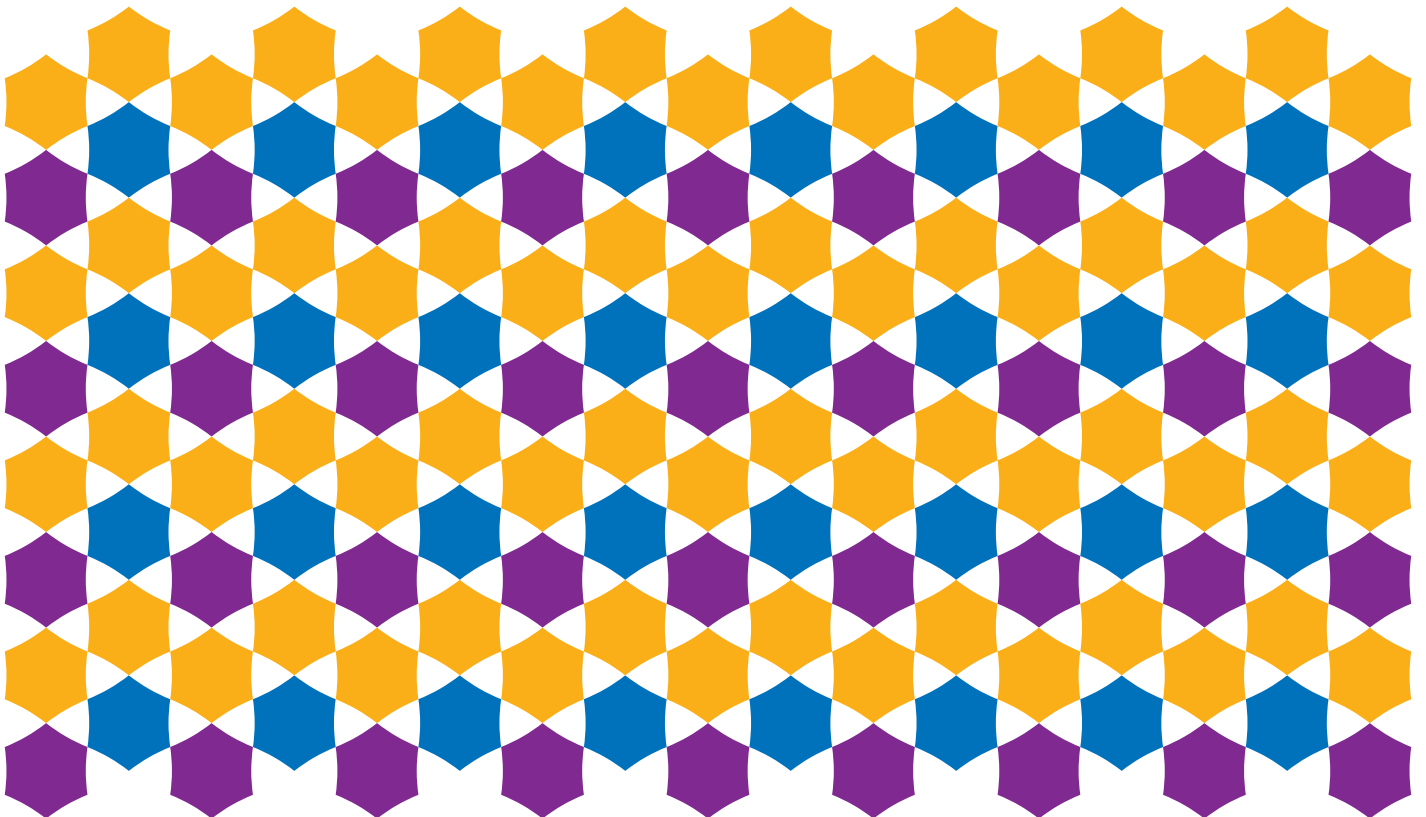


National system for quality assurance of higher education

Presentation of a government assignment



Report 2016:15

National system for quality assurance of higher education
– presentation of a government assignment

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Table of contents

Foreword	5
Summary	6
Definition of concepts	8
Assignment	10
Assuring quality in higher education	11
Shared responsibility	11
International principles for quality assurance and ENQA	12
Method development	13
Pilot studies	13
Consultation with the higher education sector and employers and the labour market	14
UKÄ's reviews	16
Aspect areas, perspectives and assessment criteria	17
Assessment panels	21
International external experts and reviews in English	24
Reviews, report and decisions	24
A legally correct, predictable and transparent quality assurance process	25
Regular follow - up of the quality assurance system and the HEIs' quality assurance processes	26
Appraisal of applications for degree - awarding powers	28
Purpose	28
Main principles for appraising degree - awarding power applications	28
Assessment material	28
Reviews, reports and decisions	29
Follow - up	29
Institutional reviews of the HEIs' quality assurance processes	30
Purpose	30
Main principles for reviewing the HEIs' quality assurance processes	30
Assessment material	31
Assessments and reports	32
Decision	33
Follow - up	33
Programme evaluations	34
Purpose	34
The main principles for programme evaluations	34
Assessment material	35
Assessments and reports	36
Decision	37
Follow - up	37

Thematic evaluations	38
Purpose	38
Choice of theme	38
Methods	38
Implementation of the quality assurance system	39
Appraisal of applications of degree - awarding powers	39
Institutional reviews	39
Programme evaluations	40
Other evaluations of programmes	41
Thematic evaluations	41
Two - or three - point rating scale	42
Institutional reviews	42
Programme evaluations	43
Sanctions with non - approval of quality assurance processes	44
Comparisons of programme quality	46
Background	46
UKÄ's viewpoint	47
Annex 1	49

Foreword

This report presents the government assignment given to the Swedish Higher Education Authority (UKÄ)¹ to develop and implement a new national system for quality assurance of higher education by 1 October 2016.

An important starting point in this work, beyond applicable laws and ordinances, has been to consider the agreements that Sweden has signed with other countries in Europe under the Bologna Process. UKÄ's reviews should not only have international legitimacy, but also ultimately contribute to a greater internationalisation of Swedish higher education. For this reason, *the Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance in the European Higher Education Area* (ESG) are central in this developed model for quality assurance of higher education.

This report to the Government, however, is not the end of efforts to develop methods for national quality assurance of higher education. Upcoming pilot studies of programme evaluations and reviews of higher education institutions' (HEIs') quality assurance processes (institutional reviews) are also important in continued development. UKÄ believes that experience from these pilot studies will be important when revising the evaluation methods. For this reason, this report does not establish any aspects and evaluation criteria for the reviews. Instead, these will be presented in future guidance and support documents. This means that internal processes within UKÄ and guidance documents for the HEIs and assessors will be developed in parallel with the upcoming pilot studies.

An important starting point for the method development efforts has been to involve UKÄ in its entirety. As such, developing and implementing a national quality assurance system involved leveraging internal development efforts and information from different parts of UKÄ's areas of responsibility.

Dialogues with stakeholders in and associated with the higher education sector have been invaluable in method development. We would like to thank the members of the national and international reference groups, advising groups and everyone else who has enthusiastically and with great expertise provided their opinions during the process. Each has contributed to our development efforts in an important way.

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1. Universitetskanslersämbetet.

Summary

Higher education institutions (HEIs) and the Swedish Higher Education Authority (UKÄ) have a shared responsibility for quality assurance in higher education. Valuing this shared responsibility has been a core principle of UKÄ in its work with the government assignment to develop a new system for quality assurance in higher education. It has been important to create a clear link between UKÄ's reviews and the quality assurance processes at the HEIs, while also considering how UKÄ's reviews can contribute to further improving this work. This report on UKÄ's assignment, however, focuses on a model for UKÄ's reviews.

The objectives of UKÄ's reviews are partly to assess the performance of the study programmes and partly to contribute to the HEIs' work with quality improvements in higher education. The new quality assurance system for higher education, which the Government tasked UKÄ to develop, consists of the following four components:

- appraisal of applications for degree-awarding powers
- institutional reviews of the HEIs' quality assurance processes
- programme evaluations
- thematic evaluations.

The model consists of four aspect areas and three perspectives, which together take into account both applicable Swedish laws and ordinances, and *the Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance in the European Higher Education Area* (ESG), and which form the common basis for the system's four components. The aspect areas are:

- governance and organisation
- environment, resources and area
- design, teaching/learning and outcomes
- follow-up, actions and feedback.

The three perspectives are:

- student and doctoral student perspective
- working life perspective
- gender equality perspective.

UKÄ has strived to develop a model that is useful for all four components but that can also support the internal quality assurance processes of the HEIs.

UKÄ's reviews are based on peer review. An independent external assessment panel performs the review. The panel normally consists of external experts, student representatives and employer and labour market representatives who play equally valuable roles.

UKÄ's assignment also includes *'evaluating the advantages and disadvantages of two- and three-point review scales and ultimately determining which scale to use'* (2015/16:76, report 2015/16:UbU9, Riksdag communication 2015/16:155) and evaluating *'whether additional sanctions are needed, beyond those in the communication, if an HEI's quality assurance processes are considered deficient and, in such case, offer proposals for sanctions'* (U2016/01132/UH, U2016/01349/UH).

- UKÄ's conclusion is that a two - point review scale be used both for assessing the HEIs' quality assurance processes and for programme evaluations.
- UKÄ has determined that continued assessment of HEIs with quality assurance processes that do not meet the assessment criteria is sufficient when combined with evaluation of an extra selection of study programmes for ensuring the quality of courses and programmes. No additional sanctions are judged necessary.

The government assignment to UKÄ also includes *'submitting proposals for how the quality of study programmes can be compared between different universities and university colleges'* (U2016/01132/UH, U2016/01349/UH).

- UKÄ has determined that the assignment to coordinate comparisons of programmes should be separate from the assignment to continue developing and implementing a new quality assurance system.

The new model for UKÄ's reviews will be implemented through a number of pilot studies starting in the autumn 2016 and through the regular, six-year review cycle that begins in January 2017.

Definition of concepts

Concept	Definition
Audit trails	Quality assurance processes and the environment in which they are studied during a site visit for an institutional review.
Aspect	A topic assessed in the review.
Aspect area	Grouping of aspects.
Assessment criteria	Requirements to be met when reviewing an aspect.
Assessment panel	A group of external experts that normally includes experts, students, and employer and labour market representatives.
Component	Type of review. The system includes four components: institutional reviews, appraisal of applications for degree - awarding powers, programme evaluations and thematic evaluations.
Degree - awarding powers	Authorisation for an HEI to issue a certain degree.
Degree project	The Higher Education Ordinance specifies the requirement for a student to conduct a degree project to obtain a degree at the first - cycle and second - cycle levels. Also sometimes called an independent project or thesis.
Employer and labour market representatives	Assessors from employers and the labour market included in the assessment panel for UKÄ's reviews.
Examination	Assessment of student performance.
Expert	External expert from the higher education sector included in the assessment panel for UKÄ's reviews.
National system for quality assurance of higher education	A system that includes the quality assurance processes of the HEIs, including self - initiated reviews of programmes and the external reviews UKÄ conducts.
Perspective	The student and doctoral student perspective, the working life perspective, and the gender equality perspective are to permeate all activities of the HEI.
Outcomes	How well the requirements and objectives of the national regulatory framework for higher education and ESG are met.
Qualitative targets	Qualitative targets for different degrees listed in the System of Qualifications in the Higher Education Ordinance and the ordinance for the Swedish University of Agricultural Sciences and the Swedish Defence University. ²

2. Entitled to award first- and second-cycle qualifications (2016).

Self - evaluation	An institution's analysis and evaluation of its own strengths and weaknesses in its operations to show how it systematically ensures and follows up that it meets the assessment criteria for the aspects and perspectives included in UKÄ's reviews.
Site visit	A physical visit by the assessment panel and UKÄ to an HEI in connection with a review.
Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance in the European Higher Education Area (ESG)	A set of standards and guidelines for internal and external quality assurance in higher education in Europe.
Student report	A written documentation being evaluated by UKÄ in institutional reviews. The local student union is given the opportunity to submit its views on the HEI's quality assurance processes.
Student representative	Assessor representing students and doctoral students and who is part of the assessment panel in UKÄ's reviews.

