**Vidzeme University of Applied Sciences Development Strategy 2023–2028**

**Strategic part**

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# Introduction

Vidzeme University of Applied Sciences (VUAS) Development Strategy 2023–2028 (the Strategy) is a medium-term planning document. The Strategy is a continuation of the VUAS Strategy 2016–2020, on the basis of which VUAS operated also in 2021 and 2022, taking into account at the time ongoing process of the reform of the governance of higher education institutions in Latvia and the conditions set by it. Since its establishment, VUAS has become an important player in the development of engineering and ICT fields, especially in niches such as virtual and augmented reality, cybersecurity, and sustainable construction. VUAS is also an important player in the education and research system for the development of social sciences, especially in niches such as circular economy, strategic communication, media literacy, sustainable and smart tourism services. In the new planning period, VUAS sets four strategic goals, related to the development of a sought-after educational offer for the growth of human capital, the promotion of excellence and interdisciplinarity in research, the VUAS involvement in the creation of innovations for economic growth, as well as the development of VUAS as an organisation to attract talent, becoming a platform for growth for everyone to fulfil their dreams and goals.

The primary leitmotif of the Strategy is VUAS contribution to a sustainable knowledge-based society in Latvia, Europe and beyond, aiming to be among the best European universities of applied sciences outside national capital cities and to be a driving force for regional[[1]](#footnote-2) development and talent attraction. The Strategy is based on the ecosystem[[2]](#footnote-3) approach: it encompasses VUAS an internal ecosystem of the organisation, consisting of its departments, organisational culture and processes, teamwork, as well as the external ecosystem – the partnerships important for the sustainable existence of VUAS in the Vidzeme region, Latvia and internationally, which need to be built, maintained and which serve to enable VUAS to successfully contribute to the wider European and global education, science and innovation ecosystem. The backbone of the international dimension of the VUAS ecosystem in the long term is VUAS participation in the European University Consortium E3UDRES2 (Engaged and Entrepreneurial European University as Driver for European Smart and Sustainable Regions), which also includes VUAS participation in other international cooperation networks. In Latvia, it is both long-term and medium-term cooperation with various stakeholders – businesses, policy makers at regional and national level, other higher education institutions and scientific institutes, non-governmental organisations, etc. In the Vidzeme region, VUAS is building strong partnership links with the so-called “5V+”, the core of which currently consists of VUAS, Municipality of Valmiera region, Valmiera Development Agency, Valmiera Business and Innovation Incubator and Vidzeme Planning region, but in the future it is also possible to include other important players in the region.

**Figure 1 Visualisation of the VUAS education, research, innovation creation ecosystem**

**Table 1. Overview of the interests of VUAS and its stakeholders within the ecosystem**

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **Industry associations** | Participation in policy planning, research commissions, alignment of study content with future labour market needs, attraction of guest lecturers, *third party* in building VUAS reputation, demand for lifelong learning content, joint activities for industry development |
| **Policy makers in the EU and Latvia** | Regulatory framework, funding for studies, science, innovation, piloting new initiatives, consulting, State Research Programmes, new planning period from 2028 |
| **HEIs and research institutions in Latvia** | Joint study content, research, engagement in innovation, capacity building for funding (State Research Programmes, Fundamental and Applied Research Programme), common interest representation, open science, science communication, new partnership networks  |
| **Foreign partners for education, research, innovation** | Joint study content, research and high-level scientific outputs, involvement in fostering innovation, international mobility, capacity building for funding, common interest representation, human capital development, experience exchange, open science, science communication |
| **Industry partners** | Research, practical challenges in the study process, industrial doctoral studies programme, internships, resource sharing, lifelong learning offer for human capital development, commercialisation of science |
| **Graduates** | Joint research, innovation promotion, talent development, strengthening of VUAS brand, internships, career opportunities for students/graduates, involvement in the study process, networking platform |
| **5V+** | *Roots in Vidzeme and Valmiera*, building VUAS reputation, coordination in development planning, funding attraction, promoting common interests at national level, joint projects, attracting talent to the county and region |
| **Secondary and vocational education institutions in Latvia** | Reality check on VUAS study offer, platform for testing ideas, student attraction, sharing laboratory resources, fostering students' research skills, consulting, VUAS expertise, strengthening teachers' skills |
| **Media**  | Building VUAS reputation, science communication, increasing the competencies of media workers, media literacy initiatives |
| **Diaspora organisations**  | Guest professors, guest lecturers, student attraction, joint projects, events, VUAS expertise  |
| **Donors** | Scholarship programmes for students, targeted scholarships, individual scholarships, donations to the VUAS Foundation for the development of VUAS activities in studies, science, research |
| **Residents of Vidzeme and other regions** | Public science, lifelong learning activities, science communication |

