FINNISH EDUCATION
EVALUATION CENTRE

EXTERNAL REVIEW OF THE FINNISH EDUCATION EVALUATION CENTRE

– Self-assessment report

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FINEEC

Finnish Education Evaluation Centre

Contents

1
Introduction
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The evaluation of Finnish higher education has experienced several changes since the previous external review conducted by the European Association for Quality Assurance in Higher Education (ENQA) in 2010. The Finnish audit model was revised in several ways for the second round of audits, which began in 2011. Stronger emphasis was placed on the quality management of education at the level of degree programmes. The evaluation was tailored to better meet the needs of individual Higher Education Institutions (HEIs) and to support institutions in their efforts to reach their strategic objectives through the introduction of an optional audit target. So far, Finnish institutions have chosen such themes as quality management of global education, internationalisation, undergraduate study guidance, studies preparing students for entrepreneurship, lifelong learning and student well-being. The internationalisation of audits has increased, with half of institutions now choosing to be evaluated by audit teams composed of international experts, even if this presents the HEI with the additional challenge of presenting all of the material in English and conducting the interviews in English.

However, even as the evaluation model continues to evolve, some central features remain unchanged. The principle of enhancement-led evaluation, which prioritises the needs of the institution and its internal development work, remains paramount to the planning and execution of the evaluations. The production of information to support the internal development of HEIs, conducted by teams of peer-reviewers continues to enjoy the trust of both higher education sectors – universities and universities of applied sciences. The evaluation reports produced by external evaluations of Finnish HEIs are now as much needed as ever, with the on-going budget cuts, planned mergers, and other major shifts within the national context.

The organisation of higher education evaluation in Finland saw its most important change since the mid-1990s with the foundation of the Finnish Education Evaluation Centre (FINEEC) in 2014. The agency was formed by merging the Finnish Higher Education Evaluation Council (FINHEEC), the Finnish Education Evaluation Council and the National Board of Education's Unit for Evaluation of Learning Outcomes. FINEEC is the single body responsible for evaluation of all educational sectors, from early childhood to higher education, as well as vocational and adult education in Finland. The Centre is still new, but it builds on the very established foundations

of the previous agencies. Therefore, FINEEC is able to maintain the solid evaluation activities in higher education, while simultaneously exploring possibilities for evaluations that offer new information on phenomena crossing the boundaries of educational levels. As evaluations across different educational levels are conducted with diversified methods, opportunities for sharing and learning are beginning to present themselves. The Centre also offers possibilities and resources for participating in international co-operation on many fronts and educational levels, which would have previously been challenging. FINEEC can potentially be an even more attractive partner in international collaboration projects.

The Finnish Education Evaluation Centre hopes that the ENQA-coordinated external review helps to contribute a fresh, external view of the current status and future direction of higher education evaluation in Finland and enables us to better understand our strengths and needs for further development.

Harri Peltoniemi   Helka Kekäläinen

Director   Head of Unit

2
Development of the
self-evaluation report
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The self-assessment report was produced as a joint venture of FINEEC's Higher Education Evaluation Unit. Nine persons were given responsibilities for drafting texts for individual chapters. The division of responsibilities took place quite organically, since the strengths and interest areas of different staff members were known to everyone in the unit. After the first draft was combined, it was edited by a three-person task group and commented on by the personnel of the unit and the chairs of the Evaluation Council and the Higher Education Evaluation Committee. The report draws heavily from texts in FINEEC's audit and accreditation manuals, descriptions on FINEEC's website, national legislation, FINEEC's strategy and other existing documents. Perhaps the most useful chapter in terms of FINEEC's internal learning is the Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities and Threats (SWOT) –analysis, which was produced jointly with the members of the Higher Education Evaluation Committee and the Unit's staff. At the time of the exercise, the Committee had operated for just over a year and analysing the activities in a collaborative way clarified a variety of issues and laid the foundation for further discussions on the goals and principles of FINEEC's work. The results will be used in the internal development work of the unit and entire organisation. Similar exercises have been conducted previously in the development of FINHEEC's activities and will most likely be conducted periodically in the future as well.

3
Higher education and QA of higher education in the context of the agency
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3.1 Higher education institutions in Finland

Finland has a dual higher education system and an extensive network of higher education institutions (HEIs) covering the whole country. Finland is geographically large in relation to its population and offering opportunities for higher education in the whole country has been a part of overall regional policy. Higher education is offered by 14 universities and 24 universities of applied sciences (UASs). Most of the HEIs operate under the governance and steering of the Ministry of Education and Culture (MoEC). In addition, there is Åland University of Applied Sciences in the self-governing Province of Åland, Police College under the steering of the Ministry of Interior, and National Defence University under the steering of the Ministry of Defence.

The universities are prescribed in the Universities Act (558/2009)[1]. Most of the universities are public, although two of them are foundation-based. The educational responsibilities of the universities are prescribed by government decree. The UASs have operating licences awarded by the MoEC. All of the UASs are limited companies. Finnish universities and universities of applied sciences enjoy rather extensive autonomy. The operations of the higher education institutions are built on the principals of freedom of education and research. The HEIs decide on their internal organisational structure as well as steering, funding and quality systems. Finland does not have a programme accreditation system. However, for opening degree education in a totally new field, universities must make a proposal to the Ministry of Education and Culture. The educational responsibilities of the UASs are prescribed in their operating licences.

Both HE sectors have undergone extensive structural changes in the past years. The number of higher education institutions has declined between 2009 and 2014 from 49 to 38 through mergers (universities from 20 to 14 and UASs from 28 to 24). In addition to structural changes, in the last ten years both sectors of higher education have undergone several big reforms: they have received new legislation (Universities Act 558/2009, UAS Act 932/2014), and new

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1   Universities and Polytechnics Acts are provided to the external review panel as attachments.

legal status (universities are no longer state institutions, UASs became limited companies), in addition to undergoing organisational changes (e.g. in management and decision-making systems). Furthermore, the performance-based funding systems for both sectors have been revised several times.

3.2 Quality assurance, steering and funding of higher education

The role of FINEEC is to assist higher education institutions in the development of higher education and quality management by conducting external evaluations. The higher education institutions carry the main responsibility for the quality and development of education, research and other activities. The institutions also have a legal obligation to regularly undergo an external evaluation of their operations and quality system. The HEIs have the option to choose another external evaluator apart from FINEEC.

Higher education institutions

- Main responsibility for quality and the improvement of education and other activities
- Establish their own QA systems
- Participate in external evaluations of their activities and quality systems

Ministry of Education and Culture

- Steering
- Decision-making

FINEEC

- National responsibility
- Audits of quality systems
- Other evaluations
- Assisting HEIs in evaluation activities and quality management

Figure 1: The national quality assurance system in Finland

The Ministry of Education and Culture steers the higher education institutions through:

- Higher education legislation
- Performance based funding (different indicators for universities and UASs)
- Performance agreements

Universities and universities of applied sciences receive most of their funding from the Ministry of Education and Culture and the activities of HEIs are steered in practice by four-year performance agreements with the Ministry. Each university and university of applied science has negotiations with the Ministry in relation to their performance agreement. Operational and qualitative targets for the HEIs and the resources required are determined in the agreement. The monitoring and evaluation of target attainment as well as the development of operations are also described in the agreement. Both HE sectors have a performance-based funding model which includes several quantitative indicators relevant to the HE sector. For instance, the progress of degree students in their studies is monitored by an indicator based on the percentage of students achieving 55 ECTS credits/year. The funding models are presented below. In addition to state funding, HEIs receive supplementary funding, e.g. from paid services, donations and sponsors. Competitive research funding is an important source of additional financing especially for the universities. Competitive funding for scientific research is provided and evaluated by the Academy of Finland, which is an agency within the administrative branch of the MoEC.
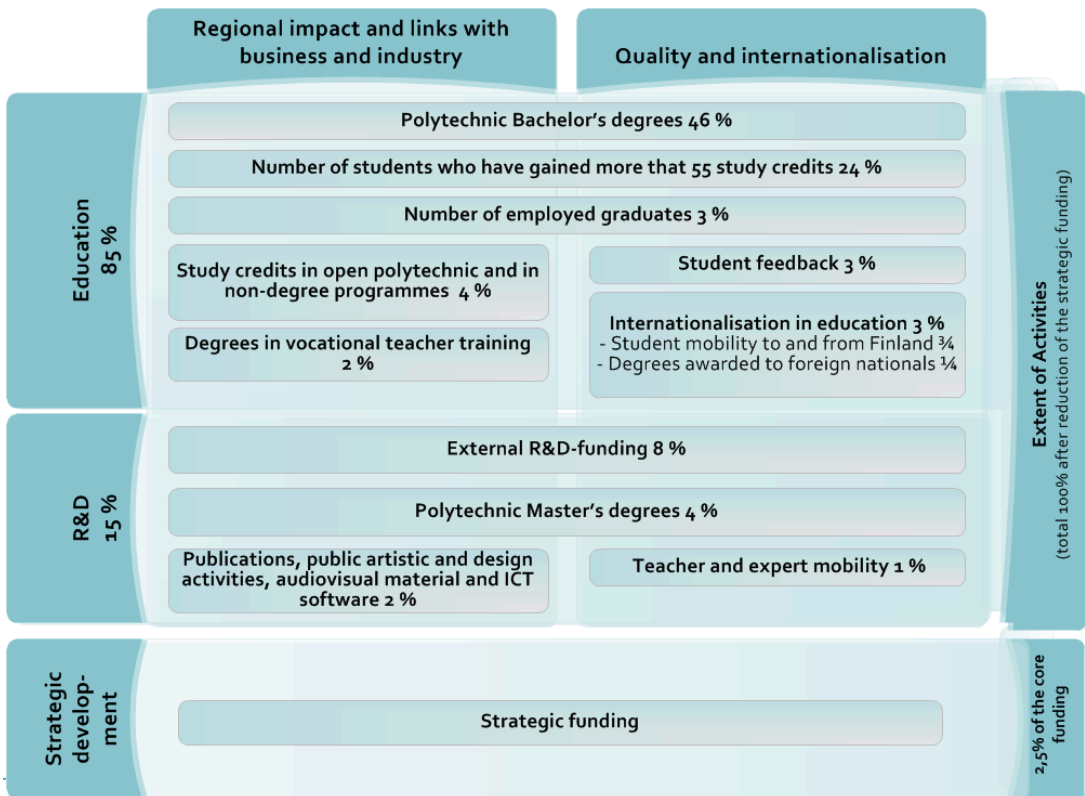
Figure: 2 The core funding model of the universities of applied sciences 2015
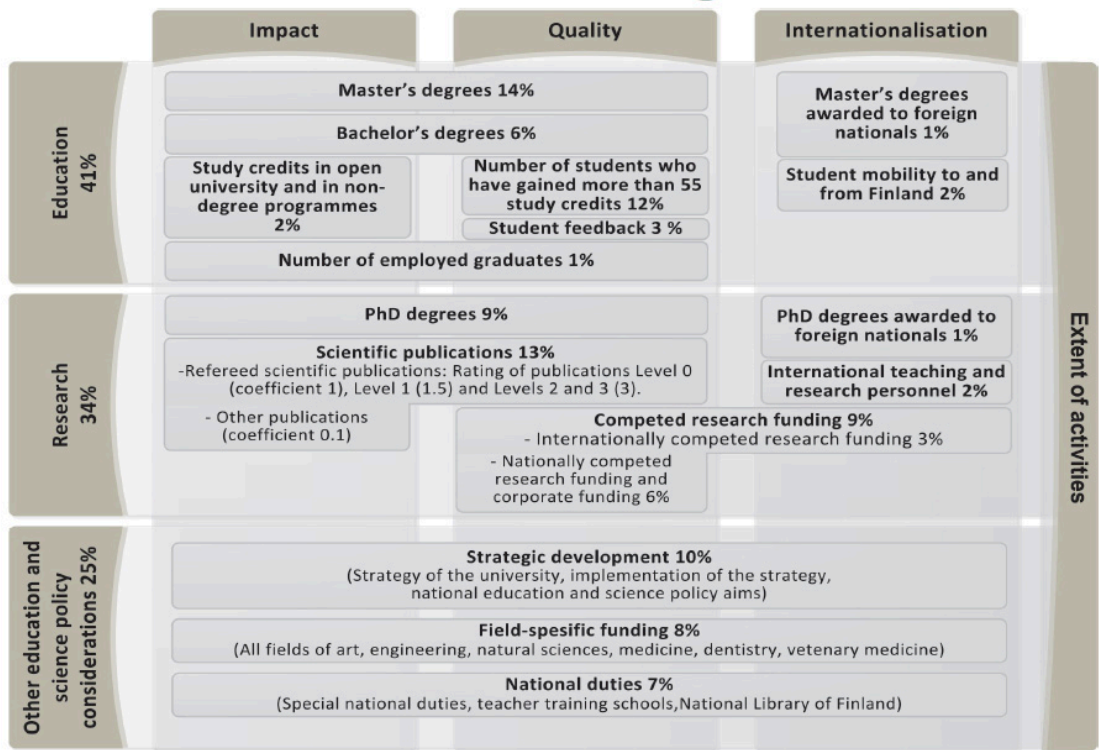
Figure: 3 The core funding model of universities 2015.

Electronic bachelor's level graduate feedback surveys are arranged separately for the universities and the UASs nationally. The MoEC funding models consist of a student satisfaction indicator, which is based on the outcomes of these surveys. In addition, most HEIs have their own student satisfaction, graduate and career path surveys.

Key statistics on degree education, placement of students after graduation, research etc. are available to the public in the national Vipunen database maintained jointly by the MoEC and the National Board of Education (NBE). The data and information in the Vipunen database are produced and gathered by Statistics Finland, MoEC and NBE.

3.3 National regulations on degrees

Finland has not yet adopted a national qualifications framework (NQF). However, the Government Decree on University Degrees (794/2004) and the Polytechnics Decree (1129/2014) define the objectives, extent and overall structure of degrees. In addition, the Universities Act and Polytechnics Act state the aimed duration of the studies for each degree type. HEIs decide

on the detailed contents and structure of the degrees they award. They also decide on their curricula and forms of instruction. Some fields have detailed regulations for the structure and/ or content of the degrees awarded. For instance, medical education also has to comply with the European Union's regulations and teacher education is required to contain a certain amount of pedagogical studies.

HEIs select their own students. Different types of entrance examinations are commonly used. However, national regulations (Universities Act and Polytechnics Act) prescribe general principles for student admission (e.g. the equal treatment of applicants). Also the eligibility for studies leading to the different HE degrees is prescribed at the national level. The application procedure is arranged through a national electronic application system. In certain cases, HEIs can also arrange separate admissions if defined in the national regulations. HEIs are obliged to reserve an admission quota for the applicants who do not yet have a HE degree from a Finnish HEI or a right to study for a degree in a Finnish HEI. Exceptions are possible when the student intake is very small. Applicants can accept only one study place per year.

HEIs are obliged to recognise prior studies and learning. However, as the legal obligation has been defined only in broad terms, the processes, methods as well as level of recognition vary in practice. The recognition decisions are made by HEIs. Credited studies gained in other HEIs are commonly recognised, but challenges exist in the recognition of informal and non-formal learning, as well as between the two HE sectors. HEIs decide on their own regulations concerning recognition.

HEIs award degree certificates to graduates as stated in the Government Decree on University Degrees and the Polytechnics Decree. In addition to this, HEIs are obliged to award an international certificate (in practise the Diploma Supplement) to each graduate as an attachment.

3.4 Universities

Universities conduct scientific research and provide higher education based on research. In carrying out their missions, universities are expected to interact with the surrounding society and strengthen the impact of research findings and artistic activities on society.

University degrees

Universities provide bachelor's, master's and doctoral degrees. A pre-doctoral degree of licentiate may be taken before a doctoral degree. A bachelor's degree consists of at least 180 ECTS (3 years of full-time study). A master's degree consists of at least 120 ECTS (2 years of full-time study). In the fields of medicine, veterinary medicine and dentistry the second-cycle degree is called a licentiate. In the fields of medicine and dentistry, universities may arrange the education leading to

the second-cycle licentiate degree without including a first-cycle university degree in the education. In medicine the degree consists of 360 ECTS (six years of full-time study) and in dentistry the degree consists of 330 ECTS (5.5 years of full-time study).

