Examples of obstacles to mobility between sectors and universities included lacking encouragement, the notion of a single entity formed by the Bachelor’s and Master’s degrees, and the possibility of study times lengthening. One of the faculties said it preferred to offer

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24 The career profile tool is a application that helps students in career planning. The tool suggests real job descriptions of former students in the order of how well they match the student’s personal preferences. In addition to alumni job descriptions, the tool also introduces different career profiles in general.
the option to progress from the Bachelor’s to Master’s degree in the most popular subjects to its own students rather than those of other universities. To promote mobility, the faculties develop competitive degree programmes and offer students from universities of applied sciences admission channels to some degree programmes. According to one of the faculties, progression from the Bachelor’s to Master’s degree could be made more attractive by guaranteeing a thesis position in a prestigious research group.

In the respondents’ view, the degree reform had not increased participation in international exchange programmes among Bachelor’s and Master’s degree students. According to these respondents, degree structure-related obstacles to international mobility included the great number of compulsory studies and the possible lengthening of study times as a result of student exchange. The faculties proposed that student mobility could be advanced by improving the international relations and partner networks of staff (for example, by creating thesis or practical training positions), supporting the activities of universities' international affairs units (coordinators of international affairs, networking), marketing student exchange options and improving the recognition of prior studies.

Conclusions

- The degree reform did not shorten study times or reduce dropout rates in the field of natural sciences. International and domestic mobility – defined as objectives of the degree reform – were not achieved in the expected manner.
- The degree reform resulted in an ongoing revision of degree programmes, which includes analysing the content of degree objectives and producing a written description of them. The degree requirements will change considerably as a result of these post-reform processes.
- Co-operation within individual fields was found useful and worth continuing.
- The enhancement of working life skills should also be continued.
9.5 Music

In the field of music, the evaluation survey was taken by the degree programme in Music Performance from the Sibelius Academy. This means the answers are based on the views of a single degree programme. Of the degree reform objectives, the increase in international and domestic mobility, improvement of the ECTS credit system and development of content to better match the needs of employers had been achieved relatively well. What had been challenging was the reduction of study times. Study progress monitoring is now part of the strategic education project.

The Sibelius Academy has actively participated in the harmonisation of music degree structures (Tuning project) and in the Polifonia music network. The positive impact of Tuning co-operation was also emphasised in the interviews. There was no national field-specific co-operation in the field of music. Instead, the degree reform in the field was mainly supported by the internal prescriptive work carried out at the Sibelius Academy (Regulations on Education) and through work on the structure and ECTS credits of degree programmes. National co-operation, such as the W5W project and national Bologna seminars, were felt to be rather useless. According to themed interviews, however, the support for degree reform implementation received from the Ministry of Education was sufficient.

The transition from the old to new degree system involved a few problems. These included the conversion of personal study plans from printed to electronic versions, issues related to schedules, as well as delays in student communication.

According to the responses, the “3+2” two-cycle degree structure is not feasible, since the duration of the Bachelor’s degree was four years prior to the reform. The duration of the Master’s education (2.5 years) was also considered too short in terms of completing the degree and developing as an artist. A key area of development involves organising Bachelor’s studies so the degree can be completed on target schedule or alternatively keeping to the four-year Bachelor’s degree. In general, the field of music has not found it necessary to modify study rights to only include the Bachelor’s degree.

According to the Sibelius Academy, the qualifications of cantors and subject teachers in music require a Master’s degree. However, a Master’s degree is not required of soloists or for duties in professional orchestras.
At the Sibelius Academy, studies for the Bachelor's and Master's degrees are carried out in an overlapping manner, which was considered to speed up the completion of degrees. As an example of this, the Academy highlighted studies in different instruments, which call for long-term and continuous practising of skills.

In the degree programme in Music Performance, the core content analysis was found to provide useful support for curriculum design. The degree objectives, however, did not change in any way. Work on the ECTS credit system and the scopes of courses and corresponding modules was considered to be particularly challenging. The degree reform led to a notable increase in optional minor subject studies in the degree programme in Music Performance. The teaching methods and ways of taking courses have remained the same, however.

The improvement of working life skills has been defined as a strategic education project at the level of the entire Sibelius Academy. According to the Academy’s joint response, the working life perspective has mainly taken place through external members of department councils and has been related to the teaching staff’s work in professional orchestras. The degree programme in Music Performance believed it had sufficient insight into employers' expectations of graduates' skills, when working on the degree reform. However, the labour-market relevance of degrees is still a new notion, and no competence surveys of graduates have yet been made.

The degree reform seems to have increased the domestic mobility of music students more than that of students in other fields. Students primarily transfer between disciplines within their own university. More and more applicants have completed a UAS degree. According to the Sibelius Academy’s joint response, many of them start their studies at the Bachelor’s stage in order to get individual teaching in their main instrument for as long as possible. Moreover, the recognition of studies completed at universities of applied sciences has not been unproblematic. The applicants' skills level was considered to be the main obstacle to domestic mobility.

Based on the Sibelius Academy’s joint response, the degree reform did not introduce significant changes in international mobility. Instead, the new degree structure was felt to make it more difficult to schedule participation in exchange programmes. However, the opportunity to apply for a place in
a Master’s degree programme notably increased the number of international students.

Attempts were made to advance student mobility by emphasising the importance that studies and contacts abroad have to the career of art students. Encouragement given to teachers, the teaching staff’s own contacts, as well as staff exchange programmes were listed as other important methods. Furthermore, the interviews indicated the positive impact that general, mobility-enhancing tools have on organising and monitoring mobility. The “Learning Agreement” is an example of such a tool.

Conclusions

- The responses from the field of music reflect the special nature of the field in relation to traditional university studies. Students’ growth into working artists is an internal part of music studies.
- The ECTS credits of studies, as well as squeezing the Bachelor’s degree into three years, were found to be particularly problematic issues.
- As for internationalisation, the degree reform has increased participation in student exchange programmes, especially among those working on their Master’s degrees. The number of degrees taken abroad has also increased.
- In the field of music, working life contacts are linked, on the one hand, to the teaching staff’s own activities and, on the other hand, to students’ own activities (in both cases, playing in orchestras). Because of this, music studies were considered to match employers’ needs relatively well.
- Promoting labour-market relevance is felt to be an important part of the development of degrees, and a university-level project has been launched to support this.

9.6 Engineering

In the field of engineering, the evaluation survey was taken by the Faculty of Information and Natural Sciences at the Aalto University School of Science and Technology, the Faculty of Business and Technology Management at the Tampere University of Technology, the Faculty of Technology at the Lappeenranta University of Technology, and the Faculty of Technology at the University of Oulu.
The opinions on the achievement of degree reform objectives differed widely depending on the responding university. The only objectives believed to be promoted by the degree reform to some extent were the reduction of dropout rates, increase in international mobility and development of the ECTS credit system.

Three of the four faculties said they had not participated in national field-specific co-operation, so they refrained from taking a stand on the benefits of such co-operation. Other national forms of organising the degree reform, such as Bologna seminars and the W5W project, were also judged to be of less use in the field of engineering than in other fields on average. Overall, the field of engineering did not engage in as much national co-operation as other fields in connection with the degree reform.

In engineering, the transition period did not end until the end of July 2010, so it is still early to assess the degree reform objectives. On the one hand, the transition phase was felt to be too long, but on the other hand, the actual time left for reforms was found to be too short for renewing content and developing degrees. All the faculties had experienced at least some problems during the transition period. They were caused especially by the need for individual tailoring and the consequent load on study guidance.

In the field of engineering, the Bachelor’s degree is mainly designed to form a general mathematics and natural sciences foundation for more professionally oriented advanced studies. According to the faculties, the current degree structure suffers from the following problems: the Bachelor’s degree lacks labour-market relevance, Bachelor’s and Master’s studies are commonly carried out side by side, no uniform instructions exist for the Bachelor’s thesis, the module structure is not clear to students and study periods are too crammed.

All the respondents were of the opinion that the Master’s degree in engineering forms a relevant education, which is why students should be directly granted the right to continue all the way to the Master’s degree. Separate student admissions for the Master’s degree were feared to create additional work and introduce unhealthy competition into the Bachelor’s stage. However, some of the respondents found that the two-cycle solution supported studies and that strengthening it might lead to shorter study times in the long run. According to the respondents, it is important to monitor developments
in European engineering education and re-evaluate the reform some five years from now.

Three of the four respondents said their curricula had been thoroughly revised in connection with the degree reform, and only one said its curricula had seen hardly any revising. However, the faculties also said they had not had enough time or resources to review the content of curricula in 2004. Structure was considered to command attention when studies were divided into two degrees – and, in some cases, also into a new module structure.

The degree reform led to the Master’s degree in engineering going from 180 old credits to 300 ECTS credits, which means its scope was reduced to correspond to that of other Master’s degrees (160 in old credits). This change would have called for particularly profound and thorough discussion about the learning outcomes of the Bachelor’s and Master’s degrees. It would also have needed prioritisation of study content and a review of the curriculum as a whole. The evaluation indicates that the faculties felt these objectives were not achieved and that in some cases the reform actually made degrees heavier than before.

Several degree programmes were conducting thorough curricula development at the time of the evaluation. Based on the responses, reforms call for the philosophy of outcomes-based teaching to be implemented in the everyday activities of universities and among teaching staff. Moreover, the management of education and flexibility of degree structure must be improved, and the status of general competences strengthened in the target competences defined for the Master’s degree.

In the field of engineering, working life contacts consist of a variety of practices and procedures, such as surveys given to thesis supervisors, questionnaires targeting graduates, monitoring of early-stage careers, as well as teachers’ own contacts with companies and industry. Despite this, the faculties jointly identified their challenge to be to more closely and systematically involve working life and other stakeholders in the planning and development of education.

In terms of the degree structure, the respondents mentioned internationalisation, the use of new technologies and attention to sustainable development as other central development trends in education.
According to the faculties of engineering, the students’ unwillingness to change universities during their studies is a key obstacle to domestic mobility. On the other hand, mobility opportunities are not much advertised. Moreover, the wide range of Bachelor’s degrees and the need to tailor bridging complementary studies for each individual student were considered to restrict mobility. Objective recognition of studies and the admission of students with a UAS degree based on their diploma support domestic mobility. The respondents also believed that separate student admissions for Master’s studies promoted internal mobility.

The faculties did not have a clear impression of the impact that the degree reform had had on international mobility. The reduction in the scope of degrees and the consequent decrease in optional studies, as well as the heightened emphasis on target study times are the main reasons for the low participation in international exchange programmes. The level of studies offered at international universities were also said to involve problems, which probably indicates a lack of established partner universities. All the faculties said the reform had led to an increase in the number of international students – mainly thanks to the Master’s programmes taught in English.

Conclusions

- All the respondents found the Master’s degree in engineering to form an entity that works well in view of working life.
- In the field of engineering, special attention must be given to systematically supporting the development of general working life skills from the very beginning of studies and to setting related objectives for the Bachelor’s degree.
- The status of learning outcomes in terms of general working life skills must be boosted in the Master’s degree in engineering.

9.7 Law and social sciences

In the field of law and social sciences, the evaluation survey was taken by the Faculty of Law at the University of Helsinki, as well as the faculties of social sciences at the University of Tampere and the University of Turku.
The organisation of the degree reform

The most important objectives in the field were the development of the ECTS credit system and the reduction of study times. According to faculty representatives, the former objective had been attained relatively well, the latter one only satisfactorily.

Two faculties in the field of law and social sciences had participated in European degree reform projects, one in the Tuning project and the other in the EuroPsy project, both of which had been found to be useful. The core benefits of national co-operation were related to its comprehensiveness, close contacts and comparisons of faculty-specific solutions. The participation of the Ministry of Education representative in field-specific work was considered to be important in the field of law and social sciences. Not all fields had a Ministry representative in their field-specific working groups. Problems were caused by differences in the faculties’ sizes and traditions. The scope of the Master’s thesis was one of the issues in which agreement was not reached.

The transfer from the old to the new degree system had progressed unproblematically in one of the faculties. The said faculty believed its success was based on a long enough transition period and a staff that felt motivated about the change. Two of the faculties experienced problems during the transition period due to harmonisation of old and new degree requirements and scopes, as well as the resistance shown towards the reform.

The feasibility of the degree structure

All three faculties rated the feasibility of the two-cycle degree structure as average. The intermediate nature of the Bachelor’s degree was mentioned as a key problem. According to one of the faculties, the independent status of the Bachelor’s degree was not discussed sufficiently in field-specific co-operation, which is why the work is still unfinished. Fields whose qualifications requirements call for a Master’s degree pose a special challenge.

Owing to the heterogeneity of the field, the situation in different disciplines changes depending on the extent to which the Bachelor’s degree can be thought of as being an independent degree that is also relevant to working life. In social sciences, the public sector offers duties that do not require a Master’s degree. On the other hand, the Bachelor of Laws does not have relevance to working life, since the duties of judges, for example, require a Master’s degree. Overlaps between the Bachelor’s and Master’s degrees are not considered to be a structural problem, but rather one related
to the curriculum and involving the content and periodisation of studies.

All three faculties participating in the survey agreed that the reform of the degree structure did not shorten study times. One of the faculties said its dropout rates had decreased, while the other two had not noticed any change.

Curriculum changes varied depending on the faculty. In one of the faculties, the change was all-encompassing; in another, reforms affected less than half of the degree programmes; and in the third, hardly any changes were made to the curricula. The biggest challenges came from curriculum design being dispersed across numerous disciplines due to the broad scope of the field. Applying the new ECTS credit system in the Bachelor’s and Master’s degrees, as well as placing courses in new frameworks, were also challenging tasks.

When planning Bachelor’s degrees, their relevance to the labour market was mainly increased by including courses offering general working life skills in the studies. In the Faculty of Law’s opinion, the introduction of compulsory practical skills studies, with a minimum scope of 10 ECTS credits, was an important reform. Based on the faculties’ responses, it seems the field does not have enough information about the requirements of working life and consequently cannot be sure whether the new degrees meet the requirements better than the old ones. However, the degree programmes differ greatly from one another in this respect.

The field has well-established methods for monitoring and developing education in view of the needs of employers. These include alumni activities, research co-operation, feedback from practical training, as well as information provided by career and recruiting services.

The degree reform did not notably increase domestic student mobility. As obstacles to domestic mobility the faculties mentioned differences in curricula and study registers, the universities’ interest in producing Master’s degrees, as well as the poorly functioning admission of students with UAS studies in the field of Law. Ways to promote domestic mobility include developing separate admissions procedures and offering high-quality and attractive Master’s programmes.

The results were similar for international mobility. The faculties of social sciences were of the opinion that the reform had not brought any changes to mobility. In the Faculty of Law, participation in exchange programmes has increased.
among Bachelor's degree students. Similarly, a larger number of students now completes their Master's degree abroad. However, fewer Master's degree students now take part in exchange programmes. The faculties mentioned the demand for quick graduation and the time limits for the completion of studies, as well as matters related to students' work and family lives, as obstacles to international mobility. The main methods for promoting international mobility involve better communication, provision of quality exchange positions and development of the recognition of studies.

Conclusions

■ The field is quite heterogeneous: it includes both professions that require a Master's degree and general academic fields where the Bachelor's degree is not considered to provide sufficient working life skills. In the field of social sciences, the respondents pointed out many problems that are not directly related to the degree reform or the two-cycle degree structure. These include the nature and multidisciplinarity of degrees, the division of labour between universities, as well as the number of new students and study places from which students can choose.

■ The ongoing national co-operation organised in the field has proved to be useful and should therefore be further strengthened.

■ The profile of Bachelor's degrees should be developed and working-life skills improved.

■ Since the field does not seem to have a clear enough understanding of the degrees' relevance to working life, the content of degrees should be planned in closer co-operation with working life representatives and especially with graduates in the field, as well as with other stakeholders.
Field-specific conclusions in the university of applied sciences sector

10.1 Humanities and Education

In the humanities field, the evaluation survey was taken by Diaconia University of Applied Sciences, HUMAK University of Applied Sciences and Mikkeli University of Applied Sciences.

