



OULUN YLIOPISTO
UNIVERSITY of OULU

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THE AUDIT OF THE QUALITY ASSURANCE SYSTEM 25.-27.11.2009.

As used by the University of Oulu, the term 'quality' as a whole stands for the following: expedient and accomplished everyday work, conducted by each member of the scientific community, which benefits the individual, the discipline and the work community.

According to the Quality Assurance Handbook of the University of Oulu, we all have to bear the responsibility of of quality assurance. It is important that you are aware of

- the basics of the QA system as a whole
- the methods used by your own unit to assure quality and
- your own role and responsibilities in the QA system.

Recommended ways to prepare yourself for the audit are, for example

- reading this brochure
- revising articles concerning the QA system and the audit in Tietopisto 5/09 and 6/09 (in Finnish)
- visiting <http://www.oulu.fi/laatutyö>, where you will find more detailed information on the QA system and the audit process, as well as the material which was sent to the external evaluation team. (web site in Finnish)

What is the Quality assurance system of the University of Oulu?

The QA system of the University of Oulu **covers all functions and operations** of the university. It is based on the recognised characteristics and established QA methods of the university organisation.

The QA system for all functions consists of systematic, sufficiently uniform and documented structures, well-defined areas of responsibility and procedures, which are all described in the **Quality Assurance Handbook**. There are **three guiding principles in the QA system: collaboration, enhancement-led evaluation and promotion of good practises**. The three principles represent the special nature of the university organisation and the goals set for the QA system.

Already existing QA practises have been recognised and systematised on the grounds of these principles. The majority of practises have existed even before the overall QA system. The system consists of both common elements and unit- or field-specific choices. In the figure below there are examples of the practises that embody the three guiding principles.



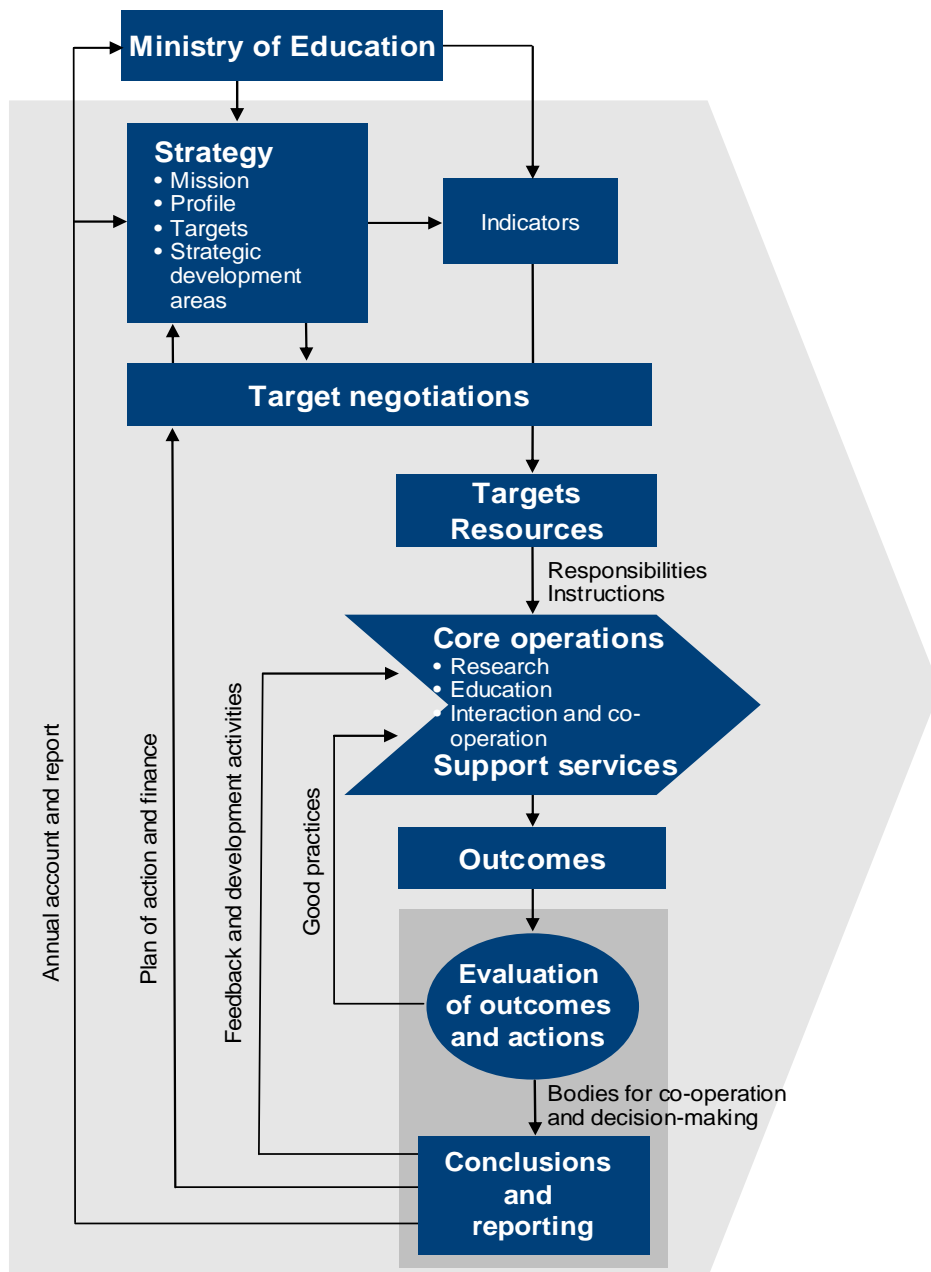
The overall framework of the University's QA system, operational guidelines and management

