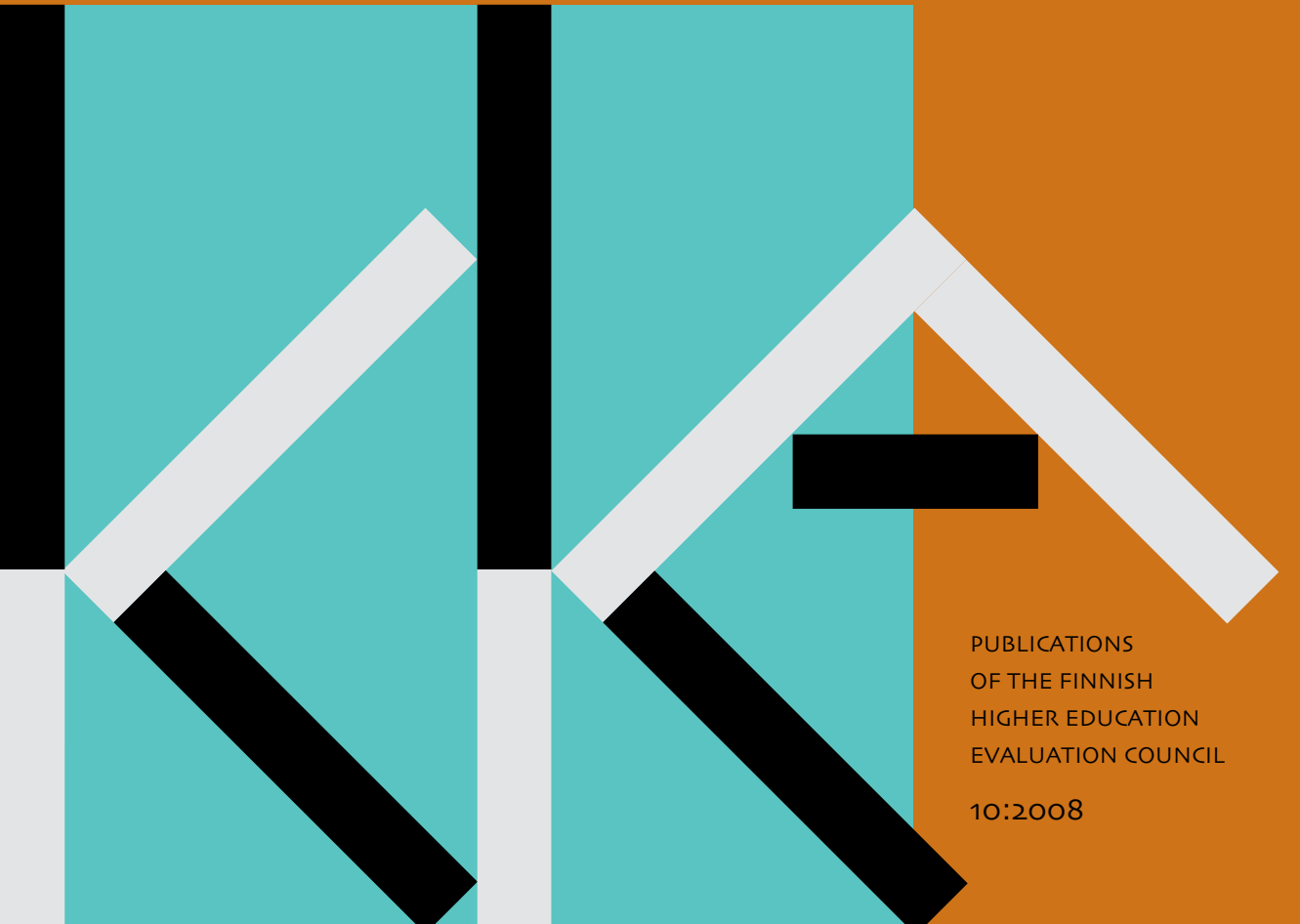


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## Audit of the Quality Assurance System of the Helsinki School of Economics



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# Foreword

The Finnish Higher Education Evaluation Council (FINHEEC) will perform audits of the quality assurance (QA) systems of all Finnish higher education institutions (HEIs) by 2011. The key aim is to support the HEIs while they are developing their QA systems to meet European QA principles<sup>1</sup> and to demonstrate that competent and consistent higher education QA is in place in Finland at the national level. Consequently, one of the aims of the audits is to promote the competitiveness of Finnish HEIs in the global education market. The aim at the national level is to compile, promote and disseminate good QA practices within higher education and thus develop the entire field of higher education.

The point of departure for QA auditing is enhancement-led evaluation, which has been established as a strong tradition within Finnish evaluation practices, and which the HEIs have found supports their activities and autonomy. The method is based on trusting the HEIs to be responsible for the quality of their own activities. The HEIs decide for themselves on their quality assurance system, and the auditing assesses its suitability: the system's comprehensiveness, functionality and effectiveness.

The development phase of the audit model was implemented in 2005–2007, and currently the method is in its establishment phase. In November 2007, FINHEEC published a new edition of the audit manual<sup>2</sup>, which defines the objectives, focus, methods, criteria and consequences of the audit. The manual follows the basic principles and measures of the previous manual with some clarifications and amendments, which have been made on the basis of feedback garnered from the HEIs and auditors during the development phase as well as the experiences of FINHEEC.

During the development phase, the QA systems of 15 HEIs were audited. According to the feedback and audit reports, the audits have clearly accelerated the systematic development of the QA systems and measures. It appears that QA has both provided tools for the internal management of the HEIs and guided them towards developing their activities in a comprehen-

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<sup>1</sup> Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance in the European Higher Education Area. European Association for Quality Assurance in Higher Education. Helsinki: Multiprint. ([http://www.enqa.eu/pubs\\_esg.lasso](http://www.enqa.eu/pubs_esg.lasso))

<sup>2</sup> Audits of Quality Assurance Systems of Finnish Higher Education Institutions. Audit Manual for 2008–2011. Finnish Higher Education Evaluation Council publications 7:2007.

sive manner. It may well be said that audit processes and public reporting on the HEIs' systems have increased and deepened the debate on quality and the interaction between the HEIs and their stakeholders.

The responsibility for utilising and applying the evaluation information rests with the audited HEI and the completed audits show that the method is conducive to the fulfilment of that responsibility. On behalf of FINHEEC, I wish to extend my gratitude to the Helsinki School of Economics for participating in the auditing. I would also like to thank the members of the audit group for their professionalism and commitment.

*Professor Riitta Pyykkö*

Chair of the Finnish Higher Education Evaluation Council

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# Audit group

## Chair

### **Dr. Mikko Luoma, Finland**

Mikko Luoma works as Managing Director and Rector at the JTO School of Management, a private management development institute serving both individual and organizational customers throughout Finland. He is an active researcher, lecturer and author in the fields of strategic management and human resource management and also acts as an Adjunct Professor at the University of Vaasa, Finland. Prior to joining JTO, he worked in several management and executive positions in the Finnish metals industry corporations Outokumpu and Metso, where he has been closely involved with quality assurance system development and quality management. He has participated in several quality audit processes in industrial and professional organizations and is an active contributor to FINHEEC's initiatives on accrediting professional courses. Luoma has been a member of FINHEEC since 2008.

## Members

### **Prof. Hans-Dieter Daniel, Switzerland**

Hans-Dieter Daniel holds a dual professorship at ETH Zurich and at the University of Zurich. He is Director of the Evaluation Office of the University of Zurich and Professor of Social Psychology and Research on Higher Education at ETH Zurich. He has been professor of social science research methods at the Department of Social Sciences of the University of Kassel and director of the International Centre for Higher Education Research Kassel. He has directed several research projects on the evaluation of teaching and research evaluation. Professor Daniel has acted e.g. as chairman of the Society for Evaluation in Germany and as a member of the Scientific Advisory Council of the Rectors' Conference of the Swiss Universities for the 2006 CHE-ranking of Swiss universities. In 2008 he was a member of the panel for the evaluation of the support action of the European Research Council (ERC). Since 2002, he has been an Associate Editor of *Scientometrics – An International Journal for all Quantitative Aspects of the Science of Science, Communication in Science and Science Policy*.

**Prof. Bente Kristensen, Denmark**

Bente Kristensen is a Professor at the Copenhagen Business School (CBS) in Denmark. From 1994 until 2006 Bente Kristensen acted as Vice President of CBS and had overall responsibility for quality work at the CBS as a whole. She now works as Quality Adviser to the CBS. Copenhagen Business School was awarded the prize for the best example of quality work in a Nordic higher education institution in May 2005 and its quality system was commended as an outstanding example of best practice. Kristensen has also served as an expert and chairman on several peer review teams in Nordic countries and in Europe. She has produced many publications on strategic planning, governance and leadership, quality management (quality improvement/quality assurance), evaluation strategies and benchmarking. In 2004–2007 Kristensen acted as leader of the ESMU European Benchmarking Programme, ESMU (European Centre for Strategic Management of Universities).

**Dr. Anneli Pirttilä, Finland**

Dr. Anneli Pirttilä is Rector of South Karelia University of Applied Sciences. Prior to working in the higher education sector, she worked in different positions in market research and information services in the pulp and paper industry. Pirttilä has also worked as a journalist for several newspapers and the Finnish Broadcasting Company. Pirttilä was awarded her Doctor of Science (technology) degree from the Department of Industrial Engineering and Management of the Lappeenranta University of Technology. Her doctoral dissertation was on competitor information and knowledge management in industrial organizations. She has also been an active lecturer in her area of expertise and has acted as a board member in several associations and companies in Finland and abroad.

**Staffan Wahlén, MA, Sweden**

Staffan Wahlén (MA, English) worked for the National Swedish Agency for Higher Education in 1995–2007. In 2001–2007 he was responsible for international co-operation in the field of the evaluation of higher education. Prior to this, he worked as the coordinator for quality audits of higher education institutions in Sweden. He has also worked as a University Lecturer and Director of Studies at Stockholm University. He has acted as an expert for the National Board of Universities and Colleges for the evaluation of the university teachers' working conditions. Wahlén has written many publications on higher education management and quality in higher education. He is also an active participant in international higher education evaluation forums.

**Lauri Vaisto, Finland**

Lauri Vaisto is a student of the University of Vaasa. He is studying management in the Faculty of Business Studies and public law in the Faculty of Public Administration. He served as a member of the Executive Board of the student union of the University of Vaasa for two years and was responsible for educational affairs in 2006. Vaisto was also Chairman of the student union in 2007. He has been a member of the Senate of the University of Vaasa since the spring of 2007 and was re-elected for the administrative period of 2008–2010.

**Secretaries**

Senior Adviser **Kirsi Mustonen**, Finnish Higher Education Evaluation Council (FINHEEC)

Project Manager **Hannele Seppälä**, Finnish Higher Education Evaluation Council (FINHEEC)

# 1 Audit objectives and criteria

## Audit objectives

The most important aim of the audits is to support the development of the QA system of the HEIs to meet European QA principles, thereby promoting the competitiveness of the Finnish HEIs in the global education market.

The aim of the audit of each HEI is:

- to establish the qualitative objectives set by the HEI for its own activities;
- to evaluate what procedures and processes the HEI uses to maintain and develop the quality of its education and other activities;
- to evaluate whether the HEI's quality assurance works as intended, whether the QA system produces useful and relevant information for the improvement of its operations and whether it brings about effective improvement measures.

The objective of the audits is to collect and disseminate best QA practices and promote their adoption within the HEIs. The aim of the audit processes and public reporting on the HEI system is to activate the debate on quality issues, as well as the interaction between the HEIs and their stakeholders.

## Focus and criteria of the audit

Auditing focuses on two levels: the HEI's QA system as a whole and the quality assurance related to the HEI's basic mission. The target of the audit is the HEI's QA system, developed by each HEI starting from its own premises and objectives. 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.

Auditing targets:

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<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>3</sup> Degree education refers to the education leading to the first, second and third cycle degrees. First cycle degrees include university and polytechnic BA degrees, while second cycle refers to university MA degrees and post-graduate MA-level polytechnic degrees. Third cycle degrees are Licentiate and Doctorate degrees (research training).

- 
- b) Research/R&D
  - c) Interaction with and impact on society as well as regional development co-operation<sup>4</sup>
  - d) Support services (such as library and information services, career and recruitment services, and international services)
  - 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.

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 auditing target (see Criteria in Appendix 1).

The audit report must also include assessments by the audit group on the stage of development of the QA system for each auditing target (including sub-targets 2 a–e and 5 a–b). On the basis of these assessments, the audit group makes a proposal to the Finnish Higher Education Evaluation Council, recommending either that the QA system pass the audit or be subjected to a subsequent re-audit.

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<sup>4</sup> Societal impact and regional development work also include continuing education (such as professional courses), as well as open university and polytechnic teaching.

## 2 Audit process

### 2.1 Audit agreement

FINHEEC and each higher education institution to be audited sign an audit agreement before starting the audit process. In the agreement the following are agreed upon: the way in which the audit will be carried out, the timetable for the audit process, the international/domestic composition of the audit group, the language to be used in the audit, the duration of the audit visit (2–5 days depending on the size of the HEI), the division of the audit costs and the commitment of the HEI being audited to a possible re-audit.

The audit agreement between the HSE<sup>5</sup> and FINHEEC was signed on the 13th of December in 2007 with the commitment to a possible re-audit. The agreement stated that the audit will be conducted by an international audit group in English.

### 2.2 Audit material

The HEI involved in an audit process compiles the audit material from its own QA system, the purpose being to provide the audit group with sufficient information and evidence to assess the comprehensiveness, performance, effectiveness and transparency of the QA system. The HEI must compile the audit material to allow the auditors to gain a picture of the HEI's organization, the QA system, its links to the operative steering system, as well as evidence of the QA system performance.

The audit material must include the following documents:

- basic material for the audit, and
- evidence and samples chosen by the HEI to substantiate the performance of the QA system.

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<sup>5</sup> HSE is the common acronym derived from the English name of Helsinki School of Economics. The audit group decided to systematically use this acronym when referring to the Helsinki School of Economics.

More detailed information on the audit material can be found in FINHEEC's Audit Manual.<sup>6</sup>

The audit materials are compiled in the language used in the audit project. The HEIs which have agreed to an international audit send their materials in English.

The audit materials are primarily collected from existing sources. The HEI can organize the compilation of the audit materials at it chooses.

The HEI must submit ten (10) copies of the audit material to FINHEEC no later than six weeks before the audit visit.

HSE submitted the audit material to FINHEEC on the 29th of February 2008, which was also the deadline in the audit agreement between FINHEEC and HSE. The basic material produced by HSE consisted of the following descriptions and documents:

- profile of HSE
- HSE's quality development and assurance system
- timeline (1974–2008) of quality development and assurance at HSE
- quality and the management system at HSE
- SWOT of quality work at HSE
- development targets for HSE's quality system
- list of exhibits by auditing targets.

The HEI must include evidence and samples providing proof of the performance of the QA system in the audit material for each of the seven auditing targets and their sub-targets. The material should indicate which evidence relates to each auditing target.

The samples chosen by HSE consisted of the following documents and descriptions:

- organization chart 2008, academic departments and disciplines
- strategy – last updated in 2006
- “Quality Development and Assurance Processes and Practices” (Handbook)
- request to report for performance negotiations 2007–2008
- responses to peer reviews: a) CEMS & b) EQUIS
- examples of improved internal agreements in 2004 and 2008
- steps in the annual cycle of performance negotiations
- student union agenda for training student representatives
- stakeholder response to strategy consultation

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<sup>6</sup> Audits of Quality Assurance Systems of Finnish Higher Education Institutions. Audit Manual for 2008–2011. Publications of the Finnish Higher Education Evaluation Council (10:2007). The manual is also published on FINHEEC's website <http://www.kka.fi/publications>

- HSE.fi front page article
- descriptions of the following activities/units:
  - degree education
  - research and development
  - interaction with and impact on society
  - support services
  - staff recruitment and development.

In addition to above, the audit group may ask the HEI to provide additional materials deemed necessary before the audit visit. In the case of HSE, the audit group made a decision to ask for the following additional material:

1. What are the most important **key indicators** at a) the HSE level and b) in each of the units which will be visited?
2. What are the operative **procedures** behind these indicators?
3. **Basic material** from those units the audit group would be visiting in May. This extra material could be provided in the same way as for the audit material folder, i.e. parts 11–15 of the audit manual “List of exhibits by Audit Target”.
4. The **internationalization strategy** (or equivalent) of HSE.

