



FUAS Graduate School: Finland's Leading Graduate School of Universities of Applied Sciences

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Abstract

During the last few years, higher education institutions (HEIs) in Finland as well as in across the world have faced a lot of challenges such as decreasing public funding, increasing demand to improve productivity, efficiency and quality of education, increasing international competition as well as changing needs and expectations of students and other university stakeholders. As an answer to these challenges there are several reforms to increase the strengths, quality and attractiveness of Finnish higher education institutions. This paper focuses one of them: Federation of Universities of Applied Sciences (FUAS Federation) and FUAS Graduate School as one of its new operating models. FUAS Graduate School is a unique form of network-based cooperation between three universities of applied sciences in Finland. It covers more than 20 Master's degree programs in various fields of study varying from healthcare to technology and natural resources, from business to design and hospitality. The central aim of the FUAS Graduate School is to improve the quality and impact of the Master's degree programmes, and thus boost the international competitiveness of the Greater Helsinki Metropolitan area.

The paper analyses the development process and implementation of the FUAS Graduate School. This is an action research based case study. In action research, the purpose is to develop solutions to practical problems and, at the same time, develop new knowledge. The development work of FUAS Graduate School started in 2009, and the first practical action was an intensive curriculum review in 2010. In 2013 the development and implementation have already a firm basis. The paper shows how the FUAS Graduate School has significantly expanded and diversified the study opportunities, increased the use of international experts in the Master's studies in the form of shared workshops, symposiums, and seminars, and initiated joint R&D projects targeted for Master's level students.