



FINNISH EDUCATION
EVALUATION CENTRE

ENHANCEMENT-LED EVALUATION AS FINLAND'S CHOICE

Over three decades of external quality evaluation
of Finnish higher education

Mira Huusko | Riitta Pyykkö

ENHANCEMENT-LED EVALUATION AS FINLAND'S CHOICE

Over three decades of external quality evaluation
of Finnish higher education

Mira Huusko
Riitta Pyykkö



Finnish Education Evaluation Centre
Publications 28:2022

PUBLISHER Finnish Education Evaluation Centre

BOOK DESIGN Juha Juvonen (org.) & Ahoy, Jussi Aho (edit)
LAYOUT PunaMusta

ISBN 978-952-206-743-2 pdf
ISSN 2342-4184 (pdf)

© Finnish Education Evaluation Centre

Publisher

Finnish Education Evaluation Centre (FINEEC)

Name of publication

Enhancement-led evaluation as Finland's choice – Over three decades of external quality evaluation of Finnish higher education

Authors

Mira Huusko & Riitta Pyykkö

The objective of this publication is to describe the external quality evaluation of Finnish higher education from the 1980s to today and the changes that have taken place in it. In the European Higher Education Area (EHEA) countries, *the Standards and guidelines for quality assurance in the European higher education area* (ESG 2015) form the basis for the external quality evaluation of higher education institutions. However, national solutions for external quality evaluation in higher education differ from each other.

In Finland, external quality evaluations and audits of higher education follow the principles of enhancement-led evaluation. Compared to many other European countries where a programme-based accreditation model is applied, Finland's approach is comprehensive. The starting point is the autonomy of higher education institutions and responsibility for developing their own activities. In the audits, the whole higher education institution is audited. In addition to education provision, the audit targets research, development and innovation activities and the societal engagement and impact of the higher education institution.

This publication describes the external quality evaluation of Finnish higher education and its changes. In the publication, we answer the following questions:

- How has the external quality evaluation of Finnish higher education progressed as a historical continuum?
- How have the Bologna Process and the Standards and guidelines for quality assurance in the European higher education area (ESG) influenced the external quality evaluation of Finnish higher education?

The publication examines the external quality evaluation of Finnish higher education as a historical continuum, starting from the time before the establishment of the Finnish Higher Education Evaluation Council. At the national level, the starting point was the general strengthening of

planning and monitoring in the public sector. Since the 1980s, the key solution for higher education has been to emphasise higher education institutions' responsibilities for developing their activities and monitoring their performance, not only external control. At the time of establishing the Finnish Higher Education Evaluation Council in 1995, it was decided that a joint council would be established for universities of applied sciences and research universities. Following the launch of the Bologna process, the Berlin Declaration in 2003 provided strong guidance to national systems. Finland's response was to start and establish audits of higher education institutions. The same audit model applies to both higher education sectors. A commitment to the idea of enhancement-led evaluation is common to Finnish higher education evaluations and audits. Nowadays, enhancement-led evaluation is even confirmed in decrees that concern FINEEC. There is a clear division of labour between the evaluation agency, higher education institutions and the Ministry of Education and Culture, which has promoted the acceptability of evaluations in higher education institutions.

In Finland, the development of higher education evaluation activities has been influenced by both national and European trends. During the 2000s, the Bologna Process, which made a change in the national evaluation policy for higher education necessary, has been the most important driver in Europe. The Bologna Process and both versions of ESG (2005; 2015) have had a clear impact on the external quality evaluation of Finnish higher education. The Finnish audit system was developed in parallel with the development of the ESG, and Finland joined the various European quality assurance organisations at a very early stage.

Julkaisija

Kansallinen koulutuksen arviointikeskus (KARVI)

Julkaisun nimi

Kehittävä arviointi Suomen valintana – Yli kolme vuosikymmentä suomalaisen korkeakoulutuksen ulkoista laadunarviointia

Tekijät

Mira Huusko & Riitta Pyykkö

Julkaisun tavoitteena on kuvata 1980-luvulta tähän päivään suomalaisen korkeakoulutuksen ulkoista laadunarviointia ja siinä tapahtuneita muutoksia. Eurooppalaiset laadunvarmistuksen periaatteet (*Standards and guidelines for quality assurance in the European higher education area, ESG 2015*) muodostavat perustan Euroopan korkeakoulutusalueeseen (*European Higher Education Area, EHEA*) kuuluvien maiden korkeakoulujen ulkoiselle laadunarvioinnille. Kansalliset korkeakoulutuksen ulkoisen laadunarvioinnin ratkaisut ovat kuitenkin erilaisia.

Suomessa korkeakoulutuksen ulkoiset laadunarvioinnit ja auditoinnit noudattavat kehittävän arvioinnin periaatteita. Suomen lähestymistapa on moneen muuhun, usein ohjelmapohjaista akkreditoimallia soveltavaan Euroopan, maahan verrattuna kokonaisvaltainen. Lähtökohtana on korkeakoulujen autonomia ja vastuu oman toiminnan kehittämisestä. Auditoinneissa tarkastellaan koko korkeakoulua. Koulutuksen lisäksi auditoinnin kohteena ovat tutkimus-, kehittämis- ja innovaatiotoiminta sekä toiminnan yhteiskunnallinen vaikuttavuus.

Julkaisussa kuvataan suomalaisen korkeakoulutuksen ulkoista laadunarviointia ja sen muutoksia. Julkaisussa vastaamme kysymyksiin:

- Miten suomalaisen korkeakoulutuksen ulkoinen laadunarviointi on edennyt historiallisena jatkumona?
- Miten Bolognan prosessi ja Laadunvarmistuksen periaatteet ja suositukset eurooppalaisella korkeakoulutusalueella (ESG) ovat vaikuttaneet suomalaisen korkeakoulutuksen ulkoiseen laadunarvointiin?

Julkaisussa suomalaisen korkeakoulutuksen ulkoista laadunarviointia tarkastellaan historiallisena jatkumona. Aloitamme ajasta ennen Korkeakoulujen arviointineuvoston perustamista ja kuvaamme arviointitoimintaa ensimmäisistä tutkimuksen arvioinneista alkaen. Kansallisella tasolla lähtökohtana oli aluksi yleinen suunnittelun ja seurannan vahvistuminen julkisella sek-

torilla. Korkeakoulutuksen kannalta olennainen ratkaisu on 1980-luvulta lähtien ollut korostaa korkeakoulujen omaa vastuuta toimintojensa kehittamisestä ja tuloksellisuuden seurannasta, ei vain ulkoista kontrollia. Korkeakoulujen arviointineuvoston perustamisvaiheessa vuonna 1995 päätettiin perustaa yksi yhteinen korkeakoulujen arviointineuvosto ammattikorkeakouluille ja yliopistoille. Bolognan prosessin käynnistyttyä Berliinin julkilausumassa vuonna 2003 ohjeistettiin myös kansallisia järjestelmiä. Suomen vastaus oli korkeakoulujen auditointien aloittaminen ja vakiinnuttaminen. Auditoinneissa sovelletaan kummallekin korkeakoulusektorille samaa auditointimallia. Yhteistä historiallisessa jatkumossa on sitoutuminen kehittävän arvioinnin ajatukseen. Nykyisin kehittävä arviointi vahvistetaan jopa Karvia koskevassa asetuksessa. Arviointiorganisaation, korkeakoulujen ja opetus- ja kulttuuriministeriön kesken on selkeä työnjako, mikä on osaltaan edistänyt arviointien hyväksyttävyyttä korkeakouluissa.

Suomessa korkeakoulutuksen arviointitoiminnan kehitykseen ovat vaikuttaneet sekä kansalliset että eurooppalaiset suuntaukset. 2000-luvun aikana tärkein vaikuttaja Euroopassa on ollut Bolognan prosessi, joka teki korkeakoulutuksen kansallisen arviointipolitiikan muutoksen välttämättömäksi. Bolognan prosessilla ja ESG:n molemmilla versioilla (2005; 2015) on ollut vaikutusta suomalaisen korkeakoulutuksen ulkoiseen laadunarviointiin. Suomen auditointijärjestelmä kehitettiin samanaikaisesti ESG:n kehittämisen kanssa, ja Suomi liittyi varhaisessa vaiheessa eri laadunarvioinnin eurooppalaisiin organisaatioihin.

Sammanfattning

Utgiven av

Nationella centret för utbildningsutvärdering (NCU)

Publikationens namn

Utvecklande utvärdering som Finlands val – Över tre decennier av extern kvalitetsbedömning av den finländska högskoleutbildningen

Författare

Mira Huusko & Riitta Pyykkö

Syftet med publikationen är att från 1980-talet till idag beskriva den externa kvalitetsutvärderingen av den finländska högskoleutbildningen och de förändringar som skett. De europeiska principerna för kvalitetssäkring (*Standards and guidelines for quality assurance in the European higher education area, ESG 2015*) utgör grunden för den externa kvalitetsutvärderingen av högskolorna i länder som hör till det europeiska högskoleområdet (*European Higher Education Area, EHEA*). De nationella lösningarna för extern kvalitetsutvärderingen av högskoleutbildningen är dock olika.

I Finland följer högskoleutbildningens externa kvalitetsutvärdering och auditeringar utvecklande utvärderingsprinciper. Finlands förhållningssätt är helhetsbetonat jämfört med många andra europeiska länder som ofta tillämpar en programbaserad ackrediteringsmodell. Utgångspunkten är högskolornas autonomi och ansvar för utvecklingen av den egna verksamheten. Vid auditeringarna granskas hela högskolan. Utöver utbildning omfattar auditeringen forsknings-, utvecklings- och innovationsverksamhet samt verksamhetens samhällliga genomslagskraft.

I publikationen beskrivs den finländska högskoleutbildningens externa kvalitetsutvärdering och förändringar i den. I publikationen svarar vi på frågorna:

- Hur har den externa kvalitetsutvärderingen av den finländska högskoleutbildningen framskridit som ett historiskt kontinuum?
- Hur har Bolognaprocessen och principerna och rekommendationerna för kvalitetssäkring inom det europeiska högskoleområdet (ESG) påverkat den externa kvalitetsutvärderingen av den finländska högskoleutbildningen?

I publikationen granskas den externa kvalitetsutvärderingen av den finländska högskoleutbildningen som ett historiskt kontinuum från tiden innan Utvärderingsrådet för högskolor grundades. På nationell nivå var utgångspunkten till en början en allmän förstärkning av planeringen och uppföljningen inom den offentliga sektorn. En för högskoleutbildningen väsentlig lösning har

sedan 1980-talet varit att betona högskolornas eget ansvar för utvecklingen av sin verksamhet och uppföljningen av resultaten, inte bara den externa kontrollen. När Utvärderingsrådet för högskolor grundades 1995 beslöt man att inrätta ett gemensamt råd för utvärdering av högskolorna för yrkeshögskolor och universitet. I Berlinförklaringen från 2003, när Bologna-processen inleddes, gavs också starka riktlinjer för de nationella systemen. Finlands svar var att inleda och etablera auditeringar av högskolorna. Vid auditeringarna tillämpas samma auditeringsmodell för båda högskolesektorerna. Varje skede som beskrivs ovan har varit annorlunda, men gemensamt för dem är att förbinda sig till tanken på utvecklande utvärdering. Den nuvarande utvecklande utvärderingen fastställs till och med i förordningen om NCU. Utvärderingsorganisationen, högskolorna och Undervisnings- och kulturministeriet har en tydlig arbetsfördelning, vilket har främjat godkännandet av utvärderingarna vid högskolorna.

I Finland har utvecklingen av utvärderingsverksamheten inom högskoleutbildningen påverkats av både nationella och europeiska inriktningar. Under 2000-talet har den viktigaste påverkaren i Europa varit Bologna-processen, som gjorde det nödvändigt att ändra den nationella utvärderingspolitiken för högskoleutbildningen. Bologna-processen och ESG:s båda versioner (2005; 2015) har haft en klar inverkan på den externa kvalitetsutvärderingen av den finländska högskoleutbildningen. Finlands auditeringssystem utvecklades parallellt med utvecklingen av ESG och Finland anslöt sig i ett mycket tidigt skede till olika europeiska organisationer kvalitetsutvärderi.

Contents

Summary	3
Tiivistelmä	5
Sammanfattning.....	7
1 Introduction	11
2 Discussions on the quality of universities started in the 1980s	17
2.1 From evaluations of fields of science to systematisation of data collections.....	19
2.2 The first institutional evaluations and evaluations of fields of study.....	21
2.3 Enhancement-led evaluation as the basis of evaluation of higher education institutions.....	22
3 Establishment of the Finnish Higher Education Evaluation Council.....	25
3.1 Evaluations central to the establishment of universities of applied sciences.....	27
3.2 Institutional evaluations and evaluations of fields of study in universities continued	29
4 Evaluation of quality as part of the Bologna Process	33
4.1 Quality assurance central to the objectives of the Bologna Process	34
4.2 European principles are specified in more detail	36
5 Audits as Finland's response to European guidelines.....	41
5.1 The quality systems were built in the first audit cycle	44
5.2 The second audit cycle focused on the enhancement of the quality systems.....	46
5.3 The third audit cycle focuses on higher education institutions' ability to develop their activities.....	47
6 The different solutions of European countries	51
7 Future challenges in changing contexts	57
7.1 New openings in European higher education	60
7.2 Towards the fourth audit cycle.....	61
References	65

Introduction

1

The first national higher education evaluation systems in Europe were created in the 1980s in France, the United Kingdom and the Netherlands. Before 1990, an external quality assurance model and an independent agency was also present in Denmark. In Finland, Norway and Lithuania, higher education evaluation activities began in the 1990s. (Bernhard 2011, 540; European Commission/EACEA/Eurydice 2020, 62; Huisman 2019, 1; Pyykkö et al. 2013, 16.) In Finland, the evaluations of higher education institutions (HEIs) began with scientific-specific evaluations, institutional evaluations of universities, evaluations of fields of study and selections of centres of excellence for teaching.

The Quality assurance of higher education saw a real boost in the early 1990s, when the European Commission funded quality assurance practices after the Maastricht Treaty (Ursin 2007, 15; van Vught & Westerheijden 1993). The Institutional Evaluation Programme of rectors' conferences of European universities started in 1993. It continues in the European Universities Association EUA, established in 2001. The European Union's European Pilot Programme for Evaluating Quality in Higher Education was implemented in 1995 (European Commission 1995). Between 1994 and 1995, a four-stage method for implementing an evaluation was created in a pilot project. The four stages were planning of the evaluation, self-evaluation, site visit and the evaluation report (Pyykkö et al. 2013, 16). The method had already been used at least in Sweden and the Netherlands.

In 1998, the Council of Europe's recommendations for enhancing cooperation and networks in the quality assurance of higher education were approved (European Commission 1998). In the recommendations, establishing national quality assurance systems for higher education was proposed for the EU Member States. The Bologna Process aimed at building a European Higher Education Area (EHEA) began to guide the quality assurance in higher education. In 2001, the Prague Communiqué was based partly on the above-mentioned recommendation of the Council of Europe. The ministerial meetings of 2003 and 2005 were most effective for quality assurance: the common guidelines for a framework for quality assurance systems were confirmed in Berlin and the first version of the European Standards and Guidelines in Quality Assurance (ESG 2005) was approved in Bergen.

