INNOVATION ROADMAP 2035

Part two – Action plan

UNIVERSITY OF HELSINKI

7 GOALS FOR 2035

4 ‘must win goals’ and 3 supporting ones

1 Culture and skills

We have a strong innovation culture and an active community of student and researcher innovators creating new solutions to local and global challenges.

2 Incubation and technology transfer

We are one of the leading Nordic universities in creating research and knowledge-based spinouts and startups.

3 EU and external funding

We attract significant amounts of external funding for innovation and new research.

4 Business engagement

We are one of the most desired academic innovation partners in Finland for the private sector.

5 Support and services

We support innovation and entrepreneurship with high-quality services and by building cooperation with the world’s leading academic and industrial ecosystems.

6 Assets for spinout growth

We use our networks and wide range of assets to support the growth of university-born companies.

7 Innovation in the University's brand

Innovations are a meaningful part of our main brand, and we are internationally recognised as a university that creates innovations.

1. Culture and skills

2035: We have a strong innovation culture and an active community of student and researcher innovators creating new solutions to local and global challenges.

Long-term strategic focus

- Strengthen a culture that supports and encourages innovation.
- Develop innovation and entrepreneurship skills and mindset throughout the University (researchers, students, management, and staff).
- Faculties and units actively engage in innovation and build cooperation with the private sector and other innovation partners.
- Recognise innovation as a merit and create career and other incentives for researchers and students to engage in innovation.
- Grow the number of professors, PIs, and researchers that have innovation skills and experience.

ACTIONS 2024–2027

1.1 **Innovation services and faculties*** develop innovation and entrepreneurship education for all levels (students, doctoral students, post-docs, staff). Basic courses are supplemented by thematic programmes and more advanced courses in **forerunner faculties**.

1.2 All **faculties** include innovation activities in their TOPSU 2025–2028 plans and set concrete goals (e.g. apply for EU and BF innovation funding, increase the number of invention disclosures, establish new corporate partnerships). **Forerunner faculties** develop ways to support and incentivise top-performing researchers and teams.

1.2.1 To accelerate cultural change and the accumulation of new skills in academic staff, **forerunner faculties** begin evaluating innovation and entrepreneurship skills, if relevant, when recruiting new PIs, lecturers, university lecturers, and professors.

1.2.2 **Forerunner faculties** require that innovation elements (potential IP created, business engagement, co-creation, etc.) are included in major research project funding proposals when suitable.

1.3 **Helsinki Think Company** focuses on building an active student innovation and entrepreneurship community on all four campuses by organising activities and supporting student groups with early-stage idea development. €

TENTATIVE ACTIONS 2027+

Faculties include optional entrepreneurship and innovation courses and modules in their curriculum. By 2030, a large share of the University's students take at least one basic course. €

By 2035, **all faculties** evaluate innovation and entrepreneurial skills, if relevant, when recruiting new PIs, lecturers, university lecturers, and professors. **Forerunner faculties** pilot academic positions where innovation activities are a key part of the job description.

*faculties include other units and UH's research institutes throughout this document

€ Significant long-term investment

€ Significant one-time investment or moderate long-term investment

€ Moderate one-time investment or minor long-term investment

? Requires external project funding

2.
Incubation and technology transfer

2035: We are one of the leading Nordic universities in creating research and knowledge-based spinouts and startups.

Long-term strategic focus

- Increase the number of University of Helsinki-born teams in incubation/technology transfer services.
- Develop early-stage services that support researchers in transforming research findings into new ideas and potential inventions.
- Incubation becomes a permanent service.
- Provide seamless support to researchers and other customers from pre-incubation to incubation and technology transfer.
- Adopt intellectual property ownership and technology transfer models, where the focus is on enhancing spinout company growth.

ACTIONS 2024–2027

2.1 Incubation is a *permanent* part of **innovation services** with a professional team. It offers high-quality, industry-specific services and an international network of mentors. Incubation coaches University of Helsinki-born teams to develop their research findings and ideas into practical solutions, licensable technologies, and growth-capable companies. It helps teams to find investors/funding, connect with potential partners, and gain market access. €

2.2 The **university** reviews its IP ownership and commercialisation policy with the aim of enhancing the growth potential of University of Helsinki-born spinout companies and the development of licensable technologies, while increasing the University's long-term revenue.

2.3 Strengthen **technology transfer services,** with a focus on maturation of IP, flexible commercialisation models, improved access to market and funding, license sales, and post-spinout support. €

TENTATIVE ACTIONS 2027+

Improve/upgrade selected thematic incubators to become among the best-ranked in Europe.

