FINNISH EDUCATION
EVALUATION CENTRE

AUDIT OF THE VAMK UNIVERSITY OF APPLIED SCIENCES 2015

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ABSTRACT

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Abstract

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The Finnish Education Evaluation Centre has conducted an audit of VAMK University of Applied Sciences and awarded the university of applied sciences with a quality label that will be valid for six years from 20 March 2015. The quality system of VAMK University of Applied Sciences fulfils the national criteria set for the quality management of higher education institutions, and the system corresponds to the European quality assurance principles and recommendations for higher education institutions.

The object of the audit was the quality system that VAMK University of Applied Sciences has developed based on its own needs and goals. The freely selected audit target chosen by the university of applied sciences was Working life integration into teaching. The following were regarded as key strengths of the quality system:

1. The latest strategy development process was based on a wide analysis of national and local contexts, including regional demand and opportunities for cooperative synergies with other local higher education institutions. This has produced very clearly defined strategic goals. Operational implementation of this strategy is aligned to the organisation structure, including a set of five functional programmes that promote development of quality in context.

2. VAMK has a single operating system that effectively integrates strategic, operational and quality management. This system incorporates relevant performance indicators and promotes a strong culture of result-based management of quality.

3. A range of review processes, especially the annual unit reviews and internal audits, are implemented comprehensively. Quality management tools integrate representatives of management, staff, students and external stakeholders; and thus support organisational learning processes and continuous improvement.

Among others, the following recommendations were given to VAMK University of Applied Sciences:

1. VAMK should review and re-design the Educational Programme in order to steer development of pedagogical leadership and the development of teachers' competences. This should support development of competence-based curricula, and teaching and assessment practice that is student-centred and focussed on employability. Its implementation within the organisation structure should promote wide engagement by staff, reaching more merely than the enthusiasts.

2. VAMK should simplify its student feedback systems, and enhance the students' use of selected systems, the processing of the collected feedback, and feedback to students in response to their comments.

3. In order to promote performance-based management of RDI work, VAMK should review its conceptual framework and operational processes for RDI work, the (ex-ante) selection of projects to reflect institutional priorities and identification of indicators and targets. Attention should be given to the improvement of quality management methods in RDI, standardisation and utilisation of RDI feedback, throughout all kinds of activities and all areas of RDI (including the Design Centre MUOVA).

Key words
Evaluation, audit, quality system, quality management, quality, higher education institutions, university

TIIVISTELMÄ
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Tiivistelmä
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Kansallinen koulutuksen arviointikeskus on toteuttanut Vaasan ammattikorkeakoulun auditoinnin ja antanut ammattikorkeakoululle laatuleiman, joka on voimassa kuusi vuotta 20.3.2015 alkaen. Vaasan ammattikorkeakoulun laatujärjestelmä täyttää korkeakoulujen laadunhallinnalle asetetut kansalliset kriteerit ja vastaa eurooppalaisia korkeakoulujen laadunhallinnan periaatteita ja suosituksia.

Auditoinnin kohteena oli Vaasan ammattikorkeakoulun laatujärjestelmä, jonka ammattikorkeakoulu on kehittänyt omista lähtökohdistaan ja tavoitteidensa mukaisesti. Ammattikorkeakoulun valitsema vapaavalintainen auditointikohde oli työelämän integroituminen koulutukseen. Laatujärjestelmän keskeisinä vahvuuksina pidetään:

1. Vaasan ammattikorkeakoulun viimeisin strategiaprosessi perustui laajaan kansallisen ja paikallisen toimintaympäristön analyysiin sisältäen alueelliset tarpeet sekä yhteistyö- ja synergiamahdollisuudet alueella toimivien muiden korkeakoulujen kanssa. Tuloksena olivat hyvin selkeästi määritellyt strategiset tavoitteet. Strategian toteutusta edistää ammattikorkeakoulun organisaatiorakenne ja laatutyötä tukevat viisi strategiaohjelmaa.

2. Ammattikorkeakoululla on yksi yhtenäinen toimintajärjestelmä, joka kytkee tehokkaasti toisiinsa strategisen ja operationaalisen johtamisen sekä laadunhallinnan. Tämä järjestelmä hyödyntää toimivia tulosmittareita edistäen siten vahvaa tulostavoitteista laadun johtamisen kulttuuria.

3. Ammattikorkeakoulu toteuttaa monipuolisesti sisäisiä arviointiprosesseja, kuten yksiköiden vuosikatselmointeja ja sisäisiä auditointeja. Laadunhallinnan eri työkaluja käyttävät niin johto, henkilökunta, opiskelijat kuin ulkoiset sidosryhmätkin, mikä edistää yhteisöllistä oppimista ja jatkuvaa kehittämistä.

Vaasan ammattikorkeakoululle esitetään muun muassa seuraavia kehittämissuosituksia:

1. Vaasan ammattikorkeakoulun tulisi arvioida ja uudistaa pedagoginen ohjelmansa, jotta se voisi paremmin ohjata pedagogisen johtajuuden ja opettajien osaamisen kehittämistä. Ohjelman tulisi entistä vahvemmin tukea osaamislähtöisten opetussuunnitelmien sekä opiskelijakeskeisten ja opiskelijan työllistettävyyttä tukevien opetus- ja arviointimenetelmien kehittämistä. Ohjelman toimeenpanon tulisi tavoittaa koko henkilökunta, ei vain asiasta innostuneet.

2. Ammattikorkeakoulun tulisi yksinkertaistaa opiskelijoiden palautejärjestelmiä, tukea opiskelijoita valittujen palautejärjestelmien käytössä, tehostaa kerätyn palautteen käsittelyä sekä raportoida opiskelijoille heidän palautteensa hyödyntämisestä kehittämistyössä.

3. Edistääkseen tutkimus-, kehitys- ja innovaatiotoiminnan tulosjohtamista ammattikorkeakoulun tulisi arvioida uudelleen TKI-toiminnan käsitteellinen viitekehys ja toimintatavat, kuten TKI-projektien valintamenettely suhteessa ammattikorkeakoulun painopisteisiin sekä TKI-työn mittarit ja niille asetetut tavoitetasot. Laadunhallinnan menetelmiä, palautteen keruuta ja sen hyödyntämistä tulisi parantaa kaikilla TKI-toiminnan osa-alueilla (mukaan lukien Muotoilukeskus MUOVA).

Avainsanat
Arviointi, auditointi, laatujärjestelmä, laadunhallinta, laatu, korkeakoulut, ammattikorkeakoulu

SAMMANDRAG

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Sammandrag

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Nationella centret för utbildningsutvärdering har utfört en auditering av Vasa yrkeshögskola och beviljat högskolan en kvalitetsstämpel som gäller i sex år från och med den 20 mars 2015. Kvalitetssystemet vid Vasa yrkeshögskola uppfyller de nationella kriterier för kvalitetshantering som fastställts för högskolorna och systemet motsvarar de europeiska principerna för och rekommendationerna om högskolornas kvalitetshantering.

Föremålet för auditeringen var kvalitetssystemet vid Vasa yrkeshögskola, som högskolan tagit fram utifrån sina egna utgångspunkter och mål. Auditeringsobjektet, som universitetet kunde fritt välja, var arbetslivets integrering i undervisningen. Kvalitetssystemets viktigaste styrkor är:

1. Den senaste strategiprocessen baserade sig på en omfattande analys av den nationella och lokala verksamhetsmiljön, inklusive en analys av regionens utbildningsbehov samt samarbetsmöjligheterna med de andra lokala högre utbildningsinstitutionerna. Tydligt definierade strategiska mål kan ses som ett slutresultat av detta arbete. Verkställandet av strategin främjas av yrkeshögskolans organisationsstruktur och de fem strategiprogrammen som stödjer kvalitetsarbetet.

2. Vasa yrkeshögskola har ett verksamhetssystem som effektivt integrerar strategisk ledning, verksamhetsstyrning och kvalitetshantering. Detta system utnyttjar fungerande resultatindikatorer och främjar en kvalitetsledningskultur som är starkt resultatinriktad.

3. Yrkeshögskolan genomför vittomspännande interna utvärderingsprocesser, exempelvis enheternas genomgång samt interna auditeringar. De olika kvalitetshanteringsverktygen används av ledningen, personal, studerande och externa intressentgrupper, vilket stödjer organisatoriskt lärande och ständig förbättring.

Vasa yrkeshögskola ges bland annat följande rekommendationer för vidareutveckling:

1. Vasa yrkeshögskola borde utvärdera och förnya sitt pedagogiska program för att bättre kunna styra utvecklandet av pedagogiskt ledarskap och lärarnas kompetensutveckling i högskolan. Programmet borde bättre stödja utvecklingen av kompetensbaserade läroplaner samt undervisnings- och utvärderingsmetoder som är studentcentrerade och har fokus på de studerandes anställningsbarhet. Det pedagogiska programmet borde implementeras på ett sätt som omfattar hela personalen, inte endast de som redan är engagerade i de pedagogiska frågorna.

2. Vasa yrkeshögskola borde förenkla sina system för studeranderespons, stödja de studerande i användningen av de valda systemen, förbättra bearbetning av insamlad respons och ge respons till de studerande angående de förbättringar som gjorts på basis av deras respons.

3. Vasa yrkeshögskola borde utvärdera på nytt sitt konceptuella ramverk och sina operativa processer för forsknings-, utvecklings- och innovationsverksamheten för att främja resultatinriktad ledning av FUI-verksamheten. Utvärderingen borde omfatta (ex-ante) val av FUI-projekt i relation till yrkeshögskolans prioriteringar samt indikatorer och mål för FUI. FUI-verksamhetens kvalitetshantering och utnyttjandet av respons borde utvecklas i alla FUI-verksamhetens delområden (inklusive forsknings- och produktutvecklingscentret MUOVA).

Nyckelord
Utvärdering, auditering, kvalitetssystem, kvalitetshantering, kvalitet, högskola, universitet

CONTENTS

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Description of
the audit process

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1.1 Audit targets

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The target of the audit is the quality system that VAMK University of Applied Sciences has developed on the basis of its own needs and goals. The focus of the audit is on the procedures and processes that the institution uses to maintain, develop and enhance the quality of its operations. In accordance with the principle of enhancement-led evaluation, the higher education institution's (HEI) objectives and the content of its activities or results are not evaluated in the audit. The aim is to help the HEI to identify strengths, good practices and areas in need of development in its own operations.

The Finnish Education Evaluation Centre (FINEEC) audits evaluate whether the institution's quality system meets the national criteria (Appendix 1) and whether it corresponds to the *Standards and Guidelines for Quality management in the European Higher Education Area* (also known as ESG). In addition, the audit evaluates how well the quality system meets strategic and operations management needs, as well as the quality management of the HEI's basic duties and the extent to which it is comprehensive and effective. In this way the audit focuses on evaluating the institution's quality policy, the development of the quality system, as well as how effective and dynamic an entity the system forms.

VAMK University of Applied Sciences chose "Working life integration into teaching" as its optional audit target. As samples of degree education, it chose the Bachelor's Degree Programme in Electrical and Automation Engineering and the Master's Degree Programme in Developing and Managing Social and Health Care Services. The audit team chose the Bachelor's Degree Programme in International Business as the third sample of degree education.

The audit targets for VAMK University of Applied Sciences:

1. The quality policy of the higher education institution
2. Strategic and operations management
3. Development of the quality system
4. Quality management of the higher education institution's basic duties:
   a. Degree education
   b. Research, development and innovation activities (RDI), as well as artistic activities
   c. Societal impact and regional development work[1]
   d. Optional audit target: Working life integration into teaching
5. Samples of degree education: degree programmes:
   a. Bachelor's Degree Programme in Electrical and Automation Engineering
   b. Master's Degree Programme in Developing and Managing Social and Health Care Services
   c. Bachelor's Degree Programme in International Business
6. The quality system as a whole.

1.2 Implementation of the audit

The audit is based on the basic material and self-evaluation report submitted by VAMK University of Applied Sciences as well as an audit visit to the university of applied sciences on 13–15 November 2014. The audit team also had access to electronic materials that were important for quality management. The main phases and time frame of the audit process are shown in Appendix 2.

An international audit team carried out the audit in English. VAMK was given the opportunity to comment on the team's composition especially from the perspective of disqualification prior to the appointment of the audit team.

The audit team:

Professor **Alan Davidson**, Robert Gordon University, Aberdeen, Scotland (chair)
Vice Rector **Pekka Auvinen**, Karelia University of Applied Sciences, Finland
Head of Evaluation **Nina K. Hietakangas**, the Finnish Blue Ribbon, Finland
Part-time MSc student **Arie van Scheepen**, Utrecht University, School of Governance, Bachelor in Energy Technology at the UAS Utrecht, the Netherlands
Head of Staff Unit for Coordination Research & Development **Roswitha Wiedenhofer**, University of Applied Sciences FH JOANNEUM, Austria (vice-chair)

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[1] Including social responsibility, continuing education and open university of applied sciences education, as well as paid-services education.

FINEEC staff members:

Chief Planning Officer **Sirpa Moitus** acted as the project manager for the audit and Senior Advisor **Mirella Nordblad** acted as a backup for the project manager.

As indicated, the audit team conducted a three-day audit visit to the UAS. The purpose of the visit was to verify and supplement the observations made of the quality system based on the audit material. The programme of the visit is shown in Appendix 3.

The audit team drew up this report based on the material accumulated during the evaluation and on the analysis of that material. The audit team members produced the report jointly by drawing on the expertise of each team member. VAMK was given the opportunity to check the report for factual information prior to the Higher Education Evaluation Committee's decision-making meeting.

2
The organisation of VAMK University of Applied Sciences
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The Finnish higher education system consists of two complementary sectors: universities and universities of applied sciences (UAS). The UAS system is fairly new in Finland; the first UASs were made permanent in 1996. Universities conduct scientific research and education based on this research, while the universities of applied sciences offer work-related education in response to labour market needs, as well as conducting research and development (R&D) that supports education and regional development. Universities and UASs receive most of their funding from the Ministry of Education and Culture and the activities of the higher education institutions (HEIs) are governed by four-year performance agreements with the Ministry.

In UAS study programmes, the bachelor's degrees consist of core and professional studies, optional studies, practical training, and a bachelor's thesis. The degree is worth 210–270 ECTS credits and the duration is from 3.5–4.5 years. The compulsory on-the-job training period is equivalent to a minimum of 30 credits. UAS master's degrees are professionally oriented, they take 1–1.5 years to complete, and are worth 60–90 ECTS credits. To be eligible to apply for these programmes, you need to hold a bachelor's degree in a relevant field, followed by at least 3 years of work experience.

Vaasan ammattikorkeakoulu VAMK Ltd, University of Applied Sciences started its operation as a temporary polytechnic[2] in 1996. VAMK Ltd is owned by the City of Vaasa (main owner), University of Vaasa, Regional Council of Ostrobothnia and Ostrobothnia Chamber of Commerce.

VAMK has three educational units which are the Technology; Business; and Health Care and Social Services units; a unit for administrative services; a unit for applied research, development and innovation; as well as the Design Centre MUOVA. A director is appointed to lead the work of each unit. In these units there are altogether 8 heads of degree programmes who act as supervisors of the teachers. Some services

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[2] In approx. 2000, VAMK adopted the university of applied sciences (UAS) in its name.

are administratively answerable to the Rector, while others are supervised by the Director of Administration. The Director of RDI leads support services for RDI activity. Functions organised jointly with other HEIs are library services (Tritonia Academic Library) and the teaching and research laboratory (Technobothnia).

VAASAN AMMATTIKORKEAKOULU, UNIVERSITY OF APPLIED SCIENCES ORGANISATION

Figure 1. VAMK organisation. Source: VAMK self-evaluation report 2014.

VAMK has two campuses, one in Palosaari, the sea side campus, and one on Raastuvankatu right in the heart of the city centre. VAMK offers education in Finnish and English languages on both campuses.

VAMK University of Applied Sciences mainly focuses on degree education. The total number of students in 2013 was 2635 of which 2582 were bachelor's degree students and the rest were studying master's programmes. Intensifying international cooperation is one of the key strategic decisions of VAMK which is reflected in the rather large number of international degree students. There are about 400 international degree students at VAMK and three degree programmes are taught entirely in English. At the time of the audit, VAMK had still three discontinued degree programmes which were taught in Swedish. In 2012, the Ministry of Education and Culture decided to reduce the intake of new students in UASs and strengthen the profiling concerning the supply of UAS education. Due to these decisions, VAMK had to give up the degree programme in tourism and all degree programmes in Swedish. The last student intake to these programmes was in 2012.

The number of students, degrees awarded, faculty and staff at VAMK are presented in Table 1 below.