Assignment

On 17 March 2016 the Government amended the appropriation for the current budget year for the Swedish Higher Education Authority (UKÄ) (U2016/01132/UH, U2016/01349/UH). The amendment tasked UKÄ with developing and implementing a new higher education system for quality assurance by 1 October 2016, in accordance with the Government's specifications in the Government communication *Kvalitetssäkring av högre utbildning* (2015/16:76, report 2015/16:UbU9, Riksdag communication 2015/16:155), applicable legislation and ordinances, and the principles for quality assurance developed within the framework of the Bologna Process, known as *Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance in the European Higher Education Area* (ESG, 2015).

UKÄ's assignment also includes

- *'submitting a proposal for how the quality of study programmes can be compared between different universities and university colleges'* (U2016/01132/UH, U2016/01349/UH)
- *'evaluating the advantages and disadvantages with a two-point and three-point rating scale and ultimately determining which scale should be used'* (2015/16:76, report 2015/16:UbU9, Riksdag communication 2015/16:155)
- *'evaluating whether additional sanctions beyond those in the communication are needed if an HEI's quality assurance processes are determined insufficient and, if so, providing proposals for sanctions'* (U2016/01132/UH, U2016/01349/UH)
- *'annually reporting of how well the quality assurance system ensures study programme quality and the degree to which the system has served to improve quality for HEIs and their study programmes'* (U2016/01132/UH, U2016/01349/UH).

Additionally, through 1 February 2021, UKÄ is *'responsible for ensuring that an external follow-up and review of the system are conducted three years after the quality assurance system has been introduced to evaluate its impact on improving quality for both the HEIs and their study programmes. The follow-up will also examine whether and, if so, in what way the experiences of students, employers and the labour market have been leveraged in the review work'* (U2016/01132/UH, U2016/01349/UH). This assignment, however, is not discussed in this report.

Assuring quality in higher education

Shared responsibility

Quality assurance in higher education presupposes that the quality assurance efforts are conducted by HEIs as well as by UKÄ. This means that the HEIs and UKÄ have a shared responsibility for quality assurance in higher education. Chapter 1, section 4 of the Higher Education Act (1992:1434) specifies that universities and university colleges are responsible for maintaining the high quality of their courses and programmes and research, and that quality assurance processes at universities and university colleges are a shared responsibility for staff and students. Section 2 of the Act (1993:792) on the authority to grant certain degrees states that courses and programmes of independent higher education providers are to be grounded on a scientific or artistic basis and on proven experience, and be conducted in such a way as to meet the demands placed on higher education in Chapter 1 of the Higher Education Act. With instructions for UKÄ, Ordinance (2012:810) defines UKÄ's responsibility for quality assurance in higher education. HEIs are responsible for developing their operations, which includes responsibility for organising operations and the content of their courses and programmes and conducting these in a way that meets the requirements and goals of higher education, as specified in the Higher Education Act, the Higher Education Ordinance (1993:100) and the ESG. Consequently, most quality assurance efforts are to be conducted by the HEIs. This requires HEIs to have systematic quality assurance processes that UKÄ is responsible for assessing. UKÄ is also responsible for ensuring that all the courses and programmes are encompassed by these processes. This is done partly by UKÄ evaluating a selection of programmes and partly by the HEIs having responsibility for quality assuring their own courses and programmes and that UKÄ monitors that this has been carried out.

A central and crucial principle for UKÄ has been to create a clear link between UKÄ's reviews and the quality assurance processes conducted at HEIs, while also considering how UKÄ's reviews can contribute to further developing quality assurance processes used by HEIs. This is also in line with international principles for quality assurance of higher education. ESG deals with the internal quality assurance processes of HEIs, the external quality assurance of HEIs' operations, and the requirements to which the quality assurance agencies adhere to. To adhere to the requirements in ESG, both the HEIs and UKÄ must ensure that these principles are followed. The guidelines for the ESG 2.1 standard state the following: 'Quality assurance in higher education is based on the institutions' responsibility for the quality of their programmes and other provision; therefore it is important that external quality assurance recognises and supports institutional responsibility for quality assurance. To ensure the link between internal and external quality

assurance, external quality assurance includes consideration of the standards of Part 1. These may be addressed differently, depending on the type of external quality assurance.'

Taking into account the HEIs' own quality assurance processes is thus an important starting point in UKÄ's reviews. However, this report on UKÄ's government assignment to develop a new higher education system for quality assurance focuses on the model for UKÄ's reviews. UKÄ has strived to develop a model that is useful for all four components, but that can also support the internal quality assurance processes of HEIs.

International principles for quality assurance and ENQA

To build legitimacy for Swedish higher education, UKÄ emphasises the importance of following international principles for quality assurance in the new quality assurance system. This includes, first and foremost, the principles on which ESG is based and that have been developed within the framework of the Bologna Process. ESG was first adopted in 2005 by the ministers for higher education in the countries taking part in the collaboration. In May 2015, a new and revised version was adopted. ESG primarily strives to contribute to a common understanding of quality assurance related to learning and teaching, to contribute to developing mutual respect and to streamline the recognition of degrees and programmes across national borders. To this end, the standards and guidelines in ESG have been drawn up so that they can be applied in each country irrespective of its legal framework, educational system and other circumstances.

It is also important that the quality assurance processes of both HEIs and UKÄ builds on ESG as it effects UKÄ's membership in the European Association for Quality Assurance in Higher Education (ENQA). ENQA is a member organisation for national quality assurance agencies in the European area for higher education. To join ENQA, a quality assurance agency must meet ENQA's requirements. These requirements, in turn, are based on ESG's principles for external quality assurance of HEIs' operations and on the principles to which the quality assurance agencies are to adhere. Membership in ENQA is thus evidence that national quality assurance of higher education adheres to ESG. The former Swedish National Agency for Higher Education (now the Swedish Higher Education Authority, UKÄ) was previously a member but lost its membership in 2012 when a review showed that the Agency did not meet ESG standards. Once UKÄ implements the new model for its reviews, it intends to apply for new membership in ENQA.

To meet ENQA's requirements, the reviews of the quality assurance agency are to include monitoring and enhancement of quality work. ESG also requires that the quality assurance agency is autonomous and acts independently. Autonomy is important for ensuring that processes and decisions are only based on objective grounds. This refers to both organisational and operative autonomy and autonomy when taking formal decisions. The member quality assurance agencies in ENQA are subjected to an external review at least once every five years to ensure they adhere to ESG.

Method development

In 2013, UKÄ began working with method development to revise the then review system. As part of this process, UKÄ conducted conferences, interviews, surveys, and seminars with representatives from higher education institutions (HEIs), teachers, students, employers and the labour market aimed at collecting opinions and development ideas. In April 2014, the Minister of Education appointed Professor Harriet Wallberg to assist the Government Office with proposing how a new quality assurance system for higher education could be designed. This proposal was presented in a memorandum (U2015/01626/UH) produced by the Government Office (Ministry of Education) and was submitted in March 2015. Based on this memorandum, the Government then sent an official communication to parliament (*Kvalitetssäkring av högre utbildning 2015/16:76*), resulting in a report by the Education Committee with associated Riksdag communication (report 2015/16:UbU9, Riksdag communication 2015/16:155).³ These documents constitute the framework for the quality assurance system for higher education that UKÄ was commissioned to develop and implement. The Government's communication, together with experience from the 2011–2014 review cycle and the comments and suggestions that were collected during the work initiated in 2013 formed the basis for further developing the model for UKÄ's reviews.

Pilot studies

In December 2014, a pilot study began for the evaluation of third-cycle programmes. The pilot study included both small and large programmes in natural sciences, engineering and technology, medicine, social sciences, the humanities and artistic research. It also included two interdisciplinary/multi-disciplinary programmes. The pilot study was completed in May 2016, and experience from the assessors, evaluated HEIs and UKÄ have subsequently been used in the process of developing UKÄ's reviews. Above all, these experiences have been used to design the method for programme evaluations.

In the autumn 2016, additional pilot studies will be launched to test the methods for the institutional reviews and the revised method for programme evaluations. The pilot study for programme evaluations will include pre-school teacher and primary teacher training programmes. After the pilot studies are completed, the methods will be adjusted as necessary.

In March 2016, through a revision to the public service agreement for the current budget year, the Government instructed UKÄ to evaluate the work of the HEIs in promoting sustainable development. UKÄ sees this assignment as an opportunity to test methods for thematic evaluations.

3. Government communication (*Kvalitetssäkring av högre utbildning 2015/16:76*), report from the Education Committee and the Riksdag communication (report 2015/16:UbU9, Riksdag communication 2015/16:155) are hereafter referred jointly as the Government's communication without additional references.

Consultation with the higher education sector and employers and the labour market

UKÄ's work to develop and implement a new system for quality assurance in higher education has occurred in dialogue with the HEIs and with teachers, students, employers and the labour market representatives, including through regular discussions with advisory groups and reference groups (see Annex 1).

Advisory groups

UKÄ has recruited a number of people to different advisory groups to provide support and feedback in various questions. These individuals are primarily active at the HEIs, but also within other areas of the sector. The groups consist of people with experience in internal and external quality assurance of higher education and from various HEIs and disciplines (see Annex 1).

Reference groups

In addition to advisory groups, several reference groups have also been set up to discuss and comment on the overarching principles for the quality assurance system and its components. These groups have included representatives from various organisations representing HEIs, students, employers and the labour market (see Annex 1).

An international reference group of experts with proven experience in quality assurance processes in higher education in Europe has also been appointed to provide additional perspectives (see Annex 1).

Dialogue meetings

In the summer 2016, UKÄ held a number of dialogue meetings to discuss and receive comments on UKÄ's proposal for a new quality assurance system.

The entire quality assurance system was discussed at dialogue meetings held on the following dates:

- 30 May. Target group: students
- 3 June. Target group: vice chancellors, quality officers and teacher representatives
- 8 June. Target group: vice chancellors, quality officers and teacher representatives
- 10 June. Target group: employer and labour market organisations
- 17 June. Target group: Swedish Association of University Teachers and Researchers (SULF)

A dialogue meeting was also held on 9 June with representatives from the HEIs to discuss programme evaluations, in particular evaluations of teacher training programmes. In addition to the dialogue meetings, comments could also be submitted online. A summary of the comments has been published online.

An additional dialogue meeting to discuss UKÄ's institutional reviews will take place in autumn 2016.

Experience from previous systems

Conferences, interviews, surveys and seminars were conducted with representatives from HEIs, teachers, students, employers and the labour market to collect opinions and development ideas as a way of leveraging experience from the 2011–2014 evaluation system. UKÄ has also conducted a number of analyses of the effects of the previous evaluation system.

