

Development Report 2013-2014

The Higher Education Evaluation Unit publishes annually a development report as a part of its internal quality management. The report illustrates the various improvements the Unit has done supported by the feedback gathered from the evaluations of Higher Education Institutions (HEIs) and analysed at FINEEC.

This report includes evaluations conducted in 2013-2014 and includes the following audits of quality systems:

- University of Graz, Austria
- Hanken School of Economics
- Tampere University of Technology

The following thematic evaluations:

- Education and Training in Early Childhood Education in Finland
- Evaluation of higher education institutions' social and regional impact

And two Engineering Programme Reviews:

- Degree programme in Logistics Engineering, JAMK University of Applied Sciences
- Mechanical Engineering, Savonia University of Applied Sciences

The online questionnaires were sent to the HEIs and evaluation team members after the evaluation process.

Utilisation of the feedback

The staff of the Higher Education Evaluation Unit analysed the feedback information in a full-day-session in June 2014. The feedback were divided amongst the staff present beforehand and this time each project manager presented the feedback to her/his own evaluation project. Another designated person commented and added to the findings to make sure important findings were not left out. Strengths, good practices, easy and difficult development issues were raised by the Unit. The feedback questionnaires also provide indicator data on the success of the processes, which was also included in the analysis. The most important 'difficult development issues' were selected for further scrutiny and changes to the Unit's procedures were made on to tackle the issues. Furthermore, indicator targets for the next year were set by the Unit.

Indicators

The feedback questionnaires have many open questions to provide qualitative responses on what worked in the process and how the audits could be improved. These have proved most useful for FINEEC’s development purposes. In addition, there are seven statement questions, where the respondent selects the best fitting option from the following options:

- 1 Fully disagree
- 2 Partially disagree
- 3 Partially agree
- 4 Fully agree

The statements for HEIs were:

- The audit/evaluation report provided us with useful feedback for development.
- FINEEC's audit/evaluation team performed in a professional manner.
- The chair of the audit/evaluation team performed in a professional manner.
- FINEEC's project manager communicated well in this audit/evaluation.
- The timetable of the audit/evaluation was successful.
- The audit/evaluation criteria is clear and functional.
- Higher education institutions are treated equally in FINEEC's evaluations.

The statements for audit team members were:

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

A response of fully disagree resulted in a score of 1 and fully agree in 4. The response rate from HEIs was 100% and 89% from the audit team members.

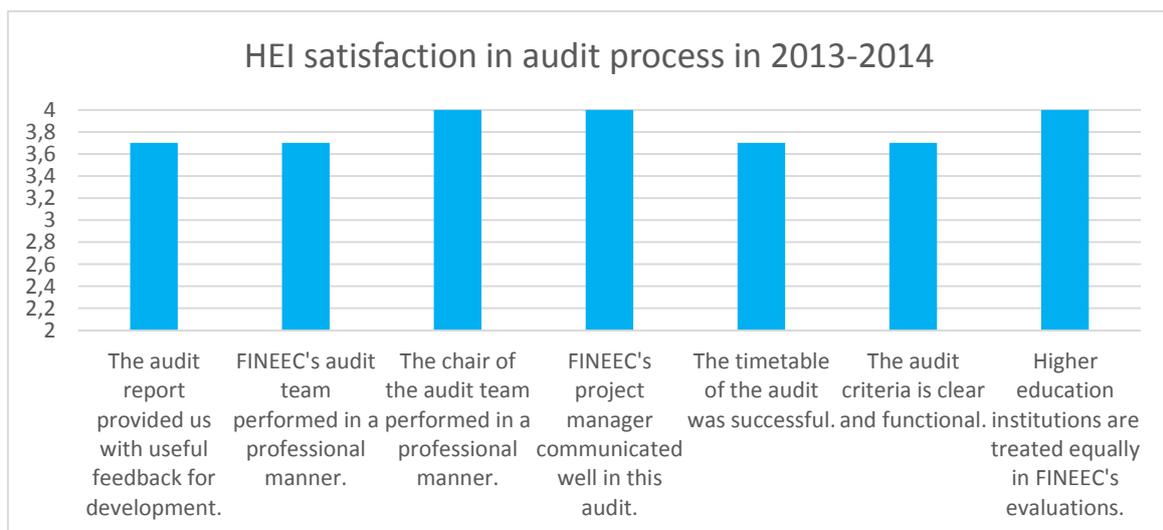


Figure 1: HEI feedbacks in 2013-2014.

