

ENQA

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Our ref: 11/476
Our date: 13.11.2015
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President Pdraig Walsh

ENQA Agency Review 2013 - Follow-up report

According to the expectations of ENQA, NOKUT hereby delivers the follow-up report two years after the decision by the ENQA Board to reconfirm NOKUT's ENQA membership. Text in *Italics* indicates quotation from the Report, areas that NOKUT responds to in this follow-up report:

The Review Panel congratulates NOKUT's determination to use its control and supervisory powers for further development of HEIs and enhancement of the quality of their provision and recommends to the agency that it:

- 1. Strengthens further its audits in order to fully address the ESG Part 1*
- 2. Introduces options for follow-up of recommendations*
- 3. Considers how to make sure that students' contributions add value*
- 4. Defines the non-conflict of interest*

1. Addressing ESG Part 1

Recommendation:

... strengthens further its audits in order to fully address the ESG Part 1 by guiding evaluation panels and institutions regarding the kind of processes and procedures they are expected to devise in order to improve the standards of their awards and the quality of learning opportunity for their students

NOKUT's Report on audit and ESG Part 1

Audit, the obligatory evaluation of the institutions' internal quality assurance systems every six years, has now been performed twice for all HEIs. Before entering into the third round, NOKUT has an on-going process to revise the model, the criteria as well as the process, to evaluate the institutions' internal quality assurance work. In this revision, we will strengthen the significance of the ESG 2015 as a prerequisite for well-functioning quality assurance. In the future, NOKUT will expect the institutions to clearly address the effectiveness of all the standards in ESG 2015 Part 1.

These days the Norwegian Ministry for Education and Research is launching a regulation concerning quality assurance by providers at tertiary level (EQF level 5 to 8) and in this also NOKUT's quality assurance of tertiary vocational education as well as higher education. In this regulation the Ministry

states that: *Quality work has to be in compliance with the European Standards and Guidelines.* – The Ministry is about to translate ESG 2015 into Norwegian to contribute to a platform of common understanding for both the Ministry, HEIs and NOKUT.

For the upcoming third round of institutional evaluations/audits it is NOKUT's intention to conduct evaluations that will be recognized as predictable in the way that makes the information comparable on every criterion. This has to have an implication on the guidance of both institutions and panels. More information about this will be presented in due time. NOKUT expects the revised model itself is ready to be launched in August 2016.

2. Follow-up of recommendations

Recommendation:

... Introduces options for follow-up of recommendations in evaluation reports in order to monitor more closely developments in quality assurance systems and study programmes. This is particularly important with the view of the fact that NOKUT accredits on the basis of ex ante evaluation of new programmes and the validity of accreditation is not time-limited

NOKUT's Report on follow-up:

NOKUT acknowledges the impact of follow-up as a stimulus to the institutions' awareness of quality and quality work. This year, 2015, we have initiated a follow-up three years after the accreditation of new programmes (the verification procedure). In total, this follow-up includes 34 study programmes. NOKUT will present the results in a public report by the autumn of 2015.

Plans for follow-up of audit decisions will also emerge as NOKUT is now developing a renewed approach to the quality assurance model and procedures as a whole.

3. NOKUT and the student reviewers

Recommendation:

... Considers how to make sure that students' contributions add value to the work of experts' panels and they are well supported by an adequate to their needs training

NOKUT's Report on student reviewers:

Please note that the Norwegian "Accreditation of new study programs" is actually a term that other countries like to describe as licensing or verification. So far, we cannot see the advantage of including the student experience to assess paper-plans for a study program. This is a verification process where no higher education is yet in place, an application for accreditation of a new program in the 1. and 2. cycle (BA and MA). Please also note that the first panel reviewing NOKUT according to ESG and ENQA

membership, recommended NOKUT to simplify this procedure even more, which is something we still bear in mind.

2008: Much resources and capacity is tied up in a very standardised procedure for accrediting of new programmes with less resources and capacity for more targeted action. The evaluation team would recommend that NOKUT initiate licensing procedure (via documentation) to bring down the processing time, and instead use most of the accreditation resources on re-accreditation of existing programmes when needed.

It will not take long from a new program is accredited until NOKUT initiates an institutional evaluation of quality system and quality work. That evaluation always involves a full panel, with a student representative as well as a site-visit.

NOKUT will take all measures necessary in order to exercise the quality assurance of higher education in compliance with the newly revised ESG 2.4 Peer-review experts:

External quality assurance should be carried out by groups of external experts that include (a) student member(s).

However, it is our judgement that the licensing or accreditation of new study programmes cannot be considered as a part of the regular “quality assurance” that is covered by ESG. Accreditation, or licensing, of a new programme is rather to be considered as the step that brings the study into the continuous quality cycle.

NOKUT considers making use of review panels that cover wider areas of expertise in its new accreditation model, in order to ensure equal treatment of applications. These review panels will also include student representatives.

4. Regulation of no-conflict of interest

Recommendation:

Defines the non-conflict of interest it applies in its procedures for nomination and appointment of experts, which would help both its experts and the institutions under review to easily detect and prevent cases of conflict of interest.

NOKUT’s Report on no-conflict of interest:

Detailed regulations, regulating non-conflict of interest concerning the reviewers, have been tried out with success this spring. They are about to be approved by NOKUT’s director. The regulations will also give directions for non-conflict of interest concerning the NOKUT staff.

5. Conclusion

NOKUT appreciates the assessment as well as the recommendations given by the review panel in the ENQA Agency Review 2013. Of the four recommendations NOKUT has positively adapted its procedures in accordance with three of them:

- *Strengthened audits in order to fully address the ESG Part 1*
- *Introduced options for follow-up of recommendations in evaluation reports*
- *Defined the non-conflict of interest NOKUT applies in its procedures for nomination and appointment of experts*

The Panel's recommendation on student involvement will be taken into further consideration. For the moment, NOKUT will not make use of student experts in panels for verification or licensing of new Bachelor- and Master programmes which are paper-based evaluations only.

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We hope that this report is corresponding to your expectations. We are at your disposal if there is a need for extra information.

Yours sincerely

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