The audit group received this material from HSE before the audit visit. The HEI is also requested to provide the audit group with access to any electronic material relevant to the audit. The HSE audit group asked for and received access to the HSE intranet.

## 2.3 Audit visit

Before the actual audit visit to HSE, the Chair of the audit group, Mikko Luoma, and FINHEEC’s Project Manager, Hannele Seppälä, and Senior Adviser Kirsi Mustonen visited HSE on 23 April 2008 to participate in the information and discussion seminar on the forthcoming audit process. The purpose was to organize a meeting to inform HSE staff and students and to provide them with an opportunity to discuss the objectives, targets, criteria and implementation of the audit. In addition to the presentations given by Luoma, Seppälä and Mustonen, the following presentations were also given: Expectations related to the audit process by Vice-Rector, Professor Olli Ahtola (representative of HSE management), Ms Tuija Nikko (HSE staff representative) and Ms Katariina Kyckling (HSE student representative).

The audit visit took place in Helsinki between 12–14 May 2008.<sup>7</sup> The objective of the audit visit was to verify and complement the picture of HSE's QA system obtained on the basis of the audit material. Another objective was to make the audit visit an interactive event contributing to the development of HSE's quality assurance.

The programme of the audit visit was planned according to the principles stated in FINHEEC's Audit Manual. The HSE audit visit programme is appended to this report (Appendix 2).

The focus of the first day was on the QA system as a whole. The first day involved interviews with the representatives of HSE management, the heads of the five academic departments and other units (Helecon Information Center, Small Business Center and HSE Executive Education Ltd), teaching and other staff, students and other stakeholders. The heads of the 12 Administration and Services Units were also interviewed.

On the second day, the audit group concentrated on QA of degree education, research and other operations in the different units of HSE. The audit group interviewed the vice-heads, staff and students of the following eight departments and units to verify the comprehensiveness, performance, impact and transparency and communicativeness of the QA in actual operations: Department of Accounting and Finance, Department of Business Technology, Department of Economics, Department of Languages and Communication, Department of Marketing and Management, Small Business Center (Mikkeli), Helecon Information Centre and HSE Executive Education Ltd.

On the third day, the audit group interviewed the representatives of "JOKER" target (QA procedures of Internationalisation) and external research funding (thematic interview). The audit visit ended with a meeting with HSE management. In the concluding session the audit group gave the first oral feedback to the HSE management of the strengths and developmental areas of the QA system of HSE.

The audit group met 113 individuals at HSE during the audit visit. Excluding the students and external stakeholders, the audit group met 16,5% of all HSE employees.

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<sup>7</sup> Rector Anneli Pirttilä, a member of the audit group, did not take part in the audit visit because of sick leave. However, she took part in the other phases of the audit project.

## 2.4 Structure and compilation of the audit report

The structure of the report follows the principles stated in the Audit Manual, whereby a description of the audit process and a description of HSE and its quality assurance system are introduced in the beginning of the report (Chapters 1–3). The audit findings, itemized by auditing targets, are introduced in Chapter 4 and the final conclusions in Chapter 5.

The members of the audit group produced the audit report co-operatively using their own expertise. The audit group held two meetings before the audit visit in which it planned the structure and content of the visit. In addition to this, the themes of the interviews were clarified and a preliminary outline of the audit report was made and presented by the audit group members. During the visit the audit group had meetings every day. After the visit, the audit group had one meeting and in addition to this the Chair, the Vice-Chair and the project managers had one meeting.

The project managers were responsible for Chapters 1–3. HSE was allowed to check the facts in the report before it was published. In the process of writing the report, the audit group commented on several drafts of the report by email.

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## 3 Helsinki School of Economics and its quality assurance system

This Chapter describes the organization structure and administration; and the vision, mission, strategy and quality assurance system of the Helsinki School of Economics on the basis of the terminology used in the audit material delivered to the Finnish Higher Education Evaluation Council by HSE.

### 3.1 Organization structure and administration

The university was established by the business community in 1904 and became an institute of university standing in 1911. The Helsinki School of Economics remained privately operated until 1974, when financial responsibility for HSE and other Finnish universities was given over to the State of Finland. HSE remains autonomous in the administration of its internal affairs.

In 2007, the total number of HSE staff was 507. The number of teaching staff was 162, researchers 89 and other staff 256. The total number of degree students was 4,276 (1,502 Bachelor's students, 2,438 Master's students and 336 Doctoral students). The number of Open University students was 6,756 and continuing education students 5,400.

Most courses are taught at the main campus located in Helsinki. A Bachelor's degree is also offered in Mikkeli, a small regional campus, designed to serve local students, which is located 230 kilometres from Helsinki. In addition to degree students, the Helsinki and Mikkeli campuses host a large number of Open University and continuing education students. There are about 600 MBA students enrolled at any one time. HSE also regularly provides short courses in St Petersburg and Tallinn. HSE also accepts students in four other countries – Poland, Korea, Taiwan and Singapore – for its tuition-supported MBA programme.

HSE is led by the HSE Executive Team, which is comprised of HSE's Rector, three Vice Rectors and the Director of Administration.

The HSE Board is the equivalent of the 'university senate' as described in the Universities Act.

The Board's responsibilities are articulated in the Rules and Regulations. The Board is responsible for critical decisions that affect HSE's quality, i.e. for deciding on the:

1. establishment or termination of a teaching and research department or of a separate institution of the University;
2. location of subjects in the departments of teaching and research;
3. bachelor's and master's programmes of the University and on the doctoral programme;
4. number of students to be admitted to the University annually;
5. granting of the title of honorary doctorate; and
6. approval of the financial statements of the funds managed by the University and the use of their surplus, and to choose auditors for those funds.

The faculty is organized into the following five academic departments, which are headed by a chair of the department:

- Department of Accounting and Finance
- Department of Business Technology
- Department of Economics
- Department of Languages and Communication
- Department of Marketing and Management.

In addition to these departments of teaching and research, HSE comprises administration and services units, HSE Funds and HSE Holding Ltd and other units (Center for Knowledge and Innovation Research, Helecon Information Center and Small Business Center).

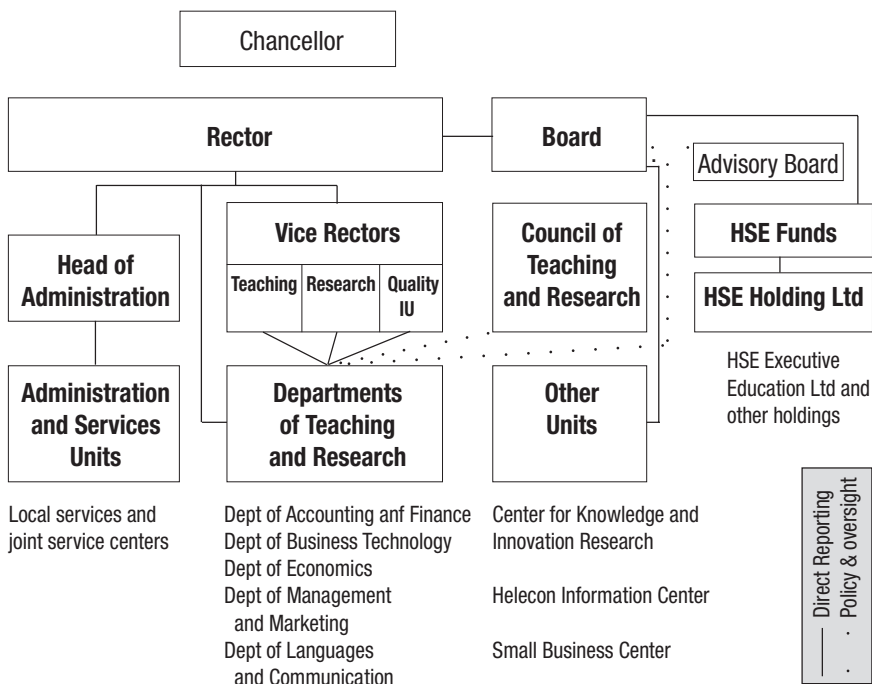


Figure 1. Organization chart of HSE 2008

## 3.2 Vision, mission and strategy

In the audit material, HSE states its **vision** to be: “The Helsinki School of Economics – a world-class business school.”

According to the audit material, HSE states its **mission** to be: “The Helsinki School of Economics (HSE) seeks to produce international research of a high standard, to provide teaching based on this research, and to serve business and society.

HSE seeks to create innovative business expertise that improves competitiveness for those in positions of leadership today and tomorrow, for companies and for society at large.

HSE seeks to be a career-long partner to management, experts and researchers.

HSE seeks to provide Finnish society with the best and most diverse international environment in Finland for business studies and research and to promote business expertise on a wide front through life-long learning.”

According to the audit material, HSE emphasizes the following **values**: “In all its activity, the Helsinki School of Economics (HSE) observes high ethical principles, takes equality and sustainable development into account, and places special emphasis on the following factors:

- quality
- incentives
- diversity
- democracy and a sense of community
- national and international responsibility.”

According to the chapter on **Strategy** in the audit material, the general operating principles of HSE are the following:

- HSE seeks to secure an internationally competitive environment, resources that ensure high quality, and a management system that motivates and offers incentives.
- HSE works to improve its management practices, hone them through regular performance appraisals, and give feedback that contributes to positive development. HSE promotes well-being at the workplace and seeks to make salary an incentive.
- In filling key positions, HSE pursues an applications policy that is competitive and to a large extent international. The exceptions to this are the invitation procedure for persons with exceptional international merit and the future tenure-track system, which may be established in Finland. For appointments to academic positions, HSE’s evaluations are based on an extensive portfolio of research achievements, teaching abili-

- ties, and practical experience in business. HSE defines career paths for its personnel and supports them in their career development.
- HSE is improving its system of student recruitment, which is based on open international competition, especially for the English-language master's programs.
  - HSE is developing a system in which business leaders work for extended periods on campus and researchers in business.
  - HSE allocates resources for teaching and research to demand-driven, multidisciplinary programs.
  - HSE is increasing its financial latitude through exports of training, sales of services, cooperation with business, and donations and sponsoring.
  - HSE takes part in international accreditation, rankings, and benchmarkings and is developing its own quality system on the basis of them. HSE increases quality constantly by introducing the best practices.
  - HSE concentrates its efforts and resources on chosen areas of priority. HSE builds closer cooperation with its networks both abroad and in Finland, especially with the Helsinki University of Technology and the University of Art and Design Helsinki. HSE promotes entrepreneurship together with its partners.
  - HSE provides a high standard of efficient administrative and support services with emphasis on professional competence and use of the best information systems.

### 3.3 HSE quality assurance system

#### Objectives

Quality development and assurance is part of the continuous improvement and process development of the whole organization and cannot thus be easily presented as a separate function. The overall goal of the quality development and assurance system (QS) at HSE is “continuous improvement to develop and sustain the competitive position of HSE as a internationally highly ranked world-class business school that deeply understands stakeholders needs.”

- The specific objectives of HSE's quality system can be summarized as:
- to sustain and further enhance the competitive position of HSE as a world-class business school;
  - to support continuous improvement of the quality of HSE research, teaching and learning as well as services and administration, in respect to processes, operations and results;

- to systematically provide structured information for decision-making and planning
- to support personal development of personnel and students;
- to commit the whole HSE community to a high-quality culture and communicate this commitment to present and prospective students, employers, partners and other stakeholders, including the academic world;
  - to maintain international accreditations and be active in international benchmarking and the introduction of best practices arising from these exercises.

## HSE quality assurance system

There are both external and internal reference points that provide important indicators for the quality of operations at various levels. Figure 2 illustrates the reference points commonly agreed and used at HSE.



Figure 2. HSE quality assurance system

## Key instruments of quality assurance and development at HSE

According to the audit material, the focus of HSE's quality work is on methodological development, the measurement of the most appropriate and useful quality indicators, and corrective actions.

Currently, HSE uses three interlinked core processes for monitoring quality assurance and the overall development as a university. These are:

1. International peer review processes associated with accreditations and benchmarking, mostly on a 5-year cycle;
2. Annual cycles of performance negotiations using a 3-year planning horizon, and directly relating to the fulfilment of HSE's strategy; and
3. Annual individual personal development discussions with immediate superiors.

HSE participates in several **international peer review processes**. These are both accreditation processes (AACSB<sup>8</sup>, EQUIS<sup>9</sup>, AMBA<sup>10</sup>, CEMS<sup>11</sup>, and in 2008 FINHEEC<sup>12</sup> audit for the first time) and benchmarking processes (most frequently with ESMU<sup>13</sup>). The first quality audit was conducted in 1992 by EFMD<sup>14</sup>. These processes are cyclical in nature too and are linked into HSE's QS, intersecting in particular with, for example, annual operations and budget planning. Each of the international accreditations with its specific focus provides lessons that are analyzed and action plans are drawn up accordingly through negotiation with the relevant stakeholders.

The HSE-wide objectives for improvements are decided at Board level and funding is negotiated with the Ministry of Education (or may be sought from alternative sources such as foundation funds or corporate sponsors). A key mechanism for agreeing on the actions to be taken is the performance negotiation process described below. Once the action plans are approved, they are implemented before the next round of self-assessments and peer reviews. In each round of assessments, HSE collectively evaluates the success of the implementation through the process of collating the self-assessment documents.

In addition to the peer reviews, HSE actively monitors **independent external indicators** such as SEFE<sup>15</sup> surveys, the *Financial Times* rankings, and

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<sup>8</sup> AACSB = Association to Advance Collegiate Schools of Business

<sup>9</sup> EQUIS = European Quality Improvement System

<sup>10</sup> AMBA = Association of the MBAs

<sup>11</sup> CEMS = Community of European Management Schools

<sup>12</sup> FINHEEC = Finnish Higher Education Evaluation Council

<sup>13</sup> ESMU = European Centre for Strategic Management of Universities

<sup>14</sup> EFMD = European Foundation of Management Development

<sup>15</sup> SEFE = The Finnish Association of Business School Graduates

research and surveys published by international consultants and recruiting companies.

For over two decades, the processes concerning the **annual performance negotiation cycles** have been an essential part of the comprehensive quality development process at HSE. The annual performance negotiations take place on two levels. One level is between HSE and the Ministry of Education. These negotiations are to agree on the budget allocation and the objectives to be achieved with the given budget. Internally, performance negotiations are conducted annually between HSE's Executive Team and all the HSE operational units, which are represented by their managers and other unit representatives. These internal processes have been explicitly developed as a major internal means of performance management, quality development and information sharing. The annual performance negotiations now include a review of the previous year's efforts and learning, and monitor the progress towards the agreed objectives. Objectives for the coming year are set according to HSE's strategic priorities and objectives for improvement.

The personnel who are employed at HSE also have **individual personal development discussions** with their immediate superiors about both their individual performance and development.

Through these discussions superiors can ensure that individuals receive the support they need in their jobs to be able to effectively contribute to the achievement of HSE's goals. In these discussions individuals can make suggestions for changes that affect their own work and personal development.

Each of these processes uses qualitative and quantitative **indicators**. HSE is required to report on many numeric indicators each year to the Ministry of Education, Ministry of Labour, the Tax Department, and other Finnish authorities. HSE also reports annually both quantitatively and qualitatively to AACSB. A significant amount of qualitative information is collected and collated through internal feedback processes. Each unit is responsible for agreeing with the

Executive Team on the most appropriate and useful indicators to monitor the quality of their work. It is recognized that very different indicators are relevant for the monitoring of the quality of performance in different units, e.g. research departments and the university accounts office.

When the quality monitoring process indicates the need, **corrective actions** are negotiated and agreed. HSE monitors the action's effects for the full cycle of planning, doing, checking and closing the feedback loop on the quality of activities and outcomes of the cycle by reviewing the cycle and integrating the key lessons learned at every level of the organization.

