



Development Report 2014-2015

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

This report includes evaluations conducted in 2014-2015 and includes the following audits of quality systems:

- University of Jyväskylä
- University of Tampere
- University of Turku
- University of Helsinki
- Lappeenranta University of Technology
- Kajaani University of Applied Sciences
- Vaasa University of Applied Sciences

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

Utilisation of the feedback

The staff of the Higher Education Evaluation Unit's Team for Audits analysed the feedback information in a full-day-session in October 2015. The feedback were divided amongst the staff present beforehand so that one person read all of the answers from all audits for a specific question and presented the key findings to the whole group. 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 Team. The feedback questionnaires also provide indicator data on the success of the audit processes, which was also included in the analysis. The most important 'difficult development issues' were selected for further scrutiny and changes to the Team for Audit's procedures were made on to tackle the issues. Furthermore, indicator targets for the next year were set by the Team.

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 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 is clear and functional.
- Higher education institutions are treated equally in FINEEC's evaluations.

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 is 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 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.

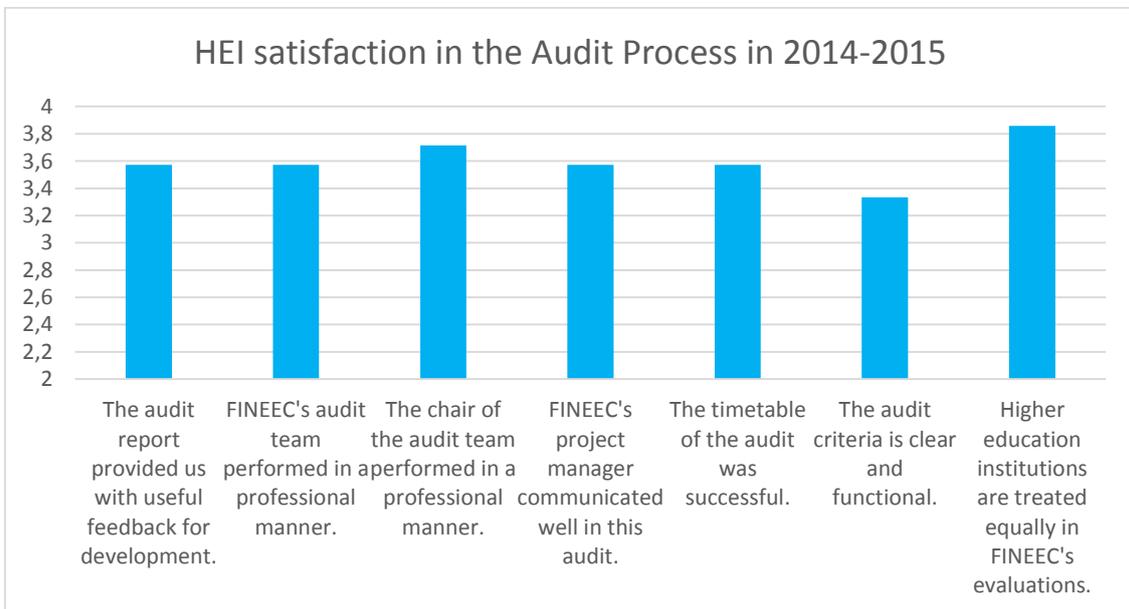


Figure 1: HEI feedbacks in 2014-2015.

Figure 1 illustrates the Likert-scale responses from the Finnish HEIs that took part in FINEEC's audits in 2014-2015. The overall satisfaction is still very good as all means are well above 3 (Partially agree). The equal treatment answers are not very representative since only 3/7 HEIs answered. The rest felt unable to assess the equality of treatment according to the open answers. Still, the overall satisfaction to FINEEC's performance is very high.



Figure 2: Audit teams' feedbacks in 2014-2015

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 since these audit projects, which hopefully will slightly boost this indicator.

Improvements

This year the major challenge that rose from the HEI and audit team members' feedbacks was a lack of consistency between audit processes. FINEEC conducts an increasing amount of international audits with many foreign team members providing useful recommendations and unique perspectives to quality management in Finnish higher education. FINEEC utilises many forms of internal quality management to support the consistency and uniformity between audit projects. Namely, the extensive training of experts, usage of the common audit criteria for all HEIs and the final decision-making power of the Higher Education Evaluation Committee. However, interpretations of the audit criteria and on satisfactory level of quality management can vary in Finland and abroad and better communication on these issues.

As solutions, the Higher Education Evaluation Unit decided to make sure that there is strong enough expertise on the Finnish higher education system in the audit team, especially in the case of universities of applied sciences. For the working life representatives also some form of previous contact to higher education was seen necessary. A short discussion on comparison to foreign HE-systems vs. the Finnish was decided to be included in FINEEC's auditor training. In addition, it was concluded that the FINEEC's audit team leader will also read the report draft before submission to the evaluation committee with the power to return the report to the audit team in the case of major inconsistencies in the report. A number of smaller improvements and adjustments were also agreed upon.