



Procedure to request a review of an audit result 2019-2024

Approved by the Higher Education Evaluation Committee
on 20 May 2019



Procedure to request a review of an audit result

A brief description of the procedure

This document describes the procedure that can be used by higher education institutions to request a review of the result of an audit or re-audit conducted by the Finnish Education Evaluation Centre (FINEEC). The procedure will be applied to audits performed in accordance with FINEEC audit Audit manual for higher education institutions 2019–2024.

Objective

The objective of the procedure is to ensure equal treatment of the audited institutions and to guarantee that the Higher Education Evaluation Committee operating under FINEEC makes fair decisions about audit results.

Approved by the Higher Education Evaluation Committee

Date: 20 May 2019

Period of validity

Valid until the end of 2024

Procedure published

The procedure and updates to it will be published on the FINEEC website

Further information

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1 Introduction

This document describes the procedure that can be used by higher education institutions to request a review of the result of an audit or re-audit conducted by the Finnish Education Evaluation Centre (FINEEC). The procedure will be applied to audits performed in accordance with the FINEEC audit manual¹. The procedure follows the jointly agreed European quality assurance principles for evaluation agencies².

The request may be targeted at the following audit results decided on by the Higher Education Evaluation Committee:

- 1) The higher education institution does not pass the audit, and a re-audit is required; or
- 2) The higher education institution does not pass the re-audit.

The request may be based on the grounds that the audit has not been performed in compliance with the audit manual, and that the audit process, as performed, brings into question the fair and equal treatment of higher education institutions.

The request shall be filed in accordance with the procedure described in this document. The request can only be filed by the higher education institution whose audit result the request concerns. The decisions concerning audit results issued by the Higher Education Evaluation Committee are considered as expert opinions. They are not administrative decisions and appeals pursuant to the Administrative Judicial Procedure Act cannot be filed to challenge them.

2 Filing and processing the request

Delivery of a request

The outcome of audit is communicated to the higher education institution immediately after the Higher Education Evaluation Committee's decision-making meeting. The report and press release are published on the FINEEC website within three working days of the meeting.

A request for a review of the audit result must be filed within 30 days of receiving the result. The day on which the result was communicated is not included in this period. If the request is not filed within the designated period, it will not be processed.

Requests must be sent to FINEEC by e-mail using the address kirjaamo@karvi.fi.

¹ Audit manual for higher education institutions 2019–2024 (2019). Finnish Education Evaluation Centre. Publications 21. The procedure will be also applied to re-audits conducted during 2020–2021 and performed in accordance with the audit manual applied in the actual audit Audit manual for the quality systems of higher education institutions 2015–2018 (2015). Finnish Education Evaluation Centre. Publications 2.

² The Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance in the European Higher Education Area (ESG 2015) <http://www.enqa.eu/index.php/home/esg>.

The form and content of the request

The request must be made in writing. The request must include the following information:

- 1) The audit result for which a review is requested;
- 2) The grounds on which a review is requested.

Documents to support the request shall be attached to the request. The higher education institution cannot attach to the request materials that were not available to the audit team during the audit process.

Address and signature

The request must include an address to which notifications on the matter can be sent. The rector of the higher education institution, or a representative appointed by the rector, must sign the request.

The request must also include the name of the higher education institution's contact person for the duration of the processing of the request. The director of FINEEC will appoint a FINEEC contact person who will keep the institution up to date on the progress of the review.

Supplements to the request

If the request is incomplete, the higher education institution will have 14 days to provide supplements to it.

Processing of the request

The request will be processed by an expert team appointed by the Evaluation Council, that operates under FINEEC, for the duration of the appointment. FINEEC will deliver the request and the attached documents to the expert team. The following materials will be sent to the team when necessary if they are not included in the materials sent by the higher education institution:

- the audit report;
- the materials delivered by the higher education institution for the audit, and the additional materials available to the audit team; and
- the working documents of the audit team.

When the expert team has reviewed the written materials, it will hear the higher education institution and if needed any third parties before issuing a resolution.

Requests are usually processed within three months of filing the request with FINEEC.

Statement of the expert team

The expert team processing the request will consider the audit as a whole. If a procedural error that could have brought into question the fairness and equality of the audit result is discovered, the expert team may return the audit result to the Higher Education Evaluation Committee for re-processing. In its statement, the expert team must then identify the procedural error that was the reason for returning the audit result to the Committee for re-processing. In all other cases, the audit result will not be returned to the Committee for re-processing.

If the higher education institution has not included the necessary materials to support the request, or if the materials included are new materials that were not available to the audit team during the audit process, the request will not be processed.

Justification and content of the statement

The expert team must provide justification for its statement. The statement issued must include the following information:

- 1) The date of the statement;
- 2) The higher education institution that filed the request, and the audit result for which the review was requested;
- 3) An account of any significant phases of the processing of the request;
- 4) The statement and the justification for it.

Communicating the statement

The statement of the expert team is communicated to the higher education institution immediately after the decision-making meeting of the team.

3 Expert team

Composition of the expert team

The Evaluation Council appoints a national expert team with three members and three deputy members to process any requests from higher education institutions for a review of an audit result. The expert team selects a chair among its members. Experienced evaluators should be appointed to the expert team so that both sectors of Finnish higher education are represented.

The selection criteria for the members of the expert team are:

- Good knowledge of the higher education system;
- A comprehensive and deep understanding of quality management in higher education institutions;
- Experience in evaluation or audits.

A person is disqualified from acting as a member of the expert team if he or she is an interested party or if confidence in his or her impartiality in relation to the audited higher education institution comes under question. Disqualification is determined in compliance with the provisions of the Administrative Procedure Act (434/2003, Chapter 5, sections 27–29). According to good administrative procedure, a disqualified person may not in any way participate in the processing of the matter. Such situations may arise, for example, if the person is employed by the audited higher education institution or has acted in a position of trust in the institution's decision-making body. The experts must report any potential grounds for their disqualification to FINEEC. A person who has participated in the audit process for the higher education institution that has filed the request, or who is a member in another expert body of FINEEC, shall also be excluded from the expert team.

The higher education institution that filed the request will be given an opportunity to provide

comments concerning the potential disqualification of the members of the expert team.

FINEEC will conclude an agreement with the members of the expert team to define the tasks, fee and other terms of the expert team assignment. The experts' fees are determined in accordance with the principles adopted by FINEEC.

Work of the expert team

The expert team is an independent body, and it works free of the influence of any third parties such as higher education institutions, ministries or other stakeholders. When working in the expert team, the team members are independent experts who do not represent their background organisations. Instead, they work to promote the equal treatment of all audited higher education institutions and fair decision-making by the Higher Education Evaluation Committee.

The work of the expert team is supported by FINEEC officials who have not participated in the audit process for the higher education institution that requested a review and are not otherwise disqualified.