

PRiME

*an initiative of the
United Nations Global Compact*

Sharing Information on Progress 2026

University of Vaasa

June 2026

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About the Principles for Responsible Management Education (PRME)

The Principles for Responsible Management Education (PRME) is a United Nations-supported initiative founded in 2007 that aims to raise the profile of sustainability in their classrooms through Seven Principles focused on serving society and safeguarding our planet.

PRME engages business and management schools to ensure they provide future leaders with the skills needed to balance economic and sustainability goals, while drawing attention to the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and aligning academic institutions with the work of the UN Global Compact. Driven by its mission to transform management education, PRME equips today's business students with the understanding and ability to deliver change tomorrow. As a voluntary initiative with over 800 signatories worldwide, PRME has become the largest organized relationship between the United Nations and management-related higher education institutions.



“*The PRME initiative was launched to nurture responsible leaders of the future. Never has this task been more important. Bold leadership and innovative thinking are needed to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).*

Antonio Guterres

Secretary-General (2017 - Present)

United Nations

”

Principles of PRME



Purpose

We advance responsible management education to foster inclusive prosperity in a world of thriving ecosystems.



Values

We place organizational responsibility and accountability to society and the planet at the core of what we do.



Teach

We transform our learning environments by integrating responsible management concepts and practices into our curriculum and pedagogy.



Research

We study people, organizations, institutions, and the state of the world to inspire responsible management and education practice.



Partner

We engage people from business, government, civil society, and academia to advance responsible and accountable management education and practice.



Practice

We adopt responsible and accountable management principles in our own governance and operations.



Share

We share our successes and failures with each other to enable our collective learning and best live our common values and purpose.

The Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)

In September 2015, all 193 Member States of the United Nations adopted a plan for achieving a better future for all – laying out a path over the next 15 years to end extreme poverty, fight inequality and injustice, and protect our planet. At the heart of Agenda 2030 are 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and 169 related targets that address the most important economic, social, environmental and governance challenges of our time. The SDGs clearly define the world we want – applying to all nations and leaving no one behind. Successful implementation of the SDGs will require all players to champion this agenda; the role of higher education is critical to this.





Getting Started

This section provides foundational information about University of Vaasa, including key details and basic institutional data.

Mission

The University of Vaasa creates and disseminates knowledge to advance sustainable business, energy and society. Through innovative and high-quality research and education, we address global challenges that support the sustainable development of our learners, collaborators, ecosystems and society, both regionally and globally.

Vision

The University of Vaasa is internationally recognised as a high-impact research university. Research in our focus areas contributes significantly to international scholarship, is increasingly multidisciplinary, and informs both policy and practice. The education we provide offers a transformative learner experience for future employment built on teaching excellence, high-quality learning environments, equality and inclusion. We make a positive societal impact on the economy, energy (transition) and governance.

Strategy

VaasaYO_Strategy_2024_EN

[View document](#)  [Download document](#) 

Strategy Alignment

Strategy alignment with sustainable development, the common good, and quality education

The University of Vaasa is an international, business-oriented, multidisciplinary university focused on sustainable business, energy and society. Via our multidisciplinary schools and research platforms, we solve complex societal challenges by combining expertise in business, technology and governance. We are a valued partner within Europe's largest energy and environment business cluster, working towards affordable and clean energy, economic growth, industry innovation, and responsible consumption and production. Our modern, beautiful seaside campus is working towards carbon net neutrality and is located in a truly international, student city. The collaborative innovation activities and economic impact of the Vaasa region are recognised nationally and internationally, creating excellent opportunities for our researchers, teachers and students.

Institutional History

The University of Vaasa – A Brief History and Its Path Toward Responsible Management Education

The University of Vaasa

A Brief History and Its Path Toward Responsible Management Education

From a regional school of economics to a PRME signatory

The University of Vaasa's road to responsible management education is two stories braided together: a half-century of institutional growth from a small business school into a multidisciplinary university, and a more recent, deliberate turn toward sustainability and responsibility that culminated in joining the United Nations' Principles for Responsible Management Education (PRME) initiative. The account below traces that development and highlights the milestones most relevant to the university-level adoption of responsible management education.

From Business School to University (1966–2001)

The university traces its origin to a 1966 decision by Finland's Council of State to establish a School of Economics and Business Administration in Vaasa. The first students arrived in September 1968 to study in the annexe of the Commercial School, with Tryggve Saxén acting as rector. At that point the school could award only lower university degrees. Its later home — the maritime Palosaari campus, anchored by a converted 19th-century cotton mill that now houses the "Fabriikki" building and the Tritonia library — became the physical setting for this history.

Key milestones

- **1966** — Finland's Council of State decides to establish a School of Economics and Business Administration in Vaasa.
- **1968** — The first students of the Vaasa School of Economics and Business Administration arrive; Tryggve Saxén serves as rector.
- **1970** — The school gains the right to award higher university degrees and doctorates; Mauri Palomäki becomes rector.
- **1973–1975** — The first master's degrees are awarded (1973), followed by the first Licentiate and Doctor graduates (1975).
- **1977** — The school becomes a state institution.
- **1980** — Renamed Vaasan korkeakoulu as education in the humanities begins; social sciences follow in the early 1980s.
- **1987–1990** — Ilkka Virtanen becomes rector (1987); the first technology students start in 1990 in cooperation with the Helsinki University of Technology.
- **1991** — The institution is renamed the University of Vaasa.
- **1994–1996** — The university moves to its Palosaari premises (1994) under rector Ari Salminen; the Technobothnia research centre begins operating in the old cotton mill's weaving hall (1996).

- **2001** — The Tritonia academic library is completed.