This publication describes the external evaluation of the quality of Finnish higher education and its changes. In the publication, the following questions are asked:

- How has the external evaluation of quality of Finnish higher education progressed as a historical continuum?
- How have the Bologna Process and the Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance in the European Higher Education Area (ESG) influenced the external evaluation of quality of Finnish higher education?

In autumn 2022, the third audit cycle of HEIs in Finland is approximately half-way, and the planning of the new audit model will begin soon. It is important to examine how the current state has been reached. In this publication, the history of external evaluation of quality is not looked at only through the Bologna Process (cf. Huusko & Pyykkö 2021), but the publication includes the history preceding it and the perspectives of national development. For the Finnish HEIs involved in university alliances need to have an extensive understanding of quality evaluation in Finland and other European countries. The Finnish model may be interesting for an international audience too.

The literature used included research literature, publications of the Finnish Higher Education Evaluation Council (FINHEEC) and the Finnish Education Evaluation Centre (FINEEC) and works describing the history of external evaluation of quality in higher education. External quality assurance, management, and evaluation of higher education in Finland have been discussed in many publications (e.g., Huusko 2009; Liuhanen 2007; Moitus et al. 2020; Overberg 2019; Saarinen 1995; Salminen 2004; Pyykkö 2010; Pyykkö et al. 2013), but this publication explores the topic more comprehensively. A similar examination has been conducted by the Finnish Education Evaluation Centre (FINEEC) in a publication dealing with quality management at different levels of education (Huusko et al. 2021) which presents the development of external quality evaluation. For example, there have not been any school inspectors or advance inspections of learning materials in Finnish primary and secondary schools for decades (Atjonen 2015, 34). The national curriculum means the national core curriculum, based on which schools and teachers make pedagogical decisions. This shows that the responsibility for the quality of education at all levels lies with the educational institutions.

This publication looks at the external quality evaluation of higher education in Finland, starting from the first development act of higher education institutions. Before the 1980s, there was practically no external evaluation or monitoring of quality in HEIs. Evaluation was not even mentioned in the first development act issued in 1966. The accountability and funding models of HEIs have significantly increased reporting on activities.

This publication will first describe the evaluation activities before the establishment of the Finnish Higher Education Evaluation Council (FINHEEC). The early stages of enhancement-led evaluation and the first higher education evaluation projects are also described. The following stage was the establishment of FINHEEC, which made the activities more systematic. The Bologna Process has had a significant impact on quality assurance in higher education in Europe. After describing the Bologna Process, Finland's response to the ministerial meeting of Berlin in 2003 is discussed,

in other words, starting the quality audits and continuing them until the third audit cycle. After that, this publication briefly examines the quality assurance solutions of different countries. In the end, future challenges will be reflected in changing contexts.

Discussions
on the quality
of universities
started in the
1980s

2

This chapter looks at the period before systematic external evaluations in higher education. It starts with the first evaluations of the fields of science (see Figure 1). The institutional evaluations of universities and evaluations of fields of study began in the early 1990s. At the end of the chapter, the early stages of enhancement-led evaluation are described. In later chapters, enhancement-led evaluation will be examined in more detail.

Systematic planning of higher education policy began in Finland in the 1960s. The number of students was increasing and there was a desire to secure the growth of universities (Kivinen et al. 1993, 9, 124; Numminen 1987, 39; Saarinen 2005, 5). The first act on developing higher education institutions was enacted in 1966 to apply to the period 1967–1981. Later the schedule of the act was extended to the end of 1986. The first development plan for teaching and research in higher education was drawn up for the period 1967–1981, and its continuation was confirmed until the end of 1986. It focused on the quantitative expansion of universities and securing the allocation of resources. Evaluation was not mentioned at all. (Korkeakoululaitoksen kehittämissuunnitelma... 1979; VN 228/1966.) The end of the 1960s and the 1970s were a time of an expanding higher education system and an emphasis on the societal importance of science. Resources were allocated to research with the help of the reformed Academy of Finland. (Hakala et al. 2003, 32; Kivinen et al. 1993, 47–49.)

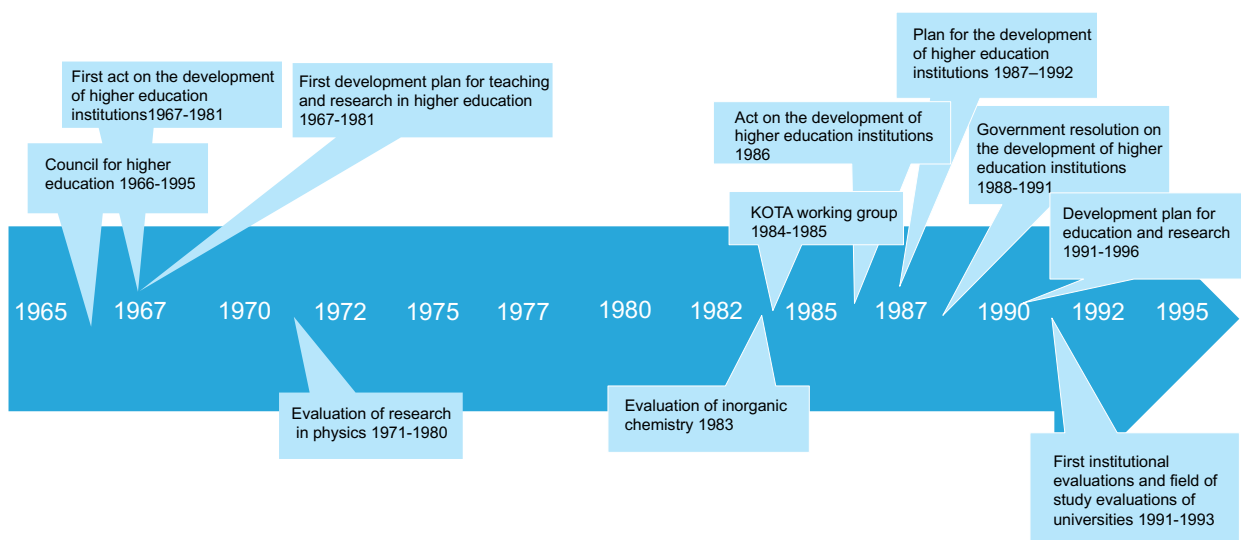


FIGURE 1. The first steps in the evaluations of Finnish higher education institutions in 1967–1995

2.1 From evaluations of fields of science to systematisation of data collections

In the 1970s, research field evaluations began with research evaluation in physics by the Finnish Physical Society in 1971–1980 (Stenman 1981, 25). In 1983, the Academy of Finland launched its first evaluation of research, the evaluation of inorganic chemistry (Evaluation of scientific research... 1983). The evaluations continued to other fields of science by the Academy of Finland and scientific societies.

In 1984, the Ministry of Education set up a working group, called the KOTA, with the task of surveying the monitoring, planning and evaluation methods of HEIs. The working group's task was to draw up a proposal of the methods that could be used to monitor and evaluate the activities of HEIs and their performance quantitatively and qualitatively. (MinEdu 1985.) According to the working group, HEIs should be able to act as "a conscience that diversely evaluates society", which required HEIs to be self-critical and open-mindedly examine their tasks (MinEdu 1985, 1).

The KOTA memorandum was the first step towards external evaluations. It also stressed the importance of self-evaluation and internal evaluations. In the memorandum, evaluation was the responsibility of the universities themselves. According to the working group, the results of the evaluations should primarily be used to enhance HEIs. The idea of evaluation as a development tool was also expanded from the memorandum of the KOTA working group to later evaluation strategies and became part of Finnish higher education policy. (Liuhanen 2007, 28–29; MinEdu 1985; Pyykkö et al. 2013, 15.)

As a result of the recommendations made in the KOTA memorandum, the Ministry of Education began to compile a database containing essential statistical information on the students, teaching staff and financial resources of higher education institutions. This had a significant influence on later evaluation activities. The database was introduced in 1987 and is still in use under the name Vipunen. Because up-to-date statistical information is openly available in databases in Finland, it has been possible to focus the evaluation activities of HEIs on qualitative data and enhancement. In many other countries, evaluation activities are tied to collecting a variety of indicator data (Calculating Quality 2019).

The Council for Higher Education operated in Finland in 1966–1995. The Council had divisions for different fields of study, tasked with discussing the enhancement of the higher education system and drawing up an overview of teaching and research in each field at least once during its three-year term. It issued statements on HEIs' budget proposals and the projects included in the proposals, conducted field-specific evaluations to promote the structural development of degrees and HEIs, and developed the performance criteria. (Asetus korkeakoulujen arviointineuvostosta, muistio 1995; Pyykkö et al. 2013, 15). The Council for Higher Education also selected the first centres of excellence for teaching. The selection process was still far from actual evaluation and was mainly based on "the knowledge and experience that was available to the members of the Council" (Hosia 2009, 238–244).

When the preparations for permanent evaluation activities were made in the mid-1990s, one of the options was to give the task to the Council for Higher Education. However, the Ministry of Education considered it better to establish a new independent expert body, a decision that contributed to the establishment of the Finnish Higher Education Evaluation Council (FINHEEC). (Pyykkö et al. 2013, 15.) According to Numminen (2020, 265), the establishment of FINHEEC, which emphasised the evaluation of education, also highlighted the task of the Academy of Finland as an evaluator of research.

The next step in starting evaluations was the new development act of higher education institutions of 1986. The act was accompanied by a government resolution on the development of higher education institutions between 1988 and 1991 (VN 1052/1986). According to it, every university had to develop a system for evaluating its own activities. The system had to produce sufficient and comparable information on the results and costs of teaching and research. The resolution guaranteed an increase of 15 per cent in the appropriations for universities for the period 1988–1991. (Kivinen et al. 1993, 149–150, 155.)

In 1987–1992, the Plan for the Development of Higher Education Institutions continued the KOTA working group's guidelines for evaluation activities in an almost identical form (Huusko 2009, 97). The general objective was to improve the quality of teaching and research. The development plan emphasised especially HEI's responsibility for performance monitoring. Special attention should be paid to the systematic nature, accountability and evaluation of research and education with the help of the KOTA database. The Ministry should develop this national database in such a manner that it would produce comparable basic data for planning, monitoring, and evaluation. The AMKOTA database was created in 1997 to serve the information needs of universities of applied sciences. It was recommended in the development plan that

methods suitable for assessing their activities should be developed for HEIs. Research activities should be evaluated using the field of science-specific evaluations implemented by the Academy of Finland in basic research. (Korkeakoululaitoksen kehittämissuunnitelma... 1987, 4–5, 7–8; Saarinen & Huusko 2004, 488.)

2.2 The first institutional evaluations and evaluations of fields of study

Institutional evaluations of universities were launched in 1991 as voluntary pilot evaluations. The first institutional evaluations started in the Universities of Jyväskylä and Oulu in 1991. They provided experience and examples of implementing evaluations of universities as well as experience of the suitability of evaluation methods for Finnish HEIs. Between 1992 and 1995, the Ministry of Education funded the institutional evaluations of six universities. (Liuhanen 2005, 259–260; 2007, 29; Pyykkö et al. 2013, 16.)

The evaluations of fields of study began with evaluations of the humanities and natural sciences. These evaluations were completed in 1993 (Humanistisen koulutusala-arvioinnin... 1993; Luonnontieteiden koulutuksen arviointi 1993). As part of the evaluation of higher education in the humanities, departments conducted a self-evaluation of their activities. Two subject groups also carried out international peer evaluations. Similar evaluations conducted in the Netherlands and Sweden were used as examples. A permanent national higher education evaluation system was also outlined in the evaluation report for the humanities. (Humanistisen koulutusala-arvioinnin... 1993, 1, 75, 79.)

In Finland, institutional evaluations and evaluations of fields of study of universities began amidst a number of changes concerning universities. Many reforms and the strengthening of New Public Management began in the 1980s and expanded to universities during the 1990s. The government steering of universities was changed to performance management. The management, administrative and steering practices were changing. (Liuhanen 2007, 37.) At the time when evaluations began, more efficient operation of universities began to be called for both in Finland and elsewhere. The Government of Finland at the time decided to introduce the principle of performance management across public administration, i.e., also in universities. Savings of five per cent in personnel costs by 1995 were set as the target. When the economic situation deteriorated, the above-mentioned development accelerated. (Hyvärinen et al. 1996, 8.) The introduction of external evaluations evoked much discussion in the universities. It was feared that the evaluations would lead to cuts being made in resources and to an overemphasis on quantitative evaluation criteria at the expense of qualitative criteria. (Liuhanen 2007, 29; Saarinen 1995.)

2.3 Enhancement-led evaluation as the basis of evaluation of higher education institutions

Chelimsky (1997) divides the methods of evaluation according to the purpose of the evaluation. These are *evaluation for accountability*, *evaluation for development* and *evaluation for knowledge*. (Chelimsky 1997, 10.) The key concepts in the discussion on evaluation of higher education are *quality assurance* and *quality enhancement* (Henry et al. 2001) and alongside them, *accountability to taxpayers*. In Finland, external evaluation activities have been based on the idea of enhancement-led evaluation from the beginning.

Williams (2016) reflects on the relationship between *quality assurance* and *quality enhancement*. According to him, the staff of HEIs are more interested in improvement than the management, whereas the management of HEIs tend to be more interested in quality assurance and accountability to higher levels. The staff may therefore find quality assurance to be a burdensome extra. (Williams 2016, 98–100.)

Patton's (1997) solution to choosing the point of view for evaluation is clear: evaluation must have a *use*. According to him, evaluation is carried out primarily to support decision-making and development work, to survey different options and to survey the restrictions in the contexts of action plans. Patton distinguishes evaluation research from evaluation as the objective of evaluation is to support operations. He emphasises that systematic collection of data is more essential from the point of view of utilising evaluation than the methods used (cf. Saarinen 1995, 20). According to Patton, no evaluation is value-free. Evaluation focusing on usability answers the question of whose values are visible in the evaluation, who will use the results and for what purpose. Patton's key idea is that evaluation must have a use and evaluation results must be used in decision-making and in the development of activities. The development of evaluation thinking may have a more sustainable influence than the results of individual evaluations. (Patton 1997, 6, 16, 21–24, 88.) Patton developed his idea of enhancement-led evaluation especially for the evaluation of different programmes.

Patton (2011, 41) makes a distinction between *development* and *improvement*. As the emphasis of the evaluations and quality assurance of European HEIs is on supporting and improving the work of HEIs, *enhancement-led evaluation* is a more appropriate concept than *developmental evaluation*, which emphasises only development. (Atjonen 2015, 59, 75.) The principles guiding the evaluation of higher education in Europe (ESG 2015) should be suitable both for systems that emphasise control and for systems that emphasise enhancement. The quality assurance system provides information on the quality of HEIs' activities (accountability) and may also provide advice and recommendations for improving it (enhancement). Quality assurance and the enhancement are thus inter-related. (ESG 2015, 7.)

There are several definitions for enhancement-led evaluation. According to Lee Harvey, it is "a process of augmentation or improvement" (Harvey 2004) and the activities may focus on individual learners, improvement in the quality of an institution, or programme of study. The purpose of enhancement-led evaluation is to help the institution and its actors to develop their

activities and to anticipate the future based on previous knowledge and activities. The objective of enhancement-led evaluation is to obtain information on the weaknesses and strengths of the enhancement activities. (Huusko 2009, 48, 55.) Scotland, which is known as a strong implementer of enhancement-led evaluation, defines enhancement-led evaluation in its evaluation manual as taking deliberate steps to bring about improvement in the effectiveness of the learning experiences of students (QAA Scotland 2017, 3). In addition to effectiveness, the enhancement culture in Scotland also places emphasis on engaging well beyond the threshold, that is, inspiring excellence. Scotland's model sees enhancement-led evaluation as management of change. (QAA Scotland 2017, 4; Atjonen 2015, 35, 89.)

