

# AUDIT MANUAL FOR HIGHER EDUCATION INSTITUTIONS 2018–2024



FINNISH EDUCATION  
EVALUATION CENTRE



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Finnish Education Evaluation Centre  
Publications 21:2017

PUBLISHER Finnish Education Evaluation Centre

BOOK DESIGN Miltton, Juvonen & Liimatainen  
LAYOUT Juvenes Print

ISBN 978-952-206-412-7 (pdf)

ISSN 2342-4184 (pdf)  
ISSN-L 2342-4176

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# 1

## Audit premise and objectives

The work of the Finnish Education Evaluation Centre (FINEEC) is based on the principle of enhancement-led evaluation and producing impactful information which contributes to the development of education.

The goal of enhancement-led evaluation is to involve staff, students and stakeholders of a higher education institution (HEI) in recognising strengths, good practices and development areas in the HEI's operations. The aim is also to support HEIs in achieving their own objectives, thus creating a premise for the continuous development of HEIs. Provisions on the tasks and the organisation of FINEEC are included in the Act 1295/2013 and Government decree on the Finnish Education Evaluation Centre 1317/2013.

The Universities Act (558/2009) and the Act on Universities of Applied Sciences (932/2014) contain provisions which oblige HEIs to participate in external evaluation of their activities and quality systems, and for the evaluation results to be public. HEIs also have the possibility to meet their statutory obligation through means other than participating in the audits carried out by FINEEC. The legislation also allows FINEEC to operate across borders.

Quality of education is a key issue in building global higher education. Demonstrating quality externally in an understandable and reliable manner is a challenge. Quality systems that are public also contribute to openness between HEIs, which helps to build mutual trust within the European Higher Education Area. FINEEC's audit model for HEIs meets European quality requirements and is based on an

**Enhancement-led evaluation** is based on participation and interaction. Its purpose is to help HEIs recognise strengths, good practices and areas for development in its operations, thus enabling continuous development of HEIs.

**A good practice** is an exemplary and creative course of action. Spreading and applying the practice elsewhere inside the HEI and in other HEIs is recommended.

**A quality system** encompasses the quality management organisation, division of responsibilities, procedures and resources which all contribute to the development of the operations.

institutional approach. The autonomy of HEIs to develop their quality systems according to their own needs and goals is a central premise for the audit model. The autonomy and strategic development of HEIs is supported in the audit model by offering HEIs the possibility to select one of the areas of evaluation as well as a benchlearning target.

FINEEC's 2018–2024 audit model for HEIs assesses the functionality and effectiveness of the quality systems of HEIs. The focus of the audit is on the procedures used by the HEI to maintain and enhance the quality of its operations.

### The purpose of the audit model is

- to evaluate whether the quality work in the HEI meets the European quality assurance standards,
- to assess whether the quality system produces relevant information for the continuous development of operations and whether it results in effective development activities,
- to encourage internationalisation, experimenting and a creative atmosphere at HEIs, and
- to accumulate open and transparent information on quality work at Finnish HEIs

One of the central premises in the planning of the audit model has been the ESG<sup>1</sup>, which emphasises a student-centred approach, as well as learning and research as the basis for planning, implementing and developing education. In the student-centred approach, students are encouraged to take an active role in the learning process. This can be done, for example, by supporting students' motivation, self-evaluation abilities and well-being, as well as enabling flexible study paths. Other important aspects in the development of teaching include learning environments and the connection between teaching and research, artistic activities and innovation activities.

The audit model emphasises the impact of operations as part of the educational task. Likewise, the impact of research and artistic activities is seen as part of the HEI's tasks. The impact may manifest as education and culture, well-being, research which generates new knowledge, active participation in regional development work, or competitiveness in reforming the society.

The audit process is updated by introducing a digital platform, which functions as a template for the self-evaluation and the audit report. HEIs carry out their self-evaluation online by answering questions derived from the criteria. The audit team will write its assessment next to the HEI's self-evaluation.

**The digital platform makes the audit more transparent, interactive and the results easier to use. This promotes participatory and open quality culture.**

FINEEC carries out audits in Finnish, Swedish and English.

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<sup>1</sup> The document detailing the European principles and recommendations for quality management (ESG 2015), *Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance in the European Higher Education Area*, can be viewed at <http://www.enqa.eu/index.php/home/esg/>

# 2

## Description of the audit

The audit evaluates the appropriateness, functionality and effectiveness of a quality system of an HEI. The focus of the audit is on the procedures used by the HEI to maintain and enhance the quality of its operations.

