

AUDIT OF HäME UNIVERSITY OF APPLIED SCIENCES

Authors **Eva Werner, Mia Brzakovic, Henrik Dindas, Kaisa Lähteenmäki-Smith, Marja-Liisa Saarilammi & Karl Holm. Self-assessment of Häme University of Applied Sciences (ed.) Lotta Linko**

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3.1 Using the quality system in strategic management

- HEI's self-assessment

Strategic management procedures are the core of the quality system

According to [HAMK's quality policy](#), strategic management and the quality system are intertwined. Management, operational planning, and activities are guided by the continuous improvement approach (plan-do-check-act cycle, PDCA), as well as the principles and practical procedures of quality management.

The [quality system](#) refers to HAMK's organisation, division of responsibilities, resources, and procedures, the aim of which is to ensure the quality and impact of education, RDI activities, and support services. Mechanisms for gathering situational information and feedback are built into the procedures. This information collected on the activities is analysed and utilised in the planning and development of the activities. The quality system ensures the implementation of development measures and the launching of new ones.

HAMK's Quality System

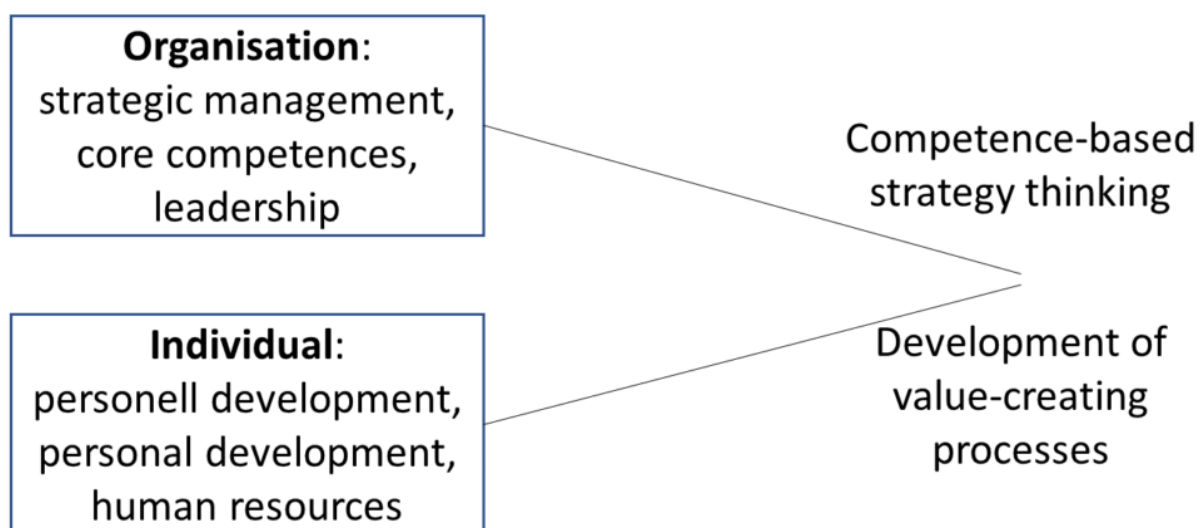


Each HAMK unit and function, as well as staff member is responsible for practical quality work in their own activities.

Strategic management is management by objectives (MBO), competence management, and knowledge management

At HAMK, **strategic management** is based on creating a strategic vision and setting related objectives. Achieving the strategic objectives requires the right kind of competence in the right places to be built through competence management. Monitoring the progress of the strategy and possible reorientation require the correct situational picture and result data. The MBO system describes the objectives and tasks of various levels, and these include responsibilities, schedules, and connections to other objectives. Responsibilities are distributed appropriately to the various parties and levels of the organisation. As part of management, performance appraisals are conducted, through which strategic objectives are broken down as part of personal tasks. Internal communications plays an important role in pursuing and achieving goals.

The operating model for **competence management** introduces a comprehensive overview of the organisation's future and the competence needed. Competence-based strategic thinking combines strategic leadership and the development of competence among personnel. This operating model strengthens HAMK's knowledge capital, which enables more ambitious strategies.



Knowledge management involves collecting, analysing, and visualising information, and sharing it with those who benefit from it. Data is accumulating and collected from HAMK's activities and external data sources, as well as their combinations. The information is combined, modified, and visualised according to use. The information is utilised in the management and development of HAMK's operations. The enterprise architecture work supports HAMK's quality management and the development of operations to achieve strategic objectives.

The progress of the strategy is monitored annually through the evaluation of the set milestones and their implementation. The Management Board, the Education Development Group, and the Research Development Group act as management forums in which the progress of the objectives is assessed and agreed upon. The rule of thumb the Management Board is to make documented decisions, and the Education and Research Development Groups are meant for less formal dialogue between rectors and leaders of the units. In addition to the above-mentioned groups, HAMK also has several development groups that cross unit boundaries. Their task is to develop strategically important, thematic, and HAMK-wide activities (e.g. LeaD team, Guidance Counsellor Group, RDI Support Team).