According to the humanities and education units, the objectives fully achieved during the degree reform were the profiling of UAS Master’s degrees and development of the ECTS credit system. As partly achieved objectives, the respondents mentioned the increase in domestic mobility and reduction of study times.

As for national co-operation in individual degree programmes, the respondents listed, among other things, the definition of core competence areas and competencies, the exchange of experiences, as well as the reinforcement of a shared vision. Challenges included inadequate central government steering (creation of interpreter authorisation, register maintenance).

Based on the responses, the two-cycle degree structure seems to work relatively well in the humanities and education. The problem is that UAS Master’s degrees do not yet have an established status. Moreover, the competence provided by the degrees is not yet known in working life. Field-specific areas in need of development mentioned by the respondents included the creation of new customer groups, rapid technological changes in the field, as well as international trends and national legislation.
UAS Master’s degrees were considered to be a feasible and significant reform. The respondents unanimously agreed that working life experience should remain a part of the selection criteria. This was justified by the need to stand out from Master’s degree programmes offered at universities and by the degree focusing on university education relevant to the labour market.

All of the curricula were thoroughly revised in the field of humanities and education. The curricula specifically emphasised the outcomes-based approach. The respondents found large study modules and the organisation of specialist lectures to be challenging. Some of the challenges remain topical.

According to the respondents, the degree reform considerably improved the degrees’ relevance to working life. In relation to working life, degrees were further refined by integrating development projects focused on teaching and working life and by reinforcing co-operation with stakeholders. Work was also carried out in a separate advisory board for working life. Future trends in working life and competence requirements mentioned by the respondents included an emphasis on content expertise, possible labour shortage, as well the development of technological and legislative prerequisites.

The adult education status of the UAS Master’s degree and the related practice of studying alongside work, as well as the inclusion of working life experience as compulsory selection criteria, were mentioned as obstacles to both national and international mobility. Furthermore, unclear and inflexible procedures for transferring between sectors to continue studies were listed as obstacles to national mobility. The respondents proposed co-operation agreements between universities as a way to facilitate transfers. The respondents believed international mobility could be improved, for example, by developing joint degrees.

The national degree reform objectives of shortening study times and reducing dropout rates were largely felt to be unrealistic, and the respondents did not consider the reform to have had any particular impact on the achievement of the goals set. However, the curricula in the field were comprehensively revised in terms of their objectives and content. In the units participating in the evaluation, over half of the curricula – in some cases all of them – underwent thorough changes, which
was found to have made them more outcomes-based. What the respondents found to be challenging was the definition of joint competences, the concept of learning outcome-oriented education and the analysis of the workload of studies.

Conclusions

- The humanities and education fields in the UAS sector focused especially on the revision of curricula during the degree reform. The reform was felt to have increased the outcomes-based approach of degrees.
- The fields should continue to develop outcomes-based and labour-market relevant curricula so that the learning outcomes of different types of degrees are clearly defined. The goal should be to identify and recognise prior learning and to shorten study times.

10.2 Culture

In the field of culture, the evaluation survey was taken by the Faculty of Culture and Creative Industries at the Metropolia University of Applied Sciences and the field of culture at the Kymenlaakso University of Applied Sciences.

The main objectives of the degree reform in the field of culture involved developing the profile of UAS Master’s degrees, increasing international mobility, improving the allocation of ECTS credits, shortening study times and developing content to better correspond to the needs of employers. At the start of the degree reform, the objectives were not quite as familiar as in other fields in general, and the field of culture assessed them somewhat more negatively than other fields.

National co-operation was considered to explain the success of the transition from the old to the new degree structure. Co-operation was found to be useful especially when assessing the workload of studies, carrying out the core content analysis, and defining competence profiles and targets, as well as nationally uniform competences. National co-operation was hindered by differences between degree programmes, which made it difficult to find common policies during the reform.

In the field of culture, the degree structure was not consistently described as being feasible. The respondents did not find the
UAS Master’s degree of 60 ECTS credits to be feasible. The respondents hoped for a scope of 90 credits and a standard duration of two years, provided that the degree was to be completed in the form of adult education. A specific problem was the organisation of UAS degrees as adult education, which leaves “students without student status” and makes it difficult for students to commit themselves to studies.

The option of completing the UAS Master’s degree as full-time studies was mentioned as a field of development. One of the problems related to the feasibility of the degree structure mentioned by the respondents was the small number of Master’s degrees and the qualification requirement of three years of work experience, which is difficult to acquire in a reasonable time in the field of culture. However, the request of preserving the three-year work experience requirement in the selection criteria for UAS Master’s degrees led to widely differing opinions. Those who were in favour of the work experience requirement proposed that it be reduced to, for example, one year.

The culture curricula were revised thoroughly in terms of objectives and content: over half – or even all – of the units that participated in the evaluation carried out a thorough revision of their degree programmes. What the respondents found to be challenging was the definition of joint competences, the concept of outcomes-based education and the analysis of the workload of studies.

The labour-market relevance of degrees led to an increase in working-life oriented projects and studies in research and development skills. Examples of good practices in cooperation with employers included the participation of teachers in business co-operation projects, the involvement of employers’ representatives in curriculum design and the increased use of visiting lecturers.

The adult education status of the UAS Master’s degree and the related practice of studying alongside work, as well as the inclusion of working life experience as compulsory selection criteria, were mentioned as obstacles to both national and international mobility. Furthermore, unclear and inflexible procedures for transferring between sectors to continue studies were considered to hinder national mobility. The respondents proposed co-operation agreements between universities as a way to facilitate transfers. The respondents
believed that international mobility could be improved, for example, by developing joint degrees.

Conclusions

- The degree reform strengthened the labour-market relevance of degrees of culture, as the number of working-life oriented projects increased. As for best practices, the respondents mentioned the participation of teachers in business co-operation projects and the involvement of working-life representatives in teaching as visiting lecturers.
- In the respondents’ opinion, the UAS Master’s degree of 90 ECTS credits was not feasible in the field of culture. The respondents hoped for a scope of 90 credits and a standard duration of two years, provided that the degree was to be completed in the form of adult education.

10.3 Natural Sciences

In the field of natural sciences, the evaluation survey was taken by the Vaasa and Tampere Universities of Applied Sciences.

In the field of natural sciences, shortening study times and reducing the dropout rate were more important objectives than in other fields, partly motivated by the notably high dropout rate, totalling 14.7% (AMKOTA 2008). The development of the content and scope of studies was the best attained objective. In turn, raising the profile of the UAS Master’s degree was achieved only satisfactorily. The shortening of study times seems to have succeeded slightly better than the reduction of dropout rates.

While the respondents had not taken part in European degree reform projects, national co-operation in individual degree programmes benefited the entire field through the development and definition of joint, field-specific competence profiles and core competence areas. It was expressly within the field where co-operation and networking increased. Co-operation promoted the field's policies and advanced learning from others. Nevertheless, because of the heterogeneity of degree programmes, the respondents felt that the field was difficult to handle as a single entity, seeing as field-specific co-operation during the degree reform highlighted regional differences, as well as distinctions in the needs of rural and
urban environments. The decrease in the number of applicants worried the field.

The transition from the old to the new degree system was felt to have been successful. Special reasons for this were the teaching staff’s positive attitude and commitment to the reform process, the smoothness of curriculum design and the successfully completed development of the ECTS credit system.

The two-cycle degree structure was felt to function quite well in the field of natural sciences, even though the difference in the skills level required for the UAS Bachelor’s and Master’s degrees was felt to be unclear. The development of curricula was mentioned as an area in need of development. Special emphasis was given to the integration of teaching and research, development and innovation activities, the strengthening of the outcomes-based approach in degree programmes, as well as the promotion of multidisciplinarity and genuinely international activities. A few responses indicated a wish to make degree titles better known and change them to correspond to university titles. The respondents were also interested in regional and national profiling in order to increase the attraction of the field.

The work-experience requirement in the UAS Master’s degree was considered to be very good, since the degree aims at vocational development and calls for practical experience. Students were considered to be more skilled if they had insight into working life.

One of the respondents in the field of natural sciences thoroughly revised its curricula and the other one revised over half of them. Challenges and surprises resulted from the transfer from old to new credits and from the teachers’ work going from individual to teamwork. According to the respondents, curriculum design has changed permanently.

Degrees were considered to make an excellent match with the needs of working life, since the field is familiar with the employers’ expectations and because it has drawn up policies concerning stakeholder participation in curriculum design. Good practices in stakeholder co-operation include the integration of working-life relations into studies in connection with, for example, theses and projects. Co-operation between teaching staff and employers was mentioned as another good practice. The key trend in working life and competence needs is the emphasis on co-operation and interaction skills, including networking, as well as communication, team and
project competence. The respondents also listed lifelong learning and the increasingly versatile demands of working life as other development trends.

The degree reform was not found to have affected domestic student mobility in the field of natural sciences. The recognition of prior learning was considered to be an obstacle to domestic mobility, since degrees and studies are not recognised when transferring between university sectors. The amount of bridging studies was also found to be large. Efforts have been made to promote mobility, for example, by developing practices for the recognition of prior learning, by providing more information about transfer options and by encouraging or emphasising the marketing of education.

Similarly, no particular increase had been noticed in international exchange or degree studies. The main reason the respondents gave for this was the unwillingness of students to participate in exchange programmes. The respondents aimed to advance the mobility of their own students by marketing exchange programmes and providing encouragement to students. They had created practices promoting international activities, reserved room for exchange programmes in degrees and curricula, as well as planned flexible replacement and recognition methods. The entry of students who have completed their basic education outside Finland has been facilitated by offering more instruction in foreign languages and by increasing co-operation with international partners.

Conclusions

- In the UAS field of natural sciences, special attention must be given to the reduction of dropout rates and to making the field more attractive by profiling degree programmes more clearly on the basis of regional needs.
- The field of natural sciences must continue to eliminate obstacles to domestic and international mobility by improving practices for recognising prior learning and by developing the definition of competence levels within the two-cycle degree structure and between universities.
10.4 Natural Resources and the Environment

In the field of natural resources and the environment, the evaluation survey was taken by Novia University of Applied Sciences, Seinäjoki University of Applied Sciences and the Centre for Natural Resources at North Karelia University of Applied Sciences.

The objectives and organisation of the degree reform

The two main national objectives in the field of natural resources and the environment were the development of content to better meet the needs of working life and the advancement of the profiling of the UAS Master’s degree. The respondents mentioned both the increase in international mobility and the reduction of dropout rates as the third most important objective. The field of natural resources and the environment was the only respondent group to define the increase in domestic mobility as an objective for the degree reform. The field believed it had done well in achieving what it considered to be the most important objectives.

The field of natural resources and the environment found many advantages in national co-operation. For example, field-specific competences were developed and defined, a common structure and content were created for curricula, core content analysis was used to determine the workload and scope of studies and versatile co-operation was carried out at different levels of education. There were problems related to practical arrangements, as well as to the commitment to co-operation and the lack of trust, which resulted from mutual competition. The respondents had also detected differences in the views on determining the content and scope of studies.

The feasibility of the degree structure

The field of natural resources and the environment found the two-cycle degree structure to work relatively well. All of the respondents considered the weak opportunities to transfer from universities of applied sciences to universities to constitute the main problem. A proposed solution was to clarify the relationship between the UAS Master’s degree and the Master’s degree offered at universities. According to one of the respondents, problems with the degree structure stem from general factors related to the structure of degree programmes, such as the dominance of the thesis, the small number of common studies and the restricted opportunities to freely accumulate competence.

The field wanted to develop the current degree structure especially by enhancing curriculum design and the labour-
market relevance of education. A few individual statements were made about developing co-operation between universities of applied sciences and universities, improving pedagogical issues and clarifying the difference between the UAS degree and the UAS Master’s degree.

The work experience required for the UAS Master’s degree was described as being necessary, since the degree aims at vocational development. Contacts with working life were considered to be essential to the degree’s profile and differentiation from the Master’s degree offered by universities. However, the respondents were also worried about study times lengthening and students opting for universities.

According to its own assessment, the field of natural resources and the environment had thoroughly revised all of its curricula. Curriculum design emphasised the development of the outcomes-based approach to curricula, which led to notable changes in the objectives and content of degrees. The respondents had found it challenging to implement the vocational aspect in curricula so that working life representatives would be involved in supervising the curricula. Other challenges included the transfer to larger, balanced and outcomes-based study modules. The short time reserved for the change, as well as change resistance, were mentioned as problems during the transition phase.

The degree reform was believed to have had particularly large impacts on the implementation of education and degrees in the field. Career counselling, the methods of study, as well as teaching and assessment methods were said to be much more versatile, as was the range of optional studies or minors.

The units in the field of natural resources and the environment considered the degrees to make an excellent match with the needs of working life, since the field is familiar with the employers’ expectations and because it has drawn up policies concerning stakeholder participation in curriculum design. As for key trends in working life, the respondents expect multidisciplinarity, lifelong learning, project orientation and individual customisation to increase and the labour markets to become more international. Co-operation and interaction skills, such as networking and communication, team and project competence, will be emphasised in the labour market.
Domestic and international mobility

According to the field of natural resources and the environment, student mobility has increased considerably within the field, while transfers between disciplines and sectors have seen hardly any growth. Examples of obstacles to domestic mobility included problems related to the recognition of studies and the large number of supplementary studies when transferring between university sectors. Other reasons included schedule-related issues, application periods, attitudes and problems with information systems. Efforts have been made to increase domestic mobility by enhancing guidance and developing co-operation practices, and above all by using co-operation projects between universities and national co-operation.

Two of the three respondents in the field of natural sciences and the environment were of the opinion that international mobility has increased, while the third one saw no notable change resulting from the degree reform. Instead, the mobility of international students has increased considerably following the reform. Internationalisation was believed to have increased thanks to mobility co-operation between universities and the increasingly versatile instruction offered in foreign languages.

Conclusions

- The UAS field of natural resources and the environment considered the increase in domestic mobility, especially transfers from universities of applied sciences to academic universities, to be an important area in need of development.
- Education in the field should be made more relevant to the labour market, and differences in the levels of the two-cycle degree structure should be clarified.

10.5 Tourism, Catering and Domestic Services

In the field of tourism, catering and domestic services, the evaluation survey was taken by the tourism, catering and management units at the HAAGA-HELIA University of Applied Sciences and the tourism units at the Kajaani and Rovaniemi universities of applied sciences.

The objectives and organisation of the degree reform

The field of tourism, catering and domestic services believed it had succeeded well in what it considered to be the three most important degree reform objectives: studies were developed
to match the needs of working life, the scope of studies was improved and the profile of the UAS Master’s degree was raised. International mobility also increased, but dropout rates did not decrease as expected.

One of the respondents had participated in the EUROTUR, European Master of Strategic Tourism Management, project, which, however, was not clearly beneficial to the degree reform. National co-operation, instead, was said to have been useful, as it increased networking in the definition of learning outcomes, content and structures. Other concrete advantages included the creation of harmonised application procedures and entrance exam co-operation, better correspondence between education and working life and improved visibility of Swedish-language education. Problems resulted from different views about joint objectives and operating methods, which were based on differences in the sizes of units. Differences in opinion were also seen in the profile creation of different universities, the heterogeneity of degree programmes and the attention given to regional needs. The piling up of studies resulting from tighter schedules was considered to be a challenge in the organisation of education.

The two-cycle degree structure was found to work quite well in the field of tourism, catering and domestic services. The biggest problem with the degree structure is that neither working life nor potential students are familiar with the UAS Master’s degree nor do they find it has an established position. Development of the current degree structure focuses on the curricula, with the emphasis being on integrating research, development and innovation activities with instruction, as well as on strengthening the outcomes-based approach, labour-market relevance, internationality and multidisciplinarity.

Virtual studies were found to be a good way to organise education. As targets of development, the respondents mentioned the challenges related to the provision of UAS Master’s degrees as adult education. Rapid completion of studies while working was found to be a strain and a common reason for the prolongation of studies. International mobility also faces difficulties. Transferring between disciplines to complete a UAS Master's degree was considered to be difficult due to field-specific special content.