UKÄ's reviews

Reviews by UKÄ consist of the following four components:

- appraisal of applications for degree-awarding powers
- institutional reviews of the HEIs' quality assurance processes
- programme evaluations
- thematic evaluations.

UKÄ is formulating a six-year plan that includes reviews in all four components. The reviews will be based on relevance and with consideration given to the efficient use of resources. This means the selection of reviews and how many are performed within each component will vary from year to year. Institutional reviews of all HEIs will, however, be performed within a period of six years. Information obtained through UKÄ's different activities, analyses and assignments can also serve as the basis for determining the selection and content of the reviews within the various components. To facilitate planning for HEIs in internal quality assurance, UKÄ will notify the HEIs well in advance of a schedule of its planned reviews.

UKÄ has based its development work on the framework of the Government communication stating that the reviews are to

- consider the HEIs' internal quality assurance processes to create a cohesive system
- be focused on both monitoring outcomes and developing the quality of higher education
- be developed in consultation with HEIs, students, employers and the labour market
- consider the individual characteristics and profiles of the different HEIs
- consider the working life perspective and clarify the role of employer and labour market representatives in the reviews
- develop, clarify and strengthen the role of students in the reviews
- value gender equality between women and men
- be legally correct, predictable and transparent.

In accordance with UKÄ's and former Swedish National Agency for Higher Education's reviews and evaluations, UKÄ's reviews in the four components are to be based on peer review. UKÄ will appoint an external assessment panel normally consisting of external experts, student representatives and representatives for employers and the labour market who play equal roles. In UKÄ's experience this is a model that works well.

To achieve a legally correct, predictable and transparent process, the review's different aspects and the basis of review will be communicated to the relevant stakeholders in advance. To further ensure legality, predictability and transparency, UKÄ will introduce a procedure to share the reviews. This procedure involves the HEIs receiving the assessment panels' prelimi-

nary report and having the opportunity to correct any factual errors before the final report is confirmed, which is the basis for UKÄ's decision. It is also possible to appeal UKÄ's decision.

Aspect areas, perspectives and assessment criteria

The model used for UKÄ's reviews consists of four aspect areas and three perspectives that take account of both applicable Swedish law and ordinances and the ESG (Figure 1). The reviews will be based on aspects developed in dialogue with representatives from HEIs, teachers, students, employers and the labour market. The aspects are grouped into four aspect areas, which have been defined based on what part of the HEI's activities they cover.

The four aspect areas are:

- governance and organisation
- environment, resources and area
- design, teaching/learning and outcomes
- follow-up, actions and feedback.

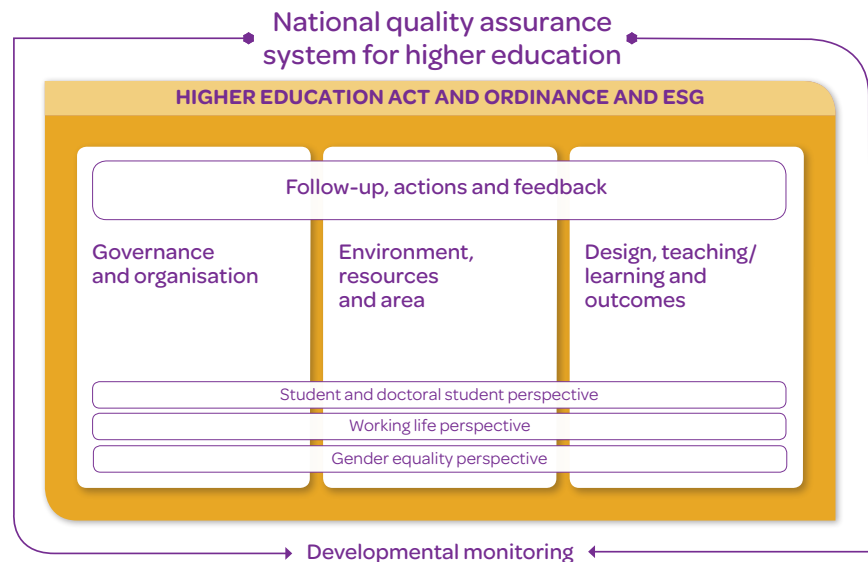
In addition to the four aspect areas, the reviews include three perspectives. These perspectives are:

- student and doctoral student perspective
- working life perspective
- gender equality perspective.

Student influence and participation are regulated in the Higher Education Act, particularly in relation to the HEI's quality assurance processes (Chapter 1, section 4). Furthermore, the student perspective is more clearly described in the most-recently revised ESG (2015) than in the previous version. The working life perspective is also regulated in the Higher Education Act. For example, first-cycle programmes are to prepare 'students to deal with changes in working life' (Chapter 1, section 8). Gender equality and gender mainstreaming are key quality factors to be considered in the reviews and, like many other authorities, including the HEIs, it is an area that UKÄ has been tasked to develop.

UKÄ formulates the requirements to be met when assessing aspects and perspectives, i.e. assessment criteria. Aspects, perspectives and the basis for the review will be more closely described in the guidance documents UKÄ is developing for each component. However, it is important for UKÄ's assessment criteria to remain open-ended and not to be excessively controlling in how HEIs choose to organise and conduct their operations.

Figure 1. Overview of the model's aspect areas and perspectives. The model is based on the Swedish Higher Education Act, the Swedish Higher Education Ordinance and ESG. Aspects and perspectives are assessed using the assessment criteria. The aspect area 'follow-up, actions and feedback' is influenced by and has repercussions on the other aspects and is thus included in the assessment criteria for the other aspects. The HEIs are asked to describe, analyse and evaluate specific examples of how they systematically ensure and follow-up that they fulfil the assessment criteria for the different aspects and perspectives.



Student and doctoral student perspective

Students have the right to exercise influence over the courses and programmes and will also be involved in HEIs' quality assurance processes. This makes the student and doctoral student perspective an important factor in UKÄ's reviews. Assessing the student and doctoral student perspective involves focusing on how student influence works in practice, and how students are given opportunities and incentives to participate in the HEIs' quality assurance processes and the development of courses and programmes. The assessment criteria will primarily be based on the Higher Education Act's wording on student influence. Chapter 1, section 4 specifies that the quality assurance processes at universities and university colleges are a shared concern of staff and students. Chapter 1, section 4a clarifies that students have the right to exert influence over their courses and programmes. The HEIs will also work to ensure that students take an active role in the continued development of courses and programmes. Chapter 2, section 7 states that students have the right to representation when decisions or preparations are made that have bearing on their courses, programmes or situation. The formulations in ESG are also considered, for example, the standard 1.2 in the ESG (on the design and approval of programmes) and standard 1.3 (on student-centred learning, teaching and assessment).

To strengthen the perspective of students in UKÄ's reviews, student representatives are included in the assessment panels for all components,⁴ i.e. the

4. Appointment of these students is described in the section on assessment panels.

review of the HEIs' quality assurance processes, appraisal of applications for degree-awarding powers and in thematic evaluations.

To further incorporate student experiences and perspectives on the courses and programmes, student interviews will provide supporting documentation for UKÄ's reviews. Student interviewees should first and foremost be appointed by a student organisation that either belongs to a student union or has union status at the HEI. If the student union does not have the resources to recruit the students, UKÄ, in consultation with the HEI's quality officer or other designated person, will ensure that students are recruited for the interviews.

In the review of the quality assurance processes of HEIs, UKÄ also intends to invite the local student union at the HEIs to submit a so-called student report, in which the union presents its views on the HEI's quality assurance processes.

To further strengthen the student and doctoral student perspective, it is included in the training completed by all of UKÄ's assessors. While incorporating the student and doctoral student perspective when reviewing all of the aspect areas, the assessors will include an overall assessment of these perspectives in their report as a way of clarifying the student and doctoral student perspective in all their judgements.

Working life perspective

Since higher education is to be useful and to prepare students for careers, UKÄ's reviews also takes into account the working life perspective. The focus is on how useful courses and programmes are and how well they prepare students for future careers. The assessment criteria are primarily based on the Higher Education Act and Systems of Qualifications,⁵ but also on the ESG, which in standard 1.1 states that external stakeholders are to be involved with quality assurance. Standard 1.2 also states that the programmes are to provide the knowledge necessary for future careers and that they are to be formulated in dialogue with students and other stakeholders. The Higher Education Act states that one of the aims of first-cycle courses and programmes is to prepare 'students to deal with changes in working life' (Chapter 1, section 8). In addition, second-cycle studies are to involve acquiring specialist knowledge, competences and skills building on first-cycle courses and programmes, and develop the students' potential for professional activities that demand autonomy or for research and development work (Chapter 1, section 9). Furthermore, third-cycle courses and programmes are to develop the knowledge and skills required to be able to undertake autonomous research (Chapter 1, section 9). The System of Qualifications also has qualitative targets for different types of degrees, which are linked to the usefulness of the academic programmes in future careers.

Collaboration is an important quality parameter and will be one of several indicators for the working life perspective in UKÄ's reviews. In the self-evaluations, UKÄ will ask HEIs to describe and justify how and on what grounds collaboration occurs. UKÄ feels that a connection to the students' future

5. The term 'System of Qualifications' refers to Annex 2 of the Higher Education Ordinance and the annex to the Ordinance (1993:100) for the Swedish University of Agricultural Sciences (1993:221) and the annex to the Ordinance (2007:1164) for the Swedish Defence University. Henceforth, the term System of Qualifications is used with this meaning.

careers is important throughout higher education. With the large variety of programmes offered at Swedish HEIs, UKÄ's reviews are not to become normative for determining what forms of collaboration and cooperation with employers and the labour market should be carried out. For this reason, UKÄ feels that it is important for its assessment criteria to not be determinative of how and on what basis collaboration may occur.

The working life perspective is also taken into account by including representatives of employers and the labour market in UKÄ's assessment panels and by including the perspective in the training given to UKÄ's assessors. UKÄ also intends to examine the possibility of receiving input from the HEIs' employer and labour market partners through interviews. While incorporating this perspective in the review of all the aspect areas, the assessors will also provide an overall review of the working life perspective in their report. This is to clarify the working life perspective in all reviews.

Gender equality perspective

Equality between men and women and gender mainstreaming are key quality factors to be considered in UKÄ's reviews. The assessment criteria applied are primarily based on the Higher Education Act and the System of Qualifications. Chapter 1, section 5 of the Higher Education Act states that equality between women and men shall always be taken into account and promoted in the operations of HEIs. From this year, the Government has also instructed all state institutions, Chalmers University of Technology and Jönköping University⁶ to develop a plan for their gender mainstreaming efforts. This involves explaining how they intend to develop efforts to mainstream gender into their operations so that gender equality becomes a part of the institution's day-to-day activities, such as in the HEI's governance processes. The Government emphasises equal opportunities for careers in academia, the need to combat gender-based educational choices, and the need to improve women's and men's completion of studies as particular priority areas.

Since 2015, UKÄ has also been part of the Government's programme *Gender Mainstreaming in Government Agencies* (JiM). This means that UKÄ has developed a plan for supporting gender mainstreaming in its operations, which is included as an assignment in the instructions.

Based on the above, UKÄ will integrate a gender equality perspective in the reviews in all four components. UKÄ will ensure that gender perspectives are incorporated by always striving for a gender balance in the groups to be interviewed, as well as UKÄ's assessment panels. Gender mainstreaming will also be included when training UKÄ's assessors.