Table 1. Key figures of VAMK

STUDENTS (FULL-TIME EQUIVALENT) *	NUMBER
UAS bachelor's degree	2582
UAS master's degree	53
**DEGREES AWARDED **	**NUMBER**
UAS bachelor's degree	489
UAS master's degree	21
STAFF (FTE) *	
Teaching and research staff	147
Other staff	78

* Statistics from the Ministry of Education and Culture 2013.
**Annual average, 2011–2013. Statistics of the Ministry of Education and Culture 2013.

3

The quality policy of VAMK University of Applied Sciences

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VAMK's quality system in its current form was introduced in 2011. The objectives of the quality system are clearly defined, although the inclusion of staff members in the objective setting could have been wider. Division of responsibilities and involvements in strategic objective setting are clear, based on a line-of-command system. The management approach ensures the strong engagement of the management and the key persons in quality management; yet, the commitment and engagement varies among staff members. The Chair of the Student Union VAMOK is a full member of the senior Management Team, demonstrating the importance of students in the quality system. The quality system documents are communicated via the intranet and are mainly accessible to staff, although the intranet structure could still be developed. In addition, various other means are used to communicate information produced by the quality system to staff and students. There is also a clear commitment at VAMK to developing a positive quality culture, and to continuing to emphasise the human, face-to-face aspects of communication.

*The quality policy of VAMK is at a **developing** stage.*

3.1 Objectives of the quality system

The quality policy at Vaasa University of Applied Sciences (henceforth VAMK) is defined in the VAMK Quality Programme for 2014–2015. The objective of the quality policy is 'to aspire to the level of quality education required by working life and students, while at the same time ensuring the economic viability and the operational preconditions of the UAS.

In addition, the Quality Programme defines the main objectives of the quality system for each strategy period that are evaluated annually and listed in the guide for unit level operating plan. The five objectives for the current strategy period 2011–2015 are (in brief):

1. **Recognition and responsibility related to the quality system:** Everyone in VAMK is familiar with the operating system and their responsibilities in developing quality
2. **The clarity and functionality of the system:** The operating system and the information it produces is clear and functional
3. **Methods, indicators and feedback systems:** The methods, indicators and feedback systems and their functionality are under annual assessment and continuous development
4. **Usability of the system:** The operating system produces up-to-date and relevant information for different parties
5. **Quality leadership:** The objectives of the methods of quality management advance the development of quality culture and operations management.

These objectives for the quality system have been processed and approved by the Management Team. VAMK's self-evaluation report indicated that some staff members would have hoped for wider participation opportunities in setting objectives. The objectives are meant to further the implementation of VAMK's vision, values and strategy.

VAMK's quality system has a rich tradition in applying different quality management methods (ISO 9004 standard, EFQM) and planning and visualisation tools (such as a Balanced Scorecard model). After the 2008 external audit, VAMK undertook a complete revision of the quality system towards creating an integrated system. The new performance-based funding model and heavy budget cuts have been strong drivers for VAMK in developing its quality system and strategic and operations management approaches. The current system was introduced in 2011. A distinctive aspect of VAMK's quality system is that it is now a single system combining strategic, operational and quality management. As a visible sign of this integration, at the time of the audit VAMK used the concept 'operating system' (in Finnish toimintajärjestelmä) instead of the quality system.

The other changes in the context that have shaped objectives included the application of UAS licencing, reform of the Polytechnics Act 2015 and VAMK's reflection on the city of Vaasa and regional contexts, including six higher education institutions and their satellites within the region. As a result, VAMK has a new strategy structure consisting of key strategic decisions and five programmes to support the realisation and development of strategy. These programmes include the Quality Programme; International Programme; RDI Programme; Educational Programme; and Staff Programme. The strategy and programmes will be discussed in more detail later in this report.

The strategic objectives have been set by the Rector and the Management Team in an inclusive way, reporting to the VAMK Board and the annual shareholders' meeting. The latest objective-setting procedure included a wide range of stakeholders including the Ministry of Education and Culture through a funding agreement and indicators; externals through their membership in the VAMK Board, working-life representatives from business and industry through the degree programme advisory boards; and staff and students through evaluations and feedback. Based on the evidence from VAMK's self-evaluation report and interviews, strategic objective-setting has been clear and successful, but excludes the objectives for RDI (see section 6.2).

Implementation of the quality management processes is mapped onto a "Plan – Do – Check – Act" cycle, which is aligned to an annual cycle of operational resource planning, with process documents from each stage of the cycle feeding in to the next.
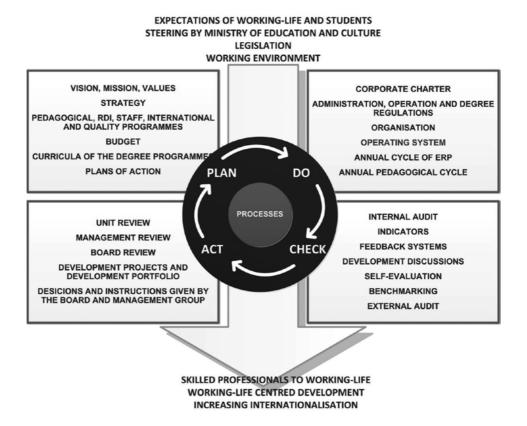

Figure 2. VAMK's operating system. Source: VAMK self-evaluation report 2014.

As a logical response to developments in external reporting and funding, there has been a stronger emphasis on top-down performance management and result-based objectives. There is scope for VAMK to increase focus on performance-based results

that have a positive impact on degree completion and hence funding for the UAS. Nevertheless, VAMK should also become aware of risks involved in the system becoming too narrowly focussed on quantitative, performance-based results, with risks that the qualitative aspect is given less attention.

3.2 Division of responsibility related to the quality system

Development of the quality system since the last audit in 2008 has seen significant transfer of responsibilities, with a key role for the Management Team and three Directors of Units. Responsibilities are aligned to strategic, management and operational roles. In addition, process descriptions clearly identify responsibilities and engage top management in quality and provide clear location of responsibilities at the top level.

Division of responsibility starts with VAMK's limited liability company shareholders' general meeting, which chooses the VAMK Board. The Board has specific defined responsibilities, including appointing the Rector/Managing Director. Based on the reform of the Polytechnics Act 2015, a planned change at the end of 2014 was the discontinuation of the Internal Board to remove overlap with External Board.

The organisation and organisational culture of VAMK have changed a lot during the last years. The management approach based on command lines has been strengthened and the role of the matrix organisation has been reduced at the same time. In the top-management interview, VAMK described its division of responsibility as a "line-of-command" system.

The Rector's decision-making is supported by the Management Team which reviews and approves for instance the direction and principles of quality management and approves future operations based on the information produced by the operating system. Besides the membership in the Management Team, the three academic Directors of Units have very wide responsibilities – effectively for everything that goes on within their respective units. Whilst this has benefits in terms of clarity, there is a risk of overload. Recent developments, driven by a concern to streamline and remove overlaps, but also budget cuts that have impacted on staffing, have created increased risks of overload unless appropriate support is provided.

The Quality Team that includes the Quality Manager and the Quality Team Planner works directly under the Rector and oversees practical development of the quality system. Previously a Quality Working Group had responsibilities for the quality system; these responsibilities were transferred to the Management Team in spring 2014.

Within the units, Heads of Degree Programmes are responsible for the quality of their degree programmes, supported by Unit Quality Coordinators. The three Unit Quality Coordinators are responsible for coordinating the development of quality in their units and managing the internal audits. There is scope to clarify the role of three Unit Quality Coordinators within the overall structure, and this could be a way of supporting Directors of Units.

Based on evidence from the self-evaluation, evidence of operational implementation, and interviews, the key actors are committed and competent. Managers and staff of support services were clear about their responsibilities within the quality system, and the ways in which their worked aligned to objectives.

VAMK's student organisation, VAMOK is identified as a key player, and the fact that the Chair of the Student Union VAMOK is a full member of the Management Team, demonstrates the significance of responsibility attached to VAMOK, and a commitment to see students as partners at the highest level. There was a culture of real, mutual respect between VAMOK and the Rector. VAMOK also offers tutor training to students on a basis of paid-services contracts.

At the level of degree programmes, students felt that their opinions are mostly listened to. The interviewed students saw the community-building activities from VAMOK as a valuable addition to student life.

3.3 Documentation and communicativeness of the quality system

According to the self-evaluation report, VAMK's quality management documentation consists of quality policy and Quality Programme, process descriptions and guidance of operations. In addition, all phases of the PDCA cycle produce versatile quality documentation. Documentation and communication of the quality system was reformed in 2011 with the aim to increase openness, transparency, and the distribution of communicative responsibilities to responsible experts individually. Development of the quality system included an objective to move away from a separate quality handbook, and instead integrate quality documentation within process descriptions as well as on the intranet under corresponding headings.

In general, the process descriptions are of high quality and provide guidance on all aspects of operational management, although there is some variety in the level of precision. The number of processes has been reduced to 20 based on the previous audit 2008 recommendation. The process descriptions follow a uniform RACI model, defining the responsible person, the process owner (accountable), the data collection needed for the process (consulted) and persons to be informed on the completion of each process stage. There is also a clear process for updating the process descriptions by the Management Team. Notably, after the process map revision, the support services do not have their own process descriptions any more but instead a dedicated website on the intranet.

VAMK's intranet was reformed in 2011, based around the operating processes, and is one of the central means of communicating processes and supporting documentation. VAMK states that the process descriptions can be found on corresponding pages on the intranet for each section that has a process description. However, not all pages have been updated recently. A specific development need relates to the data systems. Two out of three sample degree programmes mentioned in their self-evaluation reports

that VAMK's operating system does not provide complete degree-specific indicator data, but the programmes had to collect statistical data from different sources for this audit. Both interviews and the Quality Programme identified developing the intranet as a development target for 2015.

Based on the interviews, availability of the documentation is not an issue for staff members, but instead, making improvement work more visible was mentioned as a challenge. The intranet-based Development Portfolio documents initiatives and development measures taken on the basis of feedback information. This proves that the PDCA cycle is working well and that feedback leads to improvement measures. In addition, a number of development measures and conclusions drawn on the basis of quality management tools are embedded in the annual planning documents and the minutes of different development bodies. When developing the intranet, the audit team recommends VAMK to structure the existing quality documentation in a way that helps the user to easily form a holistic picture of the continuous development work that takes place at VAMK. One idea presented in the interviews was that the process map could include direct links to relevant indicators and development projects.

In addition to the communication via the intranet, VAMK has paid special attention to communicating the operating system and its results both to staff members and students through briefing events about current issues; internal auditor training; and publication events for internal audit results and reviews; attendance by student representatives at teachers' degree programme meetings; and annual unit-based students' feedback days. The Quality Team Planner informs all new students about the quality system and the students' opportunities for influencing them – this is an example of good practice.

Based on the interviews, teaching staff members were aware of the quality system and the use of feedback in the curriculum planning and development of teaching. Students also generally recognised different feedback channels and participation opportunities available for them. In addition, the interviews showed that VAMK had informed external stakeholders of the quality system. The VAMK Board members especially felt that they receive relevant feedback and indicator information for monitoring the strategy implementation.

3.4 Quality culture at VAMK

VAMK is actively trying to find ways to create a positive quality culture. Based on VAMK's own analysis, the former quality culture was too focused on "finding the guilty party", while VAMK now has added some rewarding elements in the system. The Quality Programme does not explicitly define the quality culture. Instead, the self-evaluation report characterises it for instance in the following ways: "The quality culture changes all the time", "The general atmosphere affects the quality culture" and "Teamwork and open culture of information". Based on the management and staff workshop organised by the audit team, the ideal quality culture at VAMK could

include elements such as common understanding, balance of freedom and limits, uniformity, commitment of all parties, innovativeness, and online availability of result information.

Based on the top-management interview, it takes time for the three institutions, which were merged to form VAMK, to bring about a unified VAMK culture. The top-management also admitted that there is an official and unofficial quality culture; the latter referring to fact the "official" quality system was not intended to restrict the freedom of teachers to use their skills effectively in the classroom. Senior teachers' representatives acknowledged and valued this responsibility, but as the strategic principles for education presented in the Educational Programme were not fully embedded, it is questionable how well this freedom works.

A recurring theme during interviews was treating staff as "human beings" within the quality culture, as well as the importance of face-to-face communications. The audit brought up a bipolar nature in the staff commitment to the development work; there are those very committed and those reluctant to change and to engage with developments. The audit team recommends that VAMK should continue to define and develop the quality culture and to extend the ownership of the quality system among the staff members.

4
Strategic and operations management
—

The operating system serves as a central feature within VAMK´s quality management linking it in an integrated manner to the strategic and operative management of the organisation. It functions well at the different organisational levels and is actively supported by many staff members. The overall strategy is, on the one hand, based on the demand of the labour market and tightly linked to regional stakeholders and strategies by different channels and mechanisms. On the other hand, the corporate strategy is operationalised within five programmes defining several measures and activities for a given period. A well introduced set of key performance indicators supports the monitoring of VAMK's performance and success in implementing its strategy.

Information is generally collected systematically by various feedback systems and reviewed in different formats according to the respective level of demand and point of use within the organisation. Selected review formats, especially the annual unit reviews and internal audits, are comprehensively implemented quality management tools integrating representatives of management, staff, students and even external experts; and thus support organisational learning processes and continuous improvement. Based on the interviews and submitted documents, there is clear evidence that the quality system of VAMK works in a good manner at most organisational levels and is improved and supported by a committed management.

The link between the quality system and strategic and operations management at VAMK is at a **developing** *stage.*

4.1 Linkage of the quality system with strategic and operations management
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A central feature of VAMK's approach to quality management is its operating system. This system closely combines strategic, operations and quality management by linking several management topics from normative, strategic and operative management and quality management topics such as methods, instruments, documents, to

a PDCA-cycle (see Figure 2). Based on an analysis of environmental framework conditions, the operating system should support the realisation of corporate goals and the fulfilment of VAMK's mission to produce "skilled professionals for working life". With a strong focus on regional demand VAMK's profile is determined by two "key strategic decisions"– international cooperation and regional impact. These key elements do not only form focus points to further complementing functional strategies i.e. programmes, but – based upon a logical approach – also for the three focus areas in education and research. Business expertise, essential skills in social and health care and technical skills are highly needed in the future in the Vaasa region and are also reflected in the organisational chart of VAMK, forming specific educational units.

The tight linkage to the regional demand is also underlined by the fact that regional actors are represented in the VAMK Board having a major impact on the strategic choices of this institution. Beyond this formal integration of regional actors, there is also much evidence of multiple extensive networks including VAMK and its strategy as part of a broader concerted regional strategy successfully aiming for sustainable regional development and competitiveness. The audit team considers that the multiple linkage mechanisms of VAMK's strategy to its environment is a specific strength.

As mentioned in Section 3, VAMK has a process map containing 20 processes including the strategic management process. The strategic management process clearly describes the elaboration and implementation of the strategy and its measures, the evaluation of activities, the involvement of different groups of stakeholders, and VAMK's set of management indicators. Based on the evidence from the audit, this process is a well introduced element throughout VAMK's processes, its results being well integrated into the longer term organisational planning (4 year cycle) as well as operational management. The last strategic planning process with a duration of more than half a year was described by interviewees as a "giving, integrative process" including feedback from many stakeholders within and beyond the organisation on a "grass-roots level" leading to a "compact" strategy. The current strategy improves on its predecessor by pursuing the same goals.

The usage of management indicators is a well-established part of the regular business at VAMK. The indicators are also systematically evaluated at the level of degree programmes in the course of the annual operations planning. Complementing the indicators set by the Ministry of Education and Culture, VAMK's own indicators are oriented towards an enhancement of the students' learning process, serving as drivers for the indicators of the Ministry. Concerning the linkage of the indicators to strategy, regional impact in the form of the education of highly employable students is well measured by the current indicators. Further aspects of regional impact are not yet covered by indicators. This will be discussed more in detail in Section 6.4.

Strategic use of local operations and services

A specific framework condition for VAMK which also affects its strategy is given by the fact that there are six higher education institutions within a short regional distance at Vaasa. Cooperative potential and possible synergies in infrastructure and services have to be handled in balance with enforced competition for funding, RDI contracts and the attention of economic partners. Putting it briefly – VAMK tries to get the best out of this situation and is doing well. Implemented synergies in support services and commonly run infrastructure, e.g. the Technobothnia Labs, the Tritonia library, the Vaasa Energy Institute, IT and security services, exhibit a win-win situation for participating partners. With the strategically aligned intention to boost the RDI activities at VAMK, the Design Centre MUOVA was acquired from Aalto University 1 January 2014.

