AUDIT MANUAL FOR HIGHER EDUCATION INSTITUTIONS 2019–2024

FINNISH EDUCATION EVALUATION CENTRE

AUDIT MANUAL FOR HIGHER EDUCATION INSTITUTIONS 2019–2024

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Contents

1 Audit premise and objectives 5

2 Description of the audit 7

2.1 Evaluation areas 7

2.2 Passing the audit 8

2.3 Re-audit 8

2.4 An evaluation area selected by the HEI 9

2.5 Evaluation of benchlearning 9

2.6 Quality Label for Excellence 10

2.7 Appeals procedure 10

3 Evaluation criteria for the level *good* 11

3.1 HEI creates competence 11

3.1.1 The planning of education 11

3.1.2 The implementation of education 12

3.1.3 The evaluation and enhancement of education 12

3.2 HEI promotes impact and renewal 13

3.2.1 Managing societal engagement and impact 13

3.2.2 Research, development, and innovation activities and artistic activities with impact 13

3.2.3 Promoting renewal through the organisational culture 14

3.3 HEI enhances quality and well-being 15

3.3.1 Using the quality system in strategic management 15

3.3.2 Supporting the competence development and well-being of the staff 15

3.3.3 Functionality and development of the quality system 16

3.4 HEI as a learning organisation 16

3.4.1 An evaluation area selected by the HEI 16

4 Audit process 17
4.1 Description of the audit process 17
4.2 Follow-up on the enhancement work 18

5 Audit team 19
5.1 Team composition and selection criteria 19
5.2 Tasks of the audit team 20
5.3 Operating principles for the audit team 21
5.4 Auditor training 21
5.5 Auditor fees 21

APPENDIX 1 Self-assessment guidelines 22

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 enhancement 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 enhancement areas in the HEI's activities. 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 enhancement areas in its activities, thus enabling continuous development of HEIs.

A good practice is an exemplary course of action, and there is evidence of its possitive effects on the HEI's activities. 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 enhancement of the activities.

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 evaluation areas 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 activities.

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 implementation of the strategy and the continuous development of the HEI's activities, and whether it results in effective enhancement 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[1], which emphasises competence-based, student-centred and research-based approach in 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-assessment 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 the HEI's activities as part of the education, research and artistic activities. The impact can be manifested in education and culture, well-being, research which generates new knowledge, or as active participation in regional development, reform in society or solving global challenges.

A digital audit platform functions as a template for the self-assessment and the audit report. HEIs carry out their self-assessment on the digital platform. The audit team writes its assessment next to the HEI's self-assessment.

FINEEC carries out audits in Finnish, Swedish and English.

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

1 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 activities.

2.1 Evaluation areas

I HEI creates competence

- The planning of education
- The implementation of education
- The evaluation and enhancement of education
- Examples of successful enhancement activities

II HEI promotes impact and renewal

- Managing societal engagement and impact
- Research, development and innovation activities and artistic activities with impact
- Promoting renewal through the organisational culture
- Examples of successful enhancement activities

III HEI enhances quality and well-being

- Using the quality system in strategic management
- Supporting the competence development and well-being of the staff
- Functionality and development of the quality system
- Examples of successful enhancement activities

IV HEI as a learning organisation

- An evaluation area selected by the HEI

2.2 Passing the audit

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

In order for the HEI to pass the audit, the evaluation areas I–III should reach at least the level *good*.

The level *excellent* means that the HEI shows evidence of long-term and effective enhancement work. The HEI's enhancement activities also create substantial added value for the HEI, stakeholders, or both. The HEI presents compelling examples of successful enhancement activities.

The level *good* for the evaluation areas I–III is described in chapter 3.

The level *insufficient* means that the HEI shows an absence of or major shortcomings in systematic, functioning, and participatory procedures in the evaluation area (I–III). There is no clear evidence of the impact of quality management in the enhancement of activities.

The audit team makes an assessment of whether the HEI should pass the audit or whether it should be required to undergo a re-audit. 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. 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 at the meeting in which the decision will be made and will answer the Evaluation Committee's questions on the report. The Evaluation Committee's decision may deviate from the assessment of the audit team or the proposal of the presenting official.

In its decision-making, the Higher Education Evaluation Committee follows the provisions of the Administrative Procedure Act regarding conflicts of interest of its members.