VUAS strives to be a partner for life for the stakeholders defined in this Strategy and operate in a way that ensures that relationships within the ecosystem are sustainable and oriented towards cooperation to achieve goals that could not be achieved as well if the parties did not work together. The process and outcome of the cooperation are such that all parties are motivated to continue it.

# Strategy development process and methodology

The Strategy was developed taking into account the goals and priorities set out in planning documents of the Republic of Latvia and various international planning documents. A wide range of regional, national and international stakeholders' perspectives on VUAS performance to date and future growth opportunities have been taken into account, as well as numerous discussions have taken place within VUAS, involving both staff and students.

The Strategy is based on seven core principles:

1. Engaging planning: during the development of the Strategy, a broad representation of stakeholders was ensured: VUAS staff, students, private and public sector representatives, foreign partners, education and innovation experts. A wide range of engagement methods were used: focus groups, workshops, surveys, discussions, individual and group meetings, etc;
2. Comprehensive planning: the Strategy takes into account all areas of the University's activities: education, research, innovation promotion and commercialisation of science, resource management and provision, cooperation, communication, etc;
3. Interconnected planning: the Strategy is developed in relation to national and international level policies of education, science and innovation promotion, taking into account the strategic specialisation of VUAS approved by its founder the Ministry of Education and Science (MoES), the Constitution of the University and other documents;
4. Financially sound planning: the Strategy is developed with measurable and achievable financial performance goals;
5. Cooperation-enhancing planning: the Strategy was developed in collaboration with stakeholders, taking into account their strategic objectives, prioritising effective cooperation and sustainable resource sharing;
6. Monitoring of the implementation of the Strategy: the planned monitoring measures of the implementation of the Strategy are based on data that is readily available, reliable and regularly collected. The Strategy indicates the sources of data.
7. Bottom-up approach: in the development of the Strategy, as much consideration as possible was given to proposals and data previously collected at different levels of the VUAS structure.

Work on the VUAS Strategy began in 2020 by systematically working with various stakeholders, ensuring their involvement in the development of the Strategy. The development of the Strategy was completed on 5 July 2023 (VUAS Council Decision No.8/1.1).

**Table 2. Overview of the Strategy development process and key actions taken to gather information and to ensure stakeholder involvement (2020–2023):**