The implementation of VAMK strategy

The implementation of the overall strategy is accomplished by five functional programmes which operationalise the strategy by setting binding goals and activities with assigned responsibilities, which are pursed by the organisation. They embrace programmes for education, RDI, international activities, staff and quality. In the case of the International Programme this is also linked via content and period to an overall national strategy supporting the national goals for internationalisation in higher education.

In contrast to the clear target-measure structure of the other programmes, the Educational Programme is more theoretically based, defining principles for quality teaching, evaluation and competence development. The goal of this programme is that the whole of VAMK follows the same unified and common principles. The implementation is accomplished by the application of instructions and forms. There are shared responsibilities concerning the further educational development originally foreseen by VAMK. The application of instructions and forms is accomplished by the teachers, while the coordination of the further teaching development is done by the Director of Education. Due to a broader organisational change focusing on streamlining the whole organisation more towards "a line of command" the further development of education has been assigned to the Directors of Units. Thus, it is questionable as to what role the Educational Programme will take in the future and how it can be redesigned concerning the new responsibilities and resources in a proper way to support adequate quality development of VAMK's educational function. The underlying principles of quality education could perhaps be developed as guidelines, while the implementation of these principles – i.e. the extent, manner, and integration into an overall competence development of teachers – could be addressed by a redesigned Educational Programme or as part of the Staff Programme (See Section 6).

The Quality Programme strives for supporting the overall strategic development of the organisation by defining development targets within five areas: the recognition and responsibilities of the quality system; the clarity and functionality of the system;

methods, indicators and feedback systems; the usability of the system; and the leadership in quality. The Quality Programme is valid for 2014–2015. Based on the evidence from the audit, the chosen measures are well considered and some also correlate with the audit team's findings of areas for improvement. Specified measures explicated in the Quality Programme are also actually monitored by VAMK, resulting in a coherent picture of deliberate, well linked quality management planning across all levels of the organisation.

The overall implementation of the strategy is accomplished by operative annual planning and budgeting at unit and support service level, as well as supported by specific instructions. Quality management methods used to evaluate the strategy implementation and further activities of VAMK are unit specific management reviews, as well as internal audits, accompanied by different forms of meetings. Unit reviews are implemented annually and are considered as very important throughout VAMK. Beyond identifying certain development issues for the following year, unit reviews seem to provide an excellent opportunity to gather feedback from different systems, obtain expert input, and exchange experiences between different staff groups at different organisational levels. This comprehensive review format is considered by the audit team as a strength with quality management methods strongly supporting organisational learning.

Internal audits are judged as being highly important from VAMK's management perspective and function as a tool to identify common institution-wide problems. The instruments aim at an assessment of the consistency of VAMK's processes and actual activities, and have targeted themes such as student-centred learning in teaching, student counselling and marketing and PR. Three degree programmes are audited annually. The internal audits are followed by a staff briefing and the Management Team selecting development targets valid for the whole UAS. The internal audits also play a central role since not only are all staff members invited, but also students are integrated into the different phases of these audits. For instance, students are invited to staff briefings and are part of the internal audit teams conducting interviews. The audit process itself supports organisational development and is therefore also considered by the audit team as a strength. The reporting format of internal audits, though, could still be improved.

4.2 Functioning of the quality system at different organisational levels

In line with the previous mentioned change towards a more streamlined organisational structure and responsibilities, the responsibilities of the Quality Management Team were also included into the (top) Management Team. By this measure the management support and importance of quality management was stressed and also the responsibility of the Directors of Units for the quality system was emphasised. Probably due to changes mentioned in the whole UAS sector, budget cuts and performance-based steering mechanisms by the Finnish Ministry of Education and Culture, there is a

common feeling throughout the organisation of a "large amount of pressure to be good". Common efforts are undertaken at different levels of the organisation to further improve the quality of its basic duties. A small incentive mechanism (100€ notes awarded by the management) has been installed as a "visible way of demonstrating being good".

Following the implementation of strategy and operations planning, all selected and implemented measures from different review formats are evaluated in the following period. The Management Team, Directors of Units and Heads of Degree Programmes, supervisors and teachers are all integrated into the evaluation of measures and further planning processes at their respective levels.

Information provided by several feedback systems is used, such as staff surveys, Student Radar, feedback given during the students' feedback days, and the OPALA system. Working life feedback is received through board meetings, specific surveys and initiatives and also through project connected feedback templates. The "Feedy" system is also used for further development of activities. The personal development discussions between supervisors and staff members serve as the most important feedback mechanism for the service staff. The staff competence survey to be conducted in two yearly intervals is a promising new practice which will help VAMK to identify competence development needs, to provide targeted training and offer training possibilities for staff members in development discussions.

It is noteworthy that the MUOVA quality system cannot be assessed within this audit. From a legal point of view MUOVA is part of VAMK; however, it still follows the quality management standards of Aalto University and its quality system has not yet been integrated into VAMK. The audit team recommends that the integration of MUOVA's quality system is accomplished soon; this could also support the cooperation between single units and their RDI work with MUOVA.

The quality systems of the other joined services are partly managed by the partners and/or in case of the library integrated into some additional, overall quality systems (national biannual enquiries). Common policies, steering structures and meeting formats support the development of these cooperative structures.

The support services are well integrated into the whole quality system at VAMK and are really committed to it and its further development. The directors of support services were integrated into the elaboration of strategic programmes and align their work towards it by taking care of VAMK's key performance indicators. The annual planning and budgeting is especially well prepared by all the supporting services. Beyond a commonly concerted planning process they also proactively try to support VAMK's goals by considering new sources of income and further support for education, as well as managing cooperation with the student union.

The results of the diverse feedback mechanisms as well as reviews and indicators are used for the new operations planning and update of measures. Examples of reports – such as examples of unit review feedback, the report on internal audits 2010–2014 and main conclusions from these audits – and measures covering an observation period of several years together with several confirmations in the course of the audit interviews of a well working, even inspiring quality system bring upon the conclusion that the PDCA cycle is fully implemented.

An even further enhanced understanding of the operative system could be obtained by a little visual improvement of the picture of the operating system (Figure 2), separating the single elements from normative, strategic and operative management within the four fields (e.g. by a respective colour code or specific positioning along the radius of the circle). However, the integrated strategic, operations and quality system is functioning well at the different levels of the organisation being actively supported by most staff members.

5
Development of the quality system
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The current quality system is a product of a complete redevelopment in response to VAMK's strategic objectives and development recommendations in the 2008 FINHEEC audit report. The Quality Programme has been significant in the development of the quality system. This was renewed and revised in 2012, and clearly identifies targets and associated objectives for developing the quality system. VAMK acknowledges the usefulness of internal audits and self-evaluation, including the self-evaluation conducted for the 2014 FINEEC audit, and has plans to develop the use of self-evaluations as well as to continue with the development of its quality culture.

The development of the quality system is at a **developing** *stage.*

5.1 Procedures for developing the quality system
—

The Quality Programme is one of VAMK's five strategic programmes. It clearly defines procedures for developing the quality system by identifying five development targets and associated objectives, scheduled development operations and responsible groups or persons. The current five development targets are the same as the objectives of the quality system: recognition and responsibility related to the quality system; the clarity and functionality of the system; methods, indicators and feedback systems; usability of the system; and leadership in quality.

The first version of the Quality Programme was implemented during the period 2010–12. The programme was revised resulting in the current version Quality Programme 2012–14. The alignment of the Quality Programme with VAMK's overall strategy is a clear strength, as the programme is always updated in conjunction with strategy updates.

In VAMK's process map, the process for assessment of the operating system (i.e. Quality System) introduces the main tools for developing the quality system: "The operating system is reviewed annually with a spot check type of internal audit. VAMK participates

in external audits at least every sixth year and prepares a complete self-evaluation every third year according to the FINEEC Audit Manual. The operating system is also reviewed by benchmarking." In addition, the self-evaluation report states that the development of the quality management is embedded into strategic management and operations planning and subsequently scheduled in VAMK's annual cycle.

VAMK has carried out internal audits on a systematic basis since 2007. The Management Team selects the development targets that will be further analysed based on internal and external feedback as well as deciding on the internal audit themes. Internal audits are realised on a rotating basis targeting annually three degree programmes and three themes. It seems that internal audits are used for two purposes: as a tool for quality management and for developing the quality system. However, internal audits could be used more effectively to monitor the functioning of the quality system as a whole (see Section 5.2). In 2013, the internal audit targeted the effectiveness of quality work, focussing on the realisation and follow-up of operating plans. Based on the report available on VAMK's intranet, the internal audit resulted in a number of observations of strengths and areas for development. However, no recommendations were presented and it was not easy to conclude what improvement measures in the quality system this internal audit led to.

At the time of the audit, VAMK had plans to establish self-evaluation as a new regular method of quality management to assist in the planning of the following year's operations. So far, self-evaluations have been carried out in connection with the introduction of the new operating plan, when the attainment of the previous year's objectives has been assessed.

When it comes to the development of the whole quality management system, the roles of self-evaluation and benchmarking are still unclear. VAMK has tested EFQM-based self-evaluation and benchmarked it together with the Mikkeli University of Applied Sciences. The first self-evaluation workshops based on the quality management manual were held in 2012. In future, VAMK has plans to conduct systematic self-evaluations every second year.

According to the self-evaluation report drafted by VAMK for this audit, VAMK states it conducts regular benchmarking with SeAMK University of Applied Sciences and by participating in national and international networks. However, there are no documents available concerning benchmarking and cooperation, which makes it difficult to conclude their use and impact.

The interview with the top management indicated that VAMK is very motivated to develop its quality system further with the help of external feedback. In order to include the external element in the development work, the audit team recommends VAMK to consider benchmarking its quality system regularly with a strategically selected higher education institution partner. The benchmarking could be based on the criteria used in VAMK's external evaluation (such as FINEEC audit criteria).

Based on the self-evaluation report, the audit team sees that VAMK is able to form a reflective analysis of the current state of the quality system. The audit team agrees with VAMK's self-analysis that the relevant areas of strategic programmes have been identified and there is a strong commitment of the management to the development of quality and processes. The audit team commends VAMK for recognising and pointing out that not all feedback from working life concerning RDI operations is being documented and the amount of study unit feedback is insufficient. VAMK has partly addressed these issues, but some of them still need further attention.

The Management Team bears the main responsibility for the quality system. According to the Quality Programme, the Quality Manager has had an important role in evaluating functioning of the quality system since the beginning of 2014, when the recent Quality Working group was discontinued. The audit material revealed that there would be willingness among the degree programme staff members to participate in the development of the quality system; this is an important message regarding the commitment of the staff and could benefit the institution when striving towards a more transparent quality culture.

5.2 Stages in development of the quality system

Development of a quality system at VAMK started in 1995 with the aim to have it in place during 1997. The quality system was then based on the ISO 9004-2 standard. As an indication of VAMK's strive towards continuous development, VAMK participated in FINHEEC's voluntary audit for universities of applied sciences in 2002. Following the external audit, more emphasis was put on the systematic development of the quality system and on testing new methods, which led VAMK to use the EFQM framework for self-evaluations and the Balanced Scorecard (BSC) for monitoring the results for some time. In addition, process descriptions were introduced and at their peak in 2007, they numbered about 120.

In 2008, VAMK took part in the FINHEEC audit, the use of which is followed in this audit 2014. At the audit team's request, VAMK drafted the following timeline of key changes and introduction of new quality tools starting since 2008 and extending to 2018, including future plans for the quality system.

TIMELINE OF QUALITY MANAGEMENT

Intranet according to
the Quality System

Development
Portfolio

Student participation   Financial performance
in department   working groups and
meetings, Feedback   focus on the new
Continuing internal   Days and internal   financial model
auditing   auditing
                                                          From Department
Conjunction between   Iniative system   Reviews to Unit
management, planning   Reviews
of operations and
quality system more   Systematic Internal
closely to support the   Audits   Development of   Diploma Supplement
strategy   indicator follow-up   renewal   ECTS-label renewal

2009   **2011**   **2013**   **2015**   **2017**

Quality Programme 2010-2012 Quality Programme 2012-2014 Quality Programme 2014-2016

2008   **2010**   **2012**   **2014**   **2016**   **2018**

FINHEEC audit   Quality System   Self-evaluation working **Student Radar**   Self-evaluation   Self-evaluation
passed   version 3.0   groups & international
                                       benchmarking   **Student Feedback Days**   Quality System   Applying for the
Implementation of   **per Educational Unit**   version 4.0 on a   National Quality
Department and   Board reviews and   new base (IMS?)   Award
Management reviews   process working   **Indicators to Annual**
                                       groups   **Cycle of Operations**
In-line electronic   **Resource Planning and**
Operating Plans   **Development Portfolio**

                                                             OPALA results on
                                                             intranet per degree
                                                             programme

Figure 3. Key stages in development of the quality system in 2008–2018. Source: VAMK self-evaluation report 2014.

Based on the feedback from the FINHEEC audit in 2008, VAMK has responded to the majority of recommendations and has undertaken a number of improvement measures in developing the system. In addition, from 2008 the concept behind the quality system was completely revised, to focus on a greatly reduced number of operational processes integrating strategy, operational and quality management. For instance, the strategy hierarchy was renewed, strategic targets were simplified and reorganised, the aims of quality management were defined and the development of the quality system was included in the Quality Programme. For monitoring indicators, the BSC model was replaced with a more holistic and functional approach.

This resulted in Quality System 3.0. From 2010 onwards, changes in the quality system included, for instance, an increase in student representation channels and dialogues with employers about quality as well as the introduction of the Feedy-initiative feedback system and Development Portfolio. Former department reviews were replaced with unit and management reviews. In 2014, the Student Radar was introduced to fill the feedback gap resulting from the small amount of replies to the study unit feedback.

VAMK's self-evaluation concluded that (the new) "quality methods have been tested and developed in order to identify the most effective and functional methods … All of the methods, indicators and feedback systems have been linked to strategic management and operations planning, and have been subsequently scheduled in VAMK's annual cycle".

Based on the evidence and interviews, the audit team finds that development of the quality system has been continuous and systematic. One of the main issues raised by the audit 2008 related to the complexity of the quality system, and it can be stated that VAMK has been successful in developing a significantly lighter quality system than before.

Although the associated Quality Programmes for 2010–2012 and 2012–2014 have generally been effective in directing and supporting further development of the quality system, it seems that they have mainly focused on developing individual quality and operations management tools and organisational structures. In order for VAMK to achieve the next level in developing the quality system as a whole, VAMK could define features and target levels to different development stages of the quality system, i.e. for Quality System 3.0 and Quality System 4.0.

The illustrated future plans for developing the quality system raise some questions. It seems that the next version of the Quality System 4.0 to be introduced in 2016 will possibly be based on a yet new platform, the Information Management System. Additionally, VAMK has plans to apply for the National Quality Award in 2018 and to conduct self-evaluations in 2016 and 2018.

The audit team encourages reflective self-evaluation, but recommends that VAMK considers its aim of keeping the number of development tools and frameworks as few as possible. Keeping this in mind, VAMK might consider how the current internal review and audit processes could be developed in order to increase evidence-based, self-evaluation within these processes to serve the development of the quality system.

6

Quality management of the HEI's basic duties

▬

6.1 Degree education
▬

VAMK's quality management advances the development of the degree education and the achievement of quantitative and qualitative goals set for education. The pedagogical objectives are mostly linked to VAMK's overall strategy. The processes of education are described clearly. Curriculum development especially functions well at the degree programme level. Different personnel groups, students and external stakeholders have good opportunities to participate in the development of education. However, pedagogical leadership should be strengthened and the Educational Programme should be revised in order to deepen the competence-based approach in all degree programmes. Multiple student feedback systems are not working as expected and should be simplified. The quality management of key support services functions well.

*The quality management of education is at a **developing** stage.*

6.1.1 Objectives for degree education
▬

Pedagogical objectives for degree education

As described in Section 3, international cooperation and regional impact are VAMK's key strategic choices and the focus areas, are very clearly integrated into these choices. One of VAMK's main strategic objectives is to strengthen attractiveness and effectiveness of VAMK's degree education.

The Educational Programme is part of the strategic basis for VAMK and has been drawn up to advance the institution's strategic guidelines. The Educational Programme was developed in a committee chaired by the former (now retired) Director of Education for VAMK. The first version of the programme was introduced in 2011 and updated at the end of 2012. The revision aimed to make the programme more practical than before by using examples. According to the programme, VAMK's education is based

on the constructivist theory and holistic paradigm of learning. Teaching and learning are seen as the active construction of knowledge, where the learner is an active processor of information. The individual has freedom of choice, and is responsible for his or her actions or inaction. The teacher is seen as a facilitator of learning who partakes in a dialogue.

The audit team recommends VAMK to consider whether the Educational Programme is fit for purpose. The programme has been written in a different style than the other strategic programmes and does not steer the implementation of education in a desired manner.

