



FINHEEC

Cross-border Quality Audit – an Example from Practice

EQAR Members' Dialog Ghent 17/18 October 2013

Helka Kekäläinen, PhD, Secretary General

FINHEEC



- An independent expert body founded in 1996
- Assists Higher Education Institutions (HEI) in matters relating to evaluation, e.g. by organising evaluations of HEI activities
- 12 member Council – decision making body
- 11 member Secretariat – preparative and implementing body
- Full member of ENQA and registered in EQAR
- **Enhancement-led approach** since the beginning



FINHEEC

FINHEEC's evaluation types

FINHEEC currently conducts two principal types of evaluations:

- **Audits of quality systems of higher education institutions**
(universities and universities of applied sciences)
- **Thematic evaluations and programme/field-specific evaluations**
(the field or theme must be significant with regard to education and society, rapidly growing and developing or problematic).

FINHEEC may also undertake evaluation projects

- 1) under a mandate from the Ministry of Education and Culture, as was the case with the selection of Centres of Excellence in Education
- 2) as contract work provided that the evaluations fit thematically into FINHEEC's strategy.



FINHEEC

The audit model



FINHEEC

FINHEEC **audit**

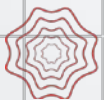
- **Institutional** approach – the same model for both higher education sectors (universities and universities of applied sciences)
- **Comprehensive** approach – covers education, research and social impact – and overall quality management
- External assessment of internal QA - reflects institutions' **autonomy and responsibility**, and a large measure of trust
 - HEIs are responsible for the quality of their operations
 - Each institution develops its quality system based on its own needs and goals



FINHEEC

Enhancement-led approach

- Aim to support HEIs in the **enhancement** of quality and establishment of quality culture by (1) producing information to assist HEIs to develop their activities, and by (2) exchanging and disseminating good practices among other HEIs
- As a result of the audit, an institution either passes the audit and receives a **quality label** or is subjected to a subsequent re-audit
- The quality system is evaluated against the HEI's objectives, focusing on its efficiency and fitness for purpose – against the FINHEEC criteria
- Does the system produce useful information and does the HEI use the system to develop its activities? Does the quality system cover all activities and units of the HEI?



The audit targets

1. The quality policy of the HEI
2. Strategic and operations management
3. The development of the quality system
4. Quality management of the higher education institution's basic duties:
 - i. Degree education (three cycles)
 - ii. Research, development and innovation activities, as well as artistic activities
 - iii. The societal impact and regional development work
 - iv. Optional audit target (internationalisation)
5. (Samples of degree education: degree programmes)
6. The quality system as a whole



