

Substantive Change Report

by Norwegian Agency for Quality Assurance in Education (NOKUT)

Register Committee

Ref. RC35/C77

Ver. 1.0

Date 2022-03-06

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|---|---|
| Decision of: | 2022-05-16 |
| Report received on: | 2022-04-27 |
| Agency registered since: | 2014-05-22 |
| Last external review report: | 2018-06-21 |
| Registration until: | 2023-06-30 |
| Absented themselves from decision-making: | |
| Attachments: | <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Substantive Change Report 2. Table of how NOKUT's external quality assurance activities address the standards in part I of the ESG (Annex 1) 3. Principles for NOKUT evaluations (Annex 2) |

1. The Register Committee considered the Substantive Change Report of 2022-04-27.
2. The Register Committee took note of the newly introduced activity "Evaluation of quality in education"; an activity that derived from the pilot activity "Joint evaluations of research and education" implemented at the time of the last review.
3. The new activity complements NOKUT's other EQA activities and entails focused programme reviews by providing the evaluated institutions with data and information based on comparative assessments, including examples of good practices from other institutions. Final evaluation results are recommendations rather than a formal decision.
4. The agency uses general principles (Annex 2) and tailor-made criteria, that are agreed with the institutions under review and the public, depending on the focus of the review (ESG 2.3). The self-assessment findings provided by the evaluated HEIs have been integral part of the one evaluation performed so far; the guidelines, though, do not require this. The next review should thus explore how the agency ensures that the self-assessment is ensured to be a component of future evaluations.
5. The Committee noted that the extent to which ESG Part 1 is covered in the reviews depends on the focus area. In general, this is logical for the type of activity and acceptable when the full set of ESG Part 1 is covered through the other agency's activities. In the last review, however, the agency was found to be only partially compliant with ESG 2.1 due to insufficient coverage of ESG Part 1. The next external review should

thus explore whether the agency made changes leading to more comprehensive coverage of the ESG Part 1 in its procedures.

6. The Committee learned that the final outcomes of the evaluations are expected to be public. At the time of the analysis of the Substantive Change Report, the final report of the only evaluation conducted so far was still in development. The next external review should confirm whether the reports of the evaluation of quality in education are made available to the public (ESG 2.6).
7. From the last review, the Committee noted that NOKUT had an informal system of complaints and was found to be partially compliant with ESG 2.7. The next review should consider whether the agency has formalised the complaints procedure, and how it extends to the new activity.
8. The Committee expects that this activity will be analysed in full as part of NOKUT next renewal of registration.

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EQAR Substantive Change Report

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|--|--|
| Agency #1 | Nasjonalt Organ for Kvalitet i Utdanningen |
| Agency acronym | NOKUT |
| Expiry date #1 | 30/06/2023 |
| Contact #1 | Aslaug Louise Slette |
| Phone #1 | +4790787507 |
| Email #1 | aslaug.louise.slette@nokut.no |
| Other organisations? | No |
| A. Has the organisational identity of the registered agency changed? | No |
| B. Has the organisational structure changed? | No |
| C. Changes in EQA activities | 1. One or several new external QA activities were introduced |
| Description new/changed | <p>In the last external review of NOKUT, we described our work on the "Joint evaluations of research and education". At the point that the ENQA review panel finalised their review of NOKUT, the report from this evaluation was not yet finalised, and hence, the Joint evaluations of research and education could not be fully scrutinized as an EQA activity.</p> <p>Since 2018, NOKUT has worked on further developing evaluations of quality in education as an EQA activity. This is because evaluations of quality in education is an important part of NOKUT's EQA portfolio, in particular in relation to our mission of contributing to enhance quality in higher education.</p> <p>The methodology is based on the pilot, the Joint</p> |

evaluations of research and education, and has now been refined into a consistent methodology. One new evaluation is launched based on this methodology. That is the Evaluation of Integrated secondary teacher education.

