



NOQA-meeting, 27th-28th May 2009, Hämeenkylä Manor Minutes

Participants: Nina Friisberg, Christian Tangkjær, Vibeke Fahlén, Staffan Wahlén, Karin Järplid Linde, Tue Vinther-Jørgensen, Christel Sølvhjelm, Agi Csonka (first day), Gro Hanne Ås, Gehard Yngve Amundsen, Stefan Baldursson, Helka Kekäläinen, Kirsi Hiltunen, Sirpa Moitus, Kenneth Lundin, Heikki Holopainen, Matti Kajaste (first day), Emmi Helle, Paula Ranne.

First day, 27th May

Opening of the meeting

Helka Kekäläinen, Secretary General of FINHEEC, opened the annual meeting with a short presentation of NOQA activities 2008/09: A Nordic conference "Quality and Development in Nordic Higher Education" in Iceland and the Joint Masters Degree -project.

Examine the minutes of the NOQA annual meeting 2008

There were no comments on the 2008 minutes.

Tour de Table

ACE Denmark

Last year, ACE Denmark's pilot project of accrediting 37 existing study programmes was accomplished. A conference in November completed the pilot project by presenting and discussing central areas where we gained new knowledge. This has been an evident process for ACE Denmark in terms of consolidating the accreditation concept.

In spring 2009, ACE Denmark has initiated the rotation accreditation which involves around 50 study programmes in the spring and an additional 50 programme accreditations in the autumn - all together around 100 study programmes to be accredited this year. In the year 2010, this number will increase to appr. 150 accreditations of existing study programmes.

Before the summer this year, the Accreditation Council will approve a rotation plan for existing study programmes for the period 2010-2012. The rotation plan is being worked out, and it is a task of the highest importance and complexity. All together, there are around 1000 study programmes in Denmark. At the end of 2009, around 150 study programmes will be accredited in total.

ACE Denmark has initiated a review of the accreditation criteria for study programmes. This action is based upon our experience which shows us where we can improve the accreditation

criteria and their coherence. At the turn of the year, and as a result of the review, we will have a new set of criteria applicable for accreditations in the middle of 2010.

Finally, ACE Denmark is commencing the initial preparations for the EQAR and ENQA application for admission. Thus, the following months will be spent on documenting our own processes and results for the purpose of external evaluation. One of the reasons why ACE Denmark is applying for EQAR admission can be found in the Accreditation Law which says that ACE Denmark shall apply for admission to the register. ACE Denmark perceives it as a natural and appropriate step to apply for admission to the ENQA network.

During the last six months, recruitment of new staff members has found place due to the increased activity in ACE Denmark

EVA/Denmark

EVA is responsible for short and mid-cycle programmes as well as for police, military and other special higher education. The concept was developed until 2008 and now EVA has moved to a more operational phase and finishing the second round (some 200 new programmes and provisions). The third round consists of some 40 programmes. A report across all programmes will be published to get a nationwide overview of the situation.

The 4-level higher education framework from 2007 is integrated in the accreditation process and EVA acts as a secretariat for that process.

There are several merges within the higher education sector in Denmark.

A new external evaluation of EVA shall be conducted in 2010.

Iceland

The accreditation process started in 2007 and is now in the finishing stage. All the programmes were successfully accredited which caused some critic also from the HEIs. Minimum standards are used. The rules for the QA-procedures are just finished and in the end of this year the guidelines shall be published. They are made in cooperation with the universities. The universities are worried about the reliability of the peer-review system.

The ministry have established task forces to give recommendation concerning coordinating measures within HE. The report suggests that there should be 2 universities in the country.

The national quality framework -process is going on.

NOKUT

In early December 2008, Mr. Terje Mørland replaces Mr. Oddvar Haugland as Director General. In the wake of this change, NOKUTs organisation will be revised, and probably the units for accreditation and for audit will merge into one.

As a follow up of the external evaluation of NOKUT, the Act of 1. April 2005 No. 15 relating to universities and university colleges, has been changed concerning NOKUTs tasks. The Ministry is working with a revised version of the Regulations concerning accreditation, evaluation and recognition. The revised formulations in full:

§ 2-1. NOKUTs oppgaver og myndighet

(1) NOKUT er et faglig uavhengig statlig forvaltningsorgan.