Development needs of the management system have been identified through the quality system. The management system has been simplified and procedures have been harmonised, accordingly. The number of separate layer of documents that guide and report operations has decreased significantly as a result from active digitalisation.

Strengths

Harnessing information systems as a tool for achieving objectives.

Systematic competence development practices.

Enhancement areas

Development of data architecture.

Developing data literacy and the culture of knowledge management.

3.1 Using the quality system in strategic management

- Assessment of the audit team

A clear strategy serves as a roadmap for HAMK's development plans

HAMK has a clear strategy, laid down in the Strategy 2030 document, which was developed in a participatory process led by the Board and the Rector's team. It is published on HAMK's webpage and outlines the institution's strategic goals related to its core processes of education, RDI, societal impact and international cooperation. Strategic goals are translated into achievable and measurable objectives, the process towards achievement of the set goals is monitored through defined qualitative and quantitative indicators, as well as regular review processes at all organisational levels. Furthermore, a well-elaborated BI system supports the implementation of HAMK'S strategy.

Quality policy and Quality management form the backbone of HAMK's quality work

HAMK's Quality Management is firmly embedded into a quality framework of the **pdca** cycle; not only representing the Deming cycle, but according to the audit team's experiences, also standing for **people and policy**, **dialogue and development**, **commitment and collaboration** and **ambitions and actions** as proprium of the institution.

The institution's quality policy, which is publicly accessible on HAMK's webpage, stipulates that quality means "*doing the correct things right the first time*" (*sic*). Thus, quality work at HAMK implies active use of the QMS tools, commitment of all staff to strategic and quality goals, and a constant "quality dialogue" across the institution as was confirmed in the interviews by staff and students. The staff recognise that the steady contribution to the further development of quality by everyone's (daily) work is crucial for fulfilling the institution's quality policy and strategic ambitions. Quality, as a shared responsibility, is a principle of HAMK's mission, both as education provider and research partner.

Quality actors at all institutional levels, and their responsibilities, are clearly defined and transparently communicated to all stakeholders: the Rector of HAMK as head of the Quality Management Development Team, bears the overall responsibility of the institution's quality system; the quality manager takes care of coordinating quality work at the different

organisational levels such as Schools, Research units and Support services. Students have a strong voice in quality management (“we are heard” as student representatives mentioned in the interview), being part of various institutional bodies and through involvement in processes and feedback circles.

A system of multi-faceted QMS tools fosters strategic management and the profile of the institution

A well-designed BI system, management principles such as Management by Objectives (MBO), competence and knowledge management, clear processes, guidelines, and a comprehensive feedback system form the basis of HAMK’s Quality Management. The system, that has undergone a steady, long-term development since its first implementation, with decisive quality enhancement steps having been taken since the last audit, as mentioned in the self-evaluation report and in the interviews – focuses on three clearly formulated objectives: to foster the realisation of HAMK’s strategic goals and objectives, to ensure uniform operations throughout the institution and to support evaluation and improvement of operations.

Regular reviews of the system ensure that the institution’s quality management remains efficient and target oriented. The comprehensive information – data, results, and reports – which is provided by HAMK’s BI system, is systematically used in monitoring and evaluating strategic goals and testifies to the achievement of the set milestones. Monitoring is supported by an easily accessible and recently remodelled STARA 2.0 tool that transparently tracks the progress of tactical goals and objectives and visualises the progress of achievement. The management team confirmed the major value of this system and the information provided even though there is a tendency of data overload that may overlay analytical aspects necessary for improvement activities.

The various tools that HAMK has implemented into its QMS support has sharpened the institution’s profile as a recognised work-place -oriented Higher Education Institution, with special focus on competence and practice-orientation. Among these tools, which were appreciatively mentioned by internal and external stakeholders in the interviews, are, e.g., profiling, labour-market surveys, feedback from academic and industry partners, alumni, staff and students. Well prepared staff performance appraisals, which are done annually, are a useful and efficient way to link strategic objectives to personal tasks and needs and are highly valued, as the audit team learned in the interviews. The comprehensive feedback system ensures that input from internal and external stakeholders alike is captured for further development of quality and the quality system. The strong students’ voice in the institution’s quality dialogue was confirmed in the interviews.

In the interviews, staff from different units and levels confirmed that their work is guided by HAMK’s strategic goals and the institution’s quality policy principles. Quality issues have become a “set topic” in meetings at all levels, which underlines that quality and quality orientation are firmly incorporated in HAMK’s DNA. The audit team gained convincing evidence that HAMK uses

its solid and well-developed Quality Management System both for strategic management and further development of the institution.