

## **Minutes of the NOQA meeting in Stockholm -Krusenberg Herrgård 21-22 May 2007**

**Participants:** Denmark – EVA Agi Csonka (attended the first day of the meeting), Anette Dørge Jessen, Christel Sølvhjelm; Finland – FINHEEC Ossi Tuomi, Matti Kajaste, Sirpa Moitus, Kirsi Mustonen; Iceland – Ministry of Education Einar Hreinsson; Norway – NOKUT Tove Blytt Holmen, Jon Haakstad, Wenche Froestad; Sweden – HSV Clas-Uno Frykholm, Iréne Häggström, Lisa Jämtsved-Lundmark, Eric Lindesjö, Britta Lövgren, Staffan Wahlén; ENQA Emmi Helle; Nordic Council of Ministers Christian Möller (attended the second day of the meeting)

### **Day one**

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

Clas-Uno Frykholm welcomed the participants. In his introduction, he mentioned the increasing international interest in Scandinavian systems for quality assurance. Our national systems for quality assurance of Higher Education Institutions (HEIs) are now cited among others by Japan as examples of good practice.

### **Recent developments in the Nordic Countries**

#### *Finland*

Ossi Tuomi, the Secretary General of FINHEEC, presented the recent developments in Finland. A working group nominated by the Ministry of Education has recently finished their assignment to evaluate the present system of quality assurance at all levels of education in Finland. The group was also asked to put forward proposals for a new system of external evaluations, if needed, as well as a proposal for new legislation in this area. According to the working group, the present systems and legislation are still relevant for the Finnish system for education. However, to meet future international challenges the system has to be further developed. The advice from the working group was that co-operation between the two councils responsible for the evaluations needs to be intensified and that they both need to be located in Helsinki.

The discussion about the dual model in Finland, i.e. universities and polytechnics, is ongoing. Higher education will be developed as one unit consisting of the universities, the polytechnics and new clusters based on agreements between them. This new structure for higher education should be in place by 2012.

Since the new system of audits by FINHEEC started in 2005, 12 audits have been completed. For the coming period up to 2011, 38 new audits will be performed.

The challenges in the near future for FINHEEC will be:

- A new structure for higher education
- New legislation for quality assurance
- A new council for the period 2008-2011
- A tight audit schedule for future years
- More internationally based evaluations
- An external evaluation of FINHEEC
- Membership of the European register

### *Denmark*

Agi Csonka, the Executive Director of EVA, presented the recent developments in Denmark. Agi Csonka was appointed the new Executive Director of EVA in January 2007. A new accreditation law for higher education was established in March 2007 as a follow-up to the Danish Government's Globalisation Strategy. The law has important consequences for the Higher Education Unit of EVA. Up to 2007, EVA had full responsibility for the evaluation of higher education (in Denmark divided in three: short cycle/academy profession programmes, medium cycle/professional bachelor programmes and university programmes). This commission will now be restricted to short and medium cycle higher education. In practice, EVA will no longer take the initiative in quality assurance of the universities. However, EVA may still operate within the university sector at the request of either the Ministry or the universities themselves.

With the new accreditation law, a new accreditation council will be formed during 2007. It will have responsibility for accreditation of all new and existing higher education programmes over a five-year cycle. Accreditation will be linked to public funding and provision of programmes. There will be a two-level structure: the Accreditation Council (meta level) with decision-making powers and an operational level with two or more operators. EVA will be one of the operators covering short-cycle and medium-cycle higher education and the higher education programmes under the Ministry of Culture. In addition to this, a new operator covering the university programmes will be established.

### *Norway*

Jon Haakstad, Head of the Quality Assurance Department of NOKUT, presented the recent developments from Norway. The NOKUT system for quality assurance of HEIs is currently stable and no new major strategies are planned for the next four to five years. In total, 52 institutions have been audited, of which 11 are in progress. On average, 10% of the institutions failed to get their quality assurance systems approved and had to pass a

second test half a year later. So far, all the second tests have been successful.

