



FINNISH EDUCATION
EVALUATION CENTRE

AUDIT MANUAL FOR THE QUALITY SYSTEMS OF HIGHER EDUCATION INSTITUTIONS 2015–2018

Publications 2015:2

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PUBLISHER Finnish Education Evaluation Centre

BOOK DESIGN Juha Juvonen

LAYOUT Juvenes Print – Suomen Yliopistopaino Oy, Tampere

ISBN 978-952-206-269-7(pb)

ISBN 978-952-206-270-3 (pdf)

ISSN-L 2342-4176

ISSN 2342-4176 (paperback)

ISSN 2342-4184 (pdf)

PRINTED BY Juvenes Print – Suomen Yliopistopaino Oy, Tampere 2015

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Audit framework and objectives



Audits of the quality systems of higher education institutions (HEIs) have been implemented in Finland since 2005. All Finnish universities and universities of applied sciences participated in the first audit round that ended in 2012. The current second audit round will continue until 2018. The objective of the audits has been to support Finnish HEIs in developing quality systems that correspond to the European principles of quality assurance and to demonstrate that functional and consistent quality assurance procedures are in place in Finland both in institutions and on the national level.

In 2014, the activities of the Finnish Higher Education Evaluation Council (FINHEEC) that was previously in charge of the external evaluation of Finnish HEIs were transferred to the Finnish Education Evaluation Centre (FINEEC), whose task is to produce information for decision making in education policy and the development of education as concerns all sectors of education. The Higher Education Evaluation Committee operates in connection with FINEEC. The Committee decides on project plans for the evaluations of HEIs, the composition of planning and review teams and the final results of the audits performed on the quality systems.

The FINHEEC audit manual (*Audit manual for the quality systems of higher education institutions 2011—2017*)¹ applied in the second audit round has been updated to correspond to the administrative model of FINEEC and is replaced by this manual. At the same time, efforts have been made to improve the transparency and clarity of the criteria used based on feedback obtained from HEIs and auditors during the second audit round. The manual will be valid until the end of 2018.

Similar provisions in the Universities Act and the Polytechnics Act oblige HEIs to participate in external evaluations of their operations and quality systems and to

¹ *Audit manual for the quality systems of higher education institutions 2011—2017*. Publications of the Finnish Higher Education Evaluation Council 15:2012.

publish the results of these evaluations. Institutions have the option to fulfil their statutory obligation through other means than by participating in audits implemented by FINEEC. Further, legislation on FINEEC allows for the operation of the centre also outside of Finland. Audits are carried out in Finnish, Swedish and English.

International cooperation in quality assurance has been an essential element of the Bologna Process aiming to create a European Higher Education Area. A central tool in the work has been the publication *Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance in the European Higher Education Area*² (also known as ESG), which has been applied in the evaluations of Finnish higher education institutions and FINHEEC. During its final term, FINHEEC renewed its full membership in the European Association for Quality Assurance in Higher Education and was accepted as member of the European Quality Assurance Register for Higher Education, a listing of reliable European evaluation organisations. In 2014, the higher education functions of FINEEC were accepted in the register on the basis of the membership of FINHEEC.

Compared to the European principles of quality assurance, the Finnish audit model based on institutional reviews covers all functions of an HEI from a broad perspective. Procedure in the second audit round explores the quality management of degree education to a greater detail. The samples used in the process consist of degree programmes, some of which are selected by the institution, some by the audit team. A closer link between the audit and the strategic objectives of each HEI is forged through an optional audit target that is defined by the institution itself.

The auditing method is based on respecting the autonomy of HEIs and trust in the institutions' intentions regarding their statutory responsibility for the quality of their operations. The participating HEIs have themselves decided on the development and form of their quality systems, and the audit assesses the comprehensiveness, functionality and effectiveness of those systems. The audits have thus adhered to the principle of enhancement-led evaluation that has formed into a strong tradition in Finnish evaluation practice. The goal is to help HEIs to recognise the strengths, good practices and areas in need of development in their operations. The institutions are supported in their efforts to reach their strategic objectives and in directing future development activities in order to create a framework for the institutions' continuous development.

Second-round audits continue to be implemented in four stages. First, the HEI carries out a self-evaluation and prepares the audit material. Next, a team of experts examines the material and then visits the institution. Finally, the results of the audit are published in the form of a report. Once an HEI has passed the audit, it will

² The document *Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance in the European Higher Education Area* (European Association for Quality Assurance in Higher Education, 2009) is available at <http://www.enqa.eu/index.php/home/esg>.

receive a quality label. As for the overall assessment of the quality system, the audit focuses on quality management procedures and their effectiveness. As concerns degree programmes functioning as samples of degree education, ESG is applied (*Part 1: European standards and guidelines for internal quality assurance within higher education institutions*) also to review the impact that quality management procedures have on the results of operations. However, the results are compared to the objectives set by the institution itself in order to pay more attention to the effectiveness of quality management.

Chapter 2 of the manual describes the targets and the final outcome of the audit, Chapter 3 outlines the audit process and Chapter 4 examines the procedure for a re-audit.

2

Focus and outcome of audit

2.1 Audit targets and criteria

2.1.1 Targets

Audits focus on the quality system that HEIs develop for themselves based on their own needs and goals. They examine the procedures that the institution uses to maintain and develop the quality of its operations. In the audits, it is evaluated whether the quality system meets the national criteria defined in Appendix 1 and whether it corresponds to the European quality assurance principles and recommendations for HEIs. Audit targets are:

1. Quality policy
2. Quality system's link with strategic management
3. Development of the quality system
4. Quality management of the higher education institution's core duties, including essential services supporting these:
 - a. Degree education (including first-, second- and third-cycle education)³
 - b. Research, development and innovation activities, as well as artistic activities
 - c. The societal impact and regional development work (incl. social responsibility, continuing education, open university and open university of applied sciences education, as well as paid-services education)
 - d. Optional audit target
5. Samples of degree education: degree programmes
6. The quality system as a whole.

³ First-cycle degrees include bachelor's degrees and university of applied sciences degrees, while second-cycle degrees include master's degrees and university of applied sciences master's degrees. Third-cycle degrees include postgraduate licentiate and doctoral degrees.