1. New EQA activity:

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Evaluations of quality in education

Focus

study programmes or higher education institutions

ESG 2.1

NOKUT addresses all of ESG standards 1.1-1.10 across our set of external quality assurance activities and the different activities have different purposes (see uploaded table mapping our external quality assurance activities against the ESG part 1 - ANNEX 1). We here outline how evaluations of quality in education address the effectiveness of the internal quality assurance processes described in Part 1 of the ESG.

Evaluations of quality in education recognise that Norwegian universities and university colleges are responsible for ensuring that the study programmes they offer are of high quality. These evaluations complement NOKUT's other EQA activities by providing the evaluated institutions with data and information based on comparative assessments, including examples of good practice from other institutions. The evaluated institutions can use this information to support internal quality assurance and development. The evaluations produce recommendations for quality enhancement rather than any formal decisions, and participating institutions are under no obligation to carry out any recommended changes.

Depending on the chosen focus of an evaluation, it may for example provide institutions with information on student admission and drop-out (1.4 and 1.7), on staff and student experiences of research-based teaching (1.3 and 1.5) or student support activities (1.6), and on employer and graduate experiences of the programme learning outcomes (1.7 and 1.9).

Evaluations provide institutions with such information at a programme level, but also at a national level. This enables institutions to compare their ...

...own study programmes with equivalent programmes elsewhere.

By providing arenas for the exchange of knowledge and experiences, evaluations also offer institutions opportunities to reflect on issues in educational quality with their own students and colleagues, with peers from other institutions and with other stakeholders.

In sum, NOKUT evaluations support institutions in their internal quality assurance and development in two key ways: By providing information that is relevant for internal quality assurance and by providing arenas for knowledge exchange within institutions, across institutions and between HEIs and other stakeholders. In doing so, evaluations support institutions in their development of quality culture in which all internal stakeholders engage in quality assurance and assume responsibility for quality (1.1).

1. provide the HEIs, NOKUT, the Ministry and other stakeholders with information about the quality of study programmes at a programme level and in a national context

2. facilitate quality enhancement.

To ensure that evaluations are fit for this dual purpose, each NOKUT evaluation compares a set of study programmes, usually within a particular subject area.

Each evaluation is based on NOKUT's policy documents "Quality Areas for Study Programme" and "Principles for NOKUT evaluations" (ANNEX 2) and is preceded by a mapping exercise. The mapping examines existing data on the selected study programmes and reviews extant research to identify the quality areas the evaluation should focus on, the questions the evaluation should address and the evaluation criteria. The evaluation questions and criteria are then refined in dialogue with the expert group and key stakeholders, such as internal stakeholders at the institutions; organisations representing students, HEI staff or employers and the Ministry for Education and Research.

Dialogue invites stakeholder input on:

- the composition of the expert group
 - evaluation questions and criteria
 - self-assessment
-

- arenas for knowledge exchange across institutions

- evaluation follow-up

Institutions are encouraged to consider the level of workload and cost demanded by the evaluation design. Information about the expert group, evaluation questions and criteria, the self-assessment, events and the evaluation follow-up is published on the NOKUT website.

ESG 2.3

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<https://www.nokut.no/en/evaluations-of-quality-in-education>

ESG 2.3

Not applicable

ESG 2.4

NOKUT's evaluations of quality in education are carried out by groups of external experts. Each group includes a student member as well as academics from relevant subject areas. They may also include one or more employers or professional practitioners. NOKUT strives to include one or more international experts in each group. The experts are carefully selected so that the group collectively have the relevant competencies and skills to carry out that particular evaluation.

The expert group is supported by NOKUT through briefings about the aims of the evaluation as an external quality assurance activity and about the evaluation methodology. The expert group is also involved in the development of the evaluation questions, the self-assessment questions and in the planning of the site visit. They carry out the site visit and

write the final report, supported by NOKUT.

Each member of the expert group completes a form declaring any conflicts of interest. In cases where an expert has ties to an institution participating in the evaluation, that expert may not participate in any evaluation activities pertaining to that institution. As described in 2.7, the participating institutions are invited to raise any concerns about the composition of the expert group before the recruitment of the group is formalised. Information about the expert group, including institutional ties, is published on the NOKUT website.

ESG 2.5

NOKUT evaluations lead to recommendations for quality enhancement. Participating institutions are, however, not obliged to carry these out.