### 2.1 Areas of evaluation

#### **I HEI creates competence**

- The planning of education
- The implementation of education
- The enhancement of education
- Example(s) of successful development activities

#### **II HEI promotes impact and renewal**

- Managing societal interaction and impact
- Impactful research, development and innovation activities and artistic activities
- Promoting impact through the operational culture
- Example(s) of successful development activities

#### **III HEI enhances quality and well-being**

- Using the quality system in strategic management
- Using the quality system in the development of staff competence
- Functionality and development of the quality system
- Example(s) of successful development activities

#### **IV Learning HEI**

- An area of evaluation selected by the HEI

## 2.2 Passing the audit

The areas of evaluation (I-III) are each assessed as one entity using the scale *excellent*, *good*, *insufficient*.

If all of the evaluation areas I-III reach at least the level *good*, the HEI will pass the audit. The level *good*, which must be reached in order to pass the audit, is defined separately for each area of evaluation (see details in chapter 3).

The level *excellent* means that in addition to the systematic development of its operations, the development activities also produce substantial added value for the HEI, a stakeholder, or both. The HEI is able to present compelling examples of successful development activities.

The level *insufficient* means that in the areas of evaluation (I-III) the HEI shows an absence of or major shortcomings in systematic, functioning, and participatory procedures. There is no evidence of the impact of quality work in the development of operations.

The Higher Education Evaluation Committee, which functions in connection with FINEEC, makes a decision on the result of the audit based on the presenting official's proposal. The task of the Evaluation Committee is to ensure that the audit decisions are fair and based on the same standards. The Evaluation Committee will use the audit team's report in making the decision. In addition, the chair or vice chair of the audit team will present the main results of the audit in the meeting where the decision will be made, and answer the Evaluation Committee's questions on the report. The Evaluation Committee's decision may deviate from the proposal of the audit team or the presenting official based on the audit report.

In its decision-making, the Higher Education Evaluation Committee follows the provisions of the Administrative Procedure Act regarding conflicts of interest of its members, which further supports the credibility and objectivity of the decisions.

After passing the audit, the HEI will receive an audit certificate and an electronic quality label. The HEI will be entered into the Audit Register, which is maintained on FINEEC's website. The quality label is valid for six years from the decision of the Higher Education Evaluation Committee.

## 2.3 Evaluation of benchlearning

Benchlearning is utilised in the audit. According to the principles of enhancement-led evaluation, the purpose of benchlearning is to learn from the good practices of another organisation. The HEI selects a target and a partner for benchlearning. The partner can be an HEI or any other type of cooperation organisation. The HEI can freely select the participants in the benchlearning process from its own organisation. The HEI is encouraged

to select individuals from different levels of the organisation (students, teachers, administration).

The target of benchlearning may be included in any of the following areas of evaluation:

- I) HEI creates competence
- II) HEI promotes impact and renewal
- III) HEI enhances quality and well-being
- IV) Learning HEI.

In the assessment of benchlearning, the HEI will receive feedback from the audit team regarding the success of the planning and implementation process, and the plan for applying ideas the HEI has discovered during the benchlearning process.

In the areas of evaluation I-III, the benchlearning is considered as part of the overall assessment of the evaluation area.

## 2.4 An area of evaluation selected by the HEI

For the area of evaluation IV, the HEI will select an area central to its profile on which it would like to receive feedback for development.

The evaluation area selected by the HEI will not be taken into consideration when deciding whether the HEI will pass the audit, and its development level will not be assessed separately. However, the area selected by the HEI will be mentioned in the audit certificate accompanying the quality label.

## 2.5 Quality Label for Excellence

An HEI will be nominated as a candidate for the Quality Label for Excellence if the audit team grants the level *excellent* in at least one of the following areas of evaluation: I *HEI creates competence*, II *HEI promotes impact and renewal*, or III *HEI enhances quality and well-being*.

In order to qualify for the Quality Label for Excellence, the HEI must provide evidence of exceptionally successful development activities in the particular area of evaluation. Successful implementation of the benchlearning activity will also be considered when granting the Quality Label for Excellence.

**Benchlearning** is a communal way of working, where learning from another community, active interaction and commitment to mutual development are essential. A central part of benchlearning is visiting the benchlearning partner.

### Benefits of benchlearning

- receiving feedback from peers regarding the current state of the organisation
- gaining new insight
- building social networks

The Higher Education Evaluation Committee reviews the candidates for the Quality Label for Excellence and awards the quality labels annually.

The HEI will receive a special certificate for the Quality Label for Excellence, which will mention the area(s) of evaluation at the level *excellent*. The HEI will also receive an electronic Quality Label for Excellence, and it will be included in the Excellence Gallery maintained by FINEEC. FINEEC will invite representatives from the HEIs that have received the Quality Label for Excellence as speakers to its development seminars, to share outstanding practices with a wider audience.