There is no knowledge of precisely how and when the decision to choose enhancement-led evaluation as the approach for external evaluation of HEIs was made in Finland. The idea of enhancement-led evaluation was presented for the first time in a memorandum of the KOTA working group in 1985: "The primary purpose of evaluation is to produce information to lay the basis for developing the activities of the unit in question" (MinEdu 1985, 9). According to Moitus et al. (2020, 38), enhancement-led evaluation "was adopted in Finland at an early stage".

When looking at the time before the Finnish Higher Education Evaluation Council (FINHEEC), general planning and monitoring were being strengthened in the public sector. From the 1980s, the key solution for higher education was to emphasise HEIs' responsibility for enhancing their activities and monitoring their performance, rather than using external control. The idea of enhancement-led evaluation was already presented by the KOTA working group and laid the foundation for the later systematic evaluation activities.

Establishment
of the Finnish
Higher Education
Evaluation
Council

3

The Finnish Higher Education Evaluation Council (FINHEEC) was established in 1995. It started its operation at the beginning of 1996 (VN 1320/1995). In this chapter, the establishment and early times of FINHEEC and the activities before the audits will be examined.

When FINHEEC was established, the Council for Higher Education was terminated. The factors contributing to FINHEEC's establishment were international developments in the 1990s, the establishment of evaluation agencies in different countries and, later, the recommendations issued by the European Union in 1998 for cooperation in the evaluation of higher education (European Commission 1998; Moitus et al. 2020, 38). In 1995, the Education and Culture Committee of the Parliament of Finland also paid attention to the need to create a unified system for evaluating the quality of higher education in Finland (MinEdu 2004, 14). The establishment of universities of applied sciences with license evaluations contributed to the development of evaluation activities (also see Lampinen 2003, 31–35).

The new Evaluation Council covered both higher education sectors. FINHEEC's members were selected from universities, universities of applied sciences, student organisations and working life outside HEIs. As Council members they were independent experts and did not represent their background communities. After having consulted the HEIs and different stakeholders, the Ministry of Education appointed FINHEEC's members for a maximum of four years at a time. (VN 1320/1995.) The decision corresponded with the European guidelines confirmed ten years later, and thus there was no need to change the principles of FINHEEC's composition later.

The basic principles of FINHEEC's evaluation activities were independence of evaluation, respecting HEIs' autonomy and trust between the evaluator and the evaluation participant. It was also outlined that rankings based on comparisons of HEIs would not be implemented in Finland. The aim was to involve the staff, the students, and the external stakeholders of the HEIs in the activities.

FINHEEC's first year of operation 1996 was mainly used for planning activities, familiarisation with international evaluation activities and surveying the situation regarding evaluations in different universities. FINHEEC's chair and general secretary familiarised themselves with the external quality evaluation systems of higher education in Nordic and European countries and outside Europe. The actual evaluations were launched in 1997. (MinEdu 2004, 12; Moitus & Saari 2004, 6; Visakorpi 1996, 2; Välimaa 2004, 110.) FINHEEC's secretariat was active in both Nordic and European networks and in other cooperation. National cooperation with various actors was close.

In the Government decree on the Finnish Higher Education Evaluation Council (VN 1320/1995), the following were defined as FINHEEC's tasks: assisting HEIs and the Ministry of Education in matters concerning the evaluation of HEIs as well as broad-ranging evaluation and development of HEIs, including assessing the applications of universities of applied sciences for a licence to provide education. The latter task meant that a procedure like the accreditation of higher education used by many countries was applied in Finland for the first time. FINHEEC also had fixed-term tasks that were related to topical needs in education policy. (MinEdu 2004, 14; Pyykkö et al. 2013, 16.)

In 1997, the internal and external evaluation of universities' operation was recorded in the Universities Act (VN 645/1997):

The universities shall evaluate their education, research and artistic activities and their effectiveness. The universities shall also take part in external evaluation of their activities. The universities shall publish the findings of the evaluations they undertake. (VN 645/1997, section 5.)

The expression "quality assurance" is mentioned in the justifications for the act. As an enhancement task had been given to FINHEEC, HEIs' continuous quantitative reporting to the Ministry of Education was made a prerequisite for development and self-regulation. This reporting could be called evaluation for accountability. Universities' responsibility for the evaluation of their activities was recorded in the agreements between the ministry and the universities for the first time in 1995–1998 (MinEdu 2004, 12). As from 1999, universities also reported on evaluation activities and their key results in performance negotiations, as well as on the development measures based on them (MinEdu 2004, 13).

3.1 Evaluations central to the establishment of universities of applied sciences

Temporary universities of applied sciences were established in Finland in 1991. The first permanent universities of applied sciences started operating after evaluation processes in 1996. The Ministry of Education considered it important to integrate the evaluation and development of activities into the operation of universities of applied sciences from the beginning. Internal and external evaluation became a statutory obligation for universities of applied sciences already from 1995 onwards. (Pyykkö et al. 2013, 16; VN 255/1995.) Between 1996 and 2003, FINHEEC assessed the

applications of all universities of applied sciences for a licence to provide education, applications for an extension to the licence and the mandatory development obligations related to the licence (MinEdu 2004, 20; Pyykkö et al. 2013, 22). The 2003 Act on universities of applied sciences (VN 351/2003) defined evaluation of quality in the same way as the Universities Act, in other words, as HEIs having the responsibility for quality and its continuous development as well as an obligation to participate in external evaluation at regular intervals.

The evaluation of applications submitted by universities of applied sciences for a licence to provide education deviated from FINHEEC's other tasks to assist and support HEIs (Visakorpi 1996, 2). Evaluation was based on statutory criteria including the mission of the university of applied sciences, the up-to-dateness and necessity of the degree programmes, teachers' educational level, relationships with working life, and the learning and work environment. Some of the institutions aspiring to become universities of applied sciences had to apply for the licence in all three application years. The application process was considerably demanding. (Pyykkö et al. 2013, 22; see also Ala-Vähälä 2011, 24–25.) The evaluations have speeded up the establishment of evaluation activities in the entire field of higher education. Another FINHEEC's task that can be considered an official task was the evaluation and registration of specialisation studies of HEIs (MinEdu 2004, 19).

When the system of universities of applied sciences had been made permanent, FINHEEC's evaluations could focus on supporting their development. Although the first systematic audit cycle had not been started yet, FINHEEC implemented audits of the quality systems and quality work of universities of applied sciences from as early as 1998. By 2004, quality work had been audited in 16 universities of applied sciences, which was approximately one half of the universities of applied sciences at the time. The evaluation targets were quality work as a whole and especially the feedback systems related to teaching and learning. Some of the audits were carried out as joint projects of several universities of applied sciences. At the time, the audits were carried out without a common set of criteria or audit model, but they laid the basis for the forthcoming first audit cycle. (MinEdu 2004, 14; Pyykkö et al. 2013, 23; see also Ala-Vähälä 2011, 25; Moitus & Saari 2004, 26.) The aim was to introduce institutional evaluations of universities of applied sciences alongside the audits of quality work. Between 2000 and 2003, institutional evaluations were implemented in seven universities of applied sciences. The emphasis of the evaluations varied from evaluating the management and organisation of HEIs to evaluating their pedagogical strategies as well as their teaching and learning processes. (MinEdu 2004, 14; Pyykkö et al. 2013, 23.)

Between 2002 and 2004, FINHEEC also evaluated the applications received for the trial of master's degrees at universities of applied sciences and the trial itself. The trial was evaluated in two stages by first implementing an evaluation of the initial stage in 2003 and an international final evaluation as a continuation for it in 2004. Based on the recommendations made in the evaluation, the master's degrees of universities of applied sciences were made a permanent part of the education system. (Pyykkö et al. 2013, 23.)

3.2 Institutional evaluations and evaluations of fields of study in universities continued

The government's development plan, according to which all universities had to evaluate their activities by 2000 (Koulutus & tutkimus... 1996, 8), extended institutional evaluations to all Finnish universities. In 1996–1999, each university evaluated its activities as a whole or one extensive part of it. Institutional evaluations were implemented in a total of 22 universities. Six of the evaluations were conducted before FINHEEC was established. (MinEdu 2004, 20.) The main evaluation area in institutional evaluations was management and decision-making in the university. The university could choose the emphasis of the evaluation. Apart from one university, the institutional evaluations were implemented by an international evaluation team. Based on the recommendations, the universities developed their strategy work and responsibilities in decision-making, clarified the profiles and feedback systems, and began to shift the focus of the enhancement of education from teaching to learning and supporting it. Follow-up evaluations of the institutional evaluations were also carried out. (Pyykkö et al. 2013, 22.) The progress made in universities' evaluations and quality work was monitored in the feedback on universities' financial statements, published by the Ministry of Education in 2001–2009 (Ala-Vähälä 2011, 10).

Between 1997 and 2004 (see Table 1), FINHEEC conducted evaluations of fields of study and evaluations related to education policy and other thematic evaluations (MinEdu 2004, 20; Pyykkö et al. 2013, 24–25.) FINHEEC also funded HEIs' own evaluation projects, research related to evaluation and benchmarking projects.

TABLE 1. The different types of evaluations in higher education according to FINHEEC's publications 1997–2004

Year/evaluation types	Institutional evaluations	Evaluations of fields of study	Thematic evaluations	Audits of quality systems of UASs	Centre of excellence evaluations	Evaluations of licences of UASs	Benchmarking projects
1997	2	-	-	-	-	-	-
1998	3	1	3	1	1	1	-
1999	5	2	4	2	-	1	1
2000	5	4	-	7	3	-	-
2001	3	4	2	-	1	-	1
2002	2	1	9	1	1	1	3
2003	5	3	4	-	3	-	1
2004	3	2	2	1	-	-	-

One part of FINHEEC's operation was to evaluate the proposals for centres of excellence and centres of quality for teaching. The Ministry of Education began to select and award national centres of excellence for university teaching in 1994. The origins of the activity go back to the activities of the Council for Higher Education in the 1980s, but FINHEEC was given the task of reorganising this form of evaluation. (Moitus 2000; Parpala & Seppälä 2003.) FINHEEC implemented 18 cycles of centres of excellence evaluation, the purpose of which was to emphasise the importance of education alongside research and activate the continuous improvement of education. This was the only form of evaluation with a link to funding. A significant amount of performance-based money was allocated to the units selected. The units selected as centres of excellence spread best practices within their own HEI and often outside it (Raaheim & Karjalainen 2012). FINHEEC changed the title of the centres for the period of 2001–2003 from 'excellence' (*huippu*, 'top') to 'quality' (*laatu*). The reason was that the Finnish term included a reference to an order of preference, and 'quality' was considered to describe the different factors of good education better. In English, the term centre of excellence is used for both. (Moitus & Saari 2000, 7; Saarinen & Huusko 2004, 489.)

HEIs found that the selection of centres of excellence supported the development of teaching (Knubb-Manninen 2003). The centres served as an external incentive for launching the development of teaching. Selecting centres of excellence also developed the criteria for excellent education nationally. The criteria changed in the different cycles (Pyykkö 2009, 29). Centres of excellence were selected based on written applications that were evaluated by national field-specific panels. There were also challenges in the selections, however, as the national operating area was small.

When universities' centres of excellence were selected in 2008, the evaluations were carried out by an independent international evaluation team and evaluation visits were included in the process. In addition, the first selection was made without mentioning the applicant's name and HEI to those selecting the centre. The experiences of the new model were encouraging. The model was found to support innovation and diversity better than the previous one. (Pyykkö 2010, 71.) Although the international evaluation process worked as expected the evaluations of centres of excellence for education were no longer continued after 2012. Between 1999 and 2012, a total of 87 departments or faculties of Finnish universities received the Centre of Excellence award. (Karjalainen 2014, 198–199; Raaheim & Karjalainen 2012.) In the same years, centres of excellence of universities of applied sciences and adult education were also evaluated (also see Hämäläinen & Moitus 1999).

From the end of the 1990s until the mid-2000s, FINHEEC organised educational trips for familiarisation with higher education evaluation systems. Several actors from different universities and universities of applied sciences participated in these trips to different European countries, North America, Japan and Australia. (Karjalainen 2014, 200.) The last trip organised by FINHEEC was carried out in 2013 and was made to Switzerland and Germany.

The development plan for education and research for the period 1999–2004 was the first such plan in compliance with the new Universities Act and clarified the target of the forthcoming evaluations. According to the plan, universities and universities of applied sciences must evaluate their own activities, the quality and effectiveness of their education, and the utilisation of the results of previous evaluations. Evaluation had to be carried out as a self-evaluation conducted by

the education provider and as an external evaluation, while also developing evaluation methods suitable for the activities. (Koulutus & tutkimus... 1996, 23; Rekilä 2004, 100; Saarinen 2005, 8; Saarinen & Huusko 2004, 488.)

The period from the first institutional evaluations of universities implemented in 1993 to the institutional evaluations implemented in the first years of the 21st century was a time of reforms in Finnish higher education policy, in the management of universities and in evaluation activities. At the time of the last institutional evaluations, HEIs had already adapted to performance-based management. The staff of HEIs had already partly got used to external evaluations (Saarinen 1995, 117). Finland's economic situation had improved significantly since the recession of the 1990s. Finland also joined the European Union in 1995. (Liuhanen 2007, 30.)

The establishment of FINHEEC did not cause major changes to the approach of national evaluations as FINHEEC continued to apply the idea of enhancement-led evaluation adopted before (Liuhanen 2007, 34). In the first years of FINHEEC's operation, there were many different forms of evaluation. Although evaluations supporting the enhancement of HEIs had already been introduced before, the concept of enhancement-led evaluation was not used in FINHEEC's action plan for the first time until the period of 2000–2004. (Pyykkö et al. 2013, 17.) However, FINHEEC did not commit itself to any specific evaluation model or process. Often, qualitative methods (see Atjonen 2015, 129) were tailored according to the objective of the evaluation and the special characteristics of the evaluated theme. An exception to this were the evaluations of specialisation studies of HEIs and the evaluations of the licence and master's degree applications of universities of applied sciences, in which the objectives and criteria had been defined in advance. (MinEdu 2004, 21.) In the first years of FINHEEC's operation, there was a lot of discussion about the *fitness for purpose* principle, which also later guided the examination of the evaluations through usability.

Evaluation of quality as part of the Bologna Process

4

The Bologna Process and the building of the European Higher Education Area has been the factor that has contributed to the quality assurance procedures in higher education in Finland and the entire Europe the most. The Bologna Process has three main objectives: a three-cycle degree structure, mutual recognition of degrees and quality assurance of higher education. The national development of quality assurance procedures has been monitored in the Bologna Process Implementation Reports. In this chapter, the role of the Bologna Process in paving the way for external quality evaluation in higher education from the Sorbonne Declaration in 1998 to the Rome Communiqué in 2020 is examined.