The work experience requirement in the UAS Master’s degree was described as being essential for the degree to have its own profile and stand out from the Master’s degree offered at academic universities. However, the respondents
suggested that the requirement could be made more flexible by recognizing work experience accumulated at different phases more extensively than is currently the case.

The field of tourism, catering and domestic services estimated that over half of the curricula in the field were thoroughly revised. Core content analysis was found to be extremely useful in curriculum design. Nevertheless, conducting a core content analysis and transferring to extensive outcomes-based study modules were still found to be challenging activities. It was also problematic to identify differences in skills levels between UAS degrees and UAS Master’s degrees, as well as between UAS Master’s degrees and Master’s degrees offered at academic universities.

As for the impacts of the degree reform, the field specifically emphasised the systematic use of personal study plans during studies. Personal study plans were believed to benefit studies and make career guidance more versatile. According to the respondents, the methods of study, as well as the teaching and assessment methods, had become much more versatile. However, the amount of optional studies and minors had increased only slightly.

Degrees were considered to make a good match with the needs of working life, since the field is familiar with the employers’ expectations and because it has drawn up policies concerning stakeholder participation in curriculum design. Competence needs are monitored with, for example, surveys and visits to fairs. Professional skills and the ability to transfer between tasks are important in the labour market.

Domestic student mobility has increased considerably within the field of tourism, catering and domestic services and moderately between university sectors. Transfers between disciplines, primarily within the same university, have also increased somewhat. To boost domestic student mobility, the respondents had worked on providing more information to students and creating functional transfer procedures. Cooperation procedures between universities have also been enhanced and alternative education structures, such as the Finnish Online University of Applied Sciences and other online instruction, have been utilised.

Respondents in the field had different views on the increase in international exchange and degree studies: some of them felt that participation in exchange programmes had increased, while others did not. The mobility of international
students was found to have increased notably as a result of the degree reform. As obstacles to international mobility, all the respondents mentioned social factors and factors related to the students’ situation in life, the students’ fear of their studies slowing down, as well as language problems. The respondents also found it difficult to find exchange places suitable for the content of curricula. Moreover, the structure and scheduling of studies do not always support exchange options. The poor recognition of Finnish universities of applied sciences and degrees was also mentioned as an obstacle.

Conclusions

- The UAS field of tourism, catering and domestic services has developed several practices for increasing domestic mobility within the field and between university sectors.
- As for UAS degrees offered as adult education, the field has identified problems related to increased workloads and lengthened study times, which call for national cooperation in order to be solved.
- The field of tourism, catering and domestic services must continue to develop outcomes-based curricula and clarify the two-cycle degree system.

10.6 Social Services, Health and Sports

In the field of social services, health and sports, the degree reform evaluation survey was taken by the field of health and welfare at the Arcada University of Applied Sciences, the fields of social services, health and sports at the Laurea, Metropolia and Tampere universities of applied sciences, the School of Health and Social Care at the Oulu University of Applied Sciences, as well as the field of health care at the Turku University of Applied Sciences.

The national objectives of the degree reform were relatively well known in the field of social services, health and sports at the beginning of the reform, but assessments of their achievement differed widely depending on the objective. Some of the objectives were not attained: dropout rates did not decrease and domestic mobility did not increase as expected. Objectives that were achieved relatively well included the profiling of UAS degrees, the development of the scope of studies and the improvement of content to better match the needs of
employers. Half of the respondents found that study times had shortened and graduation had sped up, largely thanks to the development of study guidance and pedagogical reforms.

Participation in European co-operation was minor: the only example that the respondents mentioned was OECD/IMHE. National co-operation focused on, for example, the analysis of study content, definition of the scope of studies, preparation of competence descriptions and development of the labour-market relevance of study content. Co-operation was hampered by problems in information flow, insufficient development resources, lack of joint planning events, the unofficial nature of the network for developing UAS degrees, as well as the competition between units when applying for permits to offer UAS Master’s degrees.

The two-cycle degree structure was found to be slightly more feasible in the field of social services, health and sports than in other UAS disciplines. According to the respondents, the problem is that the structure does not serve all disciplines equally. Other problems include the poor awareness and prestige of UAS degrees in working life, the unrelatedness of the UAS Bachelor’s and Master’s degrees, as well as their relation to specialisation studies. Other problems identified by the respondents included the dominance of the thesis in curricula, the differences between curricula, poor cooperation between academic universities and universities of applied sciences when transferring between the sectors, as well as minor recognition of UAS studies when transferring to universities.

Curricula in the field were revised comprehensively. Five of the units had thoroughly revised all of their curricula, and the sixth had done so for over half of the degree programmes. This work was advanced by the core content analysis, which was successfully carried out despite the challenges involved. As a result of the reform, the curricula are comprehensively outcomes-based, correspond better to the needs of working life and offer more versatility and individuality (personal study plans). Degree reform activities were found to be challenging overall but to have permanently changed the forms of curriculum design. The reform also made contacts with stakeholders and employers more regular and versatile.

The OECD programme on Institutional Management in Higher Education, which offers a co-operation forum to its members.

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The feasibility of the degree structure
Graduate competencies and labour-market relevance of degrees
According to the respondents, domestic mobility had increased slightly, but the degree reform had not notably advanced transfers between university sectors. Examples of proposed development measures include the following: the study times and scope of degrees in universities of applied sciences and academic universities should be made proportionate; theses should be developed and the content of Bachelor’s and Master’s degrees should be mutually evaluated; mobility between university sectors must be made more flexible; the work experience required for Master’s degrees must be proportionate to prior learning. The respondents also hoped for a solution to the problem related to the Act on Qualification Requirements for Social Welfare Professionals, which involves the UAS Master’s degree being considered equal to a university Master’s degree.

As examples of obstacles to international mobility, the respondents mentioned the UAS Master’s degree being offered as adult education, which leads to studies being carried out alongside work. As for international mobility, the respondents found it challenging to guarantee European comparability. In their view, international mobility could be promoted, for example, by making curricula more personal and developing their structure.

Conclusions

- The UAS field of social services, health and sports, the strength is the comprehensive and thorough revision of curricula and the emphasis on the development of study guidance and pedagogical aspects.
- According to the respondents, the problem of the two-cycle degree structure is that it does not serve all disciplines equally.
- The field would like to see the UAS Master’s degree providing qualifications for the post of social worker.

10.7 Technology, Communication and Transport

In the field of technology, communication and transport, the evaluation survey was taken by six units: the degree programmes in technology and transport at the HAMK University of Applied Sciences, the School of Technology at the Jyväskylä University of Applied Sciences, the fields
In the field of technology, the main degree reform objectives were to develop the labour-market relevance of UAS degrees and the scope of studies. In the respondents’ opinion, these had been well achieved. Challenges related to internationalisation were also emphasised in the objectives.

Higher education institutions engaged in close co-operation in the field of technology, jointly determining competences, learning outcomes and key teaching contents. According to the survey results, this co-operation made curricula more commensurate, increased information exchange about various practices and gave rise to new networks. The most challenging elements of co-operation were the time taken up by it and the difficulty of defining competences. In the course of co-operation, many participants were surprised to note the differences in the structures of technology degree programmes. One of the problems in the implementation of the reform was the long-lasting insecurity about the status of UAS Master’s degrees.

The survey results showed that despite the strong development orientation, the definition of target competences and deeper development of curricula were often launched only after a technical credit definition. Most of the respondents believed that curriculum design had changed fundamentally after the degree reform. While the teaching and research staff played a key role in the reform, students’ involvement in the reform planning was considered to be minor.

The status of the UAS Master’s degree was considered to be the main problem of the new degree structure. According to some of the respondents, the degree is still little known in working life, too similar to continuing education, problematic from the perspective of international co-operation and unclear in terms of its title. The large number of degree programmes was listed as a problem of the degree structure. The close integration of working-life contacts with the degree was still considered an area in need of development. However, the evaluation clearly indicated that the profile of the degree had strengthened and, according to the respondents, had moved in the right
direction in the minds of both UAS Master’s degree graduates and employers who had hired them.

Both university sectors in the field of technology had noticed the need to clarify the difference in the learning outcomes of Bachelor’s degrees from universities of applied sciences and those from academic universities.

Opinions were slightly divided as concerned the work experience required for the UAS Master’s degree. Most of the respondents considered it to be a good and justified practice that students applying for UAS Master’s degrees are required to have work experience. Supporters of work experience pointed out the degree’s objective of offering vocational development. They also believed that in order to strengthen the dual model, work experience is a necessary requirement so the UAS Master’s degree can be developed as a unique degree compared to the university Master’s degree. The opponents, in turn, believed the work experience requirement hindered international co-operation, in particular. They were also of the opinion that the current degree model pushes some engineers to pursue postgraduate studies at universities.

Some of the main factors affecting the direction of degree structure development in the field of technology were globalisation, the structural education reform currently underway in universities of applied sciences and the introduction of innovation projects into education.

The labour-market relevance of degrees was emphasised in the field of technology, although the respondents said this had been the case in the development of teaching even before the degree reform. The degree reform further emphasised the integration of research and development work with teaching development. The responses clearly indicated the difference from universities as concerns the bases of degree development: universities of applied sciences emphasised the working-life skills provided by degrees, while universities focused on the abilities that studies offered for postgraduate studies. Teaching development emphasised project-work skills, in particular. Some of the best practices used to increase the labour-market relevance of degrees included a wide range of advisory councils, surveys, as well as working life-oriented learning environments and projects. A concrete and often cited example of development needs was the need to create a degree focused on the supervision of work.
The universities’ views differed considerably as concerned domestic mobility. Most did not consider it to be an objective in the first place, because it lengthens study times. Nevertheless, the recognition of prior learning, modular degrees and the two-cycle nature of degrees were believed to make mobility sufficiently possible between universities of applied sciences. However, many respondents still considered mobility between universities and universities of applied sciences to be problematic.

Except for a few, higher education institutions were of the opinion that the reform of degree structures had increased international mobility in terms of the Bachelor’s degree. Some of the main challenges in the attempt to increase international mobility included the lesser interest shown by men in studies abroad, financial obstacles, as well as problems in the recognition of studies, which may lead to students falling behind their peers. As for the UAS Master’s degree the work experience requirement and studies integrated with working life were considered to hinder an increase in international mobility.

Conclusions

- The degree reform increased national co-operation within UAS field of technology and harmonised the learning outcomes of degrees.
- Most respondents in the field of technology considered the work experience requirement for the UAS Master’s degree to be good and to clarify the degree’s relationship to the Master’s degree conferred by universities of technology.
- The field should continue to clarify the structure of degree programmes in the form of national co-operation.

10.8 Social Sciences, Business and Administration

In the field of social sciences, business and administration, the evaluation survey was taken by the business unit at the HAAGA-HELIA University of Applied Sciences, the Business Management degree programme at the Kemi-Tornio University of Applied Sciences, as well as the fields of social sciences, business and administration at the Central
Ostrobothnia University of Applied Sciences and the Lahti University of Applied Sciences.

Similar to other disciplines, the field of social sciences, business and administration considered the three most important national objectives to be the development of the labour-market relevance of degrees, the improvement of the scope of studies and the promotion of the profile of the UAS Master’s degree. According to the units’ own evaluations, the main objectives were achieved very well, but their success in increasing domestic and international mobility, reducing dropout rates and shortening study times was not particularly good.

One of the universities of applied sciences had participated in the European Tuning project, which it found to be extremely useful. As benefits of national co-operation in individual degree programmes, the field mentioned harmonised practices, commensurability of degrees of different levels, as well as increased co-operation and networking. Co-operation also promoted development work and related policies, although units of different sizes were seen to have different views about common targets and operating methods, which was felt to be challenging in terms of co-operation. Problems mainly affected practical arrangements, since co-operation took up a great deal of time and resources.

The respondents felt the transition from the old to the new degree system had been successful in their own field. The success came especially from the teaching staff’s positive attitude and commitment to the reform process.

The two-cycle degree structure was found to work quite well in the field of social sciences, business and administration. According to the responses, the UAS Master’s degree is feasible and has proved its status as a degree in the system of higher education institutions. The work experience requirement was clearly deemed to be good. Virtual studies were found to be a good way to organise education. Organising the UAS Master’s degree as adult and blended learning education involved challenges. For example, short study times alongside work are straining, and studies are often drawn out.

As ways to develop the degree structure, the respondents suggested that the work experience requirement of the UAS Master’s degree could be removed or relaxed. Individual universities of applied sciences found areas in need of development to include co-operation between universities of
applied sciences and academic universities, the labour-market relevance of education, as well as the recognition of the UAS Master’s degree and degree titles.

With the exception of one university of applied sciences, the curricula were thoroughly revised in the field of social sciences, business and administration. Challenges in curriculum design resulted from the identification of different levels of learning outcomes between the UAS Bachelor’s and Master’s degrees and, correspondingly, between UAS Master’s degrees and university Master’s degrees. What was also challenging was conducting the core content analysis and defining extensive study modules based on employers’ competence needs.

Examples of good practices in stakeholder co-operation included advisory councils, various working groups and co-operation projects, as well as working life contacts closely integrated into studies in connection with theses, projects and traineeships, among other things. Collaboration between teachers and employers, as well as feedback surveys and surveys of the employment of graduates, were other good forms of co-operation with working life. In the respondents’ opinion, co-operation and interaction skills, such as networking and communications, team and project competence, will be emphasised in the labour market.

Student mobility has increased a great deal within the field of social sciences, business and administration and moderately between university sectors. The recognition of prior learning was considered to be the biggest obstacle to domestic mobility, since degrees and studies are not recognised when transferring between university sectors and because the amount of bridging studies was found to be large.

The field has paid a great deal of attention to promoting domestic mobility. The most common targets of development involved good transfer practices and procedures for the recognition of prior learning, as well as co-operation between universities. Students were also provided with more information, mobility was encouraged, the allocation of ECTS credits was developed and alternative education structures, such as the Finnish Online University of Applied Sciences and other online education, were utilised.

International exchange studies increased as a result of the degree reform. No change was noticed in the mobility of students working on the UAS Master’s degree, but a few universities of applied sciences reported that their
graduates had gone abroad to complete the Master’s degree. Many respondents suggested that the mobility of their own students could be promoted by marketing exchange options and providing information about the alternatives, creating procedures that promote internationalisation, as well as including exchange studies in the degree and the personal study plan. Two universities of applied sciences said they supported exchange programmes financially using, for example, grants, higher student financial aid and EU support.

The mobility of international students increased notably as a result of the degree reform. According to the respondents’ own evaluation, the internationalisation options of students and mobility co-operation between universities had clearly increased, while instruction offered in languages other than Finnish and Swedish had become more versatile.

Conclusions

- The field of social sciences, business and administration has developed successful methods for eliminating obstacles to domestic and international mobility.
- The UAS Master’s degree was felt to be feasible and to have proved its position, although organising it alongside work as adult and multi-modal education involved problems related to the recognition of prior learning, which often led to studies becoming drawn out. Such obstacles must be removed by developing the system for recognising prior learning.
- Co-operation between different fields and university sectors must continue to be developed in order to further clarify the two-cycle degree structure and ensure domestic mobility.
Finland set a variety of national and university-specific objectives for the degree reform and Bologna process implementation. This evaluation project assessed the achievement of the objectives and the degree to which they were known. The evaluation also examined the success of the reform’s national implementation. The focus was on determining the feasibility of the two-cycle degree structure, identifying changes in domestic and international mobility and evaluating the competences and working-life skills provided by degrees in the university and UAS sector.

