

# Abstract

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The Finnish Education Evaluation Centre has conducted an audit of Diaconia University of Applied Sciences. Based on the audit report, the Higher Education Evaluation Committee has decided to require the institution to undergo a re-audit. In its current state the quality system of Diaconia University of Applied Sciences does not fulfil the national criteria set for the quality management of higher education institutions, and thus the system cannot be said to correspond to the European quality assurance principles and recommendations for higher education institutions.

The object of the audit was the quality system that the institution has developed based on its own needs and goals. The optional audit target chosen by the institution was *Quality management of the operational culture which enables studying and working at multiple locations and e-campus activities.*

The following were regarded as key strengths of the quality system:

- The long history of continuous quality work in Diaconia University of Applied Sciences is reflected in many areas of its daily activities. The quality culture is open and interactive, it goes hand in hand with the strategy, and it promotes operations in accordance with the central guidelines steering the institution's work. A value-based approach and strategic awareness have been widely accepted as cross-cutting themes by the personnel.
- The quality system is based on the model of continuous improvement. The personnel are thoroughly familiar with the cycle of continuous development (PDCA), which lies at the core of the model, and know how to make use of the steps of the cycle in their own work.
- A broad range of different measures have been introduced to ensure that training and RDI are relevant to working life. The OSKE approach helps to strengthen the relevance for working life of the training and RDI, as well as regional cooperation. The OPS2015 curriculum reform helps to ensure student participation in working life cooperation as well as in working life-oriented research and development projects.

Among others, the following recommendations were given to Diaconia University of Applied Sciences:

- Harmonising the feedback culture and creating a comprehensive feedback chart are the most important development priorities in the work to strengthen the functional aspects of the quality system. As part of the operational improvements, and especially in the efforts to improve the quality of training, Diaconia University of Applied Sciences should also ensure the consistent use of qualitative feedback in the development work.
- Students should be provided with more extensive and effective opportunities to participate in the development of training and to influence the process. The audit team urges Diaconia University of Applied Sciences to develop, in cooperation with the students, a feedback system that produces information that can be systematically used in the development of study units, teaching and the training as a whole.
- Diaconia University of Applied Sciences should analyse more systematically the information produced by its quality system at different organisational levels so that it could be used more effectively in such areas as knowledge-based management.

The re-audit will focus on the Quality systems's link with strategic management (audit target 2), Degree education (audit target 4a), Societal impact and regional development work (audit target 4c) and on the Quality system as a whole (audit target 6).

**Keywords**

Audit, evaluation, higher education institutions, quality, quality management, quality system, university of applied sciences