## 2.6 Re-audit

The audit model also includes the possibility of a re-audit. If the Higher Education Evaluation Committee determines that the HEI must be re-audited, the Committee's decision will state the areas of evaluation where improvements are necessary and which will be assessed in the re-audit. The HEI must have evidence that it has developed its operations in the evaluation areas of the re-audit at least to the level *good*. The same criteria apply in the re-audits as in the initial audit. The principles governing the appointment, work and decision-making of the audit team that are applied in the initial audit also apply to the re-audit. The re-audit process is described on FINEEC's website ([www.karvi.fi/en/](http://www.karvi.fi/en/)).

## 2.7 Appeals procedure

An HEI audited or re-audited by FINEEC may request a review of the assessment outcome. The purpose of the procedure is to ensure the just treatment of HEIs in the audits and to guarantee that the decision-making of the Higher Education Evaluation Committee is fair regarding the outcome of the audit. The appeals procedure is published on FINEEC's website ([www.karvi.fi/en/](http://www.karvi.fi/en/)).

# 3

## Evaluation criteria for the development level *good*

### 3.1 HEI creates competence

#### Evaluation area I

assesses the procedures which support student-centred, working-life oriented planning, implementation and development of education, which is based on research or artistic activities. The HEI is able to present examples of effective development activities which are based on feedback and evaluation data.

#### 3.1.1 The planning of education

The education offered is in line with the HEI's strategy. Degree programmes or other study entities<sup>2</sup> are planned with clearly defined learning outcomes. Quality management procedures support the planning of education. The planning process ensures that the education is relevant for employment and that the degrees correspond with the National Framework for Qualifications and Other Competence Modules. Staff, students and external stakeholders participate in the planning of education in a purposeful manner.

The HEI has procedures for ensuring that the students' workload is defined according to the principles of the ECTS (European Credit Transfer and Accumulation System). The HEI ensures that the teaching methods, assessment of learning, and learning environments support the achievement of the learning outcomes. Research, development, innovation and artistic activities are integrated to education in a way that links the latest knowledge to the education in a relevant way.

In the **student-centred approach**, the HEI encourages students to take an active role in the learning process, for example by supporting the motivation, self-evaluation abilities, well-being and flexible study paths of students.

<sup>2</sup> First, second and third-cycle degree programmes are included. First-cycle degrees include bachelor's degrees and university of applied sciences degrees. Second-cycle degrees include master's degrees. Third-cycle degrees include postgraduate licentiate and doctoral degrees.

The implementation of education is planned to take into account the variety of needs among students, in terms of flexible study paths and internationalisation. Collaboration within and outside the HEI takes place in the planning of education and benchmarking is used. The HEI has systematic procedures for approving the plans for study entities.

### 3.1.2 The implementation of education

Education is implemented in a manner that supports target-oriented learning, the progress of studies, links to the working life and the active role of students in their own learning process. Students receive feedback on their learning, which helps them achieve the learning outcomes.

The HEI applies the provisions and regulations concerning student admission, the recognition of prior learning, progress of studies and completion of degrees consistently and transparently. The procedures of implementing education support students in completing their studies and integrating to professional life.

The study abilities and equality of students are promoted throughout the student's study path. The HEI provides adequate resources, counselling and other services to support the progress of studies and learning.

### 3.1.3 The enhancement of education

The HEI regularly monitors and evaluates degree programmes and/or similar study entities to ensure that they are up-to-date with regard to the latest research findings and the changing needs of the society and working life. The HEI collects relevant information on the societal impact of education, and the information is used to improve the HEI's operations.

The HEI collects systematic information on the expectations and needs of students and analyses how well the intended learning outcomes are achieved in degree programmes or similar entities. Feedback and evaluation data is used systematically in the enhancement of education. Feedback-on-feedback, i.e. information on changes introduced based on student feedback is provided to students in an appropriate manner.

**Feedback-on-feedback** means that the feedback-giver receives information on how his/her feedback has impacted the development of operations. Seeing the results of their feedback is motivating to those who give feedback.

The HEI systematically collects and uses information on the well-being of students, the progress and workload of their studies in order to enhance the education it provides.

Learning environments and support services are improved so that they support the achievement of learning outcomes and meet the needs of students and teachers. Staff, students and external stakeholders take part in the enhancement of education in a purposeful manner.

### Example(s) of successful development activities

The HEI is able to present examples of development activities.

### Benchlearning

If benchlearning is included in the evaluation area I, it will be assessed within this area.

## 3.2 HEI promotes impact and renewal

### Evaluation area II

**assesses the procedures used to manage and improve societal interaction, strengthen the impact of the HEI's research, development and innovation as well as artistic activities, and support an experimental operational culture.**

### 3.2.1 Managing societal interaction and impact

The HEI enhances its societal interaction and impact, which is supported by its management system. The HEI has defined goals for its societal interaction and ways in which it attempts to reach those goals.

Information produced by the HEI's analysis of its operational environment is used to set the direction for its activities. The HEI is keen to engage in renewal and enhancement-oriented projects with its stakeholders, for example by means of co-creation.