Within the framework of the various components, UKÄ intends to examine how a gender perspective is included in the processes at every level of the HEIs' organisations.

While incorporating the gender equality perspective in the review of all the aspect areas, the assessors will also provide an overall review of the gender equality perspective in their report to clarify the gender equality perspective in all reviews.

6. Independent higher education institution entitled to award third-cycle qualifications in one disciplinary research domain and one specific research domain (2016).

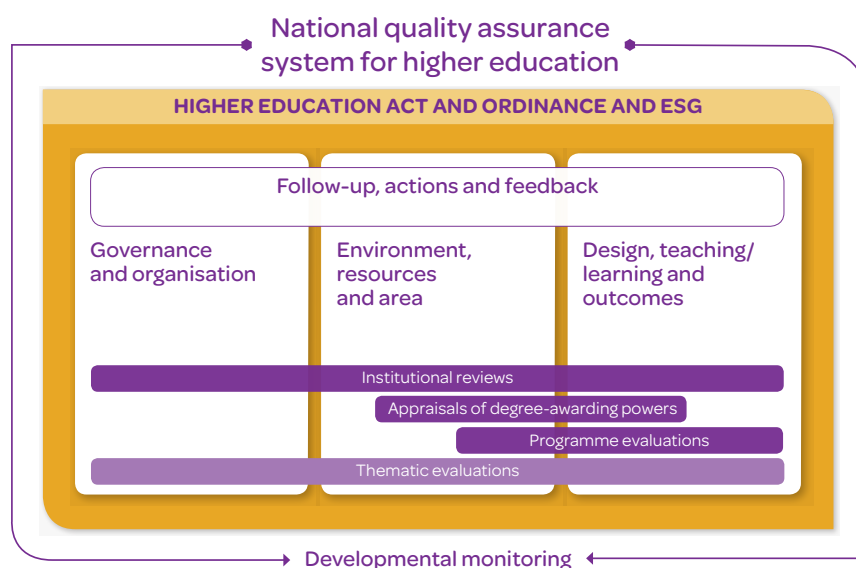
Focus of the various components

The aspect areas and perspectives form a common basis for UKÄ's reviews within the four components. The relevant aspect areas to be assessed differ between the components, however, because they have different purposes and focuses (Figure 2). For the same reason, the detailed aspects and the assessment criteria may vary in the different components.

Reviews of the HEIs' quality assurance processes will include all aspect areas, and the reviews' focus will be on how well the HEIs' quality assurance processes, including monitoring, action and feedback processes, help to develop and ensure the quality of the courses and programmes. Furthermore, appraisal of degree-awarding powers⁷ and programme evaluations will include the aspect areas 'environment, resources and area', 'design, teaching/ learning and outcomes' and 'follow-up, actions and feedback'. Programme evaluations will focus on actual results and on how the programme is followed up and developed while the appraisal of degree-awarding powers will focus on prerequisites and processes. The focus of the thematic evaluations will vary, for obvious reasons, depending on the theme being evaluated. A clear focus in each component will allow for efficient use of resources.

The aspects and the basis for the review will be described in the guidance documents that UKÄ is developing for each component.

Figure 2. Diagram of the scope and focus of the different components.



Assessment panels

UKÄ's reviews are based on peer review by an independent external assessment panel that normally consists of external experts, student representatives and representatives from employers and the labour market. All the assessors have the same formal status and participate on equal terms. UKÄ

7. UKÄ has chosen not to regularly assess the aspect area of *governance and organisation* within the framework for the appraisal of degree-awarding powers, as this is assessed when the HEIs' quality assurance processes are reviewed. However, independent higher education providers who have not had their quality assurance processes assessed will need to describe these in relation to the aspect area *governance and organisation* in their application.

normally appoints representatives to the assessment panels following a nomination process, in which the HEIs, student unions through the Swedish National Union of Students (SFS) and professional organisations nominate assessors. UKÄ provides feedback to the nominating groups and informs them of which nominations have led to appointments. In addition to these nominations, UKÄ also uses recommendations from the various networks.

UKÄ appoints the assessors, but it is important for the panels to be appointed in dialogue with the HEIs. As a quality assurance measure, the HEIs have the opportunity to comment on the proposed appointees to the assessment panel, for example, to point out conflicts of interest, before the panel is officially appointed by UKÄ.

Gender balance, geographic distribution and national and international experience are preferred among the panel of assessors. Collectively, the panel is to have sufficiently broad and extensive expertise to assess all aspect areas and perspectives based on the assessment criteria. An assessor may not have a conflict of interest with the HEI being assessed. The rules of disqualification for government agencies (§§ 11 and 12 of the Administrative Procedure Act (1986:223)) aim to avoid conflicts of interest that could call into question objectivity, and UKÄ has established procedures for dealing with conflicts of interest.

The panel is to take advantage of the knowledge and experience of the experts, students and representatives from employers and the labour market to assess the aspect areas and perspectives that are included in the review. All assessors in a panel will receive the same introduction and training by UKÄ to clarify the assignment and the expectations. The assessor training will also include interview techniques and orientation with the laws, ordinances and the ESG, on which the assessors must base their work. The assessors' training will also discuss gender equality.

It is important to emphasise that all assessors must support the basis for the review and the report that the panel of assessors ultimately submits to UKÄ.

Experts

Collectively, the experts from the higher education sector on the assessment panel are to have sufficiently broad and extensive expertise to assess all aspect areas and perspectives being examined in the review. Depending on the component being assessed, different areas of expertise will be needed from these experts. The use of external experts with international experience can potentially broaden the competence of the panel and provide external perspectives.

In their reviews, all the experts within all components must include student and doctoral student, working life, and gender equality perspectives. These will be given special attention during the training.

The panel's chair is always an expert, since this task requires very good knowledge of the higher education sector.

Student representatives⁸

Student representatives in the assessment panels take part in assessing all aspect areas and perspectives in the review. Having student representatives on the panels strengthens the student and doctoral student perspective, but

8. Includes doctoral students.

it is important to emphasize that they are not solely responsible for assessing this particular perspective. Students are expected to participate in the entire review process from beginning to end. In their role as assessor, the student is an expert, just like the other assessors, and comments independently on the basis of his or her expertise and experience.

To develop the process of appointing student representatives, UKÄ works with SFS and the country's student unions. UKÄ feels that a special function within SFS is needed to ensure the nomination of student representatives and that this function should be separate from SFS's regular activities. An examination is needed of whether the resources allocated by the Government to SFS in connection with the previous evaluation system are sufficient to achieve the objective of the new system.

Employer and labour market representatives

Employer and labour market representatives in the assessment panels take part in assessing all aspect areas and perspectives in the review. Their role is to assess how the HEI ensures that courses and programmes are useful and prepare students for careers (in assessing the HEIs' quality assurance processes) and how individual programmes are useful and prepare students for careers (appraising degree-awarding powers and programme evaluations). In addition, the assignment may also include general reflections within a subject or programme area. Including employer and labour market representatives in the reviews strengthens the working life perspective. Just as student representatives are not only responsible for assessing their particular perspective, the employer and labour market representatives are not solely responsible for assessing the usefulness of courses and programmes and how they prepare students for careers.

In the pilot study for evaluating third-cycle programmes, employer and labour market representatives participated in the entire evaluation process, which these representatives greatly appreciated. However, employer and labour market organisations and the Government's communication have expressed the need for limiting the role of these representatives. UKÄ has therefore more narrowly-defined and clarified their role and assignment based on experience from the pilot study and the views expressed to UKÄ in connection with the reference group meetings and dialogue meetings. UKÄ will test the following limitations for the role of the employer and labour market representatives. An employer and labour market representative should at a minimum

- participate in the first meeting of the assessment panel and training prior to the assignment
- ensure that the working life perspective is considered in the various aspect areas included in the review
- participate in the review of the working life perspective and, if possible, be responsible for this part of the report
- read and, when necessary, comment on the reviews of all perspectives and aspect areas
- participate in the assessment panel's final meeting on the report.

International external experts and reviews in English

There is a general need to support expanded internationalisation in higher education. Increasing use of external experts with international experience for UKÄ's quality assurance reviews of higher education can contribute an international dimension to the development of both Swedish higher education and quality assurance processes. ESG standard 2.4 also states that it is desirable for international experts to participate in external quality assurance efforts conducted by quality assurance agencies like UKÄ. By 'international experience', UKÄ means both foreign experts who are active in Sweden or another country and Swedish experts who are or have been active in another country.

According to UKÄ, the benefits of using external experts with international experience are

- the potential to find external experts with the right competence increases, especially in small disciplinary domains
- experts with international experience can contribute expertise that adds another dimension to the review and can help improve quality for Swedish higher education
- experts working abroad can help increase knowledge about Swedish higher education in other countries.

Based on this, UKÄ's reviews should increasingly be able to be conducted with English as the working language. UKÄ has concluded that a review can be conducted in English, but that UKÄ's decisions are always to be written in Swedish in accordance with the requirements of the Language Act (2009:600). The language used for interviews with representatives from the HEIs already varies. For example, if an interview involves a non-Swedish teacher, it is conducted in English if the HEI so wishes.

UKÄ's reviews are normally conducted in Swedish, but there may be reason for reviews to partially be conducted in English. In special cases, reviews can be entirely conducted in English. In these cases, the HEI provides and pays for any translation of documents into English. The reviews in English are always conducted in consultation with the HEI and with written agreement between the HEI and UKÄ.

For the reviews conducted in English, UKÄ is to ensure that both its own staff and the concerned assessors have an appropriate command of English for the assignment.

Reviews, report and decisions

Common for all UKÄ's reviews of all components is that assessment panel reports are to be based on an overall review of all documentation and that all aspect areas and perspectives included in the review are to be judged as satisfactory for UKÄ to come to a positive decision.

The reviews result in a report from the panel that constitutes the basis for UKÄ's decision or recommendation to the Government (applies to independent higher education providers). For the reviews not to be just normative but also contribute to improving quality at the HEIs, the assessment panel is to justify its reviews and provide feedback to the HEIs in its report. This

feedback should include both identified improvement opportunities and descriptions of good examples.

A legally correct, predictable and transparent quality assurance process

Developing and implementing UKÄ's reviews also includes ensuring that the system is legally correct, predictable and transparent. This primarily involves clarifying UKÄ's processes in connection with the reviews.

Sharing of assessment panel's report before the decision

The assessment panel will share its findings with the HEIs before the report is finalised and UKÄ makes a decision. This will give the HEIs the opportunity to correct any factual errors. For reviews of the HEIs' quality assurance processes, programme evaluations and appraisals of degree-awarding powers, the HEIs will have three weeks to review the report and submit comments on any factual errors to UKÄ. For thematic evaluations, this review process is determined on a case-by-case basis. Timely planning is required of UKÄ to allow the HEIs to plan for this work. Accordingly, HEIs will be notified about the relevant schedule well in advance and be informed when they are expected to provide comments on the draft report.

This review approach has been tested in the pilot study evaluating third-cycle programmes with positive responses from the assessed HEIs. This procedure was also presented at the dialogue meetings, and representatives from the HEIs responded positively to having access to the report before UKÄ makes its decision about the review's findings.

Appealing decisions

The principles for quality assurance developed within the Bologna Process state that processes must be legally correct, predictable and transparent. ESG standard 2.7 specifies that processes for complaints and appeals should be a clearly-defined part of the external quality assurance processes and these are to be communicated to the HEIs.

