

**Approval of the Application by the
Norwegian Agency for Quality Assurance in Education (NOKUT)
for Renewal of Registration**

Register Committee
5/6 December 2018

Ref. RC22/A61

Ver. 1.0
Date 11/12/2018
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Application of:	03/10/2017
Agency registered since:	22/05/2014
External review report of:	21/06/2018
Review coordinated by:	European Association for Quality Assurance of Higher Education (ENQA)
Review panel members:	Tue Vinther-Jørgensen (chair), Đurđica Dragojević (secretary), Terhi Nokkala (academic), Hermann Blum (student)
Decision of:	06/12/2018
Registration until:	30/06/2023
Absented themselves from decision-making:	nobody
Attachments:	1. Confirmation of eligibility, 24/10/2017 2. External Review Report, 21/06/2018

1. The application of 03/10/2017 adhered to the requirements of the EQAR Procedures for Applications.
2. The Register Committee confirmed eligibility of the application on 24/10/2017 having considered clarification received from NOKUT on 11/10/2017.
3. The Register Committee considered the external review report of 21/06/2018 on the compliance of NOKUT with the Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance in the European Higher Education Area (ESG, 2015 version).

Analysis:

4. In considering NOKUT's compliance with the ESG, the Register Committee took into account the following activities:
 - INSTITUTIONAL QUALITY ASSURANCE AUDIT
 - INITIAL INSTITUTIONAL ACCREDITATION
 - INITIAL PROGRAMME ACCREDITATION
 - REVISION OF INSTITUTIONAL ACCREDITATION
 - REVISION OF PROGRAMME ACCREDITATION

5. The Register Committee found that the report provides sufficient evidence and analysis on NOKUT's level of compliance with the ESG.
6. When confirming eligibility, the Register Committee considered that COMBINED RESEARCH AND EDUCATION EVALUATIONS were within the scope of the ESG and requested that these be considered in the external review of NOKUT, provided the methodology was finalised.
7. The review report covered the methodology under Part 2 of the ESG, as far as feasible to date. The report further noted that these evaluations were – thus far – not part of the national quality assurance system and that only an experimental pilot was underway, which may or may not be continued; and that no reports had been produced so far.
8. **The Register Committee underlined that NOKUT is required to make a Substantive Change Report if and when it rolls out a further pilot or makes these evaluations part of its regular offering.**
9. With regard to the specific European Standards and Guidelines, the Register Committee considered the following:

ESG 2.1 – Consideration of internal quality assurance

When NOKUT was admitted to the Register, the Register Committee flagged for attention “whether all aspects of part 1 of the ESG are explicitly and firmly embedded in NOKUT's criteria and processes”.

The Register Committee acknowledged a number of improvements described by the review panel. The Committee, however, noted that the cyclical audit does not include consideration of ESG 1.3, 1.4 and 1.5, as indicated by the panel's comments and the table on page 28 of the report.

While NOKUT stated that these standards were anyway checked in the programme or institutional accreditation, the Committee considered that universities – once they obtained self-accrediting power – only undergo cyclical audits. As a result, these standards were not regularly considered for universities.

While respecting the goal of ensuring efficiency of the whole system and the strong focus on institutional responsibility, the Committee considered that this might lead to improvement opportunities being missed.

While the Register Committee appreciated that the panel felt “confident that the ESG part 1 will be addressed in a more thorough and systematic way in the 3rd cycle” of audits, this cycle was still at pilot stage at the time of the external review.

The Register Committee was therefore unable to concur with the conclusion that ESG part 1 was satisfactorily covered through the totality of QA procedures and concluded that the flag was only partially addressed. The Committee therefore considered that NOKUT only partially complies with the standard.

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ESG 2.3 – Implementing processes

The review panel considered that NOKUT only partially complied with the standard, primarily due to a lack of follow-up of audits.

The panel noted that “actions taken by the institutions after the audit are not checked comprehensively”. While the panel noted that NOKUT provided an avenue for follow-up through seminars and conferences organised to discuss the audit findings and recommendation, it did consider those to be a systematic follow-up and noted that “the institutions do not feel obliged to implement the recommendations received”.

The Register Committee considered that a very “light” approach to follow-up can be appropriate for (purely improvement-oriented) recommendations from an audit with an unconditionally positive outcome. Moreover, it considered that it was in the nature of a recommendation that there is no obligation to implement it.

The Register Committee therefore did not concur with the panel's conclusion, but considered that NOKUT complies with the standard.

ESG 2.4 – Peer-review experts

The inclusion of students on expert groups for initial programme accreditation was flagged when NOKUT was admitted to the Register.

Based on the review report, the Register Committee noted that there was no systematic inclusion of students in all expert groups for initial, paper-based accreditation as yet, but that the inclusion of students in these expert groups was currently piloted.

Notwithstanding that the pilot was acclaimed by NOKUT and stakeholders, the Register Committee concluded that the flag has only been partially addressed so far, pending the pilot advancing to become a full regular part of the process.

The Register Committee was therefore unable to concur with the panel's conclusion, but considered that NOKUT only partially complies with the standard.

The Committee further noted that there were no students included in the panel for the pilot on Combined Education and Research Evaluations, but appreciated that the panel was confident that students would be involved in case this activity became permanent.

ESG 2.7 – Complaints and appeals

The Register Committee noted the panel's analysis that the complaints procedure “is less clearly defined”.

While the Committee acknowledged that the prevailing culture of dialogue meant that institutions were aware of their opportunities to voice complaints, it considered that the possibility to complain and the

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related procedures should be explicitly spelled out, e.g. in the relevant guides for institutions, as required by the standard.