Appropriate procedures help to ensure that societal interaction supports the implementation of the HEI's overall strategy. The HEI cooperates with alumni and utilises the alumni in development work.

The HEI has functioning procedures for managing and updating its stakeholder relations and collaboration networks.

### 3.2.2 Impactful research, development, and innovation activities and artistic activities

The research findings, development work, innovations and artistic activities of the HEI contribute to reforming the society. The HEI has functioning procedures for promoting the use of open data and research in society at large.

Targets have been set for the impact of the HEI's research, development, innovation and artistic activities. The achievement of the targets is monitored in a systematic manner.

The HEI collects relevant information regarding the impact of research, development, innovation and artistic activities, and the information is used in the development of these activities.

### 3.2.3 Promoting impact through the operational culture

The operational culture of the HEI encourages experiments with partners and strengthens the conditions for a creative atmosphere.

The HEI has functioning procedures that support using the full competence possessed by its staff and students, as well as networking, and promote the dissemination of a quality culture. The HEI supports lifelong learning which takes place through societal interaction.

Staff members, students and external stakeholders take part in the development of operations. Collaboration with both national and international networks supports the development of operations.

In an **experimental operational culture**, staff and students are able to find new ways of learning and creative thinking. This kind of environment encourages and inspires experimenting, which rises from education, research, artistic activities as well as both internal and external interaction.

#### **Example(s) of successful development activities**

The HEI is able to present examples of development activities.

#### **Benchlearning**

If benchlearning is included in the evaluation area II, it will be assessed within this area.

### 3.3 HEI enhances quality and well-being

#### Evaluation area III

assesses how the quality system is used in strategic management and the development of staff competence. The overall functioning of the quality system and the systematic nature of the development work are also assessed.

#### 3.3.1 Using the quality system in strategic management

The principles, objectives and responsibilities set out in the quality system constitute the HEI's quality policy, which is public. The quality culture of the HEI is participatory and open: staff, students and external stakeholders are involved in its development in a purposeful manner.

The information generated by the quality system is used in the management of the HEI. The system supports the profile of the HEI, the achievement of its objectives in accordance with its core duties and the implementation of its strategy. The HEI ensures that the staff recognise the connection between their own work and the goals of the HEI.

#### 3.3.2 Using the quality system in the development of staff competence

The HEI has functioning procedures that support the development of staff competence. Using the information generated by the quality system, the HEI recognises development needs in staff competence, and the information is used for this purpose.

The HEI has procedures that help to support the well-being, equality and non-discrimination of staff. The HEI encourages staff members to take part in the development of its operations. The HEI has transparent procedures for staff recruitment.

### 3.3.3 Functionality and development of the quality system

The HEI has a functioning quality system which covers its core duties. The system is used and developed in a systematic manner. With the help of its quality system, the HEI is able to recognise development needs and improve its operations in a goal-oriented manner. There is evidence of the functionality and impact of the quality system.

#### Example(s) of successful development activities

The HEI is able to present examples of development activities.

#### Benchlearning

If benchlearning is included in the evaluation area III, it will be assessed within this area.

## 3.4 Learning HEI

### **Evaluation area IV**

**assesses an area selected by the HEI where it wishes to receive feedback for the development of its operations.**

### 3.4.1 An area of evaluation selected by the HEI

The HEI selects an area central to its profile on which it would like to receive external feedback for development. The area may also be related to all of the core duties of the HEI.

The development level of the area selected by the HEI will not be defined and it will not be considered when deciding whether the HEI shall pass the audit.