The change of the management approach, based on command lines has meant the abolition of the post of Director of Education and the centralisation of these tasks mainly to the directors of the three educational units. At the time of the audit, the reorganisation of responsibilities was still in progress. The interviews indicated a plan to update the Educational Programme, but it seemed to be unclear who will take the lead in the reform.

Quantitative objectives for degree education

The new performance-based funding model was introduced in Finnish universities of applied sciences from the beginning of 2014. The funding model is based on 12 indicators and the weight of results of education is 85 % in this model. According to the Polytechnic legislation the indicators of the model and their weights are:

- **Number of completed bachelor's degrees (46 %),**
- **Number of students completing at least 55 ECTS credits per academic year (24 %),**
- Number of graduates employed (3 %),
- **Number of credits completed at Open UAS (4 %),**
- **Feedback given by graduating students (3 %),**
- **International student exchang**e and degrees completed by international students (3 %),
- Number of graduates in vocational teacher education (2 %),
- Amount of external R&D funding (8 %),
- **Number of completed master's degrees (4 %),**
- **Number of publications (2 %) and**
- **Extent of international staff mobility (1 %).**

VAMK has chosen the bolded indicators as the most important indicators to be monitored regularly. In addition to these indicators, VAMK has some of its own indicators, such as the attraction of education (number of applicants), average graduation time, student's workload and teacher's reachability.

In its strategy, VAMK has set concrete objectives related to education. The first objective is to increase the number of completed degrees and to reduce the drop-out rate to less than 10 %. The second one is to raise the ratio of students completing at least 55 credits per academic year to at least 45 %. The next goal is to maintain the number of completed bachelor's degrees at 510 in 2013–2016 and the fourth objective is to double the number of primary applicants by 2015.

The introduction of the new funding model has strongly emphasised a management by results- approach at VAMK. The indicators are monitored more closely than previously, new performance monitoring systems are developed and workshops have been organised in order to orientate staff on performance-based approach. As a result of these measures, the performance responsibility among staff members has clearly increased and many of VAMK's results have improved significantly. The number of completed master's degrees has been developed according to the objectives, but the attractiveness of education has not increased as desired. The number of students completing at least 55 credits per academic year is considerably higher than two years ago but the set target has not yet been achieved. In summary, it can be concluded that the transition to the performance-based approach has been successful at VAMK.

6.1.2 Functioning of the quality management procedures and the information produced by the quality system

Curriculum development

The basis of the Educational Programme consists of competence-based curricula. In 2008–2010, VAMK implemented a profound competence-oriented curriculum renewal process. Each bachelor's curriculum now includes descriptions of generic and degree programme specific competencies and intended learning outcomes. In spring 2014, VAMK received the European Commission ECTS Label as a proof of being fully compatible with the Commission requirements of curriculum competence-based study unit descriptions.

However, holistic competence-based orientation has not yet fully replaced the former teacher-centred 'lehrplan' approach. Instead, in many cases the curricula seem to consist of lists of small and unconnected study units rather than descriptions of a planned learning process. To ensure meaningful learning, it would be important to ensure that the curriculum consists of sufficiently large, working life oriented units and that the interconnected units form a continuum that smoothly flows from one year to another. In a fragmented, atomistic curriculum the student acquires separate, detached and easily forgettable elements of knowledge and skills, which he/she is not able to connect to his/her prior learning and easily concentrates only on passing the required tests and study units. The audit team recommends that pedagogical leadership would be strengthened in order to improve the holistic and competence-based approach at VAMK.

According to the process descriptions, the three Directors of Units bear the strategic responsibility for the curriculum planning and development process. They ensure that the curriculum corresponds to the needs of the regional working life and are compatible with the national higher education policy, European Qualifications Framework and the strategy of VAMK. The eight Heads of Degree Programmes launch the planning process at the teachers' meetings in which teachers and student representatives participate. Opinions of representatives from working life are mainly collected through advisory boards and in some cases through teachers' interviews with representatives of VAMK's key partner companies. At the time of the audit visit, the approval procedure of curricula seemed to function quite well. Directors of Units presented the finished curricula to the Rector, who presented the proposal for the approval of the Internal Board. After the discontinuation of the Internal Board in December 2014, the Rector will be responsible for the approval of curricula.

All curricula are evaluated and updated annually in accordance with common guidelines and schedules. The documentation of this process, such as the need for changes, agreed changes, responsible persons, timetables and deadlines, can be found in the minutes of teachers' meetings. VAMK emphasises a high degree of autonomy for the degree programmes and units in the curriculum development. Therefore, the curriculum renewal process is mainly implemented at the degree programme level. Based on the audit interviews, there is a clear need to increase cooperation between degree programmes and options for students to take study units from other degree programmes. The audit team recommends that VAMK would intensify cooperation between degree programmes in the curriculum development.

Teaching methods and assessment of learning

In general, the process descriptions of education are of high quality and form a compact whole in VAMK's process map. In particular, the strategically important planning processes of education are described comprehensively. The processes of study unit implementation and competence assessment are described more in general terms. Instructions for student counselling practices are given in the group tutors' handbook. Electronic follow-up tools have been developed to monitor the progress of students. The student admission process is thoroughly described in a manner that supports the practical implementation.

The main objectives of the VAMK's Educational Programme are: to increase the use of student-centred teaching methods, diversification of assessment methods, and to increase the use of ICT-supported teaching and mobile technology in teaching. Although student-centred approach has been a target for internal audit, the audit interviews showed that there was no shared understanding of what a student-centred approach means at VAMK in practice. The interviewed students stated that the quality of teaching and teaching methods may vary within and between degree programmes. In general, it seemed that the teachers were interested in students' learning; however, quite many interviewed students hoped that there would be more cooperation between teachers than currently is the case.

According to the Educational Programme, assessment and feedback are seen as central parts of the learning process. Continuous evaluation and students' role in evaluation are considered very important at VAMK. In addition, students should have an opportunity to receive individual feedback on their performance by the end of each study unit or module. The audit did not provide clear evidence of the achievement of these objectives. The student assessment was conducted mainly by traditional methods, such as written exams and learning assignments, and students seemed only rarely to receive individual development feedback.

Following the competence-based approach, a new five-scale assessment criteria of learning outcomes was introduced in 2013. The degree programmes have drafted assessment criteria for each study unit following the general guidelines but the audit team found that there were differences in the level of descriptions, some of them being quite schematic and general. The curriculum for the Master's Degree Programme in Developing and Managing Social and Health Care Services provides a good example of well-written and informative assessment criteria.

It would be important that student assessment and evaluation forms a consistent whole and supports the attainment of learning objectives and competences. A holistic assessment plan should be based on the competence requirements or profile of the whole programme. The audit team recommends that VAMK would continue to strengthen the development of student assessment and feedback procedures in all degree programmes. The Heads of Degree Programmes could have a central role in this development work.

Student feedback mechanisms and their functionality

VAMK students have a wide variety of feedback channels and systems through which they can share their opinions on the implementation of education. In addition, the annual development discussions between student and his/her group tutor are a very important feedback channel through which teachers can get direct and immediate feedback from each student. On the basis of the audit materials and interviews, students' feedback systems are not used in a systematic and integrated manner in all degree programmes at VAMK.

Study unit feedback is a web-based questionnaire meant especially for teachers to support the development of teaching. However, the response rates are rather low. This may partly relate to the large number and small size of study units. Some students explained that they did not give feedback because they had already completed the study unit and thus possible changes would not affect them. According to students, there were also a few cases where several students' multiyear complaints about certain study units had not led to any changes. Based on the teachers' and students' interviews, it seems that only some of the teachers were utilising this feedback system effectively. Some teachers considered the questions too general and therefore used their own questionnaires.

The Student Radar is described especially as a quality management tool for the degree programme and UAS level development. When introducing the Student Radar in 2013, it was used for the first and second year Finnish students, having a response rate below 10 %. In 2014, the Student Radar was expanded to all degree programmes but with a still rather low response rate. The Student Radar is an incipient good practice and has a potential to become an important part of VAMK's quality management system, but its effectiveness remains to be seen.

The Student Union VAMOK has an important role in the development of the UAS's education. Besides the VAMOK chair being a full member of the Management Team of VAMK, the student union has representatives in many other development groups and teams as well. In these positions students have excellent opportunities to give feedback and participate in decision making even at the top management level. For the promotion of students' interests, VAMOK carries out the Educational Affairs Survey and Social Affairs Survey every second year. As is the case with Student Radar system, VAMOK surveys have also been in use for only a short period of time and response rates have only been about 10 %.

The national OPALA survey constitutes one indicator in the new performance-based funding model applied by the Ministry of Education and Culture. In addition to student satisfaction, the number of responses influence the value of the indicator. This has had a strong influence on VAMK's management practices and explains why the response rate of the OPALA survey has increased significantly. OPALA results affect VAMK's funding and strategic leadership, but their utilisation in the development of VAMK education remained unclear.

Feedy is a recently reformed feedback system on VAMK's public webpage allowing students to provide open feedback directly to VAMK staff and the Rector. According to the audit material, students have so far not used Feedy very actively; however, this new feedback channel was considered as a good complement to the student feedback systems at VAMK.

The staff and student interviews confirmed that there are too many student feedback systems in VAMK. It was also difficult for students to describe different ways of giving feedback. As a conclusion, the audit team recommends that VAMK simplifies its student feedback systems and enhances the use of selected systems by processing the collected feedback and creating systematic feedback loop practices.

6.1.3 Support services key to degree education

Many of the support services are closely related to the education at VAMK. The units of study affairs, ICT services, international services and coordination of Open UAS and e-learning have direct connections to education. As already mentioned in this report, besides the units administered by VAMK there are support services maintained together with other HEIs in Vaasa.

According to the audit interviews the support services related to education are working well. At the time of the audit VAMK's premises in Palosaari campus were under renovation, and the support services staff were operating in different locations. Despite this, the division of responsibilities between the entities seems clear and support services are focused on the relevant topics from the point of view of VAMK's educational activities.

6.2 Samples of degree programmes

6.2.1 UAS Bachelor's Degree Programme in Electrical and Automation Engineering

The quality management of the Degree Programme in Electrical and Automation Engineering enhances the overall planning and implementation of the programme. The curriculum has been traditionally developed on the basis of the input from local companies, but the recently introduced "Engineer 2020"-project will broaden the cooperation to a new level, including the strong involvement of the advisory board. The degree programme is strongly working life oriented and relatively well-connected to RDI work allowing students to take part in real-life projects and assigned thesis works for companies. Group work-based teaching methods have had a positive effect on students' motivation. Opportunities for engineering students to take business studies should be made easier.

The quality management of the Degree Programme in Electrical and Automation Engineering is at a **developing** *stage.*

The Bachelor's Degree Programme in Electrical and Automation Engineering is a four year study programme taught in the Finnish language. The yearly enrolment is about 55 students and the programme as a whole holds around 270 students. About half of the student population comes from the Vaasa area. The first two years consist of mainly general engineering studies, as well as basic professional studies mainly targeted at electrical power systems and industrial automation systems. In the 3rd or 4th year, students choose their specialisation. The programme has separate curricula for young and adult students.

Planning of education

The degree programme emphasises a continuous dialogue with working life and regional industry in curriculum development. There has been an annual curriculum renewal process in which teachers and the Head of Degree Programme have discussed the development needs of curriculum on the basis of feedback from students and representatives of local industry. This is followed by the Director of Unit approving the curriculum. Although this process has in principle been functional, much of the communication with external stakeholders has happened through personal contacts and has remained undocumented and not yet formalised.

At the time of audit, the degree programme was undergoing a big development programme "Engineer 2020" which is a new systematic way to review, adapt and enhance working-life relevance of the curriculum with central regional partners. The process has been very inclusive involving the majority of the programme's teachers and benefiting from the expertise of the advisory board in a fruitful way. The degree programme started this process by determining from which companies information was required. The approach was then tested and interview questions were developed together with the advisory board. This approach, including teachers interviewing external stakeholders and documentation of the feedback, seems to be very complete. The resulting information will be discussed again with the advisory board and used in the development of the curriculum. The audit team finds the curriculum development approach of the "Engineer 2020" to be a good practice which could be applied for other programmes as well.

The degree programme has integrated general studies into professional studies. Based on the curriculum document drafted before the "Engineer 2020-approach", the programme needs to pay more attention how to interconnect separate study units into an accumulating learning process that support students' professional growth. The competence-based approach and phrasing needs to be strengthened in the curriculum.

Implementation of education

When developing the teaching methods, the tendency has been in the programme to reduce the amount of contact teaching and to increase the share of practical work, laboratory exercises and projects with or at local companies and to move towards more student-centred methods. Some teachers are recruited from industry and others have updated their knowledge through a six month local industrial placement. Currently, a significant part of the studies are carried out as project-based learning in small guided groups. The interviewed students appreciated the teaching methods and felt that the combination of theoretical studies and practical training especially supports their learning. The degree programme noted in its self-evaluation that group work-based approach has clearly improved students' motivation and reduced the dropout rate.

Typical assessment methods of learning outcomes consist of exams, homework, exercises, laboratory exercises, and reports. The interviews confirmed that students are informed of the assessment criteria at the beginning of each study unit and this information alongside the teaching material is often also available on the programme's Moodle site. The staff interviews showed that there are slight differences in the grading policies for group assignments. Some teachers give the whole group the same grade while others ask students to assess their own contribution to the group work and use this as a basis for individual grading.

The study guidance for the degree programme is generally well-functioning and based on good cooperation between the group tutors/leaders, team counsellors and student tutors. Through regular face-to-face discussion with students, group tutors play a

key role in monitoring the progress of the studies and accumulation of the study credits. Students felt that teachers are well equipped to help the students with their personal learning plans (PLPs), and any problems with exchange periods, timetables or changing study units can be easily discussed and resolved between students and teachers. The interviewed students also valued visits by company representatives to the degree programme telling about the future employment prospects.

Based on the interviews, teacher guidance during the training periods could be improved. Another important area for development is the final year thesis work process which has received poor feedback from students.

Opportunities for engineering students to take business studies should be made easier, beginning with increasing the flexibility in the curriculum structure and coordinating the timetables. Currently, the lack of flexibility within the curriculum hinder genuine cross-disciplinary student choices and the only possibility for engineering students to take business studies is to take them as a part of their optional studies.

Internationalisation should have an important role in this programme as many of the graduates will work in international companies. Based on Student Radar feedback from 2014, integration of language teaching into discipline studies received the lowest rating from students. In order to improve the situation, the interviewed students suggested integrated groups with international students.

The RDI connection to education is working relatively well. Thesis works are mainly done as assignments for regional industry, often connected to product development or research projects. Based on students' interview, project work is integrated into the study units and embraces "a little bit of research, development and testing". Students' opportunities for joining projects are often restricted to laboratory work. The degree programme also offers RDI services such as testing services and corporate client training to companies. However, the staff interview indicated that the Unit of Technology is not able to handle every RDI request it receives from companies.

Effectiveness of quality work

Based on the staff interview, the most useful feedback mechanism for the degree programme teachers is the study unit feedback. The teachers in the Degree Programme in Electrical and Automation Engineering have tried to solve the problem by asking students to fill in the feedback at the end of the course; however, there has not been a big increase in response rates. Some teachers seem to be using their own feedback forms and Moodle as a feedback channel as the questions in the study unit feedback are considered too general. The low response rates in the study unit feedback is a common problem of the VAMK degree programmes and should be addressed at VAMK level.

Based on the interviews, the development discussions between the Head of Degree Programme and teacher serve as a central forum to discuss about the student feedback and to agree on development measures. The common development targets of the degree programme are also discussed in the teachers' meetings. As a good practice, student representatives act as secretaries in the teacher meetings and the minutes are made available on the intranet for students' comments.

In recent years, the degree programme has been successful in the graduate placement leading practically to the full employment of graduates. Although the working life connections and cooperation with key partners are a clear strength of the degree programme, it should also take care that the curriculum does not restrict students' possibilities to find employment in various companies.

6.2.2 UAS Master's Degree Programme in Developing and Managing Social and Health Care Services

The quality management procedures related to the planning and implementation of education enhance the quality of Master's Degree Programme in Developing and Managing Social and Health Care Services. The curriculum reform has been implemented in a participatory way involving staff members, students and representatives of working life. The programme uses student-centred teaching methods and assessment of learning outcomes is based on clearly defined criteria. The degree programme might benefit from an own advisory board that could concentrate on topics relevant to a master's programme. The self-evaluation prepared by the degree programme showed an outstanding ability to recognise the areas in need of development. There is clear evidence of the effectiveness of the quality work.

