

Workshop on CRIS data quality related practices within nationally audited QA processes

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Abstract

The Bologna Process, which started in 1999, includes the common quality assurance principles for the European education area. In accordance with the principles, the national quality assurance system of the higher education institutions (HEI) includes a procedure which guarantees the national and international quality of the higher education institutions. In Finland this procedure is *auditing or external evaluation of the quality assurance system*, which is carried out by the Finnish Higher Education Evaluation Council (FINHEEC) by the end of the year 2011.

The audit of quality assurance system of the University of Helsinki was successful: on 29th February 2008 FINHEEC decided that the *University of Helsinki fulfils the criteria set for the quality assurance system as a whole* and for quality assurance in its primary missions:

“The audit team notes that the quality assurance largely covers the university operations and the procedures used in it to constitute a systems structure that works fairly well at the level of the university... The quality assurance system is linked to management and the direction of operations at the institutional and faculty levels...”.

The audit is valid for six years. The summary of the report in English can be accessed at: <http://www.kka.fi/english/>. The audit report also pinpoints several development challenges, some of them clearly related with the University's current CRIS.

Workshop participants will get a 30 minute presentation about a successful auditing process i.e. how the process can be organized to pass an audit. Participants will then be involved in a structured, one hour fishbowl discussion on: 1) how the development challenges (described below) affect CRIS data quality and 2) what practices within quality assurance processes would help tackle the challenges affecting CRIS data quality.

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1 An audit process as a tool for quality assurance in Finnish higher education institutions (Aimo Virtanen)

The starting point for quality assurance

The Bologna Process, which started in 1999, includes the common quality assurance principles for the European education area. In accordance with the principles, the national quality assurance system of the higher education institutions (HEI) includes a procedure, which guarantees the national and international quality of the higher education institutions. In Finland this procedure is *auditing or external evaluation of the quality assurance system*, which is carried out by the Higher Education Evaluation Council (FINHEEC) by the end of the year 2011.

The quality assurance system of the University of Helsinki has been audited in the autumn 2007. The audit report will be published in March 2008.

The objective of the FINHEEC audit is to ensure that the higher education institution has a quality assurance system that supports continuous development of activity. The audit also ensures that a higher education institution operates in accordance with its objectives and the activity is internationally reliable.

The goal of the audits of institutional quality assurance systems

- To evaluate how well the quality assurance system works as a tool for quality management and enhancement
 - whether the HEI's quality assurance system promotes the attainment of national higher education policy objectives, as well as those set by the HEI itself
 - whether the HEI's quality assurance system produces useful information for the improvement of its operations and engenders improvement measures
- To evaluate the quality assurance system in terms of the audit criteria, to highlight strengths and best practices, to put forward recommendations for the development of quality assurance and to determine whether the HEI passes the audit or needs to undergo a re-audit at a later date.

This audit does not take a stand on the objectives of the activity or the results as such, but it assesses the processes that are used to control and develop the quality of activity.

Auditing consists of an external evaluation that assesses the comprehensiveness, functionality, communicative performance, transparency and effectiveness of the system, among others. The audit focuses on the whole University or HEI and on all activities. The criteria of the audit are published at the Audit manual of FINHEEC¹. A passed audit means that the Quality Assurance System corresponds to the criteria.

Auditing targets

1. Objectives, overall structure and internal coherence of the quality assurance system
2. Documentation, including the formulation of quality policy and the definition of procedures, actors and responsibilities

1 http://www.kka._Hlt188683966_Hlt188683967fBM_1_BM_2_i/pdf/julkaisut/KKA_406.pdf

3. Comprehensiveness of quality assurance:
 - a) Degree education ²
 - b) Research/R&D
 - c) Interaction with and impact on society, and contribution to regional development ³
 - d) Support and other services (such as library and information services, career and recruitment services, and international services)
 - e) Staff development
4. Participation of staff, students and external stakeholders in quality assurance
5. Interface between the quality assurance system and management/steering
6. Relevance of, and access to, quality assurance information within the HEI
7. Relevance of, and access to, quality assurance information for external stakeholders
8. Efficiency of quality assurance procedures and structures and their effect on the development of activities
9. Use of information produced by the quality assurance system as a tool for quality management and enhancement in education and other activities
10. Monitoring, evaluation and continuous development of the quality assurance system.

Audit process

The audit process has seven phases:

1. The HEI registers for an audit
2. An audit agreement is signed between the HEI and FINHEEC (UH May 2007)
3. The HEI collects the audit data and other material (UH by 15th September 2007)
4. A meeting is arranged to prepare an audit visit
5. The audit group visits the HEI (UH 26th to 30th November 2007)
6. An audit report is prepared (UH December 2007 to March 2008)
7. The results are published, followed by a feedback meeting (March 2008).