Optional audit target

As an optional audit target 4 d, an HEI chooses a function that is central to its strategy or profile and which the institution wants to develop in terms of its quality management. The function may also be an overarching feature of the institution's core duties (such as internationalisation, sustainable development, the status and well-being of the staff and students, lifelong learning). The choice must be justified in connection with the audit agreement. The optional audit target is not taken into account when evaluating whether the audit will pass, but it is mentioned in the audit certificate related to the quality label.

Samples of degree education

Audit target 4 a reviews the quality management of degree education at a general level. In turn, audit target 5 takes a more detailed look at primarily three degree programmes chosen as samples of degree education. HEIs choose two of these themselves. Universities of applied sciences choose one programme leading to a bachelor's degree and one programme leading to a university of applied sciences master's degree. Universities choose one study entity leading to a degree that includes both bachelor's and master's education, as well as one programme leading to a doctoral degree. The HEI must explain the reasons for its selections and evaluate how representative the quality management of the selected programmes is in relation to other degree education.

Based on the audit material supplied by the HEI, the audit team chooses a third degree programme for evaluation at the latest six weeks prior to the audit visit. Programmes used as samples are evaluated as independent audit targets, but they also complement the evaluation of the quality management of education by providing detailed information at the level of degree programmes.

2.1.2 Criteria

Audits employ a set of criteria that is based on a scale of four development stages of quality management (see Appendix 1): absent, emerging, developing and advanced, which are specified for each audit target. The development phase of each audit target is determined individually, including targets 4 a–d. Likewise, the development stage of the quality management of each sample of degree education is also determined individually.

2.2 Outcome of audit

2.2.1 Threshold for passing

The audit team presents FINEEC's Higher Education Evaluation Committee with its appraisal of whether the HEI should pass the audit or whether a re-audit needs

to be conducted. The report contains the team's evaluation of the development stage of each audit target. The audit team can propose that the institution passes the audit if none of the targets is 'absent' and if the quality system as a whole (audit target 6) is at least 'developing'.

The evaluation of the quality system as a whole focuses on whether quality management procedures form a comprehensive and functioning system and whether the quality culture supports the development of the operations. The features of 'developing' and 'advanced' systems are characterised below.

The quality system of an HEI is at a developing stage if it displays the following features:

- The quality management procedures constitute a functioning system.
- The quality system covers the essential parts of the core duties of the HEI and provides support for the development of the operations. There is evidence that the system has an impact on the development of the core duties.
- The development of the operations is based on an existing quality culture.

The quality system of an HEI is at an advanced stage if it displays the following features:

- The quality management procedures form a dynamic and coherent system.
- The quality system covers all the core duties of the HEI and provides excellent support for the institution's overall strategy and the development of the operations. There is clear evidence that the system has an impact on the development of the core duties.
- The institution has a well-established quality culture, characterised by wide participation, commitment and transparency.

2.2.2 Decision-making

The Higher Education Evaluation Committee decides on the audit results. The Committee is responsible for ensuring that decisions are impartial. The Committee has access to the audit team's report when making the decision. In addition, the chair or vice-chair of the audit team gives a presentation of the audit's key results at the decision-making meeting and answers the Committee's questions on the issues presented in the report. Based on the audit report, the Committee may also make a different decision from the one proposed by the audit team.

When preparing and making decisions, FINEEC complies with the provisions of the Administrative Procedure Act concerning disqualification, which, in turn, supports the credibility and objectivity of the decisions.

2.2.3 Quality label

HEIs that pass the audit receive a quality label and are added to the register of audited institutions maintained on FINEEC's website. The quality label is valid for six years from the Evaluation Committee's decision. The audit certificate related to the quality label explains whether the audit was carried out by a Finnish or an international audit team, provides a summary of the key findings and describes the optional audit target.

If the HEI is required to undergo a re-audit, the targets that are in essential need of development and which will be subject to the re-audit are recorded in the Evaluation Committee's decision. The re-audit is conducted two to three years after the decision on the initial audit. The re-audit procedure is described in Chapter 4 of this manual.

2.2.4 Appeal's procedure

If an HEI is unsatisfied with the Evaluation Committee's decision, it can make use of the FINEEC's appeals procedure. The appeals procedure is available on FINEEC's website (www.karvi.fi).

3

Audit process

The audit process consists of the following stages:

1. The HEI's registration for an audit
2. Agreement negotiation
3. Appointment of the audit team
4. Compilation of audit material by the HEI
5. Auditor training
6. Briefing and discussion event
7. Audit team's visit to the HEI
8. Audit team's recommendation regarding the audit result
9. The Higher Education Evaluation Committee's decision on the result
10. Publication of the report
11. Concluding seminar
12. Feedback to FINEEC
13. Follow-up seminar.

The audit process is described in a diagram in Appendix 2.

3.1 Agreement negotiation

FINEEC signs an agreement on the audit with the HEI. The following issues are recorded in the agreement:

- Audit targets (incl. the optional target)
- Audit procedure and time frame
- The national or international composition of the audit team and the language to be used to carry out the audit (Finnish, Swedish or English)
- Duration of the audit visit (3–5 days)
- Price of the audit
- Commitment to a potential re-audit.

3.2 Audit team

3.2.1 Team composition and selection criteria

HEIs may choose either a Finnish or an international team to carry out the audit. An international audit team always includes Finnish members, who are acquainted with the domestic higher education system. The role and number of international auditors are agreed upon on a case-by-case basis.

The Higher Education Evaluation Committee appoints the audit team and its chair. An audit team usually consists of five to seven members, selected so that they represent the two higher education sectors, students, as well as working life outside the higher education sector. The team members must also have experience in the activities of different personnel groups, as well as in the core duties and management of HEIs. The goal is to include a few individuals with prior experience as auditors in the team. An individual with special experience in the optional audit target is also appointed to the team, if required.

The members of the audit team are on an equal footing as evaluators. The audit team selects a vice-chair among its members. The team members are expected to participate in the training arranged by FINEEC. A project manager from FINEEC in charge of the audit takes part in the team's activities as an expert of audits.

