

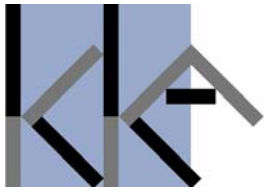
Audits of Finnish Quality Assurance Systems of HEIs

PhD Marja-Liisa Saarilammi

Senior Adviser

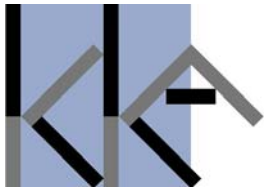
Finnish Higher Education Evaluation Council (FINHEEC)

Stockholm 8th September 2009



FINHEEC

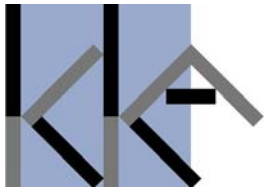
- Appointed by the Finnish Ministry of Education
- An independent expert body
- Organises evaluations
- Initiates and promotes evaluations
- Engages in international evaluation co-operation
- Promotes research on evaluation of higher education



Audits in Finland

Institutional audits

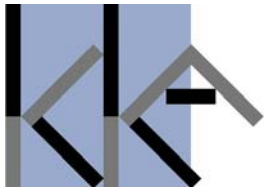
- evaluate what **procedures and processes** universities use to maintain and develop the quality of education and other activities
- **DO NOT** evaluate the **quality** of the teaching and research, but rather the **system** that assures the quality
 - ◆ Does the QA system work as intended?
 - ◆ Does it bring about effective improvement measures?
 - ◆ Does it produce useful and relevant information for the university itself?



Enhancement-led evaluation

- supports the universities
- produces information
- disseminates good practices



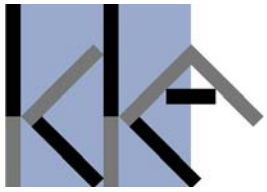


Auditing focuses on two levels

- HEIs quality assurance system as a whole
- HEIs quality assurance relating to the basic mission



The criteria are scaled to four development stages:
absent, emerging, developing and advanced



Fundamental audit questions

Comprehensiveness

Does QA cover all the institutional units and activities?

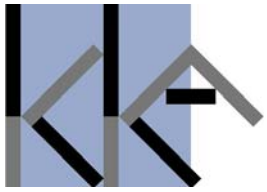
Effectiveness

Does the QAS produce relevant information? Does this information lead to effective improvement measures?

Transparency

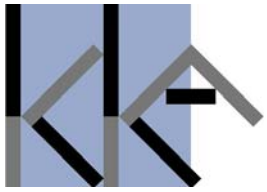
How is the information related to the QAS and to the quality available to staff and students?

How does the HEI deliver this information to its external stakeholders?



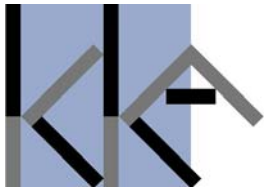
The audit goals 1/2

1. to evaluate the quality assurance system in terms of seven auditing targets:
 - documentation and responsibilities
 - management and steering
 - interaction with society
 - participation of the staff, students and external stakeholders
 - evaluation and continuous development
 - procedures related to basic mission in degree education, research, art, support services and staff recruitment
 - the QA system as a whole.



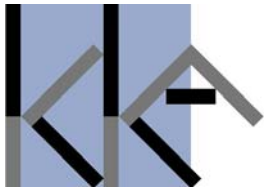
The audit goals 2/2

2. to highlight strengths and best practices
3. to propose recommendations for the further development
4. to determine whether the HEI passes the audit or needs to undergo a re-audit at a later date.



Audit procedure

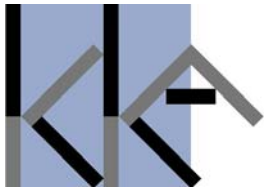
- FINHEEC sets up an unique audit group for each HEI (5+1 members).
- Audit group makes a recommendation whether the HEI should pass the evaluation or requires a re-audit.
- The FINHEEC Council reads the report and makes the final decision. The results are published, followed by a public feedback seminar.