Once students have been admitted to a bachelor's programme, universities usually offer them direct access to a master's programme in the same field. However, this is dependent on the university's decision. Students can apply for doctoral studies after the completion of a relevant second-cycle degree. The doctor's degree consists of 4 years of full-time study after the second-cycle degree or 2 years following the pre-doctoral degree.

3.5 Universities of applied sciences

The UASs are professionally-oriented higher education institutions. The UAS system was established in the early 1990s through mergers of former vocational and higher post-secondary colleges. The first universities of applied sciences began to operate on a permanent basis in 1996. The UASs offer professionally-oriented education in response to labour market needs as well as conducting research, development and innovation (RDI), which supports education and is geared to the needs of business and industry. The RDI activities at UASs are usually linked to the structure and development of the regional economy.

UAS degrees

Universities of applied sciences provide bachelor's and master's degrees. The UAS bachelor's degree consists of 180, 210, 240 or 270 ECTS (3 to 4 years of full-time study) depending on the study field. The UAS master's degree consists of 60 or 90 ECTS (1 or 1.5 years of full-time study). Applicants eligible to apply for a UAS master's degree programme must hold a relevant bachelor's degree and at least 3 years of relevant work or artistic experience. The focus of the educational provision of universities of applied sciences is on bachelor's degrees. Several UASs also offer vocational teacher education leading to a teacher qualification. The teacher education is aimed for those who already have a higher education degree from the relevant field.

4
History, profile and activities of the agency

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4.1 History of the Finnish Education Evaluation Centre

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The Finnish Education Evaluation Centre (FINEEC) was established on the 1st of May 2014 by merging three previous organizations, namely the Finnish Higher Education Evaluation Council (FINHEEC), the Finnish Education Evaluation Council and the National Board of Education's Unit for Evaluation of Learning Outcomes. FINEEC is the single body responsible for evaluation of all educational sectors, from early childhood to higher education, as well as vocational and adult education in Finland.

FINEEC's predecessor in higher education, FINHEEC operated from January 1st 1996 until April 31st 2014. All its activities and personnel were included in the merging process. FINHEEC's history encompasses much of the history of evaluation of higher education in Finland.

Table 1: Types of evaluation conducted by FINEEC and its predecessors.

Evaluation type	Duration
Evaluations for granting UAS operating licenses	1995–1999
Thematic evaluations	1997-
Accreditation of professional courses	1999–2007
Institutional evaluations of institutions	1992–2004
Centres of Excellence evaluations	1996–2012
1st round of audits of quality systems	2005–2011
2nd round of audits of quality systems	2012–2018
3rd round of audits of quality systems	2017-
Accreditations of engineering degree programmes	2014-

The predecessor of FINHEEC, the Higher Education Council (HEC) (*Korkeakouluneuvosto*) worked from 1966 to 1996 as an advisory body to the Ministry of Education in matters related to the development of the higher education system. The Higher Education Council had a broad mandate to prepare and handle important matters dealing with planning and developing Finnish higher education. In the 1990s the steering of higher education shifted towards performance agreements between the ministry and HEIs and the need for the expert opinion changed. Meanwhile, the Finnish Council of University Rectors and the Rectors' Conference of Finnish Universities of Applied Sciences emerged to represent the higher education institutions on a national scale.

Evaluations of research have been conducted since 1983 by the Academy of Finland. The Academy conducts, coordinates and commissions international evaluations of research with a view to improving both its performance and the quality and impact of Finnish and research. The results of these evaluations are put to extensive use in various development projects. Research evaluations and assessments tie in closely with foresight efforts. At that time the Ministry of Education had financed institutional evaluations of universities and universities of applied sciences, while HEIs had also financed and coordinated institutional evaluations for themselves.

FINHEEC was founded when the decree (1320/1995) for the Finnish Higher Education Evaluation Council became effective on January 1st 1996. On the same date the first FINHEEC Council was appointed. Its tasks and goals remained largely unchanged throughout the lifespan of the organization for nearly two decades. The logic was to separate evaluation of higher education from the Ministry to ensure independent evaluation.

Initially, the first objective of FINHEEC was defined as the development of evaluation procedures in the HEIs nationwide. FINHEEC assisted in institutional evaluations by training experts, providing consultancy services for the institutions, building a database of information about Finnish and foreign evaluation practices, developing evaluation methodology, promoting research of evaluation, intensifying international co-operation and publishing related literature. From 1999 to 2007 a subcommittee of the FINHEEC Council, the Accreditation Board of Professional Courses was responsible keeping a register of accredited courses.

The second important objective was to commence systematic evaluations. In the university sector, FINHEEC's role was to conduct institutional evaluations of operations, where the university could choose a relevant field as the focus of the evaluation. 13 out of 20 Finnish universities decided to take part in the exercise. The University of Helsinki chose administration as the focus of its evaluation, for example, while the University of Tampere selected teaching. In the University of Applied Sciences Sector, however, FINHEEC conducted evaluations of quality assurance mechanisms until the end of 2004, when current audits started. The first round of audits of quality assurance systems of Finnish HEIs began in 2005 and was completed in 2011. The second round of audits began immediately after that and were continued by the Higher Education Evaluation Unit under FINEEC. The current cycle will be finished by the end of 2018.

The third main objective of FINHEEC was to carry out evaluations for granting UAS operating licenses. The ultimate power of decision was to remain, however, with the Government. FINHEEC established an accreditation sub-committee consisting of representatives of teachers, students

and the world of work outside the higher education institutions. In 1995–1996 the accreditation and extension of the universities of applied sciences were evaluated on the basis of applications. Between 1997 and 1999 a more in-depth evaluation was added to the procedure; site visits became part of the process. The Operating Licenses Subcommittee members visited each temporary university of applied sciences applying for accreditation, including HEIs which had applied to be extended by the incorporation of a new educational establishment. The Subcommittee compiled reports of each evaluation, which were published in FINHEEC's publication series.

During the years 1996–2012, the Finnish Higher Education Evaluation Council carried out the selection and evaluation procedure of *centres of excellence* in university education and universities of applied sciences at the request of the Ministry of Education. In total, there were five selection rounds in both sectors of higher education. The decision was used as a basis for the allocation of performance-based funding for the HEIs. The aim was to enhance the quality and relevance of education and to encourage institutions to carry out long-term development. The programme represents a remarkable exercise in Finnish higher education, and promoted development activities in all universities and universities of applied sciences. In addition, FINHEEC conducted evaluations of the regional impact of the *centres of excellence* three times in the UAS sector in 2001–2007.

Although audits of quality systems have been the chosen national quality assurance solution, FINHEEC has responded to the needs of technical universities and universities of applied sciences by gaining the right to conduct EUR-ACE accreditations for engineering degree programmes. FINHEEC's successor FINEEC passed the European Network for Accreditation of Engineering Education (ENAEE) review in 2014. To date FINEEC has completed four programme accreditations.

FIN(H)EEC has conducted thematic evaluations throughout the duration of these organisations. The topics of these evaluation projects have ranged from individual subjects such as education for social work to sector-wide topics, such as the research, development and innovation activities of Finnish universities of applied sciences. FINHEEC was also very active internationally. FINHEEC joined ENQA in September 2000 and renewed its full membership in ENQA and was registered in EQAR in 2010.

FIN(H)EEC have embraced the principle of enhancement-led evaluation as an overall guiding principle. Enhancement-led evaluation emphasises participation, as well as trust between the party implementing the evaluation and evaluation participant, and the responsibility of education providers and higher education institutions in the development of the quality of their operations. In enhancement-led evaluation, the methods will be tailored according to the objectives of the evaluation and the theme to be evaluated. Furthermore, the goal of FINEEC audits, as enhancement-led evaluations, is to help HEIs identify the strengths, good practices and areas in need of development in their own operations. The purpose is, thus, to help HEIs achieve their strategic objectives and steer future development activities in order to create a framework for the institutions' continuous development.

4.2 Structure and profile of the Finnish Education Evaluation Centre

Mission of FINEEC

The Finnish Education Evaluation Centre is an independent expert organisation, which operates within the branch of government under the Ministry of Education and Culture. FINEEC's mission is set out in the Act on FINEEC (1295/2013) to:

1. *conduct evaluations related to education and teaching and to the providers of education and the activities of higher education institutions in accordance with an evaluation plan referred to in section 5;*

2. *in accordance with the evaluation plan referred to in section 5, undertake:*

   a. *evaluations of learning outcomes relating to the distribution of lesson hours and the national core curriculum targets referred to in section 14 of the Basic Education Act (628/1998) and in section 10 of the General Upper Secondary Schools Act (629/1998);*

   b. *evaluations of learning outcomes relating to targets of the national core curriculum referred to in section 13 of the Vocational Education and Training Act (630/1998) and in the national qualification requirements referred to in section 13 of the Vocational Adult Education Act (631/1998) and in the national core curriculum referred to in section 5 of the Act on Basic Education in the Arts (633/1998);*

3. *support providers of education and training and higher education institutions in matters related to evaluation and quality management;*

4. *develop the evaluation of education; and*

5. *attend to any other duties that are issued or given to the Evaluation Centre.*

Organisation

Evaluation Council

The Evaluation Council is the strategic decision-making body of the Centre. The Government Decree (1317/2013) on the Finnish Education Evaluation Centre dictates the composition, tasks and decision-making powers of the Council.

The tasks of the Council are the following:

1. To take part in strategic planning of the Centre's activities;
2. To decide on important statements and proposals with far-reaching implications;
3. To prepare a proposal for the National Education Evaluation Plan and changes to it;
4. To prepare a proposal for the Ministry of Education and Culture on Boards under the Council.

The Council decides on all project plans for evaluations and compositions of planning and evaluation teams for all education sectors apart from higher education.

The Council members are appointed by the Ministry of Education and Culture. The Council has 13 members with representatives from different educational sectors, teacher education, research, working life and students. The Council selects the Chair and Vice Chair from among its members.

The composition of the Evaluation Council for the term 26 June 2014 – 31 May 2018 is:

Chair:

Tapio Huttula, Managing Director, Rector, Humak University of Applied Sciences

Vice-chair:

Sampo Suihko, Head of Education and Cultural Services, City of Espoo

Members:

Rita Asplund, Research Director, the Research Institute of the Finnish Economy (ETLA)

Heidi Backman, Head of Education and Cultural Services, City of Kauniainen

Jarkko Hautamäki, Professor, University of Helsinki

Piia Kuosmanen, President, National Union of University Students in Finland (until 31 May 2016) – Mikko Vieltojärvi, Adviser, Union of Students in Finnish Universities of Applied Sciences (SAMOK) (from 1 June 2016)

Arja Laulainen, Lecturer, Upper Secondary School of Porin Suomalainen Yhteislyseo

Jari Lavonen, Professor, Head of the Department of Teacher Education, University of Helsinki

Kaarina Määttä, Vice-Rector, Professor, University of Lapland

Heikki Silvennoinen, Professor, University of Turku

Annakaisa Tikkinen, Advisor, The Union of Upper Secondary School Students in Finland (from 1.6.2016)

Anni Vesa, Adviser, Union of Students in Finnish Universities of Applied Sciences (SAMOK) (from 1.6.2016)

Ritva Viljanen, Vice Mayor, City of Helsinki

Jouni Välijärvi, Professor, University of Jyväskylä.

Higher Education Evaluation Committee

The Higher Education Evaluation Committee is attached to Centre. According to the Government decree, the Council proposes members for the Committee and the Ministry of Education and Culture appoints them. The Council makes its selection from the candidates put forward by the higher education institutions and other stakeholders.

The Higher Education Evaluation Committee consists of nine members of which three must also be members of the Council. The members must be experts in evaluation of higher education. The Evaluation Committee also selects the Chair and Vice-Chair from among its membership. The Evaluation Committee reports to the Education Evaluation Council and decides on:

1. Project plans and compositions of planning and evaluation teams for evaluations of higher education institutions;
2. Outcomes of audits of quality systems of higher education institutions.

The composition of the Higher Education Evaluation Committee for the term December 16th 2014–May 31st 2018 is:

Chair:

Jouni Välijärvi, Professor, University of Jyväskylä

Vice-chair:

Anneli Pirttilä, Rector, Saimaa University of Applied Sciences

Members:

Pekka Auvinen, Vice-rector, Karelia University of Applied Sciences

Tapio Huttula, Rector and Managing Director, HUMAK University of Applied Sciences

Tapio Heiskari, Educational Policy Officer, National Union of University Students in Finland

Katrina Nordström, Professor, Aalto University

Anni Vesa, Adviser, Union of Students in Finnish Universities of Applied Sciences (SAMOK)

Eva Maria Raudasoja, Director, University of Oulu

Susanna Tauriainen, Director of Education, the Central Union of Agricultural Producers and Forest Owners (MTK).

4.3 The organisational structure of FINEEC

The structure of the organisation is laid out in the Rules Procedure of FINEEC, which is currently being updated. The order lays out the tasks, operating principles, leadership structure and general division of labour within the Centre.

The Finnish Education Evaluation Centre currently has approximately 40 persons working in three units:

1. The Higher Education Evaluation Unit
2. The General and Vocational Education Evaluation Unit (Helsinki)
3. The General and Vocational Education Evaluation Unit (Jyväskylä)

FINHEEC's former Secretary-General Helka Kekäläinen is the current Head of the Higher Education Evaluation Unit. The organisational structure is under development at the moment as the Director of the Centre Harri Peltoniemi will decide on a structure after hearing the Council and the Centre staff. The heads of units and the Director of the Centre form the Management Team which has a pivotal role in preparing the annual plan of action and budget for the Centre.

Within the Centre structure operates also two teams. Most importantly there is the Team for Audits to which all those personnel who conduct audits of quality systems belong. In addition, the Thematic Evaluation Team has also been formed to develop practices and methodology for those evaluations. Furthermore, FINEEC has working groups also for communications, internal quality work, finances, human resources development and IT. The staff of the Higher Education Evaluation Unit has been very active in these working groups and currently chairs two of them. The Team for Audits is, however, perhaps the most established of the teams since it has an appointed leader with several responsibilities and the team's activities have a long established history dating back to FINHEEC.

FINEEC launched its first strategy (Foresight and Effective Evaluation 2020, in 2015). The strategy process included several workshops attended by the whole FINEEC staff and also the members of the Evaluation Council. FINEEC's vision, mission and operating principles as stated in the strategy are the following:

Vision

Finland develops education based on the versatile and up-to-date evaluation information produced by the Finnish Education Evaluation Centre.

Mission

FINEEC is a nationally significant and internationally desired evaluation partner in the field of education and an inspiring developer that produces evidence-based evaluation information that has an impact on the development of education.

The strategy also includes service promises, a scorecard, strategic goals, critical success factors, focus areas regarding evaluation and definitions of different types of stakeholders.

Another important document that steers FINEEC's activities is the National Education Evaluation Plan for 2016–2019. The plan outlines all major evaluations that the Centre intends to conduct during the years to come. FINEEC's proposal for the plan was confirmed without major changes by the Ministry of Education and Culture in spring 2016. Changes to the plan are, however, possible. The plan is therefore similar in nature to the previous National Education Evaluation Plan for 2012–2015 that FINEEC's predecessors devised.

4.4 Activities of the Finnish Education Evaluation Centre

Units in FINEEC conduct evaluations in their own sectors and often also joint evaluations on themes that overlap various educational levels. Pre-primary and basic education are evaluated with learning outcomes evaluations and various thematic and system evaluations. The aim is to produce knowledge for developing teaching and decision-making. The evaluations also aim to ensure educational equity and the quality of teaching. Moreover, they function as a tool for informative steering and development in schools. Systematic data acquisition provides information for use at the national and regional levels for teaching and education providers, as well as schools.

Evaluations of learning outcomes collect information about the attainment of the objectives of the national core curricula for pre-primary and basic education. Systematic and comprehensive evaluation enables the monitoring of the development of learning results. For example, it enables the monitoring of pupil evaluation in relation to study objectives and evaluation criteria. It further provides information for studying regional and gender-based differences, as well as studying pupils' attitudes and motivation towards studies.

The aim of evaluating vocational education and training (VET) is to support local, regional and national development work. The aim is to develop the quality of education, learning outcomes, and the work of the teaching and instruction staff. Evaluation types include thematic evaluations and evaluations of learning outcomes. Thematic evaluations provide information about topical education content areas with regard to educational policy, forms of education and the education system as a whole, or specific parts therein.