National evaluations of programmes recently finished or in progress: General teacher training (finished in 2006), Engineering programmes (3-year Bachelor's degree; in progress until mid-2008) and Pre-school teacher training (3-year Bachelor's degree; starts in 2008)

A new unit for analysis and planning will be established at NOKUT. An evaluation of NOKUT is also planned.

A new national qualification framework is under development. This will affect the way institutions put together their programmes.

The second round of audits will start from 2009. During the new round, the audits will go much deeper using audit trails compared to the audits in the first round that focussed more on the system itself.

A new university will be opened this year. The suggested new name is the University of Agder. There will then be seven universities in Norway but one more is expected to follow within the next couple of years.

### *Iceland*

Einar Hreinsson, Advisor at the Office of Evaluation and Analysis at the Ministry of Education in Iceland, presented recent developments in Iceland. Regarding the organisation of the agencies responsible for quality assurance of HEIs in Iceland, i.e. the Office of Evaluation and Analysis under the Ministry of Education, there is no plan to establish an agency similar to those in the other Nordic countries. However, the new law on higher education from 2006 states that influence from the Ministry should be minimized and QA is to be in the hands of an independent body.

A system for the accreditation of all HEIs has been set up in Iceland. All HEIs have been accredited in each field of study in accordance with the *Frascati Manual* of the OECD and all new HEIs have to apply for accreditation. There are now eight HEIs in Iceland, most of them small. Circa 18 000 students attend these institutions every year.

All HEIs are to have a qualifications framework in accordance with the Bologna agreement. The accreditation procedure involves only foreign experts and is always carried out in English. The outcome of the accreditation can be 'No Confidence', 'A Yellow Card with comments' (that must be considered before accreditation is given) or a 'Yes'. If 'No Confidence' is the outcome, the HEI will not be accredited in that particular field of study. Extensive materials are collected from the HEIs to be given to the experts. These include all staff CVs, course syllabuses, diploma supplements, the qualifications framework, internal quality systems etc. After the accreditation has been given, the Ministry decides what the HEI will be called in foreign languages.

In 2006, a new law on the HEIs took effect.

In 2008, external evaluations will begin of all fields of studies at HEIs, according to a three-year plan and announced by the Minister of Education. The evaluations will follow up the previous accreditation and will be enhancement oriented. The structure of the external evaluations and Quality Assurance in general will be structured in accordance to the European Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance within the EHEA.

### *Sweden*

Clas-Uno Frykholm, the Director of the Department of Evaluation at HSV presented the recent developments from Sweden. The first six-year round of subject and programme evaluation has been finished. On average, 11 % of 1 700 evaluated programmes were rejected. Last year's evaluation of the nursery programmes resulted in the rejection of 40%.

A new government was elected last autumn and this will have important implications for comprehensive schools, upper secondary schools and higher education. With regard to higher education, a sharper focus will be given to quality of the student results. Our new system of financing HEIs will probably be inspired by the British system. Resources might be allocated partly based on the results from the new HSV system for quality control. The new system has five parts.

- audits of the quality procedures at higher education institutions,
- evaluations of subjects and programmes,
- appraisal of entitlement to award degrees,
- thematic studies, and
- distinguishing centres of educational excellence.

Evaluation of subjects and programmes will be reorganised compared with the previous cycle and will have an additional stage: *Selection* of subjects, programmes or individual courses. This selection is based on self-evaluation, key statistics and other factual material. If this process discovers that a programme is failing to maintain sound quality, it will be selected for in-depth evaluation. Only the selected subjects and programmes will be visited on site. Selection may also be made for other reasons, for instance, a programme may have an interesting focus, be innovative or an example of good practice.

### **Joint Project 2006/207 – Quality Audits in the Nordic countries**

Staffan Wahlén presented the joint project for the last year. The work by the project group was highly appreciated by the participants. The report can be downloaded from the NOQA website.