Based on the material collected by the evaluation team, fully achieved degree reform objectives include the implementation of the European Credit Transfer System (ECTS), as well as the development of second-cycle degrees in universities of applied sciences (UAS) and their labour-market relevance (Table 6). Partly achieved objectives were the shift to a two-cycle degree structure, the strengthening of the status of the Bachelor’s degree, the implementation of Master’s degree programmes, promotion of domestic and international mobility, the development of quantitative planning in higher education and the strengthening of a competence-based approach. The evaluation team regards the objective of reducing total study times as completely unachieved.
<table>
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<tr>
<th>Focus of evaluation</th>
<th>Objective of the Bologna process</th>
<th>National objective for the degree reform</th>
<th>Evaluation of achievement</th>
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<td>1. Feasibility of the degree structure</td>
<td>Creation of a two-cycle degree structure with international comparability</td>
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<td></td>
<td>- Shortening study times</td>
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<td></td>
<td>- Strengthening the status of the Bachelor's degree</td>
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<td>- Enabling UAS students to continue studies by deepening their vocational skills</td>
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<td>- Profiling the UAS Master's degree as different from Master's degrees offered by universities</td>
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<td></td>
<td>- Introduction of the ECTS</td>
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<td>2. Mobility</td>
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<td>Implementing mobility goals in the degree structure</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Increasing international mobility</td>
<td>Internationalisation of higher education institutions</td>
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<td></td>
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<td>- Boosting the international competences of students</td>
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<tr>
<td>3. Competencies provided by degrees in relation to labour markets</td>
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<td>Defining the scope of studies to better reflect the actual workload of students</td>
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<td></td>
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<td>- The abilities of UASs to develop as working life-oriented higher education institutions</td>
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<td>- Developing the degree system to match the needs of working life</td>
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</table>
11.1 Strengths of the degree reform and degree structure

As a result of the degree reform, Finland now has legislation compliant with the Bologna process, which enables the use of a two-cycle degree structure in both the UAS and university sector. Especially in the UAS sector, the two-cycle structure has also been successful in practice. The reform has many other positive features and strengths related to, for example, curriculum design and study guidance. Furthermore, the organisation of the degree reform went well, and the experiences gained can be used in the future. In the following paragraphs, the evaluation team lists the strengths of the degree reform and the new degree structure, as assessed on the basis of the evaluation material.

Achievement of the degree reform objectives

- Legislation enables a two-cycle degree structure in the UAS and university sector and international comparability of the Finnish degree system.
- An authentic two-cycle degree structure has been achieved in the UAS sector, as graduates with a UAS degree now have the opportunity to deepen their competence through the UAS degree or transfer to universities to complete a Master’s degree.
- The new degree structure offers better opportunities for both domestic and international mobility. The obstacles to mobility lie elsewhere than in the degree structure.
- Higher education institutions automatically present graduates with a Diploma Supplement designed for international use.
- A proposal has been made to set up a national framework for higher education degrees in order to determine the levels of degrees and competence at different levels of education and to improve international comparability.

Organisation of the degree reform

- The degree reform was a significant national development project which was carried out rapidly in a well-organised manner both nationally and at the level of individual HEIs.
- National field-specific co-operation played a key role in the degree reform’s success in both universities and UASs.
Field-specific co-operation promoted the policies and harmonisation of the degree structure. The commitment of HEIs to the degree reform was boosted by the fields and HEIs being able to choose their own way to organise the reform.

The approach used to organise the degree reform enabled HEIs to include their own objectives (such as periodisation and grading scales) and thus support the entire reform process, which the HEIs found to have been successful.

The degree reform also gave rise to a separate Master’s degree programme structure based on the Bachelor’s degree. This has promoted the multidisciplinarity and internationality of degrees and strengthened their two-cycle nature. Master’s degree programmes gave a more versatile picture of Master’s studies, strengthening the image of Master’s degrees as independent second-cycle degrees.

Curriculum design

- The revision of curricula gave rise to extensive discussions about the labour-market relevance and outcomes-based approach of degrees in both university sectors and emphasised the responsibility of HEIs for the employment of students and the working-life skills provided by education.

- The national W5W project set up to support the degree reform provided universities with training, tools and information about good academic curriculum thinking and promoted a student- and learning-centred teaching culture.

- The guidance and support provided by the Rectors’ Conference of Finnish Universities of Applied Sciences, as well as national field-specific co-operation, harmonised the curriculum design of UASs, giving them good opportunities to develop as higher education institutions relevant to the labour market.

- Several important models for working life-oriented learning were developed in research and development projects carried out by universities of applied sciences.
Study guidance and the introduction of personal study plans

- Personal study plans (PSPs) were widely introduced in all higher education institutions in connection with the degree reform.
- The use of personal study plans has become more versatile: students can now use them to support and plan their own learning and professional development.
- Some HEIs have adopted electronic personal study plans and a system for recognising prior learning, which can be used to shorten study times.
- The introduction of personal study plans has promoted the internationalisation of studies.

11.2 Recommendations for the development of the degree structure

While the concept of the two-cycle degree structure is clear from the perspective of legislation, this is not so in practice and the structure does not work fully as intended – especially in universities. Most universities consider this to be a problem and hope to transfer to “a genuine two-cycle structure”. The lack of recognition of the Bachelor’s degree in the labour markets is seen as the central problem impeding the adoption of a genuine two-cycle system. The student admission process between the Bachelor’s and Master’s degrees also involves many questions and concerns.

Compared to academic universities, universities of applied sciences had less time to set up the two-cycle degree structure, since they did not start with the process until 2005, when the UAS Master’s degree acquired permanent status. The new structure now works well in UASs. On the one hand, the three-year work experience requirement for the UAS Master’s degree is considered to be necessary, but on the other hand it is found to be too long and to hinder international mobility.

The shortening of study times was a degree reform objective that was fully unachieved. Some units felt the reform had amplified degrees, stretched out study times and increased dropout rates. However, the main reason for studies being dropped or delayed was not felt to arise from the degree structure but from personal reasons, such as working alongside studies, difficulties to cope with studies, insecurity
about the chosen field and study skills. Lacking study guidance and study arrangements were also found to delay graduation.

Domestic student mobility, that is, transfers between fields of study, higher education institutions and sectors, has not increased as much as expected when setting national objectives for the degree reform. The problem in universities is that the Bachelor's degree is still considered to be an intermediate degree, and most students go on directly to the Master's degree in their own degree programme. Moreover, the existing steering and financing model does not encourage universities to promote domestic mobility. In turn, graduates with a UAS degree still find their options to continue in university Master's degree programmes to be restricted by the required supplementary studies.

The new degree structure has created increasingly better opportunities for international mobility. Concerns about the intensity of the university Bachelor's degree and the upper limit to study times reducing students’ interest in exchange programmes were expressed in connection with the degree reform. This also came up in the survey responses from universities. Student exchange figures actually did drop slightly after the degree reform but have again increased in recent years. However, it is impossible to definitely say the dip was caused by the degree structure.

The universities had partly conflicting opinions about the development of the steering system. Generally speaking, the national steering system must help to strengthen the two-cycle degree structure.

1. Development of the two-cycle degree structure in universities

**Bachelor’s degree**

- Study rights should primarily be granted only for the Bachelor’s degree in student admissions. The relationship between the Bachelor’s and Master’s degree may vary depending on the field due to, for example, the needs of employers, the characteristics of individual disciplines or the educational entity created by the HEI sector in the field.

- Study rights may exceptionally be granted directly for the Master’s degree in fields preparing students for professions that traditionally call for a second-cycle university degree, such as teachers, or for professions regulated by the Directive on the Recognition of
Professional Qualifications, such as doctors, architects and speech therapists.

- The three-year (180 ECTS-credit) education leading to a Bachelor’s degree is the starting point, but some fields may deviate from this by defining the duration of education to be three and a half years (210 credits) or even four years (240 credits). When considering the duration, the length of the Master’s degree in the same field must be taken into consideration. The overall duration must not exceed five years.

Master’s degree

- The study right for a Master’s degree is usually granted through student admission open to graduates with a first-cycle degree or corresponding education.

- The admission procedures and bases are being developed so that students can be selected as flexibly, appropriately and using as little bureaucracy as possible in line with the HEI’s own focus areas. The selection does not necessarily call for a separate entrance exam but can also be based on other factors, such as success in studies, depending on the degree to be taken. The selection is scheduled so that it does not make it slower for students to transfer to Master’s education.

- The duration of Master’s degrees ranges from one-and-a-half years (90 credits) to two years (120 credits) in such a way that the overall duration of education in a single field, taking into account the length of the Bachelor’s degree, is five years (a few exceptions may be found in individual fields). In cases where the first-cycle degree is from a different field or is vocationally oriented, the overall duration of the degree may vary.

- Universities must pay special attention to the quality of Master’s degrees offered in languages other than Finnish or Swedish. FINHEEC’s future evaluation of international degree programmes should assess, for example, the abilities that the programmes offer for postgraduate studies and for working life, as well as the graduates’ learning results in general.

Status of separate Master’s degree programmes in the degree structure

- The decree-issuing process related to university Master’s degree programmes ought to be abandoned. Separate Master’s degree programmes and the decree-issuing
process related to them has been an intermediate phase in the adoption of the two-cycle degree structure.

- Universities must design Master’s degree education based on their own needs and within the scope of their educational responsibilities. The division into separate Master’s degree programmes and other Master’s degree education will be eliminated, and universities will only have one type of study path leading to a Master’s degree.

2. Development of the two-cycle degree structure in universities of applied sciences

- The UAS Master’s degree must be further developed as a degree relevant to the labour market that aims at vocational development. The current form of completing it should be retained. Proposals have been made to adopt an alternative method of completion, which would make it possible to relax the work experience requirement and would enable the UAS Master’s degree to be carried out as full-time studies. Alternatives are sought especially for young adults with no work experience and for international students.

- Universities of applied sciences must ensure that international students forge contacts with employers during their studies and that the degree offers them the same competences as it does to Finnish students.

- The second-cycle UAS degree will be called maisteri (AMK), Master of Science/Arts (AMK).

3. Opportunities for graduating in target time provided by the degree structure

- The funding model for higher education institutions must steer HEIs to more clearly support flexible study paths and enable studies to be completed within the target period.

- To reduce study times, comprehensive measures are required, involving study plans (including PSPs), guidance and student welfare issues.

- The planning of Bachelor’s degrees as independent degrees would clarify the two-cycle degree structure, which in turn could reduce study times and dropout rates.

- HEIs do not have sufficient methods for monitoring student mobility. Problems are caused, among other things, by a lack of information about whether students
have dropped out or transferred to another HEI. To clarify this, the definition of dropouts must be specified and both statistics collection and monitoring must be improved.

4. Scope of studies and workload of degrees

- HEIs must systematically monitor students’ use of time from the very beginning of studies to support the assessment of workload.
- It is especially important to teach higher education study skills at the very beginning, since poor study skills make the workload feel heavier.
- The workload of studies must be continuously monitored and analysed as a part of the evaluation of education in order to understand what factors contribute to students’ experience of workload.

5. Supporting students in the completion of degrees

- Degree programmes should be made more flexible and students should be offered alternative ways to obtain and prove their competence, including methods that can be used alongside work (such as online studies).
- The status of personal study plans as tools for career counselling, professional growth and internationalisation must be enhanced.
- The development of working-life skills must be integrated into the degree to strengthen the outcomes-based nature of education.
- Study progress monitoring and education support services must take into account the various life situations and student welfare factors that might affect studies.

6. Competencies provided by degrees in relation to labour markets

- The development of curricula must be continued so that labour-market relevance and the outcomes-based approach are achieved in all degree programmes, both Bachelor’s and Master’s.
- HEIs must engage in fundamental discussions about the meaning of labour-market relevance and the outcomes-based approach in Bachelor’s and Master’s degrees, the definition of working-life skills and ways to support their development at different stages of the degree.
All Bachelor’s degrees, irrespective of the field and target degree, must pay attention to the systematic development of key working-life skills, such as co-operation and interaction competence, from the beginning of studies.

To ensure that degree structures and content are comprehensively developed, co-operation between universities and universities of applied sciences must be enhanced. Fields of study represented in the two sectors must launch national co-operation to define the learning outcomes of degrees and especially the competence areas related to working life.

Stakeholder co-operation, which has started moderately in universities and well in universities of applied sciences, should be made a systematic part of the planning and implementation of education.

7. Quality assurance and continuous development of degrees

- The feasibility of the two-cycle degree structure must be monitored by taking into consideration the views that different players (higher education institution, student, employers) have of the feasibility.
- HEIs must continue to develop teaching methods and assessment procedures so that they serve the working life connections of degrees better than now.
- University pedagogical management and training to help the staff cope with changes brought about by the degree reform must be strengthened.

8. Domestic student mobility within and between fields and HEIs

- The content of Bachelor’s degrees must be modified to make it easier for students to postpone the selection of their specialisation option until they begin their Master’s degree studies. At this point, attention must be paid to the abilities that the Bachelor’s degree offers for transferring to Master’s studies in a different field and for being active in working life.
- The policies on credit transfers and the recognition of prior studies in HEIs must be clarified for individual disciplines.
- A national register used to monitor student mobility must be implemented. The register will be developed on the
basis of the RAKETTI project and will mostly be jointly maintained by higher education institutions and the Ministry of Education and Culture.

9. International mobility

- Studies must be planned and the personal study plan drawn up so that the exchange period can be linked to studies and the international studies are fully recognised in studies, taking care that the scope of the degree is not exceeded. This calls for good planning of the exchange periods jointly with the student early on in the studies, sufficiently flexible curricula and genuine co-operation with foreign HEIs to ensure that the co-operation partners become acquainted with one another's curricula.
- Modules providing general internationalisation skills will be included in education.
- The internationalisation opportunities of UAS adult students will be improved, for example, through international intensive courses, group visits or virtual mobility.
- Universities of applied sciences must develop exchange periods suitable for the UAS Master's degree jointly with their co-operation HEIs.
- International traineeship options must be further developed in both universities and universities of applied sciences jointly with employers.
- Universities of applied sciences and academic universities increase regional co-operation in questions related to internationalisation. These include joint orientation courses, joint teaching, marketing, communication, joint projects and funding applications.

10. Monitoring and evaluation of the degree reform

- International comparisons of degree structures and content must be promoted. International co-operation leading to joint curricula and double degrees, as well as comparisons between Finnish and international degree structures and content, must be increased.
- A second-phase evaluation of the degree reform should be carried out four to five years from now to deepen the understanding obtained of the reform.
- A broad national research project must be launched to survey the problems involved in the degree structure
reform and to look for ways to promote the national objectives that, according to the evaluation, have been only partly achieved or have remained fully unachieved. Key areas of study include:

– the reduction of study times
– the labour-market relevance and job-creating power of the Bachelor’s degree
– conditions of and obstacles to domestic and international mobility
– the admission criteria (work experience requirement) for the UAS Master’s degree and the international comparability of the degree
– learning outcome-based curriculum design.
Bibliography


APPENDIX:
Themed interviews related
to the degree reform evaluation in 2010

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<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Time</th>
<th>Interview group</th>
<th>Participants</th>
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N=67
Part II

The Implementation of the Bologna Reforms in Finland from an International Perspective
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Introduction: Aims and implementation of the international analysis

The Finnish Higher Education Evaluation Council (FINHEEC) published an evaluation report on the degree reform in December 2010. The evaluation was implemented by a Finnish evaluation team and the language of the report, accordingly, was Finnish. In order to have an external view to the Finnish degree reform, the FINHEEC Council decided to invite Professor Dr. Ulrich Teichler from the University of Kassel (Germany) to conduct an analysis of the Bologna implementation in Finland. For this purpose, the original evaluation report was translated into English and it is published as the first part of this report.

The overall aim of the international analysis was to assess how the original European aims set for the Bologna Process and the national aims set for the Finnish degree reform have been achieved in Finland from the perspective of an international evaluator.

The analysis was to focus on the following Bologna themes:
1. Bachelor’s and Master’s degree structure in the university and universities of applied sciences sector
2. Competencies provided by degrees in relation to labour market needs
3. National and international student mobility.

Concerning each of these topics, Professor Teichler was invited to analyse challenges and solutions typical to the Finnish higher education system, to compare the Finnish Bologna implementation with some chosen countries in Europe, and to bring up conclusions and ideas for further Bologna development in Finland.

In order to complement the information provided by the evaluation report, Professor Teichler wished to meet some Finnish experts in the Bologna Process. For this purpose, FINHEEC invited twenty experts to be interviewed by Professor Teichler on Monday 23 January 2012.