The criteria used in the selection of auditors include:

- Good knowledge of the higher education system
- Experience in evaluation or audits
- Knowledge of quality systems.

Moreover, the chair of the audit team is expected to have:

- Prior experience in the evaluation of HEIs and their operations
- A comprehensive and deep understanding of the higher education system
- Knowledge or experience of higher education management.

A person is disqualified from acting as a member of the audit team if he or she is an interested party or if confidence in his or her impartiality in relation to the HEI subject to the audit comes under question. Disqualification is determined in compliance with the provisions of the Administrative Procedure Act (434/2003, Chapter 5, sections 27–29). According to good administrative procedure, a disqualified person may not in any way participate in the processing or evaluation of a matter. Such situations may arise, for example, if the person is employed by the HEI subject to the audit or has acted in a position of trust in the institution's decision-making body. Auditors must also take it upon themselves to inform FINEEC about any aspects that may have a bearing on their disqualification.

Prior to the appointment of the audit team, the HEI is given the opportunity to comment on the team's composition, especially from the perspective of disqualification.

FINEEC and the auditors sign an agreement that specifies the audit-related tasks, fees and any other conditions related to the assignment.

3.2.2 Tasks of the team and the project manager

Members of the audit team:

- examine the HEI's audit material
- decide on how to carry out the audit visit and which groups and individuals to interview
- determine any additional material that may need to be requested from the institution
- draw up interview questions for the audit visit
- conduct the audit visit as planned
- draw up the audit report
- present FINEEC's Higher Education Evaluation Committee with its appraisal of whether the HEI should pass the audit or whether a re-audit needs to be conducted.

In addition to these tasks, the chair of the audit team has a special role, which involves:

- chairing the audit team's meetings and audit visit, unless otherwise agreed
- participating with the project manager in the briefing and discussion event arranged at the HEI prior to the audit visit
- taking responsibility for the audit task as a whole and editing the audit report jointly with the project manager
- presenting the audit results at the Higher Education Evaluation Committee's meeting and at the concluding seminar at the HEI
- participating in the communication of the results.

The project manager's tasks include:

- organising the training event for auditors and acting as an instructor
- supporting the audit team's activities by taking part in the team's discussions as an expert in audits, and instructing the team as concerns the audit criteria and the Higher Education Evaluation Committee's uniform decision policy
- being the point of contact between the HEI and the audit team
- editing the audit report and taking charge of communication of the outcome of audit.

3.2.3 Auditor training

Among other things, auditors learn in the training about the operations of FINEEC, the objectives and procedure of the audit, as well as the tasks and operating principles

of the audit team. In addition to this, international auditors are familiarised with the Finnish higher education system. If required, the project manager arranges personal training for the audit team's chair focusing on his or her special tasks.

3.2.4 Auditors' operating principles

The audit team must comply with the following operating principles and ethical guidelines in its work:

- Impartiality and objectivity: Auditors must take an impartial and objective approach towards the HEI subject to the audit, as well as recognise their position of power and the responsibility relating to it.
- Transparent and evidence-based evaluation: The audit must be based on transparent and systematically applied criteria, as well as on material collected in connection with the audit.
- Confidentiality: All of the information acquired during the process, except for that published in the final report, is confidential.
- Interaction: The audit is carried out through good cooperation and interaction with the HEI.

3.2.5 Remuneration

The auditors' fees are determined in accordance with the principles adopted by FINEEC.

3.3 Audit material

The HEI compiles material for the audit, the goal being to provide the audit team with a sufficient knowledge base and evidence for the evaluation of the quality system. The material consists of basic material and a self-evaluation report drawn up by the institution. The material is prepared in the language of the audit, as agreed in the audit agreement.

3.3.1 Basic material

- An organisation chart and a concise description of the HEI's organisation, as well as the number of students and staff (max. three pages)
- Overall strategy of the HEI and a description of the strategy process, as well as a summary of the key strategic choices in terms of the institution's future
- A diagram and concise description of the quality system (max. two pages)
- The HEI's institution-level quality manual or other corresponding document describing the development of the operations
- For all degree programmes, the total student intake, number of degrees completed, average time of degree completion, statistics on international degree students and exchange students (exchange periods of more than three months) to the degree of accuracy as agreed in the audit agreement; for programmes chosen as samples, the curriculum as well (incl. intended learning outcomes).

3.3.2 Self-evaluation report

The HEI draws up a self-evaluation report on the functioning of its quality system in line with the guidelines provided in Appendix 3. The institution chooses how to carry out its self-evaluation and write the report.

In its report, the institution is expected to carry out as reflective a self-evaluation as possible, identify areas in need of development and provide a concrete description of its practical measures related to the quality work. The report must focus on evaluation rather than description. Identifying the institution's own strengths, and especially the ability to determine areas in need of development, are proof of a functioning quality system and an established quality culture. The HEI should be prepared to present evidence of the issues brought up in the self-evaluation report during the audit visit.

3.3.3 Submission of material

The HEI must supply the basic material and self-evaluation report to FINEEC in paper format (ten copies) and as electronic documents at the latest twelve weeks prior to the audit visit. The self-evaluation report drawn up on the third sample of degree education, which is selected by the audit team, must be submitted to FINEEC at the latest three weeks prior to the audit visit.

In addition to the materials mentioned above, the audit team is allowed to request the HEI to provide other materials deemed necessary prior to or during the audit visit.

The institution is also requested to give members of the audit team the opportunity to access electronic materials that are key to quality management and which may provide additional information to the team.

3.4 Briefing and discussion event

Around four weeks prior to the audit visit, the chair of the audit team and FINEEC's project manager visit the HEI to be audited. The purpose of the visit is to arrange an event that supports the institution in the preparations for the audit and where the objectives and implementation of the audit can be discussed.

3.5 Audit visit

The purpose of the audit visit is to verify and supplement the observations made of the HEI's quality system based on the audit material. The goal is to make the visit an interactive event that supports the development of the institution's operations.

The visit lasts from three to five days. During the first day, the team generally interviews representatives of the institution's management, teaching and other staff groups, students and external stakeholders. At this stage, the focus is on the quality system

as a whole. During the other days, the evaluation focuses in particular on the quality management of degree programmes and the optional audit target in the institution's various units. The audit team may also conduct evaluation visits to individual faculties, departments or units to verify the practical functioning of quality management.