The quality management of the Degree Programme in Developing and Managing Social and Health Services is at a **developing** *stage.*

The Master's Degree Programme in Development and Management in Health Care and Social Services is one of three master's programmes offered by VAMK. It is the only master's programme that is fully implemented in Vaasa. The other two programmes are carried out together with other UASs. The degree programme was launched in 2007. The extent of the programme is 90 credits and the intended degree completion time is 2½ years. The annual enrolment is about 20 students and there are altogether about 80 students in this programme. Students are mainly from the provinces of Ostrobothnia and Southern Ostrobothnia. The level and background of incoming students, e.g. age, study experience, and professional background, varies a lot which causes challenges for the implementation of education.

Most of the students work full-time during their studies and it is therefore particularly important that cooperation between the student, VAMK and student's employer works well. Based on the interviews, relations and cooperation between teachers and students seemed smooth and informal.

Planning of education

The curriculum of the degree programme was reformulated in 2010. The structure of the curriculum and descriptions of study units are clear. Since then the curriculum has been updated annually and in 2013 the assessment criteria of study units were drawn up in a very clear and informative way. At the time of the audit, a new curriculum reform was underway. On the basis of the self-evaluation report and teacher interviews, the current curriculum is considered too theoretical from the students' perspective. It does not ensure graduation within the planned timeframe and the international perspective of the curriculum is insufficient. In addition, the programme does not have a specific profile and therefore discussion about profiling is one of priorities of the curriculum renewal process.

The current curriculum reform started in spring 2014. The reform has been led by the group of teachers in charge of the degree programme and implemented in a very participatory way involving all central stakeholders. The audit team was impressed about the way students were integrated in the reform. As a part of the Development Work course, students interviewed representatives of working life about the competencies needed in the social and health care sector in the future. In general, the degree programme's students are an important resource and link to working life and the audit team encourages the programme to continue to use their expertise to full potential.

Some of the teachers saw as a problem that the degree programme does not have its own advisory board and that the current advisory boards for nursing and social services education mostly concentrate on questions concerning bachelor's degrees. The audit team recommends that VAMK would consider establishing a separate advisory board for the master's programme.

Implementation of education

On the basis of students' and teachers' interviews, teachers in charge of the degree programme are very competent. Most of them have long and updated working life experience in the management and development tasks of the social and health care sector. The multi-professional cooperation between representatives of social services and health care seemed to be very fruitful among both teachers and students. In the audit interviews, the students expressed their general satisfaction with the teaching but hoped for increased cooperation between teachers. It is recommended that teachers would collaborate more in order to avoid overlaps and gaps in their teaching.

Blended learning is used as the main pedagogical approach in this programme. Teachers seem to have close and informal cooperation with students and student-centred teaching methods are commonly used. The studies are organised in a way that enables students to integrate studies with their work and to the development of their background organisation. One of the main problems of the degree programme

has been the low graduation rate and very long average degree completion time. The programme has tried to solve these problems by enhancing student guidance and by connecting study modules more closely to the thesis process. There was also a future plan to conduct tripartite negotiations at the beginning of studies between the student, teacher and student's employer. The audit team considers this as a very good development proposal.

Assessment of learning outcomes is based on clearly described criteria. Written exams based on course literature, learning assignments made individually or in a group and learning diaries are the most common assessment methods used in the degree programme. Student's self-evaluation is used actively too. Student counselling has been well organised and all students have a group tutor. In principle, the programme includes a window for optional studies but due to the budget-cuts the programme has been forced to limit alternative ways to deliver study units. Integration of studies to RDI activities is working well especially in master's thesis which is typically a working life-based development project to be completed for student's own work place.

More attention should be paid to the international perspective in the master's programme. The interviewed students suggested increased use of articles in English especially on international management as well as more cooperation with Novia UAS that has many international teachers in this field. On the other hand, according to the teachers' experience not all students are willing to read materials in English.

Budget cuts have decreased teaching resources remarkably. Resources allocated to theses tutoring have diminished more than 30 % and teacher's working hours allocated to planning and implementation of study units will be reduced by about 40 % in the academic year 2014–2015. These cuts have caused pressure to reduce the amount of contact hours, to renew teaching methods and to improve the utilisation of working life representatives in teaching. From the quality management point of view, it is important to ensure that the implementation of the degree programme is not too much dependent on individual teachers and to pay attention to the well-being of the teachers.

Effectiveness of quality work

The master's programme uses VAMK's common feedback systems and national OPALA survey for graduating students. However, it has to be noted that these feedback systems are mainly designed for bachelor's programmes and thus do not meet the needs of master's programmes in an optimal way. The programme's teachers utilise the study unit feedback when planning and reforming the study unit, but the scarcity of feedback does not provide a good basis for the development of teaching. The Student Radar system is producing a bit more feedback information than study unit feedback system but the response rate is still rather low. According to the feedback, students are mainly satisfied with their studies. The study unit workload was the only topic that received a low score in the Student Radar and was also mentioned as a development area in the

students' interview. Despite the low response rates, students feel that their opinions are listened to and activities are developed based on them. The audit team recommends that student feedback systems would be used more efficiently and feedback questionnaires be developed to be a better fit for master's degree programmes.

In VAMK's internal audits the master's degree programme has been integrated with the Degree Programme in Social Services and consequently gets very little attention on its own. VAMK could consider separate internal audits for master's programmes or to change assessment practices so that these would better take into account the needs of master's programmes.

In the self-evaluation report produced for this audit, the Master's Degree Programme in Developing and Managing Social and Health Care Services showed a high level of self-awareness by listing openly its development needs. It seems that the self-evaluation of the programme has been carried out with integrity. This forms a very good basis for the future development. At the same time, it is very important to prioritise the identified areas for development and take into account the constraints of human resources of this programme.

6.2.3 UAS Bachelor's Degree Programme in International Business

The quality management of the Degree Programme in International Business partly supports planning and development of education. The role of advisory board should be strengthened in the curriculum planning. There are good examples of how the working life perspective is integrated in education. As a result of successful team work by the teaching staff, the indicators of the degree programme related to study completion have improved significantly during the recent years. However, the quality system does not seem to be fully functional in terms of using the feedback from the students for the development of the programme.

The quality management of the Degree Programme in International Business is at an **emerging** *stage.*

The Bachelor's Degree Programme in International Business is a programme taught in English. As an indication of the degree programme's multinational character, over the past few years around 50% of the about 200 enrolled students have been international students. This mix of international and Finnish students forms a cross-cultural learning environment for the students within the degree programme.

Planning of education

The curriculum renewal process of the degree programme follows VAMK's annual plan of education. In 2013, the degree programme replaced the earlier stream-based curriculum with a new competence-based and student-centred curriculum, including the introduction of new teaching methods and assessment methods of learning outcomes.

The last curriculum check showed a need to improve the alignment of study units in the curriculum as the workload was unevenly divided over the years of study. In addition, the interviewed students missed sales studies and more optional choices in the curriculum. The degree programme has mostly identified these challenges and has adjusted the curriculum on the basis of feedback; however, the audit team recommends that the degree programme continues with this development work. Based on the views of the interviewed students, there should be more options for business students to take study units in energy technology. This is something that the degree programme should consider when revising the curriculum. The self-evaluation report mentioned that the module of energy technology had been tailored for business students which the audit team finds as a welcome direction.

In the self-evaluation and interviews the staff emphasised open dialogue with working life, especially with the international trade industry in anticipation of the graduates' competence needs. However, the advisory board has not supported the degree programme in planning and evaluating the content of education in an ideal way, and it has been re-activated only recently. The audit team recommends that the role of the advisory board should be strengthened and working life feedback system will be systematised and documented.

Implementation of education

New student-centred teaching methods include active, problem-based individual and group work learning tasks. Working life integration into teaching is realised in students' small scale research and marketing assignments and theses for companies. Based on the OPALA feedback, 80% of graduates perceived that the education was of high quality and carried out in a competent manner. However, the interviewed students mentioned that the business programmes taught in Finnish include more contact teaching compared with the international business degree programme in which group work-based methods are more used. In the students' opinion, this partly relates to teachers' proficiency in English which is not always at the required level. Teachers are experts in their field but not always able to communicate their expertise as well as in Finnish and thus sometimes replace lectures with group work. Therefore, improvement of teachers' English language skills in an international degree programme is an area for development.

As good examples of the RDI connection, the degree programme had conducted "Get global-project" and EU-projects such as "Creative strategic foresight" with companies. The "Get-Global Project" involved a lot of companies, mapping the competences and needs for future students of the companies and thus supported the link to working life in an excellent way. However, the further exploitation of RDI opportunities was limited due to personal resources and the ex-ante selection process of projects. Thus, the audit team recommends that the degree programme continues to strengthen its links to RDI work.

Following the new pedagogical approach, the degree programme has diversified the methods of the assessment of learning ranging from regular exams to poster presentations and project reports. The programme sees it as a special challenge to support different types of learners, especially as so many students represent many different backgrounds and nationalities.

The integration of Finnish and international students is both an opportunity and a challenge. In order to support the integration, students are divided into mixed groups consisting of international and Finnish students. Nevertheless, more could be done to fully exploit the potential of an international cross-cultural learning environment. As international students are experiencing problems finding places for practical training and projects in Finnish companies, it is vitally important that the degree programme and VAMK provides special support for them.

The opinions of the interviewed students about the student guidance were divided. The introductory phase during the first year of studies seemed to be working well. Students were especially happy with the student tutoring and the Student Union VAMOK's role in integrating both Finnish and international students to VAMK and Vaasa. On the other hand, according to the interviewed students, group tutors were not always reachable because they were responsible for the guidance of a very large number of students. The degree programme should check whether this is a widespread issue and if so, try to come up with ways to improve the situation.

Effectiveness of quality work

Many teachers have a long international experience and good personal contacts with the industry. However, as identified in the self-evaluation and interviews, the international business competence and cross-cultural skills among the teaching staff members could be still strengthened. The degree programme provided thorough conclusions on its strengths and development areas in its self-evaluation which provide an excellent basis for further work.

In addition to VAMK's common feedback mechanisms, teachers emphasised the importance of face-to-face feedback when developing the content and methods of teaching. Based on the students' interview, their knowledge about VAMK-level feedback systems is low and finding the feedback tools on the intranet appears to be challenging. The audit team got the impression that some students feel that their feedback does not always lead to change and if it does, the effects are visible only to the next year's class. Although students have a representative in the teachers' meeting and thus a opportunity to get information on how the student feedback is used, the degree programme should look for more effective ways to inform students about the improvements made.

The audit team noted positive changes in the indicators of progress of studies and number of completed degrees. Two reasons for this were mentioned in the interviews: according to the latest curriculum revision, students now start their thesis work

earlier, which has speeded up the process and teachers have successfully worked as a team to achieve the indicator targets. The audit team recognises this improvement and complements the degree programme on this advance.

6.3 Research, development and innovation activities

The goals of VAMK's research, development and innovation activities (RDI) are linked to the strategy via the RDI Programme, however, certain quality management procedures do not support the further development of RDI in a sufficient and meaningful manner. A too rigid ex-ante selection procedure requiring projects to be linked to education together with very limited resources available for the development of RDI activities are counteracting a strategy of further growth and even demotivating staff members in exploiting their full potential. This in turn reduces the impact of RDI activities as a form of quality management for teaching and competence development of staff. In addition, due to a lack of indicators the fulfilment of strategic objectives in RDI cannot be measured to a desired extent.

Although the institution is well aware of some shortcomings in gathering feedback in RDI, only a few improvement measures were perceived in course of the audit. Certain feedback forms are still not used in a consistent way or systematically. Information about the quality management measures in RDI were partly not widespread among the teaching staff.

Due to recent organisational developments concerning the structure of VAMK, including the acquisition of the Design Centre MUOVA and the shift of internal responsibilities, the quality management procedures in RDI are not fully functional or assessable yet. Cooperation with different partner institutions on site is seen as a means to pursue VAMK's RDI strategy. Commonly run research infrastructure determines the base for a significant part of VAMK's RDI work. From a quality management perspective these activities are not under VAMK's control and thus not assessable, although there is some evidence that quality management methods and tools are being implemented.

The quality management of RDI is at an **emerging** *stage.*

6.3.1 Objectives set for research, development and innovation activities

RDI activities at VAMK

RDI at VAMK covers a spectrum of different activities including: actual projects (publically funded or privately financed), expert assignments, student assignments, continuing training and publications. A good part of the project activities, summing up to a total budget of almost 1 M € in October 2014, is funded by EU structural funds and other EU programmes that are covered under the umbrella of "Erasmus plus". Most of the projects are implemented together with local partners from higher education (University of Vaasa, Novia UAS), VASEK (Vaasa regional development company) and also the city of Vaasa.

As trend data of the RDI indicators show, a drastic decrease took place in the period between 2011 and 2013 cutting in half the number of publications (to 17 in 2013) and to a third of the external RDI funding volume (to 860T€ in 2013). In the audit interviews, this fact was partly explained by the phasing out of two big projects. As mentioned in Section 4, VAMK is operating in a challenging environment with six higher education institutions on site. The specific focus on regional impact and sustainable economic development, which is also a precondition for application in regional structural funds, leads to a common focus of the institutions towards the economic needs in the region (e.g. energy technologies). Together with a not so strongly developed research function at VAMK, which can generally be observed at UASs compared to traditional universities in Finland, this leads to a fiercer competition for VAMK on site in terms of RDI.

A recent development is the acquisition of MUOVA, a research and product development centre, which has been taken over from Aalto University. This centre offers design, research and training services. On one hand, it is likely that MUOVA will improve the integrational function of VAMK's RDI by doing applied research with a focus on design together with and as a contractor for companies. MUOVA also runs an innovation platform and a business incubator, thus it should overall enhance regional development and competitiveness. On the other hand, it also integrates students into design projects and offers virtual learning environments offering opportunities for lessons in design thinking. In terms of RDI indicators MUOVA doubles the current funding volume of VAMK and also raises the number of publications as a result of the many EU projects MUOVA is part of.

Implementation and operationalisation of VAMK's strategy in RDI operations

Reflecting the ongoing development and VAMK's strategy, which foresees a further growth of RDI activities, the acquisition of MUOVA is a clear measure to support the strategic goals. Design thinking has a trans-sectional function and can be applied to many disciplines. Therefore, a further stimulation of – not research – but innovation activities at different thematic areas of VAMK can be expected in the future and this acquisition can be considered as an opportunity for further growth.

The operationalisation of the strategy in RDI is accomplished via the RDI Programme. It sets specific objectives aiming at a further development of the RDI operations. According to the objectives, RDI operations should be "active", of "high quality", "integrated into teaching" and be "expanding". Several measures have been defined in the programme. A prominent objective is the integration of RDI into teaching, by including students in the projects and RDI operations into the curricula. Following the management's view expressed in the interviews, "RDI should renew the teaching" and thus it serves as a means of quality management for teaching. The growth goal of RDI is addressed implicitly by the RDI Programme's objectives. It is pursued by increased cooperation with HEI partners and other regional institutions. The cooperation goal is implemented very extensively, which goes beyond common projects with partners.

Besides the above mentioned acquisition of MUOVA, it also embraces even further institutionalised elements of running common research and support infrastructures with regional partners.

The overall internationalisation goal of VAMK is also addressed by the RDI Programme monitoring the opportunities for expanding regional projects to an international level. The quality of RDI operations is an objective in itself. Based on the programme, RDI processes should by systematised and better documented. Indeed, this measure aims at the enhancement of the quality management of RDI operations and picks up some issues, e.g. gathering and utilising client's feedback, which based on the self-evaluation and interviews, were identified as weaknesses. It became evident during the audit that some improvement on this topic has been achieved, e.g. online feedback forms have been implemented, although the information about this measure was not very widespread among the teaching staff.

Concerning the quality of the RDI Programme as a strategic planning document, the audit team considers that the measures and responsibilities are comprehensible, although some of them might be hard to measure, e.g. considerations of some activities. Indicators and target figures, in terms of when the objectives are met, are generally missing throughout the programme. This leads to a somewhat unclear situation for the staff and does not support a common prioritisation and alignment of activities. The audit team recommends that VAMK follows up on this matter and perhaps a redefinition of measures in combination with the introduction of target figures is needed.

The organisational anchoring of RDI operations is accomplished by a set of processes and guidelines and a specific organisational structure. Four process descriptions assigned to different types of activities should enhance the accessibility and transparency of the information available to teaching staff, the integration into teaching, and together with the feedback from the clients support the further development of RDI operations.