The schedule of interviews and participants in each interview are presented in the appendix.
The Implementation of the Bologna Reforms in Finland from an International Perspective

By Ulrich Teichler

1 The character and tone of the Finnish self-evaluation report

The Bologna Process has often been characterised as one of the two major reform movements in higher education across European countries during the last five or six decades. Only the reform efforts in the 1970s are comparable to the Bologna Process. Reforms at that time were stirred up by concerns about how coping with the rapid expansion of higher education, the continued inequalities in access, the demands formulated in the student protests as regards new approaches of knowledge and learning, and finally efforts to establish more appropriate modes of governance.

In commenting on the reform efforts of the 1970s, experts agree, first, in pointing out that this was a time of heated and controversial debate. Second, there was no clear, highly structured reform agenda, but rather a multitude of claims and programmes were put forward by different actors at different points in time over a decade of discourse and reform efforts. Third, one could note a complex process of “implementation”: not a straight line of goals – measures – results, but rather a substantial change in the reform agenda in the process of initial goal-setting, the acceptance of goals, the formulation of measures, and actions taken on the basis of set plans, etc. Fourth, the eventual results of the reform processes in the 1970s were well summarised in a book (Cerych and Sabatier 1986) entitled “Great Expectations and Mixed Performance” – not as the more moderate results that were initially hoped for, but rather as an enormous discrepancy between the initial
reform hopes and the situation that higher education found itself in some years later.

Reading the 2010 evaluation report on degree reform in Finland, the international observer is bound to believe that the discourse in Finland on the Bologna Process has been very cool-headed and not very controversial. According to the overtone presented in the report, there seems to have been some grumblings here and there at the beginning, but a high extent of acceptance shaped the scene relatively early on. There seems to have been a notion of a relatively clear list of strategic goals and operational objectives across Europe, and Finland has added and specified a clear list of national goals and objectives. There doesn’t appear to have been constant controversies and fights for changes to the agenda during the process of implementation, but rather a relatively targeted process of carrying out the reform measures. As a consequence, the Finnish evaluation report does not have to discuss at length the process between the initial goal-setting and the eventual results, but can concentrate on the extent of the eventual realisation of the initial goals and objectives. Moreover, the report can end with a relatively “cool” tone: much has been achieved, but not all – the glass is more than half-full and less than half-empty.

In order to avoid any misunderstandings, the Finnish report on the Bologna Reform is not a summary PR report that covers more than it unveils. The report is a professional and honest document – not only presenting this overtone characterised above, but also mentioning divergences of views, complex processes of goal-setting, remaining ambivalences of goals, divergent perceptions of results, etc. However, this is the undercurrent rather than the overtone of the report.

A report on the Bologna Process could not have been written in a similar character in every European country participating in the Bologna Process. In some countries, the Bologna Declaration has elicited such a heated controversial debate and has stirred up fundamental discrepancies in values that any account of the aims and the results of the reform processes would have to concentrate on describing political turmoil rather than the logic of a relatively rational reform process. In some countries, the results would have been viewed as too meagre to undertake a serious account of the extent of goal-achievement. In some countries, no agreement would have been possible on who could be trusted to write such a report. In some countries, one would need several reports – each of them starting off with the specific expectations of some of the
actors and also presenting perceptions of the results according to the divergent expectations. In some countries, one might not have been sure whether it would be worth spending so much energy on such an evaluation exercise.

2 The option to undertake a “Bologna” evaluation

The report on the degree reform in Finland does not start off explaining an issue at stake that deserves attention. It could have started with an explanation of the importance of the degree reform and all its implications, and with a claim that an account is needed in order to identify remaining challenges and opportunities for future improvement. This is initially left to a foreword, and this foreword is not signed by a political actor, but rather by the chair of the evaluation agency (the Finnish Higher Education Evaluation Council).

Instead, the Report begins with a relatively elaborate explanation of the evaluation approach and the evaluation process. This signals that this is a normal evaluation exercise – not an extraordinary issue which needs extraordinary attention and extraordinary procedures.

From an international perspective, it is interesting to note what is not written at the beginning of the report in this respect. First, it seems to be generally accepted in Finland that for such a major process of higher education reform such a substantial evaluation exercise should be undertaken. Second, in Finland it is not difficult to decide who should be in charge of such an evaluation. The agency in charge of evaluating higher education seems to be the obvious choice for the evaluation of a nationwide and even international reform process. Third, the team taking on the responsibility of undertaking this evaluation could be similar to the usual evaluation teams for institutional and programme evaluation, one with a good mix of high-level actors and evaluation experts with a very flat hierarchy. Fourth – somewhat in contrast to the customary evaluation of higher education in Finland – the evaluation team for the degree reform is composed exclusively of Finnish actors and experts: the evaluation is seen as a national self-evaluation.

Again, such an option would not have been chosen in every European country participating in the Bologna Process and deciding to evaluate it. In some countries, one would have to argue from the outset that the exceptional importance of
the degree reform calls for such an account, and one would have set up a specific high-level committee with a highly reputed leader to legitimise the activity and to underscore the relevance of the findings (for example the “Sir x” reports on key issues of higher education in the United Kingdom). In some countries (possibly in Germany, if such an evaluation were to be undertaken there at all), one would set up a committee with a majority of foreigners in order to signal that the views presented stand above the national turmoil and the specific interests of national actors involved in the issue in question.

From an international perspective, one can argue, first, that an evaluation culture has taken root in Finland. It is considered worth reflecting on the developments of the recent past; one is willing to “confess to sins” and to search intensively for possible improvement. Second, there is a high degree of trust in the existing evaluation mechanisms. One can ask those in charge of coordinating the usual evaluations of segments of the system to be in charge of such a comprehensive evaluation of the higher education system of the country. Third, there is a specific culture of evaluation. This might be the case in some other European countries, but not all over Europe. A mutual respect exists between influential actors, evaluation experts and researchers (in this case higher education researchers) as well as a belief in the functioning of consensus-building mechanisms and attitudes.

3 Evaluation approach and procedures

At the outset, we can say that the Finnish evaluation of the degree reform envisaged and undertaken across Europe in the first decade of the 21st century is a very professional and high-class evaluation report. A very good combination of experts and actors presents a convincing report in substance and in good style both for evaluation experts and a broad audience. The approach and procedures are laid out clearly and self-effacingly, pointing out the constraints of such an evaluation study due to high levels of complexity of the issues at stake and the limitations of time and resources. The report is both sufficiently detailed and is effectively focused on the messages conveyed.

This does not mean that the approach and the procedure of the report is exactly what one might expect anywhere if a good team came together for the purpose of undertaking
such an evaluation of targeted changes in a national higher education system embedded into convergent efforts across Europe. Rather, six characteristics of the chosen evaluation approach and procedures should be pointed out (disregarding here the extent to which these choices have been the mandate for the evaluation or have been made by the evaluators themselves).

First, a decision was taken to define a clear set of reform objectives as the starting point of the evaluation. This is, of course, a very elegant start for such an evaluation study, but this is not necessarily the most obvious approach for assessing what has happened in the Bologna Process that, as will be discussed below, is often characterised as comprising so many facets and ambiguities, that we note internationally almost as many different lists of Bologna objectives as publications on the Bologna Process, as well as by revisions – notably additions – to the list of objectives.

Second, the report presents two lists of reform objectives: “the original Europe-wide objectives set for the Bologna Process and the original national objectives set for the Bologna Process” (p. 17). This suggests that there is a clearly identifiable Finnish line for handling the Bologna Process. Moreover, there seems to be a co-existence of two interrelated sets of objectives – not a full dominance of a European approach, not just a national adaptation of the European approach, not just a selective national attention to supra-national objectives and measures, and not just a watering down or undermining of the European Bologna objectives.

Third, the report characterises the evaluation as being clearly focused on the results of the reforms: “The objective of the current evaluation is to assess how well this objective has been achieved ...” (p. 17). “Implementation” is not used in this context in terms of implementation theories underscoring the complexity of goal-setting, goal-specification, goal-revision in the policy discourse, designing of measures, learning processes about the appropriateness of concepts underlying the initial goals, re-adaptation of goals and measures in response to experience, etc. Rather, the term “implementation” is employed in the frequently used colloquial way: the degree of realisation of an initial set of goals. At times, it even sounds as if the evaluators expect compliance with the set goals and just want to measure the degree of compliance. It should be pointed out, however, that the report does not fully concentrate on the results of the reform, but it also provides considerable information as well on the reform process.
Fourth, the Finnish evaluation of the degree reform has demanded substantial support from the relevant agencies in the higher education system. There has been a multitude of information-gathering activities, and the willingness to respond has obviously been high. In various other countries, one might have opted in a similar study for a more modest design of inquiry, because one would have expected a lower willingness of cooperation.

Fifth, the Finnish evaluation study comprised an element of “action research”. One did not only collect information on the views and observations of respondents, but a procedure was designed to create views. The Finnish institutions of higher education have been asked to undertake a process of communication of different types of actors on different levels of the institution, which eventually resulted in a “joint response”. This is not a process of opinion gathering, but of opinion creation. Certainly, empirical processes of information gathering often elicit views and opinions, but the process called for by the Finnish evaluation team goes far beyond this. The institutions are expected to build up a common opinion. This certainly shows a strong belief in the potential of consensus building. From an international perspective, we can argue that the success of such a procedure would not be expected in all European countries. In addition, such a process would certainly be viewed in many other countries as not being a legitimate element of an evaluation study. Obviously the Finnish evaluation team is convinced that it has received responses which are not merely rectors' voices or simply compromises; rather, the answer is viewed as a successful process of collective learning and the integration of views.

Sixth, the Finnish evaluation study of the degree reform is focused on a single country without elements of explicit comparison. This approach is understandable from various points of view: One would not have been able to collect in-depth information from a number of European countries. One cannot analyse the relationships between general European objectives and specific Finnish objectives thoroughly using a comparative approach. One possibly did not want to water down the motivational value for future improvement in Finland by supporting the message that many other European countries have been less successful in their reform efforts. However, one can argue that the report comprises many elements of implicit comparison, which might have been more valuable if there had been explicit comparison; there are various comparative studies available on the Bologna
Process which could have been useful in this respect (see notably Alesi et al. 2005; Kehm, Huisman and Stensaker 2009; CHEPS, INCHER and ECOTEC 2010; Sursock and Smidt 2010; Teichler, Ferencz and Wächter 2011; Curaj et al. 2012). Moreover, how can one assess the success of objectives such a creation of a comparable system of study programmes and degrees across Europe without explicitly analysing what the other countries do?

4 The European and national reform objectives

In looking at the vast literature available across Europe on the Bologna Process, we can clearly see a core consensus: the core operational objective of the Bologna Process is the establishment of a similar two-cycle structure of the study programmes and degrees across European countries, and the increase of student mobility – both a higher attractiveness of higher education in European countries for students from other parts of the world and facilitating intra-European cross-border mobility – is the most strongly emphasised strategic objective for the operational reform of study programmes and degrees.

However, beyond such a core, we note extremely diverse characterisations of the Bologna Process. The Bologna Declaration signed by the ministers responsible for higher education in 1999 is not a role model of clarity, but rather the result of a search for a compromise, which could make almost all important different higher education philosophies and almost all actors happy. Some publications summarising the Bologna Declaration focus on the strategic goals such as mobility, while other list details of “accompanying measures” such as the promotion of a credit system or the Europe-wide conferring of “diploma supplements”. Many of those analysing the Bologna Process conclude that the loose coordination process – helpful as it might have been for minimal consensus building – has provided ample room for vague formulations and diverse interpretations. In some respect, the Bologna Process has become so popular that almost any new higher education reform goal in subsequent years has been codified as a new bullet point in the communiqués of the ministers meeting every two years.

As formulated in an overview book (Kehm, Huisman and Stensaker 2009), Bologna became a “moving target”. As a consequence, some observers seek to establish the “real” or
“original” goals; other try construct a clear distinction between official interpretations of the Bologna Process (not only the ministerial communiqués, but also the results of official conferences of the Bologna Follow-up Group) and other issues not belonging to the Bologna Process. Others consider all the intended and unintended consequences and deliberate distortions being “Bologna”; others see Bologna as the sponge that has soaked up almost every popular reform idea during the last decade.

The report characterises the “original Europe-wide” objective as “the adoption of an internationally comparable two-cycle degree” (p. 17). Subsequently, four additional “objectives/action lines” are named: a harmonised credit system (ECTS), the promotion of mobility, cooperation in quality assurance, and the European dimension of higher education (p. 35).

The “national objectives” are described in a more elaborate way. The report hints that the list of objectives could have been longer and names only those objectives which are in the focus of the evaluation study:
- the change in the “status of the Bachelor’s degree”,
- the “profiling” of Master’s degrees at universities of applied sciences,
- the increase in international and domestic mobility,
- the measuring of student workload, and
- the strengthening of a “learning outcome-oriented approach” in degree requirements (p. 17).

The report specifies the national objectives by naming various measures proposed by the Ministry of Education during 2001 and 2002, including the adoption of personal study plans, increasing cooperation with employers in planning, improving the labour market relevance of the Bachelor’s degree, and establishing international Master’s degree programmes.

The report, finally, bridges the two domains of objectives by stating a list of “main themes” of the evaluation study:
1. “The feasibility of the degree structure”,
2. Mobility (both “domestic mobility” and “international mobility”),
3. “Competencies provided by degrees in relation to labour markets” (pp. 18–19).

The report points out in this context that the evaluation study had excluded those “objectives of the Bologna Process which are not directly linked with the degree reform”, such as the “social dimension”, qualifications frameworks, the
third cycle (doctoral programmes), and lifelong learning (p. 20). It does not specify whether these could be understood as European or national objectives.

The report is eager to point out that the “national objectives” are not a precise set of commandments handed over in a single moment, such as that from God to Moses. It also seems to take it for granted that the government has had a very influential role in the reform process, which is not necessarily the case in all European countries, and that there has been a relatively high acceptance of such a strong role. It attempts to analyse the “awareness” of the national objectives (pp. 41–42) rather than their legitimacy and acceptance. The report indicates that the national objectives have emerged following a long process of communication, were composed of a long list of governmental documents made public over many years, and show signs of policy modification and change. Obviously, this process frequently met critique on the one hand as being a set of overly strong directives, and on the other hand as being too slow, in some elements too late or overall not consistently directive enough to give clear guidance.

The report offers a surprise by presenting such a short list of European objectives and such a long list of national objectives. Moreover, the relationships between the European objectives and national objectives remain unexplained. An external observer of the Bologna Process in Europe could ask:

- Are there objectives named in the Bologna Process that are considered outside Finland to be Europe-wide objectives, whilst when viewed in Finland to be Finnish objectives (e.g. the labour-market relevance of the study programmes)?
- Are there implicit European objectives of the Bologna Process, i.e. objectives that are not explicitly named in the Bologna Declaration but would have to be named if the Bologna reform was “spelled out” in detail (e.g. curricular reforms to make the Bachelor’s degree programme a set of competencies in its own right)?
- Are there broad objectives of the Bologna Process that call in principle for specification, but this specification is left to national action (e.g. national policies to increase the status of the Bachelor’s degree)?
- Finally, are there national objectives that are at most loosely related to the European reform agenda, whereby the Bologna reform is simply taken as an opportunity to add this to a broader reform agenda (e.g. avoidance
of prolongation of study, reduction of the dropout rate, increase of inter-institutional domestic mobility)?

Obviously, the Bologna Process in the broadest sense is such a multi-facetted attempt at reform that the Finnish evaluation project had to filter out the major reform thrusts. Moreover, it does not matter so much for the analysis of the relationships between objectives and outcomes of this reform process, whether a convincing distinction has been made between European and national objectives. It also makes sense to discuss the additional results of the Bologna Process, even if they do not rank as highly in the official lists of objectives, because there have been latent and hidden agendas or agendas only mentioned in passing, such as the increasing popularity of completing study and the transfer to employment after a relatively short study period (i.e. mostly a three-year study period instead of preceding four-year or five-year single cycle study periods at most universities in Europe). Finally, the choice of the evaluation study is convincing in its focus on measures and trends that are very closely linked to the operational objective of establishing and enhancing the two-cycle structure of study programmes and degrees. However, more systematic attention could have been paid to the implementation process: did we learn in this process that some of our initial assumptions about the relationship between prior problems and measures to cure them have been based on a wrong “theory” and had to be left behind or enhanced in order to serve the aim of the study stated, i.e. to help institutions of higher education “to improve degree education” (p. 17)?

