

## **Minutes of the NOQA annual meeting in Oslo – Sem gjestegård 28.-29. May 2008**

**Participants:** EVA Agi Csonka, Søren Poul Nielsen, Christel Sølvhjem, ACE Denmark: Christian Tangkjær, FINHEEC: Helka Kekäläinen, Matti Kajaste, Icelandic Ministry of Education: Einar Hreinsson, NOKUT: Tove Blytt Holmen, Wenche Froestad, Gunn Gallavara, Kjetil Skogrand, Anne Karine Sørskaar, Gerhard Amundsen (attended first day of the meeting), Oddvar Haugland (attended the second day of the meeting), HSV: Clas-Uno Frykholm, Mehdi Sedig Zadeh, Staffan Wahlén (attended second day of the meeting).

### **Day one:**

#### **Opening of the annual meeting**

Tove Blytt Holmen welcomed all the participants. In the introduction she specially welcomed ACE Denmark to their first NOQA annual meeting.

There were no comments on the 2007 minutes.

#### **Report from the chair 2007-2008**

In this period there has been no request for information concerning NOQA. The only activity have been the ongoing NOQA project 2007-2008 and the coming NOQA project on Nordic joint master 2008-2009.

#### **Presentation of ACE Denmark**

Christian Tangkjær presented the new Danish accreditation agency, ACE Denmark.

ACE Denmark started its activity 1. September 2007. The purpose of the agency is to ensure and document the quality and the relevance in higher education through accreditation of new and existing study programmes at the Danish universities. Currently around 850 study programmes exist at Danish universities.

Further reading; [read Tangkjærs presentation here](#)

The annual meeting welcomed ACE Denmark as members of NOQA.

#### **National Highlights since last annual meeting**

##### ***EVA***

The Executive Director of EVA, Agi Csonka, presented the recent developments in Denmark, and especially for EVA.

The new legislation has renewed EVA's mandate within quality assurance of Danish higher education by introducing systematic accreditation and by establishing an independent Accreditation Council.

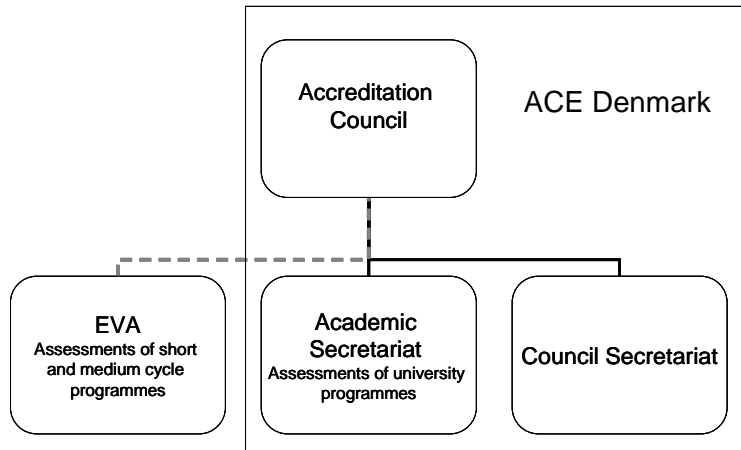
##### **EVA's task within quality assurance of higher education**

EVA's function within higher education has become the following:

- initial accreditation assessment of short and medium cycle programmes;
- clustered accreditation assessment of short and medium cycle programmes;
- initial accreditation and accreditation of existing other higher education programmes (excluding university programmes);
- system-wide analysis within the field of higher education;
- revenue-generating activities within the field of higher education (including the university sector).

### The Danish accreditation system and the role of EVA

In March 2007 the Danish Accreditation of Higher Education Act was passed. The new national quality assurance system in Denmark implies that all new and existing higher education programmes must be systematically accredited. The Accreditation Act also specifies the establishment of an independent accreditation institution, which has now established itself as ACE Denmark. The relationship between EVA and ACE Denmark can be illustrated as shown below.



The Council's basis for an accreditation decision rests upon accreditation assessments carried out by independent quality assurance agencies, and two agencies are specified in the act:

- accreditation assessments of new and existing university programmes will be conducted by the Academic Secretariat, under ACE DENMARK;
- accreditation assessment of new and existing short and medium cycle programmes will be conducted by EVA;
- accreditation assessments of other new and existing higher education programmes will be conducted by EVA.

Institutions are entitled to use other agencies for the accreditation assessments. If they choose to do so, they must provide their own finance.

Prior to the Accreditation Act, approval of new programmes was granted by the relevant ministry.

### Criteria for decision and assessment

EVA's accreditation assessments are based on explicit and published criteria. These will be available in the various frameworks (legislation and self-evaluation guidelines) and will be easily obtainable for the parties involved through for example EVA's website. When conducting accreditation assessments, EVA will in advance determine and make public concepts and criteria for the reports and site visits. The reports will be published and made available to the general public on the EVA website.

The different steps in the accreditation process are inquiry for accreditation, an external accreditation panel, the institutions self evaluation of the programme, a site visit, a draft report and factual verification, the Accreditation Councils decision. The accreditation assessments will be organised as clustered assessments that ex post will be used as a basis for comparative sector description and analysis.

### ***Iceland***

Einar Hreinsson, Advisor at the Office of Evaluation and Analysis at the Ministry of Education, Science and Culture in Iceland, presented the recent developments in Iceland.