Case: The QA system at the University of Helsinki

Quality secures the future of the University

Quality at the University of Helsinki means expedient activity and high-quality results. The cornerstones of *the quality policy at the University of Helsinki* are:

1. through quality work the University of Helsinki reinforces its position as one of the best research universities in Europe
2. each University community member, from teachers and researchers to other staff members and students, is responsible for the quality of the University in their activities

2 Degree education means the first, second and third cycles of education leading to a degree. The first cycle comprises university and polytechnic Bachelor's degrees, and the second cycle university and polytechnic Master's degrees. The third cycle is research training, i.e. in Finland the postgraduate Licentiate and Doctorate degrees.

3 HEIs' societal and regional mission also includes continuing education, (such as professional courses) and open university and open polytechnic education.

3. the University quality assurance system supports the activity and development of activity of each member of the University community, their unit and the whole University community.



Operations manual

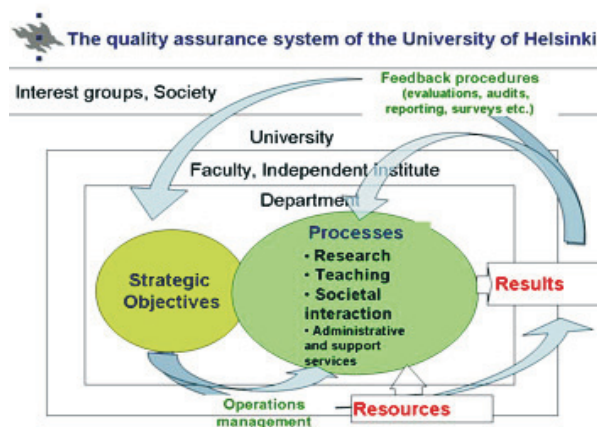
The University operations manual constitutes the central documentation of the quality assurance system. The Operations Manual consists of general text sections, existing updated documents linked to them and essential process descriptions.

The faculties and separate institutes formulate their own operations manual based on the corresponding document of the University.

Quality System

The quality of the University of Helsinki consists of the quality of the final results, the processes and activities that produce the results and the organisation quality, which includes the atmosphere at the University, the organisational culture and the outward image.

The quality of the activity is maintained, developed and evaluated with an all fields covering quality system that every University community member exploits in their work.



Quality assurance is based on the strategic objectives of the University and is a part of the University's normal activity. The objective of the quality work is continuous development of the activity and making the development visible in all the units and everyone's work. Quality work concerns all the members of the University community from teachers, researchers and other staff members to students.

Quality Assurance Organisation

The Rector is responsible for the quality of the activities of the whole University. The quality assurance steering group, appointed by the Rector, coordinates and plans the quality assurance system of the University in its entirety. One of faculty deans acts as the chairman of the group.

The Quality Manager is responsible for the quality assurance system to follow the given guidelines and for the sufficiency of documentation. He also ensures that the quality assurance mechanisms are used appropriately to cover all the units and activities.

The University Quality Expert and experts from other operational sectors support the Quality Manager at the Administration Office. Similarly the contact persons in the faculties and independent institutes see to these matters in their own organisations.

2 Workshop discussion on QA processes affecting CRIS data quality (*Markku Niemi, Aija Kaitera, Heikki Kallasvaara*)

The above mentioned audit report pinpoints several development challenges, some of them clearly related with the University's current CRIS:

- development of research infrastructure and services are ways of supporting research (p. 41)
- the University's research project guide was considered a good tool, but not known to many interviewed research staff (p. 42)
- Information systems' input personnel should have congruent understanding with the intended content and collection principles of the data (p. 63)
- stakeholders seem not to use or even know about the University's CRIS system (p. 64)
- CRIS system's familiarity, functionality and necessity should be evaluated in cooperation with the University's stakeholders (p. 65)
- procedures of senior management and measures to identify and respond to defective quality should be documented (p. 73)
- the University's follow-up and reporting information systems need further development and integration (p. 74)

In the workshop participants will be involved in a structured fishbowl discussion on: 1) how the above mentioned development challenges affect CRIS data quality and 2) what practices within quality assurance processes and practices would help tackle the challenges affecting CRIS data quality.

The discussed QA process categories will be:

- Research services: research policy management support, international research funding application, negotiation and project administration, IPR management, development of research IS services
- Library and information services: publication information processing
- Communications: public communications of ongoing research and its results
- Financial administration: research project opening, project cost management and reporting

The focus of discussions about information processing related practices should be limited to information systems consisting CERIF model related data: people, projects and organizations, including research results like publications. Research management process focus will be in EU funded framework projects, in order to have a common conceptual and interest ground for most of the workshop participants.

The outcome - the recognized good practices - will be reported and published for EuroCRIS members and CRIS2008 participants.

3 Recommended readings in advance

- Quality and Evaluation at the University of Helsinki: <http://www.helsinki.fi/evaluation/>.
- The Finnish Higher Education Evaluation Council (including the audit report of the University of Helsinki): <http://www.kka.fi/english/>
- About fishbowl conversation method:
http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Fishbowl_%28conversation%29