The Turn Toward Responsible Management Education (2010–2020)

As the university matured, its identity consolidated around a mission to advance sustainable business, energy, and society — reflecting Vaasa's position as host of the largest energy-technology cluster in the Nordics. Two strands of formal recognition fed into this. The International Business programme has held EFMD accreditation since 2010, embedding an international quality framework early on. In 2019, a large-scale campus development project was launched, later tied explicitly to carbon-reduction goals.

The decisive responsible-education commitment came at the end of 2020. According to PRME's own signatory records, the University of Vaasa became a PRME signatory on **8 December 2020**. PRME — the Principles for Responsible Management Education, an initiative of the UN Global Compact — engages universities and business schools to equip future leaders with the skills to balance economic and sustainability goals, and the community now spans more than 800 institutions across roughly a hundred countries. By joining, the university committed to advancing sustainability, responsibility, and ethics across teaching, research, and leadership. In practice, all four of its schools now incorporate sustainability and responsibility into their curricula in ways relevant to each discipline.

Building on the Commitment (2021–2025)

PRME membership became the anchor for a series of further steps:

- **2021** — The university signs the SDG Accord and joins that network, committing to work toward the UN Sustainable Development Goals and report progress annually.
- **August 2024** — The university receives the internationally renowned AACSB accreditation for business studies — valid for six years and covering all business degree programmes. Fewer than 6 percent of the world's schools offering business degrees hold this accreditation. Rector Minna Martikainen tied the achievement directly to the mission of advancing sustainable business, energy, and society.
- **February 2025** — The university co-organises the first Diversity, Equity, Inclusion for Small and Medium-Sized Enterprises (DEI4SME) Hackathon in Vaasa, bringing together ten companies from Finland and Austria, nearly 200 students, and around 30 experts.
- **2025** — The University of Vaasa becomes the first university in Finland to earn the EFMD BSIS (Business School Impact System) label for positive impact; the same year, PRME's annual Education Award recognises faculty in Finland among several countries for embedding responsible management practices into business education.

The Individuals Who Paved the Way

The early institutional foundation was laid by the first rectors – Tryggve Saxén, who led the school from its 1968 opening, and Mauri Palomäki, who oversaw the move to higher and doctoral degrees from 1970. Later rectors Ilkka Virtanen (from 1987), Ari Salminen (from 1994), and Matti Jakobsson (from 1998) guided the transition into a full multidisciplinary university and the consolidation of the Palosaari campus.

The responsible-education era is most associated with current Rector **Minna Martikainen**, under whom both the PRME-era commitments and the AACSB accreditation were realised. Vice-Rector **Martin Meyer** led the AACSB accreditation effort, and **Adam Smale**, Dean of the School of Management, credited the achievement to years of work across education, research, and societal impact.

Graduates & Enrollment

2025 Statistics	Number
Graduates	883
Faculty & Staff at the University	715
Faculty & Staff at the Institution	715
Student Enrollment at the University	7017
Student Enrollment at the Institution	7017
Undergraduate Attendance	6662
Masters-Level Postgraduate Attendance	6662
Doctoral Student Attendance	355
Certificate, Professional Development, or Continuing Education Attendance	300

Degrees Offered

Bachelor Programs

-  Bachelor of Science (B.Sc. or B.S.)
-  Bachelor of Arts (B.A.)
-  Bachelor of Business Administration (B.B.A.)
-  Bachelor of Technology (B.Tech.)

Masters Programs

-  Master of Arts (M.A.)
-  Master of Business Administration (M.B.A.)
-  Master of Technology (M.Tech.)

Doctoral Programs

-  Doctor of Philosophy (Ph.D.)
-  Doctor of Engineering (D.Eng.)
-  Doctor of Philosophy (D.Phil.)

Undergraduate Degree Programmes

-  Undergraduate degree programmes

Masters Degree Programmes

-  Masters degree programmes

Postgraduate Degree Programmes

-  Doctoral degree programme

Certificates, Professional Development, or Associate Programmes

-  Certificates, professional development, or associate programmes



Purpose

We advance responsible management education to foster inclusive prosperity in a world of thriving ecosystems.

Definition of Purpose

The University of Vaasa interprets the PRME principle of Purpose as a commitment to generate and share knowledge that advances the Sustainable Development Goals through research, education, and partnerships in sustainable business, energy, and society. Within this commitment, "inclusive prosperity" takes shape through equality, inclusion, decent work, and responsible economic growth, while "thriving ecosystems" is realised through the energy transition, the pursuit of carbon neutrality, and healthy regional innovation ecosystems. The university captures this overarching ambition in a single guiding idea: to be locally rooted while shaping global change.

Institutional Engagement

76% - 100%

of faculty at University of Vaasa actively contribute to our work with PRME, advancing responsible management education, or addressing sustainable development challenges through their work.



Values

We place organizational responsibility and accountability to society and the planet at the core of what we do.



How We Define Values

The University of Vaasa defines the PRME principle of Values by making responsibility one of its three core values – alongside courage and community – and embedding it through a binding Code of Conduct that applies to staff, students, and partners alike. This places accountability to both society and the planet at the heart of how the university operates: accountability to society through human rights, equality, research integrity, responsible procurement, and zero tolerance for corruption; and accountability to the planet through sustainable development embedded across teaching, research, campus operations, and responsible investment. These commitments are backed by concrete mechanisms – a confidential whistleblowing channel, enforceable sanctions, and a Sustainability Committee overseeing annual reporting against frameworks such as the SDG Accord and PRME.

Who Champions Responsible Management Education at Our Institution

- ❖ Individual leader
- ❖ Interdisciplinary efforts across parent organization
- ❖ Research or issue group, society, or club leading sustainability efforts

Student Voices

The following narrative demonstrates how University of Vaasa has influenced students' academic journey and personal growth.