The evaluations of higher education are covered in chapters 6 and 7 of this report in detail. In addition to the evaluation activities, the Higher Education Evaluation Unit also supports institutions in their quality work and issues related to evaluation. For example, an annual seminar

is organised for those universities and UASs that are half way through their audit cycle to present their development work since the audit, normally three years after the audit. FINEEC organises benchmarking pairs of the HEIs in question who together present their changes to an audience of representatives from other Finnish HEIs, usually quality managers. This exercise has been an extremely useful follow-up tool for the HEIs to maintain the impetus of quality system development activities and also a wonderful opportunity for learning from other institutions. Discussions in the seminars have been remarkably frank and the quality managers and other persons responsible share their experiences quite freely with their peers.

In addition, members of the Committee and the Unit participate actively in key seminars in Finland and abroad in order to stay in touch with the latest developments in higher education and to network with actors in the field. FINEEC conducts active co-operation with a number of stakeholders, such as the rectors' conferences on university and UAS sectors, student unions and other national and international stakeholders and networks. The Higher Education Evaluation Unit offers speakers for seminars and training on HEI quality matters and provides experts for various national working groups.

5
SWOT analyses
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FINEEC conducted its Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities and Threats (SWOT) analysis on four themes: Audits, Thematic evaluations, Engineering Programme Accreditations and other activities of the organisation. The fourth theme entailed activities such as supporting HEIs, stakeholder co-operation and FINEEC's communications. In addition, it includes some interesting thoughts about the role of FINEEC in the national and international context.

The SWOT analyses were conducted in cooperation between the staff of the Higher Education Evaluation Unit and the members of the Higher Education Evaluation Committee. Three groups were formed with representation from both the Committee and the Unit and the group work was prepared using the World Cafe facilitation method. FINEEC's Committee for Engineering Education and the staff of the Higher Education Evaluation Unit produced the SWOT-analysis on Engineering Programme Accreditations jointly online. The exercise was considered very useful by both staff and Committee members and the results will also be used in FINEEC's future development work.

5.1 SWOT-analysis on Audits

STRENGTHS	WEAKNESSES
• Well-established audit procedure • Audit model is the same for all higher education institutions • Enhancement-led evaluation principle • Positive evaluation culture • Information and discussion seminar prior to the audit visit • The expert pool: Cumulative evaluation competence in the expert pool when the same people are recruited more than once • International audit teams bring perspectives from outside Finland and add credibility – Finland is a small country • The personnel in FINEEC's HE Evaluation Unit is well experienced • Feedback provided by FINEEC to HEIs on the feedback collected from institutions and auditors • Independent evaluations and decision-making	• Human factors in the audits, variations in the process – qualitative assessment • Differences between national and international audit teams (experts from different HE systems as well as operational and evaluation cultures) • Are the audit criteria clear enough? • Passive use of social media; objectives for communications undefined • The HEI feedback highlights only the top management view • Some HEIs experience the process as an inspection • Heavy process for both HEIs and audit teams, lengthy reports • Overloading FINEEC's Higher Education Evaluation Committee (and the HE Evaluation Unit) when there are a high number of audits running at the same time (uneven distribution)
OPPORTUNITIES	**THREATS**
• Self-evaluation skills and interests of the HEIs • HEIs' trust in FINEEC's operations • Commitment of the HE field • Peer review process accumulates competences and disseminates good practices to the whole HE field • Meta-level analyses • 3rd cycle: Joint understanding of the vision and the future of the audit model and criteria • 3rd cycle: Possibilities to lighten the process and use resources more efficiently • International benchmarking • Digitalization, using learning analytics technologies	• Diminishing independence due to potential further mergers of FINEEC • Audit becomes too mechanical and abandons the enhancement-led approach • Someone else's "product" is better • Small circles (in Finland) • Demanding role of national experts in an international audit team providing with the insight of the Finnish HE system • Field losing interest in the 3rd round unless the model brings new perspectives and practices

5.2 SWOT-analysis on Thematic Evaluations

STRENGTHS	WEAKNESSES
• Thematic evaluations link actors from different levels of the education system • Thematic evaluations based on the National Education Evaluation Plan • High level of expertise of the evaluation teams • The competences of FINEEC's personnel cover a large variety of evaluation areas • FINEEC's project management and process competences • New Thematic Evaluation Team founded • Internal mentoring process • Thematic Evaluations offer national level information and recommendations, summaries of best practices	• The system level evaluation reports do not usually include individual or unit level feedback • Thematic evaluations are long processes • Danger of losing focus, if not well defined • Only national-level issues covered • More resources could be directed towards conducting thematic evaluations in FINEEC • Evaluation services are not being developed as compact products • Information gathered from audit processes is not used enough in the thematic evaluations • Results underused nationally, follow-ups are not being done systematically • Evaluations are separate entities of their own, lack of cooperation with, for example, the Academy of Finland
OPPORTUNITIES	**THREATS**
• Societally relevant and current topics can be covered • Thematic evaluations also make FINEEC more visible internationally in terms of the Finnish national education system • Cross-level educational evaluations (for example, vocational schools and universities of applied sciences) • International thematic evaluations • Possibility for longitudinal evaluations • Meta level analyses • Managing the evaluations as programmes with several component evaluations	• Losing independence of evaluation would be devastating • Impact of different stakeholders and their agendas on FINEEC's activities • Interpretations made to an agenda, misusing the information provided by the evaluation • Short-sighted education policy • System level changes that take place during the long processes can make the results obsolete • External expectations to speed up the process – does this lead to "empty" reports? • Growing competition between evaluation providers • Evaluation burden is carried by the HE experts besides their usual work • Evaluations starting to resemble research activities – what is the added value in evaluation compared to research?

5.3 SWOT-analysis on Other Activities of FINEEC

(Other activities consist of, for example, communications, stakeholder co-operation and supporting HEIs)

STRENGTHS	WEAKNESSES
• Diversity of expertise within FINEEC • New organisation • Open communication culture • Small organisation, shares information quickly • Good reputation and brand, including abroad • Joint events and seminars with other stakeholders of the education field • Internationally active agency • Common FINEEC strategy as a backbone • ENQA-membership of FINEEC • Internal evaluation culture • No competition (in Finland)	• Activities that are conducted on the side of the evaluations • Cooperation with the HE field takes mostly place through the audit process • The role of evaluator stronger than the role of developer (FINEEC's image in the field) • Target group analysis for communication purposes missing • Lack of systematic communication of good practices to the education actors and the field • The evaluation report "jargon", does this correspond to the language of the audience? • Lack of commercialization of evaluation products • Lot of support service and internal development functions dedicated to the personnel
OPPORTUNITIES	**THREATS**
• Interaction between different educational levels • International communications • Possibility for offering more continuous support for education development • Social media: on-going evaluations • New evaluation actors create competition • International service production, supporting the Finnish HEIs in their internationalisation work and selling evaluation services internationally	• New evaluation types and needs that FINEEC is not yet able to conduct and fulfil • Losing independence, growing outside control • Organisational changes, larger organisations might lose touch with their core

5.4 SWOT-analysis on Engineering Programme Accreditations

STRENGTHS	WEAKNESSES
• The process uses good practices from streamlined and established audit process • International experts on accreditation teams bring accreditation experience. • Common European framework as a basis for accreditation • External evaluation conducted by the European Network for Accreditation of Engineering Education ENAEE guarantees quality and has been used to develop the model. • Feedback from institutions and experts gives useful information for developing the model and for identifying the added value of the accreditations. • Straightforward reporting.	• Only a few accreditations conducted so far: not all practices established yet and limited knowledge of the added value to the institutions. • Small number of Finnish experts with strong accreditation experience. • Marketing of the voluntary process has been insufficient. • So far the interest within the university sector has not been great.
OPPORTUNITIES	THREATS
• Stronger dissemination of good practices between engineering programmes in Finland. • International attractiveness of the programmes can be enhanced with the accreditations. • Institutions use the accreditations to ease comparability of degrees within Finland and with European institutions. • Institutions use the accreditations to enhance education export, double degree activities and international RDI-cooperation. • Introduction of tuition fees may raise the demand of accreditations. • Accreditations can also bring forward the quality of education, in addition to quality in processes.	• Insufficient demand forms in the field • Tough economic situation lowers the motivation for any voluntary paid-service processes • The institutions could feel that not enough added value is produced related to the overall process cost. • A low number of accreditations does not make the process cost-effective for FINEEC. • Introduction of tuition fees may lower the number of international programmes in the field, leading to a lower number of potential programmes interested in accreditations.

6
Higher education quality assurance activities of the agency

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FINEEC is responsible for the evaluation of education provided by universities and universities of applied sciences (UAS) in Finland. The three key evaluation types are as follows:

1. Audits of higher education institutions' (HEIs) quality systems;
2. Thematic evaluations of the education system; and
3. Engineering programme accreditations.

These evaluation types are described in more detail in the next chapter.

Agency's quality assurance processes and their methodologies

Audits of Quality Systems

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 with the European principles of quality assurance and to demonstrate that functional and consistent quality assurance procedures are in place in Finland both in the institutions and at the national level.

In an audit, the quality system the university or the UAS has developed from its own needs and goals is evaluated. The quality system refers to the development of the institution's activities as a whole comprising quality management organisation, division of responsibility, procedures, and resources. Quality management refers to the procedures, processes or systems that the higher education institution uses to maintain and develop the quality of its activities.

The audits assess how well the quality system meets the strategic and operational management needs of the university or UAS, as well as how comprehensive and effective the quality management of the basic duties of the HEI is. Additional objects of assessment include the HEI's quality policy, development of the quality system, and how well-functioning and dynamic the system is. In other words, an audit does not evaluate the quality of the education or research of the HEI in question. The audit model is described in detail in the audit manual.

Thematic Evaluations

FINEEC implements evaluations of universities and UASs on themes that are important with regard to education policy. New evaluation information is required to support national level decision-making. A thematic evaluation may focus on a single field of education or cover the whole higher education sector. In addition, FINEEC implements thematic evaluations covering

various educational levels (such as general upper secondary education and higher education). In recent years, FINEEC has conducted thematic evaluations on RDI activities in the UAS sector, international degree programmes, study paths and working life co-operation between vocational education and training and professional higher education, and education and training in early childhood education.

A planning group comprising of outside experts will usually gather to draw up a project plan for thematic evaluations. The evaluation is always coordinated by an evaluation expert working at FINEEC. The actual evaluation will be implemented by a separately appointed evaluation group. It will acquaint itself with information related to the subject and acquire and provide information in accordance with the project plan. The evaluation results will be published in a report, which can be downloaded from the FINEEC website. FINEEC will collect feedback from participating parties for all evaluations.

Engineering programme accreditations

Engineering programme accreditation is a degree programme specific evaluation leading to the international EUR-ACE Label. The accreditation aims to support the development of quality in engineering degree programmes and increase international comparability and recognition of Finnish engineering degrees in industry. Higher education institutions may utilise engineering degree programme accreditations to get an external view of how well the students in a programme receive the knowledge and skills required by their respective industries.

The accreditation method is based on the European Accredited Engineer (EUR-ACE) standard administered by the European Network for Accreditation of Engineering Education (ENAEE). Accredited programmes are granted the EUR-ACE Label, which is valid for six years from the evaluation decision. The quality label shows that the programme has passed an internationally recognised accreditation in the field of engineering. Accreditations are voluntary for the HEIs and a fee covering the costs is charged.

To be eligible to grant the EUR-ACE Label, an agency must undergo an external evaluation conducted by the ENAEE, including two observed accreditation site visits. FINEEC passed this evaluation in summer 2014 (the site visits took place in January 2014) and currently has the right to grant the EUR-ACE Bachelor Label to four-year UAS bachelor's degree programmes. FINEEC aims to also attain the right to grant EUR-ACE Master quality labels to master's degree programmes. FINEEC's model for engineering programme accreditations is described in the Standards and Procedures for Engineering Programme Accreditation.

Agency's internal quality assurance

The Internal quality assurance (IQA) of the Higher Education Evaluation Unit is still almost identical to the procedures of FINHEEC, since the new organisation is only in the fairly early stages of building up its common internal quality assurance. FINEEC is basing most of its quality procedures on those of FINHEEC, so the IQA of the whole organisation will most likely eventually look fairly familiar. The Centre is currently building its common Quality System using the Common Assessment Framework (CAF) as a foundation for the system. The CAF is an application of the more common European Framework for Quality Management (EFQM) system. The CAF is actually a self-evaluation tool adapted for public organizations, but it also offers a useful framework for building a Quality System. CAF is used by many government agencies and ministries and it therefore offers many synergy benefits for staff training and development of activities. FINEEC has decided to build its Quality System as a communal process, where workshops are held approximately every 1.5 months on one of the seven evaluation areas of the system. Each workshop will produce a draft text which will be one of the chapters of FINEEC's Quality Manual. The process will be finished by the end of 2016. In the meanwhile, the Higher Education Evaluation Unit will continue to manage and develop the quality of its activities with its pre-existing quality mechanisms. The FINHEEC feedback system, in fact, offers a foundation for the new organisation's feedback apparatus.

External feedback mechanism

FIN(H)EEC has been collecting feedback systematically from all of its evaluations since 2006. Feedback has been gathered from both the higher education institutions that have taken part in the evaluations and the evaluation team members. The feedback has been gathered using first Webropol and today Digium Questback online survey tools. The purpose of gathering feedback has been twofold: First, to gather information for the development of activities, and secondly, to monitor the quality of evaluation projects to maintain a good level of customer satisfaction. In addition, the feedback gives the respondents a role in the development of FINEEC's evaluation activities and helps to convince stakeholders of the accountability of the evaluation agency. The questionnaire form has seen modest changes over the years to better guide the questions to areas

of improvement but at the same time to maintain comparability of evaluations during the long audit rounds. Most of the feedback is related to audit projects, but the questionnaire is usually slightly tailored to fit thematic evaluations as well. The survey forms include both open questions and multiple choice -questions where the respondent chooses whether she fully agrees, somewhat agrees, somewhat disagrees or fully disagrees with a statement.