5 The degree structure and reform

In observing how the various European countries have responded to the recommendation of the Bologna Declaration in 1999 to establish a similar cyclical structure of study programmes and degrees, we have to take into consideration the status quo ante (see Teichler 2007). For example, one could have assumed that Spain should not have major difficulties in transforming the system of escuelas universitarias into a Bachelor’s system (in reality, however, Spain moved exceptionally slowly toward the Bachelor’s-Master’s structure). One cannot be surprised that the strong objection in the 1970s to a model of a comprehensive university among most of the German university professors was revived
again in the discourse about Bologna and led to widespread opposition against the cycle structure. One wonders how the Bologna Declaration was received in Denmark, where most actors and experts considered the experiment of a Bachelor’s-Master’s structure ten years before the Bologna Declaration as a failure because only a tiny minority of Bachelor’s graduates transferred to the labour market.

In Finland, higher education reforms in the 1980s have headed towards a unitary higher education system with all institutions being universities and most study programmes being of the same required length. In the 1990s, Finland moved more or less concurrently in two directions of formal diversification: the establishment of a second type of higher education institution with short study programmes and a vocational emphasis (ammattikorkeakoulu – referred to in English-language documents as polytechnics, abbreviated in Finnish as AMKs and, more recently, universities of applied sciences, UASs) since the early 1990s on an experimental basis and since the mid-1990s on a wide scale on the one hand and steps taken towards the introduction of the Bachelor’s degree at universities since 1994 on the other.

The Finnish report on degree reform in the first decade of the 21st century is relatively silent about the legacy of the 1990s. As regards the university Bachelor’s, it states: “The idea of a degree reform in the university sector was made more approachable by the fact that since 1994, the trend has been towards re-introducing the two-cycle structure …” (p. 35). However, nothing is said as to whether reforms from 1994 onwards left footprints for the way the Bachelor’s degree has been addressed since 1999. In the foreword of the report, we can even read: “…the degree reform was launched in Finland in 2002 as part of the Bologna Process …”.

Certainly, the specifics of the degree reform at universities of applied sciences in Finland are treated as an important theme in the report. Looking across the specifics of the Finnish AMK, however, one could ask across Europe: what happens if what used to be the most important principle of formal diversification of national higher education, i.e. the coexistence of different types of higher education, is exposed to a new most important principle of formal diversification, i.e. the levels of study programmes? Do the relationships between the two types of higher education institution remain more or less unchanged amid minimalistic adaptations, or is a rapid erosion of the old two-type system a matter of procedure?
It is interesting to note that enormous attention was paid in Finland on the one hand to possible differences of the two-cycle logic in structural and curricular terms. This is underscored by the fact that the Ministry of Education initially issued specific decrees for about 20 different fields or groups of fields and had put all of them into a single decree by 2005. On the other hand, strong efforts have been made to ensure that almost all fields of study move towards a two-cycle structure. Teacher training and engineering, often considered to be special cases in this respect, also eventually moved towards a two-cycle structure. Finland is actually a country where the “coverage” of the two-cycle model across fields has moved a great distance. According to the 2010 Bologna Process evaluation study undertaken by the European University Association (Sursock and Smidt 2010), the two-cycle system has not (yet) been introduced across Europe in about 75 per cent of the medical field, about half in architecture, about 33 per cent of the law field and teacher training, and about 25 per cent in engineering.

Finland has opted for range of solutions as far as the length of the study programmes is concerned. Three-year programmes are the norm, but “in some fields exceptions can be made so that a programme of three and a half years (210 ECTS credits) to four years (240 credits)” exist (p. 59). The length of a Master’s degree is one and a half or two years, whilst the overall length of both programmes as a rule is five years, possibly slightly shorter or slightly longer (p. 59). According to a report published by EURYDICE (2010), 18 European countries had introduced a consistent 3–2 structure, 10 countries a consistent four-year Bachelor’s degree with different lengths of Master’s, and the remaining countries more than a single model.

To the international observer, it would have been interesting to read more about how the discourse and the eventual decisions in Finland concerning the coverage of fields and the length of the study programmes have been influenced by the strongly emphasised goal of establishing an internationally comparable system in Finland. Was there any concrete consistent notion what “comparable” means – for example a 3–2 model in all fields except for medical fields? Or was there a notion that Europe is on its way along a corridor of various options as regards lengths and coverage of two-cycle programmes, and that Finland should remain in such a corridor in an effort to create a “comparable” system?
In reflecting on the discourse on the degree structure in Finland, the report put forward what seems to be a pet term among the Finnish evaluators: the “feasibility” of the degree structure (pp. 54–55). No further explanation is provided as to why this term has been chosen in surveying the views within the institutions of higher education and what is meant by “feasible”. One can infer, however, from the subsequent text, that the degree structure is considered not to be feasible, if powers or actors outside the control of those responsible for higher education institutions (managers and academics) undermine the functioning of the cycle structure (i.e. not the knowledge system, not the academics and not the administrators, but rather students voting with their feet, employers, etc.).

However, the surveys undertaken by the Finnish evaluation team have elicited one surprising result in this respect. It is not surprising that a clearly higher proportion of both the representatives of the institution as a whole (84%) and those of the fields of study (80%) at universities of applied sciences consider the two-cycle structure feasible than that of the respective representatives at universities. We also observe in other countries that representatives of other institutions of higher education consider themselves and their clientele more often to be the winners of the Bologna reforms than university representatives.

It is remarkable, though, that the representatives of the university faculties (36%) clearly less often note such a “feasibility” than the representatives of the universities as a whole (55%) (see p. 54). One cannot assume that the university representatives of the different level have a divergent notion as regards students and employers’ reservations concerning the two-cycle structure; thus, one can assume that the less positive responses from the university faculties reflect a reservation on the part of the academics themselves.

The Finnish evaluators themselves underscore the limited “feasibility” even more strongly than one could expect in looking merely at the above named survey result. To quote the report: “A central problem in the degree structure according to the university sector is a lack of a genuine two-cycle structure ...” (p. 55). The report names various problems, but two of them stand out: First, most students seem to consider the Bachelor’s just as an interim certificate and continue to study. Second, some sectors of the employment system seem to require almost exclusively a Master’s level degree as their entry qualification.
From a comparative perspective, we repeatedly note a certain configuration of arguments about the results of the Bologna Process in many assessments of this reform process. There is a wonderful European model on the one hand, and there are national resistances, deviations and imperfections on the other. Although the Finnish evaluation report on the degree reform is highly reflective and elaborate, it falls to a certain extent into the same trap by talking about Finnish objectives and Finnish problems of implementation, even though the authors of the Finnish report undoubtedly know that Finland is not unique as far as these problems are concerned.

The European reality might be illustrated with a look at the whereabouts of Bachelor’s graduates. A secondary analysis of recent graduate surveys in various European countries (Schomburg and Teichler 2011) shows that the majority of university Bachelors’ graduates continue studying (as for example the clear majority of Bachelors’ graduates do in the United Kingdom, the United States, Japan, etc.). 75% of Bachelors’s graduates in Germany continue study, 73% in Norway, 68% in Austria and 57% in Italy in contrast to 23% in the United Kingdom. However, this comparative secondary analysis of available surveys shows that the often-discussed duality between further study and employment does not exist that sharply. Rather, many graduates – certainly in part in response to the ambivalent debate about the value of a Bachelor’s – opt for concurrent employment and further study. For example, 34% of Norwegian Bachelor’s graduates continue to study exclusively within a short period after graduation, while 39% study and work at the same time. The respective figures are 51% and 24% in Germany, 40% and 28% in Austria, and 42% and 15% in Italy.

Obviously, there is no joint European ideal in tension with national realities, but there is a joint European ideal in tension with joint European realities – at least in a substantial number of countries. One wonders whether this calls for an analysis of the extent to which the problems occurring in the implementation of the degree reform are really country-specific or whether they are similar across countries as well as for a cross-European search for improvement.

The Finnish evaluation report points out that other features also prevent the emergence of a “genuine two-cycle structure”, e.g. the right to study (i.e. up to Master’s level). These are certainly features where national regulations come into play, even though similar conditions can be found in other European countries as well.
The Finnish evaluation report presents a very convincing analysis. However, we note a phenomenon that can often be observed in other similar reports. Recommendations are formulated, which might be viewed as one of various possible options, but which are not presented in such a way that they persuade the reader to consider them the most convincing recommendations. As regards the lack of a “genuine two-cycle structure”, the report recommends a restrictive solution: the right to study should be confined to the initial admission. Students willing to study in a Master's programme should undergo a selection process. Bachelor's programmes should be made more attractive in some areas through a study period longer than three years (see p. 59).

Such suggestions are understandable in the light of various reported problems. It is surprising to hear that a substantial number of students embark on Master's programmes before they have been awarded a Bachelor's degree. There seems to be good reasons to be concerned that the quality of Master's programmes suffers from the easy transition from Bachelor’s to Master’s level.

However, such suggestions – so we can argue from a comparative perspective – assume that the level of a study programme and a degree is an enormously important element in terms of defining the logic of a higher education system. In contrast, we note that rights to study at certain levels and system-wide regulations regarding access would be toothless tigers in countries with highly stratified higher education (e.g. the United States and Japan), because those institutions with high prestige are selective anyway, and the institutions with low prestige let in and let through. As a consequence, the regulatory system does not control the overall number of students – neither for the whole system nor for levels of study – in those countries. The European discourse on the importance of the comparability of degrees seems to disregard the vertical drift in higher education – the increasing attention being paid to the ranks of institutions and programmes that seem to affect countries increasingly where the dominant policies have tried in the past to counteract the trends towards a steep stratification of institutions and study programmes. One could argue against the recommendations in the report: The achievement of a “genuine two-cycle structure” with the help of regulations restricting the students’ flows is hopeless, because reputational differences will lead the less-prestigious sectors to open their doors despite restrictive guidelines.
In many European countries, we hear a further argument similar to those in the Finnish evaluation report. One could stabilise the Bachelor’s degree by allowing more Bachelor’s programmes to be more or less as long as the old single-cycle university programmes (see p. 59). Of course, this would be viewed as an attractive solution for students who are afraid of being losers if they leave higher education with a Bachelor’s on the one hand and who are not necessarily interested in advanced study on the other. Similarly, employers who only care for certain types of skills, like teachers and judges, could dream of getting these competencies through a long Bachelor’s rather than through an even longer Master’s programme. But one could then ask as a consequence: why did Europe embark on such a dramatic change of study programmes and degrees if the Bachelor’s programmes were all made attractive through their length of study, and the level of educational attainment is as similar as possible to the old long university programme – and if the curricula of Bachelor’s programmes became “almost-long programmes” – or “bonsai-Master’s”, as one Italian expert phrased this state of affairs? One could argue that the genuine aim of the degree reform is to prepare higher education for a “mass knowledge society” by increasing entry rates to three-quarters of a given age group (see, for example, the arguments in the OECD publication “Redefining Tertiary Education”) and thereby foreseeing short programmes for the majority of students. According to this view, lengthening Bachelor’s programmes would stabilise a “genuine Bachelor’s” by undermining the rationale for creating a two-cycle system at all. One might question this argument, but it is clear that one cannot opt for a lengthening of Bachelor’s programmes without discussing its implications for the logic of the degree reform as a whole.

6 Bologna and “ammattikorkeakoulu”

The amazing feature of the Bologna Process is the fact that the ministers responsible for higher education in the various European countries decided to move in similar directions in order in increase the “comparability” of higher education without any specific vision about the optimum model one wanted to achieve beyond just a two-cycle logic. There was no agreement at the beginning as regards the length of the study programmes, the disciplinary coverage and the implications of this new model for the non-university sector.
In the subsequent years, efforts have been made to reach a common understanding about a desirable European model, for example on the occasion of Bologna follow-up conferences on Bachelor’s and Master’s held in 2001 and 2003 in Helsinki with the support of the Finnish Ministry of Education (see Teichler 2007, chapters 14 and 15).

One could argue, though, that there has been a mainstream view. Accordingly, a three-year Bachelor’s and a two-year Master’s, a two-cycle system in as many fields of study as possible and a relatively high degree of structural similarity of the two-cycle system in the university and the non-university sector would be the most desirable solution.

One can argue that Finland has moved in this direction towards a European ideal option to a substantial extent in choosing the 3–2 structure as the dominant one for universities and in realising the two-cycle structure in all disciplinary areas except medicine. As far as other institutions of higher education are concerned, the Finnish policy, in contrast, seems to have been determined more strongly by the desire to preserve a specific character of the UAS in Finland than by the desire to increase “comparability” of study programmes and degrees with other European countries.

Obviously, there was a range of options at the beginning of the Bologna Process for those national higher education systems in Europe that had been characterised by two institutional types (for example Austria, Germany, the Netherlands, Norway, Portugal and Switzerland). At one extreme, one could have kept the old study programmes at the other institutions of higher education or one could have modified them moderately without involving these institutions in the Master’s level. In that case, one might have introduced the title “Bachelor’s”, but this would not change very much – neither as regards the professional value of the degree nor as regards transition from these institutions to university programmes. In the opposite extreme, both universities and other institutions of higher education would provide Bachelor’s and Master’s programmes structurally in a similar way to universities (differences in curricular thrusts notwithstanding), and ample opportunity for mobility between the institutional types would be provided.

The Finnish report on the degree reform shows that it has taken some time in Finland to come to any coordinated option of the new degree system across sectors of the higher education system. Moreover, the option that was eventually
chosen in 2005 underscores distinctions between the sectors more strongly than a coordinated system. The universities of applied sciences offer Bachelor’s programmes now lasting between 3 ½ and 4 ½ years as a rule, i.e. longer programmes than the new Bachelor’s programmes at universities, and they offer only Masters’-level programmes for students with several years of professional experience as the first degree, whereby most students study part-time. In contrast to the university sector, students at other institutions do not have the right to study at the Master’s level.

This does not mean that this option excludes the Finnish universities of applied sciences from the benefits of the Bologna Process. Intra-European temporary student mobility at the Bachelor’s level seems to have been moderately facilitated. The Bologna Process might have also facilitated international professional mobility of graduates from universities of applied sciences.

However, the substantial list of problems named in this respect in the report suggests that the degree reform has created the expectation of a higher degree of horizontal and vertical system coordination at Bachelor’s and Master’s level in Finland, too. There are complaints that the transition from a Bachelor’s degree awarded by universities of applied sciences to a Master’s programme at universities is too complicated. Critique is often voiced about barriers against transfer of study at these institutions to study at universities.

Obviously, the Finnish option shows that European “comparability” at the Master’s level has been a major objective, at least for the university sector. One could argue that this has not been the aim in several other European countries and that therefore Finnish policies in that direction would not have been successful anyway.

However, one could argue from comparative perspective, as already pointed out above, that the Bologna Process has triggered a process of fundamental structural change, according to which the level of student programmes becomes the dominant feature of formal structural diversification, while types of higher education lose importance in this respect. This paradigmatic shift seems to be on the move in Finland to some extent, although the current regulatory system underscores a relatively clear divide according to institutional types. It does not seem to be a risky prediction that the discussions in Finland in the ongoing process of degree reform will continue to be more controversial in this area than in most other areas of degree reform.
Certainly, the specifics of the degree reform at universities of applied sciences in Finland are treated as an important theme in the report. Looking across the specifics of the Finnish AMK, however, one could ask across Europe: what will happen if the previously most important principle of formal diversification of a national higher education system, i.e. the coexistence of different types of higher education, is exposed to a new most important principle of formal diversification, i.e. levels of study programmes? Do the relationships between the two types of higher education institution remain more or less unchanged amidst minimalistic adaptations, or is a rapid erosion of the old two-type system a matter of procedure?