Support for balancing sports and studies

Veera Kauppi found balance for elite sports through education and graduated with a Master of Arts

An international career in professional sports has not prevented Veera Kauppi from completing her degree. The successful floorball star graduated in July with a Master of Arts in Communication Studies from the University of Vaasa. Kauppi plays in Sweden's top league in Umeå for Team Thorengruppen and has won medals in several World Championships. She has also been named the world's best female player.

From open university to degree student at the University of Vaasa

Education has always been an important part of Kauppi's life alongside sports. She was encouraged by her parents to pursue communication studies, which she began through the open university.

– My parents had long recognized my communication skills, but it took me a bit longer to realize that this was my field, Kauppi says.

She started her university studies through the University of Vaasa's open university, and her interest in communication quickly grew. Eventually, she applied for a degree programme and began her studies in 2020. The university's location was also practical for Kauppi, who lives in Umeå, as the Wasaline ferry Aurora Botnia made travel between the cities convenient when needed.

During the COVID-19 pandemic, remote studying offered exceptional flexibility for academic work

Kauppi began her studies during the COVID-19 pandemic. Due to the restrictions at the time, remote learning was commonly used, creating new opportunities for professional athletes to combine education and sports. The flexibility of remote studies allowed Kauppi to align her academic work with her international athletic career.

– I had originally planned to visit the campus more often, but especially during the pandemic, remote studying allowed a more flexible daily routine.

Kauppi says that studying brought meaningful structure to her days, as training only took up a few hours each day.

Support for balancing sports and studies

Kauppi praises the University of Vaasa for its flexible practices and guidance. Course loads were adjusted during important competitions like the World Championships and playoffs. While she didn't need many special arrangements, some course requirements had to be adapted.

– I've always been able to plan my studies around my sports career, and I'm very grateful for that. The University of Vaasa, and especially my study counsellor Hanna Korpela, were a huge help.

She completed her master's studies at a regular pace, though she occasionally slowed down during her bachelor's studies. Thanks to the credits earned through the open university, she still graduated on time in July 2025.

Communication studies beneficial beyond sports

Kauppi has already applied her communication skills in her career. Together with her twin sister, she runs a company offering coaching, camps, and lectures.

– I've been able to apply what I've learned in my studies many times in our business, she says.

Her studies have also given her confidence for the future.

– When I eventually retire from sports, I already have a next step in mind, or at least a solid foundation for transitioning into a 'normal' working life.

If she could try a communication-related job outside of sports, Kauppi would be interested in working in television.

– It would be amazing to be a scriptwriter for a show, where I could really use my creativity.

Student Awareness

26% - 50% of students at University of Vaasa are aware that we are a PRME Signatory Member.

Student Engagement

76% - 100% of students at University of Vaasa actively contribute to our work with PRME, advancing RME, or addressing sustainable development challenges through their work.

Values Voices

An Event Exploring Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion in Small and Medium-Sized Enterprises

An Event Exploring Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion in Small and Medium-Sized Enterprises

Among its many Sustainable Development Goal-focused initiatives, the University of Vaasa recently addressed ongoing debates on diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI), showcasing the critical role of addressing them in business.

The first Diversity, Equity, Inclusion for Small and Medium-Sized Enterprises (DEI4SME) Hackathon, held in Vaasa, Finland, in February 2025, was a collaborative event organized by the University of Vaasa and international partners from Austria within the framework of the DEI4SME Project. The two-week global hackathon brought together ten companies from Finland and Austria, nearly 200 students, and around 30 business, education, and sustainability experts from around the world to discuss key DEI issues that small businesses must address to remain sustainable and competitive.

Participating firms tasked students with exploring DEI issues in those same firms' strategy creation, strategy implementation, product and service development, and human resource management processes. The challenges focused on diversity dimensions related to age, ability, disability, language, ethnic background, education, gender, and socio-economic status.

The success of the DEI4SME Hackathon I showcased that diversity can be a valuable resource for business growth and success if managed wisely. In the feedback from the event, 92% of respondents confirmed that the hackathon increased their awareness about the issues of DEI in business, especially in the SME context, and expanded their professional network; 82% shared that the hackathon benefited their personal or company's development and advancement.

Students, together with the managers and mentors from participating firms, learned to assess the impact of DEI from different perspectives and to critically evaluate the ongoing societal debates about the DEI programmes. They also discovered that smaller firms are particularly well positioned to benefit from DEI. This is because to utilize DEI wisely, smaller firms do not require a major organizational change.

By solving cases for 10 companies, students practiced how to utilize DEI for a firm's internationalization efforts, improve the firm's capabilities and products to address diverse needs of customers, engage diverse groups of employees with the firm's strategies, or effectively resolve conflicts at work for more effective collaboration in teams. These company cases allowed students to tap into the real meaning of DEI and understand how closely it is connected to the core activities that every business does. Participating firms received new, ready-to-implement ideas on how to benefit from DEI in strategic and operational activities.

The hackathon also revealed that digitalization in business and DEI should go hand-in-hand. Many company cases were concerned with the use of technology by or the creation of technology-enabled solutions for diverse user groups. Students explored the solutions for the issues, such as: the effective use of data analytics systems for strategic management by users with visual impairments (e.g. colour blindness, weak vision), optimizing online search solutions for older users, integrating people with disabilities or refugees in high-tech manufacturing companies, or utilizing artificial intelligence for individualized employee upskilling.

The hackathon's organizing team involved students with less work experience in the country of residence or those from the under-represented groups, creating an opportunity for them to gain the needed work experience or learn about entrepreneurship. Hackathon prizes were directed at enhancing students' professional profiles and providing career guidance from industry professionals which further helped students (most of whom had a migrant background) in winning or otherwise recognized teams to improve their employability.

In the hackathon, as a co-creation platform, firms, academia, experts, and learners created a lasting impact, contributing to a more sustainable future and the implementation of the United Nations' Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) 8 (Decent Work and Economic Growth) and 10 (Reduced Inequalities).

