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The effectiveness of external quality audits : a study of Australian universities

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**Abstract**

External quality audits have been introduced in many countries as part of higher education reforms. This article is based on research on 30 Australian universities to assess the extent to which audits by the Australian Universities Quality Agency (AUQA) have improved quality assurance in the core and support areas of the universities. The article analyses the views of 120 respondents including senior members of the universities and some AUQA auditors and evaluates university satisfaction with the external quality audit process. The study finds that the audit process used by AUQA in Australia is satisfactory due to its enhancement-led reviews. The findings indicate that external quality audits alone cannot be credited for improving quality assurance in universities. A combination of external quality audits together with the internal and external operating environment has significantly contributed to improving quality assurance in universities. While external audits have led to an improvement in systems and processes in Australian universities, this study finds that they have not improved education outcomes and the student experience. (HRK / Abstract übernommen)