The audit team selects the targets for visits mainly on the basis of the audit material. The selection of one of the targets may be postponed until the actual visit. The selection must be announced at the latest on the day preceding the interview. The audit team may also arrange joint discussions for various actors within the institution concerning key topics in terms of quality management. The visit concludes with a meeting with the management, where the audit team has the opportunity to ask more specific questions about the institution's quality system. At the end of the meeting, the audit team gives the institution preliminary feedback on the functioning of its quality system based on the observations made during the visit.

3.6 Report and notification of results

The audit team draws up a report based on the material accumulated during the evaluation and on the analysis of that material. In accordance with the principle of continuous enhancement, the report points out the strengths and good practices of the HEI's quality system, in addition to giving the institution recommendations for further development. The reports follow a standardised structure:

- Description of the audit process
- Concise description of the HEI subject to the audit
- Results by audit target
- Strengths, good practices and recommendations for further development
- The audit team's appraisal of whether the institution should pass the audit or whether a re-audit is needed; in the latter case, the team lists in its report what it considers to be the essential shortcomings of the quality system.

The Evaluation Committee's decision on whether the institution passes the audit or must be subject to a re-audit is recorded at the end of the report. If the HEI is required to undergo a re-audit, the targets that are in essential need of development and will be subject to the re-audit are recorded in the report. Prior to the Evaluation Committee's decision-making meeting, the institution is given the opportunity to check the report for factual information.

The report is published in FINEEC's publication series in both paper and electronic format in the language specified in the audit agreement. The length of the report is approximately 50 pages.

The outcome of audit is communicated to the HEI immediately after the Evaluation Committee's decision-making meeting. The report and an information bulletin are published on FINEEC's website within three working days of the decision.

3.7 Concluding seminar

FINEEC and the HEI that was subject to the audit arrange a joint seminar, usually within one month of the Evaluation Committee's decision. The seminar gives the institution's staff and students the opportunity to openly discuss the audit results and conclusions with representatives of FINEEC and the audit team.

3.8 Feedback to FINEEC

FINEEC collects feedback from all of the audited HEIs and the auditors in order to develop its activities.

3.9 Follow-up

FINEEC organises national follow-up seminars to support the development of quality systems in HEIs. One of the key goals of the seminars is to give feedback on post-audit development work to HEIs whose audits have been performed around three years earlier. Another goal is to offer institutions the opportunity to discuss the development of quality systems and exchange experiences and good practices related to quality work. HEIs prepare a short report on their post-audit development work for the seminar.

4.1 Focus and criteria of re-audit

If the Evaluation Committee requires an HEI to undergo a re-audit of its quality system, the targets that are in essential need of development and will be subject to the re-audit are recorded in the Committee's decision. In the re-audit, the institution is expected to present evidence showing that it has improved its quality system so that the audit targets evaluated in the re-audit as a whole have progressed to at least the level of 'developing'.

Re-audits use the same criteria as the actual audits (see Appendix 1). Re-audits apply the same principles in the appointment of the audit team, as well as in its operations and decision-making as in the actual audits.

4.2 Re-audit process

The re-audit process consists of the following stages:

1. Negotiation between the HEI and FINEEC
2. Drawing up of the audit agreement
3. Appointment of the audit team
4. Compilation of audit material by the HEI
5. Auditor training
6. Audit team's visit to the HEI
7. Audit team's recommendation regarding the re-audit result
8. The Higher Education Evaluation Committee's decision on the result
9. Publication of the report
10. Concluding seminar
11. Feedback to FINEEC.

4.2.1 Negotiation

The HEI draws up a plan for developing its quality system, the aim being to satisfy the development needs listed in the Evaluation Committee's decision. The plan serves as background material for the re-audit negotiation that the institution and FINEEC conduct usually within six months of the conclusion of the initial audit. Participants at the negotiations include representatives selected by the HEI, representatives of the initial audit team, as well as representatives of FINEEC.

The negotiation result in an agreement on the time frame and materials for the re-audit.

4.2.2 Audit agreement

A re-audit agreement containing the following issues is concluded:

- Re-audit targets in compliance with the Higher Education Evaluation Committee's decision
- Re-audit time frame
- The national or international composition of the audit team and the language to be used to carry out the audit (Finnish, Swedish or English)
- Duration of the audit visit (usually two days)
- Price of the re-audit
- Consequences if the HEI does not pass the re-audit.

4.2.3 Audit material

The HEI draws up a written report, which starts with a short summary of the general improvements to the quality system carried out after the initial audit. This is followed by a description and evaluation of the development work and its results of the agreed re-audit targets. The HEI must present as robust evidence as possible of the improvement in the quality system and of current quality procedures. The quality system development plan presented to FINEEC is also appended to the report. HEIs should be prepared to present evidence of the issues brought up in the report during the visit.

The HEI must supply the material to FINEEC in paper format (six copies) and as electronic documents at the latest eight weeks prior to the audit visit.

In addition to the materials mentioned above, the audit team is allowed to request that the HEI provide other materials deemed necessary prior to or during the audit visit. The institution is also requested to give members of the audit team the opportunity to access electronic materials that are key to quality management and which may provide additional information to the team.

4.2.4 Audit team

The Higher Education Evaluation Committee appoints an audit team with three to four members for the re-audit. The national or international composition of the audit team and the language of the re-audit is specified in compliance with the procedure used for the institution's initial audit. The re-audit team should include at least one member from the initial audit team. The team's composition depends on the areas of the quality system that received special attention in the re-audit decision.

The audit team may not merely comprise auditors from the initial audit, but should mainly comprise people who have acted as auditors. A project manager from FINEEC in charge of the re-audit takes part in the team's activities as an expert of audits.

Prior to the appointment of the team, the HEI is given the opportunity to comment on the team's composition, especially from the perspective of disqualification.

FINEEC and the auditors sign an agreement that specifies the tasks, remuneration and any other conditions related to the audit assignment.