#### Benchlearning

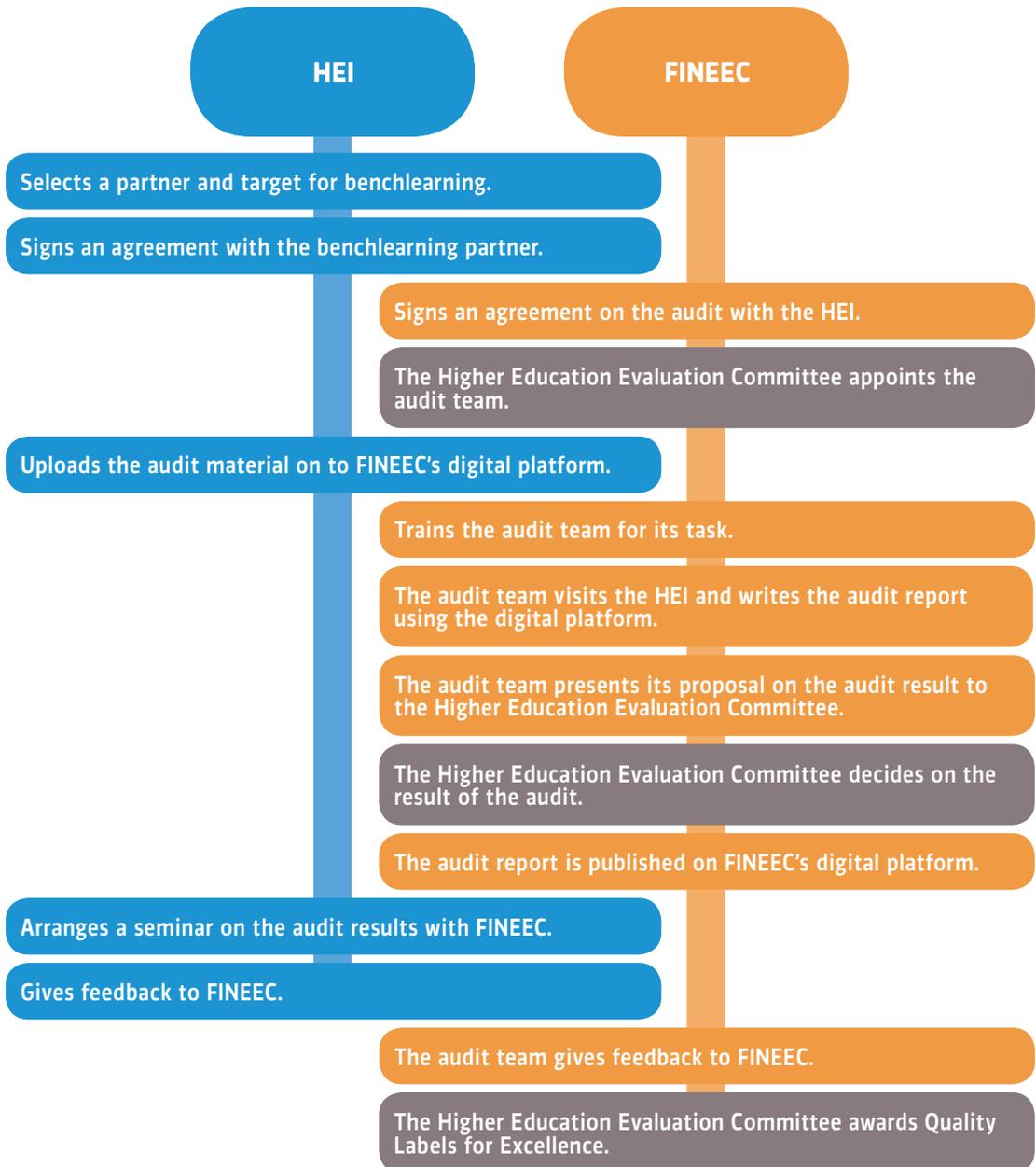
If benchlearning is included in the evaluation area IV, it will be assessed within this area.

The assessment of the benchlearning within this evaluation area will not affect whether the HEI will pass the audit.

# 4

## Audit process

### 4.1 Description of the audit process



- The HEI selects a partner and target for benchlearning.
- The HEI signs an agreement with the benchlearning partner.
- FINEEC signs an agreement on the audit with the HEI.
- The HEI uploads the audit material, including the self-evaluation and the benchlearning report, on to FINEEC's digital platform three months prior to the audit visit.
- The Higher Education Evaluation Committee appoints the audit team, which will usually include four members.
- FINEEC trains the audit team for its task.
- If necessary, FINEEC arranges a briefing and discussion event on the audit in cooperation with the HEI.
- FINEEC sends the audit visit programme to the HEI one month prior to the visit.
- The audit team may ask the HEI for additional material deemed necessary prior to or during the audit visit.
- The audit team visits the HEI. The visit lasts usually 2–3 days.
  - The audit team may decide on an additional target during the visit.
  - A special workshop or workshops are arranged to hear students during the audit visit.
  - The audit team gives preliminary feedback to the management of the HEI.
- The audit team writes the audit report using the digital platform and presents its proposal on the audit result to the Higher Education Evaluation Committee.
- The Higher Education Evaluation Committee decides on the result of the audit.
  - If the HEI passes the audit, it will receive a quality label and will be entered in the register of audited HEIs which is maintained by FINEEC. The quality label is valid for six years.
  - If the HEI does not pass the audit, it must undergo a re-audit. The re-audit will be conducted in 2–3 years.
  - An HEI audited or re-audited by FINEEC may request a review of the assessment outcome.
- The audit report is published on FINEEC's digital platform.
- The HEI and FINEEC arrange a seminar at the HEI on the audit results within approximately a month of the decision of the Higher Education Evaluation Committee.
- The HEI gives feedback to FINEEC on the audit process. The feedback is used in the development of operations.
- The audit team gives feedback on the audit process to FINEEC. The feedback is used in the development of operations.
- The Higher Education Evaluation Committee reviews the proposal for recipients of the Quality Label for Excellence annually and awards the labels.

