

Abstract

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The Finnish Education Evaluation Centre has conducted an audit of Savonia University of Applied Sciences and has awarded the institution a quality label that is valid for six years from 14 April 2016. The quality system of the institution fulfils the national criteria set for the quality management of higher education institutions, and corresponds 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 freely selected audit target chosen by the institution was “Comprehensive student counselling”.

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

- Savonia’s strength is that its information production is systematic, correct and up to date; the information production has improved substantially over the last few years. Savonia utilises information systematically to develop its operations; information production is also defined as a key factor of success in the core process of education. Continuous development has also helped Savonia to identify issues in the quality system and to streamline it.
- Strategic management, operations management and the quality system are integrated in an excellent way. The systems constitute a harmonised, concrete whole, which is based on the institution’s strategic goals and which continues to operational goals, taken to different levels of the organisation, and to active goal monitoring. It is a daily task for Savonia personnel to comply with the quality system.

- Savonia contributes a great deal to developing the region. Priority areas and related research, development and innovation activities are consistent with the province's goals, and the activities are closely linked to the region's development programmes. Research, development and innovation activities are networked with companies, other educational institutions and sectoral research institutes in the region. External stakeholders report that Savonia is on the same path with other operators in the province. Savonia actively interacts with the working life and business sector.

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

- In the future, Savonia should assess the functionality of the team approach on the basis of the experiences so far, and to make sure that the operations are of a consistent quality. Some fields have practices which differ from the common rules to some extent, and these practices should be harmonised.
- Multidisciplinary cooperation (compliant with the Open Innovation Space approach) in education planning and implementation is, to some extent, implemented very well, for example, between design and technology. However, a thoroughly multidisciplinary university of applied sciences would provide more varied opportunities for cooperation, which have not been utilised yet. The audit team encourages Savonia to expand its multidisciplinary cooperation. In addition, Savonia should more powerfully underline the significance of artistic activities and their connection to other fields.
- Students can submit electronic feedback on courses. The response rate is low and Savonia has attempted to increase it in many different ways. Savonia should continue to remind students of how important it is to give feedback so that the response rate would increase. Verbal feedback channels are used in addition to the official ones. Savonia should specify joint procedures for documenting and processing verbal feedback. Savonia should take care of motivating students and staff to contribute to quality work, for example, with regard to submitting and processing feedback, as well as to operating in working groups.

Key words

Assessment, audit, higher education institutions, quality, quality management, quality system, university of applied sciences