After passing the audit, the HEI will receive an audit certificate and FINEEC's quality label. The HEI will also 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 Re-audit

If the Higher Education Evaluation Committee determines that the HEI must be re-audited, the Evaluation Committee's decision will state the evaluation areas where improvements are necessary, and which will be assessed in the re-audit. In the re-audit, the HEI must have

evidence that it has developed its activities in the evaluation areas of the re-audit at least to the level *good*. The same criteria are used 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).

2.4 An evaluation area selected by the HEI

For evaluation area IV, the HEI will select an area which is central to its profile or strategy for which it would like to receive feedback for the enhancement of the selected area. The focus and concrete aims of the assessment are specified in the agreement negotiations between the HEI and FINEEC.

Evaluation area IV selected by the HEI will not be taken into consideration when deciding whether the HEI will pass the audit, and no grading based on the assessment scale is given. However, the evaluation area selected by the HEI will be mentioned in the audit certificate accompanying the quality label.

2.5 Evaluation of benchlearning

Benchlearning is a method applied in the audit. According to the principles of enhancement-led evaluation, the purpose of benchlearning is to receive feedback on the own organisation's activities and 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 selects the participants in the benchlearning process from within its higher education community.

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

I HEI creates competence
II HEI promotes impact and renewal
III HEI enhances quality and well-being
IV HEI as a learning organisation.

The benchlearning is included in the overall assessment of the evaluation area in question.

Benchlearning or peer learning is a communal way of working, where learning from another community, active interaction, and commitment to mutual development are essential. Benchlearning is at its best a part of a long-term development partnership.

Benefits of benchlearning

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

2.6 Quality Label for Excellence

FINEEC audits include the opportunity of being awarded the Quality Label for Excellence. An HEI, which has passed the audit 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 evaluation areas: 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 high-quality enhancement activities in connection with the evaluation area in question and criteria of excellence. The criteria of excellence and the procedure for awarding Quality Labels of Excellence are described on FINEEC's website (www.karvi.fi/en).

The Higher Education Evaluation Committee reviews the candidates for the Quality Label for Excellence and awards the quality labels annually. The Quality Label of Excellence is valid for the same period as FINEEC's Quality Label for audits.

The HEI will receive a special certificate for the Quality Label for Excellence, which will mention the evaluation area(s) at the level of excellence. The HEI will also get to use a Quality Label for Excellence, and it will be included in the Excellence Gallery maintained by FINEEC.

2.7 Appeals procedure

An HEI audited or re-audited by FINEEC may request a review of the outcome of the audit. The purpose of this 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).

3
Evaluation criteria for the level *good*

3.1 HEI creates competence

Evaluation area I

assesses the procedures which support student-centred, working-life oriented planning, implementation and enhancement of education, which is based on research or artistic activities.

3.1.1 The planning of education

The degree programmes and other provision are planned with clearly defined learning outcomes. The planning process ensures that the educational provision is in line with the HEI's strategy and relevant for working life. Aspects concerning internationalisation and continuous learning needs are ensured in the planning process. In terms of degrees, it is ensured that they correspond with the National Framework for Qualifications and Other Competence Modules. The education is planned so that the teaching methods, assessment of learning, and learning environments support the achievement of the learning outcomes. Students and external stakeholders participate in the planning of education in a purposeful manner.

Research, development, innovation and artistic activities are integrated in the education in a way that links research-based information to the education in a relevant way.

The students' workload is defined according to the principles of the ECTS (European Credit Transfer and Accumulation System). The HEI has systematic procedures for approving the plans for degree programmes or other study entities.

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-assessment abilities, well-being and flexible study paths of students.

Continuous learning or lifelong learning means that a person develops and renews his or her competences at the different stages of life and career. Continuous learning refers to the modes of educational provision primarily offered to other than degree students.

3.1.2 The implementation of education

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 education is implemented in a manner that supports target-oriented learning 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 procedures connected with the implementation of education support the efficient progress and completion of studies as well as the integration of students with professional life.

The well-being 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 evaluation and enhancement of education

The HEI systematically collects and uses feedback data on the needs of students, the implementation of the education and the progress of studies in order to enhance the education. Feedback-on-feedback, i.e., information on changes introduced based on student feedback is provided to students in an appropriate manner.