Celebrating Values

The following demonstrates a way in which our institution celebrates values in various specializations.

Managing Diversity in Smaller European Businesses

Managing Diversity in Smaller European Businesses

The DEI4SME project team carried out a number of research activities to understand the views of small and medium enterprises (SMEs), employees and employment seeking individuals, especially from the under-represented groups, on the diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI) issues in European smaller business and the challenges they face when managing diversity in them.

The survey data collection were conducted engaging with respondents in Austria, Finland, Germany and Lithuania from May to September 2024.

The DEI4SME project team carried out two separate online surveys (translated into local focus country languages: English, German, Finnish, Swedish, and Lithuanian) targeting both SME leaders and employees or those seeking employment. In total, we gathered 441 validated responses:

137 SME owners and managers

304 employees or job seekers

To qualitatively explore DEI practical issues in smaller European businesses, we also organized two international hackathons (in Finland 2025 and Lithuania 2025), bringing together students, entrepreneurs, policy makers, business, education, and sustainability experts from around the globe with the aim to explore practical cases of diversity, equity, and inclusion in smaller businesses.



Teach

We transform our learning environments by integrating responsible management concepts and practices into our curriculum and pedagogy.



How We Define Teach

The teaching principle is about making responsible management a core, integrated part of what students learn and how they learn it – and at the University of Vaasa that is operationalised through discipline-specific curricula and active, case-based, sustainability-oriented pedagogy.

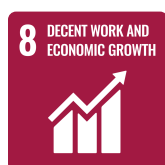
Courses that support RME

University of Vaasa reports 2 courses in 2025 that support responsible management education and sustainable development goals.

Professional Skill Development | INTB2007

The course introduces students to the core concepts of sustainable development and ethical business practices, emphasizing their application in both domestic and international business contexts. Through exploration of themes and business challenges related to responsible international business, students will gain cross-disciplinary insight combining various business disciplines and functions including but not limited to strategy, international business, law, marketing, finance, and human resource management (HRM).

The students will learn to apply the principles of ethics and sustainability, will explore ways to design and perform international business in line with the United Nations' Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and Environmental, Social, and Governance (ESG) considerations to address multidisciplinary business challenges encountered by domestic and international firms. The course supports learners in developing skills in effective collaboration within diverse teams, considering different perspectives to formulate responsible and effective business solutions.



Energy transition and sustainable economies | MOOC1001

In this course, students will be acquainted with the need of energy transition from the perspectives of various roles, including that of the producer, consumer and prosumer. Students will also recognise the importance of energy transition for sustainable development in its widest sense, consisting of ecological, economic, social and cultural aspects. The course is completed by independently working in an online environment and taking an exam in Moodle. The exam consists of multiple-choice questions covering the course topics. Students' activity in MOOC environment is expected to consist of the following: - Watching the introductory film and interviews available on the course site. - Reading

and familiarization with the text materials available on the course site. - Taking tests that measure students' knowledge and skills in content areas. - Writing short, self-reflective essays on various course topics. The course teacher can comment on students' work and can give feedback.

This online self-study course prepares students to familiarize themselves with the challenges and opportunities of energy transition and take critical steps towards sustainability in its ecological, economic and social dimension. On completing the course, students will understand how energy transition supports climate change mitigation and adaptation. They will also understand the way in which energy transition and circular economy are related and mutually reinforcing. In addition, students will know what is being done in Vaasa region for energy transition and how the region's energy cluster acts as a leader in the international development of the field.



Teaching Awards

In 2025, 1 award was given to faculty and educators at University of Vaasa.

Teaching Act of the year 2025

Granter: University of Vaasa

Grantee: Professor of Practise Elina Melgin, Professor Rebekah Rousi and Researcher Hanna Hietikko

Award Description:

The Teaching Act of the Year enabled practical teaching and international networking for students. University of Vaasa's Professor of Practise Elina Melgin, Professor Rebekah Rousi and Researcher Hanna Hietikko received the Teaching Act of the Year award for the course *Luova tapahtumatuotanto ja markkinointiviestintä* (Creative Event Production and Marketing Communication). The course, carried out in spring 2025, was organized as a work-life-oriented special course tailored for communication bachelor's students. The basic idea of the course was to produce content for the Wasa Future Festival programme in co-operation with the event founder Sture Udd. Background lectures were held during the course, and students were able to experiment with different methods and choose areas of specialization, with Elina Melgin focusing on management and impact, Rebekah Rousi on planning an international exhibition of science and art, and Hanna Hietikko on media. - Based on feedback from journalist mentors, the students came up with a populism panel, an overconsumption discussion panel, and a live newsroom where the audience and journalists could freely meet and discuss the practice of journalism, says Hietikko. The international Butterfly exhibition of science and art became a major event, drawing thousands of people to the newly opened catacombs of the old Bocks brewery. Various events in the exhibition's accompanying programme

were targeted at different audiences, including children. Students had the opportunity to collaborate not only with audiences but also with international artists and the curator group. The projects of the work-life-oriented course were made possible by local foundations and by Australia's Deakin University together with the University of Vaasa. - The Teaching Act of the Year actually belongs to about 30 people, because the projects implemented for the Wasa Future Festival and ideas with students were a magnificent showcase of international cooperation. Everything went brilliantly. The atmosphere was energetic. We received praise from audiences, the media, and the ministers who visited the event, say Melgin and Rousi. - We are fortunate that the University of Vaasa is open-minded. Courses like this, which give rise to practical projects involving art, science, and media, are important for teaching and research. But they are also important for generating new ideas and international networks, the teachers emphasize.