Swedish administrative law praxis does not allow one authority to appeal the decision of another authority. The ability of independent higher education providers to appeal UKÄ's decisions is regulated by general administrative rules. However, UKÄ has determined that all HEIs may appeal decisions that the university chancellor makes in UKÄ's reviews.

Section 27, paragraph one of the Administrative Procedure Act (1986:223) states that when an authority finds that an initial decision by a first instance is manifestly wrong due to new circumstances or for some other reason, it is to correct the decision, provided that this can take place rapidly, simply, and without detriment to any private party. The main principle when reassessing decisions is that the authority that made the original decision is to evaluate whether the decision is clearly incorrect.

UKÄ has determined that both state HEIs and independent higher education providers are already able to appeal UKÄ's decisions, which has also occurred in a few cases. To clarify this process, UKÄ intends to appoint a special expert group, which, when asked, may review UKÄ's evaluation

process for the relevant case in its entirety. The expert group's report is then used as the basis for the university chancellor's decision in the appealed case.

Regular follow-up of the quality assurance system and the HEIs' quality assurance processes

All reviews conducted by UKÄ are to be followed up. This corresponds to ESG standard 2.3, which considers follow-up as an important part of the external review. Each component description specifies the procedures for its assessment.

In accordance with its appropriation instructions, UKÄ is to annually report to the Government on *'how well the quality assurance system is ensuring the quality of courses and programmes and the degree to which the system has served to improve quality for the HEIs and their courses and programmes'*. This annual reporting consists of two parts: to report how the system is working and how the system improves quality for the HEIs. Continuously following up and improving the quality of the reviews to achieve both of these goals is an important part of UKÄ's internal quality assurance processes.

How does the quality assurance system work?

To follow up the quality assurance system, UKÄ plans to conduct dialogue meetings with the HEIs and representatives for teachers, student organisations, employers and the labour market. In addition, UKÄ intends to continue organising a regular conference to discuss more comprehensive quality issues. UKÄ also plans to regularly compile data based on national statistics on HEIs and courses and programmes, which can provide a picture of how the educational landscape changes over time. These compilations may be published separately or in the annual report that UKÄ submits to the Government.

To follow-up and evaluate how well the reviews of the system function, surveys will be sent to review participants, including representatives from the HEIs and the assessors.

Does the system improve quality?

The question of whether the quality assurance system improves quality can be divided into two levels. Has the system improved quality for the HEIs at a general level, and has it improved the courses and programmes?

UKÄ's report *Utbildningsutvärderingarnas effekter (2015:21)* (translation: The effects of programme evaluations) noted the effects of the evaluation system from 2011 to 2014 at both levels. At the general level, this primarily involved the HEIs having the opportunity to conduct a thorough review of courses and programmes and strengthen their quality assurance processes in connection with these reviews. For this reason, UKÄ intends to follow up to see whether similar effects can be found with the new system.

UKÄ will continuously monitor the effects of the quality assurance system at both the HEI and the programme levels. The HEIs' presentation of corrective measures for courses and programmes that have received criticism and whose degree-awarding powers have been under review has proven valuable in previous analyses of the evaluation system's effects. Another possibility is to conduct meta-analyses of UKÄ's reviews by systematically reviewing them

and compiling their findings, their general characteristics and their results. UKÄ's report *Utbildningsutvärderingarnas effekter* (2015:21) noted the direct effects on the courses and programmes were mainly changes in the process related to the degree projects and to course syllabi.

Questions concerning the effects of the quality assurance system at both the HEI and programme levels will also be asked at the dialogue meetings and conferences. Surveys will be used to collect information about the system's effects at different levels.

Appraisal of applications for degree-awarding powers

Degree-awarding power applications are appraised after being submitted and the appraisal is conducted according to the provisions of applicable laws and ordinances.

Appraisals of degree-awarding power applications examine whether the education provider meets the necessary prerequisites for the students to be able to achieve the qualitative targets for the degree the programme should result in.

Purpose

In accordance with chapter 1, section 13 of the Higher Education Act the purpose of appraising degree-awarding power applications is to examine whether an education provider meets the necessary prerequisites for students to achieve the objectives defined by the Riksdag and the Government for the degree the programme should result in.

Main principles for appraising degree-awarding power applications

The main principles for UKÄ's review of the right to award degrees are well tested. A starting point for UKÄ's method development has been that these reviews do not require any major changes and that the existing basic principles for the assessments should be maintained. The focus of the assessment is still on whether students are provided the necessary conditions to achieve the objectives required for the degree being applied for. The aspects and assessment criteria, however, have been reworked and developed to harmonise with the other components. Since the working life, student and doctoral student, and gender equality perspectives are emphasised in every UKÄ review, these perspectives are also highlighted within the framework for appraising of degree-awarding power applications.

The HEIs will be asked to describe how they systematically ensure and follow-up that they meet the assessment criteria for the different aspects and perspectives. Aspects, perspectives and assessment criteria will be more thoroughly described in future guidance documents for HEIs and assessors.

Assessment material

Reviews are based on the HEI's application and interviews with programme representatives. All assessment material for the review is to be weighed together.

HEI applications

Applications for degree-awarding powers are to be submitted to UKÄ. Independent higher education providers, the Swedish University of Agricultural Sciences and the Swedish Defence University submit their applications to the Government, which then normally sends the application to UKÄ for review and report.

Interviews

The written application is supplemented with interviews with programme representatives. Interviews with students are conducted if the programme is already being offered at a closely-related degree level or within a field or subject that can be considered closely related to the degree being applied for.

Reviews, reports and decisions

The assessment panel's task is to report whether the programme fulfils the assessment criteria for the reviewed aspect areas and perspectives. It will do this based on the application, interviews and any supplemental information. In the case of a negative report, the assessment panel's determinations and reasoning must clearly present what is judged to be inadequate. In its report, the panel recommends whether to grant or deny the application. UKÄ's position is based on this report and recommendation for a decision, and on UKÄ's deliberations. Before UKÄ's final decision, the report will be sent to the HEI for review according to the procedure described previously in this document.

All aspect areas and perspectives must be judged as satisfactory for the application to be granted. In cases of a smaller but well-defined issue, where measures to remedy the issue are deemed within reach, UKÄ can extend the review period. This gives the applicant time to submit specific additional information. The deadline to submit additional information is six months.

UKÄ makes decisions on degree-awarding authorisation for state HEIs, except for the Swedish University of Agricultural Sciences and the Swedish Defence University. For independent higher education providers, the Swedish University of Agricultural Sciences and the Swedish Defence University, the assessment panel and UKÄ's determination and recommendation to approve or not approve the application will be submitted to the Government.

Follow-up

UKÄ considers it important to follow-up its reviews, including reviews of degree-awarding applications. This also corresponds with the ESG standard 2.3, which notes follow-up as a part of the external quality assurance process. Forms of follow-up for reviews of degree-awarding applications are currently being developed and may include surveys.

Institutional reviews of the HEIs' quality assurance processes

The reviews verify that the HEIs ensure that the courses and programmes at all levels comply with applicable laws, ordinances and the ESG.

The reviews focus on how well the HEIs' quality assurance processes, including follow-up, actions and feedback procedures, help to systematically enhance and ensure the quality of the courses and programmes.

The reviews also contribute to improving the HEIs' quality since the assessors provide feedback in their reports on both identified good examples and areas in need of improvement.

Purpose

Institutional reviews aim to confirm that the quality assurance processes ensure high quality courses and programmes and help to enhance the HEIs' quality.

Main principles for reviewing the HEIs' quality assurance processes

The method for institutional reviews has been developed in accordance with the Higher Education Act, the Higher Education Ordinance, the System of Qualifications and the ESG. ESG specifies that HEIs should have a quality assurance policy (standard 1.1) and there should be processes for approval of study programmes (standard 1.2) and monitoring their achievement of objectives (standard 1.9).

According to ESG standard 2.1, external quality assurance processes should review 'the effectiveness of the internal quality assurance processes described in Part 1 of the European Standards and Guidelines'. The standard's guidelines state: 'Quality assurance in higher education is based on the institutions responsibility for the quality of their programmes and other provision; therefore it is important that external quality assurance recognises and supports institutional responsibility for quality assurance. To ensure the link between internal and external quality assurance, external quality assurance includes consideration of the standards in Part 1. These may be addressed differently, depending on the type of external quality assurance.' ESG standard 1.1 states that HEIs should undergo periodic external reviews. UKÄ's position is that this corresponds to the reviews conducted by UKÄ. Of course, this does not prevent the HEIs from initiating their own external reviews of their operations, if they consider it appropriate.

UKÄ is to verify that the HEI ensures that all levels of its courses and programmes fulfil the requirements of the Higher Education Act, the Higher Education Ordinance, the System of Qualifications and ESG. The institutional reviews focus on how well the processes (including follow-up, actions and feedback processes) help to enhance and ensure the quality of the courses and programmes.

The reviews are also to help the HEIs enhance quality. This is one reason why it is important for the assessment panel's reports to highlight good examples. Highlighting shortcomings and planned measures and receiving feedback also helps to improve the quality of the reviewed HEI.

All HEIs will be reviewed within a period of six years. Aspects, perspectives and assessment criteria will be more thoroughly described in future guidance documents for HEIs and assessors.

Assessment material

The basis for the review consists of a self-evaluation by the HEI, a student report, interviews, site visits, audit trails and other information. All assessment material for the review is to be weighed together.

The HEI's self-evaluation and student report

The purpose of self-evaluation is to give the HEIs the opportunity to demonstrate that their quality assurance processes ensure and enhance the quality of the courses and programmes. The HEIs are asked to describe, analyse and evaluate how they systematically ensure and follow up that they fulfil the assessment criteria for the different aspects and perspectives. Examples should be given to support the presentation. The HEI's report should focus on the results of the quality assurance process, that is, to show the way in which follow-up, actions — to address identified shortcomings and to maintain and further enhance strengths — and feedback help to enhance the programmes systematically. The self-evaluation's main points should be supported by both references to relevant policy documents and by several specific examples of how quality assurance processes contribute to quality assurance and quality enhancement. The HEI should also present the strengths and development areas, and how these are being developed further.

In the upcoming pilot study, UKÄ intends to offer the local student union the option of submitting a written statement, known as a student report, in which the union gives its opinion of the quality assurance work at the HEI.

Interviews, site visits and audit trails

Interviews will be conducted both before and during the site visit. The purpose of the initial interview is to gain an overall picture of the quality assurance processes, to improve planning for the site visit, and to identify the areas that the panel wants to gain a detailed picture of during the site visit. Initial interviews and site visits involve representatives from the HEI and student representatives, and possibly employer and labour market representatives with which the HEI cooperates.

AUDIT TRAILS

To examine how quality assurance processes work in practice, the assessors examine one or more areas of focus. This is a common approach in other European quality assurance systems.

In this context, areas of focus are quality assurance processes, related to the aspects, perspectives and assessment criteria in the selected and assessed environment during the site visit. To see how quality assurance processes work in practice, the process is followed from the overall organisation at the HEI to the local level, that is, an environment which could consist of one or more courses and programmes (main field, subject area, programme) or other types of environments, like a library. The selection principles for areas of focus will be more clearly defined and tested during the pilot study.

At the site visit, the panel speaks with the HEI's management, teachers and students, and possibly also with other groups of staff and representatives for employers and the labour market that the HEI cooperates with.