The HEI monitors and evaluates the degree programmes and other provision to ensure that they are up to date with regard to the latest research findings as well as the changing needs of the society and working life. Opportunities for continuous learning are ensured in the educational provision. In the degree programmes and other provision, how well the intended learning outcomes are achieved is analysed.

Feedback and evaluation data is used systematically in the enhancement of education. The needs of staff and students are considered in the development of support services.

Examples of successful enhancement activities

The HEI is able to present examples of successful enhancement activities.

Benchlearning

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

Feedback-on-feedback means that the feedback-givers receive information on the impact of their feedback. Seeing the results of their feedback is motivating to those who give feedback.

3.2 HEI promotes impact and renewal

Evaluation area II

assesses the procedures used to manage and improve societal engagement, strengthen the impact of the HEI's research, development and innovation as well as artistic activities, and support an innovative organisational culture.

3.2.1 Managing societal engagement and impact

The HEI enhances its societal engagement and impact, and this is also supported by its management system. The HEI has defined goals for its societal engagement 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. Appropriate procedures help to ensure that societal engagement supports the implementation of the HEI's overall strategy.

Societal impact can be manifested in education and culture, well-being, research which generates new knowledge, or as active participation in regional development, reform in society or solving global challenges.

3.2.2 Research, development and innovation activities as well as artistic activities with impact

The HEI's research, development and innovation activities as well as artistic activities contribute to reforming society. Targets have been set for the impact of the HEI's research, development, innovation and artistic activities. The HEI collects relevant information regarding the societal impact of research, development, innovation and artistic activities, and the information is used in the enhancement of these activities.

The HEI has systematic procedures for ensuring the responsible conduct of research. The HEI enhances open science.

3.2.3 Promoting renewal through the organisational culture

In an **innovative organisational culture**, the learning and creative thinking of staff and students can take new directions. This kind of environment encourages and inspires experimenting, which rises from education, research, artistic activities as well as both internal and external interaction.

The organisational culture of the HEI encourages experimental activities with partners and strengthens the conditions for a creative atmosphere. The HEI seeks opportunities to engage with stakeholders in activities which enable renewal and enhancement. The HEI has functioning procedures that support the use of the competences possessed by its staff and students.

The HEI has target-oriented cooperation with its alumni and it utilises the alumni in enhancement activities. Collaboration with both national and international networks supports the enhancement of the HEI's activities. The HEI has well-functioning procedures for managing and updating its stakeholder relations and collaboration networks.

Examples of successful enhancement activities

The HEI is able to present examples of successful enhancement 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 the functioning and development of the quality system and how the system is used in strategic management. The procedures used to support the competence development and well-being of the staff are also assessed.

3.3.1 Using the quality system in strategic management

The principles, objectives and responsibilities of the quality system constitute the HEI's quality policy, which is public. The quality policy forms a common basis for the quality work.

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 related to the core duties and the implementation of its strategy.

The **quality policy** of a higher education institution refers to the whole formed by the main principles and objectives of the quality system and the responsibilities of the quality management.

The HEI ensures that the staff recognise the connection between their own work and the goals of the HEI.

3.3.2 Supporting the competence development and well-being of the staff

The HEI has functioning procedures to identify development needs concerning staff competence and to support the development of staff competence.

The HEI has transparent procedures for staff recruitment.

The HEI has systematic procedures to support the well-being, equality and non-discrimination of staff.

3.3.3 Functionality and development of the quality system

The HEI has a functioning quality system which covers its core duties. The quality system helps the HEI to recognise development needs and to enhance its activities in a goal-oriented manner. There is evidence of the functionality and impact of the quality system on the enhancement of the core duties. The system is developed in a systematic manner.

The quality culture of the HEI is participatory and open. Staff, students and external stakeholders participate in the enhancement of the HEI's activities in a purposeful manner.

Examples of successful enhancement activities

The HEI is able to present examples of successful enhancement activities.

Benchlearning

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

3.4 HEI as a learning organisation

Evaluation area IV

assesses an area selected by the HEI where it wishes to receive feedback for the enhancement of its activities.

