

ABSTRACT

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The Finnish Education Evaluation Centre has conducted an audit of the Kajaani University of Applied Sciences and awarded the institution with a quality label that will be valid for six years from 20 March 2015. The quality system of the Kajaani University of Applied Sciences fulfils the national criteria set for the quality management of higher education institutions, and the system corresponds to the European quality assurance principles and recommendations for higher education institutions.

The object of the audit was the quality system that the Kajaani University of Applied Sciences has developed based on its own needs and goals. The freely selected audit target chosen by the university of applied sciences (UAS) was the quality management of the development target Students in development activities. The following were regarded as key strengths of the quality system:

- The Kajaani University of Applied Sciences has invested in the development of the management system with which the quality system is linked. The management and quality system form a systematic whole with the help of which strategic goals are transformed into parts of individual-level operations. The goal-setting chain includes strategy, action plans for development targets, competence areas and units, and group and individual-level development discussions.
- At the level of the UAS, operations have been organised by development target: strategic management, educational activities, students in development activities, RDI activities, and shared operating models and environments. The staff of the UAS are comprehensively included and participate in the development activities. The basic principle is that every employee participates in some development group.

- The Kajaani University of Applied Sciences has a systematic and documented project preparation and management process. Project management is at the whole UAS centralised in the shared services unit in which all required support services are brought together. The preparation process supports the implementation of the strategy of the Kajaani University of Applied Sciences and the strategies of the region. The project management process ensures both the measures required by financiers and smooth participation of the unit and individual-level in project activities. The various staff groups feel the project management works well.

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

- At the Kajaani University of Applied Sciences, the students recognise their role in the quality system as feedback providers as well as in participation of individual students in working groups for the development of learning. As a rule, students do not recognise their role in the development of the core duties – education and RDI activities. The audit team recommends that students' awareness of their role and participation in the development of the core duties is systematically increased.
- According to the students, feedback on feedback is given only randomly. The audit team recommends that the whole student feedback system is developed in an appropriate and documented manner so that there is room to give feedback on feedback and that giving feedback is more immediately effective.
- The management of working life and stakeholder relations related to the core duties of the UAS is strongly based on individual-level activities and personal networks. Even though the operating model appears to produce appropriate results, the audit team considers it vulnerable and risky. The audit team recommends that an operating model suitable for systematic stakeholder cooperation – contact management, information sharing, documentation – is created.

Key words

Evaluation, audit, quality system, quality management, quality, higher education institutions, university of applied sciences