The statements for HEIs are:

- The audit report provided us with useful feedback for development.
- FINEEC's audit team performed in a professional manner.
- The chair of the audit team performed in a professional manner.
- FINEEC's project manager communicated well in this audit.
- The timetable of the audit was successful.
- The audit criteria are clear and functional.
- Higher education institutions are treated equally in FINEEC's evaluations.
- The audit has had a significant impact in our HEI. (new question, introduced in 2016)

The statements for audit team members are:

- I am satisfied with the audit report produced by my audit team.
- Project manager(s) of the audit team acted in a professional manner.
- The overall scheduling of the audit was successful.
- The audit criteria are clear and functional.
- Higher education institutions are treated equally in FINEEC's evaluations.
- Would you be interested in being part of FINEEC audit teams in the future? (yes/no)

A response of fully disagree results in a score of 1 and fully agree in a score of 4. Last year the response rate from the HEIs was 100% and 89% from the audit team members. The HEI and Audit teams' satisfaction in the Audit process in 2014–2015 is illustrated below.
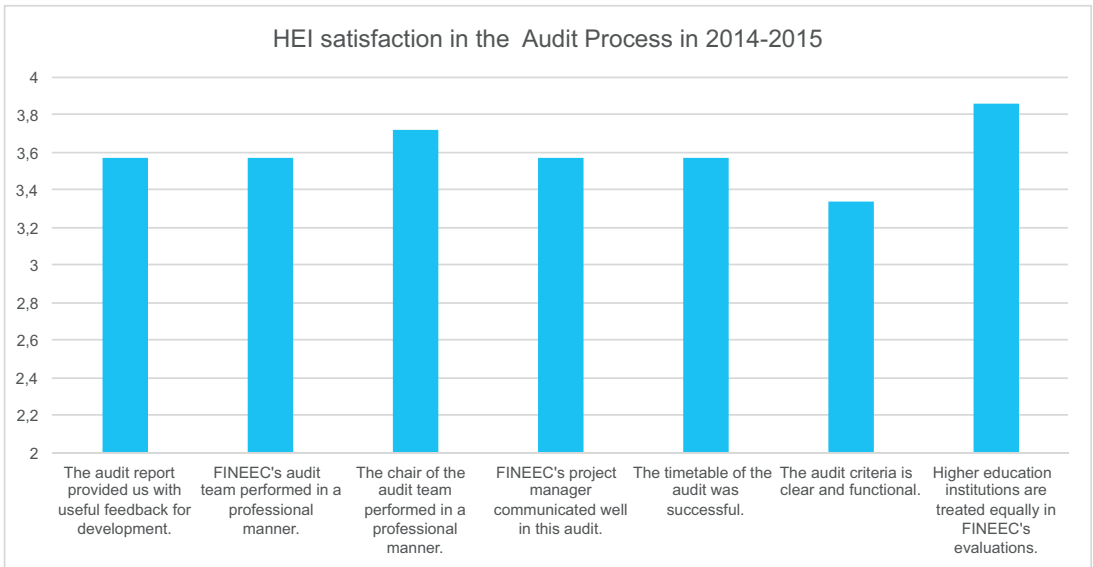
Figure 4: HEI satisfaction in the audit process in 2014–2015. N=7.
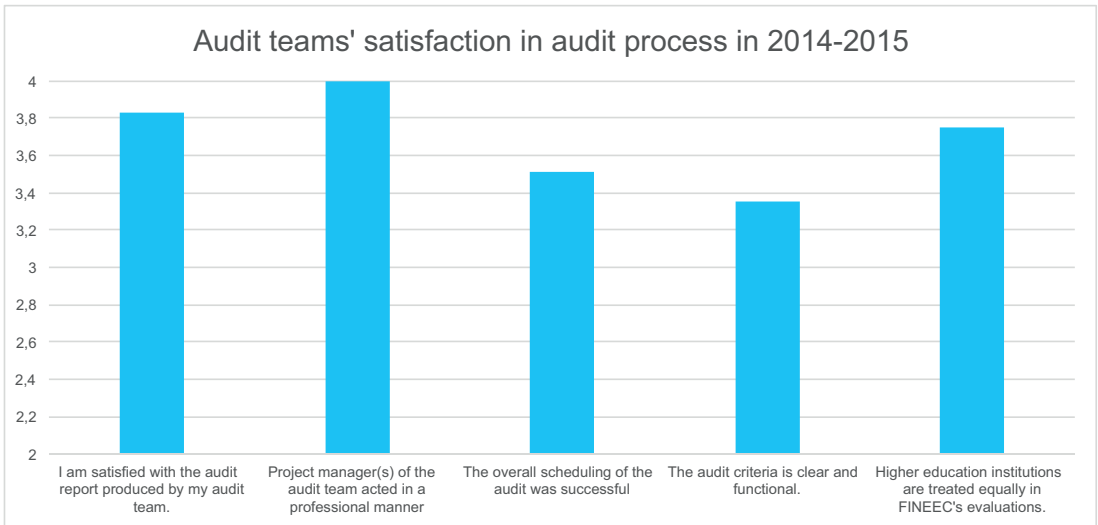

Figure 5: Audit teams' satisfaction in 2014–2015. N=32.

In terms of development of the audits and evaluations, the responses to the open questions are much more useful. The open questions invite in-depth answers largely on the same topics as the multiple-choice questions and a few other details of the project, for example usefulness of seminars held etc. HEIs often highlight some issues from their viewpoint and audit team members are able to also suggest potential solutions from their often extensive international evaluation experience.

The staff of the Higher Education Evaluation Unit analyses the feedback information usually in a full-day-session once or twice a year, depending on the number of evaluations that year. The feedback is divided amongst the staff beforehand so that one person reads all of the answers from all audits for a specific question and presents the key findings to the whole group. Another designated person comments and adds to the findings to make sure important findings were not left out. Strengths, good practices, as well as easy and difficult development issues are compiled by the Unit. The feedback questionnaires also provide indicator data on the success of the audit processes, which have also been included in the analysis. The most important 'difficult development issues' are selected for further scrutiny and changes to the Unit procedures are made in order to tackle the issues. Furthermore, indicator targets for the next year are set by the Unit. More serious development issues are normally discussed in separate working groups and more drastic changes are only made when updating the audit model from one round to the next. This work is now ongoing for the third round of audits. The overall picture of the feedback and the improvements decided upon are then communicated back to the HEIs involved and the evaluation team members in the form of a Development Report, which is also available on FINEEC's website.

Non-conflict-of-interest-mechanism

It is a part of good administration that a person with a conflict of interest does not in any way participate in the handling or evaluation of a matter. According to the Administrative Procedure Act, the provisions on the disqualification of officials apply also to members of multi-member bodies and other persons participating in the decision of a matter, as well as inspectors in their inspection duties (Section 27.2). These include the chairpersons and members of evaluation and audit groups. Thus, the disqualification of Committee members, Unit employees and evaluation group members is based on the Administrative Procedure Act, which for its part contributes to the credibility and objectivity of evaluation activities. The members of the Higher Education Evaluation Committee, and the members of evaluation and audit groups appointed by it do not participate in the evaluation of their own HEI or decision-making pertaining to it in any way.

Internal feedback mechanism

At the end of its term of office, the Higher Education Evaluation Committee draws up a self-evaluation which examines the procedures used and the impact of the activities. Thus, the Committee stepping down can use its experiences to instruct the members of the next Committee about how to embark on its term in office. The Unit has utilised a simplified

version of the CAF model in its internal self-evaluations in the past years. A new self-evaluation method as a part of FINEEC has not yet been decided on. So far the self-evaluation has mostly taken place as a part of the discussion on evaluation feedbacks. The personnel of the Unit have also responded to FINEEC's employee satisfaction and well-being survey (VM-Baro), which is common to all Finnish government agencies. These results were also discussed in detail in FINEEC's common meeting, as well as in the Management Team and in a Unit meeting. In addition, the Head of Unit, Helka Kekäläinen holds annual performance and development reviews with the personnel.

Other quality assurance procedures

In order to safeguard the evaluation process from sudden or unexpected illness, or other causes disabling personnel from managing the process, FINEEC has for some years utilised a backup system of project managers. Every project manager is assigned a colleague who acts as his/her backup in the project, usually attending all meetings of the evaluation team and receiving carbon copies of the emails of the project. The backup person also participates in the possible site visits of the project and generally maintains awareness of the progress of the project in order to continue managing the project seamlessly should something happen to the actual project manager. FINEEC has very good experience of preventing major pitfalls in evaluation projects due to this system. Although somewhat labour-intensive, the backup system also has additional benefits. It provides a natural way for project managers to share experiences and best practices without an added mechanism. Furthermore, it safeguards the staff members from being overburdened or burnouts as another person is able to share a part of the workload and perhaps monitor the wellbeing of the colleague. The backup person can also be invaluable as another editor for the evaluation report, giving the actual project manager a fresh set of eyes for error-checking before sending the report draft onwards. Audit team members are also assigned backup persons from the audit team who comment on their texts and fill their role, should the actual writer prove inacapable of doing their part.

New staff members are not normally assigned evaluation projects of their own, but ideally they will act first as a backup of a more experienced colleague, who will train them on the job, therefore passing on a wealth of tacit knowledge. FINEEC also has a common training procedure available on its intranet, which includes all the necessary steps a new employee goes through once joining the Centre. There are a number of key documents that support the maintenance and assurance of quality in evaluation projects. Most importantly the audit project manager's Check List includes, in detail, all phases of an audit project and tasks to be done in it. The meetings of the FINEEC Team for Audits have proved extremely useful for sharing best practices and other practical experiences on the innumerable details that relate to institutional audits. The free exchange of ideas and experiences in the Team also fosters internal quality management and assurance of uniformity of evaluation practices from one audit to the next. New staff members are also given training by more experienced peers on the activities of the Centre and the evaluation project in hand. The members of a new Higher Education Evaluation Committee are likewise provided with comprehensive training at the beginning of their term.

FINEEC has faced a slight challenge with the more frequent utilisation of international audit teams recently. Persons from other countries of course bring a wealth of new perspectives, experiences and ideas to the table, but their knowledge on the details of the Finnish higher education system is understandably limited. More focus has been placed on educating the international auditors on the system, since there is a risk of, for example, variance in the interpretation of the audit criteria. This is a noted area of further development for FINEEC. Therefore, more emphasis has been placed on the internal checking of the audit report for consistencies between the audit report texts and the team's outcomes. Internal scrutiny is carried out by the leader of the FINEEC Team for Audits, who also has the opportunity to return a report to the audit team should there be any major inconsistencies to deal with. Another new practice to help further formalise the contents of the audit reports is the more detailed disposition of the reports, produced by the Team for Audits in Autumn 2015. The complete uniformity of audit reports is not, however, seen as an ideal goal either, since the intention is also to contribute to the development of the institution and the contents of the report should serve these needs.

9

Agency's international activities

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In its strategy, the Finnish Education Evaluation Centre links international activities with one of the strategic goals of the organisation: the reputation. In the strategy document this is stated as follows: *We are a well-known and respected evaluation organisation both nationally and internationally*. An aspiration concerning a strong international role is also stated in the mission of the agency, which refers to FINEEC being an internationally attractive and sought after evaluation partner.

FINEEC takes part in international activities both in Finland and abroad. The activities consist of different types of actions and can be divided into four categories: (i) participation in seminars and congresses, (ii) long-term cooperation, (iii) project activities, and (iv) international activities taking place in Finland.

(i) The staff of the Higher Education Evaluation Unit are encouraged to participate in international seminars and congresses that deal with the field of work of the agency. Participation in these events is strongly supported by the Head of the Unit, and it is also a method to familiarise new staff members with questions related to quality management. The staff are actively invited to give presentations at these events.

(ii) FINEEC's Higher Education Evaluation Unit and notably its predecessor the Finnish Higher Education Evaluation Council (FINHEEC) has a long tradition of holding posts in international organisations and working in cooperation with other evaluation agencies. Permanent or long-term representation in different boards and working groups, and building networks support the objective to strengthen the internationalisation of the agency included in FINEEC's strategy scorecard.

In particular, the Higher Education Evaluation Unit is involved in cooperation with the European Association for Quality Assurance in Higher Education (ENQA), the European Quality Assurance Register for Higher Education (EQAR), the Nordic Quality Assurance Network in Higher Education (NOQA), the European Association in Higher Education (EURASHE), the Quality Audit Network (QAN) and the International Network for Quality Assurance Agencies in Higher

Education (INQAAHE). Regarding other quality assurance agencies, FINEEC's Higher Education Evaluation Unit works especially with QAA Scotland and the Estonian Quality Agency for Higher and Vocational Education (EKKA).

(iii) Projects form the main part of the international activities of the Higher Education Evaluation Unit. The unit is or has been involved in several projects, often based on earlier cooperation with other quality assurance agencies or organisations.

Currently, the Higher Education Evaluation Unit is carrying out two European Union funded Twinning projects. The projects are taking place in Armenia and Azerbaijan and aim at integrating the higher education systems of the beneficiary countries in the European Higher Education Area (EHEA). Both of the projects have an implementation period of two years. During the implementation the Unit is working together with Estonian and German colleagues in close cooperation with the local stakeholders in Armenia and Azerbaijan. Besides these projects, FINHEEC and FINEEC staff were involved as Short Term Experts (STEs) in a third Twinning project in Egypt from 2013 to 2015.

The Higher Education Evaluation Unit is also active in an ad hoc group for quality in higher education appointed by the Nordic Council of Ministers. In its work, the ad hoc group focuses on discussing challenges in relation to quality in higher education and particularly to degree-level education in the Nordic countries. With respect to the work of the group, the Higher Education Evaluation Unit is involved in organising an international conference concentrating on the student-centred approach in Helsinki in June 2016.

Recently, the Higher Education Evaluation Unit has participated in two prominent multi-stakeholder projects. The *Impact Analysis of Quality Assurance in Higher Education Institutions (*IMPALA*)* project aims at developing and applying a methodology to assess the impact of external quality assurance procedures. The project is funded by the European Union and is implemented by 11 partners from six European countries. The final report will be published in the autumn 2016.

The European Consortium for Accreditation in higher education (ECA) -coordinated project *Certificate of Quality in Internationalisation (*CeQuint*)* has developed a methodology to assess the quality of internationalisation in higher education. As a part of the project, FINHEEC assessed the internationalisation of Laurea University of Applied Sciences 2014.

In addition, the unit has been active in several ENQA and NOQA projects.

Since the previous external review by ENQA in 2010, FINHEEC or the Higher Education Evaluation Unit of FINEEC have been involved in the following international projects:

Twinning projects:

- 2015–2017: *Support to the Ministry of Education of the Republic of Azerbaijan for Further Adherence of the Higher Education System to the European Higher Education Area (AZ-ad-EHEA)*
- 2014–2016: *Empowerment of the Tertiary Level Education of the Republic of Armenia for European Higher Education Area Integration "EHEA"*
- 2013–2015: *Strengthening the National Authority for Quality Assurance and Accreditation of Education Institutional Capacity (NAQAAE) with a View to Improving the Accreditation and Quality Assurance Education System.*

International projects in quality assurance:

- 2014–2016: *Ad hoc group for quality in higher education*, appointed by the Nordic Council of Ministers
- 2013–2016: *Impact Analysis of External Quality Assurance Processes of Higher Education Institutions (IMPALA)*
- 2013–2015: *European Certificate for Quality in Internationalisation (CeQuint),* coordinated by the European Consortium for Accreditation (ECA)
- 2013–2014: *Ad hoc group on legislative and administrative obstacles in Nordic Master programmes,* appointed by the Nordic Council of Ministers
- 2011–2012: *Implementing the ESG in Central Asia and the Balkan Region,* coordinated by the European Association for Quality Assurance in Higher Education (ENQA), and United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) – Global Initiative for Quality Assurance Capacity (GIQAC)
- 2010–2012: *Quality procedures in European higher education: Visions for the future*, coordinated by the European Association for Quality Assurance in Higher Education (ENQA).

Nordic Quality Assurance Network in Higher Education projects:

- 2012–2013: *Learning Outcomes in External Quality Assurance Approaches – Investigating and discussing Nordic practices and developments*
- 2010–2011: *Stakeholder cooperation within the Nordic agencies for quality assurance in higher education – similarities, differences and examples of good practice.*

(iv) International activities taking place in Finland consist mainly of international guests visiting FINEEC's premises. The Higher Education Evaluation Unit hosted 87 international visitors in 2015, including colleagues from Algeria, Estonia, Ukraine, Kazakhstan and Singapore. In addition, 22 members of international audit teams visited FINEEC in 2015. International events in Finland are included in this category. One example of such events is the conference on student-centred approaches organised in connection with the work of the Nordic Council of Ministers' ad hoc

group for quality in higher education.

The experiences of international activities have been positive and the Higher Education Evaluation Unit has been able to establish itself well within the European context. In addition, the Unit works as an important link between the European framework and the Finnish quality assurance stakeholders. Projects particularly are considered as an effective means to develop the capacity of the staff. Available resources (human, financial etc.) are studied before the start of each project in order to avoid excessive workloads and to verify that the project can be implemented as planned. This is a good practice, which also enhances the motivation of the staff.

The support stated in the strategy is a strength, which indicates that international activities are an integral part of FINEEC's operations. The visible link between the strategic management and international activities makes the system coherent and consistent. However, the Higher Education Evaluation Unit recognises that the link needs to be further strengthened. Therefore, the Unit has started to prepare a work plan for FINEEC's international activities. Together with the strategy, the work plan will serve as a basis for the coordination and organisation of these activities by clarifying areas such as the objectives, procedures, and responsibilities. Most importantly, the work plan makes the planning and implementing of international activities more systematic by setting out a framework for its implementation. The staff participates in the preparation work through a consultation round, which is important especially from the resource point of view.

10

Compliance with the European standards and guidelines (Part 3)

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10.1 ESG STANDARD 3.1 ACTIVITIES, POLICY AND PROCESSES FOR QUALITY ASSURANCE

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Standard:

Agencies should undertake external quality assurance activities as defined in Part 2 of the ESG on a regular basis. They should have clear and explicit goals and objectives that are part of their publicly available mission statement. These should translate into the daily work of the agency. Agencies should ensure the involvement of stakeholders in their governance and work.

FINEEC Compliance:

The activities, policies and processes of the Finnish Education Evaluation Centre are described in part 2 of the ESG, chapters 4 and 11 in this self-evaluation report.

