

Project description, Evaluating Learning Outcomes

At the annual meeting in May 2007, the Nordic Quality Assurance Network in Higher Education decided to start a joint Nordic project about consequences of evaluating learning outcomes for the external evaluation the agencies undertake.

All the Nordic countries have, in connection with the Bologna-process, an obligation to develop a National Qualification Framework by 2010. Learning outcomes is an important conception in this framework. The work with, and implementation of the qualification framework and learning outcomes in the Nordic countries is now in progress.

The framework for European Higher Education Area (Bologna-process) and European Qualifications Framework for lifelong learning (The European Commissioner) are basis for common understanding in the project group.

Working title

How learning outcomes (National and European Qualification Framework) are or may be an important basis for evaluation criteria for study programmes.

Purpose

The objective of this project is to expand the agencies knowledge and understanding of the concept "learning outcomes" concerning their work with Quality Assurance of Higher Education.

The project aim is to map, describe and analyse the implementation and use of learning outcomes in both the Nordic Higher Education Institutions and the Nordic Quality Assurance agencies, and present some consequences it might have on the agencies external evaluation.

The project will try to answer the following questions:

- Why learning outcomes - how come learning outcomes are being introduced?
 - Research on learning outcomes and evaluation
- What is the present situation in each Nordic country regarding
 - National and institutional understanding of learning outcomes
 - The development and use of learning outcomes
 - The aim of using the learning outcomes
 - The impact of using learning outcomes
 - Indicators or criteria of success for achieving the learning outcomes
- How can we (as agencies) use learning outcomes in evaluations in the future?
 - Challenges evaluate learning outcomes in Higher Education Institutions
 - The benefits and dangers of focusing on learning outcomes in our external evaluations
 - Method/criteria used at other agencies

Method

Each NOQA member will gather information from selected Higher Education Institutions in each of the Nordic countries regarding their work and experience with learning outcomes. The institutions will be asked to answer a set of questions in order to get comparable material.

Furthermore we will collect information from each of the Nordic agencies regarding their work and experiences with learning outcomes, and try to indicate some consequences learning outcomes might have on our external evaluation.

We will describe the findings and make a comparative analysis of the information gathered and analyse the benefits and dangers of focusing on learning outcomes in the agencies external evaluations.

Organisation

A project group with members from each of the Nordic Quality Assurance agencies will carry out the project. NOKUT will act as the coordinator of the project.

The project group members are:

Christel Sølvhjem, EVA

Eric Lindesjö, Höskoleverket

Mehdi Sedigh Zadeh, Höskoleverket

Matti Kajaste, FINHEEC

Einar Hreinsson, Ministry of Education, Science and Culture, Iceland

Anne Karine Sørskår, NOKUT

Gunn Gallavara, NOKUT

Each agency will cover its own costs involved in participating in the project.

Time-table

October 2007	First meeting of the project group. Find relevant documentation on Learning Outcome at home, experiences and good examples world wide and at institutions in your country.
January 2008	Discuss the inventory information, decide the main questions. Start the writing of the report.
March 2008	All information collected.
April 2008	Last meeting in the work group. Writing of the final report.
May 2008	Present the report at the NOQA Annual meeting 28-29. May