4.1 Quality assurance central to the objectives of the Bologna Process

The Sorbonne Declaration in 1998 did not mention quality assurance at all (Sorbonne 1998). The Bologna Declaration in 1999 pointed out that one of the instruments for removing obstacles to mobility is the "promotion of European co-operation in quality assurance with a view to developing comparable criteria and methodologies" (Bologna 1999). In the Prague Communiqué in 2001, the ministers continued to emphasise the need for European cooperation and mutual acceptance of national quality assurance systems. They urged HEIs, other national actors and ENQA (European Network for Quality Assurance in Higher Education, later Association), to promote the creation of a common framework for quality assurance. (Prague 2001.) These demands were responded to in the following ministerial meeting in Berlin in 2003 (see Figure 2).

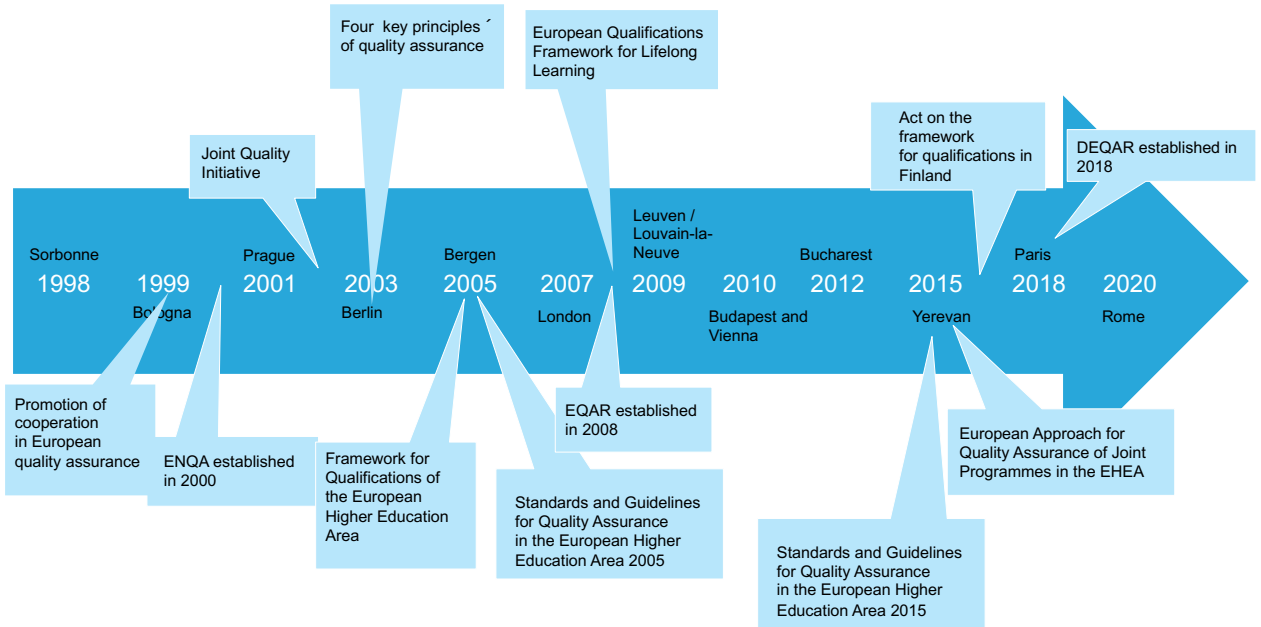


FIGURE 2. External quality assurance in higher education in the Bologna Process 1998–2020

ENQA’s first office was in Helsinki near to the office of the Finnish Higher Education Evaluation Council (FINHEEC) between 2000 and 2010. The network had close links to FINHEEC, which promoted the monitoring of European quality assurance in Finland. The activities of the ENQA secretariat were funded by the Ministry of Education of Finland. (Moitus et al. 2020, 39; Pyykkö et al. 2013, 30.) An important turning point in ENQA’s operation was the change from a network to an association of evaluation agencies in 2004. The change extended the organisation’s operation and strengthened the position of evaluation agencies. (European Commission/EACEA/Eurydice 2020, 65.)

The ministerial meeting in Berlin in 2003 has been the most significant ministerial meeting for the development of national and common European quality assurance systems for higher education. The communiqué emphasised that quality was at the heart of setting up a European Higher Education Area. The main responsibility for quality assurance lay with the autonomous HEIs themselves. (Berlin 2003.) The Berlin Communiqué issued a concrete four-step programme:

Therefore, they agree that by 2005 national quality assurance systems should include:

- *A definition of the responsibilities of the bodies and institutions involved.*
- *Evaluation of programmes or institutions, including internal assessment, external review, participation of students and the publication of results.*
- *A system of accreditation, certification or comparable procedures.*
- *International participation, co-operation and networking.* (Berlin 2003.)

In Berlin 2003, ENQA was urged to "to develop an agreed set of standards, procedures and guidelines on quality assurance, to explore ways of ensuring an adequate peer review system for quality assurance and/or accreditation agencies or bodies" in cooperation with the other members of the group later known as the E4, i.e. the European Universities Association (EUA), the European Association of Institutions in Higher Education (EURASHE) and the European Students' Union (ESU) (Berlin 2003). The year 2005 was set as the deadline for the development work.

The ministerial meeting in Bergen in 2005 approved the Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance in the EHEA (ESG 2005). The principles of the ESG are divided into three main parts which concern the internal quality assurance of higher education institutions, their external quality assurance and the quality assurance of the evaluation agencies (ESG 2005). The ESG are guiding principles. They explain what should be done, but do not define in detail how it should be implemented. Because ENQA's office was in Helsinki at the time, the first audit model for Finnish HEIs was developed simultaneously with the development of the ESG. The Bergen Communiqué in 2005 also emphasised the importance of the internal quality assurance systems of HEIs.

A new European task given in Bergen (2005) was the development of a European register of quality assurance agencies based on national review (EQAR, European Quality Assurance Register for Higher Education) (Bergen 2005). The proposal for a Qualifications Framework for the European Higher Education Area (QF-EHEA) was also approved in Bergen in 2005. The member states committed themselves to developing National Qualifications Frameworks (NQFs) in line with it by 2010. (Bergen 2005.) The development of a qualifications framework is included in the ESG standard 1.2 but the concrete weight given to it in external evaluation of quality varies in different countries. In Finland, the Act on the framework for qualifications did not enter into force until 2017 (VN 93/2017).

4.2 European principles are specified in more detail

The London Communiqué in 2007 stated that a start had been made in the implementation of the ESG, that students' involvement in quality assurance had increased and that external quality assurance had developed. However, there was room for improvement in both areas. Progress had also been made in international cooperation. To support this progress, an annual European Quality Assurance Forum (EQAF) was organised starting from 2006. The greatest attention was paid to the establishment of EQAR in London 2007. Its decision-making body is the Register Committee formed by experts and the criterion for acceptance in the register is substantial compliance with the ESG. The register should be voluntary, self-financed, independent, and transparent. The most important precondition for being admitted to the register would be meeting the guidelines of the ESG. (London 2007.)

The purpose of the register is to allow all stakeholders and the general public open access to objective information about trustworthy quality assurance agencies that are working in line with the ESG. It will therefore enhance confidence in higher education in the EHEA and beyond and facilitate the mutual recognition of quality assurance and accreditation decisions. (London 2007.)

The Leuven/Louvain-la-Neuve Communiqué in 2009 stated that the European Standards and Guidelines for quality assurance had been adopted and EQAR, established in 2008, was operational. The central role of quality in higher education continued to be a priority: "Striving for excellence in all aspects of higher education, we address the challenges of the new era. This requires a constant focus on quality." (Leuven 2009.) However, any new concrete tasks were not given to quality assurance.

The ministerial meeting in Budapest-Vienna in 2010 was a celebratory meeting as year 2010 had been set as the target for creating the European Higher Education Area in the meeting in Prague in 2001. The declaration of the meeting was short, stating the progress achieved and repeating the upcoming tasks that also applied to quality assurance. (Budapest-Vienna 2010.)

The functioning of the ESG was examined for the meeting held in Bucharest in 2012. The conclusion was that there was a need to reform the ESG to improve their clarity, applicability, usefulness, including their scope. (Bucharest 2012.) The task of preparing the ESG reform was given to the E4 in cooperation with Education International, Business Europe and EQAR. Evaluation agencies were encouraged to apply for registration in EQAR. Applying was motivated with a policy that allowed agencies accepted to the Register to operate in the entire European Higher Education Area. (Bucharest 2012.) The concrete implementation of the last guideline remained to be decided in the national legislation of each country.

EQAR expanded fast. At the end of 2009, the number of registered evaluation agencies was 14, while their number in 2022 is already 50. The expansion of the register has been supported by the fact that the approval of evaluations conducted by transnational evaluation agencies is based on registration with EQAR. In 2013, it was possible to use a cross-border evaluation agency in 14 of the countries participating in the Bologna Process, and the number of the countries had already risen to 21 in 2020. This also created competition between the evaluation agencies. (European Education and Culture Executive Agency, Eurydice 2020, 68–78.)

A revised version of the Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance in the EHEA (ESG 2015) and the European Approach for Quality Assurance of Joint Programmes in the EHEA were approved in Yerevan in 2015. The European Approach was aimed to facilitate the external quality evaluation of joint programmes and to remove obstacles to their development. (Yerevan 2015.) The focus of the ESG 2005 was on the evaluation of the quality of degree education, which was essential in thinking of the objectives of the Bologna Process. The ESG reviewed in 2015 further emphasised it. Compared to the 2005 version, the most important changes in the ESG 2015 concerned the first part of the principles, i.e., internal quality assurance of HEIs. At the beginning of the 21st century, a shift towards evaluation supporting learning and the development of teaching is a strengthening of enhancement-led evaluation (Singh 2010, 191). In many countries, the introduction of a student-centred approach emphasising students' active role as a separate standard 1.3 (*Student-centred learning, teaching and assessment*) still required further enhancement (Dakovic & Gover 2021, 6).

The 2018 ministerial meeting in Paris recognised that the application of the ESG in different countries had progressed. The Paris Communiqué encouraged countries to continue to remove the obstacles that national legislation or regulation posed to the utilisation of the ESG. The Paris

Communiqué condensed this into a commitment to quality assurance corresponding to the ESG. The Paris Communiqué encouraged countries to apply the European approach to quality assurance and praised the establishment of the Database of External Quality Assurance Results (DEQAR). (Paris 2018.)

The development of DEQAR, maintained by EQAR and established in 2018, has been fast. In May 2022, the database contained more than 75,000 evaluation reports from more than 3,000 HEIs and 44 evaluation agencies (EQAR Newsletter July 2022). The database contains all the most recent reports from many countries. The key question is how the use of the register, and its utilisation should be extended (External evaluation 2021).

The latest follow-up meeting of the Bologna Process was held in Rome in 2020. The Rome Communiqué differed from the previous communiqués through its structure and method of presentation. The aim is to build an inclusive, innovative and interconnected EHEA by 2030, able to underpin a sustainable, cohesive and peaceful Europe. It highlighted the fundamental values of Europe, the transition into green, sustainable and resilient economies and societies, and the commitment to the UN Sustainable Development Goals more than the previous communiqués. The quality assurance perspective was mentioned only in two contexts. The aim was to further develop national frameworks and their compatibility with the European framework. The quality assurance of international joint degrees and the importance of micro-credentials and flexible study paths was emphasised. To promote them, the ESG must be applied innovatively and in the spirit of enhancement-led evaluation. (Rome 2020.) The next ministerial meeting will be in Albania in 2024.

The Bologna process is one of the most disputed and one of the most influential long-term policy changes the European Union has ever succeeded to start (Dienel 2019, 403). The greatest impact has not been the process as such, but the subsequent national reforms in the higher education systems and teaching and learning practices of different countries (Haukland 2020, 365, 379; Wihlborg & Teelken 2014, 1085). However, there have been significant differences in how the process has progressed in the different member states, which is stated in the Leuven (2009) and Bucharest (2012) Communiqués, for example. Key question is whether these differences can be evened out or whether the Process will remain a two-speed process (Budapest-Vienna 2010; Curaj et al. 2018, 2). Especially the countries that joined the Bologna Process after 2007 have had difficulties in reaching the objectives (Wihlborg & Teelken 2014, 1086). Finland has actively promoted the objectives of the Bologna Process.

The role of the European Commission in the Bologna Process has changed from funding the reforms to pointing the direction of the activities. It may contribute to the different paces of EU Member States and other countries participating in the Bologna Process. It is a good question whether the Bologna Process will end one day or whether it has become a permanent structure in which the development of European higher education is carried out. (Huusko & Pyykkö 2021, 16.)

Audits as
Finland's
response to
European
guidelines

5

Signing the Berlin Communiqué in 2003 meant a strong commitment to the requirement for "a system of accreditation, certification or comparable procedures" also for Finland. The quality assurance of Finnish HEIs fulfilled the other parts of the communiqué. Finland's response to the guidelines in the Berlin Communiqué and more widely to the policies of the Bologna Process will be discussed in this chapter.

The Ministry of Education set up a working group on quality assurance in higher education to discuss the current state and development needs of Finnish HEIs and the higher education system. The output of the working group was the 2004 memorandum on quality assurance of higher education (MinEdu 2004). The memorandum recommended the systematisation of the quality assurance systems of HEIs and the launch of audits of quality assurance systems. HEIs did not find it necessary to change from the enhancement-led evaluation adopted in Finland to accreditation but supported the creation of a comparable quality assurance procedure. The evaluation of HEI's quality assurance procedures was considered such a comparable model. In quality terms, it meant an audit or auditing. (MinEdu 2004, 35, 39–40; see also Overberg et al. 2020, 334.) The concept audit referred to auditing the accounts but expanded in this context to mean an evaluation of HEIs' quality assurance systems (Salminen 2004, 66).

The working group on quality assurance took a clear stand on continuing enhancement-led evaluation. According to the working group, external evaluation must be implemented in a way that, in addition to indicating and assuring quality, also supports its improvement and continuous development (MinEdu 2004, 34). According to the memorandum, enhancement-led evaluation's aim is to support HEIs in the development of their education. Enhancement-led evaluation is understood as a user-oriented process in which the evaluation method is tailored in accordance with the objectives of the evaluation, the theme to be evaluated and the participants' needs. (MinEdu 2004, 49.)

According to the working group, the audits were more suitable for the Finnish higher education system than accreditation. The Finnish legislation on higher education defines the general obligations regarding HEIs' activities and thus guarantees the minimum level in education.

The working group was of the view that FINHEEC's evaluations of fields of study together with the audits of quality assurance systems and the decisions of the Ministry of Education on starting or ending a degree programme were sufficient to ensure quality in HEIs. According to the working group, the transparency and international credibility of the procedure could be ensured by using international experts and publishing the audit reports or their summaries in English. This supports the internationalisation of HEIs and makes the use of the audits easier. The working group proposed that the quality assurance systems of all HEIs were to be audited by 2011. (MinEdu 2004, 35, 39–40.)

In 2005, FINHEEC started the audits of quality assurance systems with the two pilot audits of universities of applied sciences. It had implemented audits of quality work of universities of applied sciences before (see Chapter 3.1). Even though the systematic audits began, HEIs also continued their evaluation activities by starting new evaluations of education provision and research and continuing the utilisation of previous evaluations. HEIs incorporated their previous evaluation methods into their quality assurance system, which laid the foundation for the spread of quality assurance in Finnish HEIs. (Kauko 2006, 86.)