In the evaluation report, recommendations are made in response to evaluation questions and criteria. Evaluation questions clarify and operationalize what the expert group should examine and how. The expert group uses the evaluation criteria when answering the evaluation questions in the final report.

As outlined in 2.2 and 2.4, evaluation questions and criteria are developed specifically for each new evaluation. They are always based on:

- NOKUT's policy documents "Quality Areas for Study Programmes" and "Principles for NOKUT evaluations"
- A mapping of existing data and extant research

Proposed evaluation questions and criteria are then refined in dialogue with the expert group and key stakeholders. Once they are finalised, they are published on the NOKUT website and

the evaluation is initiated.

Evaluation criteria may be specific descriptive criteria linked to evidence-based indicators, or they may be prescriptive criteria based on evidence from research and professional practice. This choice is informed by the context of the included study programmes.

NOKUT supports the expert group to ensure evaluation questions and criteria are interpreted consistently. Consistency is also facilitated by NOKUT's comparative approach, whereby each expert group examines a set of study programmes that all belong to a particular subject area or share other key characteristics.

Tailoring evaluation criteria in the case of each evaluation means that consistency in application is mainly ensured across the set of institutions included in the evaluation, rather than across different evaluations.

ESG 2.6

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<https://www.nokut.no/en/publications/research-and-analyses/>

ESG 2.7

Participating HE institutions are invited to submit feedback on proposals and draft text at key stages of the evaluations. This includes invitations to:

- review the proposed composition of the expert group and submit any concerns.
 - review and feedback on proposed evaluation questions and criteria. The expert group will examine the feedback and consider any proposed changes.
 - review the final report chapter about the institution and raise any concerns about the
-

representation of the institution or about recommendations made. The expert group and NOKUT will examine any submitted concerns in light of the evaluation data, and concerns that are deemed to be valid are addressed in the redrafting of the report text.

- submit a position statement that responds to the evaluation report. Position statements are published with the report and submitted to the board of NOKUT.

Once the report has been published, institutions are also invited to complete a survey on how they have experienced the evaluation process and how the evaluation report has been received.

Appeals can be made on the grounds of procedural error in the conduct of the evaluation or on the grounds of perceived bias. Appeals must be lodged with NOKUT within 15 working days of report publication. The appeal is reviewed by an Appeal Panel that includes three representatives from NOKUT's board, including the HE student member. If the panel concludes that the appeal is valid it can request that the evaluation report is withdrawn and/or redrafted. The panel reviews the redrafted report before publication.

ESG 3.4/ESG 3.6

Thematic analysis: Through their comparative approach, NOKUT's evaluations as such summarise findings across study programmes and institutions. At 3–4-year intervals, NOKUT will also conduct and publish thematic analyses that examine findings across evaluations.

Internal quality assurance and professional conduct: As part of its internal quality assurance,

NOKUT has developed the document “NOKUT’s principles for evaluation” in order to ensure that NOKUT’s evaluations are fit for purpose, that they are carried out according to high professional standards, that they are in line with the ESG, and that each person involved in evaluation work is informed about mechanisms of quality and transparency.

Each evaluation is the subject of a review based on information from NOKUT management, project staff, members of the expert group and participating institutions (through the survey described in 2.7). Review findings are used to improve the evaluation methodology.

See uploaded document “NOKUT’s principles for evaluation” (ANNEX 2)

| | |
|---|---|
| D. Activity outside the scope of the ESG | No |
| File #1 | ANNEX_1_Table_standard_2.1.pdf (151 KB) |
| File #2 | ANNEX_2_principles_for_NOKUT_evaluations.pdf (441 KB) |
| Submit form? | I am ready to submit the change report form |

Table of how NOKUT's external quality assurance activities address the standards in part I of the ESG.