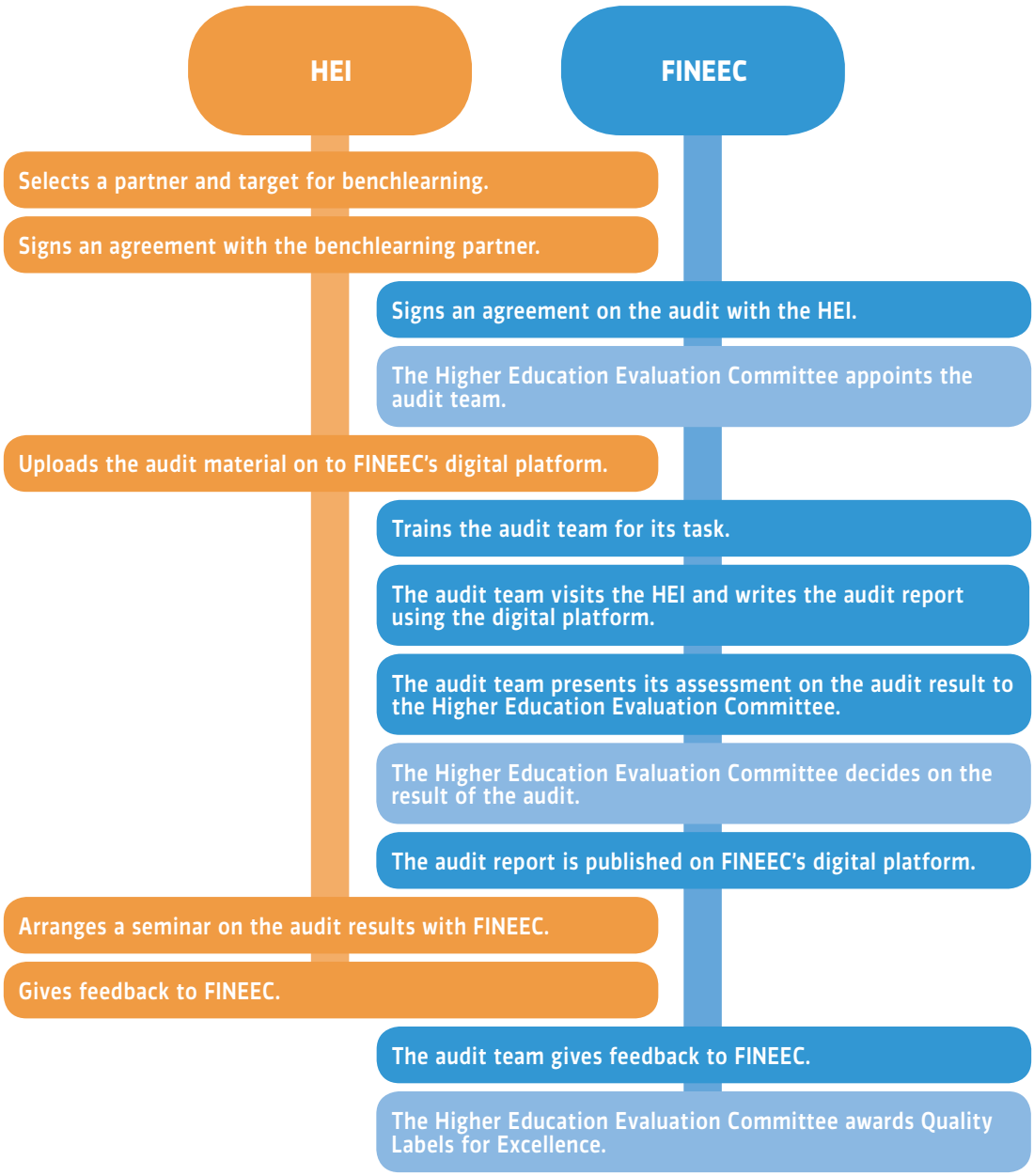
3.4.1 An evaluation area selected by the HEI

The HEI selects an area which is central to its profile or strategy on which it would like to receive external feedback for enhancement of the selected area. The assessed area may relate to any of the HEI's core duties. The focus and central aims of the assessment should be specified as part of the agreement negotiations between the HEI and FINEEC.