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
|  | **Time period** | **Activity** | **Result** |
| 1. | November 2020 | VUAS Councillors' Convention discussion on the development of VUAS in the next 10 years | Survey: what keywords should describe VUAS, what should be our contribution to society, what should be the actions to ensure the expected contribution to society |
| 2. | November 2020 | Analysis of key performance indicators of the VUAS Strategy 2016–2020 at the VUAS Councillors' Convention | Analysis of the implementation of key performance indicators in the previous strategy period |
| 3. | February – November 2021 | Five workshops for regional stakeholders (businesses, public administration, municipalities, 40 people in total) | Stakeholders' vision of the future development directions for the university was obtained, potential challenges were identified |
| 4. | March 2021 | Constitutional Assembly Working Groups – Future University, VUAS 2030 | Vision for the development of the university obtained – VUAS development context maps created  |
| 5.  | March 2021 | Results of International Evaluation of Scientific Institutions obtained | Foreign experts' evaluation and recommendations for the development of VUAS as a scientific institution obtained |
| 6. | 2021–2023 | Current international accreditation of five VUAS study directions | Self-assessment reports – analysis of the current situation, plans for future development; expert evaluations and recommendations received both for the study directions and institution-wide |
| 7. | November 2021 | VUAS long-term development vision (VUAS 2030) seminar: participation of heads of VUAS departments and decision-making bodies | Developed proposals for the vision, mission and strategic goals of VUAS in relation to the NDP, E3UDRES2 development plans |
| 8. | 2021–2022 | Faculty development planning: participation of academic staff of the faculty and administrative staff | Vision for the future development possibilities of IF and SZF |
| 9. | November 2022 | Regional Stakeholder Forum in Austria within E3UDRES2: participation of entrepreneurs, municipalities, public administrations, business support organisations | Developed mapping of stakeholder needs – a vision for the role of HEIs in regional development |
| 10. | November 2022 | Student discussion within E3UDRES2 about future university concept for youth of the future | Gained students' views on the future development of universities |
| 11. | December 2022 | Assessment of VUAS readiness for cooperation with industry using the *Engagement readiness self-assessment* tool: participation of VUAS lecturers, administration representatives | Organisation has carried out a self-assessment: VUAS readiness for cooperation with industry |
| 12. | December 2022 | Mapping workshop within 5V+ on stakeholders’ strategic goals: participation of VUAS, Valmiera region, Valmiera Development Agency, Valmiera Business and Innovation Incubator, Vidzeme Planning region | Developed mapping of strategic goals: common interests, areas, goals, needs that can be met by someone of the 5V+ community, including vision of VUAS contribution to achieving partners' goals and readiness of stakeholders to engage in the implementation of VUAS goals |
|  | 2022–2023 | Reports of the Audit Commission of the Constitutional Assembly of the VUAS: Implementation of HE governance reforms in Latvia and VUAS; Project management at VUAS | Developed mapping of objectives for further development of VUAS – for improvement of governance, communication, and information flow and more successful involvement of staff in various projects |
| 13. | January 2023 | Rector's meeting with VUAS Students' Association representatives about the framework of the future strategy: participation of VUAS students | Feedback from students on the framework of the future strategy: vision, mission, strategic goals |
|  | January – April 2023 | Discussion about the vision, mission, values, strategic goals, objectives of the strategy within VUAS: developed platform for submitting individual written comments, organised meetings | Feedback and proposals from VUAS staff for the preparation of the Strategy Action Programmes |
| 14. | January – May 2023 | VUAS Council discussions at monthly Council meetings during the development of the Strategy | Feedback from Council members on the draft of the Strategy, suggestions for further work on it |
| 15. | May 2023 | Discussion of the Strategy Action Programmes in VUAS departments | Strategy Action Programmes refined and agreed upon with departments, identification of performance indicators started |
| 16. | May 2023 | Focus group with 5V+ partners on transformational opportunities for VUAS as an institution for developing ecosystem for innovation | Overview of the key factors to be included in the Strategy to facilitate the transformation of the organisation |
| 17. | June 2023 | Rector's meeting with VUAS Students' Association representatives about the Strategy Action Programmes | Received student proposals for a set of performance indicators for the priorities “High-quality and in-demand education throughout life” and “Organisational development” |
| 18. | June 2023 | Rector's meeting with VUAS Students' Association representatives about the Strategy Action Programmes | Received student proposals for a set of performance indicators for the priorities “High-quality and in-demand education throughout life” and “Organisational development” |
| 19. | June 2023 | Discussion of the draft of the Strategy at the VUAS development, academic and scientific affairs meeting | Proposals received for clarifications on sustainability aspects of the Strategy |
| 20. | 30 June 2023 | VUAS Senate votes in favour of advancing the Strategy for approval by the VUAS Council | The Strategy is being advanced to the VUAS Council for approval  |
| 21. | 5 July 2023 | Strategy approved by the VUAS Council | Decision made to approve the Strategy |

# 2. Strategic part

## 2.1. Vision

**VUAS is an international, regionally relevant and sustainable driving force of the knowledge, research and innovation community for the resilience[[3]](#footnote-4) and growth of future society.**

## 2.2. Mission

**Vidzeme University of Applied Sciences facilitates the consolidation of an enterprising, inclusive, smart and technologically advanced future knowledge society at regional, national and international level.**

This mission states that VUAS creates and advances evidence-based knowledge for the holistic development of people and the cultivation of talents throughout life. It is equally important that VUAS, in interaction with stakeholders, researches and addresses issues relevant to the growth of the society in an international and regional context. In addition, VUAS co-creates innovations for the sustainability of regions and societies. And finally, VUAS provides a sustainable and attractive, people-oriented environment for cooperation, work and growth for all stakeholders, striving to become an attractive employer in academia.