## 4.2 Follow-up on the development work

FINEEC arranges regular follow-up seminars on the development of quality systems. The purpose of the seminar is to provide feedback on development work after the audit, and to offer the entire higher education sector an opportunity to share experiences and good practices regarding quality work. The HEIs that have received the Quality Label for Excellence are also presented at the event.

# 5

## Audit team

### 5.1 Team composition and selection criteria

The HEI has the opportunity to select between a national and international audit team to implement the audit. International audit teams always include one or more Finnish members that possess expertise on the Finnish higher education system. The roles and number of foreign auditors are agreed on a case-by-case basis.

The Higher Education Evaluation Committee appoints audit teams and their chairs. Audit teams usually have 4 members, including representatives of the higher education sector (2 members), students (1 member) and working life outside of HEIs (1 member). A project manager from FINEEC will participate in the team's work as an expert of audits.

**The audit team as a whole must possess experience in the following areas:**

- knowledge of quality systems
- good knowledge of the higher education system
- insight into societal impact
- experience in management, development of the core duties of HEIs, development of staff competence, and expertise in the field of teaching and learning
- previous evaluation or audit experience or experience in quality work
- in addition, at least one team member must also possess expertise in the area of evaluation selected by the HEI.

It is also required that the chair of the audit team has previous experience in evaluating the operations of HEIs and possesses extensive and in-depth knowledge of the higher education system. All members of the audit team have equal status as evaluators. The audit team selects a vice chair from among its members. The persons selected for the audit team should take part in training arranged by FINEEC.

A person is disqualified from acting as an audit team member 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 practice, 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 a decision-making body of the HEI. Auditors must 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 has an opportunity to comment on the composition of the team, especially from the perspective of disqualification.

## 5.2 Tasks of the audit team

- review the HEI's audit material
- decide on how to carry out the audit visit and which groups and individuals to interview
- determine any additional material that may need to be requested from the HEI
- prepare interview questions for the audit visit
- conduct the audit visit as planned
- write the audit report
- present the Higher Education Evaluation Committee with a proposal on whether the HEI should pass the audit or whether a re-audit is required. In addition, the audit team may propose to the Higher Education Evaluation Committee that the HEI should be awarded the Quality Label for Excellence.

### The chair of the audit team

- chairs the audit team's meetings and the audit visit, unless otherwise agreed
- together with the project manager participates in the briefing and discussion event arranged at the HEI prior to the audit visit, if necessary
- takes responsibility for carrying out the audit task as a whole and editing the audit report jointly with the project manager
- presents the audit results at the Higher Education Evaluation Committee's meeting and at the concluding seminar at the HEI
- participates in communicating the results.

## The project manager

- organises training for the auditors and acts as an instructor
- supports the work of the audit team by participating in the team's discussions as an expert on audits and instructs the team on the criteria used in the audit and the Higher Education Evaluation Committee's uniform decision policy
- serves as the point of contact between the HEI and the audit team
- assumes responsibility for editing the audit report and communicating the audit results.

## 5.3 Operating principles for the audit team

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 audited HEI, as well as recognise their position of power and the responsibility related to it.
- Transparent and evidence-based evaluation: The audit must be based on FINEEC's 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.

## 5.4 Auditor training

During the training, the auditors learn about the activities of FINEEC, the purpose and procedures of the audit, and the audit team's tasks and operating principles. International auditors are also briefed on the Finnish higher education system. If necessary, the project manager will arrange individual training for the audit team's chair focusing on the chair's tasks.

## 5.5 Auditor fees

Auditor fees are determined by the remuneration principles of FINEEC.

# APPENDIX 1: Self-evaluation guidelines

- The HEI decides how to produce the self-evaluation and benchlearning report on the digital platform. The number of characters per answer is limited.
- Both students and stakeholders are also involved in the self-evaluation.
- In its report, the HEI is asked to provide concrete examples of its quality work practices and identify areas for development.
- During the audit visit the HEI should be prepared to present evidence of what has been stated in the report.
- If requested, the HEI should provide documentation on the benchlearning process.
- The HEI is encouraged to select an international partner for benchlearning.

**Self-evaluation** refers to the HEI's own evaluation of its operations and their development. In accordance with enhancement-led evaluation, self-evaluation is primarily a tool for improving operations. The ability to recognise the institution's own strengths and especially areas in need of development is a sign of a mature quality culture.

In addition to the self-evaluation, the HEI will provide FINEEC the following documents as web links:

- an organisational chart
- the HEI's strategy
- a quality manual or similar description of the HEI's quality system including the management system
- web access to the curricula of degree programmes
- RPL instructions
- the equality plan/non-discrimination statement
- monitoring data of graduation rates and the progress of studies for the past five years

The HEI may also supply other documents as web links, as it sees fit. The details will be agreed upon with FINEEC's contact person.