1. All the accreditation of the Higher Education Institutions (HEIs) finished in April, done on bases of fields of study according to the Frascati manual of UNESCO. All the HEIs passed, i.e. fulfilled minimum standards. The fields of study that were in the second round of the accreditation were medicine, agriculture and natural resources and social science, including economy and law.
2. Iceland is now working on a three year plan for quality assurance. The concentration is on quality audits of the internal quality systems of the HEIs. The plan will though be spiced up with programme evaluations as seen necessary from the results of the accreditation.
3. A new regulation concerning quality assurance will be introduced during the summer.
4. We are now working on a code of practice for the expert groups.

The results of the future evaluations will be connected to the financial contracts between the state and each HEI.

### ***Finland***

Helka Kekäläinen presented the recent developments in Finland. Helka Kekäläinen was appointed the new Secretary General of FINHEEC in May 2008.

FINHEEC has continued with its auditing timetable and by the end of the year 2008 half of Finnish higher education institutions will be audited. The total number of 50 institutions will be audited by the end of year 2011. Centres of excellence in education evaluations are going on in both sectors: university and polytechnic sector. Thematic evaluation on e-learning in polytechnic sector was completed and current thematic evaluation of university centres began.

New council for two years was appointed from the beginning of 2008. New chair is Professor Riitta Pyykkö from University of Turku and new vice-chair Rector Pentti Rauhala from Laurea Polytechnic. Ministry of education took the stance that FINHEEC will remain in Helsinki.

### ***Sweden***

Clas-Uno Frykholm, The Director of the Department of Evaluation at HSV presented the recent developments in Sweden.

- HSV uses the ENQA standards and guidelines
- HSV undertakes the following evaluations:
  - o Desk evaluations, in order to provide national pictures
  - o Evaluating of existing programmes
  - o Accreditation of new programmes
  - o Thematic evaluations
  - o In-depth studies
- HSV is now in a process of developing a new audit system
- HSV expect a new act in February 2009, and a new system in January 2010.

## **Norway**

Tove Blytt Holmen, the Director of the Department for Accreditation at NOKUT presented the recent developments in Norway.

- NOKUT will by 2008 conclude the first cycle of audit
- The re-accreditation of the bachelor in nursing is now completed. In the end, all study programmes achieved renewed accreditation.
- The Ministry of Education has conducted an external evaluation of NOKUT. The agency complies with the ENQA standards and guidelines.

## **The joint project 2007-2008**

### *NOQA joint report*

Chair of this year's joint project Gunn Gallavara, presented the draft report. The project group will finish the report in mid August. The work by the project group was appreciated by the participants. The annual meeting decided asking if it is interesting for ENQA to publish this year report in the ENQA network. The report should also be published on the NOQA website.

### *Evaluation of the joint Nordic project 2007-2008*

All members of the joint Nordic project group participated in an evaluation of work, progress and their opinion the content of this year report.

[Read the survey and analysis here.](#)

Summed up:

- The project members were satisfied with the appointment, management and organization of the project.
- The project members did not have enough time for preparations in advance of the meetings, and they did not feel sufficiently prepared in the meetings.
- 4 of 7 members did not have time needed to contribute in the project and the group as all did not have enough time to make a report of satisfactory quality.
- The report will be met with interest in the Nordic agencies
- 6 of 7 members experienced the participation of the project as useful.

## **End of day one**

The day ended with a bocchia tournament and a dinner later on.

## **Day Two**

### **Next joint Nordic project**

The Nordic joint project for 2008-2009 is already decided. The chair of this project Staffan Wahlén, presented the project; Nordic joint master programmes.

[You can read more about the project here.](#)

## **ECA – What's in it for us?**

The Director General of NOKUT, Oddvar Haugland, gave an introduction to ECA (The European Consortium of Accreditation) and some of NOKUT's experiences about the work at ECA.

ECA was started in 2003 with 10 member countries from the start. Currently a new ECA Agreement of Cooperation has been signed by 13 accreditation organisations. More about ECA here <http://www.eaconsortium.net/index.php?section=content&id=1>

NOKUT's board have decided to take a new period as ECA member. FINHEEC is in a network with audit countries, and have not been thinking about membership in ECA. EVA is

interested because of the in-depth discussions about accreditation, international experiences and development of competence for the staff in EVA. HSV founds the discussion in ECA, and could be interested in an observational status. ACE are interested but have not decided yet.

### **The use of experts: How can we compare?**

Advisor in NOKUT Anne Karine Sørskaar presented a summary from the ENQA seminar in Oslo 14-15. March 2008 on "Assessing educational quality: Knowledge production and the role of experts".

[Read the summary here.](#)

### **Coming up**

#### **NOQAs future actions**

Cooperation between the Nordic countries

How to learn from each other?

- Meta- discussions, like: What are the pillars of quality assurance? Why are they important?
- What is an expert? Exchange information about how the agencies use experts. ACE Denmark took an initiative for a survey about agencies use of experts. Practical:
  - Economy and payment
  - Education
  - Selection

Actions:

- arrange conferences, one or two each year
- use reports written by the Nordic quality assurance agencies
  - joint projects
  - other reports
- workshops, on themes like organization, methods and criteria
- branding

### **The next NOQA meeting**

The next NOQA annual meeting will take place Wednesday 27. and Thursday 28. May 2009. FINHEEC will, as the network chair of NOQA for 2008-2009 hosts next year's meeting. The venue for the meeting will be announced later.