No grading based on the assessment scale is given for the evaluation area selected by the HEI and it will not be considered when deciding 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-assessment 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 needed, FINEEC arranges a briefing and discussion event on the audit in cooperation with the HEI.
- FINEEC sends the audit visit programme to the HEI no later than 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 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 on 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 is required to 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 arranges in cooperation with FINEEC 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 enhancement of FINEEC's activities.
- The audit team gives feedback on the audit process to FINEEC. The feedback is used in the enhancement of FINEEC's activities.
- 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 enhancement work

FINEEC arranges regular enhancement seminars for HEIs. One of the purposes of the seminar is to provide feedback on the work carried out at the HEIs to enhance their activities 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 invited to the seminar to share their excellent practices.

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, enhancement 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 evaluation area selected by the HEI.

It is also required that the chair of the audit team has previous experience in evaluating the activities 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 their assessment of whether the HEI should pass the audit or whether a re-audit is required.

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 needed
- 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-assessment guidelines

- The HEI decides how to produce the self-assessment and benchlearning report on the digital platform. The number of characters per answer is limited.
- Students and stakeholders in addition to staff members should be involved in the self-assessment.
- In its report, the HEI is asked to provide concrete examples and an assessment of the functioning of its procedures in relation to its activities and their enhancement.
- During the audit visit the HEI should be prepared to present evidence of what has been stated in the report.

Self-assessment refers to the HEI's assessment of its activities and their enhancement. Self-assessment is a tool used in enhancement-led evaluation for enhancing the HEI's activities. The ability to recognise the institution's own strengths and especially enhancement areas is a sign of a mature quality culture.

In addition to the self-assessment, 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 and the management system
- web access to the curricula of degree programmes
- RPL instructions
- the equality plan/non-discrimination statement

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 briefly describe the procedures used by your HEI to plan education. Assess the functioning of these procedures.

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

- How does the HEI ensure that the educational provision is linked to the strategy?
- How has the HEI ensured that the degree programmes correspond with the appropriate level in the National Framework for Qualifications and Other Competence Modules[2]?
- How is the relevance to working life taken into account in the planning of education?
- How is internationalisation taken into account in the planning of education?
- How are the continuous learning needs taken into account in the planning of education?
- How is it ensured in the planning of education that the teaching methods, assessment methods and learning environments support the achievement of learning outcomes?
- How are research, development and innovation activities and/or artistic activities integrated in the teaching? How does the HEI ensure that the research knowledge is linked to education? How are staff members encouraged to strengthen the connection between education and research, development and innovation activities and/or artistic activities?
- How is the workload of students measured and monitored?
- How can students and external stakeholders participate in the planning of education?
- How are the plans of degree programmes and other study entities approved?

Strengths	Enhancement areas

2 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 briefly describe the procedures used by your HEI to ensure the quality of education. Assess the functioning of these procedures.

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

- What procedures does the HEI use to ensure transparency in student selection?
- How is the prior learning assessed and recognised (RPL)?
- How do the selected teaching methods support target-oriented learning?
- What concrete examples does the HEI have of encouraging students to take an active role in the learning processes? How do the students receive feedback on their learning?
- How is the connection to working life taken into account in the implementation of education?
- How are flexible study paths and mobility within/between HEIs enabled?
- How are students supported at different stages of their studies? What procedures are used to intervene in the termination of studies? How does the HEI promote the well-being of students? How is the equal treatment of students guaranteed?

Strengths	Enhancement areas

1.3 The evaluation and enhancement of education

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

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

- How is student feedback collected? How does the HEI support the students as feedback-givers? How is the handling of the feedback and feedback-on-feedback organised?
- How are the degree programmes and other provision monitored and evaluated? How is it analysed that the intended learning outcomes are achieved in degree programmes and other provision? How does the HEI ensure that the requirements concerning the quality and effectiveness of education are met?
- How does the HEI take into account the changing needs of society and working life in the enhancement of education? How are opportunities for continuous learning taken into account?
- How do the support services enhance their activities?

Strengths	Enhancement areas

1.4 Examples of successful enhancement activities

Please provide examples of key successes in the enhancement of the HEI's activities. Briefly describe the effects of the enhancement activities.

Benchlearning

Describe benchlearning, if it concerns this evaluation area (see chapter 5 below).

2 HEI PROMOTES IMPACT AND RENEWAL

2.1 Managing societal engagement and impact

Please briefly describe the procedures used by your HEI to promote the societal impact of its core duties. Assess the functioning of these procedures.