Educator Recognition

At University of Vaasa, we recognize educators for quality of teaching in the following ways:

- ❖ Annual teaching excellence awards
- ❖ Faculty promotion and tenure consideration
- ❖ Financial incentives
- ❖ Institutional recognition events
- ❖ Pedagogical innovation grants
- ❖ Student-nominated teaching awards

Teaching Voices

The following statement demonstrates ways in which educators at University of Vaasa support sustainability and responsible management in their classrooms.

Building an academic career – Insights from a University of Vaasa researcher

Teaching is a matter of heart

For Aušrinė Šilenskytė, Assistant Professor of Strategic Management, academic career was not something she initially envisioned, but the year 2010 was a pivotal moment where her academic journey began. She came to the University of Vaasa 15 years ago to pursue her master's degrees. At the time, she could have imagined building an academic career or living in Finland for a long term. Through excelling in studies, being active, and keeping doors open for emerging opportunities, she progressed from master's studies to doctoral studies, and her academic career has successfully unfolded.

Aušrine, originally from Lithuania, worked in the real estate sector in Egypt before moving to Finland. While collaborating with a Finnish client, she discovered high-quality study programmes offered by the University of Vaasa and applied to the University of Vaasa's Master's Programme in International Business.

Aušrine's research focuses on international strategic management, advanced technologies (e.g., blockchain, AI, SaaS), and social sustainability. She is also interested in innovations in business education, particularly related to diversity and other issues falling under social sustainability.

Aušrine has served as Programme Manager for the Bachelor's in International Business and has led international projects and many other initiatives. She has developed innovative courses and received recognition for her educational leadership, being the first foreigner to receive the Teaching Act of the Year.

Aušrine firmly believes that academia is not just a job but a way of life. She compares research to entrepreneurship, as securing funding, developing research projects and teaching are the researcher's own responsibility.

– My tip is to find a good reason why you want to apply for doctoral studies or continue in academia afterwards. For me, it was the desire to teach. When you have a clear motivation, academic career is less challenging and you can recognise more opportunities, Aušrine says.

Barriers to Innovative Curriculum

In 2025, University of Vaasa identified the following barriers to innovating, updating, or taking risks in existing curriculum:

- ❖ Change fatigue
- ❖ Curriculum inertia
- ❖ Faculty expertise gaps
- ❖ Overloaded faculty
- ❖ Time constraints

Barriers to Innovative Pedagogy

In 2025, University of Vaasa identified the following barriers to innovating, updating, or taking risks in existing pedagogy:

- ❖ Overloaded faculty
- ❖ Resource constraints
- ❖ Time constraints



Research

We study people, organizations, institutions, and the state of the world to inspire responsible management and education practice.

How We Define Research

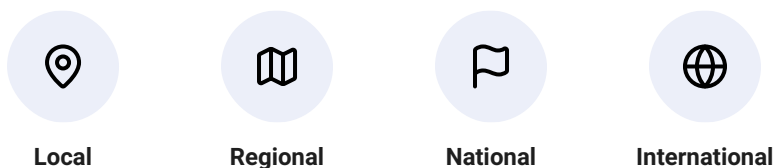
The University of Vaasa understands research as interdisciplinary, phenomenon-driven inquiry into organisations, society, and the energy transition – conducted ethically, openly, and together with stakeholders to inform policy and practice and to advance sustainability; in short, studying the world in order to change it responsibly.

Research vs Research for RME/Sustainable Development



Research Funding

In 2025, University of Vaasa was awarded funding for research that is:



Socializing Research

In 2025, University of Vaasa contributed research findings to:

- ❖ Community organizations
- ❖ Government and policy makers
- ❖ Industry and business networks
- ❖ International media
- ❖ Local media
- ❖ National media
- ❖ Open-access platforms

Research Projects

In 2025, University of Vaasa reported 2 research projects that implemented responsible or sustainable activities.

WSTAR – Wasa Zero Emission Data Centre (sustainability of digitalisation)

Period Covering: December, 2022 - December, 2025

Department: Computer Information Systems

The Wasa Zero Emission Data Centre (WSTAR) is an infrastructure that enables research on future climate-neutral data centres. As a part of the Technobothnia research infrastructure in Vaasa, the energy capital in Finland, it provides direct and near contacts to the energy industry.

Today, data centres worldwide consume approximately 1% of electrical energy, a figure projected to increase to 8–21% by 2030! Since almost all energy consumed is offloaded as unused waste heat, the carbon footprint of data centres is enormous if renewable energy sources are not used.

WSTAR enables research on how to completely change the energy model of data centres, and tight integration with the local energy system allows them to act as efficient electrical grid balancers in combination with renewable energy sources.

Future mobile, local, and small-scale data centres also enable effective edge-based installations and provide research possibilities to fulfil EU guidelines of climate-neutral data centres by 2030.



HUMAIN – Human–AI Interaction Nexus

Period Covering: December, 2025 - December, 2028

Department: Business Administration | Management | Human Resource Management

The Research Council of Finland has granted €2.8 million to establish HUMAIN – Human–AI Interaction Nexus, a new research infrastructure in Vaasa. The initiative brings together four partners – University of Vaasa, Åbo Akademi University, Novia University of Applied Sciences, and Vaasa University of Applied Sciences (VAMK) – combining their strengths in a joint initiative for future human–AI interaction.

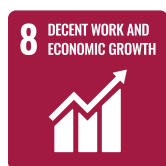
At the University of Vaasa, the project is an interdisciplinary collaboration between the Schools of Marketing and Communication and Technology and Innovations, along with the research infrastructure VME Interaction Design Environment. The initiative combines humanistic and technical perspectives to understand and develop the interaction between humans and technology.

HUMAIN is essential for strengthening the connection between people, consumption, and rapidly developing technologies that are key to a future focused on sustainable and renewable energy. This project will allow Vaasa to directly explore and create AI systems that prioritize human needs, leading to a healthier future, says Rebekah Rousi, associate professor of communication and digital economy at the University of Vaasa.