4.2.5 Auditor training

FINEEC organises a training event for auditors to review the tasks and operating principles of auditors, as well as to focus on the HEI subject to the re-audit, the report drawn up by the HEI and the practical implementation of the re-audit.

4.2.6 Audit visit

The purpose of the audit visit is to verify and supplement the observations made of the development of the quality system based on the re-audit material. The visit normally lasts for two days, but may take longer depending on the size of the institution and on the targets of the re-audit. The visit includes interviews with people from different organisational levels, students and external stakeholders. Decisions on the practical implementation of the visit are made jointly with the institution.

4.2.7 Report and notification of results

The audit team draws up a report based on the material accumulated during the evaluation and on the analysis of that material. The report presents the results of the re-audit by audit target. To conclude its report, the audit team presents an overall evaluation and an appraisal of whether the HEI should pass the re-audit. The Evaluation Committee's decision on the re-audit result is recorded at the end of the report. Prior to the Committee's decision-making meeting, the institution is given the opportunity to check the report for factual information.

The audit report is published online in FINEEC's publication series in the language specified in the re-audit agreement. It can also be published as a print version, if the HEI pays for the printing expenses.

The outcome of audit is communicated to the HEI immediately after the Evaluation Committee's decision-making meeting. The report and an information bulletin are published on FINEEC's website within three working days of the decision.

A concluding seminar may be jointly arranged by FINEEC and the institution, if the institution wishes.

4.3 Outcome of re-audit

HEIs that pass the re-audit receive a quality label and are added to the register of audited institutions maintained on FINEEC's website. The quality label is valid for six years from the Evaluation Committee's decision. The audit certificate related to the quality label explains whether the audit was carried out by a Finnish or international audit team and provides a summary of the key findings of the re-audit.

Should the Evaluation Committee decide that the HEI has failed the re-audit, decisions about the following audit will be made together with the HEI on a case-by-case basis.

4.4 Appeals procedure

If an HEI is unsatisfied with the Evaluation Committee's decision, it can make use of the FINEEC's appeals procedure. The appeals procedure is available on FINEEC's website (www.karvi.fi).

Appendix 1: Audit criteria

TARGETS	CRITERIA			
	Absent	Emerging	Developing	Advanced
<p>1. Quality policy</p> <p>The quality policy shows an absence of or major shortcomings in the:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • rationale and definition of the quality system's objectives and responsibilities • accessibility of the quality policy to internal and external stakeholders • linking to the institution's overall strategy. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The quality policy's rationale, objectives and division of responsibilities are at an early stage of development and are only partially defined. • The quality policy is not fully accessible and does not sufficiently take into account the information needs of internal and external stakeholders. • The quality policy is insufficiently linked to the institution's overall strategy. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The quality policy's rationale, objectives and division of responsibilities are clearly defined and the result of an inclusive process. • The quality policy is accessible to all internal and external stakeholders, taking their information needs into account. • The quality policy is clearly linked to the institution's overall strategy. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The quality policy's rationale, objectives and division of responsibilities are defined in explicit terms and the result of a thorough and wide process. • The quality policy is accessible and actively communicated to all internal and external stakeholders. • The quality policy is an integral part of the institution's overall strategy. 	

TARGETS

CRITERIA

	Absent	Emerging	Developing	Advanced
<p>2. Quality system's link with strategic management</p>	<p>The quality system and quality work show an absence of or major shortcomings in the:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • ability to meet the information needs of strategic and operations management • procedures for the use and communication of quality information • functionality at different organisational levels • division of responsibility • commitment in the execution of roles and responsibilities in the institution's quality work. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The quality system and the information it produces serve only partially the needs of strategic and operations management. • Procedures for the use of and communication of quality information are weak or uneven. • The quality system functions unevenly across the institution. • The division of responsibility is only partially effective, with variable commitment in the execution of roles and responsibilities in the institution's quality work. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The quality system and the information it produces serve strategic and operations management. • Established procedures ensure that the information produced is put to use and communicated systematically within the institution and to external stakeholders. • The system works evenly across different organisational levels and units. • The division of responsibility is effective, and roles and responsibilities in the institution's quality work are executed with commitment. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The institution has well-established and excellent procedures that systematically produce information for strategic and operations management needs, and the information is put to systematic and wide use. • The institution has well-established and excellent procedures for communicating information to different personnel groups, students and external stakeholders. Communication of the information is active and up-to-date. • The quality system works effectively across all organisational levels, in a way that adds value to and enhances the quality of the institution's operations. • Managers and members of the community are committed to enhancement and the embedding of a quality culture.

TARGETS

CRITERIA

	Absent	Emerging	Developing	Advanced
<p>3. Development of the quality system</p>	<p>The HEI shows an absence of or major shortcomings in the:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • procedures for evaluating or developing the quality system or • overall view of the functioning of the quality system. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The institution has in place procedures for evaluating and developing the quality system but these procedures may not always be fit for purpose and/or effectively used for the system's further development. • Institutional oversight of the functioning of the quality system needs to be strengthened. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The HEI has in place well-functioning procedures to evaluate and develop the quality system. • The institution is able to identify the system's strengths and areas in need of development, and development work is systematic. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The HEI has well-established and systematic procedures for regularly evaluating and developing the system. • The institution is able to efficiently identify the system's strengths and areas in need of development. There is clear evidence of the system's successful development work.
<p><i>Follow-up section for the HEIs subject to the second audit:</i></p>	<p>The HEI shows an absence of or major shortcomings in the:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • development work following the first audit. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The development of the quality system after the first audit has not been systematic or effective. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The development of the quality system after the first audit has been systematic. The system works better than before. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • After the first audit, the HEI has systematically improved the functionality and fitness for purpose of the quality system. Special attention has been given to the workload produced by the system. The system has been developed in a successful and effective manner.