10.2 ESG STANDARD 3.2 OFFICIAL STATUS

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Standard:

Agencies should have an established legal basis and should be formally recognised as quality assurance agencies by competent public authorities.

FINEEC Compliance:

The Finnish Education Evaluation Centre is formally recognised as the primary organisation in charge of evaluation of higher education in Finland. Its position and tasks are stipulated in the Act on FINEEC (1295/2013) and the government decree on FINEEC (1375/2013)[2].

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2   The Acts and Decrees are attached to the self-assessment report.

The Act states that:

Section 1. Mandate

1. *The Finnish Education Evaluation Centre operates in the capacity of an independent expert organisation for external evaluations of education. It produces information to serve decision-making in education policy and for the purpose of fostering education.*

2. *The Finnish Education Evaluation Centre operates within the branch of government of the Ministry of Education and Culture.*

Section 2. Mission

3. *The mission of the Finnish Education Evaluation Centre is to:*

(1) conduct evaluations related to education and teaching and to the providers of education and the activities of higher education institutions in accordance with an evaluation plan referred to in section 5;

(2) in accordance with the evaluation plan referred to in section 5, undertake:

4. *evaluations of learning outcomes relating to the distribution of lesson hours and the national core curriculum targets referred to in section 14 of the Basic Education Act (628/1998) and in section 10 of the General Upper Secondary Schools Act (629/1998);*

5. *evaluations of learning outcomes relating to targets of the national core curriculum referred to in section 13 of the Vocational Education and Training Act (630/1998) and in the national qualification requirements referred to in section 13 of the Vocational Adult Education Act (631/1998) and in the national core curriculum referred to in section 5 of the Act on Basic Education in the Arts (633/1998);*

(3) to support providers of education and training and higher education institutions in matters related to evaluation and quality management;

(4) develop the evaluation of education; and

(5) attend to any other duties that are issued or given to the Evaluation Centre.

While the Act on FINEEC stipulates:

Section 1. Operating principles of the Evaluation Centre

6. *The Finnish Education Evaluation Centre shall apply principles of independent and enhancement-led evaluation in its operations.*

7. *It shall publish the evaluation criteria used and the results of evaluations as well as communicate with its stakeholders. Educational institutions, providers of education and training and institutions of higher education subject to an evaluation shall be informed of their evaluation results.*

8. *It shall participate in international evaluation activities and cooperation.*

9. *It shall participate in international evaluation of its own activities on a regular basis.*

Furthermore, the mandate and the status of FINEEC are reflected both in the Universities Act (558/2009) and the Polytechnic Act (932/2014).

These Acts do not necessitate that Finnish HEIs take part in FINEEC's evaluations, but they are required to take part in external evaluations of their activities. The Act, however, strongly points to the direction of FINEEC (then FINHEEC) with the second paragraph:

Section 87. Evaluation

1. *The universities must evaluate their education, research and artistic activities and the impact thereof. The universities shall also take part in external evaluation of their activities and quality assurance systems on a regular basis. The universities must publish the findings of the evaluations they undertake.*

2. *Attached to the Ministry of Education and Culture is an independent expert body called the Higher Education Evaluation Council, further provisions on which shall be enacted by Government Decree (Amendment 954 /2011).*

While the Polytechnics Act states:

Section 62

Quality assessment

1. *Polytechnics are responsible for the standard of quality and for continuous development of the education provided by it and its other operations. In addition, the polytechnics must evaluate their education, research and artistic activities as well as the effectiveness thereof. Polytechnics must also regularly participate in the external evaluation of their operations and quality assurance systems and publish the results of the evaluations they have organised.*

2. *Provisions on the Finnish Education Evaluation Centre are laid down in the Act on the Finnish Education Evaluation Centre (1295/2013).*

Together this legislation provides a solid foundation for FINEEC's operations in the evaluation of higher education institutions.

10.3 ESG STANDARD 3.3 INDEPENDENCE

Standard:

Agencies should be independent and act autonomously. They should have full responsibility for their operations and the outcomes of those operations without third party influence.

FINEEC Compliance:

The Finnish Education Evaluation Centre decides independently on the implementation of the evaluations, methods used, the members of the evaluation teams, timetables, content of reports and other decisions pertaining to evaluations. Other interested parties, such as higher education institutions, ministries or stakeholders have no effect on FINEEC's decisions or evaluation results. FINEEC is an independent governmental agency within the administrative branch of the Ministry of Education and Culture. FINEEC has a separate sub-item in the state budget, which the Centre can independently decide how to use.

Suggestions for evaluations can and do also come from the HEIs and other stakeholders in the field. FINEEC can also conduct evaluations commissioned by the Ministry. The members of FINEEC's Higher Education Evaluation Committee are not representatives of their employers (e.g. the HEIs), but represent the whole field of Finnish higher education as independent experts. The independence of the members and the organisation of FINEEC is further strenghtened by Section 87 of the Universities Act and Section 62 of the Polytechnics Act as mentioned under the previous standard 10.2.

The Decree on FINEEC states that the Higher Education Evaluation Committee makes decisions on:

1. *evaluation project plans and the composition of planning and evaluation groups related to higher education institutions;*
2. *approval of the final results of audits of quality assurance systems in higher education institutions.*

10.4 ESG STANDARD 3.4 THEMATIC ANALYSIS

Standard:

Agencies should regularly publish reports that describe and analyse the general findings of their external quality assurance activities.

FINEEC Compliance:

FINEEC and its predecessor FINHEEC have produced a number of summary reports or system-wide analyses on its activities. In 2003, FINHEEC published an impact assessment on accreditations of professional courses. In 2004, FINHEEC published an extensive description of all the different

evaluation methods and a comprehensive analysis of the impact of study-field specific evaluations carried out between 1997–2003. FINHEEC has also conducted, commissioned or funded four studies on the impact of audits: an analysis of the results of audits carried out between 2005–2008, conducted at FINHEEC (Moitus, S. 2010); a more extensive thematic analysis of the first round of all audits, conducted at FINHEEC (Talvinen, K. 2011); and three studies funded by FINHEEC but conducted at universities, two of them on the impact of audits (Ala-Vähälä, T. 2011; Haapakorpi, A. 2011), and one on the quality management of societal interaction (Lyytinen, A., Kohtamäki, V., Pekkola, E., Kivistö, J. & Hölttä, S. 2012). Thematic analyses have played an important role in the development of the audit model for the second round. For example, because the quality management of societal interaction and doctoral education was found to be weak in many HEIs during the first audit round, FINHEEC decided to fund a study on the quality management of societal interaction (mentioned above) and put more emphasis on the quality management of doctoral education in the second round. Findings of the studies have also been discussed in open national seminars with the HEIs and other relevant stakeholders.

FINHEEC also supported a study on centres of excellence in university education 1999–2012 (Raaheim, A. & Karjalainen, A. 2012). In 2013, FINHEEC published a report which contains a review of the activities of the Council during the years 1996–2013, changes in the operating environment and international comparative information (Pyykkö, R., Eriksson, S., Krusberg, J-E., Rauhala, P., Rissanen, R., Vieltojärvi, M., Kekäläinen, H., Hiltunen, K., Moitus, S. & Apajalahti, T. 2013). The report also included guidelines for the evaluation of higher education to be transferred to FINEEC. The report has been used by FINEEC in the planning and implementation of the activities of the centre.

The internal quality assurance system of FINEEC also produces an annual summary of improvements based on feedback from the evaluation teams and HEIs (as described in chapter 8 of this report). Summaries on the HEIs' follow-up reports on the impact of the audit and their post-audit development work have also been produced and presented in various seminars.

10.5 ESG STANDARD 3.5 RESOURCES

Standard:

Agencies should have adequate and appropriate resources, both human and financial, to carry out their work.

The activities of the Finnish Education Evaluation Centre are funded by the Ministry of Education and Culture. The overall budget of the Centre in 2016 is approximately 3.8 million euros, of which 2.5 million euros accounts for labour costs. The labour costs of the Higher Education Evaluation Unit will be approximately 970,000 euros in 2016. The Unit comprises the Head of Unit, four Counsellors of Evaluation, eight Senior Advisors, two Evaluation Experts and an Assistant. All Counsellors and Senior Advisors are expected to have a Master's degree, although there are no formal requirements. Four employees of the unit currently hold a PhD.

The Higher Education Evaluation Committee includes members from both sectors of the higher education system in addition to student and working life representatives. They have extensive experience of evaluation, quality assurance systems and higher education. The Unit's staff have also gathered substantial experience during the last twenty years of higher education evaluation. Systematic training in evaluation methods and quality management processes has greatly strengthened the skills and expertise of the Unit as a whole. Human resources are also continuously utilised in evaluations, seminars and other activities. The Centre has a joint staff development working group, which plans and organises training for the personnel.

10.6 ESG STANDARD 3.6 INTERNAL QUALITY ASSURANCE AND PROFESSIONAL CONDUCT

Standard:

Agencies should have in place processes for internal quality assurance related to defining, assuring and enhancing the quality and integrity of their activities.

FINEEC Compliance:

FINEEC's internal quality assurance system is described in more detail in Chapter 8. The Centre is currently undergoing a process of building a quality system for the entire organisation using the Common Assessment Framework (CAF) quality model as a foundation. The initial building process will be completed by the end of 2016. Meanwhile, the Higher Education Evaluation Unit continues to employ the external feedback mechanism of gathering and utilising HEI and evaluation team feedback as before. Once completed, a new Quality Manual will be published online in Finnish, Swedish and English as was FINHEEC's previous document. For internal feedback, the Finnish Education Evaluation Centre uses the VM-Baro survey of job satisfaction that is common for the whole Finnish government. The survey is conducted annually and it enables comparison both within the Centre, between units and outside the organisation with other similar agencies. FINEEC's personnel have also many other channels for giving internal feedback and taking part in the development of the organisation.

In addition, FINEEC has a non-conflict of interest policy, which is common to all the Finnish civil service, whereby no person with a personal interest in the matter can have any role in the conduct of its evaluation or making decisions on it.

As Finnish Government officials, FINEEC's employees are bound by the Non-Discrimination Act (1325/2014). The Act states, among other things, that it is the duty of authorities to promote equality and non-discrimination in all their activities. A more specific non-discrimination plan is being written for the whole Centre. The Higher Education Evaluation Unit maintains a gender balance of at least 2:3 in all its evaluation teams, but in recent years the balance has been very close to 1:1, although the engineering programme accreditations tend to challenge the balance slightly.

FINEEC has not used subcontractors in Higher Education evaluations, but would expect them to conform to the ESG, should the services of external actors be required.

Cross-border quality assurance

FIN(H)EEC has conducted one cross-border audit so far. In 2013, the quality system of the University of Graz (*Karl-Franzens-Universität Graz,* Austria) was audited by FINHEEC. In cross-border audits, the same principles are applied from the agreement negotiation and the appointment of the team to decision-making on the outcome of the audit as in the audits carried out in Finland. In accordance with the principle of enhancement-led evaluation, special characteristics of the evaluation target are striven to take into consideration in order to achieve a coherent evaluation scheme that corresponds to the evaluation needs in the best possible way. Thus, considerable amount of effort was made to explore the Austrian higher education system and legislation regarding quality assurance to correspond to the needs of an Austrian HEI without compromising the requirements of the Finnish audit model (see Chapter 11.1).

Conducting a cross-border audit was an important learning experience to FIN(H)EEC. Although the agency already had a well-established procedure for the audit, additional consideration had to be given to following issues, among other things: even more detailed and well-planned time frames for the agency, the university and the experts in order to run to the project smoothly; training of the experts in the Austrian higher education system, the Finnish audit model and operational cultures in both countries; and clear communication with the university and explicit guidelines. Despite all the challenges that cross-border activities bring to an evaluation project, FINHEEC succeeded in implementing the audit in an excellent manner. Feedback from the university on the audit has been one of the most positive ones in the history of the agency. In conclusion, different national frameworks proved to be compatible, and mutual trust grew between the agency and the university subject to the evaluation. Additional effort was required by both FINHEEC and the university, but the process had true added value for both parties.

10.7 ESG STANDARD 3.7 CYCLICAL EXTERNAL REVIEW OF AGENCIES

Standard:

Agencies should undergo an external review at least once every five years in order to demonstrate their compliance with the ESG.

FINEEC Compliance:

FINEEC has taken part in external reviews once every five years and intends to do so in the future. The current review was postponed due to the merger process.

Regarding the engineering programme accreditations, FINEEC takes part in an additional external review conducted by the ENAEE every five years. The next ENAEE review is upcoming in autumn 2018.

11
Compliance with the European standards and guidelines (Part 2)

11.1 ESG STANDARD 2.1 CONSIDERATION OF INTERNAL QUALITY ASSURANCE

Standard:

External quality assurance should address the effectiveness of the internal quality assurance processes described in Part 1 of the ESG.

FINEEC Compliance:

Audits

FINEEC audits focus on the quality system that HEIs develop for themselves based on their own needs and goals. The audits examine the procedures that the institution uses to maintain and develop the quality of its operations. Compared to the European principles of quality assurance, the Finnish audit model, based on institutional reviews, covers all functions (education; research, development and innovation as well as artistic activities; societal interaction) of an HEI from a broad perspective. The procedure in the second audit round explores the quality management of degree education in greater detail than in the first round. 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. A function chosen as the optional audit target has to be central to the institution's strategy or profile and an area that the institution wants particularly to develop in terms of quality management. 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. The aim is to support institutions in developing their operations also in areas where they might not be at their best yet but which are important strategically.

FINEEC audit targets include:

1. Quality policy
2. The 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)
   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 targets
5. Samples of degree education: degree programmes
6. The quality system as a whole.

Table 1 illustrates how the effectiveness of the internal quality assurance processes described in Part 1 of the ESG is addressed in FINEEC audits.

Table 1. Consideration of internal quality assurance in FINEEC audits

Part 1: Standards and guidelines for internal quality assurance	How FINEEC audits address the ESG Part 1
1.1 Policy for quality assurance Institutions should have a policy for quality assurance that is made public and forms part of their strategic management. Internal stakeholders should develop and implement this policy through appropriate structures and processes, while involving external stakeholders.	**1. Quality policy** • How clearly are the institution's quality policy's rationale, objectives and division of responsibilities defined? • How inclusive has the definition process been? • How accessible is the quality policy to internal and external stakeholders? • How does the quality policy take into account the information needs of the stakeholders? • How is the quality policy communicated to all stakeholders? • How clearly is the quality policy linked to the institution's overall strategy? **2. Quality system's link with strategic management** • How does the quality system serve strategic and operations management? • How established are the procedures for ensuring that the information produced is communicated systematically within the institution and to external stakeholders? • How does the quality systems work across different organisational levels and units? **3. Development of the quality system** • Procedures to evaluate and develop the quality system • Ability to identify the system's strengths and areas in need of development • Evidence of the system's successful development work • Workload produced by the system **4. Quality management of institution's core duties** • Participation of staff, students and external stakeholders in quality work • Workload produced by the system **6. The quality system as a whole** • Comprehensiveness and impact of the quality system • What measures does the institution use to advance the emergence and development of a quality culture? • How well-established is the institution's quality culture?
1.2 Design and approval of programmes Institutions should have processes for the design and approval of their programmes. The programmes should be designed so that they meet the objectives set for them, including the intended learning outcomes. The qualification resulting from a programme should be clearly specified and communicated, and refer to the correct level of the national qualifications framework for higher education and, consequently, to the Framework for Qualifications of the European Higher Education Area.	**4a) Quality management of degree education** • How do the quality management procedures advance the development of degree education and the achievement of goals set for the operations? • Involvement of staff, students and external stakeholders in quality work **5. Samples of degree education: degree programmes** • Functioning of the quality management procedures related to the planning of educational provision (curricula and their preparation; intended learning outcomes and their definition; links between research as well as artistic activities and education; lifelong learning; relevance of degrees to working life) and how they support the planning of the programme • Involvement of staff, students and external stakeholders

1.3 Student-centred learning, teaching and assessment Institutions should ensure that the programmes are delivered in a way that encourages students to take an active role in creating the learning process, and that the assessment of students reflects this approach.	**4a) Quality management of degree education** • Functioning of the quality management procedures and their impact on the development of education • Comprehensiveness, usability and utilisation of the information produced by the quality system in the development of education • Involvement of students in quality work **5. Samples of degree education: degree programmes** • Functioning of the quality management procedures related to the implementation of educational provision (teaching methods and learning environments; methods used to assess learning; student's learning and well-being) and how they support the implementation of the programme • Participation of students in quality work related to the degree programme
1.4 Student admission, progression, recognition and certification Institutions should consistently apply pre-defined and published regulations covering all phases of the student "life cycle", e.g. student admission, progression, recognition and certification.	**4a) Quality management of degree education** • How do the quality management procedures advance the development of education and the achievement of goals set for operations? **5. Samples of degree education: degree programmes** • Planning of the programme (lifelong learning) • Effectiveness of the quality work (suitability of key evaluation methods and follow-up indicators and their impact)
1.5 Teaching staff Institutions should assure themselves of the competence of their teachers. They should apply fair and transparent processes for the recruitment and development of the staff.	**4a) Quality management of degree education** • How do the quality management procedures advance the development of education and the achievement of goals set for the operations? • Key support services for education **5. Samples of degree education: degree programmes** • Functioning of the quality management procedures related to the planning of the programme (links between research, artistic activities and education) • Functioning of the quality management procedures related to the implementation of educational provision (teaching methods and learning environments; methods used to assess learning; student's learning and well-being; teacher's competence and occupational well-being) and how they support the implementation of the programme
1.6 Learning resources and student support Institutions should have appropriate funding for learning and teaching activities and ensure that adequate and readily accessible learning resources and student support are provided.	**2. Quality system's link with strategic management** • How do the quality system and the information it produces serve strategic and operations management? **4a) Quality management of degree education** • How do the quality management procedures advance the development of education and the achievement of goals set for the operations? • Key support services for education **5. Samples of degree education: degree programmes** • Functioning of the quality management procedures related to the implementation of educational provision (teaching methods and learning environments; teachers' competence; student's learning and well-being) and how they support the implementation of the programme.