It is interesting to note that enormous attention has been paid in Finland on the one hand to possible differences in the two-cycle logic in structural and curricular terms. This is underscored by the fact that the Ministry of Education initially issued specific decrees for about 20 different fields or groups of fields and put all of them into a single decree by 2005. On the other hand, strong efforts have been made to ensure that almost all fields of study move towards a two-cycle structure. Teacher training and engineering, often considered special cases in this respect, eventually moved towards a two-cycle structure. Finland is actually a country where the “coverage” of the two-cycle model across fields has moved a significant distance. According to the 2010 Bologna Process evaluation study undertaken by the European University Association, the two-cycle degree structure has not (yet) been introduced across Europe in about three-quarters of the medical fields, about half in architecture, about one-third in law as well as teacher training, and about a quarter in engineering (Sursock and Smidt 2010).

7 Specific Finnish objectives

As already pointed out above, a long list of “national objectives” for the degree reform is presented in the Finnish evaluation report. However, various objectives and measures stated in this framework are frequently named as well as objectives and measures across various European countries. In addition, the integration of the UAS study programmes into the overall Bologna structure is an issue that all countries with a two-type higher education system have to handle. This issue is not specific to Finland, only the way it is handled. Thus, only two
objectives and measures named can really be considered to be Finnish objectives:

- Reduction of prolongation of study and reduction in the rate of dropout,
- Encouragement of “domestic mobility”.

The reduction of prolongation of study and of rates of dropout, as pointed out in the report, is not really a uniquely Finnish concern, but it is more strongly emphasised in the Bologna context in Finland than in many other European countries. In some European countries, a credit system is newly built up in the framework of the Bologna Process, and this is expected to lead to a higher extent of “efficiency” in terms of the duration of study and of completion rates. Moreover, efficiency of study is on the agenda, because the total required study period up to the Master’s degree is longer in many cases than the preceding long single-cycle study programmes; it widely hoped that the actual study time would not be longer, if prolongation of study could be concurrently reduced.

According to responses provided by the individual institutions of higher education to a question posed by the Finnish evaluation team on the actual attainments of the national objectives, success is reported primarily as regards the development of a credit system and the labour-market relevance of the degree content. Moreover, the respective institutions respond relatively positively in terms of the institutional type-specific objectives: the universities regarding the status of the Bachelor’s degree and the universities of applied sciences regarding the profiling of the UAS Master’s (p. 43).

Negative ratings, however, dominate regarding the really specific Finnish objectives: shorter study times, lower dropout rates – the two objectives “most poorly obtained” (p. 43) – and increasing domestic mobility as well as – surprisingly, as will be discussed below – the most strongly emphasised strategic objective in the Bologna Declaration of 1999, i.e. increasing international mobility.

The responses to subsequent detailed questions have obviously confirmed that only a small minority of institutions of higher education in Finland have seen a reduction of prolongation or a reduction of the drop-out rate (see pp. 67–68) and that some institutions have even experienced prolonged study times and increased drop-out rates (see p. 78–79). Thus, a failure of achieving the above named objectives seems to be the case, even though there have been targeted measures in place which could be useful in principle for attaining such goals, namely an adaptation of the credit system as well as
the introduction of Personal Study Plans, which have been mandatory for all students since 2006 (see p. 79).

In searching for the reasons for not attaining the objectives – notably the objective of reducing prolongation of study, the report primarily names elements of student behaviour, such as part-time study alongside employment, or other personal reasons for less concentrated study than the norm of full-time study. In contrast to the objectives pursued in Finland, one could argue in this context that longer average periods of study, linked with a broader range of other activities than study, could be considered a normal phenomenon on the way to a lifelong learning society. One could also argue that long study periods would not be viewed negatively, if students could opt for different modes of part-time enrolment (as is customary for example in the U.S. where prolongation of Bachelor’s study beyond the period required for full-time study is no less frequent than in most of the European countries where complaints about prolongation of study are widespread).

It might be interesting in this context to observe the respective discourse in other European countries. For example, there is a widespread complaint among representatives of the higher education institutions and as well as among students in Germany that the new Bachelor’s programmes, in combination with the introduction of a credit system, have led to an overburdening of students and thus to a further prolongation of study. In contrast, student and graduate surveys in Germany show that students do not spend more hours per week on study than they did before, and prolongation of study beyond the required period and the dropout rate have actually been reduced in the new degree programmes.

Most of the arguments presented in the Finnish evaluation report suggest that the new degree programme cannot be understood to be a tool for the reduction of prolongation of study and for the reduction of dropout rates. This would suggest dropping these objectives in this framework. Surprisingly, though, the Finnish evaluation recommends the following: “The funding model should steer higher education institutions to take more vigorous actions to support the smooth progress of studies and the completion of study within the target time” (p. 69). We can infer that the report assumes reasons for prolongation and dropout that have not been named in the analytical part of the text, i.e. low enthusiasm on the part of the institutions of higher education as far as these objectives are concerned, which the authors
of the report believe could be turned into enthusiasm if low enthusiasm was penalised.

The report is less clear about the issue of *domestic mobility* than about most other issues addressed. First, the definition of domestic mobility is misleading. “Domestic mobility refers to the transition from the first to the second-cycle degree studies as well as mobility within higher education sectors and fields and between the two higher education sectors.” This could be understood as suggesting the transition from the first cycle to the second cycle even within the same field at the same institutions is viewed as mobility.

Second, the report does not say at all (i.e. does not name any figures) how widespread mobility was prior to the degree reform. Neither does it say what extent of increase might have been expected and what scale of increase has actually taken place. It only shows that there is a widespread belief in institutions of higher education that degree reform has provided to some extent “better opportunities for domestic mobility” (p. 87) (in the interpretation of the data, perceived “opportunities” and perceived actual increase seem to be mixed up, see p. 88).

Third, the report provides figures about the perception of change of mobility on the part of the institutions of higher education. Perceptions were reported regarding other issues as well. However, the report points out that the institutions of higher education do not have a clear idea as to why their students disappear (dropout, stop-out, domestic mobility, international mobility). Therefore, factual figures would have been more important in this thematic area than anywhere else in the report.

Fourth, the report does not make clear in which respect the degree reform could be expected to promote domestic mobility and in which respect such an effect would be unlikely. It points out that there is room for improvement in the recognition of credits; this might lead us to infer that the evaluators see room for increasing inter-institutional mobility within the same field of study.

Again, a look at other countries might be useful in this context. Germany is known as a country where inter-institutional mobility during the course of study is traditionally held in high esteem. Past surveys of university students and graduates of the traditional single-cycle structure, however, have shown that less than one-fifth of students move between universities, and less than one-fifth change the field of study. Recent surveys show that the new degree structure
substantially increases domestic mobility: about one-third of all Master’s students have changed institution at the point of transition from Bachelor’s study to Master’s study, and the change in the field of study is by no means infrequent.

The Finnish Report argues convincingly “The potential for domestic student mobility incorporated in the degree structure has yet to be fully utilized.” (p. 89). It also points out convincingly that institutions of higher education might be ardent believers in the increase of incoming mobile students, but not in the increase of the flipside of the coin, i.e. outgoing mobile students. There seems to be a need for more clarity of the objectives and the potentially successful measures in this thematic area. One might assume, however, that clarity cannot be easily achieved; for example, there might be quite divergent views as regards the extent to which transfer from universities of applied sciences to universities is seen as desirable.

8 The degree reform and international student mobility

The increase in international student mobility is named in the Bologna Declaration of 1999 as the single most important strategic aim for the introduction of a two-cycle structure. The Finnish evaluation report on the degree reform, however, reserves less than one-tenth of its core text for the theme of cross-border student mobility. This certainly reflects that it seems easy to measure the impact of the degree reform in this area. Moreover, various changes in international mobility of students have addressed in various studies and reports prior to this 2010 report. This shows as well how broad the range of the objectives and measures linked to the degree reform has become Europe-wide as well as in the individual European countries.

The available international expert literature clearly suggest that international student mobility has to be divided into at least four categories: short-term outgoing mobility (occasionally called credit mobility and misleadingly called student exchange in the Finnish evaluation report – misleading, because short-time mobility is not necessarily embedded into exchange arrangements), outgoing mobility for a whole degree mobility (also called outwards degree mobility), short-term incoming mobility, and incoming mobility for a whole degree programme.
Moreover, the Bologna Declaration of 1999 makes a distinction between two strategic objectives as regards student mobility: To make European countries more attractive for students from other regions of the world, and to facilitate intra-European mobility. Finally, some analyses of student mobility emphasise the distinction between “horizontal mobility”, i.e. students moving between countries and institutions of more or less the same quality, and “vertical mobility”, i.e. students moving towards a host country and institution with clearly higher academic quality than at home.

In the Finnish evaluation report, the institutions of higher education are asked to make a distinction primarily between all outgoing and all incoming mobile students, whereby the questions posed refer primarily to the “opportunity”, e.g. “Does the new degree structure give students better opportunities to complete second degrees abroad?” (p. 98); “Does the new degree structure provide international students with better opportunities than previously to study in Finland?” (p. 99).

The report states that statistics compiled by CIMO, the Finnish agency in charge of academic mobility, shows an increase in both incoming “international” students and outgoing students. A comparative analysis published by the Academic Cooperation Association (ACA) in 2011 (Teichler, Ferencz and Wächter 2011) suggests that Finland – in comparison to other ERASMUS-eligible countries – has not experienced a substantial increase of students studying abroad, has an average increase of foreign students from outside Europe and has an above-average increase of foreign students from other European countries. The comparison of the data used by CIMO and those used by ACA is questionable (see also Zirra 2006), because the definitions of “mobile” and “foreign” students differ in some respects and the inclusion of temporary mobile students varies, as does the time-span referred to; in general, it is surprising to note how problematic the international statistics on student mobility are – given the fact that student mobility is so high on the political agenda. One would have wished that the Finnish evaluation study had:

■ taken into consideration that the absolute number of students in Europe and more so outside Europe has grown substantially and that therefore the Bologna Process can be considered a success only if the scale of outward and inward student mobility has increased clearly beyond the increase in the overall student numbers,

■ taken into account the growth rates of mobility during the first decade of the 21st century in comparison to prior
growth rates. If the growth rates in the first decade of the 21st century were no higher than in the preceding decade, this growth could not be attributed to the Bologna Process,

- made a distinction between the change of incoming students from Europe and that of incoming students from other parts of the world,
- had referred to the fact that the international statistics published by UNESCO, OECD and Eurostat do not show any substantial increase of Finnish students studying abroad in recent years – no matter whether the Finnish data base of an increase is more valid or not.

Beyond the statistics, we note a discrepancy in the survey results presented in the Finnish evaluation study. On the one hand, most representatives of the Finnish institutions of higher education underscore that the recent degree reform has improved the opportunities for students from Finland to study in other countries and for students from other countries to study in Finland (pp. 95–99). On the other, the respondents argue on average in response to the general question about the extent of attainment of the national objectives strived for that the objective of increasing international mobility was among those that were relatively poorly attained (see p. 43).

International student mobility seems to have increased notably because the introduction of two-cycle structure is often taken as good opportunity for studying in another country at Master’s level, and because teaching in English has spread. In contrast, it is argued occasionally that highly structured study programmes at Bachelor’s level have turned out to be an impediment to mobility. These arguments can be observed in other countries as well. There is a single specific argument in Finland in this context, however. Universities of applied sciences have not experienced a substantial growth of international student mobility, because some specific characteristics in Finland, such as the entry requirements of various years of professional practice and the strong emphasis of the programme provisions on part-time students, reduce the attractiveness of Master’s programmes for foreign students.

We might draw the conclusion that the increase in international student mobility is primarily favoured by elements of the degree reform that are not at the centre of the long process of reform. Mobility is facilitated primarily through structural reform (i.e. the introduction of Master’s programmes) and through teaching in English, while the
actors in the universities put their energy into reforms of
the content of study and curricula, i.e. dimensions of the
reform the impact of which for the frequency of international
mobility is not clear.

9 New substantive approaches to study
programmes in the wake of the degree reform

The Bologna Declaration has put a student flow-oriented
strategic objective (increase of student mobility) and a
structure-oriented operational objective (introduction of
the two-cycle system of study programmes and degrees) at
the forefront, but all actors involved have known from the
outset that a curricular reform would be needed to make
the structural reform viable and that such a reform of the
substance of study programmes would be the major challenge
in the reform process.

The Finnish evaluation report addresses this thematic
area in the explanation of its approach in three ways:

- in the list of national objectives addressed: “the
  strengthening of a learning outcome oriented approach in
degree requirements” (p. 17);
- in the list of the major themes addressed in the evaluation
  study: “Competencies provided by degrees in relation to
labour markets” (p. 17);
- in the actual analysis as well as in the structure of the
  report, emphasis is placed in addition to curricular reform
  approaches within the individual groups of fields of study
  (separately in universities and in universities of applied
  sciences).

The report underscores, first, that enormous efforts have
been made in Finland to reflect the situation and improve
the curricula and the substance of study programmes in the
overall process of the degree reform in the first decade of
the 21st century. Second, the overall steering process of the
curricular reform has been appreciated widely in Finland as
encouragement of bottom-up initiatives and soft coordination,
even though critique has been voiced here and there. Third,
the reform in the wake of the establishment of a new degree
structure seems to have had the strongest impact in Finland
as regards the curricular formats and the content of study
programme.

From a international perspective, we can underscore
that these three conclusions could not have been drawn in
all countries participating in the Bologna Process. In some countries, the new structure was quickly introduced without any strategic concerns for curricular reforms. In some countries, efforts to reform the content have been extremely heterogeneous. In some countries, the steering process of the curricular reform met with substantial criticism as either too controlling or as too loose. In some countries, hardly any coordinated reform was realised as a consequence of controversial views.

It is clear as well that the reform of the curricula and the content of study – in Finland as in other countries – is extremely complex, takes a long time, shows strengths here and weaknesses there, and is in flux at the time the evaluation has undertaken and, thus, can only be assessed more comprehensively in future evaluation. The Finnish report shows both that successes have been achieved and that the reform of study programmes in the wake of the new two-cycle structure is still a construction site.

In the processes of the establishment of a two-cycle system, many issues of curriculum design and of the content of study programmes have to be tackled. This is visible in the discussion and reform efforts in Finland as well as in other European countries.

First, a distinction has to be made between the levels of competences to be achieved at the programme levels. This is formulated in the qualifications frameworks that have been addressed in another evaluation study undertaken in Finland.

Second, the first degree at universities has to become an entity in its own right. The Bologna Declaration of 1999, therefore, stated: “The degree awarded after the first cycle shall also be relevant to the European labour market”. The Finnish evaluation report considers the high transition rates at Finnish universities from a Bachelor’s degree to Master’s programmes, as already pointed out, as an indication that a “genuine” two-cycle degree system has not yet been achieved. It is obvious, though, that this objective cannot be achieved with the help of a small list of target measures, but rather depends on the overall logic of programme design and the overall content of the first cycle.

Third, the question has been raised across Europe about how many clearly distinct profiles of Bachelor’s and Master’s programmes could be established. In some European countries, certain Bachelor’s programmes or Master’s programmes are officially declared to be distinct types, e.g. Master’s for continuing professional education. In Finland, the Bachelor’s
degree awarded at universities is viewed officially distinct from that at universities of applied sciences and the Master’s degrees awarded are also officially distinct according to institutional type. In contrast, separate Master’s programmes at Finnish universities with specific entry selection procedures, for example with a strong multi-disciplinary emphasis or taught in the English language – often called ‘international Master’s programmes’ – are officially not another type of Master’s programmes. There is a controversial debate across Europe as regards the virtues and drawbacks of clearly distinct types. It would not come as a surprise to note future reconsiderations of the decisions made in the early process of establishing the cycle-structure.

The options chosen in the three thematic areas above – i.e. the definition of the two levels of competences, the genuine character of the first degree at universities and the range of distinct profiles – are highly influential for the overall system of rights and opportunities – as well as restrictions – of mobility between institutions and programmes, progression from Bachelor’s to Master’s and recognition of prior learning. The respective information spread over various sections of the Finnish evaluation reports shows that there is a call for a “uniform, reliable and transparent system” (p. 40) in those respects on the one hand and an extremely varied practice on the other. This cannot come as a surprise because the opinions seem to vary substantially in Finland whether the existing differences in content thrusts and quality levels can be interpreted as sufficiently small to accept transfer easily or as so substantial that no general reliable rules can be viewed as justifiable.