The fulfilment of the following criteria is reviewed separately for each core duty and optional audit target:

TARGETS

CRITERIA

	Absent	Emerging	Developing	Advanced
<p>4. Quality management of the core duties, including essential services supporting these</p> <p>4a) Degree education</p> <p>4b) Research, development and innovation activities, as well as artistic activities</p> <p>4c) Societal impact and regional development work (incl. social responsibility, continuing education, open university and open university of applied sciences education, as well as paid-services education)</p> <p>4d) Optional audit target</p>	<p>The quality system shows an absence of or major shortcomings in the:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • quality management procedures used to achieve the goals set for the core duties • participation of the institution's personnel groups, students or external stakeholders in quality work related to the core duties • quality management of essential services supporting the core duties. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The quality management procedures are in place but insufficiently developed. The procedures do not fully support the achievement of institutional strategic goals set for the core duties. • The information provided by the quality system is as yet insufficient for the development of the core duties. Information use is sporadic and/or information collection is an end in itself. • Personnel groups, students and external stakeholders are only partially involved in quality work. • The quality management of key support services is not functional. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Functional quality management procedures advance the development of the institution's core duties and the achievement of goals set for the operations. • The quality system produces relevant information for the development of the core duties, and the information is used for this purpose. • Personnel groups and students are involved in quality work. External stakeholders also participate. • The quality management of key support services functions relatively well. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The HEI has systematic and well-established quality management procedures that provide excellent support for the development of the institution's core duties and the implementation of its overall strategy. • The institution has systematic and excellent procedures used to produce information for the development of the core duties. There is clear evidence that information is used systematically and successfully. • Personnel groups and students are committed and actively involved in quality work. Special attention has been given to the workload generated by the quality management procedures. External stakeholders are also systematically involved in quality work. • The HEI has systematic and well-established procedures for the quality management of key support services. There is clear evidence that these procedures function well.

The fulfilment of the following criteria is reviewed separately for each degree programme:

TARGETS	CRITERIA		
	Absent	Emerging	Developing
<p>5. Samples of degree education: degree programmes</p> <p>Planning of the programme</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Curricula and their preparation • Intended learning outcomes and their definition • Links between research, development and innovation activities, as well as artistic activities, and education • Lifelong learning • Relevance of degrees to working life. <p>Implementation of the programme</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Teaching methods and learning environments • Methods used to assess learning • Students' learning and well-being • Teachers' competence and occupational well-being. <p>Participation</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Participation of different personnel groups, students and external stakeholders in quality work related to the degree programme. <p>Effectiveness of quality work</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Suitability of key evaluation methods and follow-up indicators and their impact on the achievement of goals. 	<p>The quality system shows an absence of or major shortcomings in the:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • quality management procedures related to the planning of the programme • quality management procedures related to the implementation of the programme • participation of the institution's personnel groups, students or external stakeholders in the development of the programme or • effectiveness of the quality work related to the programme. 	<p>The quality management procedures related to the planning of educational functional and do not provide sufficient support to the planning of the programme.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The quality management procedures related to the implementation of educational provision are not fully functional and do not provide sufficient support to the implementation of the programme. • Personnel groups, students and external stakeholders only partially participate in quality work. • There is little evidence of the effectiveness of the quality work related to the programme. 	<p>The quality management procedures related to the planning of educational provision are fully functional and support the planning of the programme.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The quality management procedures related to the implementation of educational provision are fully functional and support the implementation of the programme. • Personnel groups and students participate in quality work. External stakeholders also participate. • There is evidence that quality work has an enhancement effect on the programme.
			<p>Advanced</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The quality management procedures related to the planning of educational provision provide excellent support for the planning of the programme. They are systematic and well-established. • The quality management procedures related to the implementation of educational provision provide excellent support for the implementation of the programme. They are systematic and well-established. • Personnel groups and students participate actively and with commitment in quality work. External stakeholders are also systematically involved. • There is clear evidence of the enhancement effect of the quality work.

TARGETS

CRITERIA

	Absent	Emerging	Developing	Advanced
<p>6. The quality system as a whole</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The HEI has only individual and unrelated quality management procedures. • There is no evidence of the procedures' impact on the development of the operations. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The quality management procedures do not yet form a functioning and unified system. • The quality system encompasses some of the HEI's core duties but there is little evidence of the system's impact on the development of the core duties. • The institution's quality culture is only just emerging. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The quality management procedures constitute a functioning system. • The quality system covers the essential parts of the core duties of the HEI and provides support for the development of the operations. There is evidence that the system has an impact on the development of the core duties. • The development of the operations is based on an existing quality culture. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The quality management procedures form a dynamic and coherent system. • The quality system covers all the core duties of the HEI and provides excellent support for the institution's overall strategy and the development of the operations. There is clear evidence that the system has an impact on the development of the core duties. • The institution has a well-established quality culture, characterised by wide participation, commitment and transparency.

Appendix 2: Audit process

The HEI registers for an audit

- The institution and FINEEC agree on a preliminary audit time frame based on the registration.



Agreement negotiation between the HEI and FINEEC

- FINEEC and the HEI sign an agreement on the audit. The agreement specifies the audit targets, procedure and time frame, national or international composition of the audit team and language to be used to carry out the audit, duration of the audit visit, price of the audit and commitment to a potential re-audit.



Appointment of the audit team

- The Higher Education Evaluation Committee usually appoints an audit team with five to seven members.



Compilation of audit material and preparation of the self-evaluation report

- The HEI compiles audit material, the goal being to provide the audit team with a sufficient knowledge base and evidence for the evaluation of the quality system. The material consists of basic material and a self-evaluation report drawn up by the institution. The material is submitted to FINEEC at the latest 12 weeks prior to the audit visit.



Briefing and discussion event

- Around four weeks prior to the audit visit, the chair of the audit team and the FINEEC project manager visit the HEI subject to the audit. The purpose of the visit is to arrange an event that supports the institution in the preparations for the audit and where the objectives and implementation of the audit can be discussed.



Audit visit

- The audit team's visit to the HEI lasts from three to five days, depending on the size of the institution and on the audit task.



Audit report

- The audit team draws up a report based on the material accumulated during the evaluation and on the analysis of that material. In accordance with the principle of continuous enhancement, the report points out the strengths and good practices in the HEI's quality system, in addition to giving the institution recommendations for further development.



(Appendix 2 continues on the next page)

Outcome of audit

- In its report, the audit team presents its appraisal of whether the HEI should pass the audit or whether a re-audit needs to be conducted. The Higher Education Evaluation Committee decides on the audit result on the basis of the appraisal.