Figure 1 illustrates the Likert-scale responses from the Finnish HEIs that took part in FINEEC's audits in 2013-2014. The overall satisfaction is again very good as all means are well above 3 (Partially agree). The results are particularly good this year. One must bear in mind that there were only three audited HEIs during the period in question.

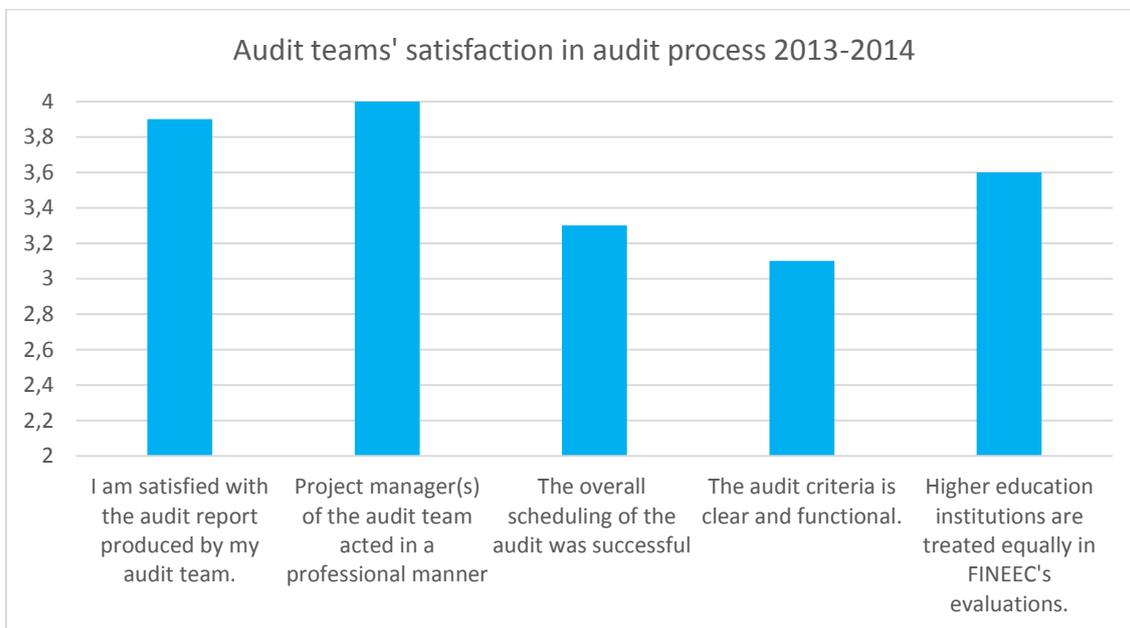


Figure 2: Audit teams' satisfaction in audit process in 2013-2014

Figure 2 presents the level of audit team members' satisfaction to the audit process. The auditors themselves were very content in the quality of their report and extremely happy with FINEEC project managers. The audit schedule was, however, considered demanding and the audit criteria still was not considered as clear and functional as perhaps it could be. The wording of the criteria has been improved by an international panel of experts since these audit projects, which hopefully will slightly boost this indicator.

Improvements

This year FINEEC conducted the first audit process abroad in the history of Finnish higher education evaluation. The audit process of University of Graz in Austria was an interesting learning opportunity for our organization. From the feedback received and our own experience it became clear that audits on foreign soil require much more planning and coordination from all parties than our conventional audit processes. Estimating costs beforehand is also quite difficult, but next time FINEEC will be much more prepared for similar projects with this experience. Noted challenges related to audits in general were the need to simplify the language of the audit criteria, need to communicate audit results better to the surrounding society and the need to harmonise the audit report writing to make the texts more uniform throughout.

From the thematic evaluation feedback it was noted that individual HEIs would greatly appreciate some form of individual feedback on their performance. This is not usually offered, since the focus of the evaluation is systemic. In addition, FINEEC should better utilise social media, various HEI networks and seminars to further disseminate the core findings of the thematic evaluation reports.

The first two pilot Engineering Programme Reviews (EUR-ACE accreditations) revealed that more detailed instructions for report writing were necessary. Also more comprehensive knowledge on the Finnish Higher Education system should be offered in the training of experts.