# 1 HEI CREATES COMPETENCE

## 1.1 The planning of education

*Please describe briefly the procedures used by your HEI to plan education. Assess the functioning of those procedures.*

Use the following sub-questions in the self-evaluation, as applicable:

- How does the HEI ensure that the education offered is linked to the strategy?
- How does the HEI ensure that learning outcomes are met and that they correspond to the needs of students and the working life?
- How has the HEI made sure that the degree programmes correspond with the appropriate level in the National Framework for Qualifications and Other Competence Modules?<sup>3</sup>
- How does the HEI ensure that the quality management procedures support the planning of education?
- How is the workload of students measured and monitored?
- How do the teaching methods and learning environments support the achievement of learning outcomes?
- How are research, development and innovation activities or artistic activities integrated to teaching? How does the HEI ensure that the latest research knowledge is linked to education? How are staff members encouraged to strengthen the connection between education and RDI?
- How can students and external stakeholders impact the planning of education?
- How is the student perspective taken into consideration in the planning of flexible study paths and in ensuring the progress of studies?
- How is internationalisation taken into account in the planning of education?

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<sup>3</sup> The Act on the National Framework for Qualifications and Other Competence Modules (93/2017) places qualifications, syllabi and other extensive competence modules on different levels of the National Qualifications Framework.

## 1.2 The implementation of education

*Please describe briefly the procedures used by your HEI to ensure the quality of education. Assess the functioning of those procedures.*

Use the following sub-questions in your self-evaluation, as applicable:

- How do you ensure that the selected teaching methods support goal-oriented learning?
- What concrete examples does the HEI have of encouraging students to take an active role in the learning processes and in giving feedback?
- How are flexible study paths and mobility within/between HEIs enabled?
- How is study progress monitored? What procedures are used to intervene in the termination of studies?
- How are students supported at different stages of their studies, from admission to graduation?
- How does the HEI ensure that the recognition of prior learning works?
- How does the HEI promote the well-being of students?
- How is the equal treatment of students guaranteed?
- What procedures does the HEI use to ensure transparency in student selection?
- How is the connection to working life ensured in the implementation of education?

## 1.3 The enhancement of education

*Please describe briefly the procedures used by your HEI to enhance its education. Assess the functioning of those procedures.*

Use the following sub-questions in your self-evaluation, as applicable:

- How is the information generated by the quality system used in the enhancement of education?
- What procedures does the HEI use to assess the achievement of learning outcomes?
- How does the HEI monitor and use the changing needs of the society in the enhancement of education?
- How do you ensure that students receive feedback on their learning? How is feedback-on-feedback organised?
- How is the workload generated by the studies assessed?
- How do you ensure that learning environments support learning?
- How do staff members, students and external stakeholders participate in the enhancement of education?

## 1.4 Example(s) of successful development activities

Please provide examples of key successes in the development of the operations. Briefly describe the impact of the development work.

For possible benchlearning description, see chapter 5 below.

*Summarise the main strengths and areas in need of development within this evaluation area.*

## 2 HEI PROMOTES IMPACT AND RENEWAL

### 2.1 Managing societal interaction and impact

*Please describe briefly the procedures used by your HEI to promote the impact of its core duties in the society. Assess the functioning of those procedures.*

Use the following sub-questions in your self-evaluation, as applicable:

- How does the HEI manage and develop activities that promote societal interaction and impact?
- How do you ensure that societal interaction supports the implementation of the strategy?
- How is information used to direct the operations?
- What goals does the HEI have with its stakeholders?
- How does the HEI manage and update its collaboration networks?
- What forms of co-development does the HEI participate in with regional, national and international networks?
- How does the HEI cooperate with its alumni? How has the cooperation with alumni been improved?

## 2.2 Impactful research, development and innovation activities and artistic activities

*Please describe briefly the procedures used by your HEI to promote the impact of its core duties in society. Assess the functioning of those procedures.*

Use the following sub-questions in your self-evaluation, as applicable:

- What procedures does the HEI have to promote the impact of research, development and innovation activities and/or artistic activities in the society?
- How do you develop and monitor the societal interaction and impact of RDI and artistic activities?
- How are research findings, artistic activities and innovation results communicated to the society?
- How does the HEI ensure the link between RDI, artistic activities and the overall strategy?

## 2.3 Promoting impact through the operational culture

*Please describe briefly the procedures used by your HEI to promote the impact of the operations. Assess the functioning of those procedures.*

Use the following sub-questions in your self-evaluation, as applicable:

- How does the HEI support the opportunities of students and staff members to participate in new experiments? How does the HEI support the establishment of an experimental operating culture?
- How are experiments monitored and utilised in the HEI?
- How does the HEI promote the staff's opportunities for collaboration?
- How does the HEI foster lifelong learning in the society?
- How do staff members, students and external stakeholders participate in the development of operations which promote an impact?
- How does the HEI participate in developing the operations of national and international networks?