The HEI passes the audit.

- The institution receives a quality label and is added to the register of audited institutions maintained on FINEEC's website
- The quality label is valid for six years.

The HEI does not pass the audit and must undergo a re-audit.

- The institution does not receive a quality label.



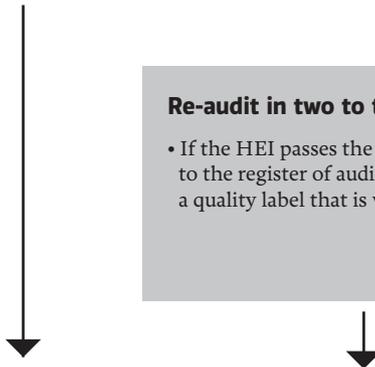
Concluding seminar

- FINEEC and the HEI arrange a joint seminar, usually within one month of the audit decision. The seminar gives the institution's staff and students the opportunity to openly discuss the audit results and conclusions with representatives of FINEEC and the audit team.



Re-audit in two to three years

- If the HEI passes the re-audit, it is added to the register of audited HEIs and receives a quality label that is valid for six years.



Follow-up

- Around three years after the audit, the HEI takes part in a national seminar arranged by FINEEC. The seminar's main objective is to provide feedback on post-audit development work and enable parties in the field of higher education to discuss the development of quality systems and share experiences and good practices related to the quality work. HEIs prepare a short report on their post-audit development work for the seminar.

APPENDIX 3: Guidelines for the self-evaluation report

GUIDELINES:

- The HEI chooses how to carry out its self-evaluation and write the report.
- The report must be structured according to the headings listed below. The institution may freely decide on the use of any sub-headings.
- In its report, the institution is expected to carry out as reflective a self-evaluation as possible, identify areas in need of development and provide a concrete description of its practical measures related to the quality work. The report must focus on evaluation rather than description.
- The HEI should be prepared to present evidence of the issues presented in the report during the audit visit.
- The self-evaluation report is 50–70 pages long in total.
- The layout of the text is as follows: page size: A4, margins: 2.5 cm, spacing: 1, and font: Arial 11 pt or similar. Texts exceeding the maximum length are not taken into consideration. The report may not include links to internet pages.

CONTENT AND HEADINGS OF THE SELF-EVALUATION REPORT:

1. Quality policy

a. Objectives and rationale of the quality system

Description: What are the key objectives and rationale of your quality system? How are the objectives set?

Evaluation: Assess the clarity of the objectives, as well as how successful and inclusive the procedure for setting them is.

b. Division of responsibility related to quality management

Description: Describe the responsibilities in your quality system.

Evaluation: Assess the clarity of the division of responsibility.

c. Communication of the quality policy

Description: How is the quality policy documented and how is it communicated? How are the information needs of internal and external stakeholders taken into account?

Evaluation: Assess success of communication from the perspective of different parties and their information needs.

d. Linking of the quality policy to the institution's overall strategy

Description: How is the quality policy linked to the institution's overall strategy?

Evaluation: Assess how well the quality policy is linked to the institution's overall strategy?

e. **Summary:** Summarise, in table format, the key strengths and areas in need of development related to audit target 1.

Strengths	Areas in need of development

2. Quality system's link with strategic management

a. Information produced by the quality system for strategic management

Description: What information does the quality system produce for the needs of strategic and operations management? What kind of procedures are there for the use and communication of this information?

Evaluation: Assess how well the quality system and the information produced by it serve the needs of strategic and operations management. Assess also the significance of the information produced by the system for the overall evaluation of the quality of the operations.

b. Functioning of the quality system at different organisational levels

Description: How is the quality system used in management at different organisational levels?

Evaluation: Assess the system's functioning, effectiveness and workload in terms of management at different organisational levels and units.

c. Quality culture of the higher education institution

Description: Describe the quality culture of your higher education institution. What concrete measures does your institution use to advance the emergence and development of a quality culture?

Evaluation: Assess the quality culture and its stage of development in your institution. Assess also the functioning of the division of responsibility and commitment of various parties in the quality work.

d. Summary: Summarise, in table format, the key strengths and areas in need of development related to audit target 2.

Strengths	Areas in need of development

3. Development of the quality system

a. Procedures for developing the quality system

Description: Describe the procedures for evaluating and developing the quality system.

Evaluation: Assess the system's ability to meet the objectives set for it and how systematic the system development is.

Summarise, in table format, the key strengths and areas in need of development related to the procedures for developing the quality system.

Strengths	Areas in need of development

b. Development stages of the quality system

Description: Describe the key development stages of the quality system. Higher education institutions subject to second audit must also explain which of the essential recommendations given in the first audit they have reacted to and how.

Evaluation: Assess the success of the system's development and describe further development needs of the system.

4. Quality management of the higher education institution's core duties, including essential services supporting these

The higher education institution prepares a self-evaluation of the quality management related to audit targets 4 a–d. A separate section is drawn up for each target, including descriptive and evaluative sections in accordance with the following guidelines.

Description: What goals have been set for the operations and what are the key quality management procedures used to achieve them? How do different parties (personnel groups, students, external stakeholders) participate in the quality work and how is participation supported?

Evaluation: Assess:

- the functioning of quality management procedures and their impact on the development of the core duties
- the comprehensiveness, usability and utilisation of the information produced by the quality system in the development of the core duties

- the roles and involvement of different parties in terms of quality work, as well as the workload
- the functioning, workload and effectiveness of the quality management of key support services⁴.

Summary: Summarise, in table format, the key strengths and areas in need of development in quality management.

Strengths	Areas in need of development

4a) Degree education (including first-, second- and third-cycle education)

4b) Research, development and innovation activities, as well as artistic activities

4c) Societal impact and regional development work (incl. social responsibility, continuing education, open university and open university of applied sciences education, as well as paid-services education)

4d) Optional audit target.

5. Samples of degree education: degree programmes

Under item 4 a, the higher education institution is requested to provide a self-evaluation of the quality management of degree education at a general level. Under item 5, the institution provides a self-evaluation of the quality management of primarily two degree programmes chosen as samples of degree education.