Strengths and weaknesses in Finnish auditing system

Finnish auditing system is

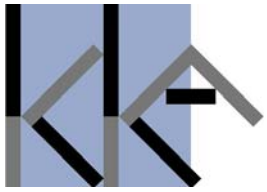
- + development oriented
 - + support management and steering of HEIs
 - + economical and manageable nationwide
 - + learning-process for all parties.
-
- general: not field specific or unit focused
 - bureaucratic: emphasizes organisational and administrative aspects of the work in HEIs
-
- +/- based on HEIs' willingness to make improvements



Strengths in the HEIs

- Committed leadership
- Processes are described and responsibilities are defined
- Staff and students participate in the quality work
- The focus areas in research are defined
- Staff development is systematically organised
- There is a realistic picture of how the QAS is going to be developed in the future

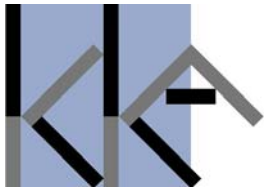




Good practices in the HEIs

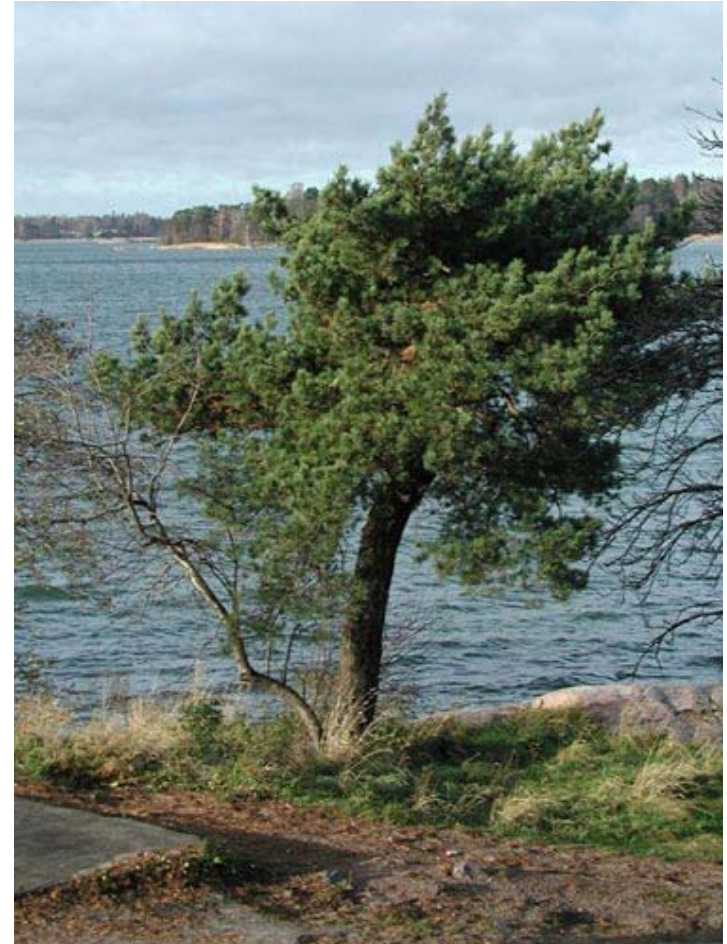
- The head of the university visits regularly the departments
- Benchmarking between the departments
- Yearly conversations with students including information on the actions taken as a result of student feedback
- The follow-up and support system to enhance graduation

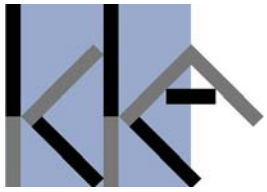




Recommendations (1/2)