Audit criteria: development stages

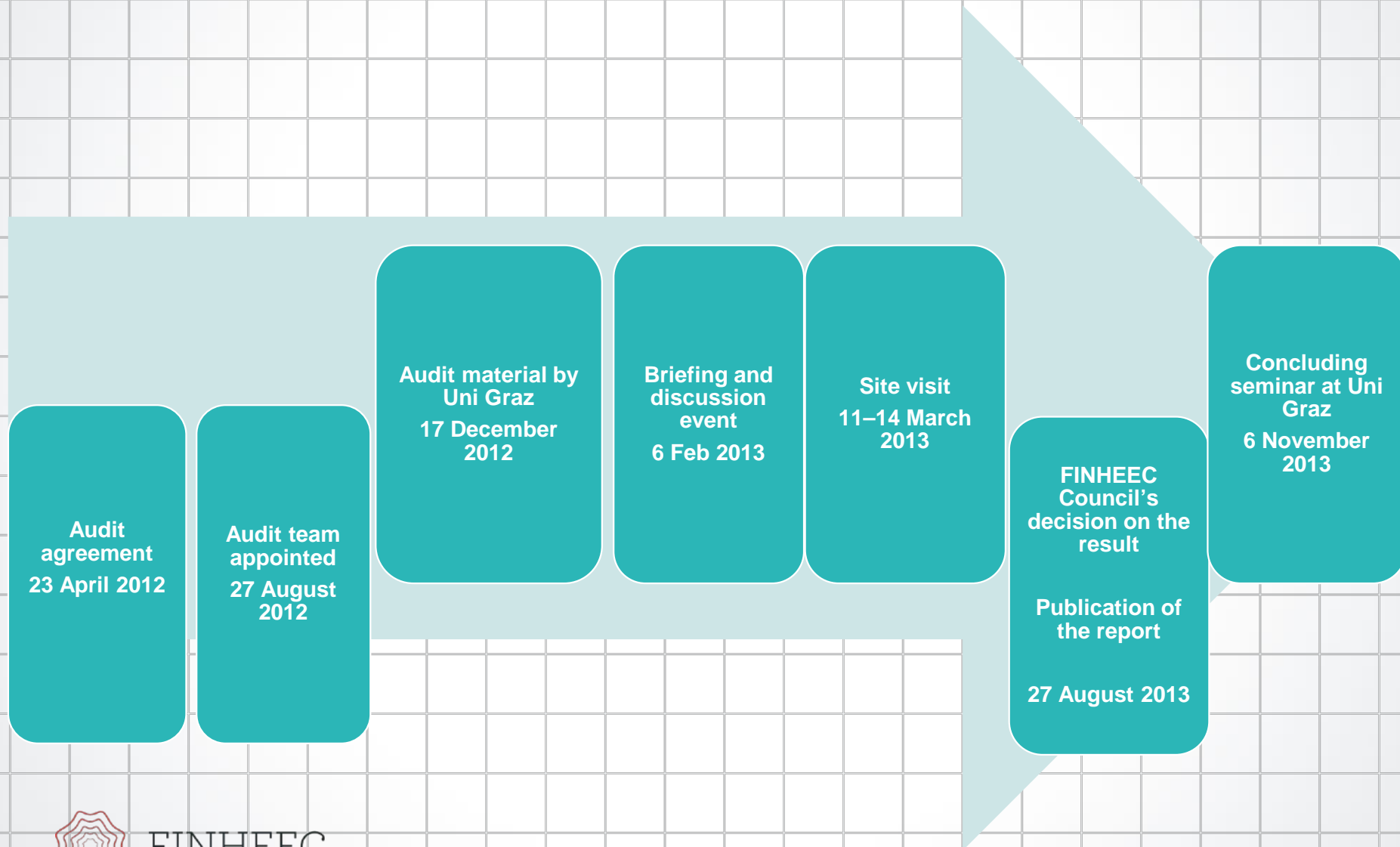
TARGETS	CRITERIA			
	ABSENT	EMERGING	DEVELOPING	ADVANCED
1. The quality policy of the higher education institution	<p>The quality system shows a complete absence of or major shortcomings in the:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ definition of the system's objectives and responsibilities ■ knowledge and commitment of those responsible ■ documentation of the system and the information it produces or ■ suitable communication. 	<p>The quality system's objectives and responsibilities have not been clearly defined. The division of responsibility works only partially, and those responsible for the operations exhibit widely differing skill levels and commitment to their duties.</p> <p>The quality system and the information it produces are inadequately documented. The information needs of the HEI's personnel groups, students or external stakeholders are not adequately addressed in the documentation. Information produced by the system is not systematically communicated within the institution or to external stakeholders.</p>	<p>The quality system's objectives and responsibilities are clearly defined. The goal-setting process is an inclusive one. The division of responsibility functions well. The key people responsible for the operations are committed to their duties and have sufficient skills to undertake them.</p> <p>The quality system and the information it produces is documented in a clear and appropriate manner. For the most part, the information needs of the HEI's personnel groups, students and external stakeholders are taken into account in the documentation. The information produced by the system is documented in a systematic and targeted manner within the institution and to external stakeholders.</p>	<p>The objectives of the quality system are defined in a very clear and inclusive manner. The objectives and division of responsibility provide excellent support for the development of the institution's operations. There is clear and continuous evidence of the skill level and commitment of those responsible for the operations.</p> <p>The HEI has systematic and well-established procedures for documenting the quality system and the information it produces so that the documentation satisfies the information needs of various parties. The institution has excellent and well-established procedures for communicating information to different personnel groups, students and external stakeholders. Communication is active and up-to-date.</p>
	<p>Complete absence or major shortcomings</p>	<p>There's already something but it is still inadequate and unsystematic</p>	<p>The system and procedures are developed and adequate</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ❖ Work is systematic, well-established ❖ Continuous evidence ❖ Excellence



Threshold for passing

- The audit team can propose that the institution passes the audit if none of the targets is evaluated to be 'absent' and if the stage of the quality system as a whole (audit target 6) is evaluated to be at least 'developing'
- The FINHEEC Council makes the final decision based on the audit team's proposition
- University of Graz passed the audit and the quality label is valid until 27 August 2020

Uni Graz **Audit process**



FINHEEC

Motivation for crossing borders



FINHEEC

The aims of ENQA and EQAR

- the maintenance and enhancement of the quality of European higher education
- driving force for the development of QA across all the Bologna signatory countries
- promoting European co-operation in the field of QA in higher education, share good practice in QA and to foster the European dimension of QA
- transparency of QA in higher education across Europe
- promote student mobility by providing a basis for the increase of trust among HEIs
- reduce opportunities for “accreditation mills” to gain credibility
- provide a basis for governments to authorise HEIs to choose any agency from the Register, if that is compatible with national arrangements
- provide a means for HEIs to choose between different agencies, if that is compatible with national arrangements
- serve as an instrument to improve the quality of agencies and to promote mutual trust among them



WIN-WIN

- **Added value for Uni Graz:**

- FINHEEC is an **experienced** actor: full cycle of audits completed and model refined twice, 2nd cycle going on => **relevant** recommendations and feedback
- **truly external** view without preconceptions and national truisms
- international **visibility** and **transparency**
- joint effort – joint **success** for the staff

- **Added value for FINHEEC:**

- **testing** the audit model in another higher education system
- **challenging** our expertise in enhancement-led evaluation
- valuable **feedback** from the institution and the experts
- becoming aware of our **national blind spots**
- **international** visibility and transparency



FINHEEC

Ready to **cross borders** again!

- **Efforts** and **gains** met
- FINHEEC audit model proved to be **compatible** with the Austrian framework
- Uni Graz opened itself up to enhancement-led approach – **trust**
- **New reference point** for Finnish HEIs and FINHEEC
- Dissemination of **good practices** across borders
- **Self-confidence** as an international actor
- € - in future
- Overall **positive** experience



Thank you for your attention!



FINHEEC