Other assessment material

Prior to reviews, UKÄ produces data for the HEI relevant to the aspects to be examined. This data could be previous inspections, appraisals of degree-awarding power applications, programme evaluations and national statistics showing student completion and establishment levels, and illustrating the HEI from a national perspective. This material provides data for discussion and questions for interviews and site visits, and the HEI will have access to the material in advance of the interviews.

Assessments and reports

The assessment panel's judgment on whether the HEI meets the assessment criteria for the reviewed aspect areas and perspectives results in a report that serves as the basis for UKÄ's decision. All aspect areas and perspectives must be judged as satisfactory for the overall assessment to be positive. For the reports to contribute to enhancing quality at the HEIs, the assessors should include their own reflections and highlight good examples. This should help drive improvements for both the HEI being evaluated and for other HEIs.

UKÄ uses the following formulation in the Government's communication to decide which requirements to place on the HEIs: 'Some of the HEIs that will be reviewed early on in the first six-year cycle will [...] not be able to demonstrate that they have assured the quality of all of their courses and programmes. In these cases, the Government therefore considers it reasonable to require the HEI to show that there is a system for assuring the quality of the outcomes of courses and programmes and that in a few years they will have quality assurance for all their courses and programmes.' During the next six-year cycle, UKÄ will not require that HEIs have quality assured all of their programmes. Instead, the HEIs must show that they work systematically and effectively to ensure the quality of their courses and programmes. They must also be able to show what part of their range of courses and programmes have been quality assured.

The assessment panel's judgements and reasoning are to clearly present what is not judged satisfactory should there be a negative judgement. Before UKÄ's final decision, the panel's preliminary judgement will be sent to the HEI for review according to the procedure described previously in this report.

Decision

The overall rating is given on a two-point scale. UKÄ will decide whether an HEI's quality assurance processes are approved or under review.

Follow-up

If the quality assurance processes do not meet the criteria, the HEI has one year to present the measures it has taken to address the problems. UKÄ will appoint an assessment panel to review the measures, and web interviews or site visits will be conducted when necessary. If the follow-up review leads to a positive assessment, the HEI's quality assurance processes will be approved. If the HEI's quality assurance processes still do not meet the assessment criteria in the follow-up review, this means that an additional follow-up review should be conducted after a period agreed upon by UKÄ and the HEI jointly. This also means that an increased number of the HEI's programmes can be evaluated by the HEI.

UKÄ believes it is important that even HEIs that receive approval for their quality assurance work have follow-ups, which is also consistent with ESG standard 2.3 where monitoring is mentioned as part of the external quality assurance process. The forms for this type of follow-up are being drafted and could include dialogue meetings, surveys and conferences.

Programme evaluations

Programme evaluations check actual conditions and results, e.g. that the programme meets the requirements in applicable laws and ordinances.

The reviews focus on how well the follow-up, actions and feedback processes systematically contribute to ensuring and enhancing quality in the reviewed programmes.

The reviews also contribute to enhancing the HEIs' quality since the assessors provide feedback in their report on both identified good examples and areas in need of improvement.

Purpose

The aim of programme evaluations is to monitor the programmes' outcomes and to contribute to the higher education institution's own quality improvements for the reviewed programmes.

The main principles for programme evaluations

The programme evaluations are based on the requirements in the Higher Education Act, the Higher Education Ordinance, the System of Qualifications and the ESG. The evaluation method is based on the experiences and lessons learned from the 2011–2014 evaluation cycle, as well as on the comments and suggestions gathered from the conferences, interviews, surveys and seminars with HEI, student, and employer and labour market representatives collected during the method development work that began in 2013. The method is based on a general structure which applies to all degree levels.

In addition to checking the programmes' results, the reviews are also to help the HEIs enhance quality. As such, it is important that the assessors provide feedback on both good examples and the identified areas in need of improvement.

The programme evaluations emphasise the actual conditions and results, that is, how the programme meets the requirements of applicable laws and ordinances. Consideration should also be given to ESG. Furthermore, the programme evaluations will focus on how the programmes ensure that students are given good opportunities to achieve the qualitative targets of the System of Qualifications, and how the HEI ensures that students have achieved the qualification objectives upon graduation. HEIs are also to describe and evaluate how well the follow-up, actions, and feedback processes systematically contribute to ensuring and developing the reviewed programmes. The assessment criteria can be adapted to some extent to different types of degrees to allow the fairest review possible. Aspects and assessment criteria will be more thoroughly described in future guidance documents for HEIs and assessors.

Selection criteria

All programmes are to be subject to quality review. This is done partly through the HEIs having responsibility for the quality assurance of their own programmes and partly by UKÄ evaluating a selection of study programmes at the first-, second- and third-cycle levels. This selection can either be done by reviewing all programmes at individual institutions or by reviewing the same programmes at all the reviewed HEIs to provide a national overview of the quality of a particular programme. The selection of programmes to include in UKÄ's reviews is based on several different criteria:

- A selection of the programmes that were not covered by the 2011–2014 evaluation system should be evaluated.
- A national overview of the quality of some professional qualifications is needed. This applies primarily to regulated professional qualifications.
- If an HEI's quality assurance processes do not meet the criteria in UKÄ's review, additional programmes may be selected for evaluation.
- UKÄ can initiate an evaluation if indications point to a risk that individual programmes are not fulfilling the quality requirements for the programme.

Assessment material

Assessment material consists of the HEI's self-evaluation with annexes, interviews with students and representatives of the reviewed programme, and other material that UKÄ produces. Randomly selected degree projects also serve as data for the programme evaluations at first- and second-cycle levels.

The HEI's self-evaluation

The self-evaluation aims to give the HEI the opportunity to show that the evaluated programme meets the assessment criteria for the aspect areas and perspectives. The HEI is asked to describe, analyse and evaluate specific examples of how it systematically ensures and follows up the evaluated programme's quality and how it has ensured that students have fulfilled degree objectives upon receiving the degree. The focus of the reports should use specific examples to show how follow-up, actions – to address identified deficiencies and to maintain and improve strengths – and feedback help to improve the programme systematically. The HEI should therefore provide examples in the self-evaluation that describe both strengths and identified areas in need of improvement, including planned and implemented measures to further develop the programme. This is intended to give the assessors an understanding of the programme overall and how the internal processes work to drive quality improvements.

UKÄ realises the importance of following up how past students experienced the programmes, especially when it comes to assessing the usefulness of programmes in the labour market. UKÄ therefore asks HEIs to describe in their self-evaluations how they work with this issue in their quality improvement work. UKÄ, however, does not plan to include interviews or surveys addressed to alumni, mainly due to methodological problems related to low response rates that UKÄ experienced during programme evaluations conducted from 2011 to 2014. The opportunity to interview alumni for their

views on the programme and its usefulness was examined during the pilot study for the evaluation of third-cycle programmes. About half of the HEIs surveyed were in favour of including alumni in the evaluation, while also pointing out several methodological problems.

Annexes for the self-evaluation may consist of tables with information, such as the number of teachers with relevant competence, research conducted by teachers in the programme and the number of active doctoral students.

Degree project

Randomly selected degree projects will continue to serve as a basis for assessing the outcomes of programmes at the first- and second-cycle levels. There is no lower limit to the number of degree projects to be included in the evaluation, which means that even the programmes that have not produced any degree projects will be included in the evaluations. Degree projects are only examined as part of the total material assessed, and where no degree projects are available, the assessors will base the review on other material.

Theses or documented artistic projects will not be used as assessment material for the evaluation of third-cycle programmes. UKÄ has determined that existing external reviews of these are already sufficient, since they have a public defence and external examination committee members, as stated in the Higher Education Ordinance's Chapter 6, sections 33–34.

Interviews

Interviews with students and representatives of the reviewed programme will be held to supplement the assessors' overview of the self-evaluation, degree projects and other documentation. During these interviews, statements from the HEI's representatives and the experience of students can be highlighted.

Other assessment material

Prior to the reviews, UKÄ will compile data on the HEI and the programme that is relevant to the aspect areas being examined. This could include national statistics showing the student completion rate and establishment level, previous inspections, appraisals of degree-awarding powers and previous programme evaluations. The material then serves as a basis for discussions and questions during the interview. The HEI will receive this material well in advance of the interviews.

Assessments and reports

All material will be considered in the assessment panel's assessment of how well the programme fulfils its assessment criteria for the reviewed aspect areas and perspectives. All included aspect areas and perspectives must be judged as satisfactory for the programme to be assessed as maintaining high quality.

The assessment panel's determinations and reasoning are to be clearly presented in a report. This report will serve as feedback to the HEI on development possibilities and good examples identified by the assessors. Furthermore, anything judged to have insufficient quality in the case of a negative finding should be clearly stated.

Before UKÄ's final decision, the report will be sent to the HEI for review according to the procedure described previously in this report. The final report will then be the basis for UKÄ's decision.

Decision

The overall rating is given on a two-point scale. On the basis of the assessor panel's report, UKÄ will decide if the programme maintains high quality or if the programme is under review. If a programme is under review, this means that UKÄ is also questioning the degree-awarding powers of the HEI when it comes to the qualification and subject field in question.

Follow-up

As with previous evaluation systems, HEIs with programmes under review will have one year to address the deficiencies and submit an action report to UKÄ. To review the HEI's report of measures taken, UKÄ will appoint a panel of assessors which, if necessary, can request additional documentation and require an interview if they consider that the material is not complete enough to make an assessment. When the panel considers that it has an adequate basis, the taken measures are evaluated and an opinion is then submitted to UKÄ.

Supported by the assessor panel's report, UKÄ will decide if the programme maintains high quality or if degree-awarding powers are to be revoked. UKÄ makes decisions for state HEIs, except for the Swedish University of Agricultural Sciences and the Swedish Defence University. For independent higher education providers, the Swedish University of Agricultural Sciences and the Swedish Defence University, the assessment panel and UKÄ's position are submitted to the Government for decision.

In cases where a state HEI has its degree-awarding powers revoked, enrolled students who have already begun their studies have a right to complete the education (Chapter 1 section 14 of the Higher Education Act).

The HEIs may also terminate the programme under review. In such cases, the HEI is to notify UKÄ of its decision to terminate the questioned programme no later than the last day for submitting the action report. The case will then be closed. If the decision to terminate the programme comes in after the last day to submit an action report, the case will then not be closed. In these cases, UKÄ will conduct a follow-up and examine the question of degree-awarding powers for the relevant programme.

UKÄ believes that it is also important to follow-up those programmes that have been judged high quality. This also corresponds with ESG standard 2.3, which notes follow-up as a part of the external quality assurance process. Forms for this type of follow-up are being drafted and could include surveys, conferences and other forms of follow-up.

Thematic evaluations

Thematic evaluations provide a better understanding and national comparisons of how various HEIs work and of achieved results in the examined theme.

Purpose

The purpose of thematic evaluations is to provide a better understanding and national comparisons of how various higher education institutions (HEIs) work and of achieved results in the examined theme. Thematic evaluations can also be important for the HEIs improvement efforts.

Choice of theme

Thematic evaluations are to be based on tasks of importance for quality in higher education assigned to HEIs by legislation and ordinances. Themes that can be evaluated include widening participation, internationalisation and gender equality. Other relevant themes for evaluation are the usefulness of courses and programmes and preparation for careers, dimensioning of higher education places and sustainable development. Information obtained through UKÄ's different activities, analyses and assignments can also be used for thematic evaluations.