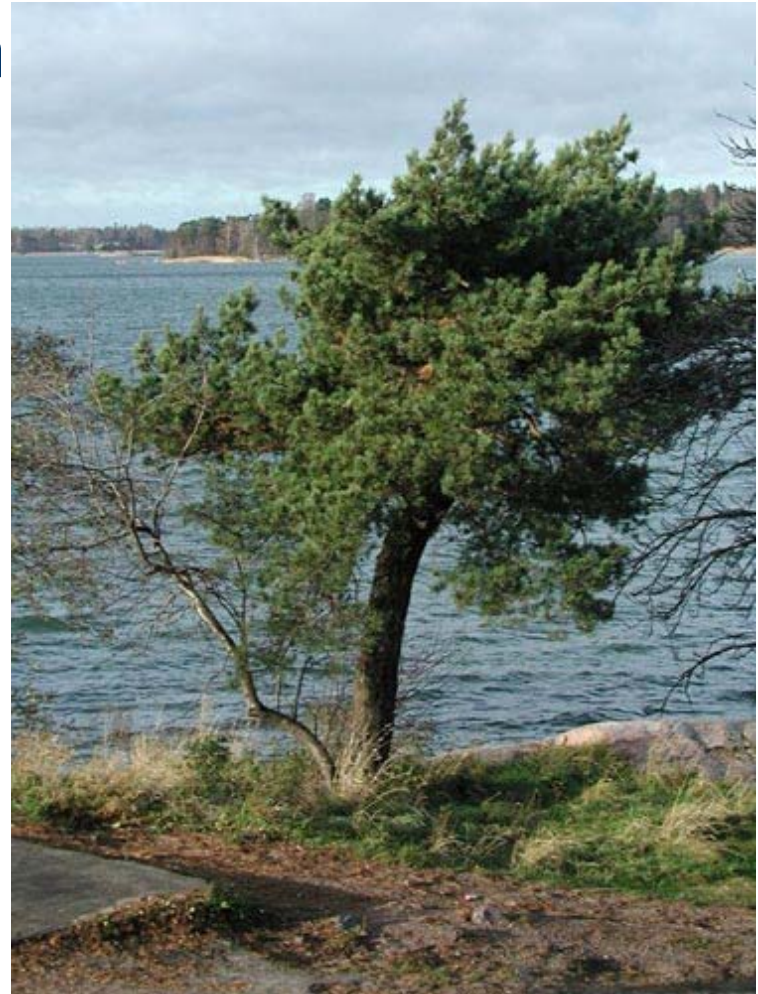
- The QA system should cover all units
- Lightening of the system
- Benefiting of feedback responses
- QAS available in English
- Strategic leadership should be developed for research activities

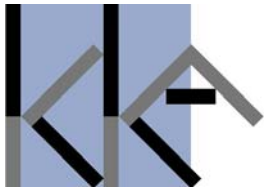




Recommendations (2/2)

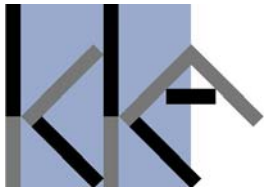
- Cooperation between support services and faculties
- HEIs should define their important stakeholders
- Qualitative measures should be drawn up





Feedback from HEIs

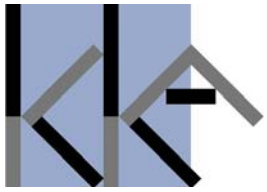
- “Now the curricula work, feedback system and student tuition have a clear connection.”
- “The audit pointed out new development targets.”
- “Strategy work is now much more dynamic than previously.”
- “We hope that in the future audits will be: more focus oriented, concentrating on future risk areas such as: leadership systems, financial risk management, stakeholder collaboration and innovative actions.”



Experiences after audits (1/2)

- The QAS is seen as a tool that helps to realise the values of the institute, especially management of change
- Transparency has increased
- The promoting of students welfare has become more a obvious target for HEIs
- The QA tools have become more communicative and user-friendly
- HEIs pay more attention to work with stakeholders

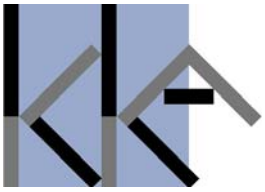




Experiences after audits (2/2)

- Collaboration with HEIs has increased both nationally and internationally
- The stronger linkage between quality assurance system and steering
- Cost-effectiveness has improved
- Quality assurance system is not longer viewed as being unconnected from normal working tasks, rather it is understood to be a part of an everyday life

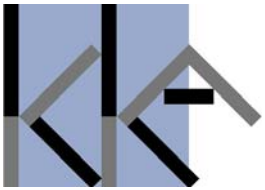




The quality culture - what is it?

Open and supportive atmosphere encourages good quality and leads to fruitful harvest in the organisation.





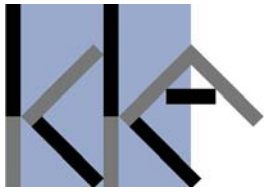
The Final Goal

The final goal of
Quality Assurance:

is to create a working
Quality Culture



...where **every individual** is collectively committed to
producing high quality



Thank you for your attention

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