## 2.3. Values

**Table 3. VUAS values and their explanations**

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **VUAS values** | **Value explanations** |
| **Entreprising** | VUAS sees opportunities, flexibly responds to change, sets ambitious goals, takes initiatives within the knowledge, research and innovation community, initiates and leads initiatives for development and resilience of society. |
| **Sustainability** | VUAS decisions and actions at regional, national and international levels are based on balanced social development, socially inclusive and equitable environment, mitigation of climate change, reasonable consumption of resources, preservation of natural diversity and economically sound actions. |
| **Cooperation** | VUAS shares resources, expertise, experience and knowledge with organisations in Vidzeme, Latvia and internationally to foster a community for internationally valuable, evidence-based scientific and academic outputs and creation of human-centred innovation.  |
| **Creativity** | VUAS is the driving force of a community in which unusual solutions are sought, original ideas are created and tested to solve problems important to society. It values intelligent and creative personalities and their ability to break free from constraints or rigid thinking. |
| **Respect and responsibility** | VUAS staff, both among themselves and in cooperation with stakeholders, treat each other with respect and responsibility, respect diversity, take an inclusive approach to working together towards common goals, and take responsibility for solutions and decisions. |
| **Academic freedom** | In its activities, VUAS ensures respect for the principle of academic freedom for students and academic staff, which means the opportunity to creatively, independently and responsibly determine and pursue scientific, educational and self-educational interests.  |

# 3. Strategic priorities and goals 2023–2028

**The VUAS Strategy defines four strategic priorities (SP):**

SP 1. High-quality and in-demand education throughout life

SP 2. Excellence and cooperation in research

SP 3. Fostering innovation for economic growth

SP 4. Organisation development

**Key development goals (G) for each priority by 2028:**

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **(SP1)**High-quality and in-demand education throughout life | **(SP2) Excellence and cooperation in research**  | **(SP3) Fostering innovation for economic growth** | **(SP4) Organisation development** |
| **Goal 1 (G1):** Internationally competitive, evidence-based education offer for a holistic development of people and the cultivation of talents throughout life | **Goal 2 (G2):** Excellent, interdisciplinary basic and applied research addressing societal issues in international and regional contexts | **Goal 3 (G3):** Involvement in the international innovation community, commercialisation of science for regional and societal sustainability | **Goal 4 (G4):** Developing a sustainable and people-oriented environment for growth that is attractive to all stakeholders |

**VUAS sub-goals by 2028**

**Goal 1 (G1): Internationally competitive, evidence-based education offer for a holistic development of human capital and the cultivation of talents throughout life in Vidzeme, Latvia, Europe**

SG1.1. Involvement in knowledge flows through the creation of relevant, high-quality learning content

SG1.2. Development of lifelong learning offer

SG1.3. Cooperation and employment measures for student attraction

SG1.4. Improving the student support system, reducing premature termination of studies (drop-out) rates

**Goal 2 (G2): Excellent, interdisciplinary basic and applied research addressing societal issues in international and regional contexts**

SG2.1.: Improving the quality of scientific results within the research missions defined by VUAS

SG2.2.: Launching the VUAS Doctoral School

SG2.3. Improving the science administration system

SG2.4.: Renewal and internationalisation of the scientific environment at VUAS, involvement in international research networks

SG2.5.: Development and sharing of scientific infrastructure

**Goal 3 (G3): Involvement in the international innovation community, commercialisation of science for regional and societal sustainability**

SG 3.1.: Fostering a culture of enterprising and innovation at VUAS through cooperation and partnership activities

SG 3.2.: Development of VUAS Open Innovation Centres

SG 3.3.: Improvement of the system for commercialisation of VUAS science and research results

**Goal 4 (G4): Developing a sustainable and people-oriented environment for growth that is attractive to all stakeholders**

SG 4.1.: Development- and renewal-oriented HR management for academic and general staff

SG 4.2.: Building regional, national and international communities for academic work, research and innovation

SG 4.3.: Communication management, strengthening the VUAS brand

SG 4.4.: Effective management of VUAS resources for the sustainability of the organisation