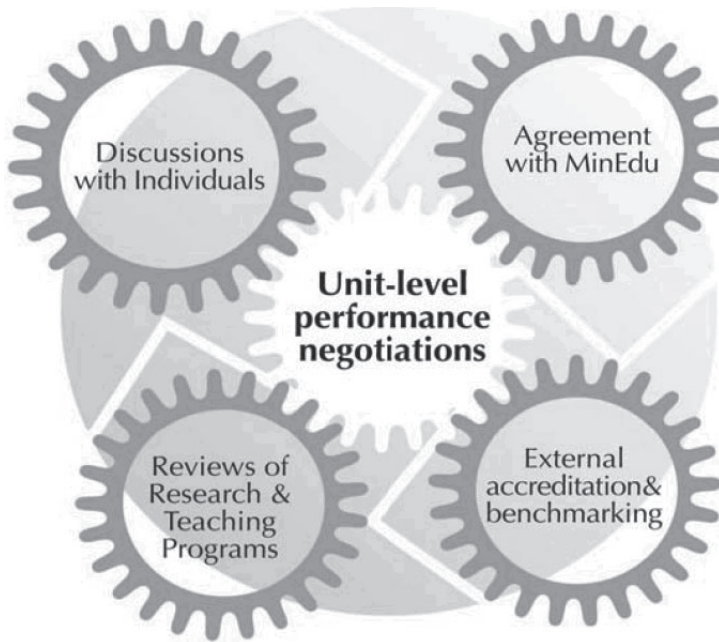


Figure 3. Annual processes for quality assurance and development

### Responsibilities in the quality system

HSE's Executive Team is responsible for leading and modelling the development of quality in all of HSE's activities. The entire HSE community is involved in one way or another in collecting, analyzing and interpreting information relevant to their activities and which contributes to the overall development. Each operational unit has its own procedures for ensuring and developing quality, since their processes differ and therefore require task-specific indicators for quality assurance.

The **HSE Board** is the equivalent of the 'university senate' as described in the Universities Act. (See sub-chapter 3.1)

The **Council of Teaching and Research** is responsible for the development of teaching and research, evaluation of the results of postgraduate study, and nominations for professorships and other academic posts.

The particular responsibilities of each person in the Executive Team are described in the document **Executive Team – Division of Responsibilities**. The first Vice-Rector has specific responsibility for oversight of quality issues and is the immediate superior of the Quality Director and also chairs the Quality Committee.

The **Quality Committee** (2007) consists of the HSE Quality Director, three members from academic faculties, two from administration and one student member. Its mandate is to:

- a) foster a collective understanding in the HSE community about integrated quality assurance and development work at HSE
- b) benchmark quality work at other business universities and raise awareness and issues at HSE
- c) promote discussion and appreciation in the HSE community about quality assurance and development work at HSE
- d) drive the development of a web-based information system to streamline reporting data
- e) oversee the maintenance of the “HSE quality manual”
- f) oversee and support the preparation of self-audit material for accreditations.

The **Quality Director** coordinates efforts for HSE’s applications for international accreditation and maintenance of accreditations. The Quality Director liaises with the faculties and staff throughout the organization, including wholly owned companies and subsidiaries, to keep them informed of the accreditation standards and requirements.

The **Rector, Vice-Rectors** and **Director of Administration** – the **Executive Team** – are responsible for the annual performance negotiations. The Rector and Director of Administration negotiate on behalf of HSE with the Ministry of Education. Each of the members of the Executive Team negotiates with the Heads of the Units which they supervise.

The discipline-based academic departments are administrative units to manage related academic functions such as nurturing researchers, teaching and professional links related to the disciplinary cluster.

Each academic department has a **Departmental Council**. The Council is responsible for directing the strategic activities of their department, which includes quality assurance and development. The Council chooses a professor as the Director, commonly known as the **Head of Department**, who represents the Departmental Council in annual negotiations with management regarding the goals, budgets, and quality.

**Immediate superiors** are responsible for conducting and recording their annual performance discussions with individual staff.

## 4 Audit results

This Chapter contains the results of the audit. The assessment is based on the audit targets and criteria. Each sub-chapter includes the appraisal of the development stage, the evidence for the assessment, conclusions and recommendations. As a consequence of the audit approach, some audit findings are discussed in this Chapter more than once, but from different viewpoints.

### 4.1 Definition of the objectives, functions, actors and responsibilities of HSE's QA system and relevant documentation

*The objectives, functions and actors of HSE's QA system are defined and documented in a clear and concrete manner. The responsibilities are defined and organised. The development stage of this auditing target is 'developing'.*

Definition of the QA system objectives and the linkage with the HSE's mission and strategies

HSE describes the QA system as part of the continuous improvement and process development of the whole organization. It is also stated that the QA system cannot easily be presented as a separate function as its integrated role is evident and every individual is involved in quality development.

The overall goal of HSE's QA system is stated as being continuous improvement to develop and sustain the competitive position of HSE as an internationally highly ranked world-class business school that profoundly understands its stakeholders' needs.

International status and striving for world-class high quality is also clearly written in HSE's mission and strategy statement.

The specific objectives of HSE's QA System are defined as being to support the continuous improvement of the quality of HSE research, teaching and learning and to also support the personal development of staff and students. A further objective is to systematically provide structured information for decision-making and planning and to gain the commitment of the whole HSE community to a high-quality culture.

The objectives of the QA system are well linked to the strategies of the HEI, which include, for example, to secure an internationally competitive en-

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vironment (through international accreditation and ESMU benchmarking), to improve its management practices (through annual performance appraisals), and to improve its international student recruitment (through English-language Master's programmes).

The so-called third task, interaction with and impact on the society, is evident in HSE's mission statement. However, specific objectives for the third task were not evident in the audit material and were not explicit during the audit visit.

#### Definition and documentation of the functions, actors and responsibilities

The HSE intranet, Piazza, is an effective tool in QA documentation. It contains key QA information and provides information for management, all staff groups and students.

In the QA system, the annual performance negotiation cycles obviously have a central role and are an essential part of the comprehensive quality development process at HSE. HSE and the Ministry of Education annually conduct performance negotiations and these procedures are then passed down to the Executive Team and the internal unit level. Unit managers and individual members of staff also have performance discussions annually.

Peer reviews – external accreditations, ESMU benchmarking and participation in rankings – evidently have a significant role in HSE's quality assurance. The cycles of these processes are linked to the HSE QA system and they intersect with the annual performance negotiations.

Thus, HSE describes its QA system as an intersecting series of continuous improvement cycles (i.e., agreement with the Ministry of Education, external accreditation & benchmarking, review of research & teaching programmes, individual personal development discussions). The cycles drive one another as cogs in the system of quality assurance. Each cycle includes planning, doing, checking and closing the feedback loop on the quality of activities and outcomes of the cycle by reviewing the cycle and integrating the key lessons learned at every level of the organization.

HSE has recently compiled documentation of the processes and practices specifically from a quality development and assurance point of view<sup>16</sup>. In general, clear QA procedures and structures are implemented with respect to the HSE's basic missions in the areas of research and teaching. At the departments and support services level, most units have not compiled a unit-specific

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<sup>16</sup> Handbook "Quality Development and Assurance – Processes and Practices 2008". Helsinki School of Economics.

ic quality handbook. One notable exception is the Quality Handbook of the Library, which is available on the library intranet.

In 2007, a Quality Committee was appointed, which is chaired by the 1st Vice-Rector. In the same year, a permanent Quality Director was appointed as well. The 1st Vice-Rector is responsible for quality matters overall and other clearly defined responsibilities for aspects of the HSE QA system. The quality work is supported by a Quality Committee and a Quality Policy agreed by the HSE Board. The Council of Teaching and Research is responsible for the development of teaching and research, evaluation of the results of postgraduate study, and nominations for professorships and other academic posts.

It is evident that many different bodies are involved in the HSE QA system. However, the QA organization has been established only relatively recently. Therefore the evidence and experience of the functionality and effectiveness of the structures and organization is scarce.

The definition of the concepts form the basis of the QA work. The audit material of HSE shows that there is some diversity in the QA concepts. For more effective QA work, the audit group suggests that the conceptual basis of the QA system is clarified.

#### Conclusions and recommendations

- The SWOT analysis of the quality work at HSE and the audit visit by the audit group have identified as an internal weakness the fact that too much information is circulated by personal contacts at the departments and support services level, as no unit-specific quality handbooks are available yet. The audit group recommends that the QA documentation (with explicit descriptions of the key processes) and the QA system is developed to increase the transfer of good practices. The Quality Handbook of the library can serve as a good practice example for other units.
- The intranet Piazza is an effective tool in disseminating quality information and increasing quality awareness.
- Since the current QA responsibilities at the HSE level have been defined quite recently, there is not much experience on how they function in the long run. Therefore, the audit group encourages the HSE management to closely monitor the appropriateness of the current structure and, if needed, redefine the responsibilities based on the experiences gained.
- For more effective QA work within HSE and especially in the phase of establishing the new Aalto University, the audit group suggests that the QA concepts are clarified.

## 4.2 The comprehensiveness and impact of the QA focusing on HSE's basic mission

### 4.2.1 Degree education

*The quality assurance system of HSE covers several procedures relating to degree education. The information is used as a tool to develop the quality management of degree education. Most of the feedback is utilised. QA procedures promote improved activities and change. Inadequate quality is identified in an efficient manner. The development stage of this auditing target is 'developing'.*

#### Comprehensiveness of the QA focusing on degree education

At the institutional level, the goals of degree education have been defined and the processes to attain them described. The departments involved in degree education have also provided descriptions of their goals, and there are also some examples of individual process descriptions at the departmental level relating to degree education. A notable example in this respect is the Department of Languages and Communication.

At the HSE institutional level, the key indicators for performance are

- number and diversity of applicants to degree programme
- number and diversity of acceptance to degree programmes
- rate of students' progress to degree programmes
- amount and quality of student feedback on courses
- number and diversity of graduates from degree programmes
- graduate feedback and evaluation on programmes
- employment outcomes of graduates.<sup>17</sup>

In addition to the departments, other units have also described the procedures to ensure the quality of the processes (indicators), the monitoring of unintended consequences, lessons learned and recent developments in quality work, links to management and other units' quality work and communication on learning and achievement. Unit and department heads are responsible for the quality assurance of their own area of competence.

While the units follow the main structure of the QA system in gathering data, following up and reporting, some have developed their own sub-systems. Some units have also developed their own quality handbooks. The Department of Marketing and Management is working on a strategy matrix that includes both short-term and more long-term means to reach its goals.

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<sup>17</sup> Handbook "Quality Development and Assurance – Processes and Practices 2008". Helsinki School of Economics.

While this is commendable, it also leads to different ways of collecting data in different departments. HSE might, for the sake of better comparability, consider unifying these practices within the institution.

According to the available information and to what was stated during the audit visit, the emphasis in degree education is on the master's and Ph.D. levels. The other strong focus is on research. In discussions about quality indicators, the first item mentioned was often publications in peer-reviewed journals. This does not mean that the quality of teaching is neglected. On the contrary, feedback from students is taken seriously and the results of surveys seem to be used in the planning and implementation of teaching. However, mainly due to the Finnish Ministry of Education's funding principles, there appears to be greater attention paid to M.Sc. students and less to those studying for a bachelors degree.

#### Collection and utilization of QA information

The process of developing and approving programmes follows a unified structure relating to the goals of the various degrees. It contains – among other things – feedback on all courses collected electronically from students as well as teachers. The results are processed by the Study Office and distributed to the teachers, department heads, programme directors and the Executive Team and is used in the further development of courses following discussions in the course planning team and sometimes the programme group.

In addition, the programmes as a whole are evaluated on the basis of the graduates' satisfaction with the education, recruiters' opinion on recent employees who have graduated from HSE, graduates' satisfaction after a few years in working life and the career development of HSE master's degree holders. This information also relates to information from other sources (student admissions, foreign exchange studies, corporate cooperation, career services, premises, equipment, library and information services). The programme boards include members representing employers, which helps to identify employability goals and to plan teaching relating to them. Peer evaluation of programmes does not seem, however, to be a method applied by HSE. This means that there is no overview of how programmes function as units, how the different parts fit together and build on each other.

At the unit level, the feedback on teaching is mostly collected through student questionnaires, although formative evaluation is also used, mostly informally through discussions in class. The electronic questionnaires suffer from a disappointingly low response rate and the information gleaned from them is of little use.

The Student Union collects feedback from first-year students taking core courses, creates a ranking list and makes it available to teachers and department heads. This is not an internal part of HSE's QA system, but serves as an external input used for improvement. Other external inputs are the SEFE surveys of graduates in working life and their opinions of the usefulness of their education. It provides important information which is fed into the improvement processes.

According to the quality handbook, the aim is that the information obtained in the above programme evaluations should be used for discussions with those who are primarily responsible for the programmes and fed into the planning processes. Information from the feedback system is meant to be used for improvement when preparing the teaching for the following academic year. This means that the structure of the programmes is continuously revised.

The information obtained from course evaluations is not available to the public due to an interpretation of the law that would suggest that publication is a violation of individual teachers' rights.

Internationalisation is one of the strengths of HSE and information is solicited from students after exchange periods at foreign universities. The information collected on HSE students' experiences at foreign universities mostly concerns the quality of those institutions. It would be more useful if systematic information on e.g. successful teaching and examination methods was also included. In the same manner, it might be helpful to gather information from foreign students on exchange programmes at HSE as to whether they have experiences that might help in further developing the teaching.

#### QA procedures promoting a culture of development and innovativeness

HSE does not have an explicit teaching and learning strategy. A common strategy for all teaching in all the units would be difficult to establish and does not seem to be favoured by the teaching staff. The mission statement of HSE states that teaching is closely linked to high-quality research. Various methods are used today, including case method, problem-based learning, guest lectures by representatives of employers, which all aim to make teaching relevant with respect to the labour market. Research-related practices include the principle of having senior scholars teaching introductory courses in all departments, and interviewees could give examples of the use of the latest research in their field of study. However, the audit group suggests that a document summarising current teaching and learning methods at HSE and giving more visibility to the Centre for Innovative Education would be a useful measure. Such a document should also recognize the current shift in univer-

sity pedagogy from teaching to learning. Some of the experiences of the Department of Languages and Communication and its award-winning teaching environment may also be helpful in this respect.

The departments have various methods of integrating students with the academic community. These methods include teacher tutoring, welcoming events and dinner parties with company representatives. Student tutoring, however, is organized mainly by the Office of Studies and the Registrar, but is insufficiently resourced by the institution.

The audit group noted that the participation rate in lectures does not seem to be conspicuously high. While this is not uncommon in the Finnish higher education system for a variety of reasons, HSE might consider investigating this phenomenon more closely to see whether the problem could be reduced.

### Conclusions and recommendations

- The quality of teaching is supported by strong linkages to research.
- HSE systematically collects a great variety of data on the quality of degree education, which is available for improvement processes. After the audit visit interviews, it remains, however, somewhat unclear what is being done with the information generated and who has access to it.
- The audit group recommends HSE to compile a document of the current teaching and learning methods, which are in use at HSE and encourages units to use new and various methods. This would also increase the exchange of good practices in teaching and learning processes in the different programmes and support the shift in the pedagogic approach from teaching to learning.
- In order to support the development of the degree education the audit group suggests that HSE considers introducing peer evaluation of the programmes on a pilot basis and assess the value of such a measure.
- There is quite a lot of evidence of good practices and efficient feedback channels through personal meetings between people, e.g. formative course evaluations between teachers and students.
- The web-based course feedback channels do not seem to be working (with only a 10% response rate in some cases). The problem has been identified but still needs to be solved urgently. In addition to this problem, the audit group suggests that: (1) HSE should create a stronger role for the Centre for Innovative Education and give more encouragement for good teaching, and (2) HSE should conduct a survey of the different data collected in different departments to find out whether the data collection processes need to be more coordinated.

#### 4.2.2 Research

*The system covers all the main procedures of research. The information is utilised in a systematic manner, and there is clear and continuous evidence of the sufficient use of the information to develop research processes. Special attention is paid to procedures and structures geared to inspire and implement new ideas. The operational culture supports innovation. Inadequate quality is identified in an efficient manner. The development stage of this auditing target is 'advanced'.*

#### Comprehensiveness of the QA focusing on research and support for innovativeness

According to its strategy, HSE's mission is to produce international research of a high standard. In the HSE's strategy statement both an international focus and superior, world-class quality are emphasized in research and teaching. HSE's strategy states that research findings should be comparable to those achieved in internationally highly valued universities and be competitive with them. The mission statement also states that teaching should be based on this high-quality research. HSE offers both international doctoral programmes and also industrial doctoral programmes.

