

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

6 SWOT analysis of FINEEC

Self-assessment of FINEEC by the Management Team

Strengths	Weaknesses
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Basic funding is included in the state budget, and FINEEC has its own budget line. FINEEC's duties and decision-making processes are defined in law. The Higher Education Evaluation Committee has an independent role that ensures the voice of the field is heard. The organisation makes use of a wide expert network, which enhances the diversity of perspectives and the quality of evaluations. FINEEC carries out evaluation activities that cover the entire education system, which enables a systemic perspective and allows HEIs to be assessed within the broader context of the education system. Competent staff, a strong quality culture, and an enhancement-oriented orientation. FINEEC has an independent status, and HEIs have shown continuous trust in its work, for example through repeated commissions of evaluations. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The ageing population and the shrinking working-age population are forcing cost-saving reforms in education policy, which affects Finnish education system and FINEEC's operations. Because FINEEC operates as a separate unit within the Finnish National Agency for Education (EDUFI), the structural costs arising from administrative and support services are high, which affects the overall cost of cooperation. FINEEC and EDUFI use many different digital systems and sets of guidelines, and staff may not always fully internalise how these should be applied or what their significance is. FINEEC's various feedback systems and self-evaluations produce a large amount of information, but this information does not always lead to development actions or systematic follow-up in the best possible way.
Opportunities	Threats
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> There is a strong need for research and evaluation information. All sectors of society aim for knowledge-based management and decision-making. There is demand for FINEEC's services among its clients, which means that fee-based services have the potential to expand. EU project funding offers opportunities to strengthen FINEEC's resources. Finland and FINEEC have a strong country brand, which enables international activities. As competition intensifies, FINEEC has an opportunity to develop its operations and processes. FINEEC has an agile operating model. FINEEC has already digitalised parts of its operations, and the use of artificial intelligence offers opportunities for further efficiency gains. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> FINEEC is under-resourced in relation to its extensive statutory mandate. The general political climate has tightened, and political steering in the field of education may increase. The enhancement-led evaluation approach is being questioned in some education policy discussions. As a separate unit within EDUFI, FINEEC is not always heard. There is uncertainty in the national division of responsibilities: EDUFI also states that it conducts evaluations (not higher education), which may blur FINEEC's role. The Ministry of Education and Culture commissions a substantial number of evaluations from other actors. The continued weakening of central government finances poses a threat to society.

Self-assessment of the institutional quality audits by the Higher Education Evaluation Committee

Standards	Self-assessment (summary)	Enhancement ideas (summary)
<p>ESG 2.2. Designing methodologies fit for purpose</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The standard was implemented very well through a clear, fitness-for-purpose design of the fourth audit cycle. • The planning process was systematic, iterative, and transparent, with objectives and aims thoroughly examined. • HEIs were placed at the centre of the model, ensuring relevance and practical applicability. • Stakeholder involvement was extensive and multi-phased, and feedback had a genuine influence on the final design. • The framework was developed through concrete improvements, including better use of existing data, a refined evaluation scale, and strengthened impact mechanisms. • These developments enhance both the reliability and the developmental impact of the audit framework. • Relevant regulations and principles of good governance were duly considered. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • HEIs report to multiple contexts, which makes the effective use of information a key challenge in audits and requires systematic use of existing data as well as the integration of audit-specific and new information. • The fourth audit cycle builds effectively on experience from previous cycles, particularly addressing shortcomings identified in the third cycle. • Key development needs relate to the implementation of recent reforms, especially the consistent, comparable, and analytical use of data to support evaluation and longitudinal analysis. • The four-point assessment scale enhances differentiation, but its effective use requires shared interpretation of criteria and a strong, high-quality evidence base. • Strengthening the visibility of long-term audit impact requires more systematic follow-up of developmental effects, while maintaining a balance between comparability and sensitivity to institutional diversity.
<p>ESG 2.4. Peer review experts</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The standard is very well implemented in audit teams, which consist of suitably qualified experts. • Audit teams ensure broad and balanced expertise from both higher education and labour market, supporting a well-rounded evaluation perspective. • Student members are systematically included in audit teams, promoting ESG-aligned inclusiveness and multi-voiced evaluation. • Peer review strengthens the developmental character of audits by bringing comparative perspective, practical experience, and constructive challenge. • The composition of audit teams is carefully prepared, justified, and reviewed by the Evaluation Committee, enhancing transparency and fitness for purpose. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The quality of peer review should be safeguarded by ensuring sufficiently broad and well-balanced audit team compositions, with attention to the overall team profile rather than individual members alone. • A cautious expansion of the expert pool should be considered to ensure greater diversity of expertise and to address potential capacity and risk-related challenges, while maintaining high selection standards. • Consistency and comparability across audits should be further strengthened by maintaining and reinforcing the guiding role of experienced FINEEC staff in supporting audit teams and aligning interpretations of criteria. • The developmental character of peer review should be preserved by keeping dialogue, reflective discussion, and enhancement-oriented questioning at the core of the evaluation process.
<p>ESG 2.5. Criteria for outcomes</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The outcomes and judgements of audits are based on clearly defined, explicit, and publicly available criteria, which enhances the transparency, predictability, and credibility of the audit process. • The criteria are generally clear and easily accessible to HEIs, while providing sufficient flexibility to take institutional diversity into account. • The assessment scale, including the clarified Excellent category, supports differentiation, although it has in some cases been perceived as relatively broad. 	

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Consistent application of criteria is ensured through a multi-level quality system, including audit teams, guidance by experienced staff, and committee-level review of results and justifications. • Audits are based on diverse and robust evidence, such as self-assessments, documentation, site visit observations, and increasingly also feedback and follow-up data. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Audit reports could be streamlined by reducing unnecessary descriptive detail and presenting procedural information in structured formats (e.g. tables), thereby strengthening the analytical focus. • Consistent application of criteria could be further deepened by strengthening shared interpretations, using comparative examples, and making interpretation principles more explicit across the audit system. • Systematic use of data could be enhanced by better integrating multiple data sources, improving comparability, and supporting the identification of development trends. • The balance between comparability and contextual sensitivity could be clarified by more clearly distinguishing between common core evaluative elements and context-specific interpretations. • Transparency of judgements could be improved by making more explicit how different types of evidence are weighted and how conclusions are derived from the available evidence.
<p>ESG 2.6. Reporting</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Audit reports are published in full and are openly accessible online, ensuring strong transparency for the academic community, external stakeholders, and the public. • The reports are well structured, clear, and systematic, covering key evaluation areas, analysis, conclusions, and recommendations, and they are well suited to support decision-making. • Despite being produced by audit teams representing diverse stakeholder backgrounds, the reports are of high quality and largely consistent in style and content. • Audit decisions are published alongside the reports in accordance with ESG requirements, supporting transparency and accountability. • The audit panel chair's summary of audit report's key findings presented to the committee further enhances the clarity, interpretability, and usability of the reports in decision-making. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The accessibility and clarity of audit reports could be improved by complementing them with concise summaries, visual elements, and one-page briefs tailored to different stakeholder groups (e.g. higher education leadership, students, external partners). • The usability of audit reports could be enhanced by structuring key findings and conclusions more clearly and reducing non-essential descriptive detail that may obscure the main messages. • The analytical presentation of findings could be strengthened by improving the structuring of qualitative evidence and, where appropriate, developing more structured or comparative formats to support understanding and cross-institutional learning. • The impact of audit reports and decisions could be increased by supporting their active dissemination and use in institutional development and stakeholder dialogue, beyond mere publication.