The evaluation of specialisation studies, which was previously laid down in the Government decree on the Finnish Higher Education Evaluation Council, was removed from FINHEEC's tasks at the end of 2007. In the 2009 Government decree on the Finnish Higher Education Evaluation Council, FINHEEC's tasks were defined in a little bit different way from before and in a way that better corresponded to its field of work at the time. Quality systems and quality assurance were mentioned in the Decree, whereas the previous Decree mentioned only evaluation. Under the Decree (VN 794/2009), FINHEEC has the following tasks:

- *to assist higher education institutions and the Ministry of Education in matters concerning evaluation of higher education institutions,*
- *to organise evaluations related to the activities and quality systems of higher education institutions,*
- *to support quality assurance and the development of quality in higher education institutions, and*
- *to participate in international evaluation activities and cooperation in evaluation.* (VN 794/2009.)

International activities had been defined not only as cooperation but also as "participation in international evaluation activities", and FINHEEC could thus accept assignments from both Finnish and international HEIs. An International Advisory Board was set up to support the activities. It operated in 2011–2013 bringing views from international trends in quality assurance to FINHEEC's strategy work. FINHEEC's independence was emphasised so that it elected the chair and deputy chair from among its members instead of the Ministry of Education appointing them. (Pyykkö 2010, 63; Pyykkö et al. 2013, 18; VN 794/2009.)

5.1 The quality systems were built in the first audit cycle

FINHEEC started the audits in 2005. In the first audit cycle in 2005–2011, HEIs' quality systems were new, and audits focused on assessing whether quality management was conducted in a systematic manner. The audits were aimed at ensuring HEIs' systematic functioning and supporting the enhancement of the quality assurance systems of HEIs. The aim was to correspond to the European principles of quality assurance. The aim was also to find out what qualitative objectives HEIs had set for their activities and to assess the processes and procedures used by HEIs to maintain and enhance the quality of its education provision and other activities. The audit processes and public reporting increased debate on quality and the interaction between HEIs and their stakeholders. (FINHEEC 2006; FINHEEC 2007; Moitus 2014, 95, 100; Moitus et al. 2020, 41.)

According to Ala-Vähälä (2011), the first audit cycle got HEIs to invest in the building and systematisation of their quality assurance systems. Because of the licencing processes, universities of applied science had already conducted better groundwork. Building the quality assurance systems was a demanding project to both higher education sectors. Universities of applied sciences considered the quality assurance systems to be everyday tools more than universities. The management of HEIs had a more positive attitude to quality assurance systems, while researchers at universities were more critical. (Ala-Vähälä 2011, 69). In the first audit cycle, 18 per cent of the audited HEIs had to have a re-audit, which was approximately two years after the first one. Most of the audits were conducted by a Finnish audit team. (Moitus 2014, 96.) As a result of the audits, a previously marginal personnel group in HEIs began to grow, because a quality manager or a similar was appointed to every HEI.

The audits included monitoring the development carried out in HEIs. FINHEEC organised quality management follow-up and development seminars in which representatives of the HEIs that had passed the audit three years before explained to representatives of other HEIs what kind of development work they had conducted based on the recommendations of the audit. The HEI presenting its work drew up a short report on its development activities, and a representative of another HEI commented on the performed development work after its presentation in the seminar. This is part of supporting HEI's continuous improvement and these seminars continue under the title Higher Education Quality Seminar every year.

Although all the Finnish HEIs were audited in the first audit cycle, thematic evaluations and the centre of excellence evaluations also continued to be implemented during the term (see Table 2). In addition, a few evaluations of fields of study and one benchmarking project per year were conducted between 2005 and 2009.

TABLE 2. FINHEEC's publications on evaluations during the first audit cycle 2005–2011

Year/evaluation type	Audits	Thematic evaluations	Centre of excellence evaluations	Evaluations of fields of study	Benchmarking projects
2005	-	1	1	-	1
2006	6	5	3	1	1
2007	5	1	-	-	1
2008	7	1	-	1	1
2009	12	4	2	-	1
2010	9	1	1	-	-
2011	9	2	-	-	-

From 2005, FINHEEC financed quality assurance training organised for higher education staff (Pyykkö et al. 2013, 29). The quality assurance training was organised by different organisations in different years. FINHEEC also supported benchmarking projects emphasising the best practices of HEIs. Several HEIs piloted the method in the enhancement of teaching. (Hämäläinen & Kaartinen-Koutaniemi 2002.) Conducting international comparative benchmarking projects also proved interesting in terms of pedagogical enhancement (Karjalainen, Kuortti & Niinikoski 2002).

FINHEEC offered also fee-based services and conducted several fee-based evaluations. In 2009, fee-based services and exporting evaluation expertise also strengthened in legislation. A provision enabling FINHEEC to accept assignments from Finnish and international actors was prescribed in the Decree on the Finnish Education Evaluation Council (VN 764/2009). In addition, FINHEEC financed research on evaluation and quality assurance, and organised seminars on evaluation and quality assurance. (Pyykkö et al. 2013, 28–29.)

In 2009, FINHEEC set an objective to strengthen enhancement-led evaluation as a brand that would help it to profile itself on international forums. According to the definition specified in more detail, "the goal of enhancement-led evaluation is to help higher education institutions to recognise the strengths, good practices and development targets in their operations". (Pyykkö et al. 2013, 17.) The new Universities Act (VN 558/2009) that came into effect at the beginning of 2010 did not change FINHEEC's activities, but the mergers of universities affected the implementations of the audits and their schedules.

5.2 The second audit cycle focused on the enhancement of the quality systems

In the second audit cycle (2012–2018), the role of HEI's self-evaluation was further emphasised, and the notion of quality culture was introduced. The aim of the audits was still to support HEIs in developing quality systems that met the European standards of quality assurance and to show that Finnish HEIs have well-functioning and systematic quality systems. The audit was also connected to the profile and strategic objectives of each HEI with the help of an evaluation area chosen by the HEI. The participation of the HEI community (staff and students) as well as external stakeholders in quality management was increasingly stressed. The audits emphasised the role strategic management and steering play in quality systems and operational development. HEIs were asked to provide concrete examples of the effectiveness of quality management. (FINHEEC 2011; FINEEC 2015, 6; Moitus 2014, 96, 101; Nordblad et al. 2020.) In the second audit cycle, approximately 10 per cent of the HEIs had to be re-audited. International audit teams implemented approximately half of the audits. (Moitus 2014, 96; Moitus et al. 2020, 42.)

According to Nordblad et al. (2020, 42), the key result of the second audit cycle was that HEIs had well-functioning quality systems. In many HEIs, quality management is connected to HEIs' operational management and strategic objectives. Quality systems produce information that supports the continuous improvement and targeting of institutions' activities. (Nordblad et al. 2020, 42.) According to Ala-Vähälä (2018), the attitudes towards quality work were more positive in universities of applied sciences than in research universities. Quality work supported the enhancement of the educational provision, and audits supported the development of HEIs. (Ala-Vähälä 2018; Nordblad et al. 2020, 40–41.)

Half-way through the second audit cycle, a significant change took place in the education evaluation activities in Finland. The Finnish Education Evaluation Centre FINEEC, in which FINHEEC, the Finnish Education Evaluation Council and the learning outcomes evaluation activities at the Finnish National Agency for Education merged, began its operation in 2014. The activities of FINEEC cover the entire education sector from early childhood education and care to doctoral education and liberal adult education. The tasks of FINHEEC's secretariat were continued by FINEEC's Higher Education and Liberal Adult Education Unit. In conjunction with the establishment of FINEEC, the Higher Education Evaluation Committee was set up for evaluations and audits of higher education. The committee was given the task of deciding on the evaluation and audit teams, whether HEIs passed the audits, and accepting the project plans of evaluations concerning higher education.

During the second audit cycle, the evaluation activities in higher education focused mainly on audits, although thematic evaluations and some evaluations of fields of study were also implemented (see Table 3). An example of evaluations of fields of study is the evaluation of undergraduate medical education, the evaluation of thematic evaluations, and the evaluation of education in entrepreneurship. In 2015, FINEEC also started accreditations of the first-cycle degree programmes in engineering (EUR-ACE).

TABLE 3. FINHEEC's and FINEEC's publications on evaluations during the second audit cycle 2012–2018

Year/evaluation type	Audits	Thematic evaluations	Evaluations of fields of study	Centre of excellence evaluations	Accreditations
2012	8	3	-	1	-
2013	4	3	-	-	-
2014	2	2	-	-	-
2015	7	-	-	-	2
2016	12	1	-	-	1
2017	9	2	-	-	1
2018	9	2	2	-	1

In the external evaluation carried out by ENQA on FINEEC's higher education evaluation activities in 2016–2017, it was stated that HEIs, students, representatives of the Ministry of Education and Culture and external stakeholders supported enhancement-led evaluation (Loukkola et al. 2017; Moitus et al. 2020, 42). In the 2015–2018 audit manual, FINEEC emphasised HEIs' strategy in enhancement-led evaluation, i.e., "to help higher education institutions achieve their strategic objectives" (FINEEC 2015, 35), while the first two audit manuals emphasised the evaluation process and its user-orientation.

Enhancement-led evaluation refers to evaluation aimed at supporting HEIs in developing their education and other activities. According to FINHEEC's interpretation, enhancement-led evaluation is a user-oriented process in which the evaluation method is tailored in accordance with the objectives of the evaluation, the theme to be evaluated and the participants' needs. (FINEEC 2015, 35.)

5.3 The third audit cycle focuses on higher education institutions' ability to develop their activities

The aim of the third audit cycle currently under way (2018–2024) is to assess whether the quality work of HEIs meet European quality assurance standards and whether the quality system produces relevant information for the implementation of the strategy and the continuous development of HEIs' activities, and whether it results in effective enhancement activities. In addition, the aim of the third audit cycle is to encourage HEIs to enhance internationalisation, experimenting and a creative atmosphere as well as to accumulate open and transparent information on quality work at Finnish HEIs. One of the central premises in the planning of the audit model has been the ESG (2015), which emphasises a competence-based, student-centred, and research-based approach in education. (FINEEC 2019, 6; Moitus et al. 2020, 42.)

In addition to a student-centred approach, the audits of the third cycle emphasise HEIs’ societal engagement and impact. The evaluation areas in the audit model have been designed to be comprehensive and the themes to be evaluated have been linked to the development of HEIs more strongly than in the previous models. The audit model examines how HEIs maintain and develop the quality of their basic tasks and how the information produced by quality systems is used to achieve strategic objectives and develop activities. One of the tasks of evaluation is making development visible. (FINEEC 2019, 6; Moitus et al. 2020, 42.)

In the third audit cycle, HEIs select an evaluation area on which they wish to receive feedback from the audit team and chooses a target and a partner for benchlearning. HEIs’ self-evaluation reports are published as such on FINEEC’s audit platform together with the evaluation text written by the audit team. The HEIs that are evaluated as having the level ‘excellent’ in one or more of the three evaluation areas can participate in the Quality Label for Excellence competition with the other HEIs that have been granted the level ‘excellent’ in the same year. In the third audit cycle, approximately 40 per cent of the audits are implemented by international audit teams. The aim is that all higher education institutions will pass the audit.

TABLE 4. FINEEC’s publications on evaluations during the third audit cycle 2019–June 2022.

Year/evaluation type	Audits	Thematic evaluations	Evaluations of fields of study	Accreditations
2019	2	2	-	-
2020	-	2	4	1
2021	5	2	2	2
2022	9	1	1	1

Thematic evaluations and evaluations of fields of study have also been implemented during the third audit cycle (see Table 4). In addition, the accreditations of degree programmes in engineering continued and were extended to master’s degrees in 2022. Evaluations of fields of study have been conducted in the humanities, business, engineering, social sciences, social and health care, and law. The newest fields to be evaluated are bioeconomy, mathematics and natural sciences.

In the audit manual 2019–2024 (FINEEC 2019), enhancement-led evaluation is defined in the following way:

Enhancement-led evaluation is based on participation and interaction. Its purpose is to help HEIs recognise strengths, good practices and enhancement areas in its activities, thus enabling continuous development of HEIs. (FINEEC 2019, 5.)

Although there are small differences, the content of enhancement-led evaluation has been formulated mainly the same way as in earlier manuals. In 2020, FINEEC published a summary publication (FINEEC 2020) in which enhancement-led evaluation was discussed as an idea joining

different levels of education. The publication brought up the common features of enhancement-led evaluation in the different evaluations. The definition of enhancement-led evaluation covers different levels of education and strengthened FINEEC's shared understanding of enhancement-led evaluation. The publication emphasises the effectiveness and use of evaluations. It reminds the reader that enhancement-led evaluation does not include sanctions and no comparisons between participating organisations are performed based on the evaluations. The evaluations should also be based only on the evidence collected during the process and the results are public. (FINEEC 2020, 7.)

FINEEC (FINEEC 2022) defines enhancement-led evaluation in the following way on its website:

The aim of enhancement-led evaluation is the development of activities. The methods applied in enhancement-led evaluations are inclusive and interactive. The evaluated organisation can develop its activities already during the evaluation. The results of the evaluations are aimed to enhance activities. In the enhancement-led approach the trust between the party implementing the evaluation and evaluation participant as well as the educational organisation's responsibility for the development of its activities is emphasised. Evaluation methods are tailored according to the objectives and the theme of the evaluation. A central aspect of the enhancement-led approach is the participation of different parties, such as education providers, teaching staff and other personnel, students, working life and stakeholders, in planning the evaluation, producing evaluation data and interpreting the results. The interaction between different parties participating in the evaluation is central. (FINEEC 2022.)

In the three audit cycles, the evaluation area of the audits has changed according to the received feedback and the gathered experiences. In the first audit cycle in 2005–2011, HEIs' quality assurance systems were built, and the documenting of activities was emphasised (Ala-Vähälä 2011, 36). The second audit cycle in 2011–2018 developed HEIs' quality systems and quality culture. In the third audit cycle, the audits focus on the effectiveness of activities as well as HEIs' ability to enhance their activities.

The first two audit cycles were quite similar, but the model was renewed more for the third cycle. The influence of the ESG on the third audit model has been obvious, which can be seen in the model as a stronger student-centred approach. However, the changes in Finland's audit models have been minor. Audits had already been tested in universities of applied sciences in 1990s. The participation of higher education staff, students and external stakeholders has been the practice from the beginning. Benchlearning, which is part of the third audit cycle, is an interesting example: HEIs' own benchmarking projects were supported from the beginning of FINEEC's operation, and they were returned to again in the third audit cycle. The changes of contexts are also visible in the contents of the audits, for example, in strategies and quality management systems as well as in the emphasis on societal engagement and impact.

The different
solutions of
European
countries

6

The Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance in the European Higher Education Area (ESG 2015) do not require evaluation models to be uniform in the different countries. In this chapter, the solutions, differences, and common features of external evaluation of quality in different countries are summarised.

Some European countries emphasise accrediting the minimum quality of higher education while others emphasise enhancement. The solutions differ in whether evaluation focuses on degree programmes, the institutional level, or both (Dakovic & Gover 2021, 1). The processes in the evaluation methods of different national higher education systems are relatively similar, involving the collection and analysis of data, often in combination with self-evaluation and an external review including site visits, and reporting (Stensaker 2018, 55). The process had already been established before the ESG, but ESG 2.3 also requires its application.