The organisational structure in RDI has recently been changed and as in many other operations has been "streamlined" assigning the responsibilities of the RDI activities from the Director of RDI to the Directors of Units. The RDI Director and Directors of Units (MUOVA's Manager and Director of Administration on demand) form the RDI team with the main responsibility for the quality management of RDI. Whether this organisational change will have a positive impact within the organisation and RDI operations cannot be assessed yet. However, it is quite a clear signal that RDI is not a field of business on its own, but subordinate to teaching. If this finding is reflected together with several other observations made during the audit, e.g.: there are no scientific staff besides the teaching staff; "follow a strategy in cooperation with others, VAMK should not take the lead"; a rigorous exclusive selection of projects that must be linked to education; too few (RDI) resources for teachers; "RDI is abolished if it does not cover its costs"; it forms – overall – a coherent picture. These developments

might serve the strategic goal of a tighter integration of RDI into teaching, but it is questionable whether the other strategic goals of having active and expanding RDI operations will be equally supported.

6.3.2 Functioning of quality management procedures in RDI

The RDI team monitors the linkage of RDI activities with the strategic goals. Proposed ideas from teaching staff, which are not linked to education, will not pass this checkpoint. The team also collects different types of feedback from projects and assignments and different stakeholders of VAMK. Based on the evidence from the audit, there are some problems concerning the functionality of the quality management procedures for RDI. Several interviewed staff members were not fully satisfied with the RDI team's processes concerning the selection of ideas. The monthly decision making process is said to cause time delays; although there is a commitment from the RDI team to a flexible handling with a one-day decision making time in urgent cases. The efforts for applying to that scheme and elaborate an adequate proposal were referred to as being a barrier. In addition, there are very limited resources of teaching staff especially at the pre-project phase. Proposals, which were considered "as brilliant ideas", cannot pass this gate if not operationalising the educational link. Thus, the selection mechanism is seen as being too rigid, limiting growth of activities and sometimes even discouraging staff members.

The objectives set for RDI and the general time allocation for RDI are considered problematic by the staff. There is a general lack of resources for doing RDI at VAMK with a perceived wish to do more. Furthermore, there also seems to be a lack of information about the measurement of staff RDI efforts i.e. how to plan staff RDI hours within the current budgetary restrictions. Whether due to a lack of resources, information, motivation or opportunity, there is evidence that a number of members of the teaching staff are not (or not sufficiently) integrated personally into RDI activities. Within a representative sample of teachers, interviews with teaching staff from different units indicated, only one person out of seven had been active in publication work during the last five years. In this interview, it was also mentioned that the only linkage mechanism to RDI as well as working life are students' theses. This leads to the conclusion that the targeted quality management function of RDI in renewing the teaching cannot be fulfilled to a sufficient and desired extent throughout VAMK by coupling RDI to the state of knowledge in working life.

Reflecting on these findings, it seems questionable, whether the comprehensive integration of RDI into teaching necessarily implies an ex-ante selection of projects up to their possible educational linkage on a corporate level. Given the fact, that the professional project work is mainly carried out by teaching staff (integrating students if possible), the teachers themselves – their improvement of knowledge and competences as an effect of scientific work – seem to be a sufficient linkage to education. To elaborate on this finding, the following recommendations could maybe help to improve the actual situation:

- A decision about the strategic "fit" of a project could be oriented to the regional impact function (a one of two overall goals of VAMK). Since the RDI responsibilities have been moved to the Directors of Units this task should also preferably be carried out within the single units. A subsequent evaluation on a corporate level should merely focus on legal and financial issues, except in cases of a necessary higher in kind contribution of VAMK e.g. within a funded programme – in these cases it is recommendable to discuss also the strategic priority of a project more broadly on a management level.
- VAMK should try to encourage the teaching staff to participate personally in RDI in order to keep their knowledge of science and technology up-to-date. Therefore, different instruments and approaches should be available to the staff: such as suitable framework conditions fostering RDI (time resources, cross-disciplinary networks, enhancing weak ties with the environment, following a "management by gardening approach", and developing an innovation friendly culture); career development schemes; integration into employment contracts; and perhaps certain incentive mechanisms. This argument is of specific importance, since dedicated research time serves as one of the strongest incentive mechanisms for academic personnel at HEIs. Besides project collaboration training and qualification programmes for external actors, focusing on innovation and recent developments within various thematic fields are especially valuable instruments linking education, innovation and professional practise together, sometimes even being followed up by research activities. Good practise examples have been shown in the School of Technology and could be implemented in other areas in a comparable manner.
- A planning support tool and maybe some considerations concerning a kind of "trading model" doing research vs. teaching could be helpful.
- VAMK could also consider implementing a funding model, which could be implemented within VAMK and governed by the RDI Director, providing small funds for internal projects, e.g. to support the strategic goals by developing new RDI areas and topics (linked to the demands of working life) and to support internationalisation by funding of international proposal work. Low formal requirements and well targeted evaluation criteria (e.g. innovation potential, interdisciplinary, international focus, integration of design thinking – linkage to MUOVA) could provide teachers with (at least) some resources for "pre"-RDI work and really support the RDI growth-goal.

6.3.3 Comprehensiveness of the system and involvement of different parties in RDI work

Centrally anchored project coordinators support the project managers (teaching staff) in administrative tasks and funding issues at the proposal stage and during the realisation. Together with the economic services, they determine the central support for RDI operations. Although some issues were raised in the self-evaluation concerning the change of coordinators and teachers not having the knowledge on how to utilise them, no further evidence on this issue was found during the interviews.

There is a high awareness throughout all different parties about the importance of integrating students into RDI activities. During the audit visit, it was mentioned that students are involved in ca. 90% of all projects at VAMK. Usually students collect credit points for RDI activities. The audit team came across some good practise examples of getting students integrated into RDI activities; for example, company visits and workshops bringing together students and companies to discuss potential common projects. RDI projects often serve as sources for theses' topics. Several of the interviewed students, who had participated into RDI activities, found it inspiring and a very valuable experience. On the other hand, some interviewed students found project opportunities quite rare and sometimes not supported or actively offered by teachers.

The integration and contribution of students with quality management is accomplished via manifold feedback mechanisms, where informal direct feedback to responsible teachers and supervisors ranks among the most frequently used. Central quality management documents, which are collected within the operating systems, cover the RDI team decisions, feedback and diverse official project documents and contracts. On the whole, sufficient information seems to exist theoretically and improvements have been made regarding the usability of single quality management documents, e.g. the collection of feedback by external parties was improved by implementing online questionnaires.

The integration into the overall PDCA-cycle is functioning. Collected feedback is reviewed by the RDI team annually and improvements are implemented. The functioning of selected aspects in RDI operations are reviewed in the course of the internal audits and improvement measures are then undertaken at the respective level. Nevertheless, the comprehensiveness of the quality system still raises some questions. Based on the evidence from the audit, feedback is not collected systematically in each project/assignment and different formats and templates are still used. Although a recommendation was made in the previous audit demanding that monitoring, clarity, standardisation and utilisation of R&D and working life feedback should be improved, it is clear that very few improvements have been made. Thus, the audit team recommends that further improvements are made concerning the systematic handling of quality management tools and methods in RDI.

The quality management of the RDI infrastructures and services, which are jointly run by several partners and have a central function within the RDI operations, is also not part of VAMK's quality system. During the audit visit, it was mentioned that one laboratory is certified up to an ISO 9000 standard and provides high quality work. Further evidence is given that there are some meeting formats and feedback mechanisms installed which are used for quality work, but the functionality and comprehensiveness of these systems are beyond the scope of this audit.

Thus looking at the overall VAMK system, the quality management of RDI operations shows a fragmented picture with several areas, which are not (yet) developed and weak or weakly linked functionalities, which have not exploited their full potential yet.

6.4 Societal impact and regional development work

VAMK's strategic objectives for societal impact and regional development work have been worked out in close cooperation with the region. The quality system produces useful information especially about the needs of local industry that has informed the development of the curriculum content and programme structure. The top management is involved in regional cooperation and staff members mostly recognise their responsibility on regional cooperation. However, alumni cooperation and overall external stakeholder feedback needs to be systematised and documented. Although the current indicators in principle cover the strategic objectives set for this area, some targeted indicators could still be developed to better monitor, for instance, the incubation of new start-ups and graduate placement in local private and public organisations.

The societal impact and regional development function is at a **developing** *stage.*

6.4.1 Objectives set for the societal impact and regional development work

VAMK's strategic choices related to societal impact and regional development indicate a strong view of the context, needs of the region and synergy with other local actors. As mentioned in section 4.1, underpinning regional drivers for the strategy process have been the Regional Plan for Ostrobothnia, the Energy Strategy for Ostrobothnia and an anticipation of needs led by professionals of the Regional Council of Ostrobothnia and also the strategy of the City of Vaasa.

Societal impact and regional development work are implemented through the two other core tasks of the institution: education and RDI. Based on the top management interview and audit material, VAMK's most important objective for societal impact is to provide expertise for the needs of the Vaasa region's working life. According to the self-evaluation report, VAMK strives to increase the attractiveness of energy technological studies, decrease the number of dropouts, combine study programmes based on future predictions of future needs of expertise and have active cooperation with the regional companies.

VAMK's objectives for the societal impact and regional development work are set out in the overall strategy. There is no separate strategic programme for this area. Instead, aspects of societal impact are embedded in the Educational Programme and International Programme, emphasising for instance students' professional growth.

6.4.2 Functioning of the quality management procedures

VAMK has many functioning quality management tools in place for societal impact and regional development work. However, a more structured approach might help VAMK to make societal impact and regional development work and its quality management even more visible. The following aspects were discussed during the interviews: quality management of knowledge transfer to the region in the form

of education and RDI; continuing training; development of external stakeholder cooperation; jointly offered services by VAMK and other local actors; and VAMK's role in internationalising the region.

Providing experts to the region

The success of the main objective is measured by indicators gathered by the Ministry of Education and Culture, such as the number of graduated students or accumulated study credits per year. These indicators are followed also by the VAMK Board. Another important indicator for VAMK is the number of graduate placements particularly in the Vaasa region, in which VAMK is doing well.

One of the areas in which the quality management of societal impact and regional development work is most efficient relates to the development of degree programmes. Both the interviews with teachers and the summaries made on the basis of unit reviews show that close cooperation with external stakeholders has led VAMK to reshape both the curriculum content and the programme structure. For instance, launching of the Engineering 2020 project to redesign the curriculum in the field of technology as well as curriculum renewal in the Master's Degree Programme in Developing and Managing Social and Health Care Services speak of VAMK's proactive and strategic approach to embrace regional needs in the curriculum design. Overall, the interviewed external stakeholders said they appreciate VAMK's role in developing the Vaasa area and providing skilful graduates to the region.

One area of where VAMK aims to support the growth of the local expertise is the offering of tailored continuing education. For instance, the School of Technology annually organises 10 courses for about 100 company representatives. The minutes of the advisory board meetings showed that continuing education needs are discussed in the advisory boards. Based on the process description for continuing education, the accountable person is the RDI Manager but the realisation of the education belongs to the responsibility of degree programmes and individual teachers. The feedback collected from continuing education courses is discussed in the development discussions between Heads of Degree Programmes and teacher. Development measures are also agreed in these discussions.

The quality management of jointly offered services

The degree programmes get feedback concerning the skills of their students in connection with students' practical training, thesis works and assignments. VAMK has a customer feedback forms for services provided both by students and RDI services. However, it seems that the feedback form is used consistently only by the Company Clinic. Therefore, a feedback system for student assignments should be systematised and the customer feedback form should be developed.

The Company Clinic is in front line realising regional interaction as it offers research and testing services to the local bodies. The Company Clinic coordinates VAMK teachers' expert projects and students' smaller schemes. Feedback from clients has been positive, both in examples in Moodle and in feedback forms. The number of small assignments increased significantly in 2012–2013 as a result of Project Treeni.

VAMK's close cooperation with local educational institutions has led to synergistic ways to collaborate. A new opening in VAMK's cooperation with Novia UAS is developing a joint institute Medibothnia offering joint teaching and teacher exchanges to provide students with skills to work in bilingual environment. Another example of the collaboration between VAMK, the University of Vaasa and Novia UAS is the Vaasa Energy Institute (VEI) offering energy research, consultancy and supplementary training services to energy actors. The third example of collaboration between these three partners is the Research Centre Technobothnia offering consulting services on creating technical product concepts, production methods and the establishment of marketing contacts. Despite much evidence of fruitful cooperation, interviews with stakeholders indicated a demand for more information about VAMK's research and other services. The support services interview indicated that the cooperation agreements define responsibilities of each party and that there is a joint body with representatives from each institution and a coordinator.

Cooperation with the external stakeholders

The previous audit conducted in 2008 recommended VAMK to make its cooperation with the external stakeholders more systematic. The audit material spoke of a positive change in this direction. VAMK produced a stakeholder analysis in 2011 including a prioritised list of partnerships and defined responsible contact persons at VAMK. The stakeholder analysis also included an objective to improve certain contacts. In many cases, the Rector was the responsible person on the VAMK side; in other cases, the Directors of Units also had defined responsibilities in contacts with the externals. The interviews also showed that teachers have direct and versatile contacts with local operators. However, much of cooperation seems to be based on personal contacts.

Based on the audit material, it seems that the recognition of the external stakeholders in the field of energy technology is relatively easy; the self-evaluation report mentions a concentration of 140 companies in the Vaasa region. For the field of social and health care, the key partners are the City of Vaasa and Vaasa Central Hospital. But otherwise the definition of partnerships is perhaps not so easy due to more diverse employment markets. Interviewed staff members called for more pro-activeness from VAMK in seeking contacts. This relates especially to small and medium size enterprises which are not mentioned in the stakeholder analysis. Thus, the audit team recommends that VAMK would look again at its partnerships, perhaps making a difference between VAMK level and programme-specific partnerships. Customer relationship management (CRM) was mentioned in the staff interviews as one possible approach.

The advisory boards are intended to play a key role as an intermediator of information between VAMK and regional actors. The self-evaluation recognised the need to strengthen the role of advisory boards. Some steps have been already taken to re-activate them, as was mentioned in the staff interviews. However, there are no systematic, structured and well-working practices for collecting information from partners and working life operations. Thus, the collection of feedback from working life needs more structured and systematised practices.

On the request of the audit team, VAMK provided an illustration of external stakeholders' versatile roles in VAMK's quality management. This serves as a good basis for considering what type of information is transferred between VAMK and its stakeholders in each process and how this could be developed. VAMK should also make sure that the abolishment of the Internal Board by the end of 2014 would not mean discontinuing the contacts acquired through the Internal Board but these be maintained as programme-level contacts.

One area for development is alumni cooperation, which became evident based on VAMK's self-evaluation and staff interviews. Current alumni contacts are often based on teachers' personal contacts with their former students. Although teachers saw this working well, contacts might be lost if a staff member or an alumni changes job. Based on the Educational Programme, the graduated students are seen as marketers of the institution. When redrafting the Educational Programme, VAMK could also define other roles for alumni, such as sharing information on employment prospects with current students as well as to develop services. Better documented alumni network could be a useful tool for enhancing regional impact.

VAMK's role in internationalising the Vaasa region

According to the Strategy "all students gain competence to function in an international environment". VAMK offers study modules in English and has some international lecturers. Technology and business students have good opportunities to work in an international company, which gives them experience in using English as a working language. Students have got international experience abroad as a part of their studies. Interaction with incoming students also provides practice in English and mingles people from different cultures.

The interviewed external stakeholders commended VAMK for being successful in recruiting international students from different parts of the world. The international students get support from VAMK on arrival. There are events and language courses. Foreign students could be an important resource to the region; however, the students have sometimes found it challenging to find training places in Finnish companies. It is important that VAMK constantly cooperates with employers to enhance international students' placements and integration. As good examples, international students have managed to become recruited through Technobotnia and have found summer jobs supported financially by the City of Vaasa.

VAMK's visibility in the region

Marketing operations play a key role in keeping public and stakeholders aware of VAMK. They also provide information for staff and students and follow up on VAMK's visibility and position in different reviews. The perception of VAMK among general public is measured annually by the market research company Taloustutkimus Oy. It delivers a brand review report in which the public image of UASs are compared both in Western Finland and in entire country. VAMK's self-evaluation report states that there has been a positive trend for VAMK since 2014. Likewise, in VAMK's own regional brand reviews (2010 and 2012) conducted by Contium Oy the regional impact and clarity of brand has improved.

The current process description for providing information about educational supply and admissions refers to the forms of marketing, such as the use of marketing letters, participation in fairs, and guidance and cooperation in these processes with other VAMK's units e.g. the educational units and admissions' office. In addition to this, it could be described how the quantity and quality of marketing is continuously monitored and developed through the quality system. In 2012, marketing and PR were themes of internal audits. Based on VAMK's own assessment, electronic PR has improved since the 2008 audit. The Student Radar measures the perceived image of VAMK in application stages, and VAMK's connections to regional working life.

