

Department
Department of Quality Assurance

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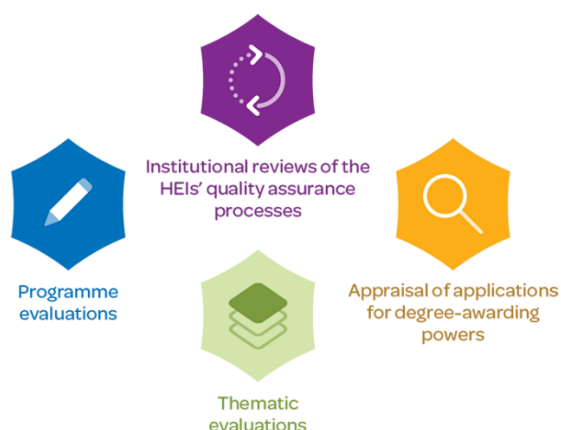
Quality assurance of higher education and research

Higher Education Institutions (HEIs) and the Swedish Higher Education Authority (UKÄ) share the responsibility for quality assurance in higher education and research.

To value this shared responsibility has been a core principle of UKÄ in its work with the Government assignment to develop the current 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.

The system consists of four components

The quality assurance system for higher education consists of the following four components:



All reviews, regardless of component, are carried out by independent assessment panels recruited by UKÄ based on a nomination procedure in which HEIs, student unions and employee/employer

organisations nominate assessors. The assessment panels consist of student representatives, employer and labour market representatives, and experts from the higher education sector.

Assessment areas

The reviews are based on assessment areas developed in dialogue with representatives from HEIs, teachers, students, employers and the labour market. The six assessment areas are:

- governance and organisation
- preconditions
- design, implementation and outcomes
- student and doctoral student perspective
- working life and collaboration
- gender equality

UKÄ's reviews are based on a number of assessment criteria included in each assessment area. It has been important to keep the assessment criteria open-ended in order to avoid micromanagement of how HEIs choose to organise and conduct their educational activities.

Follow-up of reviews

HEIs whose quality assurance processes are approved 'with reservations' are followed up in the assessment areas judged as unsatisfactory. For HEIs with quality assurance processes that are 'under review', a new, complete review of the HEI's quality assurance processes in all assessment areas will be carried out two years after UKÄ's decision.

As regards programmes under review, HEIs will have one year to address the deficiencies and submit an action report to UKÄ. Supported by the assessor panel's report, UKÄ will decide whether the programme maintains high quality or if degree-awarding powers are to be revoked.

The national quality assurance system has been developed and implemented in accordance with the Higher Education Act, the Higher Education Ordinance, and the Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance in the European Higher Education Area (ESG). UKÄ has strived to develop a model which is useful in various aspects for all four quality assurance components, but that can also support HEIs' internal quality work.

Since 1995, UKÄ and its predecessor the National Agency for Higher Education have been tasked by the Government with conducting reviews of higher education. The current review cycle takes place between 2017 and 2022.

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The Swedish Higher Education Authority (UKÄ)

The Swedish Higher Education Authority (UKÄ, *Universitetskanslersämbetet*) is an independent government agency. Our operations comprise three main areas (see below).

The operations of the Swedish Higher Education Authority are controlled by the Government through the instructions it issues. These instructions define the agency's areas of responsibility and the tasks to be undertaken.

Each year the Government issues a public service agreement directed to UKÄ that specifies targets and the funding for these operations. The Government also assigns on-going tasks during the year, referred to as government assignments.

Three main areas

- Quality assurance of higher education and research, and appraisal of the degree-awarding powers of public-sector higher education institutions
- Legal supervision of higher education
- Monitoring efficiency, follow-up and horizon scanning as well as responsibility for statistics in the higher education sector.

Quality assurance and degree-awarding powers

UKÄ evaluates the quality of higher education and research in Sweden. It is vital for students, employers and society at large that all higher education and research is of high quality. This is also laid down in the Higher Education Act and the Higher Education Ordinance.

Since 1995, UKÄ and its predecessor have been tasked by the Government with conducting reviews of higher education.

Four separate evaluations form a national system for quality assurance:

- appraisals of degree-awarding powers
- reviews of higher education institutions' quality assurance processes
- programme evaluations
- thematic evaluations.

The objectives of UKÄ's reviews are both to assess the performance of study programmes and to contribute to higher education institutions' work with quality improvement in higher education.

[Read more about quality assurance](#)

Student rights and legal supervision

To ensure that student rights are respected, UKÄ monitors and reviews how higher education institutions apply the laws and statutes.

[Read more about student rights and legal supervision](#)

UKÄ also provides administrative support for the Suspensions Board for Higher Education and the Higher Education Appeals Board. The Suspensions Board hears cases concerning the suspension of students in higher education. The Appeals Board reviews appeals against decisions made in the higher education sector and higher vocational education sector.

[To the Suspensions Board for Higher Education](#)

[To the Higher Education Appeals Board](#)

Statistics, follow-up and analysis

- UKÄ is responsible for monitoring the effective use of resources by higher education institutions.
- UKÄ follows up and analyses the operations of higher education institutions, primarily to provide the Swedish Riksdag and Government with material on which to base decisions about higher education.
- UKÄ is responsible for the official statistics from higher education institutions and decides what information is to be collected and how it is processed. This includes, for instance, figures on the number of students in different programmes, distribution of the teaching staff by age and gender, as well as higher education institutions' financial reporting.
- UKÄ monitors developments in the higher education sector, mainly in Europe and the USA, but also in the rest of the world.