

Quality Podcast 2021: Towards the auditing

Saija Halminen: Welcome to the Quality Podcast of the University of Lapland. The University of Lapland will be audited at the end of this year and the auditing visit will be on the 1st and the 2nd of December of 2021. The preparations for the auditing have started with peerlearning and self-assessment of education, research and quality systems. At the moment, there is an ongoing update on the digitalization of the quality management documentation. In this episode we are joined with Antti Syväjärvi and Hanna Marttiini. Would you like to introduce yourselves?

Antti Syväjärvi: Thank you for invitation. My name is Antti Syväjärvi and I'm the rector of University of Lapland. My background is in administrative science and management and the core tasks or background task in this university is in Faculty of Social Sciences and in the discipline of administrative science where I act as a professor.

Hanna Marttiini: Hello everybody, my name is Hannah Martini. And I'm head of quality at the University of Lapland, and I started about one year ago and I'm operating this university's quality systems and now audit process.

Saija Halminen: So, the first question for Antti is that what is the role of Rector in quality work?

Antti Syväjärvi: It's a big and difficult question because it has multidisciplinary meanings or multidimensional meanings. I think, technically it's defined in our management regulations or rules in Finnish called "johtosääntö". And there Rector's tasks are quite many and defined. And one out of those is this quality work, and it says that one of Rector's responsibility, is to take care of quality work and quality assurance system in university. So, one role definitely is to sort of make sure that quality work exists at the university, people know that we have quality system and also, it's important to follow that this system is in operation in everyday life in our university. And I would say that the second role is, of course, to try and to act according to this quality plans and work by yourself as a Rector. So, it's also Rector's task to act and work according to the quality system or quality work. I would say those are probably the main roles of Rector in quality work.

Saija Halminen: Yes, then how does quality management appear in strategic management?

Antti Syväjärvi: Quality management is a quite wide term and when we talk about management it typically means quite many things. But I would say that quality management is something how we plan quality because management is about planning and inventing and developing and making decisions. So, how we plan quality. It's also about quality assurance so that we have to sort of learn from possible mistakes or faults, as well we can learn from positive things or success signals. It's about controlling the quality and I think in case of strategic management it's also important to improve, to sort of follow how quality work is going on, how we are doing. And we have to be prepared to improve things. It's kind of continuous process this quality management.

Saija Halminen: Yes. And lastly, what kind of university is a quality university?

Antti Syväjärvi: A quality university. I think when we talk about quality, quality is something — if it's a service or process or an item or whatsoever — I think quality is something when it's very good in that, it's planned too. So, universities are because of highest education and research and of course we work closely also with our stakeholders. So, quality university is such that it's very good in this

education and research and stakeholder relations. But also, as a second point, I think that quality university is such that it takes feedback. It takes criticism or support or positive feedback as well and learns from the feedback. So, it's sort of discussing or communicating with those who sort of give whatever feedback considering education, research or stakeholder relations. It's a wide question, but I would define that way the quality university.

Saija Halminen: So Hanna, who does the auditing and when is it coming?

Hanna Marttiini: Finnish Education Evaluating Central, FINEEC, conducts an audit of the University of Lapland. A two-day audit visit at the University of Lapland is carried out first and second December of this year. And the audit team visit University of Lapland on here or virtual. We don't know yet which one. Is it a hybrid model or something like that? I don't know yet. The audit process has been started with bench-learning in last spring. According to the principle of engagement lead evaluate the purpose of bench learning is to receive feedback on the own organization's activities and to learn from the good practices of another organization. The bench-learning partner of the University of Lapland was University of Helsinki, and the bench learning target was student feedback system. FINEEC audit the functionality and effectiveness of the quality systems of higher education institutes. The focus of the audit is on the procedures used by the Higher Education Institute to maintain and engage the quality of its activities.

Saija Halminen: Yes, and what are the areas of the third auditing process?

Hanna Marttiini: Well, the evaluating areas are four. First one is Higher education institute creates competences. That include education system. Second one is higher education promotes impact and renewal, research theme. And third one is higher education enhances quality and well-being. And the last one is higher education as a learning organization. And our workgroups have been working on the self-assessment reports in spring and last autumn. And the quality management documentation has been updated and Quality Handbooks will be replaced with one quality management documentation. The self-assessment reports and the quality management documentation can be found on a digital platform, qualitywiki. And this is going to be also in English, but at the moment this is only in Finnish, we call laatuwiki. And we have also updated websites. And all this laatuwiki is going to be ready beginning of June, hopefully. And of course, we will organize Teams meetings info about this audit. And we share information about audit to staff and students during this year. This is very interesting trip toward the audit, although quality work is in process all the time and its part of normal day-to-day work, I think.

Saija Halminen: Thank you for the answers.