6.4.3 The information produced by the quality system

There is evidence that VAMK is able to develop and manage its societal impact and regional role based on the information produced by the quality system. Strategic choices support VAMK's societal impact and regional role and are well aligned to regional strategies. The interviews with the top management and Directors of Units indicated that the most informative indicators for this area are the graduate placement, number of RDI publications and surveys on local visibility. Feedback from external stakeholders is used to inform development of curriculum structure and content.

As mentioned in Section 4, the audit team sees that further aspects of regional impact, such as knowledge transfer, further education and development work are not yet covered by the current indicators. Indicators suggested in VAMK's self-evaluation report included the number of graduates working in local companies, signed contracts with regional partners and VAMK's visibility as a partner in regional strategies might be useful to further support the monitoring of the strategic objectives. In addition, as the Design Centre MUOVA strengthens VAMK's services for business incubation, the audit team recommends VAMK to consider indicators such as the number of new start-ups, the amount of seed financing or comparable.

It should be noted that VAMK's intranet pages on quality management for societal impact and regional development work are relatively scarce and only mention the partnership management and publication activity as tools for quality management in

this area. As presented above, VAMK actually has many activities in this area. Thus, it would be useful to gather them on the VAMK intranet on corresponding pages, perhaps including links to relevant indicators, surveys, summaries, and especially making visible improvement measures taken on the basis of quality management.

7
Working life integration into teaching

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Integration of working life perspective into teaching is a strategic priority for VAMK. There is evidence that working life feedback is closely connected to the planning of education. However, the role of advisory boards in planning of education should be strengthened or alternative cooperation structures should be created. In general, integration of working life into education covers implementation of all phases of Bachelors student's education. The thesis work process needs to be systematised. There are many operations showing VAMK's commitment and strategic approach to working life integration into teaching, which could be still deepened enabling VAMK to become a forerunner in this area.

Working life integration into teaching is on a **developing** *stage.*

7.1 Objectives for working life integration into teaching

Integration of teaching into the working life in all the phases of education is embedded into VAMK's strategy and Educational Programme and strongly related to VAMK's perception of its regional role producing skilful graduates for the region. The basic idea of VAMK's pedagogy is that the growth of professional identity (the feeling of belonging to one's professional community) and the development of professional know-how cannot be achieved alone, but requires interaction with science, working life, customers, students, and teachers. Thus, VAMK sees it as the teachers' role to guide the students in interacting in their own field. The teachers act as role models not only in relation to VAMK, but foremost in relation to their own professional field.

In proposing this optional audit target, VAMK identified two specific questions:

1. *Is working life sufficiently included in the planning and implementation in all phases of our education?*
2. *Does the real interaction of pedagogy function as described (in the basic ideas) above?*

Based on VAMK's self-evaluation, the cooperation in its traditional forms, such as thesis, on-the-job-training and RDI operations, works well. But deepening cooperation in all stages of education from planning to assessment is found more challenging. The audit focuses especially on how the quality system and development of processes and assessment tools could serve VAMK in this area.

7.2 Functioning of quality management procedures

Working life integration into planning of education

As has been described in this report, educational planning in collaboration with working life has progressed in recent years particularly in the fields of business and technology. The interviewees spoke about company-student-teacher triangle as an ongoing model. The quality of curriculum, structure and content are evaluated annually by feedback from teachers, students and working life actors. Summaries of the feedback and the proposed measures are outlined in the Board Review. Thus, there is evidence that PDCA cycle works in this area as intended.

Section 6.4 discussed the central role of advisory boards as the main channel to involve working life representatives in the planning of education and evaluating its outcomes. However, the contribution of advisory boards varies from one programme to another. There has been discussion at VAMK about the number of advisory boards in different fields. For instance, social services and health care has raised the question whether one board is enough to cover different areas of expertise within the field. The audit team recommends that VAMK considers how the work of advisory boards could be developed and what type of cooperation structures work best in each field and programme. There should be a win-win situation and discussion about how to keep up the advisory boards' motivation as benefits of curriculum work are often shown only in the long run.

Working life integration in the implementation of education

Based on the audit material and interviews, the integration of working life into education covers the entire Bachelor student's study path. But several details can be developed in study processes.

Already from the beginning of studies, lecturers use authentic working life examples in teaching. Cooperation works in two directions: Employers arrange information sessions and company visits for students, and VAMK invites experts from companies (such as ABB and Wärtsilä) and other organisations to give lectures. The interviewed students wished there would be even more of these types of visits. In the students' opinions, the best time for company visits would be the 2nd and 3rd year of studies, when a student has more knowledge of the field.

The various degree programmes have periods of practical training varying from 30 to 85 ECTS. Based on the process description for practical training, there are several points where students can get and give feedback on their professional growth. During a training period, there is an evaluation discussion with students and supervisors. After their practical training, students write a report including a self-evaluation and receive a written evaluation from the workplace. In addition, a feedback discussion with the supervising teacher is conducted. Feedback from the practical training place is seen as being important to VAMK for evaluating students' skills and, indirectly, the quality of the teaching. Based on the interviews, there might be a need for more systematic communication about the aims and assessment of student performance during training periods as well as the responsibilities of the employers. A written guide for that purpose would be helpful. Additionally, as the Vaasa Central Hospital receives students from VAMK and Novia, the representative from the hospital taking part in the audit interviews expressed a wish that the two institutions would coordinate their feedback forms to make the supervisor's work easier.

Within some programmes, it is possible to complete the study unit by carrying out a supervised project at a company in Finland or abroad. For example, the Technobothnia laboratory provided a number of training study units linked to technology companies in the area. The self-evaluation noted positively that the assignments on working life have consistently been 85–90 % for a long time. Based on the audit material, VAMK has recognised the need to develop the feedback system for assignments.

Students from the Units of Technology and Business have had study-related projects and trainings also abroad. Overall, within the technical and marketing education, the assignment integration with teaching has been successful. Students are given real cases to investigate, e.g. marketing plans, product developments or material production. By seeking a training place or summer job themselves, technology and business students are endowed by experience and skills to act in the recruitment market. At the Unit of Health Care and Social Services, the role of the unit is more important in finding a training place and the best practical experience is often given by local organisations. When it comes to internship and summer job placements for international students, extra support is needed from VAMK.

Thesis works are scheduled for the 3rd and 4th years of studies. The subjects of the thesis works are chosen together with a regional partner. The RDI Programme includes an explicit objective of "integration into teaching" and development targets. The strategic decision to designate theses to working life and integrate RDI projects with teaching is being followed appropriately. The theses assignments are considered an indicator that clearly measures the linkage between teaching and working life. Projects are coordinated by the Company Clinic, which offers customised research and development services to clients. The need to improve project management on a general level as well as addressing students' project management skills was mentioned in several interviews. In overall, the thesis work process needs to be systematised.

The Educational Programme postulates that students should get individual feedback on their performance after each study module or study unit. Interviews with students indicated that students do get a grade but qualitative feedback from their learning is often available only on request. On international projects, usually no feedback is available from partners, only from teachers.

Teachers' working life competence

As the Educational Programme accentuates, teachers should act as a role model for students. Following that, their professional identity, teaching material and methods should be up-to-date. In the students' opinions, teachers are mostly motivated and professional. But some teachers need to refresh their know-how in their field and update their material. Teachers' working periods in companies or other organisations is one channel for keeping the quality of teaching up-to-date. In development discussions, teachers are encouraged to further increase contacts with companies. Their working life experience is taken into account in a yearly work scheme. However, it would be helpful if there was a structured practice for teachers to go regularly into a working life period. External stakeholders supported this view on VAMK increasing teachers' working life periods and stated that companies should remove any obstacles. Company representatives were positive about increased communication with teachers, but due to limited time resources, they suggested that teachers better utilise the already organised meetings for information exchange.

In order to link visiting lecturers to the quality system, VAMK has an introduction guide for new teachers on the intranet, but it would be important to brief them also face-to-face on programme contents and VAMK's pedagogical objectives. This is especially essential, if they are carrying out a large part of the teaching. Feedback from students' links the external lectures to the quality system, but based on student interviews, the collection of feedback is sporadic. There might be a need to find some new ways for VAMK to evaluate the input of visiting lecturers.

Developing working life integration into education at VAMK level

Based on the audit interviews, there seems to be commitment among the management and staff members and students to deepen working life integration in education. Therefore, there is an opportunity for the whole VAMK community to discuss and refine its definition of working life integration with education. Moreover, VAMK's current approach to curriculum and degree programme development underlines serving the immediate needs of working life, while it could also more proactively analyse trends, developments and risks of the operational environment and promote the reform of working life practices. The Engineer 2020-approach and 25 teachers' involvement in local PK-project are good examples of this type of strategic approach that could be even more systematised.

The audit team also recommends VAMK to align its study-related process descriptions with the definition of working life integration. For instance, giving feedback should be in the structure of the thesis and assignments for both students, teachers and companies. Collecting development ideas with feedback would also be an important part of quality management. Ideas could cover, not only teaching contents, but also suggestions for organisational and system improvements. The documentation of assessments and feedback should be available on the VAMK intranet.

Based on the interviewees' proposal, working life integration should also inform the development of teaching methods, as well as provide students with more work-based learning opportunities. In addition to VAMK's current methods, new approaches might include, for instance, student mentoring, increased engagement of students in start-ups, staff coaching, and job-rotation. More reflective discussions with students about their professional growth could be conducted in all phases of studies, using for instance the existing group tutoring system.

8

The quality system as a whole

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VAMK's quality system is the product of extensive development, informed by analysis of VAMK's context and earlier quality systems. The development has been led by management, reflecting the streamlined line-of-command organisation structure. A single operating system combines strategic, operational and quality management. The system is functioning, and is mainly effective and comprehensive, covering all aspects of basic duties and operations, but with a need for further development of management of RDI work. The development measures listed in the Development Portfolio show that the quality system has impact on the development of operations. The system builds on existing quality cultures, and the next phase of development should continue this, through widening staff engagement and extending impact.

*The quality system as a whole is at a **developing** stage.*

8.1 Functioning of the quality management procedures

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VAMK has made a lot of progress in a short time, building on its history of developing its quality systems. VAMK has designed, developed and implemented a new quality system that is fit for its context and fit for purpose. It is distinctive in that a single operating system combines strategic, operational and quality management. This system covers all aspects of basic duties and operations, and supports the development and enhancement of operations. The system is aligned to a new organisation structure which has replaced the previous matrix structure for quality management. These developments have been implemented over a relatively short period of time, during which there have been challenges of significant cuts in Ministry funding for all universities of applied sciences.

The system is mainly effective, and is making an impact, although there is a need for further development of RDI work. The core of the system is a set of 20 operating processes, and VAMK aligns these to a "Plan – Do – Check – Act" (PDCA) visualisation model (see Figure 2 in Section 3). These PDCA headings are used to structure this evaluative overview.

8.2 Comprehensiveness and impact of the quality system

Plan – VAMK's system supports strategic and operational objectives

VAMK's strategy and core mission are very clear – to support development in the region through the education of skilled professionals who will be highly effective in working life. Development of these strategic objectives has been based on a very comprehensive analysis of the context. This included the distinctive aspects of the local context in the Vaasa area, considering economic aspects of business and industry, and also the range of other higher education providers in the area. As a result, VAMK is very clear about its strategic place and role.

The strategic objectives are intended to shape the curricula of degree programmes, in particular promoting employability in the region. Evidence of the effectiveness of current curricula is provided through the very positive graduate employment statistics. The Educational Programme proposed ideas on curricular and pedagogic development to enhance working life integration and employability, but did not include development actions that would impact curricula and practice.

Do – VAMK's system supports all aspects of operations

VAMK's system is fully aligned to the organisation structure of both staff and students. VAMK describes its internal organisation structure as a "line-of-command", led by the Rector, with directors leading the three academic units.

Responsibilities are very clearly defined, and the Directors of Units are responsible for all aspects of operations within their units. There has been a trend to increase the responsibilities of the Directors of Units, including recently regarding the implementation of the Educational Programme and leading RDI activities. The clarity and simplicity of the system and its alignment to the organisation structure are a real strength. This should enable Directors of Units to increase alignment and linkages between degree education and RDI activities. It is also an opportunity to lead pedagogic development in the context of subject disciplines. However a challenge is the potential overload on these key individuals. VAMK should consider how they can be supported in curricular design and pedagogic development, in ways that both respect subjects, and promote organisational learning through sharing of effective pedagogic practice.

The processes within the operating system are working well, and are aligned to the annual cycle of degree education and resource planning and allocation. VAMK should consider how to develop the operating processes for RDI work, to try to better balance the two strategic goals of: first, RDI supporting teaching, and second, expansion of RDI activities. Current processes are limited in promotion of further development of RDI work.

The Student Union VAMOK is fully embedded in the organisation structure, with the VAMOK Chair being a full member of the Management Team, involved in all decisions. Interviews during the audit found that students considered they were well-informed, and had real power.

Check – VAMK's system makes good use of a range of performance indicators and evaluation processes

Development of VAMK's operating system has included a move to a more performance-based approach, with indicators aligned to strategic objectives. There is a developmental opportunity for VAMK to focus especially on the indicators that are directly linked to Ministry funding, and consider what developments in operating processes could increase results and hence funding. However it will be important to maintain an enhancement focus, including on the quality of degree programmes and students' experience, and RDI work.

VAMK uses a wide range of student feedback systems, ranging from fully on-line, to informal face-to-face discussions. There is no doubt about the institutional commitment to hearing the student voice. However response rates are generally low, and there were mixed views from both students and teachers about the effectiveness of current approaches. This points to development needs to simplify and streamline the student feedback systems, including reporting back to students about actions being taken.

VAMK is really committed to engaging with local industry and employers to benefit working life integration. The audit team recommends that VAMK builds on this commitment by making feedback from working life more systematic, including messages from teachers' individual contacts and activities, and from VAMK's alumni.

Internal audit processes are used systematically and flexibly to support development. VAMK found the self-evaluation in preparation for this (FINEEC 2014) audit useful, and is considering how to develop the use of self-evaluation in the future. One possible approach could be to increase the use of self-evaluation within existing internal audit processes.

Act – VAMK's system promotes and supports development of operations

The single operating system is effective in aligning and connecting development actions to the line-of-command structure, driving operational actions within the academic units and component degree programmes, and also within support services. In short, the PDCA-based system works well. There was evidence that unit reviews and internal audits have led to the development of the operating system and processes. The intranet-based Development Portfolio lists numerous ongoing development measures based on the information produced by the quality system, although the intranet structure could still be developed.

The idea and purpose of the strategic programmes are good. They work best when they are practical, with clear identification of targets, objectives and responsibilities for action. The audit found the Educational Programme to be more theoretical, and limited in impact. In developing future programmes, VAMK should learn from the programmes that have been successful. Regarding Education, it should consider what actions would promote curricular design and pedagogic development at all levels, reaching through to individual teachers. It should do so in ways that balance coordinated, collective development with freedom for personal style and creativity. There will be challenges in broadening staff engagement and getting the balance right. However there are opportunities for this type of action to promote a better student experience and achievement, which will in turn impact key performance indicators and income.

8.3 Quality culture in the development of operations

VAMK has reflected on its history of developing and implementing quality systems and tools, and has developed and implemented a new quality system that is mainly working well. This system recognises and works with existing cultures. Staff who met with the audit team demonstrated clear awareness and ownership of the system and their responsibilities – "we feel big pressure to be good". They were also reflective and realistic about challenges, in particular staff time, and about colleagues who were less committed, or who found it hard to understand the system as whole, and their responsibilities for implementation.

Management has led development to date – and the design is good. For the next phase of development for the quality system, VAMK should maintain the stability and continuity of this system, and now focus on strengthening and widening staff ownership and active involvement.

9
Conclusions
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9.1 Strengths and good practices of the quality system

Strengths

- The latest strategy development process was based on a wide analysis of national and local contexts, including regional demand and opportunities for cooperative synergies with other local higher education institutions. This has produced very clearly defined strategic goals. Operational implementation of this strategy is aligned to the organisation structure, including a set of five functional programmes that promote development of quality in context.
- VAMK has a single operating system that effectively integrates strategic, operational and quality management. This system incorporates relevant performance indicators and promotes a strong culture of result-based management of quality.
- A range of review processes, especially the annual unit reviews and internal audits, are implemented comprehensively. Quality management tools integrate representatives of management, staff, students and external stakeholders; and thus support organisational learning processes and continuous improvement.
- The renewed line-of-command management structure defines responsibilities clearly. The top-management is very committed to develop the quality management.
- The support and administrative services proactively support the quality management system, the organisational performance and development.
- Based on the audit 2008 recommendation, VAMK has significantly widened opportunities for students' participation in decision making, including at the top management level. The Chair of the Students' Union VAMOK is a full member of the Management Team and the student union has representatives in many development groups and teams. There is a strong culture of mutual respect and cooperation between students and the Rector.
- VAMK's strong connections with working life and regional companies are clearly benefiting the curriculum development work and working life relevance in many of the degree programmes.