QA at HSE covers the research processes. HSE strives to recruit the highest quality faculty members through open advertisement. For the professional level, outside experts' written opinions on each applicant are required. Publications in internationally refereed journals and in the business press are regularly recorded in a central publications database. The QA information on publications is utilized in developing the HEI's research activities. Within HSE, weekly research seminars are conducted with active participation by professors, research students, visiting faculty members and others. HSE researchers are active in international research networks and they participate in international research projects and are on editorial boards of highly ranked research journals. The purpose of all these activities is to increase the quality of research.

Individual researchers, departments, other research units and priority areas that produce top-quality research are rewarded accordingly. A new wage system, for example, was introduced, which takes into account the publication activity of individuals. This was appreciated by several individual informants during the audit visit.

### Collection and utilization of QA information

The key indicators for research performance at HSE are:

- amount of external research funding won through competitive processes
- number of publications in high impact international peer reviewed journals
- number of international faculty
- number of international research projects in which faculty participate.<sup>18</sup>

HSE has clearly defined the goals for the quality level of articles (articles should be published in the top 20 journals used for the *Financial Times* ranking: the average journal impact factor should be at least 1.0) to be published in internationally refereed journals over a 5-year period. All the interviewees the audit group met during the site visit knew the research quality criteria defined by HSE very well.

The HSE research strategy defines four themes as the priority areas of research for the period from 2006 to 2009:

- globalization and competitiveness
- financial markets and services
- the information economy
- business networks.

At HSE, the quality of research is evaluated at every stage of a research project. The Research Service Office has each proposal reviewed by an external funding agency and presents it to the Vice-Rector for research. All projects with external funding are registered in the HSE research catalogue (Rescat). Projects are also monitored closely from the beginning to termination by the Research Service Office, and by the management group of the department, the research unit in which the project is located and the director of the priority area to which the topic of the research project belongs.

Research results (e.g. publications) are registered in Rescat. The exploitation of the results of a research project (e.g. patents) are planned and executed under the guidance of the Innovation Manager, located in the Research Services Office.

The Research Services Office regularly conducts institution-wide, web-based surveys on the research services and their usability. The feedback gathered in this way is then taken into account when developing the research management processes. For example, this feedback was very helpful in developing the Ph.D. programme.

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<sup>18</sup> Handbook "Quality Development and Assurance – Processes and Practices 2008". Helsinki School of Economics.

Inadequate quality is identified in an efficient manner. The HSE research database Rescat is an important management information tool that provides information for the annual performance discussions between the Rector, the heads of departments, and individual professors.

#### Conclusions and recommendations

- HSE has developed a QA system for research which is both comprehensive and generally accepted by the staff and provides a sound foundation for enduring quality assurance.
- The Research Services Office and Rescat create a functioning and systematic approach for supporting research activities.
- HSE considers internationalisation as a means to increase the quality of research. The number of international faculty members is one of HSE's key performance research indicators. The number of professors, post-doctoral students and doctoral students from abroad is low.
- The HSE research strategy defines four themes as the priority areas of research for the period from 2006 to 2009. However, it is not clear how the QA system supports emerging research projects outside the four priority areas. The audit group recommends considering the procedures and mechanisms to promote innovative and emerging research fields outside the four priority areas.

#### 4.2.3 Interaction with and impact on society as well as regional development co-operation

*The system covers several procedures relating to the interaction with and impact on society as well as regional development co-operation. The information is used as a tool to develop quality management and to develop interaction with society. Most of the feedback is utilised. The QA procedures promote improved activities and change and inadequate quality is identified in an efficient manner. The development stage of this auditing target is 'developing'.*

#### Comprehensiveness of QA focusing on interaction with society

In the mission and strategy there is an explicit statement that HSE serves business and society with high-quality research and teaching based on this research. According to the audit material, HSE seeks to provide Finnish society with the best and most diverse international environment in Finland for business studies and research and to promote business expertise on a wide front through life-long learning.

- The key indicators for the interaction and impact on society at HSE are:
- continuing education programmes offered and the diversity of participants in continuing education programmes
  - new enterprises and the number of employees in the New Business Center
  - staff on external Boards and serving as experts
  - number and type of corporate partnership agreements
  - achievement of international accreditations
  - appearance in the *Financial Times* rankings
  - appearance in Finnish media.<sup>19</sup>

In neither the HSE strategy statement nor the audit material provided by HSE are the external stakeholder groups clearly defined in a comprehensive manner. However, the external stakeholders are implicitly documented both in the mission and strategy and also in “Quality Development and Assurance – Processes and Practices” material.

Likewise, an explicit definition of the regions that HSE seeks to have an impact on is not specified in the audit material. Obviously, HSE is an important actor in the Helsinki metropolitan area and it also has an impact on the Mikkeli region, where HSE has a regional campus offering bachelor’s programmes and also a Small Business Center. HSE also has offices in overseas countries providing Executive MBA programmes.

#### QA procedures in different units that closely interact with society

The interaction with and impact on society take place in HSE through six different functions: the Open University, Small Business Center, partnership programmes, Corporate Relations Unit, HSE Executive Education, alumni relations and the library and information services i.e. the Helecon Information Center. Quality assurance procedures function in appropriate way in these units.

*The Open University* has its own quality manual which covers the work descriptions of staff, guides for the staff and their different responsibilities, the rules on various activities and details for each course. Course evaluations are submitted by students and teachers and are used for improvement and further action. Furthermore, student satisfaction surveys are used to obtain information on students’ views on e.g. the usefulness of courses. Administrative processes and problems are continuously discussed in weekly office meetings in which improvement measures are proposed and decided. The same teach-

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<sup>19</sup> Handbook “Quality Development and Assurance – Processes and Practices 2008”. Helsinki School of Economics.

ers usually teach Open University courses and HSE programme courses, which in itself helps to ensure quality. In addition, the Open University has a separate quality group, whose duty is to develop the QA system.

*The Small Business Center (SBC)* is involved in training, research, development and support services for small and medium-sized enterprises in order to help develop entrepreneurship. It is located in Mikkeli and has branch offices in Helsinki, St. Petersburg and Tallinn. The Center also carries out research within its fields of interest and two new professorships were recently established in the area of entrepreneurship.

SBC solicits feedback from participants of all courses, which influences the content of the courses in the future. If negative feedback is received the Center is free to change the lecturers or mentors. SBC is also a pilot unit within HSE for a performance-based reward system. To ensure stakeholder participation in decision-making, the stakeholders are members of the Board of SBC. Local business contacts help to ensure that all relevant stakeholders are aware of SBC's operations and help to improve the services to guarantee a good impact on society.

*Partnership programmes* are very important instruments for maintaining good corporate relations. The coverage of the programmes is evaluated on a continuous basis by the business area, and every third year a critical evaluation of the programme quality and its relevance to corporate needs is conducted. For the *International Relations Office*, international accreditations (AACBS, AMBA and EQUIS) and memberships in the most prestigious networks in the field of business and economics (e.g., CEMS, PIM, SCAN-COR ) are the most important quality assurance instruments. CEMS, for example, has its own QA systems. A CEMS peer review evaluates whether HSE is fulfilling all the CEMS programme elements. HSE plans to re-evaluate all its bilateral agreements and international networks to make sure that they support the strategic goals of the School.

*The Corporate Relations Unit* appears to have a clear perception of the quality assurance of the partnership programmes and has developed its own key indicators for success, and its own strategies for the selection, design (in cooperation with companies), follow-up and evaluation of programmes, as well as the implementation of corrective action and termination of the programme if necessary.

HSE *Executive Education* is an incorporated unit, but is an integral part of HSE. Its quality assurance procedures, however, follow the general pattern of the School, and its key indicators include the results of the international EQUIS, AMBA and AACSB accreditations and the *Financial Times* (FT) rankings.

The indicators used by the unit are in line with its tasks, as are the operative measurement procedures. The unit makes considerable use of the FT rankings and their in-depth questions, as well as formative and summative course evaluations. It has no quality handbook of its own, a feature the unit shares with several other units, and the information received states that “the formalized system for internal processes is under development due to a recent change in the organization structure”. Thus, though there is room for the development of systematic processes, the interviews with MBA students gave the impression that the quality system reacted quickly when there was a need for changes and that there was considerable student (customer) impact on the provision of the MBA programme.

HSE attaches great importance to *alumni relations*. Alumni bring expertise, connections and funds to the School, and are seen as important contributors to the quality of activities at HSE and relations with them are handled in several ways. The Alumni Board, which consists of representatives of various stakeholder groups within the institution, meets four times a year to get an update of the development of HSE. Regular communication with alumni is assured through e.g. a monthly newsletter and the HSE website. The activities in which alumni take part include lectures, seminars and workshops, which they give or take part in. Feedback from alumni is solicited through questionnaires both in the middle and at the end of events and is used for the evaluation and improvement of similar activities. All feedback is filed and available for future reference.

The system of alumni serving as mentors for graduates is another aspect of HSE’s concern for their students. The quality procedures are in line with the need to develop this link with former students. Many projects and events which take place are related to alumni.

*Helecon Information Center – The Library and Information Services* – gives access to six online databases, and 32 tailored information channels for local and international markets are produced. These information channels are also available to external stakeholders. This strengthens the role of Helecon in academic society and also has greater significance for society. There are over 100 library databases and research journals available digitally, in addition to the numerous volumes and scientific journals. The Center has more than 25,000 users. The Helecon Information Center has its own QA system, which is based on its own needs and takes account of the special requirements of libraries. Helecon’s QA system has managed to combine the interests of internal as well as external customers. The information system, which is one of bases of the unit’s quality enhancement activities, includes a great number of indicators, such as the utilisation rate of collections, circulation rate,

number of book acquisitions, number of visitors, number of students participating in training and the professional training of the staff. The use of databases is monitored through the library intranet. The Center conducted local customer satisfaction surveys every year until 2005. Since 2006, an international LibQUAL survey has been used, which enables international benchmarking. The customer satisfaction survey includes all Helecon's customer groups (i.e., even customers who are not enrolled or employed at the School). Helecon can be said to have reached an advanced level of quality assurance.

#### Effectiveness of QA procedures in the field of interaction with society

To sum up, according to the audit material provided by HSE, external stakeholders are involved in quality development and assurance by participating in a variety of feedback and decision-making processes. They have seats on many university committees and frequently contribute to courses in the design phase and as visiting lecturers. The university's own alumni are active in this interaction and alumni relations play an important role in HSE's interaction with society and the regions. Additionally, HSE organizes many public activities during the year when business people and the general public are invited to attend research-based seminars and to discuss the latest findings with HSE researches. The needs of external interest groups are taken into account in planning the HSE research strategy by sending out a web-based survey to all partners.

#### Conclusions and recommendations

- HSE should define more explicitly the external stakeholder groups and the regions that HSE seeks to influence.
- It should be more explicit as to which member of the Executive Team is responsible for the third basic mission of HSE.
- The audit group supports the HSE's plan to re-evaluate all bilateral agreements and international networks.
- In adult education, the Ministry of Education has appointed HSE as a university of excellence for 2007–2009. This function of the third basic mission could also serve as a role model for other units of HSE.
- The Helecon Information Center, in particular, is to be commended for the thorough and efficient way in which it ensures and enhances its activities. Helecon and its QA procedures could be used as a good example for other units in HSE.

#### 4.2.4 Support services

*The system covers several procedures relating to HSE's support services. The information is used as a tool to develop quality management and to develop other activities. Most of the feedback is utilised. QA procedures promote improved activities and change and inadequate quality is identified in an efficient manner. The development stage of this auditing target is 'developing'.*

In the audit visit the audit group divided the support service functions into the following two groups: (1) general administrative support units serving the whole university and (2) academic support units. Helecon Information Center is handled in the previous sub-chapter (4.2.3).

##### Comprehensiveness and effectiveness of QA in general administrative support units

All the general administrative support units operate within the general framework of the quality assurance mechanisms of HSE, which means that they take part in the annual performance negotiations and other quality assurance measures common to HSE. Some of them have special roles and are in a transition period due to the creation of the Aalto University<sup>20</sup>. This concerns in particular the IT function.

*IT administration* has a crucial function at HSE. In order to prepare for the establishment of the Aalto University, the management and administration of HSE's IT services have merged with those of the Helsinki University of Technology. There is also close cooperation with the University of Art and Design Helsinki in this field, which will result in a joint IT administration for all three institutions that will make up the Innovation University. In the field of quality assurance they are now developing their own indicators, focusing on the needs of the users. IT services are currently in a state of development and are trying to find their role in the new joint environment.

The other units under this heading operate under other conditions and have their own indicators suited to their needs.

*The Marketing and Communications Services Unit* has three major tasks: communications and public relations, business services and career services. Feedback on all activities is collected, for example, in the form of image re-

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<sup>20</sup> The new university, which will be created through a merger of the Helsinki School of Economics, the University of Art and Design Helsinki and the Helsinki University of Technology, was given the name Aalto University on 29 May 2008. On the same day, the Government authorised Ms Sari Sarkomaa, Minister of Education and Science, to sign the charter of foundation for the new university (which had gone under the working title of Innovation University).

search carried out by a market research company, the analysis of website traffic, feedback from MBA students and other students, surveys sent out to corporate partners and regular discussions with partners at other universities. The development of the intranet function, Piazza, has been a particularly successful exercise. All this information is used for development purposes and is discussed in workshops for the entire unit, during which problems are brought up and solutions found.

*The Career Services Centre* assists students in finding relevant employment and companies to meet recruitment needs. In its quality work the Centre uses various indicators of success relating to the needs of students and companies. It has developed formal and informal channels of systematic feedback and takes action on the basis of the results of this feedback. Furthermore, it has identified areas needing development on the basis of its own surveys, primarily with regard to communication with students.

*Facility management* has the responsibility for the overall planning of the current facilities, new space, furnishing and for the premises and keeping it in order. Moreover, it is in charge of long- and short-term maintenance, internal premises management, including budgeting and internal invoicing, and is responsible for security and safety. Information on the progress and problems is collected through regular contacts of various kinds with departments and units. There are clear routines for handling, for example, property maintenance. Feedback mechanisms are mostly in the form of questionnaires sent out to the various identified stakeholders.

The *Finance unit*, has at its disposal the KOTA database, the reporting system NETRA and regular internal auditing. The department has defined its own goals and works consistently towards them. The same is true for the *Office of Personnel and Legal Affairs*.

Comprehensiveness and effectiveness of QA in the academic support units  
Student support services are mainly the responsibility of the *Office of Studies and Registrar*, whose tasks include student selection, study planning, tutoring and counselling, academic records and student exchanges. Student selection is a crucial process. It is important to recruit and admit those students who have a keen interest in and are best suited for business studies and a business career, not least since the quality of incoming students is an indicator of the quality of the School. The selection procedure is analysed every year and improvements are proposed; the most recent one being the inclusion of a letter of motivation in the application.

The processes in carrying out the tasks of the Study Office are identified in relation to the students' "Life Cycle" at HSE and are described in the

HSE Study Guide. The Guide gives an exhaustive overview of all the services, from starting the studies to graduation. The Student Union is deeply involved in the work of the Office and plays an important part in the development work, including running the student tutoring programme. The measures taken are monitored in recurrent discussions with representatives of the Student Union, who collect information from individual students or groups of students. In addition, feedback from SEFE on graduates' perceptions of HSE is taken into account as a basis for development, as well as the number and content of students' official appeals against decisions.

The role and function of the student support services in the QA system are well described and seem to function well.

*The International Relations Office* is responsible for contracts and networks with foreign universities as well as for the development of HSE's international relations strategy. The main goal is to mainstream internationalisation into all levels of the institution's activities. As a part and consequence of the strategy, several degree programmes at the bachelor's, master's and doctoral levels can be completed in English, which is helping to increase the number of foreign students (currently about 180). HSE encourages all its degree students to study one term abroad as part of their programme.

The growing importance of internationalisation has made the International Relations Office a significant player in many activities at HSE. Its quality procedures seem stable. HSE, through the International Relations Office, closely monitors the quality of its partner universities by observing external reviews and by comparing the experiences of homecoming exchange students to the expectations of the partnership programmes. This monitoring has already resulted in the termination of some of the partnership programmes.

Other information sources with regard to the quality of other institutions are international quality accreditations by e.g. EQUIS and memberships of international networks in business and economics programmes.