Methods

The methodology applied to the thematic evaluations is developed and adapted to the relevant theme, but it should follow the methods used for the other components whenever possible. UKÄ will notify HEIs about the relevant methodology well ahead of beginning a thematic evaluation.

Implementation of the quality assurance system

In autumn 2016, pilot studies will begin to test both the methodology for the institutional reviews and the revised methodology for the programme evaluations. The pilot study for programme evaluations will include pre-school teacher and primary teacher training programmes. When the pilot studies are completed, the methodologies will be adjusted as needed and then be used for future regular reviews.

UKÄ is formulating a six-year plan with start January 2017 that includes reviews within all four components. The number of reviews conducted within the framework of each component will vary from year to year.

Appraisal of applications of degree-awarding powers

The new aspects and the introduction of the three perspectives will be implemented in the appraisal of degree-awarding powers from the start of 2017. This means that applications for degree-awarding powers received from 1 January 2017 will be appraised based on these aspects and perspectives.

Institutional reviews

In autumn 2016, a pilot study will test the method for reviewing of the HEIs' quality assurance processes and will include Blekinge Institute of Technology, Dalarna University, Newman Institute⁹ and Umeå University. The selection of HEIs for the pilot study was primarily based on expressions of interest from the HEIs. This was narrowed down further based on the HEIs' profiles, range of courses and programmes, organisation, size and geographic distribution. In addition, UKÄ wanted the selection of HEIs to account for participation in other pilot studies. The participating HEIs will undergo a full review using the method described earlier in this report. Decisions from the reviews are expected in autumn 2017. The HEIs with approved quality assurance processes will not undergo a new review in the 2017–2022 six-year cycle. If, however, an HEI does not meet the assessment criteria in the pilot study, it will be included in the regular reviews. After the pilot study is completed, the method will be adjusted as necessary before the regular reviews begin.

All HEIs are to be reviewed in a six-year period, and UKÄ is planning to evaluate about the same number of HEIs annually. Information about when the HEIs will be reviewed will be announced in the autumn 2016.

9. Blekinge Institute of Technology is entitled to award third-cycle qualifications in two specific research domains, and Dalarna University is entitled to award third-cycle qualifications in one specific research domain (2016). Newman Institute is an independent education provider.

Programme evaluations

First- and second-cycle programmes

A pilot study to test the revised method of evaluations of first- and second-cycle programmes will start in autumn 2016. This pilot study will include the pre-school and primary teacher training programmes. The selection of HEIs for the pilot study was primarily based on expressions of interest from the HEIs. A narrower selection was then made based on the number of new students and geographical distribution. A total of eight programmes will be included:

- two preschool teacher training programmes (Kristianstad University¹⁰ and Mälardalen University¹¹)
- two primary teacher training programmes with focus on after-school centres (Jönköping University¹² and Umeå University)
- two primary school teacher training programmes with a focus on pre-school and grades 1–3 (Karlstad University and Linköping University)
- two primary teacher training programmes with a focus on grades 4–6 (University of Gothenburg and Malmö University¹³).

Like the pilot study for institutional reviews, the programmes judged to have high quality will not undergo a new review when the regular reviews start. If, however, a programme is not found to be of high quality in the pilot study, it will be included in the regular reviews. After the pilot study is completed, the method will be adjusted as necessary prior to the start of the regular reviews of pre-school, primary school, subject teacher and vocational teacher training programmes.

Third-cycle programmes

Evaluation of third-cycle programmes has already been tested in a 2014–2016 pilot study. The method was subsequently adjusted based on the experience gained in the pilot study and in conjunction with the methodology development done as part of UKÄ's assignment to develop a new quality assurance system.

Planning for evaluating third-cycle programmes in the 2017–2022 six-year cycle is based on the fields of application and fields of research (in accordance with *Swedish standard classification of research subjects (Standard för svensk indelning av forskningsämnen 2011)*). The six fields of research are the natural sciences, engineering and technology, medical and health sciences, agricultural sciences, social sciences and humanities, including artistic research. For the evaluation of third-cycle programmes, artistic research is separated from the humanities and forms its own seventh field of research.

10. Kristianstad University is entitled to award first- and second-cycle qualifications (2016).

11. Mälardalen University is entitled to award third-cycle qualifications in six specific research domains (2016).

12. Jönköping University is an independent higher education institution, entitled to award third-cycle qualifications in one disciplinary research domain and one specific research domain (2016).

13. Malmö University is entitled to award third-cycle qualifications in seven specific research domains (2016).

The following selection criteria have been used whenever possible:

- All HEIs offering third-cycle programmes have at least one programme evaluated.
- At least one programme from each of the seven research fields (see above) that an HEI offers third-cycle studies in is evaluated.
- All programmes within selected fields of application and fields of research are evaluated to provide a picture of the situation at the national level.

In this way, 300 programmes of a total of about 900 have been selected. Since the other components will be in the pilot phase in 2017, UKÄ has decided to schedule a larger proportion of the evaluations (about 100) of third-cycle programmes in that year. The following subjects (as defined by the *Swedish Standard Classification of research topics 2011*) will be evaluated in 2017:

- 10201 Computer Sciences
- 20504 Textile, Rubber and Polymeric Materials
- 20702 Energy Systems
- 20703 Remote Sensing Technology
- 40301 Other Veterinary Science
- 50101 Psychology
- 50102 Applied Psychology
- 50201 Economics
- 50301 Pedagogy
- 60101 History
- 60102 History of Technology
- 60302 Ethics
- 60304 History of Religions
- 60405 Architecture
- 60407 Art History

Other evaluations of programmes

UKÄ plans to conduct further reviews of regulated professional qualifications during the six-year cycle. During this cycle, UKÄ is also planning for possible additional programme evaluations implemented as a consequence of an HEI failing to receive approval for its quality assurance processes or if UKÄ receives information about individual programmes judged at risk of not fulfilling their quality requirements.

Thematic evaluations

In March 2016, through a revision to the public service agreement for the current budget year, the Government instructed UKÄ to evaluate the work of HEIs in promoting sustainable development. This will be an opportunity to test methods for thematic evaluations. The assignment will be presented to the Government by 1 September 2017.

Two- or three-point rating scale

UKÄ's conclusion is that a two-point rating scale be used both for institutional reviews of the HEIs' quality assurance processes and for the programme evaluations.

UKÄ's assignment to develop and implement a new quality assurance system for higher education also includes to '*evaluate the advantages and disadvantages with a two-point and three-point rating scale and ultimately determine which scale should be used*' (2015/16:76, report 2015/16:UbU9, Riksdag communication 2015/16:155). As indicated by the description of the different components, UKÄ has concluded that a two-point rating scale be used both for assessing the HEIs' quality assurance processes and for programme evaluations. A two-point scale increases opportunities for both UKÄ and assessors to produce legally-correct assessments, because it can be difficult and costly to comment on whether a quality assurance process works very well at all levels within the HEI. UKÄ concludes that it is currently most relevant to review whether quality assurance processes fulfil the set requirements. For this reason, a two-point scale will be used both for reviewing quality assurance processes and for programme evaluations.

Institutional reviews

UKÄ's conclusion is that a two-point scale is preferable for institutional reviews.

The corresponding reviews performed in Finland by the Finnish Education Evaluation Centre (FINEEC) and in Norway by Nasjonalt organ for kvalitet i utdanningen (NOKUT) use a two-point scale for the final determination: approved or not approved. The Danish Accreditation Institute (AI) uses a three-point scale for the final determination of HEI accreditations: positive, conditionally positive and refusal. At the dialogue meetings, UKÄ also discussed a three-point scale: both a three-point scale with some kind of *approved with distinction* as one of the two approved determinations and the option of *approved with reservations*, which would result in a follow-up within six months. Opinions on which scale to use differed, and advantages and disadvantages with each option were found. A three-point scale with *approved with distinction* could promote quality, but it could also have a normative function. *Approved with reservations* could result in assessors more often opting not to approve since the consequences for the HEIs would be less severe. If, however, an HEI has such shortcomings that its quality assurance processes cannot be approved immediately, this also means that longer

than six months may be required before the deficiencies can be remedied. If the time the HEI has to rectify the shortcomings is extended, it becomes unclear what sets this option apart from the judgement *under review*. For these reasons, UKÄ's conclusion is that a two-point scale is preferable for the institutional reviews. Even so, as pointed out at the dialogue meetings, it is important that the assessors' reports provide concrete feedback to the HEIs and that the reports clearly describe what must be rectified, should be rectified and can be rectified.

Programme evaluations

UKÄ has also determined that a two-point assessment scale is preferred for programme evaluations. According to the Higher Education Act, HEIs are to adapt their operations to ensure programmes maintain high quality (Chapter 1 section 4). UKÄ feels this supports the argument that a two-point scale is sufficient and that the scale be high quality and inadequate quality. Using multiple nuances for *approved*, such as *high quality* and *high quality with distinction*, to highlight programmes that exceed the requirements and best practices is another option. Since a programme evaluation is essentially an appraisal of degree-awarding powers, and because the results of the evaluation are no longer linked to additional resources, UKÄ feels that a two-point scale is preferable for the programme evaluations. Good examples can still be highlighted in the assessors' reports for the relevant programmes. A majority of the participants advocated for a two-point scale at the dialogue meetings. A two-point scale was also an expressed wish in a majority of opinions collected from representatives of HEIs, teachers, students, employers and the labour market that were compiled as part of an effort to summarise experiences from the 2011–2014 system. Similarly, a two-point scale was advocated in a majority of the HEIs' comments on the Ministry of Education's memorandum with proposals for a new national quality assurance system (U2015/01626/UH) from March 2015.

Sanctions with non-approval of quality assurance processes

UKÄ has determined that continued assessment of HEIs with quality assurance processes that do not meet the assessment criteria, when combined with evaluation of an extra selection of study programmes, is sufficient for ensuring the quality of courses and programmes. No additional sanctions are judged necessary.

The Government's assignment to UKÄ includes evaluating *'whether additional sanctions beyond those in the communication are needed if an HEI's quality assurance processes are determined insufficient and, if so, providing proposals for sanctions'* (U2016/01132/UH, U2016/01349/UH).

According to the Government's communication, deficient quality assurance processes should lead to consequences for the HEI. Since this means that the HEI's ability to take responsibility for the quality of its courses and programmes is questioned, it should lead to the evaluation of an increased number of programmes by UKÄ. In its communication, the Government states that this sanction should be sufficient, but tasks UKÄ with studying whether further sanctions are needed.

Our neighbouring Nordic countries differ in terms of sanctions. In Denmark, which has a three-point scale (positive, conditionally positive and refusal), a positive judgement means that the HEI is accredited and, after the mandatory pre-accreditation, it may establish new programmes and change its existing programmes. The accreditation is valid for six years. A conditionally positive judgement means that the HEI may not create new programmes. New programmes must be accredited and undergo the mandatory pre-accreditation by AI. AI establishes a plan for following up the HEI's accreditation. A refusal means that the HEI may not start new programmes and that all existing programmes are to be accredited.¹⁴

Norway uses a two-point scale (approved or unapproved) where non-approval results in a follow-up within six months. If the HEI's quality assurance system still doesn't meet the assessment criteria after six months, the HEI may not establish new programmes. The HEI may apply for a new review after one more year. If the new review again results in a non-approval or if the HEI chooses not to apply for a new review, the HEI comes under supervision of NOKUT.¹⁵

In Finland, the final judgement from a 'review of the HEIs' quality assurance system' is either approved or not approved. Approval results in an

14. Vejledning of institutionsakkreditering, and Vejledning til uddannelseakkreditering, AI 2013.

15. NOKUTs evalueringer av systemer for kvalitetssikring av utdanningen ved universiteter og høyskoler, NOKUT 2014.

official seal of quality that is valid for six years. If not approved, the HEI undergoes a new review within two to three years. If this results in approval, the HEI receives the official seal of quality that is valid for six years. If the new review results in non-approval, FINEEC and the HEI together decide when a new re-assessment will be carried out.¹⁶

So while in Finland there are no links to or impact on the degree-awarding powers, there are in Norway and Denmark. In these countries, a negative judgment does not result in the HEI losing one or more of its degree-awarding powers, but the HEI may not apply for any new degree-awarding powers.