SG 4.5.: Analysing the potential of digital transformation and its implementation

**Table 4. Mapping of the sub-goals of the VUAS Strategy based on the Balanced score card approach**

|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Customer/stakeholder perspective**

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| SG1.1 SG1.2 | SG2.1SG2.2 | SG3.1SG3.2 | SG4.2SG4.3SG4.4SG4.5 |

 | **Innovation and learning perspective**

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| SG1.1SG1.2. | SG2.2.SG2.4 | SG3.1SG3.2SG3.3 | SG4.1SG4.2SG4.4 |

 |
| **Internal development perspective**

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| SG1.3SG1.4 | SG2.3SG2.5 | SG3.3SG3.4 | SG4.1SG4.3SG4.4SG4.5 |

 | **Financial perspective**

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| SG1.4 | SG2.1 | SG3.3 | SG4.4SG4.5 |

 |

# 4. Key Performance Indicators

**(SP1) High-quality and in-demand education throughout life: key performance indicators[[4]](#footnote-5)**

|  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **No.** | **Indicator** | **Baseline (reference) value (2022)** | **Value 2026** | **Value 2028** |
| 1. | Total number of full-time students at VUAS | 635 | +20% (762) | +35% (860) |
| 2. | Number of foreign students, % out of total number of full-time students | 3% (18) | 10% | 12% |
| 3. | Student drop-out rate[[5]](#footnote-6), out of total number of students | 26% | 20% | 15% |
| 4. | Graduate employment indicators[[6]](#footnote-7) | 91% | 92% | 93% |
| 5. | Graduates’ average annual salaries by sector (VUAS values)[[7]](#footnote-8) | Computer science: +29% of the national average (EUR 31,498)Individual services: average salary level (EUR 11,270)Social sciences: +9.5% of the national average (EUR 15,868) | Computer science: unchangedIndividual services: +10% of the averageSocial sciences: +12% of the average | Computer science: unchangedIndividual services: +10% of the averageSocial sciences: +12% of the average |
| 6. | Number of double and joint degree programmes with foreign partners | 3 | 5 | 7 |
| 7. | Number of jointly developed study programmes/modules within the E3UDRES2 network | - | 2 | 5 |
| 8. | Number of interdisciplinary study programmes | 1 | 2 | 3 |
| 9. | Based on the results of scientific projects, the study content in terms of CP | Not listed separately | 10 | 20 |
| 10. | Proportion of participants in lifelong learning programmes to full-time students | 33% | 70% | 100 % |
| 11. | Number of VUAS lifelong learning programmes that support the development of strategic specialisation areas of Vidzeme region/Valmiera region | Not listed | 2 | 4 |
| 12. | Public and private funding attracted for lifelong learning | 13,082 | 28% | +60% |
| 13. | Number of VUAS strategic specialisations | 2 | 3[[8]](#footnote-9) | 3 |
| 14. | Share of VUAS students involved in international mobility  | 30% | 50% | 50% |
| 15. | Number of foreign academic staff – field professionals | 4 | 12 | 16 |

**(SP2) Excellence and cooperation in research: key performance indicators**

|  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **No.** | **Indicator** | **Baseline (reference) value (2022 or respective)** | **Value 2026** | **Value 2028** |
| 1. | Results of the current International Evaluation of Scientific Institutions | 3 | ≥3 | ≥3 |
| 2. | Elected staff with a doctoral degree | 59% | 60% | 60% |
| 3. | Number of elected scientific staff in FTE | 11.81 | 14 | 17 |
| 4. | Scopus H index of elected staff | Highest in engineering: 6Highest in social sciences: 4 | In engineering: 7 for at least three researchersIn social sciences: 4 for at least three researchers | In engineering: 8 for at least three researchersIn social sciences: 5 for at least three researchers |
| 5. | Number of attracted foreign scientific staff  | 17 | 25 | 30 |
| 6. | Number of elected foreign scientific staff with doctoral degree | 1 | 2 | 4 |
| 7. | FTE per year of elected foreign scientific staff | 1 | 1.5 | 2 |
| 8. | Total number of VUAS doctoral students | 18 | 26 | 40 |
| 9. | Total number of foreign doctoral students | - | 2 | 6 |
| 10. | Number of doctoral theses defended in VUAS doctoral programmes per year | 2 | 3 | 4 |
| 11. | Proportion of scientific publications in Q1 and Q2 journals | 25% | 35% | 45% |
| 12. | Number of international research projects in which VUAS is the lead partner/coordinator | - | 1 | 3 |
| 13. | Number of VUAS patents | 0 | 1 | 1 |
| 14. | Attracted funding in research projects per FTE | EUR 125,000 | EUR 130,000 | EUR 150,000 |
| 15. | Revenue from the implementation of contract research | EUR 664,228 | EUR 700,000 | EUR 750,000 |
| 16. | Annual science base funding attracted by VUAS | 267,165 | +48% | +84% |
| 17. | Amount paid in labour taxes for scientific staff as % of science base funding | 150% | Unchanged or higher | Unchanged or higher |