Universities of applied sciences choose one programme leading to a bachelor's degree and one programme leading to a university of applied sciences master's degree. Universities choose one study entity leading to a degree that includes both bachelor's

⁴ Support services include e.g. library and information services, personnel services, IT services, financial administration, career and recruitment services, student services, communication services, facilities management and international services.

and master's education, as well as one programme leading to a doctoral degree. The institution is requested to explain the reasons for its selections and evaluate how representative the quality management of the selected programmes is in relation to other degree education. Programmes used as samples are evaluated as independent audit targets, but they also complement the evaluation of the quality management of education by providing detailed information at the level of degree programmes.

The institution prepares separate self-evaluations of both degree programmes according to the guidelines and headings listed below.

Based on the audit material supplied by the institution, the audit team chooses a third degree programme for evaluation at the latest six weeks prior to the audit visit. The self-evaluation report drawn up on this programme in accordance with the guidelines must be submitted to FINEEC at the latest three weeks prior to the audit visit.

a. Planning of the programme

Description: Describe how the quality of the following matters is ensured:

- Curricula and their preparation
- Intended learning outcomes and their definition, as well as the assessment of learning that supports the intended learning outcomes
- Links between research, development and innovation activities, as well as artistic activities, and education
- Lifelong learning
- Relevance of degrees to working life.

Describe also how personnel groups, students and external stakeholders participate in the quality work related to the planning of education.

Evaluation: Assess the functioning, workload and impact of the procedures used for planning education, as well as how different parties participate in the quality work.

b. Implementation of the programme

Description: Describe how the quality of the following matters is ensured:

- Teaching methods and learning environments
- Methods used to assess learning
- Students' learning and well-being
- Teachers' competence and occupational well-being.

Describe also how personnel groups, students and external stakeholders participate in the quality work related to the implementation of education.

Evaluation: Assess the functioning, workload and impact of the procedures used for implementing education, as well as how different parties participate in the quality work.

c. Effectiveness of quality work

Description: Describe:

- the key evaluation methods and follow-up indicators in terms of development at the level of degree programmes
- the development of operations in the past three to five years, using indicators
- the measures currently in progress for improving the quality of education.

Evaluation: Assess:

- the impact of the quality work on the achievement of the objectives set for the programme.

d. Summary: Summarise, in table format, the key strengths and areas in need of development related to the quality management of the degree programme.

Strengths	Areas in need of development

6. Implementation of the self-evaluation

Describe how your institution carried out the self-evaluation and prepared the self-evaluation report. What ideas did the evaluation process bring up? Evaluate the success of the process.

APPENDIX 4: Audit concepts

The following list contains FINEEC's interpretation of the concepts used in this manual.

Audit

An audit is an independent and systematic external evaluation. It assesses whether the quality system of a higher education institution is fit for purpose and functioning and whether it complies with the agreed criteria. An audit focuses on the procedures that the institution uses to maintain and develop the quality of its operations.

Enhancement-led evaluation

The goal of enhancement-led evaluation is to help higher education institutions identify the strengths, good practices and areas in need of development in their own operations. The purpose is, thus, to help higher education institutions achieve their strategic objectives and steer future development activities in order to create a framework for the institutions' continuous development.

External stakeholder

An external stakeholder is a party outside the higher education institution that cooperates and is involved with the institution. It is an organisation or party that is affected by the institution's operations or that can affect the institution.

Good practice

Good practice is a form of high-quality operation carried out by a higher education institution. In

principle, such a practice can also be identified in other organisations. Good practice is, thus, an exemplary and innovative procedure the dissemination and implementation of which is desirable also in other higher education institutions.

Quality culture

Among other things, quality culture describes the environment and atmosphere in which the operations are developed, as well as the individual and collective commitment to the quality work. Higher education institutions themselves define in concrete terms what quality culture means in their context of operation. Well-established quality culture is characterised by wide participation, commitment and transparency.

Quality label

A quality label indicates that the quality system of a higher education institution has passed FINEEC's audit⁵. Institutions may, if they so require, use the label when describing their operations to internal and external actors.

Quality management

Quality management refers to the procedures, processes or systems that the higher education institution uses to maintain and develop the quality of its activities.

Quality policy

The quality policy of a higher education institution encompasses the rationale and definition of the quality system's objectives and responsibilities.

⁵ Until May 2014, audits were conducted and the quality label was awarded by the Finnish Higher Education Evaluation Council, which formerly had responsibility for the external evaluation of higher education in Finland.

Quality system

A quality system encompasses the quality management organisation, division of responsibility, procedures and resources, which all contribute to the development of the operations. Each higher education institution decides on the objectives, structure and operating principles of its quality system, as well as the procedures used and the development of quality management.

Self-evaluation

Self-evaluation refers to an evaluation that a higher education institution performs of its own operations and their development. In accordance with the principle of enhancement-led evaluation, self-evaluation primarily functions as a tool that the institution can use to develop its operations, even though it is required by an external party in an audit. Identifying the institution's own strengths, and especially the ability to determine areas in need of development, are proof that the institution has a functioning quality system and an established quality culture.

The Finnish Education Evaluation Centre (FINEEC) is an independent, national evaluation agency responsible for the external evaluations of education from early childhood education to higher education in Finland. It implements system and thematic evaluations, learning outcome evaluations and field-specific evaluations. Moreover, FINEEC supports providers of education and training and higher education institutions in matters related to evaluation and quality assurance, as well as advances the evaluation of education.

Audits of the quality systems of higher education institutions have been implemented in Finland in accordance with the principle of enhancement-led evaluation since 2005. The objective of the audits has been to support Finnish institutions in developing quality systems that correspond to the European principles of quality assurance and to demonstrate that functional and consistent quality assurance procedures are in place in Finland both in institutions and on the national level. In the audits, institutions are supported in their efforts to reach their strategic objectives and in directing future development activities in order to create a framework for the institutions' continuous development.

This manual introduces FINEEC's audit model and its premises.

ISBN 978-952-206-269-7 (pb)
ISBN 978-952-206-270-3 (pdf)
ISSN-L 2342-4176

ISBN 978-952-206-269-7



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