The Register Committee was therefore unable to concur with the panel's conclusion but considered that NOKUT only partially complies with the standard.

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Conclusion:

10. Based on the external review report and the considerations above, the Register Committee concluded that NOKUT demonstrated compliance with the ESG (Parts 2 and 3) as follows:

Standard	Review panel conclusion	Register Committee conclusion
2.1	Full compliance	Partial compliance
2.2	Full compliance	Compliance
2.3	Partial compliance	Compliance
2.4	Full compliance	Partial compliance
2.5	Full compliance	Compliance
2.6	Full compliance	Compliance
2.7	Full compliance	Partial compliance
3.1	Full compliance	Compliance
3.2	Full compliance	Compliance
3.3	Full compliance	Compliance
3.4	Substantial compliance	Compliance
3.5	Full compliance	Compliance
3.6	Full compliance	Compliance
3.7	(not expected)	Compliance (by virtue of applying)

11. The Register Committee considered that NOKUT only achieved partial compliance with some standards. In its holistic judgement, the Committee considered that these are specific and limited issues, and that NOKUT was empowered and well on track to resolve these. Moreover, the current approaches were thus far accepted by all stakeholders concerned.
12. **The Register Committee therefore concluded that NOKUT continues to comply substantially with the ESG as a whole.**
13. **The Register Committee renewed NOKUT's inclusion on the Register. NOKUT's renewed inclusion shall be valid until 30/06/2023¹.**
14. The Register Committee further underlined that NOKUT is expected to address the issues mentioned appropriately and to resolve them at the earliest opportunity.

¹ Inclusion is valid for five years from the date of the external review report, see §4.1 of the EQAR Procedures for Applications.

Norwegian Agency for Quality Assurance in Education (NOKUT)

Øystein Lund

PO Box 578

1327 Lysaker

Norway

Brussels, 24 October 2017

Confirmation of Eligibility: Application for Renewal of Registration

Application no. A61 of 03/10/2017

Dear Øystein,

We hereby confirm that the application by NOKUT for renewal of registration is eligible.

Based on the information and draft terms of reference provided, the external review coordinated by ENQA fulfils the requirements of the EQAR Procedures for Applications.

We confirm that the following activities of NOKUT are within the scope of the ESG:

- *Institutional quality assurance audit*
- *Initial institutional accreditation*
- *Initial programme accreditation*
- *Revision of institutional accreditation*
- *Revision of programme accreditation*

In the application form, NOKUT stated that it did not consider *Combined Subject-specific Evaluations Interaction between Research and Education* to be within the scope of the ESG although the evaluation model concerns teaching and learning in higher education.

EQAR contacted NOKUT on 11/10/2017 to clarify this matter. Considering the clarification provided we understood that the model is currently being developed and we noted that NOKUT is considering including this activity in its regular external QA once the evaluation model has been developed.

The activity should thus be considered in the external review of NOKUT, provided it is finalised in time to be analysed by the review panel.

Please ensure that NOKUT's self-evaluation report covers all the aforementioned activities.

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We further remind you that the following issues were flagged when NOKUT's registration was last renewed and should be addressed in your self-evaluation report and the external review report:

ESG 2.1: Consideration of internal QA [ESG 2005: standard 2.1]

It should receive attention whether all aspects of part 1 of the ESG are explicitly and firmly embedded in NOKUT's criteria and processes.

ESG 2.3: Implementing processes [ESG 2005: standard 2.6]

Attention should be given to the implementation of follow-up activities for accreditation of new programmes and for institutional audits, as well as to their effectiveness in practice.

ESG 2.4: Peer-review experts [ESG 2005: standard 3.7]

It should receive attention whether students have been included in expert groups for initial programme accreditation, provided the process includes an assessment by a group of experts.

In the application form, NOKUT noted that *Analyses of quality in Norwegian higher education* is a separate external QA activity within the scope of the ESG. Based on the information provided we understand that these are studies and research analyses and therefore not activities within the scope of the ESG. This is notwithstanding the fact that they may be relevant to NOKUT's compliance with certain standards i.e. ESG 3.4 Thematic analysis.

Similarly while *thematic mapping and analysis* is not an external QA activity within the scope of the ESG it should be considered in relation to ESG 3.4 Thematic analysis.

We confirm that the following activities are not within the scope of the ESG:

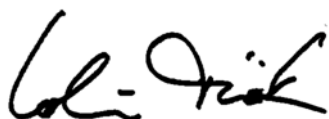
- *Analyses of quality in Norwegian higher education*
- *Thematic mapping and analysis*
- *Advisory Programme in Teacher Education*
- *Study Barometer*
- *Euroma*
- *Education quality prize*
- *Centres for Excellence in Education Initiative (SFU)*
- *Quality assurance of vocational education*
- *Recognition of foreign education*

While these activities are not relevant to your application, it is NOKUT's choice – in agreement with the review coordinator – whether those activities should be commented upon by the review panel.

We will forward this letter to ENQA in its capacity of the coordinator of the external review. At the same time we underline that it is NOKUT's responsibility to ensure that the coordinator and review panel take account of the present confirmation, so as to ensure that all activities mentioned are analysed by the panel.

This confirmation is made according to the relevant provisions of the EQAR Procedures for Applications. NOKUT has the right to appeal this decision in accordance with the Appeals Procedure; any appeal must reach EQAR within 90 days from receipt of this decision.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Colin Tück'.

Colin Tück
(Director)

Cc: ENQA