**(SP3) Fostering innovation for economic growth**

|  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **No.** | **Indicator** | **Baseline (reference) value (2022)** | **Value 2026** | **Value 2028** |
| 1. | VUAS staff, students’, cooperation partners’ assessment on changes in the culture of innovation and entrepreneurship at VUAS using HEInnovate tool | HEI Innovate tool data:Governance – 3.3 (out of 5)Organisational capacity – 3.2 (out of 5)Entrepreneurship training – 3.5 (out of 5)Support to businesses – 2.9 (out of 5)Digital transformation – 2.9 (out of 5)[[9]](#footnote-10)Knowledge sharing and cooperation – 4 (out of 5)Internationalisation – 3.9 (out of 5)Impact evaluation – 2.1 (out of 5) | +25% increase for all indicators | +45% increase for all indicators |
| 2. | Number of core employees at the VUAS Sustainability Open Innovation Centre | - | 2 | 4 |
| 3. | Number of training events organised for VUAS staff and students on innovation creation | Not listed separately | 4 | 6 |
| 4. | Innovation support for entrepreneurs in addressing sustainability challenges – number of regional level events per year with the participation of VUAS[[10]](#footnote-11)  | Not listed | 10 | 15 |
| 5. | Innovation support in addressing sustainability challenges – number of international level events per year | Not listed | 5 | 7 |
| 6. | Number of VUAS supported start-ups that involve students, employees | 2 | 5 | 10 |
| 7. | VUAS established or VUAS participation in at least one Centre of Excellence with partners according to RIS3 areas[[11]](#footnote-12) | - | 1 | 1 |
| 8. | Number of entries in the VUAS Intellectual Property Database | - | 6 | 10 |
| 9. | Funding attracted for commercialisation of science, commercialisation of research results and development of new products and services per year | - | EUR 30,000 | EUR 70,000 |

**(SP4) Organisational development: key performance indicators**

|  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **No.** | **Indicator** | **Baseline (reference) value (2022)** | **Value 2026** | **Value 2028** |
| 1. | Staff satisfied with VUAS as a workplace, % out of total staff (from 2023: work environment, workload, governance, remuneration, career opportunities, internal communication, inter-departmental cooperation) | - | ≥15% increase  | ≥20% increase |
| 2. | Assessment of VUAS as a cooperation partner (criterion 5 in HEI Innovate tool) | 2.1 | 2.8 | 3.8 |
| 3. | Number of administrative staff | 55 | 60 | 63 |
| 4. | Share of staff participating in professional development activities per year (participation in at least one activity) | Not listed | 60% | 100 % |
| 5. | Average age of staff | 48.5 years | 45–50 years | 45–50 years |
| 6. | Elected staff salary level vs. the industry average[[12]](#footnote-13) | (MoES will release data for 2022 at the end of August) | Unchanged | Unchanged |
| 7. | Graduates’ involvement in VUAS development – number of events per year[[13]](#footnote-14) | Not listed | 4 | 8 |
| 8. | Results of the brand study (implemented with IKZ direction students) – to be launched in 2024 | First measurement in 2023 | ≥10% increase  | ≥20% increase |
| 9. | Number of digitised processes, tools newly integrated into VUAS activities, significantly improved platforms per year | Not listed | 4 | 8 |
| 10. | Staff, student satisfaction with the implemented digitisation measures | Measurement from 2023 | ≥10% increase  | ≥20% increase |
| 11. | Expenditure allocated within the year to infrastructure development measures, including improving accessibility of the environment | 90,276 | At least EUR 100,000 per year, but not more than 15% of the previous year | At least EUR 100,000 per year, but not more than 15% of the previous year (EUR 135,500) |
| 12. | Share of self-attracted funding in the total budget | 64.7% | Unchanged or higher | Unchanged or higher |

