



Enhancement and Accountability. How to Serve Different Purposes in the Implementation of QA?

Implementing QA on System Level:
the Case of Finland

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Enhancement - typical features

- Stakeholder involvement in the planning process
- Report identifies strengths and good practices in the institution
- Report gives recommendations for improvement
- Process supports benchmarking possibilities



Accountability - typical features

- Minimum criteria
- Yes/ No decision
- Accredited / not-accredited or
- **Pass audit / re-audit decision**
- Financial or administrative consequences
- Appeals procedure



Finnish policy regarding the quality assurance of HEIs

- Traditionally, institutional quality was assured through legislation or operating licenses
- Since 1996 FINHEEC has supported HEIs in the development of quality by its evaluations (institutional, programme, thematic)
- Quantitative results of HEIs are monitored by the Ministry of Education in the annual budget and performance negotiations
- Following the Bologna aims in 2003, new approach for QA was seen necessary in Finland
- Premise other than external accreditation



Planning process of the 1. audit model in Finland

- 2003-04 QA committee, Ministry of Education 2004:6
Members from Ministry, FINHEEC, HEIs and students
- spring 2004 Opinions from HEIs and external stakeholders
Reactions to committee proposals very positive
“Acceptable and feasible proposals”
- autumn 2004 FINHEEC invited an expert group to plan practical
implementation of audits
Several seminars for HEIs organised by FINHEEC
- spring 2005 Development phase of audit model
Pilot audits at two HEIs
Methodological development of audit
Support to HEIs
- 2005-2011 Audits of all Finnish HEIs
- 2011- Planning of the 2. audit cycle



The aim of the audit of each HEI is:

- to evaluate what procedures and processes the HEI uses to maintain and develop the quality of its education and other activities;
- to evaluate whether the HEI's quality assurance works as intended,
 - whether the QA system produces useful and relevant information for the improvement of its operations
 - whether it brings about effective, improvement measures.



Audit conclusions and consequences

- The audit group issues an appraisal of the development stage of the QA system by each audit target
- The audit group can propose that the HEI passes the audit if all audit targets meet the minimum criteria of an "emerging" system, and that the QA system as a whole (audit target 7) is at least "developing".
- On the basis of the proposal of the audit group, FINHEEC will decide whether the HEI's QA system passes the audit or whether a re-audit is needed.
 - In the case of re-audit, the decision shall include the essential improvement needs of the QA system focused on in the re-audit.



Major changes in the 2. audit cycle

- An optional audit target that is central to strategy or profile and which the institution wants to develop in terms of its quality assurance. The activity may also be an overarching feature of the institution's basic duties; such as internationalisation, sustainable development, the status and well-being of the staff and students, lifelong learning.
- More emphasis on self-evaluation process.
- More detailed look at evidence of QA in degree education.
- Special attention has also been paid to the transparency and comprehensibility of the audit criteria.
- Institutions that pass their audit will get a quality label that is valid for six years.



To evaluate the quality assurance system, the 2. audit focuses on:

1. The quality assurance policy of the higher education institution
2. Strategic and operations management
3. The development of the quality assurance system
4. Quality assurance of the higher education institution's basic duties:
 - a) Degree education
 - b) Research, development and innovation activities, as well as artistic activities
 - c) The societal impact and regional development work
 - d) Optional audit target
5. Samples of degree education: degree programmes
6. The quality assurance system as a whole



Thank you for your attention!

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