



FINNISH EDUCATION
EVALUATION CENTRE

Institutional quality audits & FINEEC approach

Ms. Kati Isoaho
Senior Evaluation Advisor, FINEEC
ENAAE Forum 23rd September 2021

Finnish Education Evaluation Centre in short

- **Independent expert organisation and state authority for the external evaluation of education and early childhood education**
- **Operates in the administrative sector of the Ministry of Education and Culture**
 - Administration by the Finnish National Agency for Education
- **Produces information for educational policy decision-making and the development of education and early childhood education**
- **Higher Education and liberal art education unit for the external evaluation of the HE (incl. EUR-ACE accreditations)**
- **Offices in Helsinki and Jyväskylä**
 - Approximately 50 employees
 - Around 200 external experts

From early childhood to higher education

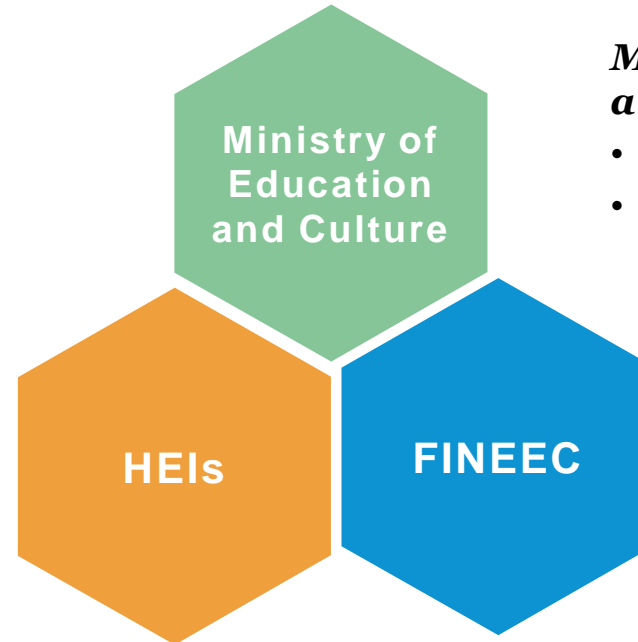
- Early childhood and pre-primary education
- Basic education
- Upper secondary education
- Vocational education and training
- Basic education in arts
- Liberal adult education
- Adult education
- Higher education



National quality assurance system of higher education in Finland

Higher education institutions

- Main responsibility for quality and the improvement of education and other activities
- Establish their own QA systems
- Participate in external evaluations of their activities and quality systems



Ministry of Education and Culture

- Steering
- Decision-making on the educational responsibilities

FINEEC

- National responsibility
- Audits of quality systems
- Other evaluations

Operations of the FINEEC HE unit

**Institutional quality audits
since 2005**

**Accreditations of the degree
programmes in engineering
(EUR-ACE) since 2014**

**Thematic evaluations since
90`s**

e.g. Student transitions and smooth study paths,
Immigrants in HE, Ability of the education system to
respond to challenges of continuous learning in
sudden structural changes

**Evaluations of the educational
fields since 90`s**

e.g. engineering, humanities, social and health care,
law

Engineering field in the Finnish higher education

24 universities of applied sciences, out of which 19 offers degree programmes in engineering

14 universities, out of which 8 offers degree programmes in engineering

Regionally wide offer of the engineering HE, from the south to the north, as well as from the west to the east

**Actually, I shall present two approaches
to institutional quality audits and their
connections to the degree programme
development**



FINNISH EDUCATION
EVALUATION CENTRE

The purpose of FINEEC audit

- to evaluate whether the quality work in the HEI meets the European quality assurance standards (ESG 2015)
- to assess whether the quality system produces relevant information for the implementation of the strategy and the continuous development of the HEI's activities, and whether it results in effective enhancement activities
- to encourage internationalisation, experimenting and a creative atmosphere at HEIs.



Basic elements of the quality audits

- ESG-based predefined and public assessment criteria
- self-assessment + external review conducted by the audit team
- audit team comprising of academic members, a student representative as well as a working-life presentative
- independent decion-making on the audit results by the FINEEC Higher Education Evaluation Committee
- publicity of the result of the audit as well as audit report as a whole
- enhancement-led evaluation & dialogic cooperation with all the parties involved



FINNISH EDUCATION
EVALUATION CENTRE

Audit team's ethical principles

TRUST AND CONFIDENTIALITY

- All of the information acquired during the process, except for that published in the final report, is confidential.
- The audit team's discussions are also confidential.

TRANSPARENCY AND EVIDENCE

- The audit is based on the material collected in connection with the audit.
- The report should be based on evidence.
- The audit process, principles and criteria are documented and public and systematically applied in audits.

IMPARTIALITY

- The audit team should be free from external influences.
- The audit team members are peers in a general expert role. They do not represent the interests of their organisations or employers.

INTERACTION AND RESPECT

- Interaction is integrated in the audit process.
- The audit is conducted in a respectful and collaborative manner, including both the work within the team and with the HEI.
- The respect for the voice of each person participating in the site visit is important.