UKÄ, however, does not believe that the Norwegian and Danish models can be implemented in the Swedish context, given the autonomy of state HEIs, which means they have general authorisation to establish programmes¹⁷ at different levels depending on whether they are universities or university colleges.

For this reason, UKÄ has determined that continued assessment of HEIs with quality assurance processes that do not meet the assessment criteria is sufficient when combined with evaluation of an extra selection of study programmes. This will ensure that the HEIs take the necessary measures for ensuring the quality of the programmes. Student and HEI representatives who participated in the dialogue meetings also agree with this assessment.

16. Auditeringshandbok för högskolornas kvalitetssystem för åren 2015–2018.

17. Does not apply to professional qualifications.

Comparisons of programme quality

UKÄ has determined that its website should first and foremost be designed to apply to UKÄ's own reviews.

UKÄ has determined that the assignment to coordinate comparisons of programmes should be separate from the assignment to continue developing and implementing a new quality assurance system.

The government assignment to UKÄ includes '*submitting proposals for how the quality of study programmes can be compared between different universities and university colleges*' (U2016/01132/UH, U2016/01349/UH).

Background

According to the Government's assessment, questions relating to internal quality assurance processes and development are matters on which the HEIs decide themselves, as they do about the organisation and implementation of their activities.¹⁸ The HEIs have a major responsibility for ensuring that the quality of their operations meets the requirements of applicable laws and ordinances. The Government states in its communication that quality assurance can best be determined locally, with associated flexibility to consider the individual HEI's specific conditions. This is also an important starting point in UKÄ's continued development of the new quality assurance system for higher education.

The communication states that all HEIs' 'quality assurance processes are to be reviewed within a six-year period and that UKÄ's programme evaluations are an important complement to the institutional reviews'.¹⁹ Furthermore, UKÄ should evaluate a selection of programmes. Accordingly, not all programmes are to be reviewed by UKÄ. The Government estimates that one consequence of this is that UKÄ's reviews will not be able to generate sufficient information to enable national comparisons of the programmes to the same extent as the previous system.²⁰ The Government, however, does want UKÄ to continue providing information about the results of all of its reviews and publish them on its website,²¹ which UKÄ intends to do. The

18. Kvalitetssäkring av högre utbildning 2015/16:76, report 2015/16:UbU9, Riksdag communication. 2015/16:155 (page 11).

19. Kvalitetssäkring av högre utbildning 2015/16:76, report 2015/16:UbU9, Riksdag communication 2015/16:155 (p 12).

20. Kvalitetssäkring av högre utbildning 2015/16:76, report 2015/16:UbU9, Riksdag communication 2015/16:155 (pp 18-19).

21. Kvalitetssäkring av högre utbildning 2015/16:76, report 2015/16:UbU9, Riksdag communication 2015/16:155 (p 19).

Government adds that HEIs should also be responsible for publishing the results of their own quality assurance reviews.²²

UKÄ's viewpoint

Short-term comparisons

UKÄ considers that the Government's communication well sums up the limited conditions that exist, at least in the short term, for establishing some form of systematic comparisons of the quality of programmes. The focus of the quality assurance system being developed in accordance with the Government's communication will be on reviewing the HEIs' own quality assurance systems. UKÄ plans to publish the results of these on its website. Similarly, UKÄ intends to publish the results of reviews within the other components, including the programme evaluations it conducts. An important aspect that highlights the importance of UKÄ's programme evaluations being kept separate from other reviews, including the HEIs' internal programme evaluations, is that UKÄ's programme evaluations could result in questioned – and ultimately revoked – degree-awarding powers if the programme does not meet the requirements of applicable laws and ordinances. This makes UKÄ's reviews special in character. UKÄ's determination is thereby that its website should first and foremost be designed to apply to UKÄ's own reviews. It is, however, important to point out that UKÄ intends to conduct its programme evaluations of subjects or professional qualifications nationally. This means there is good potential to compare the quality of reviewed programmes, such as pre-school teacher degrees.

Long-term comparisons

The Government's communication has stated that HEIs should also be responsible for making public the results of quality reviews. The Government's position corresponds with the ESG standard 1.8, which states that HEIs should publish information on their activities. In a first step, this means that it is reasonable for the HEIs to publish the results and methods of internal reviews on their websites. UKÄ is also considering following up to ensure that the HEIs publish this type of information in connection with reviewing their quality assurance processes. In a second step, these reviews could be linked to a common website that compares programme quality and provides information on the HEIs' internal quality assurance processes. UKÄ and the HEIs need to discuss what is the best way to organise this. It is also important to point out that there is already a rich source of information about HEIs and programmes through the statistics published by UKÄ.

Conclusions

UKÄ believes it is important to discuss how programmes can be compared, but it does not fit within the framework of the quality assurance system now being developed. Add to this the need to separate the reports of UKÄ's

22. Kvalitetssäkring av högre utbildning 2015/16:76, report 2015/16:UbU9, Riksdag communication 2015/16:155 (p 19).

reviews from reviews performed by other actors. UKÄ's conclusion is that the assignment to coordinate comparisons of programmes should therefore be separate from the assignment to continue developing and implementing a new quality assurance system.

The above issues were discussed at UKÄ's dialogue meetings on the proposed quality assurance system held in May and June, 2016. The students and representatives from the HEIs that participated in these meetings did not consider a national comparison of the quality of all programmes as a priority. It was felt, however, that it is important for the HEIs to clearly describe and publish their internal quality assurance reviews and the results of their own evaluations.

Employer and labour market representatives felt that quality comparisons of programmes can provide important information to both employers and the labour market and to prospective students, but that this issue should be decoupled from the assignment to develop and implement a new quality assurance system.

UKÄ's conclusion is consequently that UKÄ's own website should primarily be designed to apply to UKÄ's own reviews. Additionally, UKÄ's determination is that the assignment to submit proposals for how the quality of study programmes can be compared between different universities and university colleges should be separate from the assignment to continue to develop a new quality assurance system. There are several possible ways that comparative information about HEIs and offered programmes could be presented. UKÄ already publishes and will continue to publish the results of all reviews conducted under its auspices. This can help prospective students make informed decisions about their choice of education. UKÄ also publishes national statistics on HEIs and programmes that can serve as the basis for a national comparison.

Annex 1

The following individuals were included in the advisory groups and reference groups and participated in this work until the report was submitted to the Government.

Advisory group working with the entire system:

Karin Axelsson, Linköping University
Jonas Granfeldt, Lund University (until March 2016)
Peder Hofmann, Royal University College of Music in Stockholm
Sara Karlsson, Royal Institute of Technology (KTH)
Madeleine Rohlin, Malmö University
Maria Wolters, Uppsala University
Karin Åmossa, Swedish Association of University Teachers and Researchers (SULF)

Advisory group working with the evaluation of teacher training programmes:

Anders Olsson, Malmö University
Annika Lilja, University of Gothenburg
Astrid Pettersson, Stockholm University
Gun Lundberg, Umeå University
Helena Loborg, Linköping University
Kerstin Ericson, Jönköping University Foundation
Maj Asplund Carlsson, University West and the University of Gothenburg
Per-Henrik Holgersson, Royal University College of Music in Stockholm

Advisory group working with the evaluation of third - cycle programmes:

Kjersti Bale, University of Oslo
Christina Cliffordson, University of Gothenburg and University West
Lars Ekedahl, former vice-chancellor of University West
Love Ekenberg, Stockholm University
Stina Johansson, Umeå University
Maritta Soininen, Stockholm University
Roger Säljö, University of Gothenburg
Christina Ullenius, former vice-chancellor of Karlstad University

The following individuals have also commented on the evaluation questions and guidelines to the HEIs for the pilot study of the evaluation of third - cycle programmes:

Eva Forsberg, Uppsala University
Robert Harris, Karolinska Institutet
Charlotta Forss, Stockholm University, doctoral student in history
Karin Jonsson, Södertörn University, doctoral student in history and social studies

**The reference group working with the entire system
with representatives of HEIs and students:**

Tove Ahlsten, Swedish National Union of Students (SFS)
Johan Alvfors, Swedish National Union of Students (SFS)
Ingrid Elam, University of Gothenburg
Marita Hilliges, Dalarna University (since February 2016)
Fredrik Hylerstedt, a student at Linköping University
Åsa Kettis, Uppsala University
Eric Lindesjö, Linköping University
Karin Röding, Mälardalen University (until January 2016)
Astrid Söderbergh Widding, Stockholm University
Anders Söderholm, Mid Sweden University

In addition, meetings have been held with Swedish university teachers and researchers for feedback on the system from a teacher's perspective.

**The reference group working with the evaluation of third - cycle
programmes with representatives from HEIs and doctoral students:**

Johan Alvfors, Swedish National Union of Students (SFS)
Ingrid Elam, University of Gothenburg
Stephen Hwang, Linnaeus University
Pernilla Jonsson, SULF
Åsa Kettis, Uppsala University
Jeanette Lindberg, SULF doctoral student association
Jana Sochor, Swedish National Union of Students (SFS)
Christian Stråhlman, Swedish National Union of Students (SFS)

**The reference group working with the entire system with representatives
from different employer and employee organisations:**

Mikaela Almerud, Swedish Enterprise
German Bender, Swedish Confederation of Professional Employees
(until November 2015)
Per Fagrell, Swedish Confederation of Professional Employees
(until November 2015)
Thomas Hagnefur, Swedish Trade Union Confederation (until October 2015)
Åsa Krook, Swedish Agency for Government Employers
Emelie Lilli Feldt, Swedish Confederation of Professional Associations
Kristina Loven Selden, Swedish Confederation of Professional Employees
(since December 2015)
Jesper Lundholm, Unionen
Anna Lundgren, Swedish Agency for Government Employers
Carin Renger, Swedish Association of Local Authorities and Regions
Linda Simonsen, Swedish Confederation of Professional Associations
Fredrik Voltaire, Almega (since November 2015)

The reference group working with evaluation of third - cycle programmes
with representatives from different employer and employee organisations:

Per Fagrell, Teknikföretagen

German Bender, Swedish Confederation of Professional Employees

Alexander Beck, Swedish Association of Graduates in Business

Administration and Economics

Karin Åmossa, Swedish Association of University Teachers and Researchers

Inger Ehn Knobblock, Union of Civil Servants

The reference group working with the entire system with
international experts within the field of quality assurance:

Fiona Crozier, QAA, UK

Hanne Foss Hansen, University of Copenhagen, Denmark

Achim Hopbach, AQ Austria, Austria

Joseph Grifol, AQU Catalunya, Spain

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