Increase incubation partnerships with other Finnish and international universities. University of Helsinki incubators are developed as a central node in the Finnish incubation and research commercialisation ecosystem, offering industry-specific services and attracting the best teams and startups into the University of Helsinki's ecosystem. ?

To create more research-based innovations**, innovation services** and the **doctoral school** seek external funding for a pilot, where new PhDs from selected thematic fields can be financed for up to 24 months to mature their research-based ideas or technologies with help from experienced mentors. ?

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? Requires external project funding

3.
EU and external funding

2035: We attract significant amounts of external funding for innovation and new research.

Long-term strategic focus

- Build capability for gaining significantly more EU innovation funding to enable ambitious RDI and infrastructure projects.
- Strengthen high-quality support to researchers for creating large-scale innovation projects funded by the EU and Business Finland.
- Establish and deepen relationships with top-tier private sector and academic project partners in Europe.
- Establish practices for covering project building costs and matching funding, which are required in some EU funding instruments.

ACTIONS 2024–2027

3.1 **Innovation services** establish a stronger team with experienced project builders to help researchers in faculties and units with creating Horizon Europe and Business Finland projects that focus on innovation, innovation ecosystems, and business collaboration. Utilise external project writers and other service providers to supplement internal project creation. €

3.1.1 The University of Helsinki builds long-term EU project cooperation with key universities and RDI-intensive corporations and organisations to help connect the University to the best European innovation ecosystems and networks.

3.2 **Innovation services** increase the support for creating Business Finland-funded RDI collaboration projects between research teams and leading companies (especially co-creation, co-innovation, rise to challenge, Veturi).

3.3 **University services** develop common practices aimed at creating innovation-focused EU projects (e.g., project development costs, project management practices).

TENTATIVE ACTIONS 2027+

A permanent and expanded team focuses on synergistic projects within selected thematic areas to create a 'larger impact'. This will create a 'critical mass' of new research and innovation to attract top talent, engage with the best private sector and academic partners, and lobby the interests of the University of Helsinki within the EU to ensure suitable funding calls in the future. €

Establish a university-level mechanism for covering matching funding needed for large-scale, strategic EU projects. ?

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4. Business engagement

2035: We are one of the most desired academic innovation partners in Finland for the private sector.

Long-term strategic focus

- Increase the number and value of strategic, long-term corporate partnerships.
- Develop world-class services for business collaboration and increase industry-specific support to researchers for creating joint RDI and education projects with the private sector.
- Use EU and Business Finland innovation projects to initiate long-term strategic partnerships with Finnish and international corporations.

ACTIONS 2024–2027	TENTATIVE ACTIONS 2027+
4.1 **Forerunner faculties** invest in their internal innovation support for researchers and emphasize building RDI partnerships with leading corporations. **Innovation services** are strengthened to facilitate research, talent, and innovation partnerships and projects between researchers and the private sector. €	Expand the corporate partnership services and build expertise in selected thematic areas and industries, with an ability to build RDI collaboration with internationally leading corporations. €
4.1.1 **Innovation services** continue developing clear service paths, instructions, legal support, and template agreements to streamline the engagement between researchers and companies.	
4.1.2 Increase cooperation with the private sector for student internships, theses, and project courses to help develop working life skills and offer employment opportunities for students, and to provide a platform for talent acquisition and fresh ideas for companies.	Pilot joint venture programs and co-creation labs with the private sector, where students and researchers solve challenges presented by companies.
4.1.3 Expand the services offered to the key strategic partners of the University. Invest in long-term relationship building and continuing dialogue.	
4.2 Expand cooperation between the **doctoral school, faculties**, and the private sector by piloting an industry career-focused PhD track, with the aim to increase the number of the University's doctoral studies that are carried out in partnership with the private sector.	Expand the non-academic career PhD track with the aim that by 2035, one-third of the University's doctoral studies are carried out in partnership with the private sector.

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5. Support and services

2035: We support innovation and entrepreneurship with high-quality services and by building cooperation with the world's leading academic and industrial ecosystems.

Long-term strategic focus

- Recruit/build a team of international-level professionals that support innovation and the development of new solutions and business.
- Identify (new) thematic innovation areas with high impact potential: 1) high-quality research, 2) the ability to attract private sector and academic partners, and 3) external RDI funding. For selected areas, create ambitious innovation programmes that combine, e.g., education, incubation, open infrastructures, business collaboration, and a growing portfolio of externally funded projects.
- Build cooperation with the world's leading academic and industrial partners in our core competence areas.
- Partner with Aalto, HUS, and other relevant partners in creating thematic ecosystems and joint innovation services.