# 5. Strategy implementation and monitoring process

The VUAS Strategy 2023-2028 is designed as the highest development planning document of VUAS. Other documents, such as the Study Development Plan, the Research Development Plan, the Digitisation Strategy, the Communication Plan, etc., shall be guided by the strategic priorities, strategic goals and sub-goals and objectives contained in the Strategy and the Action Programme in ways that support the implementation of the Strategy. The Rector of VUAS is responsible for the overall development and implementation of the Strategy. Persons responsible for the development of lower-level documents are defined in the Action Programmes. The next-level planning documents resulting from the Strategy should be developed in an integrated manner, ensuring complementarity of activities and results.

The implementation of the Strategy is regularly monitored by the Rector reporting quarterly on the progress of the Strategy to the VUAS Council. The evaluation of the implementation of the Strategy takes place once a year on the basis of the Rector’s report. The report is reviewed and approved by the VUAS Senate, which forwards the report for approval to the VUAS Council. After the approval by the VUAS Council, the Rector presents the report to the VUAS Constitutional Assembly. At the annual Constitutional Assembly, the President of the VUAS Council presents an overview and the vision of the VUAS Council on the implementation of the Strategy in the previous calendar year.

The main focus in the Rector's report should be on the achievement of the strategic priorities, based on the key performance indicators set out in each priority, as well as by assessing social impact indicators. During the development of the Strategy, it has been ensured that VUAS key performance indicators are based on data that are as readily available as possible and allow for a multifaceted assessment of the implementation of the Strategy from the following aspects:

* Education process;
* Research process;
* The process of innovation and commercialisation of science;
* The process of cooperation and community building;
* Corporate governance process;
* Human resources development process;
* Resource development process;
* Financial process;
* Sustainability issues – according to the nature of each of the aforementioned aspects.

In order to monitor the implementation of the objectives defined in the Strategy, at the beginning of each calendar year, the responsible staff and responsible/involved departments prepare information on the previous calendar year, which reflects the progress in the achievement of objectives in accordance with the performance indicators set out in the Action Programmes, analysing the impact of the performance indicators on the achievement of the main performance indicators of VUAS. The implementation of the strategies of academic and scientific departments and their link to the performance indicators set in the VUAS Strategy is monitored annually, with the Rector of VUAS and the deans of faculties and directors of institutes agreeing upon the results to be achieved within the year.

## 5.1. Financial assessment of the achievement of the goals of the Strategy

According to the VUAS financial statements for the last planning period (2016–2022), a significant part of VUAS income is generated by own revenues (64.7% in 2022). This is why future financial development is partly linked to increasing the University's potential to attract project funding. This will be achieved through targeted support measures for the preparation of project applications.

VUAS has always operated with a balance between expenditure and revenue, which has been a prerequisite for fiscal stability. In the future, the focus should be on creating savings that could be used for infrastructure renewal, digitisation measures, given that EU Structural Funds funding in the current planning period will be directed towards developing human capital, as well as strengthening and developing the infrastructure base.

The Strategy envisages diversification of income as an important priority, which will be promoted by renting out VUAS infrastructure, developing resource sharing, activating lifelong learning activities, as well as commercialising VUAS intellectual property and participating in the creation of innovative products and services.

VUAS activities in priorities 1-3 are linked to the activities of the VUAS Foundation. Therefore, it is important to activate the activities of the VUAS Foundation to attract donations, create various targeted scholarships for students and other purposes.

## 5.2. Procedures for identifying, discussing and approving changes to the Strategy

VUAS continuously carries out an analysis of potential risks in the process of implementing the Strategy, being aware of changing opportunities and challenges. Risk management and monitoring during the implementation of the Strategy is based on the Internal Control and Risk Management Framework (the Framework). The risk groups it identifies are:

* Strategic risks;

operational or performance risks;

* Financial risks;
* Reputation risks.