(2) Formålet med NOKUTs virksomhet er å føre tilsyn med kvaliteten i høyere utdanning og fagskoleutdanning, gi generell godkjenning av utenlandsk høyere utdanning, og å stimulere til kvalitetsutvikling som sikrer et høyt internasjonalt nivå i utdanningstilbudene ved institusjonene. NOKUTs arbeid skal bidra til at samfunnet kan ha tillit til kvaliteten i norsk høyere utdanning, fagskoleutdanning og godkjent høyere utenlandsk utdanning.

(3) I NOKUTs tilsynsarbeid etter denne lov skal NOKUT evaluere institusjonenes system for kvalitetssikring, akkreditere institusjoner og studietilbud og revidere gitt akkreditering. NOKUT skal også gi generell godkjenning av høyere utenlandsk utdanning.

(4) NOKUT kan benytte seg av andre virkemidler og gjennomføre andre tiltak enn de som fremgår av tredje ledd, som er i tråd med formålet med NOKUTs virksomhet.

(5) I sitt arbeid skal NOKUT søke å bistå institusjonene i deres utviklingsarbeid.

(6) NOKUT skal gjennomføre evalueringer av betydning for å kunne bedømme kvaliteten i høyere utdanning. Departementet kan pålegge organet å foreta slike evalueringer.

(7) Alle evalueringer som foretas av NOKUT er offentlige, og NOKUT skal bidra til at disse gjøres kjent.

(8) NOKUTs vedtak overfor private institusjoner kan i forskrift unntas fra bestemmelsene om klage i forvaltningsloven kap. VI.

NOKUT has started the second cycle of audits with revised evaluation criteria and revised evaluation process.

HSV

See presentation

FINHEEC

The audits are going on and the first round will end in 2011. One forth of the audits (5 out of 20) has lead to a re-audit decision. In addition, some thematic evaluations and centres of excellent in higher education have been conducted in both sectors during 2008/09.

A new university law is to take effect in 2010 and FINHEEC is mentioned in the law as an independent expert body. The law might also have some impact on the organization of FINHEEC.

A mid-way seminar on the results of audits among the first HEIs was arranged in 2009. The institutions were asked to comment on the recommendations of the audit report and characterise the development of the quality assurance system after the audit.

The ministry of education has asked FINHEEC to conduct an evaluation on the implementation of the Bologna process in Finland.

European and Nordic dimensions of QA in the future

Emmi Helle, Secretary General of ENQA, gave a presentation on ENQA and EQAR: (presentation)

The majority of the agencies saw ENQA memberships as very important but to be listed in EQAR didn't seem to be as important for many of the agencies. ACE will apply for EQAR.

All the agencies saw the present organisation of NOQA as a functioning one but the steering of the project could be stronger. Also the project could be more integrated in the agencies and

not only a matter for the project group. Perhaps the project could end in something other than a comprehensive published report, e.g. seminars or recommendations.

Second day, 28th May

Report on the Nordic Master -project

Staffan Wahlén, the Project Manager for the project, presented the findings of the project group:
(link).

The status of the report was discussed and it was concluded that a joint statement of the report should be made, perhaps as a prescript signed by the chair. It is important to underline that the recommendations may have implications on the national legislation and therefore it is vital that these issues are discussed by proper national authorities.

How Nordic agencies organise their work on experts

Christian Tangkjær from ACE/Denmark presented the agency's work on experts. Denmark has a large demand for external experts also from abroad, especially from Sweden and Norway. the question of a joint Nordic data base on experts was raised. for the moment the agencies continue with direct contact with colleagues in recruiting experts.

Next joint Nordic project

It was decided that the theme of the next joint project is site-visits and the Danish participant will co-ordinate the project. The project could focus on the purpose of the site visit and how it is conducted in the agencies (e.g. differences and similarities in length/duration and content) Special attention should be given to the use of the site visit as documentation in evaluations and accreditations, i.e. under which circumstances and how it is used by the experts, the agencies and in the report. Also the question of what is in stake in a site-visit in different kinds of evaluations should be raised.

Perhaps also ethical principles should be included as a theme. The project should include site-visits of all kinds of evaluations and focusing on the developing of own processes.

The project should end in a seminar (or several on a national basis) and be more inclusive for the agencies and involve experts as well.

It was also decided that PhD education could be on the agenda on the next annual meeting of NOQA.

Next meeting

It was decided that ACE/EVA will chair the next annual meeting of NOQA and preliminary dates were set: 20-21st May 2010.