Evaluations focusing only on the institutional level are a minority in evaluations carried out in Europe. According to EQAR's knowledge base, 79 per cent of evaluation agencies carried out evaluations at both the institutional and degree programme level. Programme accreditations without institutional evaluations were carried out in only a few countries, such as the French-speaking part of Belgium, Poland, and Ukraine. On the other hand, institutional evaluations were exclusively only carried out in Finland, Iceland, Turkey, and the United Kingdom. Evaluations were also conducted by groups of degree programmes, often to lighten the evaluation load. (Szabo 2021.)

There are also differences in evaluation models between different countries. The most common evaluation models are accreditation, audit, and evaluation. According to the memorandum on quality assurance (MinEdu 2004), the countries conducting accreditation justified accreditations with the need for responsibility, transparency, and comparability. There were clear justifications for introducing accreditation that ensured a basic level of quality in the Central and Eastern European countries as the standards of HEIs varied and plenty of new private education was available. (MinEdu 2004, 23.) In the 1990s, private HEIs became more common especially in

Eastern Europe where they were previously not known. In some countries, the external evaluation of higher education had already been developed using accreditation models that ensured the minimum level of quality even before the Bologna Process.

The external quality evaluation solutions in higher education in different countries are related to the governmental traditions and policy modes of the country or region. They can also try to solve other problems in the country's higher education or public administration (Stensaker 2018, 54–56). The strong central planning typical of the countries in Eastern Europe is also visible in the steering of higher education even in the regulation of the contents. According to the latest Bologna Process Implementation Report (European Commission/EACEA/Eurydice 2020, 62), the tendency in Western Europe has been towards a more self-regulatory approach, while a more centralised and prescriptive model has been used in most central and Eastern European countries.

In the past few years, a transition from programme accreditations towards institutional accreditations has been visible, as in Denmark and in the Flemish-speaking parts of Belgium in 2017, and from accreditations towards other evaluation methods, as in Germany in 2018 and in Portugal in 2017 (European Commission/EACEA/Eurydice 2020, 71; Trends in Quality Audits 2018, 7). However, the change towards institutional evaluations has been slow (Dakovic & Gover 2021, 1). On the other hand, Poland changed over from institutional evaluations to programme accreditations in 2017 (European Commission/EACEA/Eurydice 2020, 71; Overberg et al. 2020, 334; Stensaker 2018). The evaluation model applied may also depend on the type of HEI. For example, in Austria, universities of applied sciences and private universities are required to undergo programme and institutional evaluations, while public research universities undergo an audit procedure. (European Commission/EACEA/Eurydice 2020, 71; Overberg et al. 2020, 334.)

There are also differences between the systems of different countries in terms of the contents and areas of evaluation, such as whether the emphasis is on the student's learning experience, on the learning outcomes or on the institution's quality assurance system. There are also differences in what consequences the evaluation results have on the funding or operating rights of HEIs. The change from evaluating the resources and processes to evaluating the learning outcomes of the students was already visible earlier in the United States (Ewell 2010, 173–174). Ewell (2010, 174) considers the change in teaching and learning methods, such as the increasing transition to distance and technology-based learning and teaching, as one reason for the trend. According to Ewell (2010, 175), the change has had a positive influence on the appreciation of teaching. Changing over from evaluation of accountability to enhancement of higher education and learning justifies for its part the importance and effectiveness of the evaluations (Singh 2010, 191).

Several evaluation agencies are considering expanding their evaluation activities as they try to respond to both the accountability and enhancement task as well as to the changes in higher education and society with their activities (Dakovic & Gover 2021, 4–6; Trends in quality audits 2018, 13). According EQAR Policy Brief (2021, 3), one third of the evaluation agencies analysed provided 1–3 different evaluation activities that complied with the ESG. One third provided 4–8 activities and one third 9–15. In addition, evaluation agencies may provide activities that are not even meant to comply with ESG principles.

The increase in different types of consulting services provided by evaluation agencies has proved challenging (Dakovic & Gover 2021, 5), as according to the ESG, evaluation activities should be clearly separated from other activities (ESG 3.1). The justifications mentioned for expanding the activities include the change in teaching and learning, the need for evaluations to better respond to the changing needs of society, the new expectations and information needs of national governments, well-worn evaluation methods, and developments in Europe, such as the emergence of university alliances or increasing attention to continuous learning and micro-credentials. (Dakovic & Gover 2021, 4–6.) According to Elken and Stensaker (2020, 15), rankings are also possible competitors of evaluation agencies, depending on the future development of evaluation agencies and models.

In some countries, the existing legal frameworks do not enable compliance with all parts of the ESG. The Bologna Process Implementation Report of 2020 identifies the designing evaluation methodologies (ESG 2.2), the complaints and appeals procedures (ESG 2.7) and the publicity of the reports (ESG 2.6) as challenging from the point of view of national legislation in many countries. (European Commission/EACEA/Eurydice 2020, 70–71.)

Although the Nordic countries have traditionally shared a common understanding of higher education, there are differences in the quality assurance systems of their higher education institutions. Accountability has increased in the Nordic countries over the past decade, which is reflected both in HEIs' funding models and in the introduction of accreditation systems. Finland differs from other Nordic countries. Compared with the other Nordic countries, the higher education institutions' funding system is the most strongly performance-driven, while the Finnish audit system is intended to serve higher education institutions' concrete enhancement. Finnish HEIs have no financial or other functional consequences from a negative audit decision. (Overberg et al. 2020, 336–337.) This is also supported by a clear division of labour between the Ministry of Education and Culture, HEIs and the evaluation agency. Political decision-makers in Finland have not intervened in the guidelines for evaluation activities (Pyykkö et al. 2013, 19). Evaluation of higher education has therefore remained stable in Finland. Changes have been based on joint planning by HEIs, quality assurance agencies and stakeholders as well as on monitoring international developments.

The ESG (2015) recognise that evaluations have the twin purposes of accountability and enhancement, so the ESG can be flexibly applied to different systems. Hopbach and Flierman (2020, 31) find that the external evaluations conducted by evaluation agencies have de facto turned into reviews of national quality assurance systems. Although not originally intended to be so, they argue that this development has strengthened both the relevance of the reviews and the application of principles such as the autonomy and independence of the evaluation agencies. (Hopbach & Flierman 2020, 31.) In countries with several evaluation agencies, external evaluation does not necessarily focus on national systems. National systems for evaluating the quality of higher education are therefore dependent on their context. The choices are influenced by the country's traditions and culture, how established HEIs are, how old they are, or whether they are public or private. Accreditation of degree programmes may also be necessary and effective at a certain development stage. The choices are also influenced by international competition in the field, which in some fields of study has increased interest in accreditation.

Future challenges
in changing
contexts



In this publication, external evaluation of quality in Finnish higher education as a historical continuum has been looked at. First, the period before the establishment of Finnish Higher Education Evaluation Council (FINHEEC) was examined. At the national level, the starting point was the general strengthening of steering and monitoring in the public sector. From the 1980s, the key solution for higher education was to emphasise HEIs' own responsibility for developing their activities and monitoring their performance, not only external control. At the time of establishing FINHEEC, the decision was made to establish one joint higher education evaluation council for universities of applied sciences and research universities. After the Bologna Process had started, strong instructions were also issued to the national higher education systems in the Berlin Communiqué.

The enhancement of external evaluation of quality in higher education institutions alongside the progress of the Bologna Process and Finland's response to the communiqués issued in the process, i.e., the objectives and implementation of the first three audit cycles. In the audits, the same audit model has been applied to both higher education sectors. Every stage has in common a strong commitment to enhancement-led evaluation. There is a clear division of labour between the evaluation agencies, the higher education institutions and the Ministry of Education and Culture, which has promoted the acceptability of evaluations in HEIs.

In Finland, the development of higher education evaluation activities has been influenced by both national and European trends. During the 21st century, the Bologna Process made a change in the national evaluation policy for higher education necessary. The Bologna Process has been the most important driver of quality assurance of higher education in Europe. The Bologna Process and both versions of the ESG (2005; 2015) have had a clear impact on the external evaluation of quality in Finnish higher education. Finland has developed an audit system of its own simultaneously with the development of the ESG. Finland has also joined the different European quality assurance organisations at an early stage.

Stensaker (2018, 59–61) reflects on three different scenarios in the future development of quality assurance. The first one is based on the historical flexibility demonstrated by the quality assurance agencies which have enabled them to adapt to the dynamics within higher education. The second scenario is governments' stronger influence on evaluations and, consequently, focus on results such as learning outcomes, graduation rates and employability. The third scenario is based on the idea of increased competition and de-regulation of the entire QA market. Stensaker draws the conclusion that none of the above scenarios is likely to be realised as such but are most likely to appear in some hybrid form. However, he thinks that change is likely to take place. Stensaker (2018, 55) asks whether attention has been paid to the right matters in quality assurance, in other words, to whether the learners learn and what they learn, or on secondary matters, which he considers the following: numerical indicators, plans and processes.

Hopbach and Flierman (2020, 32) emphasise the still increasing diversity of quality assurance of higher education and agencies' activities. There is diversity in the national quality assurance systems of higher education, their objectives, the coverage of the systems, the methods, the underlying statutes, and the extent of the activities. On the other hand, there are substantial changes taking place in higher education institutions, partly leading in different directions in different countries, which according to Hopbach and Flierman will emphasise common values alongside the common principles and standards (Hopbach and Flierman 2020, 33–34). This development towards highlighting values is already visible in the most recent communiqué of the Bologna Process, the Rome Communiqué in 2020.

A clear change towards competence-based thinking has taken place in higher education pedagogy and policy. It is visible in the descriptions of the intended learning outcomes-based degree programmes related to the Bologna Process, in the building of the European and national frameworks, in the development of recognition of prior learning, and in the assessment of higher education learning outcomes started by the OECD. The situation in different countries is different: in some countries the accreditation of degree programmes emphasises the structures and arrangements of education more, while in other countries it emphasises more the outcomes of learning processes.

Competence has become important in higher education policy also because of continuous learning. Some reasons behind continuous learning are demographic changes and the global economy. Students entering higher education are more diverse in terms of their age, background and needs. The aim is to promote the access of underrepresented groups to education and increase mobility. The need for individual study paths is therefore increasing. Finland has reacted fast during the entire Bologna Process to the themes highlighted in the communiqués and implemented them actively at the national level.

7.1 New openings in European higher education

The European Commission influences the development of the European Higher Education Area (EHEA) more and more actively although only just over one half of EHEA's member states are members of the European Union. French President Emmanuel Macron's initiative in autumn 2017 regarding European university alliances progressed fast in the decision-making process as decisions to establish 41 alliances were made in the calls of 2019 and 2020, and funding was granted to four new alliances in July 2022. A total of 340 HEIs from more than 31 countries already participate in alliances, which is approximately 5 per cent of all European HEIs. (European Education Area 2022.) However, there are great differences in the countries' participation activity: the country's participating most in alliances and coordinating them are Germany and France, which have also used the most national funding to support alliances. Of Finnish HEIs, nine research universities and five universities of applied sciences participated in alliances in autumn 2022 (Edufi 2022).

European university alliances and the joint degrees, which are central to their activities, have highlighted the differences between national evaluation systems. Most countries use accreditation of degree programmes, but the accreditation models and criteria vary from each other in different countries. These differences are reflected in the extent to which different countries apply the European Approach to the Quality Assurance of Joint Programmes in the EHEA, which was approved in the ministerial meeting in Yerevan in 2015. The idea was that the approach would facilitate the quality assurance procedures of joint degrees and reduce overlapping and evaluation fatigue (European Commission/EACEA/Eurydice 2020, 78), but its implementation has not progressed in the desired way. In countries like Finland where external evaluation focuses on HEIs, HEIs monitor the quality of the degree programmes (self-accreditation). In these countries, it is also easier to apply the European Approach to joint degrees than in countries requiring the accreditation of programmes. (European Commission/EACEA/Eurydice 2020, 72, 79.)

At the beginning of 2022, the European Commission published the EU's new university strategy (Communication 2022), which proposes expanding university alliances and facilitating their activities by creating a legal entity for them by 2024. In addition, the possibilities of creating a joint European Degree and to develop a new European Quality Assurance and Recognition System should be explored. (Communication 2022, 5–6.) The change towards regulation at the level of the EU would be considerable. It cannot be made mandatory as education falls under national decision-making power. The recommendations and reforms in the European Higher Education Area have been considered to apply to all 48 Bologna countries, not just to the EU Member States.

In the past few years, different development projects have been implemented to solve the challenges of university alliances. In 2019 and 2021, the EU-funded European Framework for Comprehensive Quality Assurance of European Universities project (EUniQ 2021) coordinated by the NVAO in the Netherlands and Flanders was implemented. The project was aimed at developing a method in line with the ESG for the quality assurance of university alliances.

There has been much discussion about the development of an evaluation model or quality label for European degrees. For example, the EUA has supported the application of the existing European Approach to avoid double evaluation (Considerations 2022). However, a European degree label cannot replace national quality assurance procedures and only a small part of each HEI's activities participate in the alliances. It is therefore difficult to assess the additional value brought by a quality label as of yet.

One of the changes in the past few years is related to the increasing importance of continuous learning and consequently, the need for quality assurance of micro-credentials. This applies particularly to competence modules implemented by alternative providers. There is discussion about keeping the micro-credentials at the level of higher education in the National Framework for Qualifications, and about their scope in credits in the European countries. It is understandable that the countries that carry out accreditation of degree programmes also call for a quality assurance procedure for micro-credentials. In countries where HEIs are audited, the quality assurance of micro-credentials can be based on the current methods also in future and be included in HEIs' own quality management. If micro-credentials are used as parts of degrees, the methods of recognition of prior learning in the HEI conferring the degree are applied to them.

There is also discussion about whether the ESG should be reformed again. It is also discussed how they are interpreted, whether ESG correspond to the already changed and changing reality in higher education and whether there are conflicts between national guidelines and needs and the ESG. (Elken & Stensaker 2020, 8.) According to Elken and Stensaker (2020), quality assurance agencies tend to be in strong national steering, which may lead to tensions between national and European steering. Hopbach & Flierman (2020, 34–36) write about the need to reform the ESG and about the parts that are still up to date. They consider evaluations should maintain cyclicity as a relevant principle, although the evaluations should not be repeated in entirely the same form from one audit cycle to another. Flexibility is required both in the national models and methods and between different countries and agencies. In summer 2020, the E4 expressed their view that the ESG (2015) were still up to date but encouraged their more flexible use and interpretation. The possible reforms should be based on research evidence, and they should be made in agreement with the stakeholders. (Statement by the E4 Group, 2020.) A well identified challenge is also so-called evaluation fatigue and the possibility of evaluations becoming a bureaucratic process, and therefore they have to offer something different (e.g., Dakovic & Gover 2021, 5, 7; Elken & Stensaker 2020, 3).

7.2 Towards the fourth audit cycle

Overberg et al. (2020, 334) seem astonished that even though Finland has already implemented an enhancement-led quality audit system, it has repeatedly been willing to change its procedure again. In the 2020s, it is advisable to reflect on how to reform the national model of external evaluation of higher education to enable it to continue to develop the operation of HEIs, serve the enhancement of the higher education system and fulfil the ESG also in future. Evaluations are not useful unless they contribute to and support the creation of new ideas.