Fourth, there are considerable debates in the course of curricular reform about the configuration of study programmes: where more emphasis on broad-based competences should be placed, where one can recommend new specialisations, whether the formal modularity of a credit system should be transferred into a modular curricular thrust which provides ample room for students to compose their own study programme, what teaching and learning styles are most conducive. The Finnish evaluation report names many of these issues – partly in relation to specific study programmes and partly across fields. To the international observer, the report indicates more clearly a high awareness of the multitude of options and varied choices than a single dominant direction of curricular reforms (as for example the prime preoccupation with the strengthening of key skills in the respective curricular reforms in Germany).
The Bologna Process has been accompanied across Europe by a paradigmatic shift in the area of teaching and learning in higher education. This is often called a shift from attention being given to “knowledge” dissemination and acquisition to an output and outcome awareness, whereby emphasis is newly placed on defining and pursuing “competencies” or – more broadly termed – “learning outcomes”. The report suggests that this paradigmatic shift has been widely accepted at Finnish institutions of higher education and has a strong influence on the overall process of curricular reform.

Finally, the worldwide expectation of a move towards a “knowledge society” and “knowledge economy” has affected the discourse on curricular reforms in the wake of the new degree structure by means of a call to make study programmes more relevant for the graduates’ future tasks. The Finnish evaluation report avoids the most popular phrase across Europe in this context, i.e. “employability”. This is certainly deliberate: to avoid the widespread notion of advocates and critics of this term which seems to call for a subordination of higher education to the presumed immediate demands in the employment market and to the formulated expectations of employers. The term “relevance to the labour market” mostly employed in the Finnish evaluation study calls for an observation and reflection of the prospective tasks of graduates notably in the world of work and possibly in other life spheres, and it calls for intensified communication between higher education and employers, but it leaves room for various interpretations and curricular thrusts. The report supports the view that the debate on curricular thrusts – “academic” versus “professional” or “vocational”, “pursuit of knowledge for its own sake” versus “instrumental knowledge”, “theoretical” versus “applied”, reactive versus innovative, subordinate versus critical – is to a lesser extent shaped by heated fundamentalist controversies in Finland than in many other European countries.

Altogether, the report says less about new dominant thrusts than about a multitude of concepts and activities on the move in Finland. It is interesting note, as already pointed out, that this area of activity is widely viewed as indicating a high degree of attainment among the objectives pursued in the degree reform.
10 Concluding observations

An elaborate evaluation has been undertaken in Finland in order to establish how far the objectives underlying the degree reform in Finland envisaged in the first decade of the 21st century in the framework of the Bologna Process have actually been obtained. The study has been coordinated by the agency that is generally considered to be in charge of evaluation of higher education in Finland – FINHEEC. Information has been primarily collected with the help of questionnaire surveys directed at institutions, faculties and study programmes as a whole, whereby the responding units were encouraged to consolidate joint responses. The study is somewhat surprising to the international observer by developing a longer list of “national” objectives pursued in the degree reform than of European objectives, as well as by completely avoiding international comparisons.

In many respects, the Finnish activities are shaped by the desire to create a degree system close to the most widely held views in Europe about a comparable system, notably through the establishment of three-year Bachelor’s and two-year Master’s programmes in most cases at universities and through the inclusion of almost all fields of study into the two-cycle structure. In terms of the operational objective of the Bologna Process of setting up a comparable two-cycle structure, the Finnish case looks very successful both according these structural features as well as in terms of a balance between standardisation and choice for varied options of the study programmes. However, the system of Master’s programmes at universities of applied sciences is more strongly shaped by the desire to underscore specific characteristics of this sector in Finland than to maximise European “comparability”.

Looking at available comparative analyses on the Bologna reform process across Europe, we have ample reasons to conclude that the bundle of reforms linked to the reform of the degree structure was more successfully pursued in Finland than in many other countries. The Finnish report, however, is very modest as far as the praise for the achievements in Finland is concerned. On the contrary, it strongly underscores remaining weaknesses in order to stimulate further improvements. However, while the analyses are convincing throughout almost the whole text, the recommendations formulated could often be viewed as a selection of many possible options.
According to the institutional units surveyed, the degree reform in Finland is quite successful as regards curricular issues and the content of study programmes. Obviously, a great deal of energy has been mobilised to reform the study programmes, whereby many issues widely pursued across Europe, such as greater emphasis on competences, “learning outcomes” and relevance for the labour-market are in play. This is an ongoing complex process that cannot be assessed comprehensively. However, the Finnish evaluation has chosen a convincing approach in looking at the reform processes in-depth in various groups of fields of study.

The impact of the degree reform on the frequency of international student mobility should have been analysed more robustly. It does not become clear in which categories student mobility has grown beyond the trends of past growth of mobility as well as the trend of overall growth of student numbers (in the numbers of incoming students from other European countries?), where moderate growth can be explained by those general trends (outgoing mobility? Incoming student mobility from countries outside Europe?) and in which way those mobility patterns regarding Finland differ from the general European scene. There are indications that incoming and outgoing mobility at the Master’s level is a growth area in the university sector in Finland, while specific features of Master’s programmes at universities of applied sciences do not seem too inviting for international mobility.

The Finnish report presents an overall ambivalent result in the area of international student mobility. On the one hand, growth patterns are observed in various respects. On the other, the actors – notably at the level of the institutions of higher education as whole – believe that the objective of increasing international student mobility is a poor achievement. Certainly, moderate successes in that direction are less highly appreciated in Finland than reforms in the substance of study programmes.

The degree reform is also not viewed in Finland as a success story in terms of some objectives, which really have been underscored specifically in Finland and can be rightly called “national objectives”, even if similar concerns can be found in other countries. Prolongation of study and dropout rates do not seem to have declined in the wake of the degree reform. In addition, there are no indications reported of a growth of domestic mobility due to the degree reforms. The actors surveyed obviously do not expect substantial changes in those respects, because they note failures, even it might be
premature to expect already visible changes in those respects in 2010. It is somewhat surprising to hear domestic mobility is viewed as not having grown, because a change of institution and field of study at the moment of transition from Bachelor’s degree to the start of Master’s study could be more easily realised than any change in the old single-cycle system.

The result of the degree reform is certainly disappointing in Finland with regard to a core element. No “genuine two-cycle structure” has developed in terms of a relatively frequent decision to transfer to the world of work upon completion of a Bachelor’s programme. This, however, is a widespread phenomenon across Europe. Comparative analyses as well as a common search for improved solutions might be more promising in this domain than a national study, even though a national study can be arranged more consistently and more comprehensively.

Obviously, we have to consider this issue in a broader social context. Under what conditions can we expect a large proportion of Bachelor’s graduates to transfer to the world of work? What are potentials and limits of higher education to make the Bachelor’s level as such more attractive and valuable? Can we expect changes beyond the degree programmes as such which make such an option more attractive, such as smaller salary and status differences according to levels of educational attainment, a higher permeability of professional careers, increasing opportunities for continuing education, etc.? Could there be a more strategic role by played by employment policies in the public sector? What will be character of a “mass knowledge society” – a continuous race for vertical distinctions of a flattening of the social structure?

Altogether, the Finnish evaluation report on the degree reform is a highly professional document. It demonstrates impressive achievements of an evaluation culture and of evaluation studies. It also indicates a climate conducive for a joint search for improvement rather than fundamentalist controversies and efforts to realise completely individualistic options. The report is clearly written. Where it was sometimes difficult to understand the background sufficiently and where presentations of arguments and explanations have looked incomplete to the foreign reader, the author of these comments has received enormous support in additional interviews. Such a national evaluation study of the national process within a similar European degree reform presents so many interesting insights that people involved in similar reforms in other European countries certainly would benefit
from reading the Finnish report. This also might stimulate similar analyses in other European countries.

The Finnish report could not always provide clear answers to the questions posed. There were limits on time and resources, which led the evaluators to put too much weight on collective responses to questionnaires and collective interviewing. Moreover, it is a difficult task anyway to clearly establish the impact in such complex settings. Finally, processes of change of study programmes need a long time span. A similar study undertaken again in about five year, as suggested by the authors of this report, could certainly provide a more comprehensive account of the impact of the degree reform started in the first decade of the 21st century.


APPENDIX:
Themed interviews on 23 January 2012 related to the international analysis

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Time</th>
<th>Interview theme</th>
<th>Interviewees</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>9:00–9:45</td>
<td>Evaluation of the Degree Reform – Main recommendations, following measures and topical issues</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10:00–11:00</td>
<td>Thematic interview 1: Bachelor’s and Master’s degree structure in the university and UAS sector</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11:30–12:30</td>
<td>Thematic interview 2: The curriculum work related to the Bachelor’s and Master’s structure</td>
<td>3</td>
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<tr>
<td>13:30–14:30</td>
<td>Thematic interview 3: Competences provided by the Bachelor’s and Master’s degrees in relation to labour market needs</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15:00–16:00</td>
<td>Thematic interview 4: National and international student mobility</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Avainsanat
Arviointi, yliopisto, ammattikorkeakoulu, tutkinnonuudistus, kaksiportainen tutkintorakenne, liikkuvuus, työelämä
Utövare
Rådet för utvärdering av högskolorna

Publikation
Evaluation of the Bologna Process Implementation in Finland
(Utvärdering av genomförandet av Bolognaprocessen i Finland)

Författare
Del I: Jari Niemelä, Sakari Ahola, Carita Blomqvist, Henna Juusola, Merja Karjalainen, Juha-Pekka Liljander, Ida Mielityinen, Keruut Oikarinen, Sirpa Moitus & Johanna Mattila
Del II: Ulrich Teichler

Abstrakt

I enlighet med RUH:s beslut gjordes i början av 2012 dessutom en internationell analys av hur Bolognaprocessen genomförts i Finland. I detta syfte översattes rapporten om utvärderingen av examensreformen till engelska, och utgående från rapporten samt intervjuer med finländska Bologna-expertar gjorde en internationell expert en analys som fogades till den engelska utvärderingsrapporten som del II.

Den finländska utvärderingsgruppen delade in målen för examensreformen i tre grupper enligt hur de hade uppnåtts. 1) De mål som enligt utvärderingsarbetetsgruppen har uppnåtts till fullo är införandet av studiepoängssystemet och utvecklingen av examina inom andra cykeln vid yrkeshögskolorna. 2) I viss mån uppnådda mål är övergången till en examensstruktur i två steg, stärkningen av status för kandidatexamen, inrättandet av magisterprogram, främjandet av den inhemska och internationella rörligheten, utvecklingen av studiedimensioneringen och stärkningen av kompetensorienteringen. 3) Ett mål som inte har uppnåtts är förkortning av studietiderna.


Enligt den internationella experten har man i Finland lyckats tämligen bra med att utveckla undervisningsplanerna och examensprogrammen så att de motsvarar examensstrukturen i två steg enligt Bolognaprocessen. Att man tills vidare inte har lyckats skapa ett "äkta tvåstegssystem" är enligt experten ett allmänmeuropeiskt fenomen. Enligt experten är Finlands så kallade nationella oro för utdragna studietider och studieavlopp vanlig även i andra länder. Examensreformens inverkan på studerandes internationella rörlighet borde ha analyserats med avseende på vilken typ av rörlighet som har ökat och hur modellerna för finländska studerandes rörlighet skiljer sig från den allmänmeuropeiska situationen. Enligt experten var en stark sida hos RUH:s utvärdering den ingående granskningen av examensreformen ur olika utbildningsområdets perspektiv. Experten anser att rapporten visar att den finländska utvärderingskulturen har nätt betydande resultat. Experten anser på samma sätt som utvärderingsgruppen att det tar tid att ändra examensprogrammen och av denna orsak lönar det sig att genomföra en ny, motsvarande utvärdering om ungefär fem år.

Nyckelord
Utvärdering, universitet, yrkeshögskola, examensreform, examensstruktur i två steg, rörlighet, arbetsliv
### ABSTRACT

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Evaluation of the Bologna Process Implementation in Finland

**Authors**  
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Part II: Ulrich Teichler

**Abstract**  
The group for developing the university degree structure appointed by the Ministry of Education proposed in 2002 that the implementation of the degree reform should be evaluated on a national level following the launch of the new structure. The evaluation project was implemented in 2010 by an eight-member evaluation team appointed by the Finnish Higher Education Evaluation Council FINHEEC. The evaluation examined how well the original European and national objectives set for the Bologna process had been achieved. The main target was to evaluate the feasibility of the two-cycle degree structure, i.e. how well it functions in Finland. All Finnish higher education institutions participated in the project.

According to the FINHEEC decision, an international analysis of the Bologna implementation in Finland was also drawn up in early 2012. For this purpose, the degree reform evaluation report was translated into English, and based on the report and interviews conducted with Finnish Bologna experts, an analysis was produced by an international expert that was attached as the second part to the English evaluation report.

The Finnish evaluation team divided the objectives for the degree reform in three by their implementation: First, those that could be regarded as being completely achieved were the introduction of European Credit Transfer and Accumulation System (ECTS) and the development work related to the second-cycle degrees in universities of applied sciences (UASs). Second, the objectives that were partly achieved were the shift to a two-cycle degree structure, the strengthening of the status of the Bachelor's degree, the implementation of Master's degree programmes, the promotion of domestic and international mobility, the development of quantitative planning in higher education and the strengthening of a competence-based approach. Third, the evaluation team regarded the objective of reducing total study times as completely unachieved.

In conjunction with the degree reform, Finnish legislation was also reformed to conform with the Bologna Process. This enabled the two-cycle degree structure and the international comparability of the Finnish degree system. The evaluation team considered the degree reform to be a significant development project, which was carried out in a well-organised manner in a very short period of time. According to the evaluation team, cooperation within fields was elemental to the successful outcome of the degree reform. The review of curricula gave rise to discussion on the adoption of a working life-oriented and competence-based approach in higher education and emphasised the responsibility of higher education institutions in providing working life skills to students.

Although the concept of the two-cycle degree structure is clear from the perspective of legislation, in practice it has failed to function in the intended way, particularly in universities. According to the report, the majority of universities still require the transfer to "a genuine two-cycle structure”. To facilitate the adoption of a genuine two-cycle system, the evaluation team recommended that the right to study be awarded mainly for the Bachelor's degree only, and a separate round of admissions for Bachelor's degree holders should be held to enter Master's degree education. The UAS Master's degrees should be further developed as a development-oriented degree in close connection with working life and the current way of completing the degrees should be retained. To increase mobility, the evaluation team suggested that the contents of Bachelor's degrees should be adjusted to provide better capacity to select specialisation only when moving onto the Master's degree programme. Facilitating international mobility for outgoing students requires better planning of exchange periods, adequately flexible curricula and collaboration with foreign higher education institutions. The planning of Bachelor's degrees as independent degrees would clarify the two-cycle degree structure, which in turn could reduce study times and the number of dropouts.

According to the international expert, with regard to the operational objective of the Bologna Process of setting up a comparable two-cycle structure, Finland is quite successful in terms of the curricular issues and the content of study programmes. The expert points out that so far no “genuine two-cycle structure” has developed which, however, is a widespread phenomenon across Europe. The expert sees that what might be seen as the Finnish national concerns on the prolongation of study and dropout rates can be found in other countries, too. The impact of the degree reform on the frequency of international student mobility should have been analysed e.g. in terms of in which categories student mobility has grown and in which way those mobility patterns regarding Finland differ from the general European scene. The expert appreciates the fact that the evaluation took an in-depth look at the reform in various fields of study and he thinks the report demonstrates impressive achievements of the Finnish evaluation culture. The expert agrees with the evaluation team that changes in degree programmes take time and therefore a similar evaluation in about five years would be worthwhile.

**Keywords**  
Evaluation, university, university of applied sciences, degree reform, two-cycle degree structure, mobility, working life
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