| Consideration of internal quality assurance | | External quality assurance activity | | | |
|---|--|---------------------------------------|--------------------------------------|--|--|
| | | Institutional quality assurance audit | Programme accreditation and revision | Institutional accreditation and revision | Evaluations of quality in education (programmes) |
| ESG standard part I | 1.1 Policy for QA | X | | X*** | X**** |
| | 1.2 Design and approval of programmes | X | X**** | X*** | X**** |
| | 1.3 SCL, teaching and assessment | X* | X | | X**** |
| | 1.4 Student admission, progression recognition and certification | X** | X | X | X**** |
| | 1.5 Teaching staff | X* and ** | X | | X**** |
| | 1.6 Learning resources and student support | | X | X | X**** |
| | 1.7 Information management | X | X | X*** | X**** |
| | 1.8 Public information | X* | X | | X**** |
| | 1.9 On-going monitoring and periodic review of programmes | X | | X*** | X**** |
| | 1.10 Cyclical external quality assurance | X | | X*** | |

Table. NOKUT's external quality assurance activities and ESG Part I

* These standards are monitored as part of the institutional quality assurance audit, through the Academic Supervision Regulations § 4-1 (3): "Institutions should have procedures in place for systematically assuring that all study programmes comply with the requirements in the Regulation concerning quality assurance and quality development in higher education and tertiary vocational education (Ministerial Regulations) § 3-1 to § 3-3 and chapter 2 in this regulation."

** This standard is addressed through institutional compliance with Norwegian legislation and institutions' own regulations. NOKUT monitors compliance through its risk-based approach and may initiate a revision.

*** By way of the approval of the institutional quality assurance audit, required for institutional accreditation § 3-1 (3) “The institution’s systematic quality assurances must be approved by NOKUT.”

**** Focus is on supporting quality assurance and enhancement by providing institutions with information that they can use in their quality work.

NOTAT

2022

Principles for NOKUT evaluations
[Undertittel]



NOKUT – Nasjonalt organ for kvalitet i utdanningen – er et faglig uavhengig forvaltningsorgan under Kunnskapsdepartementet.



NOKUTs samfunnsoppdrag, oppgaver og faglige uavhengighet er definert i universitets- og høyskoleloven og er nærmere spesifisert i forskrifter. I tillegg utfører NOKUT tilsyns- og forvaltningsoppgaver etter delegasjon fra departementet.



Formålet med NOKUTs virksomhet er å sikre og fremme kvalitet i utdanning ved

- å føre tilsyn med, informere om og bidra til å utvikle kvaliteten i norsk høyere utdanning og høyere yrkesfaglig utdanning
- å godkjenne og informere om utenlandsk utdanning og informere om mulighetene for godkjenning av utenlandsk utdanning og kompetanse i Norge



NOKUTs arbeid skal bidra til at samfunnet kan ha tillit til kvaliteten i norsk høyere utdanning, høyere yrkesfaglig utdanning og godkjent høyere utenlandsk utdanning.



NOKUT bruker årlig rundt 900 sakkyndige i akkrediteringer, tilsyn, evalueringer, godkjenning av utenlandsk utdanning og prosjekter.

Du kan lese mer om arbeidet vårt på nokut.no.



NOKUT er sertifisert som miljøfyrtårn

| | |
|---------------|----------------------------------|
| Tittel | Principles for NOKUT evaluations |
| Dato | |

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Principles for NOKUT evaluations

1 What is a NOKUT evaluation?

The Act relating to universities and university colleges § 2-1 fourth paragraph and the Regulations concerning quality assurance and quality development in higher education and tertiary vocational education § 1-5 second paragraph stipulate that NOKUT shall carry out evaluations to assess the quality of Norwegian higher education. A similar wording does not currently exist in the Tertiary Vocational Education Act, but NOKUT is free to choose evaluation as a tool in its work also regarding this sector (cf. the Regulations concerning quality assurance and quality development § 1-6). NOKUT also stands free to carry out evaluations for other purposes, such as to provide information on the quality situation in a given subject area related to vocational or higher education or to facilitate quality enhancement (cf. the Act relating to universities and university colleges § 2-1 second paragraph).

The overall purposes of NOKUT's evaluation activities are therefore to assess, obtain information about, and contribute to the vocational and higher education institutions' quality work. NOKUT evaluations can, among other things, give those who are evaluated (hereunder the evaluation objects)¹ the opportunity to compare their activities with others, which in turn can facilitate specialization and differentiation across institutions. NOKUT evaluations also constitute a knowledge base for evaluation objects, NOKUT, and the Ministry of Education and Research.