The evaluation area of the audits in the three audit cycles so far implemented in Finland has changed on the basis of the received feedback and the gathered experiences: in the first audit cycle in 2005–2011, HEIs' quality assurance systems were built, and the documenting of activities was emphasised (see e.g. Ala-Vähälä 2011, 36). The second audit cycle in 2011–2018 developed HEIs' quality systems and quality culture and, consequently, also their activities. In the third audit cycle, the audits focus on the effectiveness of the activities, HEIs' ability to enhance their activities, and the student-centred approach. The importance of the quality system in the model has also changed. The most recent model focuses more on HEIs' ability to continuously develop their operation, which the quality system can help with, rather than the quality system itself.

We can therefore reflect on what the model of the fourth audit cycle could be like. Evaluation methods may become well-worn and, when repeated in the same form, become mere formalities without any development. In the three previous audit cycles, changes have been made in both the content-related emphases and the methods of implementation. The Finnish model should continue to follow the ESG, but flexible application of the standards will enable us to respond to changes in the context as well as changes in higher education. Keeping the established stages of evaluation (self-evaluation, site visit, report, follow-up) does not prevent making changes to their implementation, such as to the methods of implementing self-evaluation or visits. After the pandemic, there is also the question whether the practical implementation of site visits should be online or on-site.

Audits should continue to be implemented in such a way that HEIs find them appropriate and their different steps support HEIs in their enhancement. This applies to preparing for audits, conducting a self-evaluation, site visits, the recommendations, and other observations alike. It will be essential also in the future that as many members of the higher education institution as possible can participate in and feel ownership of the audit. It is also important to involve external stakeholders. HEIs are responsible for the quality of their activities and the principal beneficiary of the audits should continue to be the HEI that commissioned the audit.

In the past few years, FINEEC has also implemented evaluations of fields of study. Their strength is to examine the degree programmes of the field and their content and enhancement. Self-evaluation has been emphasised, which has occasionally been visible as looking after the interests of one's own field and as an inward-looking approach. Another question is the utilisation of the evaluations: have the evaluations been effective? Ewell (2010, 175) draws the general conclusion that although it is difficult to say anything precise about how evaluations affect quality, "quality review has at least given us a vocabulary to begin to talk about this most important question. And that too is a form of progress". The impact of the evaluations of fields of study would be improved by more extensive participation of actors in the field, focusing the development recommendations better on the key issues in the field, discussing the wider context of the field, and comparing the assessed fields with each other. The responsibility for utilising the evaluation results lies with the HEIs.

The external evaluation of quality in higher education in Europe is facing challenges. The main challenge is the relationship between the demands for unity in the evaluation of quality and national autonomy and balancing between these two. The activities of national quality assurance

agencies are based on the national context and traditions as well as on the history of the higher education system and the country. The relationship of the quality assurance agencies with the central government and HEIs varies between different countries and so does the division of work with the ministries in the production of data and in decision-making. The diversity may also be revealed by the number of quality assurance agencies as, apart from the Nordic countries, few countries have only one national agency. For the evaluation activities to support the operation of HEIs and to be nationally credible, the model should respect the national context and the autonomy and diversity of HEIs and national quality assurance agencies.

The external evaluation of quality in Finnish higher education will continue to rely on the idea of enhancement-led evaluation also in the future. Key to the methods of implementation is to support HEIs' own development in a way that supports different HEIs fairly. Even extensive changes can be made to the contents of external quality evaluation and implemented together with HEIs and stakeholders. Enhancement-led evaluation has proved to work in stable societies based on trust and hopefully it will continue to lead the way in European development.

What must be remembered in evaluations of HEIs is the idea of making a value judgement, which means that a stand must be taken on the matters evaluated. Evaluations must not remain just reports stating the findings. The conclusions drawn and recommendations made in different evaluations could be sharper and report whether matters are good or not and what should be done next. When the fourth cycle is planned, thought should also be given to how similar the audit cycles can continue to be in the future. In evaluations it is therefore advisable to bear in mind the balance between continuity and changes and the appropriateness of the activities. Repeating the evaluations in the same way does not lead to enhancement. The evaluations should be appropriate in terms of the workload required of HEIs and they should not cause work that overlaps with the reporting of other activities.

Trust, comparability, and mutual recognition are at the heart of the Bologna Process. This must also be achieved regarding university alliances, micro-credentials and continuous learning. The shared values of the European Higher Education Area, to which higher education in the entire region must commit, will also be central in the future.

References

- Ala-Vähälä, T. 2011. Mitä auditointi tekee? Tutkimus korkeakoulujen laadunvarmistusjärjestelmien auditointien vaikutuksista [What do audits accomplish? Research on the impact of HEI quality assurance system audits]. Korkeakoulujen arviointineuvoston julkaisuja 8.
- Ala-Vähälä, T. 2018. Yliopistojen ja ammattikorkeakoulujen henkilökunnan asenteet laatutyötä ja laatu järjestelmien auditointia kohtaan [Attitudes of staff of universities and universities of applied sciences towards quality work and auditing of quality systems]. Unpublished.
- Asetus Korkeakoulujen arviointineuvostosta, muistio 1995 [Decree on the Finnish Higher Education Evaluation Council, memorandum 1995]. Opetusministeriö, Korkeakoulu- ja tiedeosasto 20.11.1995. Helsinki.
- Atjonen, P. 2015. Kehittävä arviointi kasvatusalalla. [Enhancement-led evaluation in the field of education]. Tampere: Kirjokansi.
- Bergen 2005. The European Higher Education Area – Achieving the Goals. Communiqué of the Conference of European Ministers responsible for Higher Education. Bergen, 19–20 May 2005.
- Berlin 2003. Realising the European Higher Education Area. Communiqué of the Conference of Ministers responsible for Higher Education. Berlin, 19 September 2003.
- Bernhard, A. 2011. National quality assurance systems in comparison. *International Journal for Cross-Disciplinary Subjects in Education* 2 (4), 540–543.
- Bologna 1999. The Bologna Declaration. Joint declaration of the European Ministers of Education. Bologna, 19 June 1999.
- Bucharest 2012. Making the Most of Our Potential: Consolidating the European Higher Education Area. Bucharest Communiqué. Bucharest, 26–27 April 2012.
- Budapest-Vienna 2010. Budapest-Vienna Declaration on the European Higher Education Area. Budapest & Vienna, 10–12 March 2010.
- Calculating quality 2019. An overview of indicators used in external quality assurance of higher education in the Nordics. The Danish Accreditation Institution.
- Chelimsky, E. 1997. The coming transformations in evaluation. In E. Chelimsky & W. R. Shadish (eds.) *Evaluation for the 21st century. A Handbook*. Thousand Oaks: Sage, 1–26.
- Communication 2022. Communication from the Commission to the European Parliament, the Council, the European Economic and Social Committee and the Committee of the Regions on a European strategy for universities. <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/?uri=COM:2022:16:FIN> (Accessed 5 September 2022).

- Considerations 2022. Considerations for a "European degree". May 2022. EUA Policy input. https://eua.eu/downloads/publications/considerations%20for%20a%20eu%20degree_one%20column.pdf (Accessed 5 September 2022).
- Curaj, A., Deca, L. & Pricopie, R. 2018. European Higher Education Area: The impact of past and future policies. Cham: Springer.
- Dakovic, G. & Gover, A. 2021. Diversification of external quality assurance in the EHEA – Reflection following the analysis of ENQA Agency Reviews conducted in 2020–2021. ENQA. https://www.enqa.eu/wp-content/uploads/Diversification-of-EQA_final.pdf (Accessed 28 July 2022).
- Dienel, C. 2019. Bologna – a utopy of harmony for European Higher Education. *Innovation: The European Journal of Social Science Research* 32 (4), 403–405.
- Edufi 2022. European Universities. <https://www.opf.fi/en/programmes/european-universities> (Accessed 5 September 2022).
- Elken M. & Stensaker B. 2020. Innovative practices in higher education quality assurance. A study of new activities, tasks and roles in six quality assurance agencies in Europe. Nordic Institute for Studies in Innovation, Research and Education, working paper 7.
- EQAR Policy Brief 2021. ESG Coverage of Higher Education Systems in Europe. <https://www.eqar.eu/esg-coverage-of-higher-education-systems-in-europe/> (Accessed 7 September 2022).
- EQAR Newsletter July 2022. <https://lists.eqar.eu/?m=74&p=view&pi=ViewBrowserPlugin> (Accessed 25 July 2022).
- ESG 2005. Standards and guidelines for quality assurance in the European higher education area. 2005.
- ESG 2015. Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance in the European Higher Education Area. Brussels.
- EUniQ 2021. European Framework for the Comprehensive Quality Assurance of European Universities. NVAO www.nvao.net/en/euniq (Accessed 22 August 2022).
- European Commission 1995. Information Note on the Results of the European Pilot Project for Evaluating Quality in Higher Education. DG XXII "Education, Training and Youth".
- European Commission 1998. EC Recommendations on the development of European cooperation and networking in quality assurance in higher education, 98/561/EC.
- European Commission 2012. Key data on education in Europe 2012. Education, audiovisual and culture executive agency (EACEA P9 Eurydice). <https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/documents/3217494/5741409/978-92-9201-242-7-EN.PDF/> (Accessed 22 August 2022).
- European Commission/EACEA/Eurydice 2020. The European Higher Education Area in 2020: Bologna Process Implementation Report. Luxembourg: Publications Office of the European Union.
- European Education and Culture Executive Agency, Eurydice 2000. The European higher education area in 2020: Bologna process implementation report, Publications Office, <https://data.europa.eu/doi/10.2797/756192> (Accessed 22 November 2022).
- European Education Area 2022. European Universities initiative. <https://education.ec.europa.eu/education-levels/higher-education/european-universities-initiative> (Accessed 22 August 2022).
- Evaluation of scientific research in Finland: Inorganic chemistry 1983. Epäorgaanisen kemian perustutkimuksen arviointi [Evaluation of basic research in inorganic chemistry]. Suomen Akatemian julkaisuja 7. Helsinki: Valtion painatuskeskus.
- Ewell, P. 2010. Twenty Years of Quality Assurance in Higher Education: What's Happened and What's Different? *Quality in Higher Education* 16 (2), 173–175.
- External Evaluation 2021. External Evaluation of the European Quality Assurance Register for Higher Education (EQAR). 2021. Report of the Expert Panel. November 2021. Coordinated by Central European University, Yehuda Elkana. Center for Higher Education. <https://www.eqar.eu/assets/uploads/2022/01/EQAR-External-Evaluation-report-final-November-2021.pdf> (Accessed 25 July 2022).

- FINEEC 2015. Audit manual for the quality systems of higher education institutions 2015–2018. Finnish Education Evaluation Centre, publications 2. Helsinki.
- FINEEC 2019. Audit Manual for Higher Education Institutions 2019–2024. Finnish Education Evaluation Centre, publications 21. Helsinki.
- FINEEC 2020. Enhancement-led evaluation at the Finnish Education Evaluation Centre. S. Moitus & P. Kamppi. Finnish Education Evaluation Centre, summaries 11. Helsinki.
- FINEEC 2022. FINEEC's evaluation and quality management concepts. <https://karvi.fi/en/fineec/support-for-quality-management/fineecs-evaluation-and-quality-management-concepts/> (Accessed 5 September 2022).
- FINHEEC 2006. Audits of Quality Assurance Systems of Finnish Higher Education Institutions. Audit Manual for 2005–2007. Finnish Higher Education Evaluation Council, publications 4. Helsinki.
- FINHEEC 2007. Audits of Quality Assurance Systems of Finnish Higher Education Institutions. Audit Manual for 2008–2011. Finnish Higher Education Evaluation Council, publications 10. Helsinki.
- FINHEEC 2011. Audit manual for the quality systems of higher education institutions 2011–2017. Finnish Higher Education Evaluation Council, publications 3. Helsinki.
- Hakala, J., Kaukonen, E., Nieminen, M. & Ylijoki, O.H. 2003. Yliopisto – tieteen kehdosta projektimylyksi? Yliopistollisen tutkimuksen muutos 1990luvulla [University – from the cradle of science to a project factory? The changes in university research in the 1990s]. Helsinki: Gaudeamus.
- Harvey, L. 2004. Analytic Quality Glossary. <http://www.qualityresearchinternational.com/glossary/> (Accessed 25 July 2022).
- Haukland, L. H. 2020. The Bologna Process and HEIs institutional autonomy. *Athens Journal of Education* 7 (4), 365–384.
- Henry, M., Lingard, B., Rizvi, F. & Taylor, S. 2001. The OECD, globalisation and educational policy. *IAU: Issues in higher education*.
- Hopbach A. & Flierman A. 2020. Higher education: a rapidly changing world and a next step for the Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance in the European Higher Education Area. In ENQA 2020. Advancing quality in higher education: celebrating 20 years of ENQA. ENQA, Brussels, 29–36.
- Hosia, M. 2009. Korkeakouluneuvosto 1966–1995. Toimintahistoriikki ja pääsihteerin muistoja [Council for higher education 1966–1995. History of the Council's operation and the general secretary's memories]. Opetusministeriön julkaisuja 55. Helsinki: Yliopistopaino.
- Huisman, J. 2019. The Bologna process in European and post-Soviet higher education: institutional legacies and policy adoption. *Innovation: The European Journal of Social Science Research* 32 (4), 465–480.
- Humanistisen koulutusala-arvioinnin tulokset 1993. Humanististen tutkintojen työryhmän loppuraportti [Results of the evaluation of higher education in the humanities 1993. Final report of the working group on degrees in the humanities]. Opetusministeriö.
- Huusko, M. & Pyykkö, R. 2021. Bolognan prosessi: tutkintorakenteista osaamiseen [The Bologna Process: from degree structures to competence]. *Tiedepolitiikka* 46 (2), 7–18.
- Huusko, M. 2009. Itsearviointi suomalaisissa yliopistoissa: arvoja, kehittämistä ja imagon rakentamista [Self-evaluation in Finnish universities: values, development and building an image]. Akateeminen väitöskirja. Suomen kasvatustieteellinen seura. Kasvatusalan tutkimuksia 46.
- Huusko, M., Lepola, L., Sarkkinen, T., Tuurnas, A. & Vlasov, J. (eds.) 2021. Quality Management in the Finnish Education System. Finnish Educational Evaluation Centre. Summaries 10. Helsinki.
- HY 1993. Universitas Renovata. 1993. Helsingin yliopiston arviointiryhmän raportti ja ehdotukset [Report and recommendations of the evaluation team of the University of Helsinki]. Helsinki: Yliopistopaino.
- Hyvärinen, K., Hämäläinen, K. & Pakkanen, P. 1996. Arviointihankkeet Helsingin yliopistossa 1990-luvulla ja niiden vaikutukset toimintaan [Evaluation projects in the University of Helsinki in the 1990s and their impact on the activities]. Helsinki: Yliopistopaino.