## **Report from the London Bologna Ministerial Meeting**

Emmi Helle Acting Secretary General at ENQA gave a presentation of the main points at the Bologna Ministerial meeting held in London on 18 May.

In total. There are now 46 countries in the Bologna Process, following the accession of Montenegro.

There will be a Register for QA agencies operating in Europe. This register will be set up by the E4 Group (EUA, ENQA, EURASHE and ESIB). The establishment is already in progress and the Register will be operating some time next year. The Register will be evaluated after two years of operational existence.

High priority in the Bologna agenda is given to mobility of students and staff, recognition of qualifications as well as social dimension.

The Bologna Process will continue, at least in some form, after 2010 and the whole process will be evaluated by an external, independent actor, in cooperation with the consultative members (incl. ENQA) in 2009.

Based on the discussions at the meeting the following priorities were given for 2009:

Mobility. Actions taken at national level to promote the mobility of students and staff will be reported.

Social dimension. Higher education has to play a strong role within the social dimension. The national strategies and policies for the social dimension will be reported.

Data collection. The European Commission (Eurostat) in conjunction with Eurostudent will be asked to develop comparable and reliable indicators and data to measure progress towards the overall objective for the social dimension and student and staff mobility in all Bologna countries.

Employability. The Bologna Follow-up Group (BFUG) will be asked to consider in more detail how to improve employability in relation to the three-cycle degree system as well as in the context of life long learning.

The European Higher Education Area in a global context. BFUG are asked to report back on overall development in this area.

Stocktaking. BFUG are asked to continue the stocktaking process based on national reports particularly in relation to mobility, the Bologna Process in a global context and the social dimension.

The next meeting will be held in Leuven/Louvain-la-Neuve on 28-29 April 2009

### **End of day one**

The day ended with a guided tour of the Krusenberg mansion followed by a dinner. As Staffan Wahlén is retiring, he was thanked at the dinner by Tove Blytt Holmen and Ossi Tuomi for his services and international commitments.

## **Day two**

### **Nordic Master Program**

Christian Möller from the Nordic Council of Ministers started with a presentation of the Nordic Master Program. One of the aims of the work at the Council is to promote higher education in the Nordic region. The Council has therefore decided to give one million DKR to between three and six projects for the development of joint Master programmes in the Nordic countries. The main objectives of these Master programmes are to:

- Develop new areas of academic study
- Generate specialised knowledge in areas where expertise is needed
- Provide positive models for ongoing academic collaboration
- Create Master programmes of top international quality
- Stimulate co-operation between educational institutions and other relevant bodies and make the Nordic Region a more coherent unit.
- Enhance the international profile of Nordic HE and spread good practice
- Develop new models for Nordic co-operation in education

A reference group with representation from universities, student unions, quality assurance institutions and the business sector will decide upon which programmes will be given development funds.

At the meeting, NOQA received an invitation from the Nordic Council of Ministers to discuss co-operation on quality assurance regarding the Nordic Master Programmes. NOKUT, the Network Chair for 2007/2008, will also chair this assignment for NOQA. A recent report, *Nordisk kvalitetssikring av høyere utdanning – Studie 2*, will be highly pertinent to this study. The report can be downloaded from the Ministry website

[http://www.norden.org/pub/uddannelse/forskning\\_hojereudd/sk/TN2006575.pdf](http://www.norden.org/pub/uddannelse/forskning_hojereudd/sk/TN2006575.pdf)

Recent information about the joint Master programmes can be found on council's web site

<http://www.norden.org/hogreutbildning/sk/index.asp?lang=1>

### **Joint Nordic Projects – discussion of suggested projects**

Six joint project proposals for 2007/2008 were discussed at the meeting. After a discussion within the group, it was finally suggested that the next joint project should be the proposal from NOKUT: *How learning outcomes (National and European Qualification Framework) are or may be an important basis for evaluation criteria for study programmes.*

### **Time and place of next meeting**

NOKUT as the Network Chair for 2007/2008 will host next year's meeting to take place 28-29 May 2008. The place for the meeting will be announced later.