ACTIONS 2024–2027	TENTATIVE ACTIONS 2027+
5.1 The **University** establishes its innovation activities as a core service, with permanent base funding to enable high-quality services, industry-specific support, accumulation of skills, and connections to global ecosystems. The University of Helsinki's funding is supplemented with external funding and revenue income.	**Innovation services** and **forerunner faculties** establish teams of innovation managers who work in faculties and research flagships to identify early inventions and support business collaboration and joint innovation projects. ?
5.2 Current innovation activities are evaluated during the year 2024 to help develop organisation and key services that match the level of ambition set in this roadmap.	
5.3 Organise key **innovation services** under one roof on all campuses. Open innovation spaces act as anchor points for the whole community, facilitate interdisciplinary innovation, and support interaction with the wider ecosystem. €	Develop 'physical' innovation campuses with office space, infrastructures, and specialised services open to the private sector and startups (e.g., lab spaces). ?
5.4 **Innovation services and faculties** 1) prioritise innovation activities focused on health, AI, and research flagships, 2) strengthen existing smaller, more focused innovation hubs or thematic programmes in food and education, and 3) explore and pilot new initiatives focused, e.g., on human sciences, bio/wood, and dual-use solutions. Seek external funding for new services and to supplement the University's (and faculties') own funding. €	Use thematic focus areas as a basis for building larger innovation ecosystems centred around the University, with specialised services, infrastructures, and an increasing number of partners. Explore the possibilities of building a large-scale industrial R&I ecosystem led by the University of Helsinki with national and/or Business Finland funding. ?

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6. Assets for spinout growth

2035:We use our networks and wide range of assets to support the growth of university-born companies.

Long-term strategic focus

- Leverage financial and non-financial assets (e.g., alumni networks, corporate partnerships, infrastructures, etc.) to support the growth of University of Helsinki-born spin-outs and startups. Explore the viability of offering similar services to non-UH-born teams and startups, to create an ecosystem of high-quality companies around the University of Helsinki.
- Use Proof of Concept (POC) and other early-stage funding to increase the maturity of ideas, improve the quality of 'research to business' applications, and validate new business cases.
- Innovation services and faculty staff actively support University of Helsinki-born startups and spinouts in finding business and other innovation partners and gaining access to funding.

ACTIONS 2024–2027

6.1 **HYR** invests (in partnership with private investors) in the best University of Helsinki-born spinouts, startups, and potentially in non-university startups that participate in University of Helsinki incubators, to enable their growth and to create financial returns to the University from technology transfer and incubation.

6.2 **Innovation services** and **faculties** jointly develop university-level policies and practices for offering research infrastructures, lab space, office space, and other support to the university-owned spinouts to enable their growth.

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6.3 **Innovation services** help UH-born startup and spinout teams find funding for product development, commercialisation (to supplement national R2B funding), and early-stage growth.

6.4 Establish a permanent Proof of Concept fund to accelerate the transformation of research findings into ideas/inventions and to grow the potential value of the University-owned IP**. Innovation services** seek external funding to increase POC size and opportunities.

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TENTATIVE ACTIONS 2027+

Evaluate establishing a project development and investment fund(s) with external partners, for maturing research-born ideas and investing in early-stage spinouts/startups. The aim is to increase the number of successful UH-born growth companies. The joint model would support commercialisation, lower risk per investment, and potentially attract new major investors.

Explore opportunities and external funding also for offering affordable access to research infrastructures, basic legal services, and office space to UH-born startups and possibly to non-UH-born startups.

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7. Innovation in the University's Brand

2035: Innovations are a meaningful part of our main brand, and we are internationally recognised as a university that creates innovations.

Long-term strategic focus

- The University builds a stronger innovation brand based on the core 'University of Helsinki' brand.
- Innovation is part of the key themes in internal and external communications.
- The University of Helsinki takes an active role in shaping national R&I policies and related actions.

ACTIONS 2024–2027

7.1 The current brand strategy of the University is revised to include innovation activities.

7.2 **Communications and marketing services and HIS** actively promote University of Helsinki-based innovations, spinouts, and startups – all the innovation output enabled by the University – in its media and events to draw more attention and visibility to them. Thus, building a stronger innovation brand and strengthening the innovation culture of the University of Helsinki through positive examples.

7.3 The **university** is present at selected national and/or international innovation events to strengthen the innovation brand, support the growth of the University's spinouts/startups, and forge new business and academic partnerships. €

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