1.7 Information management Institutions should ensure that they collect, analyse and use relevant information for the effective management of their programmes and other activities.	**2. Quality system's link with strategic management;** • How do the quality system and the information it produces serve strategic and operations management? • How systematic and wide is the use of the information? **4. Quality management of the core duties** • How relevant is the information produced by the quality system for the development of the core duties and how is the information used to develop the core duties? **5. Samples of degree programmes: degree programmes** • Suitability of key evaluation methods and follow-up indicators and their impact on the achievement of goals
1.8 Public information Institutions should publish information about their activities, including programmes, which is clear, accurate, objective, up-to date and readily accessible.	**1. Quality policy** • How is the quality policy communicated? • How are the information needs of internal and external stakeholders taken into account? **2. Quality system's links with strategic management** • How is the information produced communicated and how up-to-date is the communication within the institution and with external stakeholders?
1.9 On-going monitoring and periodic review of programmes Institutions should monitor and periodically review their programmes to ensure that they achieve the objectives set for them and respond to the needs of students and society. These reviews should lead to continuous improvement of the programme. Any action planned or taken as a result should be communicated to all those concerned.	**4a) quality management of degree education** • How do the quality management procedures advance the development of the institution's core duties and the achievement of goals set for the operations? • How is the information produced communicated within the institution and to external stakeholders? • Key support services for core duties • Participation of internal and external stakeholders in quality work **5. Samples of degree education: degree programmes** • Planning of educational provision (revision of curricula; links between research, artistic activities and education; monitoring of the relevance of degrees to working life) • Implementation of educational provision (continuous assessment of teaching methods and learning environments; methods to assess learning) • Evidence for effectiveness (suitability of key evaluation methods and follow-up indicators and their impact on the achievement of goals) of the quality work related to the programme • Measures currently in progress for improving the quality of • participation of internal and external stakeholders in quality work
1.10 Cyclical external quality assurance Institutions should undergo external quality assurance in line with the ESG on a cyclical basis.	FINEEC conducts institutional audits in line with the ESG on a cyclical basis. The quality label is valid for six years and, thus, the FINEEC procedure requires an audit of the HEI to take place every six years. FINEEC's external quality assurance procedure is a continuous process that does not end with the external feedback or report or its follow-up process within the institution. Therefore, institutions are required to ensure that the progress made since the last external quality assurance activity is taken into consideration when preparing for the next one (audit target 3: follow-up of the development work after the previous audit).

The planning work for the third round of audits/evaluations on the basis of the ESG 2015 is currently underway (see Chapter 14).

Engineering programme accreditations

The following table explains how FINEEC's engineering programme accreditation standards address the ESG Part 1. A self-evaluation template for the institutions addresses the standards and a report template for the accreditation team helps to concentrate on the right questions and in finding sufficient evidence. The accreditation standards and both templates are available on the FINEEC website.

Part 1: Standards and guidelines for internal quality assurance	How FINEEC Engineering programme accreditation standards address the ESG Part 1
1.1 Policy for quality assurance Institutions should have a policy for quality assurance that is made public and forms part of their strategic management. Internal stakeholders should develop and implement this policy through appropriate structures and processes, while involving external stakeholders.	15) The quality management procedures of the programme are consistent with the quality policy of the higher education institution. 16) The organisation and decision-making processes of the programme are fit for effective management. 17) In the education programme the programme aims, curriculum, teaching and learning process, resources and partnerships and quality management are reviewed and developed in a systematic and regular manner, taking into account analysis of results of student admissions, students' study progress, achieved learning levels, student, graduate and employer feedback and graduate's employment data. 18) In the programme, up to date public information about its objectives, teaching and learning process, resources, quality management procedures and results is provided.
1.2 Design and approval of programmes Institutions should have processes for the design and approval of their programmes. The programmes should be designed so that they meet the objectives set for them, including the intended learning outcomes. The qualification resulting from a programme should be clearly specified and communicated, and refer to the correct level of the national qualifications framework for higher education and, consequently, to the Framework for Qualifications of the European Higher Education Area.	1) The programme aims, which describe the educational task and purpose of the programme, are consistent with the mission of the higher education institution and reflect the identified needs of employers and other stakeholders. 2) The programme learning outcomes, which describe the knowledge, understanding, skills and abilities that the programme enables graduates to demonstrate, are consistent with the programme aims, and that these are linked to relevant national qualification frameworks (if applicable) and with the FINEEC reference programme learning outcomes (defined in the accreditation manual). 3) The course level learning outcomes, including thesis work and possible practical training, aggregate to the programme's learning outcomes. 8) The teaching and learning process, including the assessment of students, enables students to demonstrate that they have achieved the intended course and programme level learning outcomes. Students have an active role in co-creating the learning process and the assessment of students reflects this approach.
1.3 Student-centred learning, teaching and assessment Institutions should ensure that the programmes are delivered in a way that encourages students to take an active role in creating the learning process, and that the assessment of students reflects this approach.	8) The teaching and learning process, including the assessment of students, enables students to demonstrate that they have achieved the intended course and programme level learning outcomes. Students have an active role in co-creating the learning process and the assessment of students reflects this approach.
1.4 Student admission, progression, recognition and certification Institutions should consistently apply pre-defined and published regulations covering all phases of the student "life cycle", e.g. student admission, progression, recognition and certification.	6) The criteria and process for student admission and transfer are clearly specified and published. Students should be informed of the qualifications necessary to enter the programme. 7) Students are informed of regulations and guidelines that concern recognition of prior learning, progress of studies and graduation.

1.5 Teaching staff Institutions should assure themselves of the competence of their teachers. They should apply fair and transparent processes for the recruitment and development of the staff.	9) The academic staff are sufficient in number and qualification to enable students to achieve the learning outcomes of the programme. There are arrangements in place to keep the pedagogical and professional competence of the academic staff up to date. 10) An effective team of technical and administrative staff supports the programme. There are arrangements in place to keep the competence of the support staff up to date.
1.6 Learning resources and student support Institutions should have appropriate funding for learning and teaching activities and ensure that adequate and readily accessible learning resources and student support are provided.	11) The students are provided with adequate and accessible support services to enable the achievement of the programme's learning outcomes. 12) The classrooms, computing facilities, software, laboratories, workshops, libraries and associated equipment and services are sufficient and accessible to enable students to achieve the programme's learning outcomes. 13) The HEI and the programme have external partnerships that are adequate for achieving the programme's learning outcomes. 14) The financial resources are sufficient to implement the learning process as planned and to further develop it.
1.7 Information management Institutions should ensure that they collect, analyse and use relevant information for the effective management of their programmes and other activities.	17) The programme reviews and develops the programme aims, curriculum, teaching and learning process, resources and partnerships and quality management in a systematic and regular manner, taking into account analysis of results of student admissions, students' study progress, achieved learning levels, as well as student, graduate and employer feedback and graduate employment data.
1.8 Public information Institutions should publish information about their activities, including programmes, which is clear, accurate, objective, up-to date and readily accessible.	18) The programme provides up to date public information about its objectives, teaching and learning process, resources, quality management procedures and results.
1.9 On-going monitoring and periodic review of programmes Institutions should monitor and periodically review their programmes to ensure that they achieve the objectives set for them and respond to the needs of students and society. These reviews should lead to continuous improvement of the programme. Any action planned or taken as a result should be communicated to all those concerned.	1) The programme aims, which describe the educational task and purpose of the programme, are consistent with the mission of the higher education institution and reflect the identified needs of employers and other stakeholders. 17) The programme reviews and develops the programme aims, curriculum, teaching and learning process, resources and partnerships and quality management in a systematic and regular manner, taking into account analysis of results of student admissions, students' study progress, achieved learning levels, as well as student, graduate and employer feedback and graduate employment data.
1.10 Cyclical external quality assurance Institutions should undergo external quality assurance in line with the ESG on a cyclical basis.	The engineering programme accreditation is a voluntary external quality assurance method for the institutions. The accreditation is valid for six years.

Thematic evaluations

In thematic evaluations, the focus of the project is usually a phenomenon that is not directly related to internal quality assurance of HEIs (see Chapter 7).

Cross-border quality assurance

In 2013, FINHEEC conducted a cross-border audit in Austria by evaluating the quality system of the University of Graz (*Karl-Franzens-Universität Graz*). It is the only audit conducted across borders so far. The whole audit process was implemented in accordance with the FINHEEC Audit Manual and the principles described in this Chapter, with the exception of the following two deviations: (1) Although the FINHEEC audit targets defined in the Audit Manual and the assessment areas defined in the Austrian framework law on the external evaluation of higher education institutions (§ 22 Act on Quality Assurance in Higher Education) were quite compatible, the quality management of internationalisation was not included in the FINHEEC audit criteria as such, and, thus, it was reviewed as an optional audit target 4 d. Furthermore, as the assessment of the quality management of internationalisation was required by the Austrian legislation, the optional audit target was taken into account when evaluating whether the audit would pass. (2) Since the programme-level assessment as such was not required by the Austrian legislation, samples of degree education were excluded from the audit. Instead, all faculties of the university were involved in the interviews during the site visit, and three faculties went through thorough interviews of deans, teachers and students, especially from the aspect of the quality management of degree education.

11.2 ESG STANDARD 2.2 DESIGNING METHODOLOGIES FIT FOR PURPOSE

Standard:

External quality assurance should be defined and designed specifically to ensure its fitness to achieve the aims and objectives set for it, while taking into account relevant regulations. Stakeholders should be involved in its design and continuous improvement.

FINEEC Compliance:

Audits

The audit method is based on respecting the autonomy of HEIs and having 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, which has become 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.

Building a solid foundation for external quality assurance

A foundation for the external quality assurance of Finnish HEIs corresponding to the European quality assurance principles was laid during the years 2004—2005. The Finnish response to the aims and objectives set out in the Berlin Communiqué was deliberated by a committee on quality assurance representing HEIs, students, the Ministry of Education and FINHEEC. The committee proposed that the HEIs develop quality assurance systems covering all their operations and that these be regularly evaluated by FINHEEC. The audit process and the criteria were further developed in a large, national seminar with some 200 participants from HEIs and other stakeholders. The first Audit Manual was published in 2005. A revised Manual was developed for 2008—2011 (until the end of the 1st audit round) and published in December 2007; the audit criteria were improved and clarified; furthermore, a number of technical improvements were made based on the feedback of HEIs and audit teams as well as experience accumulated by FINHEEC.

Design and continuous improvement of the second round audit model

Before appointing a planning group to develop the second round audit model in 2009, the FINHEEC Council conducted a self-evaluation on its audits (resulting in a SWOT-analysis) for the development work of the second round audit model. Furthermore, all the feedback gathered from the HEIs and audit teams during the first audit round were analysed. The planning group – representing universities, universities of applied sciences, working life and students – commenced its work at the beginning of 2010. It held a national seminar to discuss the needs and aspirations in the field of higher education. The seminar gathered 200 participants from HEIs and other stakeholders. The external review of FINHEEC conducted in 2010 also had an impact on the new audit model (see Chapter 13). In addition, various thematic analyses on the general findings of FINHEEC's external quality assurance activities were utilised in the planning of the methodology for the second round (see Chapter 10.4).

The new Audit Manual was published at the beginning of 2011, and the second audit round was launched in an extensive, national seminar in March 2011. The seminar gathered around 180 participants from HEIs and other stakeholder groups. FINEEC maintains extremely close contacts with the leadership of HEIs and especially their quality managers. However, the link to the rank-and-file professors and lecturers definitely could be stronger.

In December 2014, the FINHEEC Audit Manual applied in the second audit round was updated to correspond to the administrative model of FINEEC. At the same time, efforts were 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 refinement of the audit criteria was done by an international expert team in collaboration with FINEEC staff. The current Audit Manual will be valid until the end of 2018.

Engineering programme accreditations

The engineering programme accreditation method is FINEEC's implementation of the EUR-ACE framework coordinated by the ENAEE. In addition, the new ESG have been taken into account in the design of the method. The preparation of the method included two pilot accreditations, observed by an external evaluation panel assigned by the ENAEE, which evaluated the method to be fit for the purpose set by ENAEE. The design phase was conducted by a planning team, which consisted of representatives of higher education institutions, students, engineering associations and working life. In addition, FINHEEC organised two open seminars in 2011 and 2012 for HEIs that provide engineering education. In this way, the stakeholders were involved in the design, and in defining the aims and objectives of the accreditation method.

Stakeholders are involved in continuous improvement of the model via two channels: firstly, the FINEEC committee for engineering education consists of representatives of higher education institutions, students, engineering associations and working life; secondly, FINEEC collects feedback from all HEI's that participate in the accreditations and from the experts of the accreditation teams.

As a result of the continuous improvement, the accreditation standards were updated in autumn 2015. The update was based on the ENAEE's external evaluation report, on the feedback gathered from the pilot accreditations, and on the requirements of the new EUR-ACE standards and the new ESG.

Thematic evaluations

Stakeholders and various interest groups are regularly heard in the planning stages of the thematic evaluations. Often a separate planning group is formed, with broad representation of the stakeholders, to ensure that the project focuses on the most crucial aspects of the topic. Feedback from various parties involved in the evaluation is also gathered. This information is used in the future planning of thematic evaluations.

11.3 ESG STANDARD 2.3 IMPLEMENTING PROCESSES

Standard:

External quality assurance processes should be reliable, useful, pre-defined, implemented consistently and published. They include

- *a self-assessment or equivalent;*
- *an external assessment normally including a site visit;*
- *a report resulting from the external assessment;*
- *a consistent follow-up.*

FINEEC Compliance:

Audits

By carrying out its audits in a consistent and transparent manner FINEEC ensures that its audits are widely accepted by Finnish HEIs and other stakeholders. The audit process is in line with ESG Standard 2.3: the institution first provides the basis for the audit through a self-assessment and by collecting other material including supporting evidence; the written documentation is complemented by interviews with stakeholders during a site visit; the findings of the assessment are summarized in a report written by a group of external experts; and finally, external quality assurance is a continuous process with subsequent follow-up procedures.

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 (see 11.4)
4. Compilation of audit material by the HEI
5. Auditor training (see 11.4)
6. Briefing and discussion event
7. Audit team's visit to the HEI
8. Audit team's recommendation regarding the audit result (see 11.5)
9. The Higher Education Evaluation Committee's decision on the result (see 11.5)
10. Publication of the report (see 11.6)
11. Concluding seminar
12. Feedback to FINEEC
13. Follow-up seminar.

