Abstract

The Finnish Education Evaluation Centre has conducted an audit of Centria University of Applied Sciences and has awarded the institution a quality label that is valid for six years from 22 September 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 “the professional growth of students as an effect of integrating teaching and RDI”.

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

- The hard work Centria has put into organising its quality work has proved fruitful. The development of the quality system is an on-going systematic process, and the system is evaluated regularly. The functionality of the system has been improved systematically.
- According to its stakeholders, Centria has a significant role in regenerating the region and educating competent workforce. The actors in the region participate in the development of Centria actively in the areas of strategic management, education, and research, development and innovation activities.
- Centria has a strong and open culture of engagement that supports communality and an organisation-wide quality culture and thus promotes the development of the entire University of Applied Sciences.
Among others, the following development recommendations were given to Centria University of Applied Sciences:

- The institution receives a lot of feedback from working life through different channels. The feedback could be documented more efficiently and used in more efficient and varied ways, which would enhance the utilization of the information to develop the entire institution.

- Centria should pay attention to better integration of research, development and innovation activities and teaching. Currently, students’ knowledge of research, development and innovation activities remains low. Centria’s strong expertise in research, development and innovation could be integrated more tightly into students’ studies. When developing the new organisational structure, it is important to pay attention to close cooperation between teaching and research, development and innovation activities both on a strategic and operational level.

- Centria has many good practices in place, but Centria could pay even more attention to sharing these practices inside the University of Applied Sciences and also within programmes. This would promote the utilization of the institution’s multidisciplinarity as an asset.

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