

# FINEEC's self-assessment report for the ENQA targeted review 2026

## 7 Conclusions

FINEEC operates in a rapidly evolving European and national quality assurance landscape, where expectations for transparency, accountability and impact are continuously increasing. At the same time, the organisation benefits from a strong foundation: a legally established mandate, public funding, independent decision-making structures, evaluation processes free from external influence, a high level of trust among higher education institutions, and a well-established, enhancement-oriented quality culture. These strengths position FINEEC well to respond to both emerging European developments and domestic challenges.

As FINEEC moves into the fourth audit cycle, its overarching goal remains to strengthen the quality of Finnish higher education and to support institutions in anticipating and responding to change. Through its audits, FINEEC promotes continuous improvement and seeks to enhance the impact of higher education institutions' core functions, while also supporting cross-cutting priorities such as well-being, equity, internationalisation, openness and stakeholder engagement. The audits are designed to generate added value for higher education institutions and to serve both national and international quality assurance purposes.

A central strategic question for FINEEC concerns its positioning within the evolving European Higher Education Area (EHEA). Initiatives such as the European Approach for Quality Assurance of Joint Programmes and the emerging European degree label signal a gradual shift towards more integrated and transnational forms of quality assurance. These developments may also reinforce a broader European trend towards accreditation-type approaches, or at least towards stronger accountability-oriented elements within existing models. Emerging initiatives, such as the development of a European Degree Label, further highlight the need to reflect on and potentially develop new forms of external quality assurance in the future.

FINEEC is currently exploring the possibility of offering evaluations of Joint Programmes based on the European Approach framework. This will be discussed in the Higher Education Evaluation Committee during spring 2026. FINEEC is also closely monitoring developments related to the European Degree Label, which may also lead to the introduction of a new EQA activity.

The SWOT analysis conducted by the management team highlights several things that are particularly relevant for navigating this transition. FINEEC's extensive expert network, systemic perspective across all education sectors, and strong stakeholder trust provide a solid basis for maintaining legitimacy in a changing environment. At the same time, structural challenges, such as limited resources relative to the breadth of its mandate, fragmentation of information systems, and the need to better utilise evaluation data, require continued attention. Notably, the ability to translate rich evaluation evidence into systematic follow-up and demonstrable impact emerges as a key development priority.

The experiences from piloting the fourth audit cycle and the development of the audit manual provide encouraging evidence of FINEEC's capacity for renewal. The design process has been participatory, iterative, and clearly aligned with ESG principles, with higher education institutions placed at its centre. Improvements such as the refined assessment scale, stronger use of existing data, and enhanced impact mechanisms

demonstrate responsiveness to previous feedback and a commitment to continuous improvement. At the same time, pilot experiences underline the importance of ensuring consistent interpretation of criteria, strengthening the analytical use of data, and making long-term impact more visible.

Looking ahead, FINEEC's strategic development can be seen to revolve around a few key directions. First, there is a need to further strengthen the systematic use of data and evidence across the evaluation cycle, including better integration of multiple data sources and more explicit articulation of how conclusions are derived. Second, enhancing the clarity, accessibility and usability of audit reports will be crucial for increasing their impact among different stakeholder groups. Third, maintaining the delicate balance between comparability and sensitivity to institutional diversity remains essential, particularly if European developments move towards more standardised approaches.

Finally, FINEEC's continued success will depend on its ability to preserve the core strengths of its enhancement-led approach, dialogue, trust and developmental impact, while simultaneously adapting to a more complex and possibly more accountability-driven European quality assurance environment. In this respect, FINEEC is not only responding to change but also has the potential to actively shape emerging practices by demonstrating how enhancement-oriented quality assurance can remain relevant, credible and impactful in the years to come.