Agreement negotiation

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

- Audit targets (incl. an 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.

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. Guidelines for compiling and submitting the material are found in the Audit Manual (chapter 3.3 and Appendix 3).

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 for the team. The materials provided in the second round of audits have been much more concise and to the point than in the previous round, contributing to a better all-around evaluation project for all parties.

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.

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, as well as 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 the 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.

Follow-up

The audit process does not end with the report by the experts. The report provides clear guidance for institutional action. FINEEC has a consistent follow-up process for considering the action taken by the institution. Firstly, 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.

Secondly, 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 the Audit Manual.

Thirdly, FINEEC organises national follow-up seminars to support the development of quality systems in HEIs (usually attended by approximately 200 participants). 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. These seminars and the reports submitted for them also provide an excellent opportunity to assess the impact of the audit. The seminars are open to all HEIs and other stakeholders.

Engineering programme accreditations

The standards and procedures for engineering programme accreditation are publicly available on the FINEEC website. The accreditation process consists of the following:

1. The HEI makes a request for an accreditation of a particular engineering degree programme
2. Agreement between FINEEC and the HEI
3. FINEEC appoints and trains the accreditation team
4. The HEI compiles the self-evaluation report
5. The accreditation team visits the HEI
6. The accreditation team prepares the report and the HEI checks the report for factual accuracy
7. The accreditation team gives its recommendation on the result of the accreditation
8. The FINEEC Committee for Engineering Education decides on the result
9. FINEEC publishes the accreditation results and the report
10. The accreditation team and the HEI give feedback to FINEEC

Self-evaluation

The HEI compiles a self-evaluation report for the accreditation using the self-evaluation template that is available on the FINEEC website. The HEI submits the self-evaluation report to FINEEC within sufficient amount of time before the accreditation team's visit to the HEI. The exact deadline for the report is included in the agreement between the HEI and FINEEC. Typically, the deadline would be at least four weeks prior to the visit.

In addition to the self-evaluation report, the accreditation team is allowed to request the HEI to provide other materials deemed necessary prior to or during the visit. The institution is also requested to give members of the accreditation team the opportunity to study electronic materials that contain necessary evidence regarding the fulfilment of the accreditation standards.

Visit to the HEI

The accreditation team visits the HEI and the programme in question to verify the information given in the self-evaluation report and to gain more information to support the compilation of the report and the eventual decision on the result of the accreditation.

The length of the visit is at least two days. During the visit, the team discusses with representatives of at least:

- Programme management (head of programme / department / faculty / institution)
- Academic staff members
- Support staff members
- Current and former students
- External stakeholders (employers / industry / representatives of professional engineering organisations)

The team also reviews assessed work with regards to the standard and modes of assessment as well as to the learning achievements of the students. The HEI is expected to have samples of the following available for study during the site visit:

- Thesis works, representing the whole scale of grade evaluation
- Project works
- Assessed project reports
- Examination papers
- Continuous assessment
- Other assessed coursework
- Entrance examinations
- Recent research publications relevant to the programme.

In addition to the interviews and the reviews, the team visits the most relevant facilities, such as laboratories or libraries.

At the end of the visit, the accreditation team gives initial feedback to the programme management.

Follow-up

If the programme is accredited with conditions, the programme must fulfil the set conditions within the timeframe that is specified in the decision. Within the specified amount of time, the HEI must submit an interim report to the FINHEEC Committee for Engineering Education on how the programme has fulfilled the requirements. The committee may decide that a site visit is needed to confirm the extent to which the requirements have been fulfilled. The committee may also consult the accreditation team on the matter. The committee decides on the continuation of the accreditation based on the HEI's report and possible site visit and possible consultation with the review team. If the programme fails to meet the conditions on time, the validity of the accreditation will lapse.

The HEI is expected to inform FINEEC if it has made significant changes to an accredited programme. Significant changes include, but are not limited to, a major redefinition of the programme learning outcomes, the removal of current, or the introduction of new, focus areas and major subjects, or changes to the degrees awarded for graduates. In such a case, the FINEEC Committee for Engineering Education reconsiders whether the changes affect the validity of the accreditation or not.

If the HEI desires to renew the accreditation, the programme must be re-accredited prior to the end of the valid accreditation. The re-accreditation follows the same process with special attention paid to how the programme has developed since the previous accreditation. As the validity of the first FINEEC accreditations will end during 2020 re-accreditations have not yet been conducted. The reports of engineering programme accreditations are available on FINEEC's website.

Thematic evaluations

Thematic evaluations are planned on an individual basis, since the topics and scope of the evaluations vary considerably. The focus may be on one or both of the Higher Education sectors and may be on extremely broad or more limited phenomena. HEIs taking part will normally contribute with a self-assessment report. This may be a separate document using a structure provided or an online questionnaire on the activities in question. The HEIs are informed about their contributions well in advance since producing them does require some work. FINEEC thematic evaluation teams utilise existing reports and databases for information and are careful not to ask the HEIs to report issues already reported elsewhere.

The thematic evaluations, as a rule, always include site visits or interviews. HEI representatives are invited to interviews or a number of regional interviews can be arranged in select HEIs. The rationale for the site visits is to supplement and broaden the understanding created by the self-

evaluations. Representative samples are usually selected for practical reasons since visiting each HEI is not normally possible. Due to the exploratory nature of the thematic evaluations, the visits often include facilitated group discussions or workshops where the evaluation team members and HEI representatives collaborate and tackle issues together.

The results of thematic evaluations are published in reports. The language used may be Finnish, Swedish or English, depending on the topic and the composition of the evaluation team. In some thematic evaluations, it has been necessary to produce a shorter interim report to cater to the immediate information needs of the Ministry of Education and Culture, for instance when updating the funding mechanisms of HEIs, to name one example. It is the intention of FINEEC's Council that evaluation projects and thematic evaluations especially should provide preliminary data on the outcomes of the evaluation to the general public before publication of the final report, if it is considered necessary and possible. Thematic evaluations are published either in separate seminars organised by FINEEC, or as a session in an existing event, where the ideal audience is already present. The latter is in most cases the better situation and usually ensures larger attention.

It has long been the intention of FIN(H)EEC to conduct a separate follow-up project three years after each thematic evaluation to enquire into the consequences of the original project and strengthen the impact of the evaluation. Follow-up projects have been conducted for some of the thematic evaluations, but not for all due to constraints related to time and workloads. The reports of thematic evaluations are available on FINEEC's website.

11.4 ESG STANDARD 2.4 PEER-REVIEW EXPERTS

Standard:

External quality assurance should be carried out by groups of external experts that include (a) student member(s).

FINEEC Compliance:

Audits

Higher Education Institutions 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. In most cases, there are three international experts in the Team and two Finnish experts.

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 representatives from 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 and acts as an audit expert and as the secretary for the audit team.

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 thorough 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 organises training for the auditors. In the training, among other things, auditors learn 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. However, FINEEC's practical experience has been that the Finnish experts have an extremely important role in explaining the intricacies of the national higher education system to the international experts, so that they are able to fully focus on the actual audit at hand.

If required, the project manager arranges personal training for the audit team's chair focusing on his or her special tasks. Auditors are also fully briefed for each individual audit in the team's meetings.

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 that comes with 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.

Cross-border quality assurance

For the cross-border audit of the University of Graz (Austria), a truly Pan-European audit team was appointed to conduct the evaluation: two experts from Finland, and one from Norway, Switzerland, Netherlands and Romania. In addition to the general principles set forth in the Audit Manual for the composition of the team, the following term set by the University of Graz was taken into consideration when recruiting the team: at least one member was to have deeper knowledge of the Austrian higher education system. This was addressed by recruiting one team member from a neighbouring country with extensive experience on the Austrian higher education system and one team member with special expertise on external quality assurance of universities in Austria.

Engineering programme accreditations

The basic principles regarding accreditation teams' operating principles and disqualification are the same as those described above regarding the quality system audits.

In engineering programme accreditations, the team comprises at least three members who represent a balance of relevant experience and expertise. At least one member of the accreditation team must be an academic expert, at least one a practising engineering professional and at least one a student.

FINEEC uses the following criteria to select the accreditation team members:

- Good knowledge of the higher education system and engineering education
- Good knowledge of the field of the target programme
- Experience with evaluations, accreditations or audits.

The HEI is given the opportunity to comment on the team's composition before FINEEC appoints the team, especially from the perspective of conflicts of interest. FINEEC does not distribute any confidential documentation to the accreditation team before possible disqualifications have been determined and the FINEEC Committee for Engineering Education has appointed the accreditation team.

FINEEC arranges training for accreditation team members and requires that each team member completes the training. The training is organised as a set of online videos, during which, the team members learn about the objectives of the accreditations and the accreditation procedure, as well as the tasks and operating principles of the team. The videos include also tasks to be performed while watching the material. In addition to the online videos, before starting the accreditation process, the accreditation team holds a meeting to discuss questions that have arisen from the videos, and how to operate as a team in practice. In addition, if the programme to be accredited is from a Finnish institution, the training familiarises international team members with the Finnish higher education system and with engineering education in Finland.

Thematic evaluations

Thematic evaluations also include an external evaluation team of persons outside of the organisation. FINEEC provides the project manager and a backup. These persons normally also act as the secretaries of the team. Separate teams have usually been gathered first for planning the project and then for the actual evaluation. This has been the case especially in the international evaluations, where a national viewpoint on the context of the evaluation is seen as crucial for the planning phase. The planning team has also usually included representatives from various stakeholders and interest groups. The challenge with this two-team solution is that the actual evaluation team often has its own ideas on the best ways to approach the issue at hand, while the planning team perhaps does not take into account the amount of actual work involved with the execution of the laid plans. The understanding is therefore evolving in FINEEC that it is probably better to use just one evaluation team for the whole project, which also plans the project from the beginning and consults various experts and interest groups to help focus on the most crucial issues. Thematic evaluation teams always have a student representative and a representative from working life. When the topic of the evaluation is cross-sectoral, there are experts both from universities and universities of applied sciences sectors in the team. The size of the team varies from five to ten persons.

11.5 ESG STANDARD 2.5 CRITERIA FOR OUTCOMES

Standard:

Any outcomes or judgments made as the result of external quality assurance should be based on explicit and published criteria that are applied consistently, irrespective of whether the process leads to a formal decision.

FINEEC Compliance:

Audits

All decisions are based on clear criteria published in the Audit Manual. Audits employ a set of criteria based on a scale of four development stages of quality management (Appendix 1 of the Audit Manual): 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 for each sample of degree education is determined individually.

The audit team presents FINEEC's Higher Education Evaluation Committee with its independent 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 at the 'developing' stage.

The Higher Education Evaluation Committee then decides on the audit result. 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. The Chair of the audit team is not present when the Committee makes its decision. The Committee may come to a different decision from the one proposed by the audit team, however the decision must be based on evidence presented in the audit report.

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. The FINEEC Project Manager supports the audit team's activities by taking part in the team's discussions as an auditing expert, and by instructing the team on matters concerning the audit criteria and the Higher Education Evaluation Committee's uniform decision policy. Consistent application of the criteria is also supported by auditor training provided for all audit teams.

Engineering programme accreditations

The accreditation team evaluates the extent to which the programme fulfils the individual accreditation standards that are defined in chapter 2 of the accreditation manual, using a three-point scale:

- Acceptable: the programme meets the standard fully, even if improvements are still possible;
- Conditionally acceptable: the standard is not fully met but the programme can amend it within three years;
- Unacceptable: the programme does not meet the standard and cannot amend it within three years

Based on the evaluation of the individual standards, the accreditation team recommends to the FINEEC Committee for Engineering Education that the programme should be either:

- Accredited without reservation, if all individual standards are acceptable;
- Accredited with conditions, if any of the standards are conditionally acceptable and none are unacceptable;
- Not accredited, if any of the standards are unacceptable.

A report template supports the accreditation team in applying the standards. The report template is publicly available on the FINEEC website. The FINEEC Committee for Engineering Education decides on the accreditation result based on the report and the recommendation of the accreditation team. The accreditation decision defines the exact period of validity of the accreditation and in the case of a conditional accreditation, the timeframe in which to fulfil the conditions.

Thematic evaluations

Thematic evaluations are usually not criteria-based. The focus of the evaluation is a phenomenon that encompasses the whole sector of higher education and individual institutions are not ranked or evaluated individually. There are no outcomes other than the information presented in the report.

11.6 ESG STANDARD 2.6 REPORTING

Standard:

Full reports by the experts should be published, clear and accessible to the academic community, external partners and other interested individuals. If the agency takes any formal decision based on the reports, the decision should be published together with the report.

FINEEC Compliance:

Audits

The audit team draws up a report based on the material accumulated during the evaluation and 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 audit team is provided with a report template that includes the core issues the team should address in its report chapter by chapter. 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 a re-audit are recorded in the report. Prior to the Evaluation Committee's decision-making meeting, the institution is given the opportunity to fact-check the report. The

report is published in FINEEC's publication series, both as a print copy and in an electronic format. FINEEC publishes its audit reports in full. The audit report is published in the language used in the audit (Finnish, Swedish or English), and a summary abstract is published in Finnish, Swedish and English for each report. The length of the report is approximately 50 pages. The outcome of the 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.

Engineering programme accreditations

The accreditation team prepares a review report. The report is based on the self-evaluation report, background material provided by the programme, and the observations the team makes during the visit to the HEI. It represents the consensus among the accreditation team.

The report follows a given structure:

1. Description of the review process and the programme
2. Evaluation of the fulfilment of the accreditation standards
3. Recommendation to the FINEEC Committee for Engineering Education.

The report template is available on the FINEEC website. The accreditation report, without the recommendation for the accreditation result, is submitted to the HEI so it can check the report for factual errors. The accreditation team then finalises the report and formulates its recommendation based on the results of the accreditation for the FINEEC Committee for Engineering Education. After the Committee's decision, the decision is published together with the report.

Thematic evaluations

The findings of thematic evaluations are also published in reports, which are available in full-length on FINEEC's website. Any remaining and reprinted hard copies can be ordered free of charge.

11.7 ESG STANDARD 2.7 COMPLAINTS AND APPEALS

Standard:

Complaints and appeals processes should be clearly defined as part of the design of external quality assurance processes and communicated to the institutions.

FINEEC Compliance:

Audits

If an HEI is unsatisfied with the Evaluation Committee's decision, it can make use of FINEEC's appeals procedure. The objective of the procedure is to ensure equal treatment of the audited

institutions and to guarantee that the Higher Education Evaluation Committee operating under FINEEC makes fair decisions about audit results. The development of this procedure is described in further detail in Chapter 13.

Higher education institutions may request a review of the result of an audit or re-audit conducted by FINEEC. The request may be directed at the following audit results decided on by the Higher Education Evaluation Committee:

1. The higher education institution does not pass the audit, and a re-audit is required; or
2. The higher education institution does not pass the re-audit.

The request may be based on the grounds that the audit has not been performed in compliance with the audit manual, and that the audit, as performed, brings into question the fair and equal treatment of higher education institutions.

The request is filed in accordance with the procedure described in a document titled *Procedure to request a review of an audit result* published on FINEEC's website. The request can only be filed by the higher education institution whose audit result the request concerns. The decisions concerning audit results, issued by the Higher Education Evaluation Committee, are considered expert opinions. They are not administrative decisions, and appeals pursuant to the Administrative Judicial Procedure Act cannot be filed to challenge them.

The request is processed by an expert team appointed by the Evaluation Council that operates under FINEEC for the duration of the Council's term of office. A description of the appeals procedure and the composition of the Expert Team are available on FINEEC website. As yet no requests to review the result of an audit or re-audit have been filed to FINEEC.

Engineering programme accreditations

An HEI unsatisfied with the conduct of the accreditation process by FINEEC, or with the accreditation result, can make use of FINEEC's appeals procedure for Engineering Programme Accreditations that is available on FINEEC's website. The procedure is the same as it is in the case of audits.

Thematic evaluations

No formal decisions or outcomes are made in thematic evaluations, so a complaints or appeals procedure is not available for these projects.