NOKUT evaluations adopt a comparative approach, usually looking at the quality of education of a set of study programmes within a particular subject area. However, they may also include thematic evaluations focusing on aspects of quality in study programmes across subject areas. In addition, the Ministry of Education and Research may order NOKUT to conduct evaluations of significance for assessing the quality of higher education (cf. the Act relating to universities and university colleges § 2-1 fourth paragraph).

2 What are the principles underlying NOKUT evaluations?

NOKUT evaluations are based on principles laid down in laws and regulations for NOKUT's activities, including the Public Administration Act, the Act relating to universities and university colleges and the Regulations concerning quality assurance and quality development in higher education and tertiary vocational education. In addition, it builds on the Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance in the European Higher Education Area

¹ By the evaluation objects is meant those who are the subject of evaluation. NOKUT has traditionally evaluated the quality of education in study programmes within a particular subject area. However, NOKUT stands free to evaluate other objects as well.

(ESG), internationally recognized quality standards for evaluations, for example the DAC Quality Standards for Development Evaluation, and guidelines for the evaluation of public sector operations from the Norwegian Agency for Public and Financial Management (DFØ).

The following principles are particularly relevant to the conduct of NOKUT evaluations:

1. Evaluations must be independent.

- a. The evaluation processes and results are professionally independent, cf. Act relating to universities and university colleges § 2-1 first paragraph.
- b. NOKUT shall ensure that those who carry out the evaluation are independent and impartial.

2. Evaluations must follow strict quality requirements.

- a. Evaluations shall be based on robust, reliable, and relevant data sources.
- b. Evaluations shall use designs and methods that are fit for purpose.
- c. Evaluations shall be performed by persons with relevant competence.
- d. Those who perform evaluations must exercise caution in conclusions about causation.
- e. Evaluations must be cost-effective and time effective.
- f. NOKUT shall ensure the quality of its external evaluations.

3. Evaluation processes shall be transparent and predictable.

- a. Evaluation objects must be notified of future evaluations as early as possible.
- b. NOKUT shall set appropriate deadlines for all phases of the evaluation process.
- c. Evaluation objects must be informed about why and how the evaluation is carried out, including which data sources and criteria are used for the evaluation and what they are expected to contribute to the evaluation process.
- d. Evaluation objects shall be given the opportunity to raise issues of concern about the evaluation process with NOKUT.
- e. Evaluation objects shall be given the opportunity to review the evaluation report for errors of facts or misrepresentations and raise issues of concern about its recommendations.
- f. Evaluation objects shall be given the opportunity to submit a position statement on the evaluation report. The statements thus received shall be published together with the report and submitted to the board of NOKUT.
- g. NOKUT shall facilitate the participation and involvement of stakeholders in the evaluation process.
- h. Evaluation objects shall be given the right to appeal the evaluation report on the grounds of procedural error in the conduct of the evaluation or perceived bias. NOKUT shall have a clearly defined appeals procedure and communicate it to the evaluation objects.

4. For evaluations carried out by an expert committee, NOKUT shall ensure that the committee has an appropriate composition.

- a. The expert committee shall have competence in, and experience from, the subject areas and/or thematic areas that are relevant to the evaluation.

- b. For evaluations of educational quality, at least one of the members of the committee shall be a student.
- c. The expert committee shall, as far as possible, have a balanced composition in terms of gender, geography, and institutional affiliation.
- d. Evaluation objects shall be given the opportunity to review the proposed composition of the expert committee and submit any concerns.

5. Evaluation results shall be publicly available.

- a. All evaluations carried out by NOKUT are public, cf. Act relating to universities and university colleges § 2-1 fourth paragraph, and published on NOKUT's website.
- b. NOKUT shall contribute to the dissemination of evaluation results, cf. Act relating to universities and university colleges § 2-1 fourth paragraph.
- c. NOKUT shall contribute to the follow up of evaluation results.



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