The actual administration and organization of in- and out-going students is now run by the Office for Studies and Registrar after the recent organizational change, which was brought about by the need to gather information on all studies leading to a degree pursued by individual student in one and the same place. A further development of quality enhancement activities would be to collect information on teaching and examination methods used in the universities visited by HSE students to serve as a basis for the development processes at HSE.

## Conclusions and recommendations

- The administrative support functions have developed quality assurance and development functions within the general context of the HSE system and with regard to their own special needs. They follow the development at comparable units in other higher education institutions and participate in benchmarking exercises.
- The quality development of academic support services functions well within the HSE system as a whole. Each unit has established processes in line with its own needs that also fit with the reporting models of the institution.
- The most urgent concern is the development of consistent quality development for IT services. It is especially important in the context of the merger with the much larger Helsinki University of Technology and later the establishment of the Aalto University.

### 4.2.5 Staff recruitment and development

*The QA system covers individual procedures relating to staff recruitment and development. The information is only vaguely related to the institution's quality assurance processes. QA aims at maintaining the quality level reached so far. The QA processes work satisfactorily to identify inadequate quality. The development stage of this auditing target is 'emerging'.*

#### Human resources strategy documents

HSE has formulated a distinct human resources (HR) strategy as its overall guideline for personnel-related perspectives, the main topics of which cover:

- leadership
- recruitment
- personal development
- motivation
- quality
- international cooperation
- equality
- employee health
- community spirit
- human resource policy development.

The HR strategy document emphasizes the importance of staff recruitment and development as the essential means for HSE's goal to become an internationally recognized institute. The strategy itself acts as a declaration of intent without any reference to actual processes or standards in the topic areas.

On the other hand, a more comprehensive description of the HR strategy and related HR issues is presented in the Quality Manual of the Office of Personnel and Legal Affairs (available only in Finnish). The HR strategy presented in this Quality Manual is somewhat different than the one published as a separate document. However, the emphasis on recruitment and development is strong in both.

In the document “Quality Development and Assurance”, HSE outlines that it is committed to recruiting personnel of the highest calibre to ensure the excellent quality of research, teaching and services to the community. Currently, due to the so-called productivity programme in public sector administration, there is a need to significantly reduce the total number of personnel in the sector. This has had and will have an impact on HSE’s recruitment practices as well.

There is a clear process of personnel planning described in the operational planning document. According to the document, all operative units are responsible for anticipating the near-future changes in personnel, including the number of new project-funded tasks.

Among the objectives of its quality programme, HSE emphasizes the importance of supporting the personal development of staff and students. Furthermore, in the document “Quality Development and Assurance”, several references are made to discussions with individuals as part of the annual quality processes.

These discussions focus on each employee’s role, objectives and performance as well as development needs/initiatives. It is the task of each employee’s immediate superior to carry out these discussions. These discussions form the most obvious link between HSE’s people management and the QA system.

As regards the formal descriptions of the policies and practices concerning staff recruitment and development, it can be concluded that these areas have been identified as key managerial responsibilities within the realm of the institute’s overall human resources management. However, only a limited effort has been made to outline the actual operative processes which would enable the institute to reach its objectives in the areas in question. There are two differing versions of the HR strategy, both of which highlight relevant people-related managerial aspects, but which give very little support or guidelines to practicing managers who finally carry out the task of managing the institute’s human resources.

### Recruitment process

In the audit interview, the representatives of top management indicated that a formal process for recruitment actually exists, but that the full implementation of it is not possible due to legislative and other limitations outside HSE's influence. The management made no reference to the HR strategy as a guideline for recruitment decisions.

The interview with the heads of departments and units did not give any support to the existence of an explicit recruitment process. Nevertheless, the informants underlined the importance of successful hiring as a central means of reaching HSE's vision of becoming an internationally recognized business school, but also indicated that the institute's ability to recruit faculty members from outside Finland could and should be much better. It was rightly and aptly noted that HSE does not have any difficulties in recruiting good employees from Finland, but this is because of its strong brand, not because its superior recruitment practices.

### Staff development process

The discussions with different informants on the role and nature of staff development followed to a great extent the same lines as the discussions on recruitment. The management and the heads of different units emphasized its importance but failed to bring up any evidence that a formal procedure actually exists. Nevertheless, several individual practices on skills development were mentioned, although no clear principles on how these might be deployed systematically became evident. The examples mentioned on development practices included open programmes, on-the-job guidance, sabbatical and study leaves and self-studying, all of which can be seen as representing somewhat conservative developmental initiatives. By contrast, strategically important issues such as pedagogical expertise and internationalization were not supported by large-scale developmental activities. The institute's positive attitude towards development and each person's own responsibility for his or her competence were frequently stressed, but from the quality management perspective there is obvious room for improvement in the current practice.

Furthermore, the staff representatives were asked about the induction practices, through which a newcomer in the working community gets to know his or her new position and which lays the foundation for further development of the individual's knowledge and skills. The informants typically referred to an informal system based on active social interaction with more experienced members of the team, rather than on the identification and planned processing of key learning areas.

All in all, based on the audit interviews, the areas of recruitment and development lack comprehensive and systematic procedures at the level of the whole institute. Greater responsibility and coordination is left to the individual units, whose approaches and level of commitment vary significantly. The overall area of HR management within HSE focuses mainly on administrative rather than developmental aspects, and this kind of emphasis does not contribute to the achievement of HSE's ambitious future aspirations in the most appropriate way.

#### Conclusions and recommendations

- HR management as a whole is an area which could be utilized more effectively even under the current legislative and other restrictions.
- The HR strategy is an important guideline but in its current form it does not give much practical assistance and support to the managers of the different units. Therefore, a more action-oriented HR strategy should be formulated, which should also have relevance to line managers.
- Staff recruitment, induction and development lack commonly understood and applied processes; strategic priorities are not reflected in the way recruitment and development are carried out in the line organization, although these could be powerful means to realize HSE's future aspirations. Documented processes for recruitment, induction and development at the HSE level should be outlined, and the extent to which individual units and managers can vary these should be clearly defined.
- Line managers should be provided with sufficient leadership training in order to enhance and align their performance as first-line people managers.

### 4.3 Interface between the QA system and the management and steering of operations

*The system links to HSE activities and steering of operations. The information generated through the QA system is utilised in development work. There is evidence of the existing links between the QA system and the steering of operations as well as monitoring and improving of results. The development stage of this auditing target is 'developing'.*

#### Links between the QA system and management

According to the quality documents, quality assurance at HSE is an integral part of the continuous improvement and process development of the whole

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organization and cannot thus be easily presented as a separate function. Quality development and assurance is directly linked to the regular performance management processes. Performance management in HSE departments and service or administrative units is based on HSE's strategy and annual planning cycle to ensure the implementation of the strategy.

The annual performance negotiation cycles constitute an essential element in linking the QA system and the daily management of the operations. These cycles comprise the entire process of planning, discussions and agreements on the operations and financing, including the quality of performance and outcomes expected as well as agreed indicators. The implementation of these cycles takes place between HSE management and each internal unit as well as between the unit managers and individuals.

HSE has adopted and adapted the so-called Deming cycle as a basis for its continuous quality work. This cycle comprises the phases of planning, doing, checking and reviewing, and its ultimate aim is a continuous improvement in HSE's performance. With the help of the cycle, quality work is integrated into the daily management of all activities. In ideal cases, the implementation of the cycle is difficult to see as a separate entity from the regular work at the level of regular activities. HSE allows for a variation in the way the cyclical process is pursued, but expects that the cycle can be made visible to onlookers.

#### Role of key indicators

HSE has identified key indicators at various levels of the organization to emphasize the key aspects of performance. A list of the commonly used indicators was included in the material provided to the audit group by HSE. The precise key indicators and their respective numerical values are identified at the level of HSE as a whole and each of the units separately. Thus, the key indicators and the actions relating to them together form a bridge between the QA system and management of all the operations.

The performance negotiation cycles were frequently referred to in the interviews conducted. The management emphasized the performance discussions with the Ministry of Education as the starting point for the institute's performance management process. The central role of the unit-level performance negotiations became clearly evident from the management as well as from the unit managers. The unit-level performance negotiations serve as a means of performance management, quality development and information sharing. The content of these discussions has developed in recent years, which is a good sign of their valuable role as a managerial tool.

On the other hand, the role of the discussions with individuals did not receive as much attention from the informants in the audit interviews. Those who brought up the individual discussions referred to their role in supporting individuals' own development rather than their role in individual target setting and performance monitoring. However, the practice of the discussions with individuals seemed to be in place in all the operating units, but the extent to which they cover all individuals within the units was not exhaustively proven.

Key quality indicators were asked from all the interviewee groups. As regards two basic functions of the School, teaching and research, the answers were in line with each other. The management listed the following as the most important indicators in these areas:

- articles in top journals
- the amount of "competitive" research, i.e. externally funded research
- the quality of teaching
- the market value of students (where they end up in the labour market).

In general, the key indicators regarding the two basic functions of HSE, which the management listed, were well in line with the explicitly defined key indicators in the Quality Handbook.

In the area of interaction with society, the answers varied between the informants. The management admitted that this is the area in which the use of precise measures is most difficult. The management brought up the following indicators:

- media appearance of HSE's professors
- the volume of executive education
- the volume of business incubation services.

In this area, the unit managers and staff were very seldom able to identify individual indicators at the level of the whole institute. Nevertheless, the importance of the interaction with and impact on society was well understood. The external stakeholders that were interviewed were not able to identify any concrete measures on the interaction with and impact on society either, and generally when asked about the quality of the institute stressed only the two basic functions.

The various units had identified their own key indicators, which were normally well understood throughout the unit in question. Only the area of the interaction with and impact on society was approached with some uncertainty also at the unit level.

### Operationalization process

The unit level indicators are supposed to be channelled into individuals' activities through personal development discussions. It was not possible to confirm if, and how, this hierarchical process of setting goals and defining actions proceeds down to the level of individuals in the audit interviews, but strong enough evidence was received to verify that at least all the necessary elements were in place in the form of the different performance negotiation cycles. A natural enlargement of this process is to link it to compensation at different levels. Evidence was received that this happens at least in the area of research, as the new wage system takes into account the publication activity of individuals. This was also appreciated by several individual informants.

The indicators certainly represent one manifestation of the above-mentioned Deming cycle as they help in setting targets and relevant strategies for reaching them, i.e. the planning phase. Interestingly, and unfortunately, the other manifestations did not become as clearly apparent. It would have been especially valuable to find a similar commonly applied practice as regards, for example, the management of corrective actions whenever they are called for. Currently, the representatives of individual units could only refer to actions on a case-by-case basis, which indicates that at least this part of the cycle is left to the units without any commonly set policies as to *who* is supposed to react to deviant performance, *by what means* and *how the corrections are ensured and monitored* so that the intended level of performance will be achieved.

Nevertheless, at HSE in general, the interface between quality assurance and daily management seems to be natural and well functioning. Quality awareness is good throughout the organization. Basic performance management processes have been harnessed to help reach the key quality priorities of the institute and their role is generally well recognized. Some variations between the units became evident in how closely quality assurance and the management of operations function, but the overall level is already good and the notable variations are normally signs of even more advanced practices in some units.

The Deming cycle serves as a central philosophical foundation for daily quality management throughout the organization, even though there was no evidence that it is implemented in full. This leaves unanswered what the institute actually means by the *embeddedness* of its QA system, i.e. to what extent does it allow the operating units to lose sight of the commonly set quality foundations at the expense of functioning everyday management routines?

### Conclusions and recommendations

- The performance management processes are used well to foster overall quality assurance and management.
- The key quality indicators are understood and shared throughout the organization; the only exceptions are related to the measures concerning the interaction with and impact on society. More attention should be paid to the identification and communication of these at the various levels of the organization and towards the surrounding society in particular.
- Good examples and 'best practices' of some units could be shared more effectively and almost with no extra cost to raise the overall level of performance management even higher.
- The full Deming cycle should be made operational better and more explicitly, even though there would be differences in its applications in different units.

## 4.4 Participation of HSE staff, students and external stakeholders in quality assurance

*The staff groups and students are active participants in the QA system. External stakeholders also play an active role in the QA. The development stage of this auditing target is 'developing'.*

### Participation of HSE staff

In the course of its audit visit, the audit group had ample opportunity to meet with a number of representatives of all departments, students, external stakeholders, support services, external stakeholders as well as with the leadership.

As has been mentioned earlier in this report, one of the central parts of the QA system is the performance negotiations which take place at the institutional level with the Ministry of Education, at the unit level between the management and unit (department) heads and at the individual level between unit heads and the staff. The latter activities also concern quality matters.

The staff have a variety of opportunities to make their voices heard at all levels, and thus to influence quality development. Staff members are involved in the various evaluation and accreditation exercises in which HSE participates. It goes without saying that staff members are represented on the numerous boards and committees and in staff meetings.

Individual staff members can make their voices heard in the annual (anonymous) job satisfaction surveys. The results are discussed by the top management and serve as an input into the improvement of the work environment.

### Participation of HSE students

The ways in which students' views are taken into account in the HSE QA system do not differ markedly from those of other higher education institutions. They are, by law, represented as full members on all decision-making boards and committees, including the Quality Committee and the Council of Teaching and Research, and have access to all the preparatory processes, documents and data relating to quality assurance. Approximately one-third of the HSE Board consists of students, and the Student Union Board has regular meetings with the Executive Team. In addition, student representatives on the various decision-making bodies are trained by the Student Union in special sessions. The Student Union also provides a support network for the approximately 40 students who take part in committee work.

Students are invited and encouraged to provide feedback on all courses and to take part in the work of the committees responsible for feedback. As has been previously mentioned, however, the course evaluation methodology needs to be reviewed.

Students' views are taken seriously by HSE and are acted upon. They have no direct access to the data systematically collected on teachers' performance, but the audit group found ample evidence of students being able to recognize improvements taking place as a result of feedback to teachers. Not unlike the situation in other higher education institutions, it remains somewhat unclear whether the "ordinary" student (i.e. students not active in representative bodies) is aware of the existence of the QA system and their role in it.

Foreign students also take part in regular course evaluations, and they also leave a short account of their study experiences at the institution. The MBA students have a special role as students and paying customers, and they are listened to very attentively. They are relatively few in number (2007: 600 MBA students) and the groups are small, which means that they can exert considerable influence on both the planning and implementation of their courses.

A group of students whose role is perhaps more complicated than that of degree students is postgraduate students. They also have a dual role as employees and as students. This may sometimes put them in awkward and difficult situations with regard to both their courses and supervision. It is true that the Centre for Doctoral Programmes provides considerable documentation of the rules and regulations and job descriptions. It remains, however, somewhat unclear what influence this group has within the system besides the annual performance negotiations, in which their performance is appraised. The audit group suggests that HSE considers this as an area for development.

### Participation of external stakeholders

The majority of external stakeholders taking part in the development of HSE are members of the Finnish business community and are described as deeply involved in quality assurance and enhancement at the institution. All the programme boards have a member from the business community, representing the needs of the sector that is the focus of the programme.

Close contacts are maintained with alumni through alumni meetings, and they play a role in the development of HSE by interacting with students. Corporations are also involved in the enhancement of the activities by offering students project work and offering graduate students the possibility of doing research for their dissertations.

Stakeholders were also involved in a strategy review in 2005, in which their opinions – as well as the opinions of students, HSE staff and researchers from other universities – were sought on a variety of strategic issues through an online survey and in public discussion and focus groups.

Some stakeholders met by the audit group, such as representatives of local authorities, appear to have great trust in the high quality of HSE, but failed to deliver much evidence to support their views.

Among the external groups exerting an influence on HSE are the international associations of which HSE is a member, the most important of which is CEMS. The regular CEMS accreditations play an important role, as do contacts with the CEMS community in terms of student exchanges.

Representatives of local authorities and foundations, including the Academy of Finland, were also among those interviewed by the audit group. Some of them act as representatives on the Advisory Board, for example, and may thus have an influence on the quality work of HSE.

HSE's Advisory Board – appointed for a five-year term – has 25 members, who are selected from among the external stakeholders. The major task of the Board is to give assistance by making suggestions for improvement and development. One of the members is elected to sit on the HSE Board.

The Advisory Board has a thorough interest in quality matters and the development of HSE in general, but seems to lack a well-defined role and focus on quality matters. In general, the potential of the Advisory Board could be used more effectively for the benefit of HSE's quality processes.

