

# Abstract

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The Finnish Education Evaluation Centre has carried out the audit of Oulu University of Applied Sciences and granted the higher education institution a label of quality, which will be valid for six years starting from 22 March 2018. Oulu University of Applied Sciences' quality system fulfils the national criteria set for higher education institutions' quality management and is in accordance with European principles and recommendations for higher education institutions' quality management.

The focus of the audit was Oulu University of Applied Sciences' quality system, which the higher education institution has developed starting from its own premises and in accordance with its own goals. The freely selected audit target chosen by the higher education institution was the Oamk LABs learning model.

The central strengths of the quality system are seen to be the following:

- The quality policy of Oulu University of Applied Sciences is underpinned by shared values: togetherness, partnership with working life, willingness to develop and high performance. Observance of these values is an important and visible part of the job descriptions of all staff members in the higher education institution and the students' activities. Key development activities have also been linked to the shared values.
- Since the previous audit, the documentation of the quality system has been made less cumbersome while ensuring that quality work can be easily perceived as part of developing the personal activities of each member of the higher education community. Developing the staff intranet, Heimo, as a location for storing the quality system description is working well.
- Strong cooperation with companies in the Oulu region, whose feedback is quickly relayed to the institution, is characteristic of the institution's RDI activities. The institution's strengths include the obvious effectiveness of its activities as well as the scope and diversity of its stakeholder cooperation in the Oulu region.

The following development proposals were given to Oulu University of Applied Sciences:

- At the higher education institution level, it should be ensured that practical implementation of the quality system progresses at all organisation levels in a balanced manner and that the significance of the information produced by the quality management system is understood by everyone from top management down to individual teachers.
- It is important to use systematically external stakeholders' channels for exerting influence, to prepare a genuine stakeholder plan and to gather information on cooperation groups' activities in one place. This information should be linked to both curriculum work and higher education institution management, and the stakeholders should be given feedback on its effectiveness. The students should also be informed better of the student union's role.
- The higher education institution has created good practices, including 'recycling mornings for good practices', 'project dates', 'the management's quality reviews' and 'motivation metrics', but sufficient evidence of their effectiveness and continuity in terms of developing the activities or the quality system is lacking. The University of Applied Sciences should thus carefully consider the creation of new monitoring instruments and ensure that the selected models become systems that genuinely support leadership.

**Keywords**

University of applied sciences, evaluation, audit, higher education institutions, quality management, quality management system, education development