

# SYL

**Student Role in Quality Assurance  
Case Studies and Examples**



# SYL

**Jyri Lähdemaa**

**Board Member, Academic Affairs,  
National Union of University Students in Finland**

# Topics for the presentation

1. QA System in Finland
2. Auditing and its Context
3. Case Study: Course Development
4. Case Study: Students in University Audit Process
5. Case Study: Students Designing Audit

**Quality Assurance System in Finland:  
Guided by Ministry, Audits are made by  
Evaluation Centre and Higher Education  
Institutions take part in planning**

**SYL**

# Ministry of Education

- Ministry sets standards and plans finance
- Requirements for finance are strong guiding tools
  - From the ministry funding student feedback forms 3 %
- Consensus between HEs and ministry about the standards
- Ministry ensures that every HE has a working quality system

# Finnish Education Evaluation Centre

- Independent Finnish Education Evaluation Centre (KARVI) is responsible for auditing higher educational institutes
- Publishes research about good quality practises
- National Seminars, students also invited
- Evaluation criteria is functional quality system, quality of teaching is not evaluated

# Higher Education Institutions

- In Finland HEs are very autonomous and therefore are responsible for the quality of their own operations
  - obliged to take part in audits
- Build their own quality system that ensures teaching/research reaches standards and good quality
- Plan their own actions based on audit result

**Auditing and its context:  
What is high quality education and  
how should it be evaluated?**

**SYL**



# Audit and its Context

- QA system is a leading tool that aims to increase quality through everyday activities
  - Auditing is focused on QA system itself; not teaching
  - Opinions on quality teaching vary but consensus on a system
- Previous problem: people talking about quality mean scores
- QA system is integrated as part of leading
- HEs use accreditation to measure quality of teaching/research

# Audit System

- Failing audit produces no sanctions to HEs
  - Outside Finland lack of sanctions is seen equally odd as effort placed to take soft suggestions into account
  - HEs feel comfortable to use auditing as development tool even with their weaker aspects
- It is possible that finance guides actions now more than auditing
- Independent auditing that HEs and students can be part of valued
- Ever increasing student role in QA

# Case Study 1

**Student Involvement in Course  
development through Quality System**

**SYL**

# Student Participation through Feedback

- Mind set: students are part of the academic community
- Students are represented in every part of the administration and their opinions are frequently collected
- HEs collect feedback from every course
  - Forms the raw data used in course development
  - Completed with other data
- Also QA requires feedback

# Using the Student Feedback

- Feedback is analyzed and compared to the previous feedback from the same course
  - Comparing the previous feedback reveals do we still have same/similar issues
  - QA can target reoccurring issues on courses
- Students get a summary of the feedback and teacher's response
- At this point students are only required to give feedback

# Course Development

- Direct involvement in course design
- Faculty Student representatives are members of course development work group
  - Student can have direct impact and can monitor that feedback is used
  - Teachers get a sparring companion
- QA guides to put special emphasis on issues seen in feedback such as learning targets or teaching methods

# Course / Project Funding Programs

- Even with direct student participation not all ideas can be executed
- Some HEs offer students a small budget to develop their own courses / projects
  - Students are experts of studying and know best what would supplement their studies
- Students (often their local organisation) can arrange speakers or teach a topic themselves if they are very good at it

# Case Study 2

## Student Involvement in Audit Process of University of Turku (UTU)

SYL



# Before Audit

- Local Student Union has a permanent place in QA Workgroup
- Students are constantly developing the QA system to increase good quality teaching
- Student Union was active in promoting student interests but took part in writing the self evaluation documents and QA manual etc.
  - Despite active role Student Union itself isn't audited
- Student Union ensured that students are interviewed

# During Audit

- Student union selected a representative sample from students to take part in audit interviews
- Around eight students from each faculty were interviewed
  - Students cannot fail audit or gain anything from it
  - Interviewers ask can student notice actions that are required by QA system
- Informed students what audit is and how students take part

# After Audit

- UTU failed the audit
- Student got extremely positive feedback from audit team for outperforming the teachers
- Student Union continued its work in QA work group with even more practical approach aiming to write all good policies down
- New strategic goals for University and Student Union
- In one month UTU will be re-audited

SYL

# Case Study 3

**Student Involvement in Designing the  
next Audit Process**

**SYL**

# Planning the Evaluation Criteria

- National audits happen in cycles and are often themed
- Education Evaluation Centre contacted students on how to test student centered learning and QA system in practise
  - “What should we measure to ensure this happens?”
- National Student Union has permanent place in Evaluation Centre work group but this time other students were free to attend as well

# Student input in evaluation criteria

- Students evaluated a list of things that make studying easier or were otherwise important to them
- They estimated what kind of QA structures would enforce / prevent them from happening
- What kind of measurements would tell if these things are present in QA system and functioning
- Suggestions in use during the next audit cycle

# Student Centered Audit

- National Education Evaluation Centre checks learning targets
  - They must exist and are in line of the degree program
  - Course and teaching methods are chosen accordingly
  - Exams are evaluated based on learning targets
  - (Emphasis on hard to pass courses)
- Should all this apply, students should be aware what they need to learn during a course and how it functions as part of their degree.  
Also teachers know their target better

**Recap: What is required for active student involvement?**

**SYL**



# Recap

- Quality System is Essentially a way of leading: quality is created through everyday activities
  - Structures that promote good quality teaching/research
  - Everyone must have the opportunity to develop the system
- Feedback system and proper utilisation of feedback
  - Drawback: sometimes students become tired of giving feedback
- Student members must be active and permanent part of not only QA work group but other as well

**Thank you**

**SYL**