The quality assurance system **is closely attached to the university management system.**

To assure and develop quality, the university

- sets targets
- identifies and allocates resources for the core operations and support services,
- assures that staff, students and interest groups have adequate possibilities to take part in planning, evaluation and development,
- assigns the people responsible and provides the needed guidelines and regulations
- promotes the distribution of good practises,
- monitors the key indicators and the information gathered by feedback systems,
- takes part in external evaluations and
- is willing to develop itself constantly.

The quality assurance and management system of the university can be described as follows:



What does audit mean?

Finnish Higher Education Evaluation (FINHEEC) is responsible to audit (evaluate) all the QA systems of the universities and polytechnics and decide whether they are in line with the goals set by Bologna Process. An audit is an independent external evaluation to ascertain whether the QA system conforms to its stated objectives, is effective and fits its purpose. Each university and polytechnic will undergo an audit by the end of 2011.

What is evaluated?

The audits focus on the procedures and processes which the university uses to steer and develop the quality of its education and other activities. The aims, operative contents or performance are not, per se, touched upon in the audits. Auditing assesses the comprehensiveness, performance, transparency, and effectiveness of the QA system, as well as the way in which the HEI monitors, evaluates and develops its own QA system. There are seven **auditing targets** specified in the **Audit manual**:

1. Definition of the objectives, functions, actors and responsibilities of the HEI's QA system as well as the respective documentation
2. The comprehensiveness and effectiveness of the QA procedures and structures related to the HEI's basic mission
 - a) Degree education
 - b) Research/R&D
 - c) Interaction with and impact on society as well as regional development co-operation
 - d) Support services (such as library and information services, career and recruitment services, and international services)e)
 - e) Staff recruitment and development
3. Interface between the QA system and the management and steering of operations
4. Participation of HEI staff, students and external stakeholders in quality assurance
5. Relevance of, and access to, the information generated by the QA system
 - a) within the HEI
 - b) from the perspective of the external stakeholders of the HEI
6. Monitoring, evaluation and continuous improvement of the QA system
7. The QA system as a whole

Audit visit 25.-27. of November 2009

FINHEEC appoints the **audit group**. As a rule, the audit group is composed of five members, three of whom are higher education institution exponents, one a student representative and one a work life representative. All auditors must participate in the auditor training organised by FINHEEC.

One objective of the audit visit is to verify and complement the picture of the QA system, obtained on the basis of the **audit material**. Another is to make the audit visit an interactive event contributing to the development of the quality assurance system. During the audit visit in November 2009 almost 150 staff members and students as well as representatives of the interest groups will be interviewed.

The result in March 2010

The audits of the QA system employ a set of criteria, with different scales for the four different stages of the development of the system. There are criteria for an **absent, emerging, developing and advanced QA system** specified by audit target in the audit manual.

The audit report shall include assessments by the audit group on the stage of development of the QA system per each audit target (including sub-targets 2 a–e and 5 a–b). Based on these assessments, the audit group makes a proposal to the Finnish Higher Education Evaluation Council, recommending that the QA system **pass the audit or be subjected to a subsequent reaudit** in about two years. The University of Oulu will get the result probably in March 2010.