

Abstract

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Authors

Pertti Puusaari, Hanna Hauta-aho, Maire Mäki, Jukka E. Mäkinen, Anni Suvisuo, Marja-Liisa Saarilampi & Tuula Pirinen

The Finnish Education Evaluation Centre has conducted an audit of the Satakunta University of Applied Sciences and has awarded the university of applied sciences a quality label that is valid for six years from 29 February 2016. The quality management system of the Satakunta University of Applied Sciences fulfils the national criteria set for the quality management of higher education institutions, and corresponds to the European quality assurance principles and recommendations for higher education institutions.

The object of the audit was the quality management system that the university has developed based on its own needs and goals. The freely selected audit target chosen by the university of applied sciences (UAS) was *internationalisation*.

The following were regarded as key strengths of the quality management system:

- Long-term development of the quality system provides a solid foundation for quality system which covers all the core duties. The quality management responsibilities are clearly defined.
- Feedback on the degree programmes is utilised in a systematic way and based on agreed-upon procedures and instructions. The students can give feedback when they apply for studies, during the studies, at graduation and as an alumni. The feedback is processed systematically and in various ways. Moreover, the feedback gives proven results.
- The UAS has procedures for internal audits which have been developed based on feedback. The internal audits are carried out according to an annual plan. The internal auditors are trained to form an audit pool which enables dissemination of best practices and general commitment of the staff to quality work.

Among others, the following recommendations were given to Satakunta University of Applied Sciences

- Somewhat mechanistic, the quality system's main purpose seems to be maintaining the existing procedures. Therefore, the audit group recommends strengthening the reform-orientated elements of the quality system. The UAS ought to consider a range of alternatives and develop its quality system with the view of supporting a more flexible and versatile management and encouraging the staff to thinking outside the box and exceeding expectations.
- Satakunta University of Applied Sciences has action plans for carrying out its strategy. However, there is some lack of understanding of how the UAS's goals affect the work on individual and unit level. The audit group recommends adding general discussions on various forums about how the goals are targeted to the various areas of responsibility.
- The UAS collects forecasting data and feedback from interested parties. The audit group recommends more systematic use of the collected data in developing the operations and quality management.

Keywords

Audit, evaluation, higher education institutions, quality, quality management, quality system, university of applied sciences