Information and opinions of stakeholders

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Levels of partnership with FINEEC: stakeholders, partners, and networks

On an organizational level, FINEEC has identified partnerships which support FINEEC's strategy and divided these partnerships into four levels according to the type of collaboration: a) stakeholders, b) tactical partners, c) strategic partners, and d) domestic and international networks.

a. FINEEC listens to and has continual discourse with **stakeholders** in order to determine and analyse national evaluation needs. FINEEC discusses the utilisation and impact of evidence-based evaluation information with its stakeholders. Together with the stakeholders, FINEEC strives to secure sufficient financial resources for the evaluation activities. Stakeholders are those actors, who have either a financial or non-monetary interest in the organisation's activities. Internal and external stakeholders can be divided into four categories: political decision-makers, customers/citizens, personnel, and partners.

b. **Tactical partners** include evaluators and education providers, which FINEEC involves in the planning and implementation of evaluation and the utilisation of evaluation results. FINEEC has a permanent, collaborative relationship with these partners, which produces added value to both parties. Partnerships can be formed with other service producers, businesses, associations, and customers.

c. With its **strategic partners,** FINEEC carries out joint evaluations and/or development projects, simultaneously developing its own evaluation processes and evaluation methodology. FINEEC primarily participates in collaboration with national and international actors when it produces added value to the development of the quality of education as well as the development of the Finnish education system.

d. **Domestic and international networks** consist of organisations where FINEEC is actively involved and has membership. Being active in networks strengthens the visibility of Finnish evaluation activities and enables FINEEC to influence the development of European evaluation activities.

Partners in each of these categories have been identified for each of FINEEC's three units. The table below shows all of the recognised partners of the Higher Education Evaluation Unit. In addition, the Unit has recently named a contact person for each partner, who acts as the main link between the Unit and the partner organisation.

Stakeholders	**Decision-makers** Ministry of Education and Culture (MoEC) Education and Culture Committee of the Parliament of Finland **Partners** Universities Finland (UNIFI) Rectors' Conference of Finnish Universities of Applied Sciences (Arene) National Union of University Students in Finland (SYL) and Universities of Applied Sciences (SAMOK) Research institutes for higher education research Central labour unions Labour market organizations Centre for International Mobility (CIMO) National research and innovation funds Ministry for Foreign Affairs Association of Finnish Local and Regional Authorities
Tactical partners	Higher Education Institutions (HEI)
Strategic partners	Partners in the EU-funded Twinning projects: Estonian Higher Education Quality Agency (EKKA) and the German Academic Exchange Service (DAAD)
Domestic and international networks	PEDA Forum European Association for Quality Assurance in Higher Education (ENQA) Nordic Quality Assurance Network in Higher Education (NOQA) Quality Audit Network (QAN) International Network for Quality Assurance Agencies in Higher Education (INQAAHE) European University Association (EUA) European Network for Universities of Applied Sciences (UASNET) European Association for Institutions in Higher Education (EURASHE) European Students' Union (ESU) European Higher Education Society (EAIR) Nordic Council of Ministers European Network for Accreditation of Engineering Education (ENAEE)

Opinions of the stakeholders and partners

In June 2015 FINEEC organised a nation-wide series of seminars for partners and stakeholders. The purpose of the seminars was to a) hear and take into consideration the opinions of the key stakeholders and partners in the process of preparing the 2016–2019 National Education Evaluation Plan, b) inform the stakeholders and partners of FINEEC's aims and activities, and c) discuss how to make the information and reports on evaluations more useful to stakeholders and to hear ideas about how to enhance evaluations.

FINEEC held six day-long seminars in different cities around the country. The list of invitees consisted of the MoEC and agencies under its administration, municipal education departments, education providers (early childhood, comprehensive schools, upper secondary and vocational education, continuing education), HEIs, university consortiums, parent associations, student

unions, research centres, regional councils, the Centres for Economic Development, Transport and the Environment, key regional employers, labour unions, and other local interest groups. All in all, the seminars drew nearly 300 participants, representing a wide array of stakeholders and partners. Each seminar included workshops, where the participants divided into groups according to the sector of education that they were involved in, and had an opportunity to present their thoughts and ideas for the National Education Evaluation Plan. At the end of the day each workshop presented their ideas to the whole group.

Ideas presented by participants in the workshops pertained to all four strategic focus areas of FINEEC: Developing learning and competence with evaluation; functionality and development of the educational system; central and critical themes in society; and supporting education providers in quality management and in strengthening an evaluation culture. Many of the ideas were cross-sectoral and related to broad themes in society (especially the impact of the scarcity of financial resources and equality in education). Regional themes were emphasized somewhat in the smaller cities.

Ideas for evaluation presented by higher education stakeholders included topics such as the relevance of higher education for working life, transition phases in education, the impact of the public financing model, and the impact of quality work. In terms of ideas for enhancing evaluations in higher education, the main feedback was to enhance the auditing model for the third round, and to strengthen the perspective of teachers, researchers and students in the evaluation of higher education.

The general feedback from the seminars was that this type of discussion within the field of education was much needed, and the participants were thankful that FINEEC had taken this initiative and to go out into the field. Feedback from higher education institutions is naturally gathered annually from every evaluation. The responses have been very positive throughout FIN(H)EEC's operations. Audit procedures and FINEEC's service mentality are viewed very favourably and the approach of enhancement-led evaluation enjoys the trust of higher education institutions.

In addition to the seminars, FINEEC also conducted an online survey, with a similar purpose to the seminars: to collect ideas regarding FINEEC's evaluation activities. The survey was sent to stakeholders and partners along with the seminar invitations. 245 people answered the survey between April and June 2015. The survey included general questions, as well as thematic questions for each education sector. For the higher education sector, the respondents were asked to rate the importance of evaluating different topics, as well as to identify the main challenge that the evaluation of HEIs should answer. The most common answer to this question was the quality of education, learning outcomes and the academic level of the HEI. The second most common answer was how education responds to the needs of working life and meets global challenges. One important development task for FINEEC is to widen its feedback mechanism to cover also external stakeholders. This work is being undertaken together with other units of the Centre, since feedback is also needed on the usefulness and quality of evaluation reports on basic and vocational education. So far, the views of stakeholders have been heard in periodic meetings and through personal connections, but the intention is also to gather feedback systematically through questionnaires.

13
Recommendations and main findings from the previous review and agency's resulting follow-up
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In 2011, FINEEC's predecessor FINHEEC was given the following recommendations in its external review:

1. To make explicit reference to the standards and guidelines of ESG Part 1 within the FINHEEC Audit Manual, the audit process and the audit reports;

2. To give continuing attention to the question of international expert participation in its processes, including considerations of international membership of the Council and the establishment of the proposed international advisory committee;

3. To allow a form of representation on the Council, subsequent to the audit report, with reference back to the team, in cases where an institution disputed the Council's decision on procedural grounds.

Recommendation 1: Make explicit reference to the standards and guidelines of ESG Part 1 within the FINHEEC Audit Manual, the audit process and the audit reports;

In the view of the 2011 external review panel, the Audit Manual needed to express more transparently and clearly the expectation that the criteria laid down in the standards of the ESG Part 1 would be included in institutional systems, and audited by FINHEEC. The panel therefore recommended that as FINHEEC carries out its review of the audit method in preparation for the second round of audits (from 2012), FINHEEC make explicit reference within its audit criteria to the ESG on the expected components of internal quality assurance, and their evaluation, as laid down in Part 1 and Part 2 of the ESG.

Recommendation 1 was taken into account in the development work of the second round audit model. Explicit reference within the audit criteria to the ESG on the expected components of internal quality assurance, and their evaluation, as laid down in Part 1 and Part 2 of the ESG, has been made in the new Audit Manual (from 2012), the audit process and the audit reports. As discussed already in Chapter 11.1, more emphasis was put on the review of degree education by including samples of degree education in the audit. Current audit target 4 a), thus reviews

the quality management of degree education at a general level. In turn, current audit target 5 takes a more detailed look primarily at 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 provided at the HEI.

Based on the audit material supplied by the HEI the audit team chooses a third degree programme for evaluation. 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.

Soon after the ESG 2015 had been adopted by the ministers responsible for higher education, FINEEC provided the Finnish HEIs with a Finnish translation of the revised ESG and organised a national seminar to discuss the revisions (October 2015). See chapter 14 for FINEEC's plans how to take into account the ESG 2015 in the third round evaluation model.

Recommendation 2: Give continuing attention to the question of international expert participation in its processes, including considerations of international membership of the Council and the establishment of the proposed international advisory committee;

HEIs may still choose either a Finnish or an international team to carry out the audit. When planning the 2nd round audit model, conducting all audits by international teams in English was contemplated by the planning group and the FINHEEC Council. However, it was concluded that it would not be in line with the Finnish Constitution and the supplementary language legislation, which ensure the Constitutional right of every individual to use either of the national languages, Finnish or Swedish, before the authorities.

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 (usually three foreign members and two national ones). In the second round, Finnish HEIs have chosen an international team to carry out their audit substantially more frequently compared to the first round. The number of audits carried out by international teams has gone up from 2 (+ 4 Nordic teams; out of 48 audits) in the first round to 17 (+ 4 Nordic teams; out of 41 audits) in the second round. Thus, in the current round half of the audits are conducted by international teams. This was supported by placing more emphasis on the self-evaluation reports written by the HEIs on the functioning of its quality system in line with the guidelines provided in the Audit Manual, which reduced the amount of necessary audit material and documentation provided by HEIs in English for the audit.

An international advisory board was established by FINHEEC in 2011 and it operated until the new agency was established. Currently, as the final organisation of the new agency is still taking shape, FINEEC has not yet established an international advisory board.

Recommendation 3: Allow a form of representation on the Council, subsequent to the audit report, with reference back to the team, in cases where an institution disputed the Council's decision on procedural grounds.

In 2011 when the Government announced that a new agency was to be launched, a decision was made by the FINHEEC Council to postpone the establishment of an appeals procedure until the new agency would start its operations. Soon after the FINEEC Higher Education Evaluation Committee had been appointed in December 2014 the planning of the appeals procedure was started. Consequently, in May 2015, FINEEC issued an appeal procedure for the quality system audits of higher education institutions, which can be used by institutions to request a review of the results of an audit or re-audit conducted by FINEEC. The procedure follows Part 2 of the ESG. The description of the procedure was updated in April 2016.

The objective of the procedure is to ensure equal treatment of the audited institutions and to guarantee that the Higher Education Evaluation Committee operating under FINEEC makes fair decisions concerning audit results. The procedure will be applied to audits performed in accordance with the updated FINEEC audit manual[3].

The request may be based on the grounds that the audit has not been performed in compliance with the audit manual, and that the audit, as performed, brings into question the fair and equal treatment of higher education institutions. The decisions concerning audit results, issued by the Higher Education Evaluation Committee, shall be considered expert opinions. They are not administrative decisions, and appeals pursuant to the Administrative Judicial Procedure Act cannot be filed to challenge them.

In November 2015, the Evaluation Council appointed for its term of office a national expert team with three members and three deputy members to process any requests from higher education institutions for a review of an audit result. Members of the Expert Team are:

Vice Rector **Riitta Pyykkö**, University of Turku (Chair)

Vice Rector **Heikki Malinen**, JAMK University of Applied Sciences (Vice-Chair)

Head of Degree Programme **Harri Eskelinen**, Lappeenranta University of Technology

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3   Audit manual for the quality systems of higher education institutions 2015–2018, Finnish Education Evaluation Centre Publications 2015:2. The procedure will be also applied to re-audits conducted during the years 2016—2017, and performed in accordance with the audit manual applied in the actual audit *Audit manual for the quality systems of higher education institutions 2011–2017*, Publications of the Finnish Higher Education Evaluation Council 15:2012).

Deputy Members:

Senior Specialist **Hanna Hauta-aho**, Diaconia University of Applied Sciences (Eskelinen)

Quality Manager **Hannele Keränen**, Lapland University of Applied Sciences (Malinen)

Quality Manager **Aimo Virtanen**, University of Helsinki (Pyykkö).

14
Current challenges and areas for future development
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FINEEC's Higher Education Evaluation Committee appointed a planning group to design the evaluation model for the 3rd round of evaluations of Finnish HEIs in November 2015. The planning group is instructed to take into account the revised standards and guidelines for quality assurance in the European Higher Education Area (ESG) that were adopted by the ministers responsible for higher education in May 2015.

The quality systems of all Finnish higher education institutions were audited during the first audit round which took place in 2005–2012. At the moment, a second audit round is under way and it will go on until 2018. The new 3rd round evaluation model should be operational by 2018.

The feedback received during the 2nd round of quality audits (from universities, stakeholders and auditors) is taken into account in the planning of the 3rd round. The received feedback contains views that the next evaluation model should be lighter and more emphasis should be given to the evaluation of education than the quality system itself. The new evaluation model should also deal with the digitalisation and internationalisation of higher education and support the well-being of students and teachers.

By December 2016, the planning group is expected to propose the targets, criteria and procedures for the national evaluation model of higher education, as well as to design the principles for preparation of the process, the criteria for selection of the expert team members, the follow-up methodology and the principles for reporting. During the year 2017 the staff of FINEEC will finalize the Evaluation Manual and the final decision to approve the new model will be made by the Higher Education Evaluation Committee.

The Chair of the planning group is Professor Jouni Välijärvi from the University of Jyväskylä, who is also the Chair of the Higher Education Evaluation Committee. The other members of the planning group are Quality Manager Hannele Keränen, from Lapland University of Applied Sciences, Rector Turo Kilpeläinen, from Kajaani University of Applied Sciences, CEO of the Student Union Anna Mäkipää, from Turku University of Applied Sciences, Vice-Dean Mirja Ruohoniemi, from the University of Helsinki, and Director of Innovation and Foresight Petri

Räsänen, from the Council of the Tampere Region. From FINEEC staff the Head of Unit Helka Kekäläinen and Counsellor of Evaluation Marja-Liisa Saarilammi are participating in the work of the planning group.

The Planning group will organise special hearings and workshops during 2016 in addition to the work it will carry out itself and in collaboration with the staff and bodies of FINEEC. The aim is to form a national consensus on the next model for quality assurance in higher education. Rectors' conferences and student unions of both higher education sectors will take part in workshops related to the planning process during the spring of 2016. FINEEC will also hold a workshop in a large national event organised by the Peda-forum, which is a Finnish network of experts in university pedagogy and academic development. In the autumn of 2016, FINEEC will organise a large national seminar for all stakeholders, where the draft of the model will be discussed.

Regarding the engineering programme accreditations, the FINEEC committee for engineering education has conducted a SWOT-analysis (see Chapter 5). Based on the analysis, the main challenges are related to the low volume of accreditations. The low volume poses challenges to the establishment of accreditation practices, and to the cost-effectiveness of the accreditations that are performed as paid services. The first challenge is countered to some extent by the use of experienced international accreditors, who are well aware of similar procedures in their own countries, as well as using good practices developed in the HEI quality system audits. The interest of HEIs towards the accreditations can be targeted firstly by taking a more active approach to marketing the accreditations, and secondly, by increasing awareness of the benefits of the accreditations to the institutions. For this purpose, the FINEEC committee for engineering education has chosen a few important engineering forums to spread the information in the future, such as the engineering education group ARENE and the Finnish engineer days which are held once a year. In addition, information regarding the usefulness of the accreditations will increase as more feedback is collected from the accredited programmes on how they have benefited from the accreditations and from the EUR-ACE quality label.

For thematic evaluations, the new organisational structure of FINEEC should offer entirely new possibilities for evaluations that deal with phenomena that span the entire educational system, far beyond just higher education. As the different units of the organisation learn to better co-operate, the planning of evaluations can become more problem-led or topic-led and less restricted by the current unit boundaries. There are certainly already some examples of this, but a lot still remains to be done.

One challenge that looms on FINEEC's horizon is the government's VIRSU project, where all small, independent agencies are to be merged with other, larger agencies. The government will merge the National Board of Education and the Centre for International Mobility CIMO in 2016–2017. There are also plans to attach FINEEC and the Matriculation Examination Board with this new entity in 2018. It is the view of FINEEC, its Council and the personnel of the Centre, that the independence of evaluation activities could potentially be compromised. Furthermore, since FINEEC currently has very light administration, the merger would most likely bring unnecessary bureaucracy with the inevitable administrative costs involved.

Glossary of terms

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 quality work. Higher education institutions themselves define in concrete terms what quality culture means in their context of operation. A 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 audit. Institutions may, if they so require, use the label when describing their operations to internal and external actors. 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.

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.