The implementation of the Framework shall ensure the following measures:

* Identifying potential risks, assessing when they may occur, mitigating potential harm and monitoring implementation of these measures;
* active, efficient and effective action based on knowledge of risks and priority actions to build confidence in the achievement of VUAS strategic goals;
* assigning responsibility and appropriate authority to staff to implement risk management;
* optimal use of resources for risk management;
* defined control mechanisms for limiting risks and regulatory documents to assess the effectiveness of controls;
* increased awareness of risks and their management among VUAS employees and their participation in the risk management function.

The risk management process is schematically illustrated in Figure 2.

**Figure 2. VUAS Risk Management Process Flowchart**

**Table 5. Responsibilities and accountabilities within the risk management process**

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **Responsible party** | **Area of responsibility** |
| VUAS management (Rector, Vice-Rectors) | establishes a risk management system (the System), coordinates the improvement, development, implementation and maintenance of the System, approves a risk management plan (defines mitigation measures, responsible staff and deadlines). The person responsible for the establishment, improvement and maintenance of the System is the Rector of VUAS, in his absence – the Acting Rector appointed by the Rector. |
| VUAS Council | monitors the operation of the System, reviews its adequacy and operational effectiveness as part of the monitoring and control of the Strategy |
| Heads of departments/ structural groups | identify, coordinate and control the risk management processes in their departments/ structural groups, lead the development, implementation and execution of the departments’/ structural groups’ risk mitigation measures, participate in a regular risk assessment and the preparation and execution of the risk management plan |
| Each employee | participates in the identification and assessment of risks within the scope of their duties, informs their direct manager in a timely manner of risk events, incidents and is involved in the implementation of risk mitigation measures |

1. The word “regions” in the Strategy refers to territories outside national capital cities. These are territories where additional research, development and innovation activities are typically needed to accelerate the reduction of socio-economic disparities between these areas and national capital cities – to foster cohesion[(https://www.europarl.europa.eu/factsheets/lv/sheet/93/ekonomiska-sociala-un-teritoriala-kohezija)](https://www.europarl.europa.eu/factsheets/lv/sheet/93/ekonomiska-sociala-un-teritoriala-kohezija). [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
2. Ecosystem is a concept that originated in the natural sciences, but has also long been used to refer to complex systems of relationships between various organisations and other stakeholders, such as educational institutions, policy makers, private sector companies, industry associations, civically active citizens. In national planning policy documents in the fields of education, research and governance of higher education institutions, “ecosystem” as a concept is no longer expressly explained. [↑](#footnote-ref-3)
3. ***Societal resilience*** *is a concept widely used to explain and study the development of societies under unsafe, uncertain and rapidly changing conditions. The concept encompasses problem-solving and strategic management of development in capability ways, creates the necessary conditions for long-term growth and development, and fosters community flexibility, empathy and courage, strong bonds for social support and a sense of community with the people around them and the wider community.* [↑](#footnote-ref-4)
4. Evidence-based competence is reflected in 4 criteria: total number of students, number of foreign students, number of lifelong learners, student drop-out rates [↑](#footnote-ref-5)
5. World Bank methodology [↑](#footnote-ref-6)
6. MoES graduates monitoring [↑](#footnote-ref-7)
7. For information – data of 2022: salaries of bachelor’s degree graduates after graduating from VUAS: +8% of the average (13,668); master graduates: +22% of the average (EUR 27,601) [↑](#footnote-ref-8)
8. Specialisations defined in 2022 are maintained, with a plan to additionally develop the Sustainable Construction direction [↑](#footnote-ref-9)
9. Numerical indicators defined under priority 4 [↑](#footnote-ref-10)
10. Indicators: students' research work on topics suggested by entrepreneurs, research projects based on the needs of entrepreneurs, cooperation activities with companies, number of sustainability consultancies with companies. Data sources: Protocols of the State Examination Commissions, study course descriptions, VUAS calendar of events, record-keeping system for VUAS projects. Data collection is carried out by the Open Innovation Sustainability Centre. [↑](#footnote-ref-11)
11. STDIG 2021-27 monitoring [↑](#footnote-ref-12)
12. Annual summary by MoES [↑](#footnote-ref-13)
13. Based on the work plan of the Alumni Association [↑](#footnote-ref-14)