- Hämäläinen, K. & Kaartinen-Koutaniemi, M. (eds.) 2002. Benchmarking korkeakoulujen kehittämisvälineenä [Benchmarking as a tool for developing higher education institutions]. Korkeakoulujen arviointineuvoston julkaisuja 13. Helsinki.
- Hämäläinen, K. & Moitus, S. 1999. High-quality education as the criterion for university funding in Finland. *Quality in Higher Education* 5 (1), 51–59.
- Karjalainen, A. 2014. Yliopistopedagogiikan nousu Suomessa [The rise of university pedagogy in Finland]. In A. Heikkinen & E. Kallio (eds.) *Aikuisten kasvu ja aktivointi [Education and activation of adults]*. Tampere: Tampere University Press, 188–214.
- Karjalainen, A., Kuortti, K. & Niinikoski, S. 2002. *Creative Benchmarking*. University of Oulu, Teaching Development Unit.
- Kauko, J. 2006. Valta Bolognan prosessissa: laadunvarmistusajattelun leviäminen Euroopassa ja Suomessa [Power in the Bologna Process: The spread of quality assurance thinking in Europe and Finland]. Helsingin yliopisto, valtiotieteellinen tiedekunta, yleinen valtio-oppi. Poliitiikan tutkimuksen linja. Pro gradu -tutkielma.
- Kivinen, O., Rinne, R. & Ketonen, K. 1993. *Yliopiston huomen. Korkeakoulupolitiikan historiallinen suunta Suomessa [Universities tomorrow. The historical direction of higher education policy in Finland]*. Helsinki: Hanki ja jää.
- Knubb-Manninen, G. (ed.) 2003. *Laadun tekijä [Makers of quality]*. Jyväskylä: Jyväskylän yliopisto.
- Korkeakoululaitoksen kehittämissuunnitelma 1979–86, 1979 [Plan for the development of higher education institutions 1979–1986, 1979]. Opetusministeriö. Korkeakoulu- ja tiedeosasto. Helsinki: Helsingin yliopiston monistuspalvelu.
- Korkeakoululaitoksen kehittämissuunnitelma vuosille 1987–1992, 1987 [Plan for the development of higher education institutions 1987–1992, 1987]. Valtioneuvoston 19.2.1987 hyväksymä. Opetusministeriö. Korkeakoulu- ja tiedeosasto. Helsinki: Valtion painatuskeskus.
- Koulutus & tutkimus 2000 [Education and research 2000]. 1996. Koulutuksen ja korkeakouluissa harjoitettavan tutkimuksen kehittämissuunnitelma vuosille 1995–2000 [Development plan for education and research conducted in higher education institutions 1995–2000]. Valtioneuvoston päätös 21.12.1995. Helsinki: Edita.
- Lampinen, O. 2003. *Suomalaisen korkeakoulutuksen uudistaminen. Reformeja ja innovaatioita [Renewing Finnish higher education. Reforms and innovations]*. Opetusministeriön julkaisuja 25.
- Leuven 2009. *The Bologna Process 2020 – The European Higher Education Area in the new decade. Communiqué of the Conference of European Ministers responsible for Higher Education*. Leuven/Louvain-la-Neuve, 28.–29 April 2009.
- Liuhanen, A. M. 2005. *University Evaluations and Different Evaluation Approaches: A Finnish perspective*. *Tertiary Education and Management* 11 (3), 259–268.
- Liuhanen, A. M. 2007. *How are university evaluations used? – The perspectives of two Finnish universities*. Academic dissertation. Tampere: Tampere University Press.
- London 2007. *Towards the European Higher Education Area: responding to challenges in a globalized world*. London Communiqué. London, 18 May 2007.
- Loukkola, T., Vinther-Jøregensen, T., Pol, M. & Treml, B. 2017. *ENQA agency review: Finnish Education Evaluation Centre (FINEEC)*. ENQA.
- MinEdu 1985. *Korkeakoulujen toiminnan arviointimenetelmien kehittämistyöryhmä [Working group on the development of methods for assessing the activities of higher education institutions]*. Opetusministeriö 26. Helsinki.
- MinEdu 1997. *Koulutuksen arviointistrategia [Education evaluation strategy]*. Opetusministeriö.
- MinEdu 2004. *Korkeakoulutuksen laadunvarmistus 2004 [Quality assurance in higher education 2004]*. Opetusministeriön työryhmämuistioita ja selvityksiä 6. Helsinki.

- Moitus, S. (ed.) 2000. Yliopistokoulutuksen laatuyksiköt 2001–2003 [Centres of excellence for university education 2001–2003]. Korkeakoulujen arviointineuvoston julkaisuja 6. Helsinki: Edita.
- Moitus, S. 2014. Finnish Higher education Evaluation Council (FINHEEC). In *Quality Audit in the European Higher Education Area. A comparison of approaches*. AQ Austria, 95–109.
- Moitus, S., Hämäläinen, K., Isoaho, K., Nordblad, M., Saarilampi, M. & Virtanen A. 2020. Role of ENQA in the development of evaluation activities and internationalisation of higher education in Finland. In *ENQA 2020. Advancing quality in higher education: celebrating 20 years of ENQA*. ENQA, Brussels, 37–44.
- Moitus, S. & Saari, S. 2004. Menetelmistä kehittämiseen. Korkeakoulujen arviointineuvoston arviointimenetelmät vuosina 1996–2003 [From methods to development. Evaluation methods of the Finnish Higher Education Evaluation Council 1996–2003]. Korkeakoulujen arviointineuvoston julkaisuja 10. Helsinki.
- Nordblad, M., Apajalahti, T., Huusko, M. & Seppälä, H. 2020. Quality in focus. Quality audits of Finnish higher education institutions 2012–2018. Finnish Education Evaluation Centre. Summaries 9.
- Numminen, J. 1987. Yliopistokysymys [The university issue]. Helsinki: Otava.
- Numminen, J. 2020. Sivistys-Suomen synty [The birth of Bildung-Finland]. 1. Koulutuspolitiikka [Education policy]. Edita, Helsinki.
- Overberg, J. 2019. 'Skipping the quality abracadabra': academic resistance to quality management in Finnish higher education institutions and quality managers' strategies to handle it. *Quality in Higher Education* 25 (3), 227–244.
- Overberg, J., Lehmkuhl P., Schütz, M. & Röbbken, H. 2020. (Re)-reforming external quality assurance in higher education – the Finnish case. *European Journal of Higher Education* 10 (4), 333–346.
- Paris 2018. Paris communiqué. Ministerial Conference in Paris, 24–25 April 2018.
- Parpala, A. & Seppälä, H. 2003. (eds.). Yliopistokoulutuksen laatuyksiköt 2004–2006 [Centres of excellence for university education 2004–2006]. Korkeakoulujen arviointineuvoston julkaisuja 5. Helsinki.
- Patton, M. Q. 1997. *Utilization-focused evaluation*. The new century text. 3rd edition. Thousand Oaks: Sage.
- Patton, M. Q. 2011. *Developmental evaluation. Applying complexity concepts to enhance innovations and use*. New York: Guilford.
- Prague 2001. *Towards the European Higher Education Area. Communiqué of the meeting of European Ministers in charge of Higher Education*. Prague, 19 May 2001.
- Pyykkö, R. 2009. Laadunarviointi ja moninaisuuden hyväksyminen [Quality assessment and accepting diversity]. *Ammattikasvatuksen aikakauskirja* 11 (4), 17–32.
- Pyykkö, R. 2010. Korkeakoulujen arviointitoiminnan tausta ja kehitysvaiheet [The background and development stages of higher education evaluation activities]. In E. Korkeakoski and P. Tynjälä (eds.) *Hyötyä ja vaikuttavuutta arvioinnista*. Koulutuksen arviointineuvoston julkaisuja 50, 61–75.
- Pyykkö, R., Eriksson S., Krusberg, J.-E., Rauhala, P., Rissanen, R., Vieltojärvi, M., Kekäläinen, H., Hiltunen, K., Moitus, S. & Apajalahti, T. 2013. Korkeakoulujen arvioinnin suunnannäyttäjät. Korkeakoulujen arviointineuvosto 1996–2013 ja arviointitoiminnan tulevaisuus [Leading the way in the evaluation of higher education institutions. Finnish Higher Education Evaluation Council 1996–2013 and the future of evaluation activities]. Korkeakoulujen arviointineuvoston julkaisuja 8. Helsinki.
- QAA Scotland 2017. *Enhancement-led institutional review handbook*. 4th edition.
- Raaheim, A. & Karjalainen, A. 2012. *Centres of excellence in university education Finland 1999–2012. An evaluation*. Finnish Higher Education Evaluation Council, publications 13. Helsinki.

- Rekilä, E. 2004. Yliopistojen valtionohjauksen muutoksesta 1980-luvulta 2000-luvun alkuun. Analyysi asetettujen tavoitteiden toteutumisesta ja hallinnollisen ohjauksen muutoksesta yliopistovaltiosuhteessa [On the change in government steering of universities from the 1980s to the beginning of the 21st century. An analysis of the realisation of the set objectives and the change in administrative steering in the relationship between universities and the central government]. Vaasan yliopiston julkaisuja. Tutkimuksia 257. Hallintotiede 32. Vaasan yliopisto.
- Rome 2020. Rome Ministerial Communiqué. 19 November 2020.
- Saarinen, T. 1995. Nousukaudesta lamaan, määrästä laatuun. Korkeakouluarvioinnin käynnistyminen ja kokemukset laitoksilla [From an economic boom to a recession, from quantity to quality. Launch of evaluation of higher education and the experiences of departments]. Koulutus sosiologian tutkimuskeskus. Raportti 32. Turun yliopisto.
- Saarinen, T. 2005. From sickness to cure and further: construction of 'quality' in Finnish higher education policy from the 1960s to the era of the Bologna process. *Quality in Higher Education* 11 (1), 3–15.
- Saarinen, T. & Huusko, M. 2004. Koulutuksen laatu korkeakoulupolitiikan ja yliopistojen itsearviointien teksteissä [The quality of education in texts concerning higher education policy and texts in universities self-evaluations]. *Kasvatus* 35 (5), 485–498.
- Salminen, H. 2004. Suomen toimet korkeakoulutuksen laadunvarmistamisessa Bolognan julistuksen johdosta [Measures taken by Finland in the quality assurance of higher education as a result of the Bologna Declaration]. *Hallinnon tutkimus* 23 (1), 62–72.
- Singh, M. 2010. Quality Assurance in Higher Education: Which Pasts to Build on, What Futures to Contemplate? *Quality in Higher Education* 16 (2), 189–194.
- Sorbonne 1998. Sorbonne Joint Declaration. Joint declaration on harmonisation of the architecture of the European higher education system. Paris, 25 May 1998.
- Statement by the E4 Group 2020. The ESG in the changing landscape of higher education. https://www.eua.eu/downloads/publications/e4_statement_the_esg_in_the_changing_landscape_of_higher_education.pdf (Accessed 5 September 2022).
- Stenman, F. 1981. Suomen fysiikan tilan arviointi [Evaluation of the state of physics in Finland]. In *Tieteellisen tutkimuksen arviointi*. Seminaariraportti. Suomen Akatemian julkaisuja 13. Helsinki: Valtion painatuskeskus.
- Stensaker, B. 2018. Quality assurance and the Battle for legitimacy – discourses, disputes and dependencies. *Higher Education Evaluation and Development* 12 (2), 54–62.
- Szabo, M. 2021. Gauging external quality assurance frameworks in the European Higher Education Area. *EUA Expert Voices* 12.7.2021.
- Trends in quality audits 2018. Study conducted among the agencies of the Quality Audit Network. AQ Austria & QQI.
- Ursin, J. 2007. Yliopistot laadun arvioijina: akateemisia käsityksiä laadusta ja laadunvarmistuksesta [Universities as evaluators of quality: academic views on quality and quality assurance]. Jyväskylä: Finnish Institute for Educational Research.
- Visakorpi, J. 1996. Korkeakoulujen arviointineuvoston toiminnan suuntaviivat [Guidelines for the activities of the Finnish Higher Education Evaluation Council]. *Korkeakoulutieto* 4.
- Vught, F. A. van & Westerheijden, D. 1993. Quality management and quality assurance in European higher education. Methods and mechanism. Commission of the European communities. Education training youth. *Studies* 1.
- Vuorela, T. 1990. Toiminnan arvioinnin tutkimusotteiden kehitys [Development of research approaches in the evaluation of the activities]. Valtionhallinnon kehittämiskeskus. Helsinki: Vap-kustannus.

- Välilä, J. 2004. Three rounds of evaluation and the idea of accreditation in Finnish higher education. In S. Schwarz & D. F. Westerheijden (eds.) *Accreditation and evaluation in the European higher education area*. Dordrecht: Kluwer, 101–125.
- Wihlborg, M. & Teelken, C. 2014. Striving for Uniformity, Hoping for Innovation and Diversification: a critical review concerning the Bologna Process – providing an overview and reflecting on the criticism. *Policy Futures in Education*, 12 (8), 1084–1100.
- Williams, J. 2016. Quality and Quality Enhancement: Is there a relationship? *Quality in Higher Education*, 22 (2), 97–102.
- Yerevan 2015. Yerevan communiqué. Ministerial Conference in Yerevan, 14–15 May 2015.
- VN 228/1966. Act on the development of higher education institutions between 1967 and 1986.
- VN 1052/1986. Act on the development of higher education institutions. Adopted in Helsinki on 31 December 1986.
- VN 255/1995. Act on studies in universities of applied sciences. Adopted in Helsinki on 3 March 1995.
- VN 1320/1995. Decree on the Finnish Higher Education Evaluation Council. Adopted in Helsinki on 24 November 1995.
- VN 645/1997. Universities act. Adopted in Helsinki on 27 June 1997.
- VN 351/2003. Universities of applied sciences act. Adopted in Helsinki on 9 May 2003.
- VN 558/2009. Universities act. Adopted in Helsinki on 24 July 2009.
- VN 794/2009. Government decree on the Finnish Higher Education Evaluation Council. Adopted in Helsinki on 15 October 2009.
- VN 1317/2013. Government decree on the Finnish Education Evaluation Centre. Adopted on 30 December 2013.
- VN 93/2017. Act on the framework for qualifications and other competence modules. Adopted in Helsinki on 10 February 2017.

▲ HIGHER EDUCATION

The aim of this publication is to describe the external evaluation of quality in Finnish higher education as the implementer of enhancement-led evaluation and the mediator of European influence as well as the changes that have taken place in it. In the European Higher Education Area (EHEA) countries, the Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance in the European Higher Education Area (ESG 2015) form the basis for the external quality management of higher education institutions. However, national solutions for external evaluation of quality in higher education differ from each other.

In Finland, external evaluation of quality and audits of higher education institutions follow the principles of enhancement-led evaluation. Compared to many other European countries where a programme-based accreditation model is applied, Finland's approach is comprehensive. The starting point is the autonomy of higher education institutions and the responsibility for developing their own activities. In the audits, the whole higher education institution is audited. In addition to education provision, the audit targets research, development and innovation activities and the societal engagement and impact of the higher education institution.

The Finnish Education Evaluation Centre (FINEEC) is an independent education evaluation authority. It conducts evaluations related to education and the operation of education and training providers from early childhood education and care to higher education. In addition, FINEEC conducts evaluations and learning outcomes evaluations in basic education and upper secondary education. FINEEC's task is also to support education and training providers and higher education institutions in matters concerning evaluation and quality management and develop the evaluation of education.

ISBN 978-952-206-743-2 pdf
ISSN 2342-4184

Finnish Education
Evaluation Centre
P.O. BOX 380
(Hakaniemenranta 6),
FI-00531 HELSINKI, Finland
Switchboard: +358 29 533 5500
karvi.fi/en