The initiative also strengthens the region's innovation environments and supports both industry and public sector actors in their digitalization and development ambitions. HUMAIN contributes to realizing the region's goals for sustainable technology development and provides opportunities to test new technology, develop production, and build expertise for the future.

The HUMAIN infrastructure project will greatly improve research and use of robotics and extended reality technologies in the Vaasa region by bringing together local universities and industries in Southern Ostrobothnia and Ostrobothnia, according to Jani Boutellier, an associate professor of computer science at the University of Vaasa.

Led by Åbo Akademi, HUMAIN – Human–AI Interaction Nexus – will run from 2026 to 2028 with a total budget of €2.8 million, of which the University of Vaasa's share is nearly €500,000. The initiative is part of the Academy of Finland's initiative for local research infrastructures within the national FIRI programme.



Research Awards

In 2025, University of Vaasa was awarded 1 research award for responsibility- and/or sustainability-related research.

BSIS label

Granter: BSIS (Business School Impact System)

Grantee: University of Vaasa

Award Description:

In 2025, the University of Vaasa became the first higher education institution in Finland and the Nordic region to be awarded the prestigious BSIS (Business School Impact System) label. Institutions that demonstrate significant regional, societal, and academic impact receive this international recognition. The assessment evaluates seven areas of impact, and only 98 institutions worldwide have received this honour. The BSIS evaluation report highlighted the university's pivotal role in regional development and its position within the Nordic region's largest energy technology cluster, the EnergyVaasa network.

The EFMD announcement underscores the recognition of responsible research and societal impact, with the review team noting innovative research, local connections, and significant societal effects as key strengths.

Research Presentations Related to RME and/or Sustainability

In 2025, University of Vaasa gave 1 research presentation related to RME and/or sustainability.

Ethics of GMO-based biofuels

Authors: Tommi Lehtonen, University of Vaasa

Date of publication: June, 2025

Presented at: National or international issue or theme-specific conference

Department: Business Administration

Since the late twentieth century, scientists have been working on biofuels derived from bioengineered organisms (GMOs). Bioengineered plants and bacteria can be used to generate energy sources such as ethanol, biodiesel, and biogas. Suitable crops for biofuels include miscanthus, barley, maize, and oilseed rape. As for biofuels, the primary benefit of bioengineering (gene editing and gene transfer) is its ability to alter the oil and sugar content of plants. Using genetically modified crops as an energy feedstock is a means to speed up transitioning from fossil fuels to renewables, which is necessary to address climate change.

The tasks of this paper:

- 1) To identify and categorise ethical concerns regarding GM biofuels,
- 2) To look at these issues through the lens of different moral theories,
- 3) To propose a unified framework based on multiple ethical models to address concerns surrounding GM biofuels,
- 4) To argue for it as a viable solution.



Publications Related to RME and/or Sustainability

Beyond attitude-behaviour debate on sustainable consumption : factors driving sustainable consumption in the fashion industry

| [DOI](#)

Authors: Tahir Ali | Henrika Elisabeth Heiniemi | Khuram Shahzad | Arto Ojala | Saleem ur Rahman

Date of publication: May, 2025

Department: Marketing

The fast fashion is choking the world, polluting our water, and contaminating our air. The world that we live in now demands that consumers buy sustainable fashion. Prior research has mainly focused on a single influence of consumers' attitudes on sustainable fashion consumption, thus ignoring the impacts of other factors. We investigate multiple factors that drive sustainable fashion consumption. Using online survey data of 156 Finnish consumers and using structural equation modelling, we find that 'awareness of the adverse environmental effects of fast fashion', 'sustainable fashion knowledge', 'perceived value of sustainable clothing', 'perceived customer effectiveness', 'sustainable fashion consumption attitude', and 'availability of sustainable clothing' drive sustainable fashion consumption, while 'trust in sustainability claims' is unrelated to sustainable fashion consumption. We extend the theory of planned behaviour (TPB) by providing a comprehensive understanding of factors driving sustainable fashion consumption, and provide implications for fashion brands.



Opening the black box of transition towards a sustainable business model | [DOI](#)

Authors: Irina Atkova | Tamara Galkina | Man Yang | Tiina Leposky | Petri Ahokangas

Date of publication: March, 2025

Department: Business Analytics | Finance

Transition towards sustainable business models (SBMs) has become an imperative practice for businesses. To ensure this change is systematic, firms need to transform all BM components – value creation, delivery, and capture – in a consistent manner. However, extant research lacks an understanding of the integrative mechanisms of value logic transition when modelling a business through the lens of sustainability. This study explores mechanisms for such transition towards SBMs. We follow companies operating in three traditional industries in Finland: mining, paper production, and shipbuilding. To tackle transition towards SBMs, we focus on context, intervention points,

mechanisms, and outcomes of this change. We derive an integrative model that depicts how value components are transformed as a whole, thereby contributing to the literature on sustainability transitions and dynamic views of BMs.



Contextualizing policy mixes : A configurational study on rapid transitions | [DOI](#)

Authors: Jouni K. Juntunen | Shah Rukh Shakeel

Date of publication: November, 2025

Department: Management

The policy mixes in sustainability transitions have been recognized as a central component in accelerating decarbonization. Policy mixes are embedded in a broader institutional and structural order involving technologies, infrastructures, markets, practices, and environmental conditions within socio-technical transitions. In this paper, we examine how various combinations of demand-pull policy mixes, and infrastructural, environmental, and market configurations result in either rapid or slow transitions. We draw on European heat pump diffusion as a novel innovation featuring very different diffusion levels within the continent. The analysis draws on a country-level data set of 20 European countries, and a configurational analysis using the fuzzy-set Qualitative Comparative Analysis (fsQCA) method. The policy mix measures for configurational analysis are constructed using data on sector specific policy instruments, taking in economic policies, regulatory policies, and mandatory and voluntary soft and systemic instruments. We complement the model with environmental conditions, infrastructure data on gas and heating networks, and market conditions. Three key findings emerged. First, we contextualize policy mixes to reveal how various configurations can lead to either rapid or slow transitions. Second, we contribute to the research on energy transitions by demonstrating the importance of infrastructural arrangements. Third, we make a methodological contribution by exemplifying how the two-step comparative case study method can separate slowly changing remote conditions and more rapidly evolving proximate conditions in studies on sustainability transitions. The results emphasize system-level environment and climate policy approaches that improve the cost competitiveness of clean technologies.