### Conclusions and recommendations

- Internal and external stakeholders play an important role in the quality assurance and enhancement processes through their participation on various boards and committees.

- Students and staff are listened to and members of the business community have considerable means of making their voices heard.
- HSE could clarify the role of the Advisory Board in the QA system and utilize its expertise more effectively.
- HSE should clarify the role of postgraduate students in the QA system.

## 4.5 Relevance of, and access to, the information generated by the QA system

### 4.5.1 Relevance of, and access to, the information generated by the QA system within HSE

*The system generates relevant information for the HSE actors, and the main results are available to the various staff groups and students. The development stage of this auditing target is 'developing'.*

According to the specific objectives of the HSE quality system, two of these objectives (see sub-chapter 3.3) have to do with information. They are:

- to provide structured information for decision-making and planning in a systematic way and
- to gain the commitment of the entire HSE community to a high-quality culture and to communicate this commitment to present and prospective students, employers, partners and other stakeholders, including the academic world.

The dissemination of information is also one of the development targets for the HSE QA system, which was identified in an internal seminar in HSE in 2008. Enhancing the information generated by the QA system refers both to the production of and access to information<sup>21</sup>. According to the SWOT analysis<sup>22</sup>, internal weaknesses were considered to be:

- too much information held by individuals
- no systematic documentation of processes and too much information being circulated by personal contacts
- obtaining structured information to help employees or to measure quality
- IT-systems lacking in accounting, project management, management and the lack of independence in the choice of systems.

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<sup>21</sup> In the required audit material for FINHEEC.

<sup>22</sup> In the required audit material for FINHEEC.

As with other universities, HSE operates under state regulations, which together with the local rules and the regulations of HSE are publicly available on HSE's internet pages.

The yearly performance agreement between HSE and the Ministry of Education and the annual operating and finance plans are published in print and on HSE's internet pages. The marketing and communications team maintains the current information on rankings and the accreditation status on HSE's internet pages, and the Quality Director maintains pages on Piazza about quality and accreditation, which include all the HSE self-assessments and peer review reports.

Progress towards defined key goals is monitored regularly either online via databases or via monthly reports. If measures cannot be found or agreed upon, follow-up meetings may be organized.

Annual performance negotiations with the departments and units are actively used to transfer best practices and the Rector seems to play a crucial role in the sharing of best practices, since any ideas arising during the negotiations are noted down and disseminated by the Rector. HSE stresses, however, that there is still much scope for improvement to create integrated data systems.

The interviews confirmed the above internal weaknesses mentioned in the SWOT analysis. The internal actors are the staff and the students. They are both aware of the operation of the QA system, but for their role as active participants in the quality processes it is crucial to have the right information to be able to perform the objectives of the HSE quality strategy in an effective way fulfilling.

HSE seems to be aware of the needs of the different actors but the various IT systems are not yet operating in a way that can deliver systematic documentation of the quality processes.

For the members of HSE's leadership, the need for reliable information at the institutional, faculty and departmental level is crucial for decision-making and for follow-up. According to the information systems and the Information Technology Centre, the collecting of data is not the most difficult problem. The real problem is to generate reports through analysing the data, which requires jointly accepted definitions. A joint project with other Finnish universities seems to be providing valuable feedback for further development.

The need to develop an overall database was highlighted, with the aim being to concentrate on key information reporting the current status of each of the key areas of HSE's mission, quality strategy and quality objectives. An

overall database was also needed for the very detailed information required for the external accreditations: EQUIS, AMBA and AACSB.

Quality indicators have been formulated for the three key areas of HSE's mission: research and development; degree programmes and the interaction with and impact on society (see sub-chapter 3.2, HSE's mission: "HSE seeks to produce international research of a high standard, to provide teaching based on this research, and to serve business and society."). Without reliable feedback on the progress it will be difficult for the management to monitor and evaluate the internal quality system in order to give qualified feedback to staff and students. There is no doubt that the Rescat database gives valuable information about publications and the ISI Web of Science, Google Scholar about citations earned. The question is, however, whether data from other international sources is used sufficiently for benchmarking purposes.

The feedback on courses is most relevant from the perspective of the students. The most satisfied were the MBA students as paying students. They underlined their role as customers and the very quick response and change to any requirement from the students.

Bachelor's and the Master's students were more hesitant. The use of an electronic student questionnaire is the most common method. The response rate is, as elsewhere, low, and only if at least 60% of the students give feedback, the result of the evaluation are made public. However, in the interviews there were examples of good practices, with a more proactive and formative evaluation practice including discussions with the students about the teaching and learning during the course. For the students and their employability, another source of information is crucial, viz. SEFE. The SEFE survey provides information about the knowledge and skills expected of future employers of HSE graduates, information which is needed to continuously adapt the qualifications profile of the graduates to the needs of the market.

In the interviews it was confirmed again and again that the HSE intranet, Piazza, is an important source of information on HSE's quality activities. HSE's internet and the HSE Newsletter were mentioned for bringing news about quality.

The second of the above-mentioned objectives of the HSE quality system "to gain the commitment of the whole HSE community to a high-quality culture and to communicate this commitment to present and prospective students, employers, partners and other stakeholders, including the academic world" needs a strong internal and external communication strategy, which still has to be developed (see 4.7).

It was obvious from the interviews that the present students were fully aware of the strong focus of HSE on quality and they see quality as a brand of HSE. The question is, however, whether the quality brand of HSE could be used more intensively for marketing purposes not only for Finnish students but also for students from abroad.

According to the policy on Quality Assurance and Development approved by the HSE Board on 15 February 2008, the feedback from the participation in international accreditations (EQUIS, AMBA and AACSB), the CEMS cooperation, rankings (*Financial Times*) and the ESMU Benchmarking provided valuable recommendations for the further enhancement of HSE's study programmes and services, research, administration and the HSE QA system. The HSE's background material for the audit group contained examples of an HSE Action Plan, dated March 2007 as the follow-up to the recommendations in the report of the CEMS Peer Review Team, submitted to HSE on January 18 2007. Another example is how HSE has used the renewal of its EQUIS accreditation in June 2003 for three key development objectives, implementing the EQUIS recommendations. The audit group considers the follow-up on the feedback from external accreditations, evaluations and audits as a source for an integrated and continuous process of self-reflection and quality improvement, involving both the HSE leadership, faculties, students and administrative staff.

#### Conclusions and recommendations

- Within HSE, there is will to react to both negative and positive feedback at all levels of the organization.
- There is awareness within HSE of the weaknesses of the present management information systems and a will to rectify this.
- More emphasis should be placed on the improvement of technical systems to produce and distribute the necessary data in a more concise way.
- A major step forward would be the further development of the HSE intranet Piazza into the intended powerful information management system (MIS).
- HSE could strengthen its participation in the joint university project, Universities' Data Warehouse, supported by the Ministry of Education, to define the information needs and ascertain the most feasible means to produce them.

#### 4.5.2 Relevance of, and access to, the information generated by the QA system for the external stakeholders

*The perspective of the external stakeholders has not been considered sufficiently in the planning and continuous improvement of the QA system. Dissemination of information to external stakeholders is unsystematic. The development stage of this auditing target is 'emerging'.*

The majority of stakeholders taking part in the development of HSE are members of the Finnish business community. Channels of external communication include Avista (the stakeholder magazine published twice a year), the Annual Report, various events, and the [www.hse.fi](http://www.hse.fi) internet service.

In HSE's communication with external stakeholders the Advisory Board of the University Board clearly has an important role. Furthermore, all the programme boards have a member from business, representing the needs of the sector that is the focus of the programme. The participation of board members from business and industry takes place even in designing and teaching of individual courses.

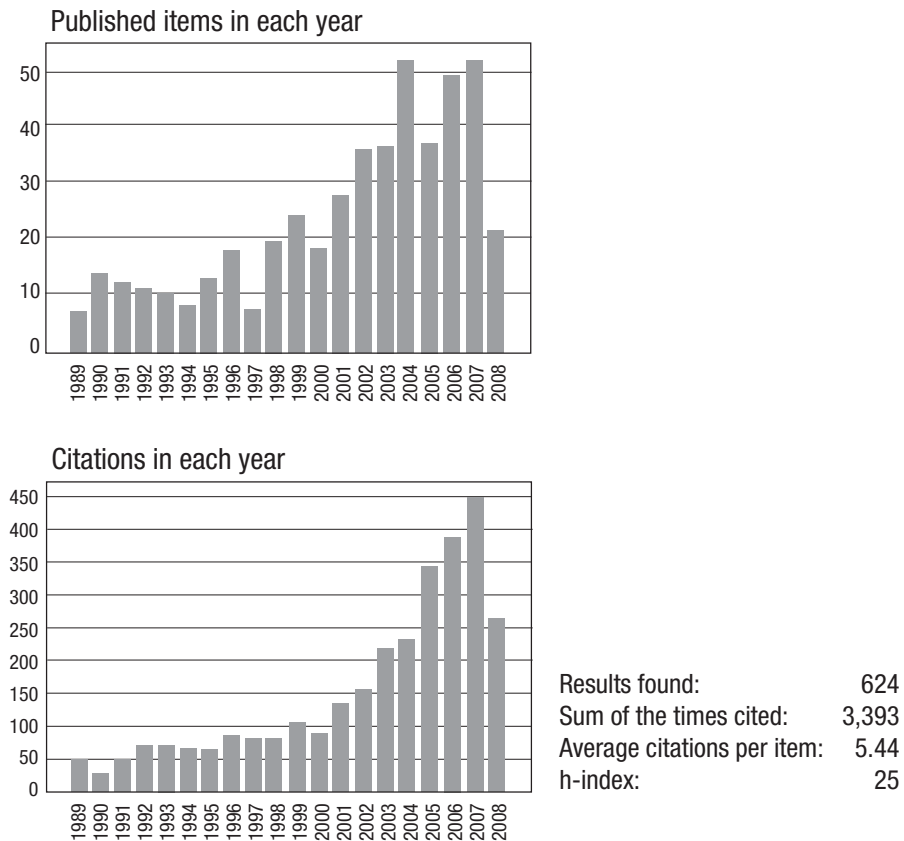
Alumni activities and various events are also regarded as important. Close contacts are maintained with alumni through alumni meetings, and they play a role in the development of HSE by interacting with students. Corporations are also involved in enhancing the activities by offering students project work and offering graduate students the opportunity to do research for their dissertations.

HSE's communications and PR team is responsible for external communication with stakeholders and also for building the HSE brand, taking into account the different needs of different target groups. Media relations and press releases are managed centrally. HSE's customer relations management system systematically registers media relations. Externally oriented communication on brand building is clearly emphasized in HSE.

The "Quality Development and Assurance – Processes and Practices 2008" material contains a list of all the channels and means of external communication, including printed brochures and other printed material, and also electronic media communication such as the content of HSE's website. In external communication, HSE publications on research results and other reports play an important part. HSE is aiming to develop the public website into a discussion forum for economic science.

All in all, HSE has a very good reputation among external stakeholders. Some stakeholders appear to have great trust in the high quality of HSE, but failed to deliver much evidence to support their views during the audit visit.

The QA system should make more use of information available in international databases. For example, Thomson Reuters' database the Web of Science contains information on the development of the number of publications and citations of HSE since 1989 (see Figures 4 and 5). Since the year 2000, the number of publications in international peer-reviewed journals covered by the Web of Science increased by more than 100 per cent, the number of citations increased from less than 100 in 2000 to more than 450 in 2007. HSE's website could be used to inform external stakeholders about these kinds of positive developments. This provides evidence that the key performance indicators for research (e.g., the number of publications in high-impact international peer-reviewed journals) are accepted by and effectively supported by the staff of HSE.



Figures 4 and 5. Number of publications and citations, 1989 to 2008 (January to May, 2008). Source: Web of Science (retrieved June, 2008)

## Conclusions and recommendations

- Only part of the information generated by the QA system is available on the Internet for external stakeholders (e.g., accreditation reports).
- In the interviews during the audit visit, it was stressed that the intranet Piazza is an important source of information about HSE's quality activities. However, Piazza is not accessible to external stakeholders. The audit group recommends that the QA information needs of external stakeholders are surveyed more systematically, and to improve access to relevant information for external stakeholders.
- The QA system should make more use of information available in international databases to demonstrate using external sources that HSE's strategy is being implemented successfully.

## 4.6 Monitoring, evaluation and continuous improvement of the QA system

*HSE monitors the operation of the QA system, and the development takes place according to plan and is documented. The development stage of this auditing target is 'developing'.*

The basis of the continuous development activities of the QA system is the Deming cycle, which includes the following processes:

1. Plan (What is the overall goal? How will you monitor and recognize progress and achievement? What will be done by whom and by when?)
2. Do (Carry out the plan; monitor and document progress, noting problems and solutions, unintended consequences)
3. Check (What does the data collected while monitoring the progress tell us about the achievement of the initial goal? What lessons are evident for future efforts and initiatives?)
4. Review (Based on the data collected and analysed, how will you continue or change the development process and activities).

These developments are based on both internal and external reference points, as described in sub-chapter 3.3. The basic external processes are international peer reviews, accreditations and benchmarkings, mostly in 5-year cycles. The first quality audit was conducted in 1992 by EFMD, and in 1997 HSE received the first AMBA accreditation for its MBA programme (and in 2004 for the Executive MBA). In 1998, HSE received EQUIS accreditation (renewed for 5 years in 2003) and in the same year HSE became a member of CEMS. In 2001, HSE's Executive Education appeared in the *Financial Times*

rankings (and each year since) and in 2007 HSE received AACSB accreditation for 5 years.

While being part of the QA system itself, the accreditation exercises also serve as an impetus for monitoring, evaluating and developing the QA system, and since they take place at regular intervals they “guarantee” cyclical reviews of the system. Other regular external reference points that are taken into account include the SEFE Annual Surveys and *Financial Times* rankings.

The annual performance negotiations are both external (with the Ministry of Education) and internal (between the Executive Team and the heads of units, and between heads of units and the staff). Internally, staff recruitment, programme reviews and workplace satisfaction surveys provide important information. They have been in place for a considerable period of time and function as instruments of continuous improvement.

Goals for quality work are established each year and are followed up in the performance negotiations. Each goal is operationalized and actions and outputs can therefore be identified and followed up. In 2008, all units have been asked to describe their quality processes and place their descriptions on the intranet for general internal information sharing purposes. As has been described in sub-chapter 3.3, the units must also agree with the Executive Team on the most appropriate and useful indicators to monitor the quality of their work.

The staff and student union officials met by the audit group were acquainted with the QA system, both the general principles and the indicators, and supported it. This is perhaps not surprising in view of the fact that most of the instruments have existed for many years. The Handbook (Quality Development and Assurance), which describes the system as a whole, is new, however, and thus appears already to have had an impact.

The plans for the next 3–5 years include improving the generation of information, the identification of key processes and goals and the development of a quality culture. In the view of the audit group, it is likely that most of the objectives will be reached, for example the intranet as a central source of information for QA is already having a very noticeable impact. Others still need to be further enhanced in order to create a quality culture that will be embraced by all. In the future, the establishment of the Aalto University will also pose a challenge in terms of the integration the quality cultures of three universities.

## Conclusions and recommendation

- HSE has a quality assurance and development model that takes into account the special needs of the institution. It uses both external and internal reference points to judge success and development factors, although the QA system is driven to a large extent by external (international) evaluations.
- While this is understandable in view of the mission to “provide Finnish society with the best and most diverse international environment in Finland for business studies and research”, HSE might consider paying more attention to the annual and systematic overview of the QA system as a whole. The development targets for the HSE QA system as identified in the internal seminar in January 2008 are an excellent step in this direction.
- HSE could develop and establish a better visualized model for the systematic review of the HSE QA system.

## 4.7 QA system as a whole

*The QA system covers most of the HSE’s activities. There is clear evidence of the effectiveness of the QA system on the development of the activities. The QA procedures constitute a fairly well-functioning whole. The development stage of this auditing target is ‘developing’.*

For HSE, the approach to quality at all levels in the organization has been quality in the notion of “fitness for purpose”. HSE has been a pioneer in Finland in building up a quality policy and a QA system suitably adequate for it as a business school. Quality is one of the core values in HSE’s strategy and according to the HSE quality policy, “the commitment and zeal for high quality in everything we do is embedded in our vision: Helsinki School of Economics – a world-class business school.” It is evident that its profile as a business school has been crucial for the choice of quality assurance mechanisms, such as the EQUIS, the AMBA and AACSB Accreditations.