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

- How does the HEI manage and enhance activities that promote societal engagement and impact?
- How are changes in the operational environment analysed? How is the information used in setting the direction for the HEI's activities?

Strengths	Enhancement areas

2.2 Research, development and innovation activities as well as artistic activities with impact

Please briefly describe the procedures used by your HEI to promote the societal impact of research, development and innovation activities as well as artistic activities. Assess the functioning of these procedures.

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

- How does the HEI advance open science?
- How does the HEI ensure the responsible conduct of research?
- What procedures does the HEI have to promote the societal impact of research, development and innovation activities and/or artistic activities?
- How is the societal engagement and impact monitored and enhanced in research, development and innovation activities and/or artistic activities?
- How are research findings, artistic activities and innovation results communicated to society?

Strengths	Enhancement areas

2.3 Promoting renewal through the organisational culture

Please briefly describe the procedures used by your HEI to promote the renewal of its activities. Assess the functioning of these procedures.

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

- How does the HEI support the establishment of an innovative organisational culture? How are new, experimental activities monitored and utilised in the HEI?
- How does the HEI promote the use of competences and collaboration opportunities within its higher education community?
- How does the HEI cooperate with its alumni? How has the cooperation with alumni been improved?
- What forms of collaboration and co-development does the HEI have with regional, national and international actors and networks.
- How does the HEI manage and update its collaboration networks?

Strengths	Enhancement areas

2.4 Examples of successful enhancement activities

Please provide examples of key successes in the enhancement of the HEI's activities. Briefly describe the effects of the enhancement activities.

Benchlearning

Describe benchlearning, if it concerns this evaluation area (see chapter 5 below).

3 HEI ENHANCES QUALITY AND WELL-BEING

- A chart of the quality system

3.1 Using the quality system in strategic management

Please briefly describe the procedures used by your HEI in using the quality system in strategic management. Assess the functioning of these procedures.

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

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

Strengths	Enhancement areas

3.2 Supporting the competence development and well-being of the staff

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

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

- How does the HEI identify development needs in staff competence (e.g., the development of pedagogical competence)?
- How does the HEI support the development of staff competence?
- How is fairness and transparency in staff recruitment and development procedures ensured?
- 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?

Strengths	Enhancement areas

3.3 Functionality and development of the quality system

Please assess the functioning of the quality system in relation to the HEI's own objectives and the enhancement of the core duties.

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

- How does the quality system support the achievement of the objectives set for the core duties and the enhancement of the core duties?
- How are good practices disseminated in your organisation? Please give concrete examples of cases where a good practice has been applied broadly.
- How does the HEI support a participatory quality culture? How do staff members, students and external stakeholders take part in the enhancement of the HEI's activities?
- How does the quality system meet the objectives set for it and how is the system developed?

Strengths	Enhancement areas

3.4 Examples of successful enhancement activities

Please provide examples of key successes in the enhancement of the HEI's activities. Briefly describe the effects of the enhancement activities.

Benchlearning

Please describe benchlearning, if it concerns this evaluation area (see chapter 5 below).

4 HEI AS A LEARNING ORGANISATION

4.1 An evaluation area selected by the HEI

Please describe an activity that is central to the HEI's profile or strategy that the HEI would like to develop.

- Please describe the focus and concrete objectives of the assessment. Explain why this evaluation area was chosen and its links to the HEI's profile or strategy.
- Describe the activity related to the evaluation area and the enhancement procedures related to it. Please assess the strengths and enhancement areas.
- Please describe benchlearning, if it concerns this evaluation area (see chapter 5 below).

Strengths	Enhancement areas

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 evaluation area 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.

- Briefly describe the benchlearning target and partner organisation. How were the target and partner selected? Describe the reasons for selecting this target and partner.
- What objectives were set for the benchlearning?
- Describe how you proceeded with the process. What was the timeline of the process and who participated in it? What 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 of the partner organisation. What similarities and differences did you find? Please summarise your findings in the table below.
- How are you planning to apply 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
Please give a concrete example/examples of how you plan to apply or have already applied good practices of your benchlearning partner.	

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 management, 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 cycle (2018–2024) is to support higher education institutions in the continuous development of their activities, 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.

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