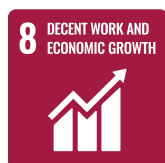
LGBTQ-friendly companies produce more patents and innovation

Authors: Veda Fatmy | Jukka Sihvonen | Sami Vähämaa

Date of publication: June, 2025

Department: Finance

Why do some firms consistently outperform others in terms of creative output? Diversity may be the answer. Veda Fatmy, Jukka Sihvonen and Sami Vähämaa write that LGBTQ-inclusive firms produce more patents, generate higher-quality innovations and have a higher concentration of individual inventors among their employees.



Responses to climate change adaptation messages: A focus group study on the potential for public engagement with climate adaptation

| [DOI](#)

Authors: Annu Perälä

Date of publication: March, 2025

Department: Management

As climate change accelerates, effective communication about climate change adaptation is urgently needed to inform and engage communities concerning proactive measures. In this article, I examine public engagement with climate change adaptation through the lens of message interpretation. Six online focus groups, including working-aged men and women (n = 30), were conducted in Finland in 2024, and the data were analysed using qualitative content analysis. The results suggest that the public demonstrates a cognitive capacity to engage with adaptation, even though many individuals in the study were unfamiliar with the specific term. Consequently, three main emotional responses to adaptation communication were identified, each carrying its own implications for public engagement. First, a supportive view of adaptation as a realistic and sensible strategy aligns with engagement. In contrast, a more critical perspective that considers adaptation as submissive and an incomplete response to climate change may hinder engagement. Lastly, a dismissive view rooted in low-risk perception also obstructs engagement by undermining the rationale for adaptation.



Research Voices

The following statement demonstrates a way in which researchers at University of Vaasa bring sustainability and responsible management into their research.

Preparedness and Resilience Research Platform (PREP)

Geopolitical tensions, a changing security environment, and growing uncertainties are major obstacles to the economy and society. In response to these challenges, the University of Vaasa established a new multidisciplinary research platform on preparedness and resilience.

The Preparedness and Resilience Research Platform (PREP) started its activities at the beginning of January 2025.

The new research platform significantly strengthens our research on economic and societal resilience as well as comprehensive security and preparedness. The phenomenon-based platform makes it easier to conduct impactful multidisciplinary research and support joint efforts to increase external research funding, says Minna Martikainen, Rector of the University of Vaasa.

According to Martikainen, the platform helps to solve complex societal problems and provides research-based knowledge for decision-making.

How can we safeguard the future of democracy? And how can we ensure that businesses can operate in a secure and predictable environment that fosters economic growth? How can new innovations and technologies support the green transition and resilience? How should consumers and businesses prepare for challenging times in their finances and operations? How can we strengthen citizens' confidence in the ability of decision-makers to maintain stability, security, and peace?

Through an innovative, bold, and multidisciplinary research platform, we believe we can provide answers to these fundamental questions, say Professors Harri Jalonen, Panu Kalmi, and Marko Järvenpää and Research Director Petri Uusikylä, who have been planning the platform.

The new research platform builds on the University of Vaasa's expertise in business, technology, and governance. It supports the university's strategic vision as an internationally recognized high-impact research university, says Mika Grundström, vice rector for research at the University of Vaasa.

The Preparedness and Resilience Research Platform is one of four multidisciplinary research platforms at the University of Vaasa. The others include VEBIC, focusing on energy and sustainable development; Digital Economy; and InnoLab, centered on innovations and entrepreneurship.

Research Barriers

In 2025, University of Vaasa identified the following barriers to conducting research related to sustainability and/or responsibility:

- ❖ Funding challenges
- ❖ Skills and expertise gaps
- ❖ Time constraints



Partner

We engage people from business, government, civil society, and academia to advance responsible and accountable management education and practice.

How We Define Partner

We define a “partner” as any external actor – such as a company, public authority, non-profit organisation, civil society organisation, or another academic institution – with whom our university maintains a purposeful, two-way collaborative relationship. The aim of this partnership is to enhance both management education (including curriculum development, teaching, student development, and research) and management practice (referring to how organisations actually operate).

Institutional Partnerships

- ❖ AACSB (Association to Advance Collegiate Schools of Business)
- ❖ EFMD (European Foundation for Management Development)
- ❖ Times Higher Education (THE)
- ❖ United Nations organs other than the UN Global Compact
- ❖ University Councils

Student Organization Partnerships

- ❖ None

Partnerships

The following provides more details on 1 key partnership at University of Vaasa.

Working together with companies like Wärtsilä, Microsoft, ABB, Hitachi Energy, and Danfoss Drives

Much of the University of Vaasa’s sustainability work runs through industry. In December 2025, Danfoss Drives and the University of Vaasa signed a long-term partnership agreement at Danfoss's Vaasa office to support sustainable development, competitiveness, and regional growth, focusing on research, education, and innovation. The agreement gives students and researchers access to top-level research and development to address issues like energy efficiency and sustainable technologies. Working together with companies like Wärtsilä, Microsoft, ABB, Hitachi Energy, and Danfoss Drives enhances knowledge, supports sustainable development, and creates chances for students and researchers; specifically, the partnership with Wärtsilä focuses on aiding the energy transition, green transition, and sustainable development through joint research projects, training for experts, shared learning spaces, and research facilities. In 2025, the university made important agreements with both Hitachi and Danfoss, is working with AGCO Power to create a research centre for engine technology to

improve low-carbon energy solutions for off-road heavy equipment, and has expanded the CoDoc doctoral model through collaboration with Wärtsilä and the universities of applied sciences in Vaasa and Seinäjoki.