The HSE QA system is illustrated in figure 2 (see sub-chapter 3.3). In the middle are the activities resulting from HSE’s mission and objectives and the two columns illustrate the external and internal quality assurance mechanisms respectively, which are used to measure the effectiveness of the system. Figure 3 (see sub-chapter 3.3) visualizes the QA system as an intersecting series of continuous improvement cycles. These cycles drive one another as cogs in the system of quality assurance.

A high quality must be seen in relation to the specific objectives of the quality system at HSE, which are:

1. to support the vision of HSE to sustain and further enhance the competitive position of HSE as a world-class business school;
2. to support continuous improvement of the quality of HSE research, teaching and learning, as well as services and administration, in respect to processes, operations and results;
3. to support personal development of personnel and students;
4. to systematically provide structured information for decision-making and planning;
5. to commit the whole HSE community to a high-quality culture and communicate this commitment to present and prospective students, employers, partners and other stakeholders, including the academic world;
6. to maintain international accreditation and be active in international benchmarking and the introduction of best practices arising from these exercises.

The QA system built up at HSE, which comprises the above-mentioned Figures and the key indicators, includes the elements and quality assurance and development mechanisms for realizing the above objectives, apart from numbers 3, 4 and 5 (see sub-chapter 4.2.5 and sub-chapter 4.5.1 regarding the objectives 3 and 4).

However, with respect to the HSE QA system as a whole, a more detailed and coordinated description of the system would be beneficial, linking the various quality mechanisms, either with external or internal reference points, to the various activities and with a clear distinction between internal and external quality assurance as referred to in *the ENQA Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance in the European Higher Education Area*<sup>23</sup>. In the general operating principles of HSE's strategy, the audit group learnt that "We (HSE) take part in international accreditation, rankings and benchmarkings and are developing our own quality system on the basis of them". As an international business school it is obvious that HSE uses various accreditation, ranking and benchmarking mechanisms for external quality assurance. According to the audit group, HSE should be commended for that but the internal quality system must be based on HSE's mission, vision, strategies and quality strategy. Therefore, the clarification of the Figure "HSE Quality Development & Assurance Cycles" could be improved through reorganization

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<sup>23</sup> Source: ENQA report on Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance in the European Higher Education Area. European Association for Quality Assurance in Higher Education, 2005, Helsinki, Finland.

and a more detailed description. It was repeated in the interviews that the cycles drive one another like cogs in the system of quality assurance and that this is a way of visualizing the HSE quality system. The impact and the interrelation between the various cogs need to be clarified to individual staff members and those responsible for the quality of research and degree programmes. In addition, the quality of the support functions for research and degree programmes, as well as services to business and society at large and the other administrative activities need to be visualized and the processes described.

The audit group recommends that the Quality Committee reviews and reorganizes the visualization and the description of the HSE Internal Quality Assurance and Development System as a whole with the external quality mechanisms used for controlling the effectiveness of the internal system.

It was obvious from the interviews that quality assurance and development is well known and practiced at the different levels within HSE. Several units have developed their own quality systems according to their strategic planning, although these units do not have a written quality manual, e.g. the Department of Business Technology, the Department of Languages and Communication and the Department of Marketing and Management. The latter started a significant strategy process in 2007 relating to the new strategy of HSE and the Aalto University. They all stress that faculty and administrative staff are familiar with the School-level quality guidelines. HSE Executive Education (HSEEE) does not have a quality handbook either. There are process descriptions for several of the internal processes and handbooks for MBA staff and MBA students, which describe what is expected.

The Finnish system of management by objectives (performance management in HSE's own terminology/documents) at the institutional level is used internally at HSE for unit-level performance negotiations and negotiations at the individual level. This has improved the awareness and the importance of quality assurance and quality development among HSE staff members and students.

It was repeatedly confirmed that HSE, through the EQUIS, the AMBA and AACSB accreditations, CEMS membership, the *Financial Times* ranking and the participation in the ESMU Benchmarking Programme, has a very strong national and international quality brand.

The local processes in accordance with the Deming wheel – planning, doing, checking and reviewing – seemed well known although are practiced differently and with different success in the various units. Some are very successful, others need improvement. A good practice was identified in the Department of Languages and Communication with its attempt to switch from a discipline-based to a learning-centred view through learning outcomes.

Another recent example of quality development, which should be mentioned as a good practice, is the HSE Certificate, i.e. a certificate describing the proficiency of HSE graduates in terms of their communicative competence in a business and/or managerial environment. The description of the levels is based on the Common European Framework of Reference and it uses CEMS accredited courses as landmarks for external quality assurance. The Certificate, which is a major step forward with regard to foreign languages, was developed and is now administrated by the Department of Languages and Communication. The department should be commended on this.

HSE wants an embedded and tailored internal quality system, i.e. to keep quality embedded in everyday work rather than as an additional process, and to develop the language on quality so that it can speak more specifically about the subject. This is related to developing a quality culture within HSE, i.e. objective number 5 referred to above. Although HSE has been developing quality for several years, it takes time to develop a quality culture.

It was noted during the interviews that especially knowledge sharing, organizational learning and the transfer of best practices within HSE need to be strengthened. The HSE quality assurance and quality development system comprise the essential core areas of the institution's operations. The QA system functions in a dynamic way and there is systematic and continuous evidence of its effectiveness not the least within the cyclical areas comprising accreditations and external and internal performance management.

There can be no doubt that HSE is developing a quality culture. However, it is Important to stress that quality is not a static concept. Quality is dynamic and has to be developed all the time. Therefore, working with quality assurance and quality development is an ongoing process.

### Conclusions and recommendations

- The HSE Executive Team has ownership of the QA system and provides a back-up to systematic quality work. The results of the commitment can be seen as awareness of quality assurance and the improvement in quality throughout the entire HSE organization. Within HSE, there is a willingness to work in a dynamic quality environment and contribute to its further enhancement.
- External evaluations and accreditations are part of the HSE QA system. An integrated and continuous process of self-reflection at the institutional and departmental level is taking place.
- HSE could formulate clear purposes of its quality assurance processes.

- HSE could strengthen knowledge sharing, organizational learning and transfer of best practices relating to QA matters within the institution.
- HSE could review and reorganize the visualization and the description of the HSE QA and quality development system with a clear distinction between internal and external quality assurance.
- HSE's quality culture would definitely benefit from further development of a common language to enable it to speak more specifically on the subject.

## 5 Final conclusions

### 5.1 Strengths and good practices

#### Strengths

- The QA system covers most of the HSE's activities and the QA procedures constitute a fairly well-functioning whole. However, there are still some differences between the units in applying these procedures.
- HSE's management and Executive Team is very motivated and committed to quality improvement and also to developing the QA system. The management's aim is also to encourage the organization to work in a dynamic quality environment and to contribute to its further enhancement. The HSE Executive Team has ownership of the QA system and provides a back-up to systematic quality work. The results of this commitment can be seen as awareness of the need to improve quality and quality assurance throughout the whole HSE organization.
- The HSE management and Executive Team is aware of the weaknesses of the present management information systems and the shortcomings in the systematic documentation. They have a willingness and commitment to improve the present systems. This honest self-assessment and commitment gives the audit group confidence in the further development of the HSE QA system and also in the future development of the Aalto University.
- HSE quality assurance is largely based on external, international evaluations. These accreditations give good information and inputs for quality assurance when combined with internal reference points.
- HSE's mission statement clearly expresses a linkage between internationally high-level research produced by HSE and teaching based on this research. Based on the audit material and audit visit, it is evident that the quality of teaching is indeed supported by the links to research. The HSE QA system supports this linkage.
- The administrative support functions have developed quality assurance and development functions within the general context of the HSE QA system and with regard to their own special needs. They follow the development at comparable units in other higher education institutions and

participate in benchmarking exercises. The quality development of the academic support services functions well within the HSE QA system as a whole. The units have established processes in line with their own needs and which also fit the reporting models of the institution.

- Internal and external stakeholders play an important role in the quality assurance and enhancement processes through their participation on various boards and committees. HSE uses the feedback and support of its alumni in an excellent way in quality improvement and in quality assurance work. In addition, the feedback from other members in the business community is used in improving quality. Of the internal stakeholders, staff and students have an important role and their views are taken into consideration in quality assurance.

### Good practices

- HSE uses the knowledge and experience of its alumni in an exceptionally efficient way in developing quality and quality assurance. Alumni are indeed seen as important contributors to the quality of activities at HSE and relations with them are fostered. The Alumni Board, which consists of representatives of various stakeholder groups, meets four times a year to get an update on the development of HSE. Feedback from alumni is solicited through questionnaires and all the feedback is filed and available for future reference.
- HSE has several good practices in managing its research projects. All projects with external funding are registered in the HSE research database (Rescat), and the projects are monitored closely from their beginning to end not only by the Research Service Office but also by the management group of the department, the research unit in which the project is located, and the director of the priority area to which the topic of the research project belongs. The Research Services Office conducts regularly School-wide, web-based surveys on the research services and their usability. This feedback has been very helpful in developing the Ph.D. programme, for instance.
- The needs of external interest groups are taken into account in the planning HSE's research strategy by sending out a web-based survey to all partners.
- The Department of Languages and Communication had several good practices in quality assurance. The department has defined the objectives of its degree education and the processes to reach them in a very clear and effective way. The department ambitiously attempted to switch from

a discipline-based to a learning-centred view through learning outcomes. In addition, the department has a lot of knowledge and experience of developing teaching and learning.

- The Helecon Information Centre, in particular, is to be commended for the thorough and efficient way in which it ensures and enhances its activities.

## 5.2 Recommendations

- HSE considers its quality development and quality assurance as continuous improvement and as process development of the whole organization. HSE clearly states its reluctance to present quality assurance as a separate function as it is considered to be embedded in the everyday life of the whole organization. Quality assurance is seen as a collective responsibility and thus clearly stated responsibilities are not precisely defined in an adequate way. The audit group recommends that HSE defines the responsibilities in quality assurance more clearly.
- HSE's overall strategy statement and also some sub-strategies form an important set of guidelines and objectives for the organization, but are somewhat general in nature. Especially regarding more specific sub-strategies e.g. the HR strategy, it would be useful to define specific and concrete guidelines and objectives. In their current form the HR strategy does not give much practical assistance and support to the managers of the different units. Therefore, the audit group recommends that HSE formulates a more action-oriented HR strategy, which should also be relevant to line managers.
- The audit group recommends that HSE describes and defines its key processes more clearly. The process charts of key processes of education and research were not presented in the audit material supplied by HSE to the audit group. HSE produced this material at the request of the audit group. As this was obviously produced as information for the audit group, there is no evidence to back up whether these processes function as described in the additional audit material.
- The SWOT analysis of the quality work at HSE and the audit visit by the audit group identified as an internal weakness the fact that too much information is circulated by personal contacts on the level of departments and support services, since no unit-specific quality handbooks are available yet. The audit group recommends the compilation of unit-specific quality handbooks, containing precise descriptions of the key processes

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because the identification and transfer of good practices is very difficult without process descriptions. The Quality Handbook of the Library can serve as a good practice example for other units.

- The audit group recommends that HSE places more emphasis on improving its QA documentation and also on improving information systems in order to produce and distribute the necessary data in a more concise way. The HSE intranet, Piazza, has excellent potential to act as the basis for a powerful information management system tool, if the documentation and information systems are developed. The implementation of a web-based data warehouse is highly recommended by the audit group.
- The exchange of good practices in teaching and learning processes within the different programmes should be increased to develop degree education and in order to support the shift in the pedagogic approach from teaching to learning. In addition, the good examples and best practices of some units could be shared more effectively and with almost no extra cost to raise the overall level of performance management even higher. HSE could strengthen knowledge sharing, organizational learning and the transfer of best practices within the institution.
- HSE systematically collects a great variety of data on the quality of degree education and this data is fed into improvement processes. After the audit visit interviews, it remains, however, somewhat unclear as to what is being done with the information generated and who has access to it. The audit group recommends that HSE develops its management processes to ensure that the information collected is used in decision-making and that the necessary corrective action is taken.
- The web-based course feedback channels do not seem to be working very well as the response rate is very low. The problem has been identified but still needs to be solved urgently. In addition to this problem, the audit group suggests that: (1) HSE should create a stronger role for the Centre for Innovative Education and give more encouragement to good teaching, and (2) HSE should conduct a survey of the different data collected in different departments to find out whether the data collection processes need to be better coordinated.
- HSE should define more precisely its external stakeholder groups and the regions that it seeks to have an impact on.
- HSE should clarify the role of the Advisory Board in the quality assurance system and utilize its expertise more effectively. Also, HSE should clarify the role of postgraduate students in the quality assurance system.

### 5.3 Audit group's overall assessment of the quality assurance system of the Helsinki School of Economics

Based on this report the audit group states that the Helsinki School of Economics fulfils the criteria set for quality assurance systems and the quality assurance of its basic missions. Based on this evaluation the audit group proposes to the Finnish Higher Education Evaluation Council that the Helsinki School of Economics passes the audit.

### 5.4 FINHEEC's decision

Based on the proposal of the audit group and the audit report, the Finnish Higher Education Evaluation Council (FINHEEC) decided in its meeting of 11 September 2008 that the quality assurance system of the Helsinki School of Economics fulfils the criteria set for the quality assurance system as a whole and for quality assurance in its basic missions. The audit is valid for six years.

## APPENDIX 1: Table of the audit criteria

AUDITING TARGETS	CRITERIA		
	ABSENT	EMERGING	DEVELOPING
<p><b>1.</b> Definition of the objectives, functions, actors and responsibilities of the HEI's QA system and relevant documentation</p>	<p>The objectives, functions, actors and responsibilities of the QA system have not been defined or documented.</p>	<p>The objectives, functions, actors and responsibilities are inadequately defined and documented. The division of responsibilities is only partly organised.</p>	<p>The objectives, functions, actors and responsibilities are very well organised and functional, promoting the QA system as a whole.</p>
	<p><b>2.</b> The comprehensiveness and efficiency of QA procedures and structures related to the HEI's basic mission</p>		
<p><b>2 a)</b> Degree education</p>	<p>There is no QA procedures related to the HEI's basic mission.</p>	<p>The system covers individual procedures related to the HEI's basic mission.</p>	<p>The QA system covers all main procedures of the HEI's basic mission.</p>
<p><b>2 b)</b> Research / R&amp;D</p>	<p>The information generated by the QA system is not used as a tool to develop quality management and to develop other activities.</p>	<p>The information is used unsystematically and/or it is accumulated as an end <i>per se</i>.</p>	<p>The information is utilised in a systematic manner, and there is clear and continuous evidence of the sufficient use of the information to develop education and other activities.</p>
<p><b>2 c)</b> Interaction with and impact on the society as well as regional development co-operation</p>	<p>Inadequate quality is not identified with the QA procedures</p>	<p>QA aims at maintaining the quality level reached so far. The QA processes work satisfactorily to identify inadequate quality.</p>	<p>Special attention is paid to procedures and structures geared to inspire and implement new ideas. The operational culture supports innovation. Inadequate quality is identified in an efficient manner.</p>
<p><b>2 d)</b> Support services (such as library and information services, career and recruitment services, and international services)</p>			
<p><b>2 e)</b> Staff recruitment and development</p>			

AUDITING TARGETS	CRITERIA		
	ABSENT	EMERGING	DEVELOPING
			ADVANCED
3. Interface between the QA system and the HEI's management and steering of operations	QA is not linked to management and steering of operations.	The interface between the QA system and the HEI's operative steering as well as the monitoring and improving of its results is inadequate.	The system links to the HEI activities and steering of operations. The information generated through the QA system is utilised in development work. There is evidence of the existing links between the QA system and the steering of operations as well as monitoring and improving of results.
4. Participation of HEI staff, students and external stakeholders in QA	The HEI staff, students and external stakeholders do not participate in QA.	Some of the following actors remain external to QA operations: - students - academic staff - support services - researchers - administration - management - external stakeholders	The various staff groups are very active and committed to the QA system not only in theory but also in practice. The external stakeholders are also involved and play a meaningful role in the activities.
5. Relevance of, and access to, the information generated by the QA system			
5 a) within the HEI	The QA does not take HEI's various staff groups or students into consideration, and there is no exchange of information within the HEI.	Information is generated without a plan, and it is disseminated unsystematically. The information needs of various actors within the HEI have not been taken into consideration in a sufficient manner.	The HEI has systematic procedures for the production and analysis of the information targeted at different staff groups.