- The FINHEEC audit 2008 and VAMK's Quality Programme have steered the development of the quality system, and the quality system is now significantly lighter and more efficient than before.
- VAMK has succeeded in creating a compact process map which provides guidance on all aspects of operational management. The process descriptions are generally of high quality and define clearly the responsibilities.

Good practices

- The systematic and inclusive curriculum development approach of the "Engineer 2020", applying new innovative ways to incorporate working-life relevance in the curriculum, is a good practice which could be applied to other degree programmes, when appropriate.
- Students of the Master's Degree Programme in Developing and Managing Social and Health Care Services have been integrated in the reform of the degree programme. Students interview working-life representatives about the future competencies needed in the field as part of the Development Work study unit.
- The Quality Team Planner visits all degree programmes to inform all new students about the quality system and students' opportunities to influence quality.
- Implementation of training and qualification programmes for external stakeholders on innovation and recent (technological) developments serve as valuable linkage mechanisms between education, RDI and professional practise.
- The staff competence survey conducted in two-year intervals is a promising new practice which can be used as a basis for planning further training offerings for staff members.

9.2 Recommendations

- VAMK should review and re-design the Educational Programme in order to steer development of pedagogical leadership and the development of teachers' competences. This should support development of competence-based curricula, and teaching and assessment practice that is student-centred and focussed on employability. Its implementation within the organisation structure should promote wide engagement by staff, reaching more merely than the enthusiasts.
- VAMK should simplify its student feedback systems, and enhance the students' use of selected systems, the processing of the collected feedback, and feedback to students in response to their comments.
- In order to promote performance-based management of RDI work, VAMK should review its conceptual framework and operational processes for RDI work, the (ex-ante) selection of projects to reflect institutional priorities and identification of indicators and targets. Attention should be given to the improvement of quality management methods in RDI, standardisation and utilisation of RDI feedback, throughout all kinds of activities and all areas of RDI (including the Design Centre MUOVA).

- VAMK should develop its support for staff to engage more widely in RDI work, including internal funding to foster RDI development linked to strategic goals; and support and tools for staff planning RDI work.
- As the organisational change has meant a lot of new management responsibilities for the Directors of Units, there is a risk of them becoming overburdened. Therefore, the role of three Unit Quality Coordinators might be reconsidered to support the Directors in quality management.
- The acquisition of the Design Centre MUOVA should be seen as an opportunity for further growth of RDI in design thinking. It is recommended that the MUOVA quality system should be integrated into VAMK's quality system.
- There is a clear need to increase cooperation between degree programmes and options for students to take study units from other degree programmes. The audit team recommends VAMK to intensify cooperation between degree programmes in curriculum development and open up wider opportunities for students to study across programmes.
- Based on the Educational Programme students should receive individual feedback concerning their learning. The audit team recommends that VAMK would continue to strengthen the development of procedures for student assessment and feedback on learning in all degree programmes.
- VAMK should consider how its quality management procedures could better serve the master's programmes. This could be achieved, for instance, by conducting separate internal audits for master's programmes, establishing a separate master's advisory board, and developing feedback questionnaires based on the needs of master's programmes.
- The role and work of advisory boards varies within VAMK. The audit team recommends that VAMK considers how the work of advisory boards could be developed, and what type of cooperation structures work best in each field and programme.
- Although VAMK's main objective of regional impact in form of the education of highly employable students is well covered by the current indicators, further indicators could be considered to measure knowledge transfer, further education and development work.
- VAMK is advised to establish systematic alumni cooperation and integrate this into its quality system. In this connection, the role of alumni could be redefined and widened to other roles than only marketers of the institution.
- The collection of external stakeholder feedback should be systematised.
- VAMK is encouraged to continue to define and develop its quality culture and strengthen the ownership of the quality system among staff members.
- When launching systematic self-evaluations every second year, VAMK is encouraged to consider how the current internal review and audit processes could be developed to serve the development of the quality system.

9.3 The audit team's overall assessment

The quality system of VAMK University of Applied Sciences fulfils the Finnish Education Evaluation Centre's criteria set for the quality system as a whole and the quality management of basic duties. None of the audit targets are at the level of absent and the quality system as a whole (audit target 6) is at the level of developing. The audit team proposes to the Higher Education Evaluation Committee that VAMK University of Applied Sciences passes the audit.

9.4 Higher Education Evaluation Committee's decision

In its meeting on 20 March 2015, the Higher Education Evaluation Committee decided, based on the proposal and report of the audit team, that the quality system of VAMK University of Applied Sciences meets the FINEEC criteria for quality systems as a whole and quality management of the higher education institution's basic duties. VAMK University of Applied Sciences has been awarded a quality label that is valid for six years beginning on 20 March 2015.

Appendix 1:
Table of the audit targets and criteria

TARGETS

CRITERIA

TARGETS	ABSENT	EMERGING	DEVELOPING	ADVANCED
1. The quality policy of the higher education institution	The quality system shows a complete absence of or major shortcomings in the: • definition of the system's objectives and responsibilities • knowledge and commitment of those responsible • documentation of the system and the information it produces or • suitable communication.	The quality system's objectives and responsibilities have not been clearly defined. The division of responsibility works only partially, and those responsible for the operations exhibit widely differing skill levels and commitment to their duties. The quality system and the information it produces are inadequately documented. The information needs of the HEI's personnel groups, students or external stakeholders are not adequately addressed in the documentation. Information produced by the system is not systematically communicated within the institution or to external stakeholders.	The quality system's objectives and responsibilities are clearly defined. The goalsetting process is an inclusive one. The division of responsibility functions well. The key people responsible for the operations are committed to their duties and have sufficient skills to undertake them. The quality system and the information it produces is documented in a clear and appropriate manner. For the most part, the information needs of the HEI's personnel groups, students and external stakeholders are taken into account in the documentation. The information produced by the system is communicated in a systematic and targeted manner within the institution and to external stakeholders.	The objectives of the quality system are defined in a very clear and inclusive manner. The objectives and division of responsibility provide excellent support for the development of the institution's operations. There is clear and continuous evidence of the skill level and commitment of those responsible for the operations. The HEI has systematic and wellestablished procedures for documenting the quality system and the information it produces so that the documentation satisfies the information needs of various parties. The institution has excellent and wellestablished procedures for communicating information to different personnel groups, students and external stakeholders. Communication is active and up-to date.

CRITERIA

2. Strategic and operations management	ABSENT	EMERGING	DEVELOPING	ADVANCED
2. Strategic and operations management	The quality system shows a complete absence of or major shortcomings in the: • links to strategic planning, management and operations management • ability to meet the needs of strategic and operations management or • commitment to quality work of managers involved in operations management.	The quality system is not sufficiently well linked to the HEI's strategic planning, management and operations management. The system and the information it produces do not serve the needs of strategic and operations management in an appropriate manner. The system does not serve as a meaningful management tool at all organisational levels, and managers involved in operations management show a lack of commitment to joint quality work.	The quality system is quite well linked to the HEI's strategic planning, management and operations management. The system and the information it produces serve strategic and operations management, and there is evidence that the information is put to use. In terms of management, the system works at different organisational levels, and the managers involved in operations management are committed to joint quality work.	Quality management is a natural part of the HEI's strategic planning, management and operations management. The institution has systematic, well-established and excellent procedures that produce information for strategic and operations management needs, and there is clear and continuous evidence that information is put to systematic and wide use. In terms of management, the quality system works in an excellent manner at all organisational levels, and there is clear and continuous evidence that managers involved in operations management are committed to joint quality work.

TARGETS

CRITERIA

	ABSENT	EMERGING	DEVELOPING	ADVANCED
3. Development of the quality system	The HEI shows a complete absence of or major shortcomings in the: • procedures for evaluating or developing the quality system or • overall view of the functioning of the quality system.	The HEI has inadequate procedures for evaluating and developing the quality system. It has a weak overall view of the functioning of the quality system. System development is not systematic.	The HEI has wellfunctioning procedures for evaluating and developing the quality system. It is able to identify the system's strengths and areas in need of development, and system development is systematic.	The HEI has wellestablished and systematic procedures for evaluating and developing the system. It is able to efficiently identify the system's strengths and areas in need of development, as well as to evaluate the effectiveness of the system. There is clear and continuous evidence of the system's successful development work.
Followup section for the HEIs subject to the second FINHEEC audit:	The HEI shows a complete absence of or major shortcomings in: • the development work following the first audit.	The development of the quality system after the first audit has not been systematic or effective.	The development of the quality system after the first audit has been systematic. The system works better than before.	After the first audit, the HEI has systematically improved the functionality and fitness for purpose of the quality system. Special attention has been given to the workload produced by the system. The system has been developed in a very successful and effective manner.

The fulfilment of the following criteria is reviewed separately for each basic duty and optional audit target:

CRITERIA

TARGETS	ABSENT	EMERGING	DEVELOPING	ADVANCED
4. Quality management of the higher education institution's basic duties **4a) Degree education** **4b) Research, development and innovation activities, as well as artistic activities** **4c) Societal impact and regional development work (incl. social responsibility, continuing education, open university and open university of applied sciences education, as well as paidservices education)** **4d) Optional audit target**	The quality system shows a complete absence of or major shortcomings in the: • quality management procedures used to achieve the goals set for the operations • links between goals set for the activities and the HEI's overall strategy • participation of the institution's personnel groups, students or external stakeholders in the development of the operations or • quality management of support services that are key to the operations.	The quality management procedures are not fully functional and do not support the achievement of goals set for the operations in a meaningful manner. The goals are not linked to the HEI's overall strategy. The quality system provides insufficient information for the quality management of the operations, and information use is sporadic and/or information collection is an end in itself. The personnel groups, students and external stakeholders are not involved in the development of the operations in a meaningful manner. The quality management of key support services is not functional.	Functional quality management procedures advance the development of the operations and the achievement of goals set for the operations. The objectives are mostly linked to the overall strategy of the HEI. The quality system produces relevant information for the quality management of the operations, and the information is used to develop the HEI's operations in a meaningful manner. Personnel groups and students are involved in the development of the operations in a meaningful manner. External stakeholders also participate in the development work. The quality management of key support services functions relatively well.	The HEI has systematic and wellestablished quality management procedures that provide excellent support for the development of the operations and the implementation of the institution's overall strategy. There is clear and continuous evidence of the system's effectiveness in achieving the goals set for the operations. The HEI has systematic and excellent procedures used to produce information for the quality management of the operations. Information is used systematically, and there is clear and continuous evidence to show that it is successfully used to develop the operations. Personnel groups and students are committed and very actively involved in developing the operations. Special attention has been given to the workload generated by the quality management procedures. External stakeholders are involved in the development work in a meaningful manner. The HEI has systematic and wellestablished procedures for the quality management of key support services. There is clear and continuous evidence that the procedures function well.

The fulfilment of the following criteria is reviewed separately for each degree programme:

TARGETS	CRITERIA			
	ABSENT	EMERGING	DEVELOPING	ADVANCED
5. Samples of degree education: degree programmes **Planning of education** • Curricula and their preparation • Intended learning outcomes and their definition • Links between research, development and innovation activities, as well as artistic activities, and education • Lifelong learning • Relevance of degrees to working life • Participation of different personnel groups, students and external stakeholders.	The quality system shows a complete absence of or major shortcomings in the: • quality management procedures related to the planning of education • quality management procedures related to the implementation of education • participation of the institution's personnel groups, students or external stakeholders in the development of the operations or • effectiveness of quality work.	The quality management procedures related to the planning of education are not fully functional and do not support the planning of education in a meaningful manner. The quality management procedures related to the implementation of education are not fully functional and do not support implementation in a meaningful manner.	The quality management procedures related to the planning of education enhance the quality of planning and support planning itself. The quality management procedures related to the implementation of education enhance the quality of the implementation and support implementation itself.	The quality management procedures related to the planning of education are systematic and wellestablished and provide excellent support for planning. The quality management procedures related to the implementation of education are systematic and wellestablished and provide excellent support for implementation.
Implementation of education • Teaching methods and learning environments • Methods used to assess learning • Students' learning and wellbeing • Teachers' competence and occupational wellbeing • Participation of different personnel groups, students and external stakeholders.		The personnel groups, students and external stakeholders are not involved in developing the operations in a meaningful manner. There is little evidence of the effectiveness of the quality work.	Personnel groups and students are involved in developing the operations in a meaningful manner. External stakeholders also participate in the development work. There is clear evidence of the effectiveness of the quality work.	Personnel groups and students are committed and very actively involved in the development of the operations. External stakeholders are also involved in the development work in a meaningful manner. There is clear and continuous evidence of the effectiveness of the quality work.
Effectiveness of quality work • Suitability of key evaluation methods and followup indicators and their impact on the achievement of goals.				

TARGETS

CRITERIA

6. The quality system as a whole	ABSENT	EMERGING	DEVELOPING	ADVANCED
	The HEI has only individual and unrelated quality management procedures that do not form a structured system. There is no evidence of the procedures' impact on the development of the operations.	The quality management procedures do not form a functioning and unified system. The quality system encompasses some of the HEI's basic duties but does not provide meaningful support for the development of the operations. There is little evidence of the system's impact on the development of the operations. The institution's quality culture is only just emerging.	The quality management procedures constitute a functioning system. The quality system covers the essential parts of the basic duties of the HEI and provides meaningful support for the development of the operations. There is evidence that the system has an impact on the development of the operations. The development of the operations is based on an existing quality culture.	The quality management procedures form a dynamic and comprehensive system. The quality system covers all of the basic duties of the HEI and provides excellent support for the institution's overall strategy and the development of the entire institution's operations. There is clear and continuous evidence that the system has an impact on the development of the operations. The well-established quality culture provides excellent support for the development of the operations.

Appendix 2: The stages and timetable of the audit process

Agreement negotiations between the HEI and FINEEC	17 January 2014
Appointment of the audit team	20 February 2014
The HEI's audit materials and self-evaluation report submitted to FINEEC	15 August 2014
An information and discussion event at the HEI	26 September 2014
Audit visit	11–13 November 2014
Audit decision	20 March 2015
Concluding seminar	29 April 2015

Appendix 3: Programme of the audit visit

TUESDAY 11 NOVEMBER 2014	
9.00—10.00	VAMK Top Management
10.15—11.15	Heads of degree programmes
11.30—12.30	Operations management and heads of VAMK support services
11.30—12.30	Support services staff
13.30—14.30	Quality management of RDI
14.45—15.45	Student representatives in VAMK working groups and internal audit teams
16.00—17.00	External stakeholders
WEDNESDAY 12 NOVEMBER 2014	
9.00—10.00	Teaching staff
10.15—11.15	Bachelor's and master's degree students
11.30—12.30	UAS Bachelor's Degree Programme in Electrical and Automation Engineering: Interview with teachers
13.30—14.30	UAS Bachelor's Degree Programme in Electrical and Automation Engineering: Interview with students
14.45—15.45	UAS Bachelor's Degree Programme in International Business: Interview with teachers
16.00—17.00	UAS Bachelor's Degree Programme in International Business: Interview with students
THURSDAY 13 NOVEMBER 2014	
8.30—9.30	UAS Master's Degree Programme in Developing and Managing Social and Health Care Services: Interview with teachers
9.45—10.30	UAS Master's Degree Programme in Developing and Managing Social and Health Care Services: Interview with students
10.40—11.30	Working life integration into teaching: interview with staff
12.05—12.25	Campus Walk (Tritonia, Technobothnia)
12.30—13.20	Working life integration into teaching: interview with students
13.30—14.20	'Surprise' audit target: development of the quality system
15.00—15.45	Final interview with VAMK top Management and Quality Manager. Preliminary feedback

The Finnish Education Evaluation Centre (FINEEC) is an independent, national evaluation agency responsible for the external evaluations of education from early childhood education to higher education in Finland. It implements system and thematic evaluations, learning outcome evaluations and field-specific evaluations. Moreover, FINEEC supports providers of education and training and higher education institutions in matters related to evaluation and quality assurance, as well as advances the evaluation of education.

Audits of the quality systems of higher education institutions have been implemented in Finland in accordance with the principle of enhancement-led evaluation since 2005. The objective of the audits has been to support Finnish institutions in developing quality systems that correspond to the European principles of quality assurance and to demonstrate that functional and consistent quality assurance procedures are in place in Finland both in institutions and on the national level. In the audits, institutions are supported in their efforts to reach their strategic objectives and in directing future development activities in order to create a framework for the institutions' continuous development.

This report presents the audit process of the VAMK University of Applied Sciences and the results of the audit.

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