## 2.4 Example(s) of successful development activities

Please provide examples of key successes in the development of the operations. Briefly describe the impact of the development work.

For possible benchlearning description, see chapter 5 below.

*Summarise the main strengths and areas in need of development within this evaluation area.*

## 3 HEI ENHANCES QUALITY AND WELL-BEING

### 3.1 Using the quality system in strategic management

*Please describe briefly the procedures of your HEI in using the quality system in strategic management. Assess the functioning of those procedures. At the end of the section please summarise the strengths and areas in need of development for the evaluation areas.*

Use the following sub-questions in your self-evaluation, as applicable:

- How is the quality system used in management and implementing the strategy?
- How does the HEI ensure that staff members are aware of the connection of their own work and the HEI's strategic objectives?
- How does the HEI support participatory quality culture?

### 3.2 Using the quality system in the development of staff competence

*Please describe briefly the procedures used by your HEI to promote the development of staff competence and well-being. Assess the functioning of those procedures.*

Use the following sub-questions in your self-evaluation, as applicable:

- How does the HEI support the development of staff competence? How does the HEI ensure that the institution's competence is up-to-date (e.g. the development of pedagogical competence)?
- How is the quality system used to chart and assess staff competence development needs?

- How does the HEI ensure the well-being of the staff?
- What procedures are used to ensure the equal and non-discriminatory treatment of the staff?
- How are staff members involved in the development of operations?
- How do you ensure fairness and transparency in staff recruitment and development procedures?

### 3.3 Functionality and development of the quality system

- Chart of the quality system

*Please assess the functioning of the quality system in relation to the HEI's own objectives.*

Use the following sub-questions in your self-evaluation, as applicable:

- How does the quality system meet the objectives set for it and how is it developed in a systematic manner?
- How is the quality system used in the development of the core duties?
- How are good practices disseminated in your organisation? Please give a concrete example or examples of cases where a good practice has been applied broadly.

### 3.4 Example(s) of successful development activities

Please provide examples of key successes in the development of the operations. Briefly describe the impact of the development work.

For possible benchlearning description, see chapter 5 below.

*Summarise the main strengths and areas in need of development within this evaluation area.*

## 4 LEARNING HEI

### 4.1 An area of evaluation selected by the HEI

Please describe an activity that is central to the HEI's profile that you would especially like to develop. Explain why you have chosen this particular area.

For possible benchlearning description, see chapter 5 below.

*Summarise the main strengths and areas in need of development within this evaluation area.*

## 5 DESCRIPTION OF BENCHLEARNING

### Check-list for the benchlearning process

- Define common rules and aims with your benchlearning partner at the beginning
- Agree on the confidentiality of shared information
- Plan the visit programme and questions and share them with your partner prior to the visit
- Make sure that you have a shared understanding of the concepts used
- Name a contact person from both organisations
- Offer to host a visit in return.

*Please name the area of evaluation in which benchlearning is applied. Briefly describe the planning and implementation of the benchlearning process and assess the success of the process.*

Use the following sub-questions in the description:

*Describe the planning and implementation of the benchlearning process.*

- The reasons why you decided to apply benchlearning.
- What objectives were set for the benchlearning?
- Brief description of the benchlearning target and partner organisation. How were the target and partner selected? Who participated in the selection process? Describe the reasons why you selected this particular target and partner.

- Describe how you proceeded with the process: What was the timeline of the process and who participated in it? What kind of tools/methods were used in the process? How was the visit organised?

Assess the implementation of the process.

- How successful was the process? Were the objectives that were set achieved?
- What kind of observations were made? Compare good practices at your own HEI with good practices from the partner organisation. What similarities and differences did you find? Please summarise your findings in the table below.
- How are you planning to apply the new ideas in your HEI? Please give concrete examples and summarise your findings in the table below.

Good practices of your organisation	Good practices of the partner organisation
<p>Please give a concrete example/examples of how you plan to apply or have already applied good practices of your benchlearning partner.</p>	



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

Audits of the quality systems of higher education institutions have been implemented in Finland in accordance with the principle of enhancement-led evaluation since 2005.

The aim of the third audit round (2018-2024) is to support higher education institutions in the continuous development of their operations, and to encourage internationalisation, experimenting and a creative atmosphere at the institutions. Furthermore, the audits will accumulate open and transparent information on quality work at Finnish HEIs.

This manual introduces FINEEC's audit model for higher education institutions and its premises.

ISBN 978-952-206-412-7 (pdf)

ISSN 2342-4184 (online)

ISSN-L 2342-4176

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