AUDITING TARGETS	CRITERIA			
	ABSENT	EMERGING	DEVELOPING	
5 b) for the external stakeholders	<p>The HEI's external stakeholders' perspective is not considered in the QA system, and they do not receive any information.</p>	<p>The perspective of the external stakeholders has not been considered sufficiently in the planning and continuous improvement of the QA system. Dissemination of information to external stakeholders is unsystematic.</p>	<p>The external stakeholders have been defined, and their information needs have been clearly considered. The performance of the QA system and its main results are available to the major co-operation partners and stakeholders.</p>	<p>The HEI focuses actively on QA issues in its internal communications. The HEI focuses actively on QA issues in its external communications. Information is given in a targeted and purposeful manner to the external stakeholders.</p>
6. Monitoring, evaluation and continuous development of the QA system	<p>The HEI does not have a clear conception regarding the functioning of its QA system which is not monitored or developed.</p>	<p>The HEI has a poor overall conception of the operation of its QA system. There is hardly any monitoring, and there is no plan to develop it.</p>	<p>The HEI monitors the operation of the QA system, and the development takes place according to plan and is documented.</p>	<p>The HEI monitors, evaluates and develops the operation of the QA system in a systematic manner, and is comprehensively aware of its impacts and consequences.</p>
7. QA system as a whole	<p>The HEI activities consist of individual and isolated QA procedures only.</p>	<p>Some of the HEI activities include QA procedures.</p> <p>There is some evidence of the effectiveness of the QA system on the development of the activities.</p> <p>The QA procedures do not constitute a well-functioning and uniform system.</p>	<p>The QA system covers most of the HEI's activities.</p> <p>There is clear evidence of the effectiveness of the QA system on the development of the activities.</p> <p>The QA procedures constitute a fairly well-functioning whole.</p>	<p>The QA system covers all activities of the HEI.</p> <p>There is systematic and continuous evidence of the effectiveness of the QA system on the development of the activities.</p> <p>The QA procedures constitute a dynamic whole.</p>

## APPENDIX 2: Programme of the audit visit

<b>Monday</b>	<b>12.5.2008</b>
9.00–9.30	The audit group's own meeting
9.30–9.50	Presentation of the QA system
10.00–11.00	Interview with HSE's leadership and the quality director
11.10–12.10	Interview with the heads of the departments and other units
12.10–13.00	<i>Lunch</i>
13.00–14.00	Interview with the representatives of the teaching staff and researchers (Council of Teaching and Research, Centre for Knowledge and Innovation Research)
14.10–15.10	Interview with the representatives of support services (divided into two groups) Group 1: Office of Studies and Registrar Adult Education Unit Center for Innovative Education International Relations Research Services Center for Doctoral Program Group 2: Marketing and Communications Services Office of Personnel and Legal Affairs Financial Office Facility and Security Administration Information Systems and the Information Technology Center
15.20–16.20	Interview with students
16.30–17.30	Interview with the representatives of external stakeholders
17.30	Meeting of the audit group
<b>Tuesday</b>	<b>13.5.2008</b>
8.30–9.30	Meeting of the audit group
9.30–10.30	Department /Unit interviews 1. Department of Accounting and Finance 2. Department of Business Technology
10.45–11.45	Department /Unit interviews 3. Department of Economics 4. Department of Languages and Communication
12.15–13.00	<i>Lunch</i>
13.00–14.00	Department /Unit interviews 5. Department of Marketing and Management 6. Small Business Center
14.15–15.15	Department /Unit interviews 7. Helecon Information Centre 8. HSE Executive Education Ltd
15.30–max 20.00	Meeting of the audit group

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<b>Wednesday</b>	<b>14.5.2008</b>
9.00–9.45	“Joker” theme Unit/ Thematic discussion 9. Internationalisation
10.00 – 10.45	Thematic discussion 10. External research funding
11.00–11.30	Interview with the management
11.30 –13.00	<i>Lunch</i> and meeting of the group
13.30 – 14.00	Concluding session and feedback to HSE
14.00 – 16.00	Meeting of the audit group

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## TIIVISTELMÄ

### Julkaisija

Korkeakoulujen arviointineuvosto

### Julkaisun nimi

Audit of the Quality Assurance System of the Helsinki School of Economics (Helsingin kauppakorkeakoulun laadunvarmistusjärjestelmän auditointi)

### Tekijät

Mikko Luoma, Hans-Dieter Daniel, Bente Kristensen, Anneli Pirttilä, Lauri Vaisto, Staffan Wahlén, Kirsi Mustonen & Hannele Seppälä

### Tiivistelmä

Korkeakoulujen arviointineuvoston toteuttaman Helsingin kauppakorkeakoulun (HSE) laadunvarmistusjärjestelmän auditoinnin tavoitteena oli:

- selvittää, mitä laadullisia tavoitteita korkeakoulu on toiminnalleen asettanut
- arvioida, millaisilla prosesseilla ja menettelytavoilla korkeakoulukoulu ylläpitää ja kehittää koulutuksen ja muun toiminnan laatua
- arvioida, toimiiko laadunvarmistus korkeakoulussa tarkoitettulla tavalla, tuottaako laadunvarmistusjärjestelmä toiminnan kehittämisen kannalta tarkoituksenmukaista tietoa ja johtaako se vaikuttaviin, laatua parantaviin kehittämistoimenpiteisiin.

Auditointi perustui Helsingin kauppakorkeakoulun ennalta toimittamaan auditointiaineistoon ja auditointivierailuun, joka toteutettiin 12.–14.5.2008.

Auditointiryhmä toteaa, että HSE:n laadunvarmistusjärjestelmä kattaa suuren osan korkeakoulun toiminnosta ja laadunvarmistuksen menettelytavat muodostavat melko hyvin toimivan järjestelmärakenteen. Yksiköiden välillä on kuitenkin jonkin verran eroavaisuuksia laadunvarmistuksen menettelytapojen käytössä. HSE:n johto ja johtoryhmä ovat erittäin motivoituneita ja sitoutuneita laadun parantamiseen ja HSE:n laadunvarmistusjärjestelmän kehittämiseen. Johdon tavoitteena on rohkaista ja kannustaa organisaatiota toimimaan dynaamisessa korkeakouluympäristössä ja osallistumaan toiminnan kehittämiseen. HSE:n johtoryhmällä on laadunvarmistusjärjestelmän omistajuus, mikä tukee systemaattista laatutyötä. Tämän sitoutuneisuuden tulokset näkyvät laadun kehittämisen tietoisuutena koko HSE:n organisaatiossa. HSE:n laadunvarmistus perustuu laajasti ulkoisiin, kansainvälisiin arviointeihin. Nämä akkreditoinnit yhdistettynä sisäisiin menettelyihin muodostavat hyvän tietopohjan HSE:n laadunvarmistukselle.

Arviointiryhmä esittää Helsingin kauppakorkeakoululle seuraavia kehittämissuosituksia:

- Laadunvarmistus koetaan olevan korkeakoulussa yhteisellä vastuulla, mutta vastuuta ei kuitenkaan ole määritelty riittävästi. Auditointiryhmä suosittelee, että HSE määrittelee laadunvarmistukseen liittyvät vastuut nykyistä selkeämmin.
- Auditointiryhmä suosittelee avainprosessit sisältävien yksikkökohtaisten laatukäsikirjojen kokoamista, mikä edesauttaisi myös hyvien käytäntöjen tunnistamista ja välittämistä yksiköiden välillä.
- Auditointiryhmä suosittelee, että HSE määrittelee henkilöstöstrategian suuntaviivat ja tavoitteet entistä selkeämmin ja konkreettisemmin. Nykyisessä muodossaan henkilöstöstrategia ei tarjoa riittävästi käytännön apua ja tukea yksiköiden johdolle.
- Auditointiryhmä suosittelee, että HSE kehittää johtamisen prosesseja varmistaakseen, että kerättyä informaatiota hyödynnetään päätöksenteossa ja että sen pohjalta suoritetaan tarvittavat korjaavat toimenpiteet.
- HSE:n tulisi määritellä nykyistä täsmällisemmin ulkoiset sidosryhmänsä ja ne alueet, joilla se hakee vaikuttavuutta.
- HSE:n tulisi selkiinnyttää neuvottelukunnan asemaa laadunvarmistusjärjestelmässä ja hyödyntää sen asiantuntemusta yhä tehokkaammin. Myös jatko-opiskelijoiden roolia laadunvarmistusjärjestelmässä tulisi selvittää.

Korkeakoulujen arviointineuvosto päätti kokouksessaan 11.9.2008 auditointiryhmän esitykseen ja auditointiraporttiin perustuen, että Helsingin kauppakorkeakoulu täyttää laadunvarmistusjärjestelmän kokonaisuudelle ja perustehtävien laadunvarmistukselle asetetut kriteerit. Auditointi on voimassa kuusi vuotta.

### Avainsanat

Arviointi, auditointi, laadunvarmistus, laatu, korkeakoulu, yliopisto

## SAMMANDRAG

### Utgivare

Rådet för utvärdering av högskolorna

### Publikation

Audit of the Quality Assurance System of the Helsinki School of Economics (Auditering av kvalitetssäkringssystemet vid Helsingfors handelshögskola)

### Författare

Mikko Luoma, Hans-Dieter Daniel, Bente Kristensen, Anneli Pirttilä, Lauri Vaisto, Staffan Wahlén, Kirsi Mustonen & Hannele Seppälä

### Abstrakt

Målet för den auditering av kvalitetssäkringssystemet vid Helsingfors handelshögskola (HSE) som utfördes av Rådet för utvärdering av högskolorna var att

- klarlägga vilka kvalitetskrav högskolan har ställt på sin verksamhet
- bedöma med vilka förfaranden och processer högskolan upprätthåller och höjer kvaliteten på utbildningen och sin övriga verksamhet
- bedöma huruvida kvalitetssäkringen vid högskolan fungerar som den bör, huruvida högskolans kvalitetssäkringssystem tar fram ändamålsenlig information med tanke på utvecklingen av verksamheten och huruvida systemet ger upphov till effektiva, kvalitetshöjande utvecklingsåtgärder.

Auditeringen utgick från auditeringsmaterial som Helsingfors handelshögskola hade lämnat in på förhand och på ett auditeringsbesök som ägde rum den 12–14 maj 2008.

Auditeringsgruppen konstaterar att HSE:s kvalitetssäkringssystem har införts vid en stor del av högskolans funktioner och att kvalitetssäkringsrutinerna bildar ett rätt så välfungerande system. Det finns likväl ett visst mått av olikheter mellan enheterna när det gäller användningen av kvalitetssäkringsrutinerna. Ledningen och ledningsgruppen vid HSE är mycket motiverade och engagerade när det gäller att förbättra kvaliteten och utveckla HSE:s kvalitetssäkringssystem. Ledningen har som mål att uppmuntra och sporra organisationen till att verka i en dynamisk högskolemiljö och ta del i utvecklingen av verksamheten. HSE:s ledningsgrupp äger kvalitetssäkringssystemet, vilket stöder det systematiska kvalitetsarbetet. Resultaten av engagemanget kan ses i form av medvetenhet om utveckling av kvaliteten inom HSE:s hela organisation. Kvalitetssäkringen vid HSE baserar sig i stor utsträckning på externa, internationella utvärderingar. I kombination med interna förfaranden bildar dessa ackrediteringar ett bra informationsunderlag för kvalitetssäkringen vid HSE.

Auditeringsgruppen lägger fram följande utvecklingsrekommendationer för Helsingfors handelshögskola:

- Kvalitetssäkringen upplevs som ett objekt för gemensamt ansvar vid högskolan, men ansvarsfördelningen har dock inte definierats tillräckligt. Auditeringsgruppen rekommenderar att HSE definierar ansvarsfördelningen i anslutning till kvalitetssäkring tydligare än för närvarande.
- Auditeringsgruppen rekommenderar att det för de olika enheterna sammanställs kvalitetshandböcker som innehåller nyckelprocesserna, vilket också bidrar till att god praxis kan identifieras och förmedlas mellan enheterna.
- Auditeringsgruppen rekommenderar att HSE anger allt tydligare och konkretare personalstrategiska riktlinjer och mål. Personalstrategin i dess nuvarande form erbjuder inte ledningen vid enheterna tillräckligt mycket praktisk hjälp eller praktiskt stöd.
- Auditeringsgruppen rekommenderar att HSE utvecklar ledningsprocesser för att säkerställa att insamlad information nyttiggörs i samband med beslut och ligger till grund för behövliga korrigerande åtgärder.
- HSE bör närmare än för närvarande definiera sina externa intressentgrupper och de områden där högskolan vill nå genomslagskraft.
- HSE bör skapa klarhet i delegationens ställning inom kvalitetssäkringssystemet och på ett allt effektivare sätt dra nytta av delegationens expertis. Det bör också skapas klarhet i forskarstuderandenas roll inom kvalitetssäkringssystemet.

Utgående från auditeringsgruppens framställning och auditeringsrapporten beslöt Rådet för utvärdering av högskolorna vid sitt möte den 11 september 2008 att Helsingfors handelshögskola uppfyller de uppställda kriterierna för kvalitetssäkringssystemet som helhet och de uppställda kriterierna för kvalitetssäkring av högskolans grundläggande uppgifter. Auditeringen gäller i sex år.

### Nyckelord

Utvärdering, auditering, kvalitetssäkring, kvalitet, högskolor, universitet

## ABSTRACT

### Published by

The Finnish Higher Education Evaluation Council FINHEEC

### Name of publication

Audit of the quality assurance system of Helsinki School of Economics

### Authors

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### Abstract

The aims of the audit of the Helsinki School of Economics (HSE) quality assurance (QA) system, carried out by FINHEEC, were

- to establish the qualitative objectives set by the HSE for its own activities;
- to evaluate what procedures and processes the HSE uses to maintain and develop the quality of its education and other activities;
- to evaluate whether the HSE's quality assurance works as intended, whether the QA system produces useful and relevant information for the improvement of its operations, and whether it brings about effective, improvement measures.

The audit was based on material provided by the HSE in advance and by a visit made between 12 and 14 May 2008.

The audit group notes that the HSE QA system covers most of the HSE's activities and that the QA procedures constitute a fairly well-functioning whole. However, there are still some differences between the units in applying these procedures. The HSE's management and Executive Team is very motivated and committed to quality improvement and also to developing the QA system. In addition, the management's aim is to encourage the organization to work in a dynamic quality environment and to contribute to its further enhancement. The HSE Executive Team has ownership of the QA system and provides a back-up to systematic quality work. The results of this commitment can be seen as awareness of the need to improve quality and quality assurance throughout the whole HSE organization. HSE quality assurance is largely based on external, international evaluations. These accreditations provide good information and inputs for quality assurance when combined with internal reference points.

The audit team makes the following development recommendations to the Helsinki School of Economics:

- Quality assurance is seen as a collective responsibility and thus clearly stated responsibilities are not precisely defined in an adequate way. The audit group recommends that the HSE defines its quality assurance responsibilities more clearly.
- The audit group recommends HSE to define more specific and concrete guidelines and objectives in HR strategy. In its current form the HR strategy does not give much practical assistance and support to the line managers of the different units.
- The audit group recommends the compilation of unit-specific quality handbooks, containing precise descriptions of the key processes because the identification and transfer of good practices is very difficult without process descriptions.
- The audit group recommends that the HSE develops its management processes to ensure that the information collected is used in decision making and that the necessary corrective action is taken.
- The HSE should define more precisely its external stakeholder groups and the regions that it seeks to have an impact on.
- The HSE should clarify the role of the Advisory Board in the quality assurance system and utilize its expertise more effectively. Also, the HSE should clarify the role of postgraduate students in the quality assurance system.

At its meeting on 11 September 2008 FINHEEC decided that the Helsinki School of Economics fulfils the criteria set for the quality assurance system as a whole and for quality assurance in its basic missions. The audit is valid for six years.

### Keywords

Evaluation, auditing, quality assurance, quality, higher education institutions, university

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