Institutional quality audits since 2005

Second round in 2012-2018

Six audit targets, covering

1. Quality policy
2. Strategic management
3. Development of the quality system
4. Degree education, **incl. three samples of the degree programmes**
5. Research and RDI
6. Societal interaction
7. Quality system as a whole

+ Optional target chosen by the HEI

Third round in 2018-2024

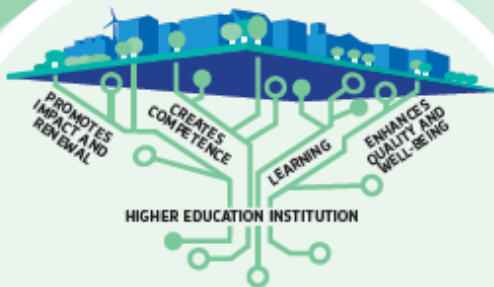
Four evaluation areas, covering

1. HEI creates competence (education, incl. PhD stage)
2. HEI promotes impact and renewal (societal impact, research and RDI)
3. HEI enhances quality and well-being (QA system, staff well-being and development)
4. Optional evaluation area chosen by the HEI

+ Benchlearning with the other HEI in the course of the HEI self-assessment, on the topic chosen by the HEI

PURPOSE OF THE AUDIT

- to evaluate whether the quality work in the higher education institutions (HEIs) meets the European quality assurance standards,
- to assess whether the quality system produces relevant information and results in effective enhancement activities,
- to encourage internationalisation, experimenting and a creative atmosphere at HEIs.



CRITERIA-BASED EVALUATION

- The HEIs' autonomy and responsibility of the quality of its activities are respected.
- The audit is based on national criteria and audit manual, which are outcomes of a participatory process.

HEI'S PREPARE FOR THE AUDIT

BENCHLEARNING

The HEI selects a target and a partner for benchlearning. The aim is to get feedback on the own activities and learn from the good practices of the partner.

SELF-ASSESSMENT

- The HE community identifies strengths and enhancement areas in its activities.
- The HEI submits its self-assessment on a public audit platform.

EVALUATION AREA CHOSEN BY THE HEI



AUDIT TEAM

Higher education sector, students and working life are represented in the team.

BRIEFING AND DISCUSSION EVENT CREATES TRUST



SYNTHESIS OF THE AUDITS

Audit reports are analysed to support the development of higher education.

HEI QUALITY SEMINARS

- HEIs present their enhancement activities to peers in a seminar three years after the audit.
- The seminar is organised annually.

HIGHER EDUCATION EVALUATION COMMITTEE DECIDES ON THE OUTCOME OF AUDIT

- If the HEI passes the audit, it receives a quality label, which is valid for six years.
- If the HEI does not pass the audit, it is required to undergo a re-audit in 2–3 years.



REPORTING

- The audit team analyses the materials and drafts the joint conclusions.
- The audit team highlights strengths and enhancement areas and gives recommendations.

AUDIT VISIT

IMPLEMENTATION

- The aim is to create a supportive and respectful atmosphere.
- The criteria guides the audit team in its work.
- The audit visit includes hearings with various actors, and interactive methods are preferred.
- The audit team identifies the HEI's strengths and enhancement areas.
- The HEI receives preliminary feedback at the end of the visit.

FEEDBACK SURVEY

FINEEC collects feedback to support the enhancement of its activities.

FINAL SEMINAR

The results and recommendations are discussed at the HEI.

Materials used in the FINEEC quality audits

**Self-assessment
report
conducted by the HEI**

**Audit visit
onsite or online**

HEI intranets

**2nd round: traditional,
paper/PDF, incl. degree
programme samples
3rd round: electronic on
the FINEEC audit platform,
public**

**2nd round: three days,
interviews
3rd round: mainly two
days, online option,
interviews and workshops**

**The audit team incl.
FINEEC staff gets a
temporary access to
intranets**

Review of the degree programme samples in the 2nd round concept

Aalto University as an example

Samples chosen by Aalto University

Bachelor's Programme in Business and Master's Programme in Strategy (2+3 yrs)

Doctoral Programme of Chemical Technology (4 years)

Sample chosen by the audit team

Bachelor's Programme in Engineering .(3 years)

All the degree programmes included in the review submitted self-evaluation reports to FINEEC and the audit team

Inclusion of the degree programmes in the 3rd round concept

- Degree programme staff members and students attend to **the self-assessment process** at their HEI (wide and diverse view to the HEI operations, learning in the course of the process).
- Participation in **the benchlearning process** carried out by the HEI
 - Target of the benchlearning can also be a degree programme or set of the degree programmes
 - The self-assessment report includes **examples of the successful development activities**, incl. degree programme development
- **Participation in the interviews and workshops** carried out on the audit visit (student workshops are obligatory in the each audit, teaching staff workshops are decided by the audit teams by case).
 - The audit teams should have a possibility to meet staff members and students from all the fields presented in the HEI

Benefits of the approaches for the degree programme development

2nd round

Possibility to carry out self-assessment on the degree programme level and identify development targets

Detailed feedback for three degree programmes

Both rounds

Inclusion in the institutional self-assessment process

Participation in the audit visit

Possibility to learn from the institutional review and apply findings on the degree level

3rd round

Possibility to attend to the benchlearning process with the other HEI

Possibility to participate in the audit visit interviews and workshops

Thank you very much!

kati.isoaho@karvi.fi



FINNISH EDUCATION
EVALUATION CENTRE