

April 2026

Vidzeme University of Applied Sciences Consolidated Institutional Assessment



Final report



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1 Summary of Unit-Level Performance

Vidzeme University of Applied Sciences (ViA) submitted two units for evaluation – Engineering and Technology and Social Sciences, both of which are small. The unit-level assessments show an uneven performance profile across the two units, with the Social Sciences unit demonstrating stronger overall performance than the Engineering and Technology unit. Social Sciences received an overall score of 3 (good), with very good scores for economic and social impact and development potential, while Engineering and Technology was assessed at 2 (adequate) overall, with particular weaknesses identified in research quality and impact and research environment and infrastructure.

The Social Sciences unit emerges as the stronger and more internationally visible component of ViA's research profile, accounting for a substantial share of research output and international publications relative to its size. It demonstrates strong engagement with societal stakeholders, policy processes and applied research agendas, resulting in very good economic and social impact. In contrast, the Engineering and Technology unit shows more limited scientific depth and infrastructure capacity, constraining its ability to generate internationally competitive research despite positive contributions to applied innovation, an emerging international network and economic and societal relevance with joint projects.

Overall, the unit-level results indicate that ViA's research performance is split along disciplinary lines, where the Social Sciences unit plays a significant role in sustaining ViA's institutional research profile, with somewhat weaker performance of the Engineering and Technology unit. To improve the institution's overall research standing, there is a need for greater balance, capacity building and institutional coherence across its research directions.

Full details of the unit's FTEs and scores are in Appendices A and B.

2 Institutional Context

Vidzeme University of Applied Sciences presents a clear mission and research strategy oriented toward building an entrepreneurial, inclusive and technologically advanced knowledge society, implemented through institution-wide priorities around interdisciplinary research, international innovation engagement and science commercialisation for regional sustainability. The institutional self-evaluation frames these priorities as a deliberate response to ViA's dual profile in Social Sciences and Engineering and Technology, regional development needs, and opportunities arising from membership in the E³UDRES² European University alliance.

During the evaluation period, ViA has undertaken substantial organisational changes intended to strengthen strategic coherence and reduce fragmentation, notably the concentration of research topics and the establishment of a unified ViA Research Institute (launched in 2025) to integrate research management and infrastructure across both research entities. Governance is described as a hybrid model, combining strategic leadership from the rectorate with bottom-up research initiatives and an intermediate level of institute leadership and deans coordinating implementation. These institutional arrangements appear designed to support consistency across units and to move the institution from a dispersed, project-driven model toward a more mission-oriented approach.

While the self-evaluation emphasises increasing coherence between the Social Sciences and Engineering and Technology directions, the unit-level outcomes suggest that the benefits of this integration are not yet fully realised for Engineering and Technology. The recent (2025) merger into a single institute should be seen as an important enabling step, but its effectiveness will depend on whether institutional mechanisms are sufficiently strong to support quality improvement and capacity-building across both entities, rather than reinforcing existing asymmetries.



The institutional strategy and research model at ViA appear particularly well aligned with the epistemic and organisational logic of the Social Sciences, where applied, stakeholder-driven and policy-oriented research can be effectively pursued within relatively light infrastructure and small research teams. By contrast, the same institutional framework is less well suited to the requirements of Engineering and Technology research, which typically demands higher levels of laboratory infrastructure, technical support, critical mass and sustained investment in specialised equipment.

3 Overall Institutional Score and Rationale

Assigned overall score: **3 (good), strong national player with some international recognition.**

The overall institutional score of 3 reflects a synthesis of the unit-level evidence and the institutional context, indicating that Vidzeme University of Applied Sciences demonstrates a credible and developing research profile with national relevance and emerging international engagement. The two evaluated units show different performance, with the Social Sciences unit performing at a good level and the Engineering and Technology unit at an adequate level, and neither unit exhibiting critically weak performance across the evaluated criteria.

At the unit level, the Social Sciences unit represents the stronger component of ViA's research profile, demonstrating good scientific quality and particularly strong economic and social impact relative to its size. The Engineering and Technology unit, while more limited in scale and infrastructure, contributes to applied research and innovation agendas aligned with institutional and regional priorities. Taken together, the two units provide ViA with a balanced applied research profile.

ViA has articulated a coherent and strategically focused institutional mission, and recent reforms, including the establishment of a unified Research Institute and the concentration of research topics, provide an integrated framework for research development. This institutional research model, however, aligns better with applied social sciences than with capital-intensive engineering. This limits the institution's ability to achieve stronger scientific depth and international visibility, but does not undermine its role as a competent and developing international player within its applied mission.

Taken together, the unit-level results and institutional conditions, in particular the introduction of the unified Research Institute, justify an overall assessment of 3 (good), positioning ViA as an institution with solid applied research performance, clear societal relevance, and a positive development trajectory, provided that greater consideration of the strategic role of Engineering and Technology is implemented.

4 Recommendations

- Strengthen research coherence and strategic prioritisation across the institution. Chairs of Disciplinary Expert Groups recommend that ViA further sharpen its institutional prioritisation of research topics by concentrating resources and support on a limited number of thematic areas where the institution demonstrates the strongest potential for scientific contribution, societal relevance and international visibility. Clearer strategic choices, based on existing strengths in applied social sciences and selected technological domains, would help improve synergy between disciplines and international profile of the institution's research.
- Strengthen structural support for engineering research. The Chairs of Disciplinary Expert Groups recommend strengthening institutional mechanisms to better support Engineering and Technology research, including investment in research infrastructure, technical capacity and researcher development, while at the same time more



systematically integrating engineering with the Social Sciences profile. Developing interdisciplinary research agendas at the interface of technology, digitalisation, governance and regional development would allow ViA to exploit complementarities between the two domains, strengthen scientific depth, and reinforce the institution's distinctive applied research identity.



Appendix A FTE academic and research staff at units as reported in the self-evaluation reports

Unit	FTE academic and research staff at units as reported in the self-evaluation reports																	
	2019			2020			2021			2022			2023			2024		
	Academic	Research	Total	Academic	Research	Total	Academic	Research	Total	Academic	Research	Total	Academic	Research	Total	Academic	Research	Total
Study and research field of engineering and technologies	3.55	6.81	10.36	1.97	9.91	11.88	1.43	12.13	13.56	1.86	9.31	11.17	2.95	8.65	11.6	2.03	15.82	17.85
Study and research field of social sciences	6.76	20.26	27.02	6.6	21.44	28.04	5.83	18.24	24.07	4.93	11.16	16.09	4.43	14.21	18.64	4.51	22.29	26.8



Appendix B Unit scores assigned by disciplinary Expert Groups and Institutional Score

Unit	Unit scores assigned by disciplinary Expert Groups						
	Overall score	Quality of research	Impact on the discipline	Economic impact	Social impact	Research environment & infrastructure	Development potential
Study and research field of engineering and technologies	2	2	2	3	3	2	3
Study and research field of social sciences	3	3	3	4	4	3	4

Assigned overall score: **3 (good), strong national player with some international recognition.**