Partner Voices

The following statement from our partners demonstrates ways in which our collaborations at University of Vaasa support sustainability and responsible management education.

Wärtsilä introduces a unique PhD program to bridge research with product development in partnership with three universities

In October 2025, Wärtsilä announced its industrial PhD programme “to bridge research with product development”, naming Aalto University, the University of Vaasa, and LUT University as the first partner universities in Finland and quoting Rector Minna Martikainen on how the CoDoc model strengthens innovation ecosystems in line with the university’s strategy and the Energy Transition Valley initiative.



Practice

We adopt responsible and accountable management principles in our own governance and operations.

How We Define Practice

“Practice” means applying to our own governance and operations the same responsible and accountable management principles we teach – walking the talk in everything from sustainability reporting to how we treat our staff and students.

Institutional Policies and Practices

- ❖ Buildings/real estate
- ❖ Carbon reduction or offset commitments
- ❖ Climate action plan

Policy Documents Related to RME and/or Sustainability

17.12.2024-audit_of_the_university_of_vaasa

View document  Download document 

Practice Awards

In 2025, University of Vaasa received 1 award for responsible and/or sustainable practices.

BSIS label

Granter: European Foundation for Management Development (EFMD)

Grantee: University of Vaasa

Award Description:

The BSIS label (June 2025) is directly tied to responsibility and societal impact: the University of Vaasa became the first higher education institution in Finland and the Nordics to be awarded the BSIS label – a recognition granted to institutions demonstrating significant regional, societal, and academic impact, held by only around 60 institutions worldwide at the time, with the evaluation putting the university’s total economic impact on the region at €254 million. The relevance to responsibility is explicit in the BSIS criteria themselves, which assess the existence of explicit policies in the area of CSR and sustainable development, the integration of these concerns into teaching, research, and management, and concern for diversity and equal access across all the school’s activities. The University of Vaasa’s rector framed it in her autumn 2025 opening speech as evidence of impact commitments: “As the first university in the Nordics, we were awarded the BSIS label. This demonstrates our commitment to ensuring that our education and research are genuinely impactful and deliver concrete value for society.”

Practice Voices

The following statement from stakeholders at University of Vaasa demonstrates our commitment to sustainable and responsible practices.

The University of Vaasa's Sustainability Report

The University of Vaasa's Sustainability Report 2024, published in September 2025, directly addresses the practice principles' focus on "own governance and operations". It details the university's carbon footprint, which stands at approximately 3.18 thousand tonnes of CO₂-equivalent for 2024, and outlines operational strategies such as the utilisation of the Hansel Procurement Pulse system and Granlund Manager to monitor emissions related to waste management, cleaning, campus dining, and energy consumption. The report highlights specific operational initiatives, including sensor-controlled lighting and ventilation that achieved energy savings of up to 10%, water-saving taps, energy-efficient dishwashers, plans for plant-based catering, and a proposed bike shelter to serve as "internal compensation" for commuting emissions. The agenda is structured around four key pillars, one of which is explicitly titled "Campus, our own functions and administration". The Sustainability Report can be accessed at https://www.uwasa.fi/sites/default/files/2025-09/Sustainability%20Report%202024_Saavutettava.pdf.



Share

We share our successes and failures with each other to enable our collective learning and best live our common values and purpose.



How We Define Share

At the University of Vaasa, the term “share” in the context of PRME refers to the transparent, ongoing, and honest communication of progress, encompassing both successes and shortcomings. This communication is directed towards both the global PRME/SDG community for mutual learning and its own community, rather than solely aiming to enhance external reputation through transparency.

Engagement Opportunities

University of Vaasa offers transparent engagement opportunities for members of our institution and community to contribute to our sustainability and responsibility efforts in the following ways:

- ❖ Boards and advisory committees
- ❖ Annual reports
- ❖ Community events and consultation forums
- ❖ Public events and panel discussions
- ❖ Sustainability-focused research and collaboration Opportunities

Communication Audiences

University of Vaasa communicates its policies and progress on sustainable development and responsibility with:

- ❖ Accreditation bodies
- ❖ Boards and advisory committees
- ❖ Business and industry partners
- ❖ Chamber of commerce and local communities
- ❖ Faculty and staff
- ❖ Government and policy makers
- ❖ Media and public relations channels
- ❖ Non-governmental organizations (NGOs)
- ❖ Prospective and current students
- ❖ Research and academic networks

Sharing Voices

The following statement from stakeholders at University of Vaasa demonstrates our commitment to sharing and learning from sustainability and responsible management practices.

The University of Vaasa's Blogs platform

The University of Vaasa's Blogs platform, part of the Newshub, serves as a space for staff and researchers to share first-person reflections with a public audience. Several posts from 2025 exemplify this approach, including contributions from Rebekah Rousi and the editorial team, such as an article on the CARE project. In February 2025, we published this project, which aids early-stage researchers in their transition to careers beyond academia (<https://blogs.uvasa.fi/researchsupport/the-university-of-vaasas-care-project-facilitates-early-stage-researchers-transition-to-careers-outside-academia/>). The blogs represent the university's most narrative and personal-voice channel, aligning well with the spirit of the sharing principle.

Communication Barriers

University of Vaasa faces the following barriers in transparent communications:



**Accessibility
issues**



**Audience
reach**



**Engagement
gaps**



**Feedback
loops**



Media visibility

SIGNATORY

University of Vaasa



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