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A Comparative Analysis of Systematic Quality Work in Nordic Higher Education Institutions

NORDIC QUALITY ASSURANCE NETWORK
IN HIGHER EDUCATION

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Foreword

Higher education institutions are under growing pressure to demonstrate accountability, effectiveness and quality. These demands have been created by the increasingly internationalised setting of higher education, mass education, the Bologna Process, Lisbon Declaration and national higher education policies. Higher education institutions compete with each other both nationally and internationally, and in this, they need to provide evidence for quality and qualifications to their students, stakeholders, international partners and society in general. This project has been one attempt to support the Nordic higher education institutions in the demand for assuring quality and building a quality culture.

The Nordic Network has engaged in four previous joint projects, which have all been innovative in the sense that they have produced new perspectives by examining issues such as student involvement and mutual recognition of agencies, which have not been focussed on in such a forum before. This time the Network wanted to involve the Nordic higher education institutions in the project and to focus on their quality work.

The project's success is due to the four participating universities, a professional Panel and an innovative Project Group. The universities' readiness to participate and publicly share their quality assurance practises has been the central part of the project. The senior level participation from each of the universities demonstrates that the universities took the project seriously and invested in it.

All the participating universities have displayed a developed quality culture and awareness. They will all have a good foundation on which to face the above-mentioned demands. Each of the universities has strengths: Copenhagen Business School has a high level of dialogue within and between staff and students, the University of Kuopio has a clear quality strategy, the Norwegian University of Life Science has a transparent student feedback system, and the University of Uppsala has an evaluation culture that emphasises the reflection of learners, just to name a few.

One of the project aims was to name the best example of quality work from the participating higher education institutions. On behalf of the Nordic Network, I am happy to congratulate the winner, Copenhagen Business School (CBS), which has demonstrated quality work that undoubtedly fits in well with the institution's own operational culture, context and purposes.

It is my hope that the two new concepts of the project, both involving the HEIs in the Nordic projects and the method for sharing practices openly can be developed further and applied in other circumstances.

Anna-Maija Liuhanen
Project Chair

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1 Introduction

1.1 Nordic network

The five Nordic countries[1] and their respective quality assurance agencies[2] have convened annually for over a decade to exchange experiences and discuss issues of mutual interest concerning quality assurance in higher education. In 2003, the annual meeting officially formalised the co-operation as the *Nordic Quality Assurance Network in Higher Education (NOQA)*.

An important form of the collaboration is joint projects; the Nordic agencies have worked together on four previous projects during 1996–2003. All the projects have been published as reports. It has been the custom to initiate a new project at the annual meeting. The projects have been significant in terms of learning from each other and enhancing co-operation between the agencies. In fact, the joint projects have built the collaboration of the Nordic agencies into the form of a concrete network.

Similar cultural backgrounds and mutual understanding regarding quality assurance approaches have naturally helped in building fruitful co-operation and later a network. However, even with all the similarities, after a decade of co-operation between the Nordic quality assurance agencies, the further the co-operation evolves, the more differences appear. One reason for the divergence is that the Nordic countries have different approaches to quality in higher education and the agencies have different authorisation from their governments. The joint projects have been a rewarding way of forming a dialogue to try to understand these differences and reasons behind the convergence and non-convergence.

Usually all five Nordic countries participate in the projects. In the current project, Iceland decided to only take part in the project workshop. Thus, the participating countries were Denmark, Finland, Norway and Sweden.

[1] Denmark, Finland, Iceland, Norway and Sweden

[2] EVA, FINHEEC, NOKUT, NAHE, Ministry of Education, Science and Culture of Iceland

1.2 Background of the project

The theme for the project rose from the growing demands concerning quality assurance in higher education on the European level, national level and the level of higher education institutions. All the Nordic countries understand the need for quality assurance of higher education and measures have been taken to build national quality assurance systems. Generally, the institutions' own responsibility for quality is strongly stressed in all the Nordic countries.

In Denmark, programme and subject evaluations have been the main focus of national quality work since the start. In addition, evaluations of teaching and learning methods, institutional evaluation and thematic evaluation have also been included. Since 2004, the Danish Evaluation Institute has broadened its methodological approaches and introduced methods of audit and accreditation in response to the recent developments in government policies and regulations of the higher education sector.

Sweden started audits in 1995, concentrating on the institutions' systematic quality work and quality culture. Each institution has been evaluated twice. Since 2001, Sweden has been focusing on cyclic subject and programme evaluations at six-year intervals. Accreditation is used in Sweden only when colleges apply for university status or when higher education institutions apply for Master's degrees in professional training programmes.

Until 2003, FINHEEC has organised institutional evaluations, programme and thematic evaluations, quality audits of polytechnic education, accreditation of professional courses, and has selected high-quality units (centres of excellence) in university and polytechnic education. From 2004, the focus has been on audits of quality assurance systems of the higher education institutions. This has replaced institutional evaluations of both higher education sectors and audits of quality work in the polytechnic sector.

In Norway, the national quality regime concentrates on audits of the higher education institutions' systems for quality assurance. Each institution will be evaluated at intervals of no more than six years. In addition, accreditation is formalised by law, and this method is a more essential part of the national quality assurance system in Norway than in the other Nordic countries, even if accreditation in most cases is given once and for all, and therefore peaked the first years after the implementation of this system in 2004.

The project chose to examine quality assurance from the perspective of higher education institutions. It has thus aimed to support the Nordic higher education institutions in the challenge to assure quality in these national contexts. Consequently, this project has been significantly different compared to

the previous joint projects in that it involves Nordic higher education institutions for the first time; whereas, the previous projects have concentrated on evaluation and had an agency approach. This time the higher education institutions played a central role, although agencies were also involved in the project.

The involvement of higher education institutions in the project brought about one additional area that had to be considered when agreeing on the project's theme and aims, as well as questions concerning the realisation of the project and the methods used as the project proceeded. Thus, every time a decision was made, each country had to consider how it related to the national system, as well as what implications it would have for the participating higher education institutions.

1.3 Structure of the report

This report is structured so that first a description of the project is given in Chapter 2 to deliberate the project aims, method and the general working process. The chapter also outlines the evaluation task of the Panel and the project workshop and describes how each of the Nordic countries chose its representative higher education institution for the project. Evaluation feedback and project results are presented in Chapter 3, and finally some conclusions are drawn in Chapter 4. The appendices contain short overviews of the national quality assurance systems in the four Nordic countries, which have been included because they help understand the national selection procedures and tie the higher education institutions' quality assurance work to the national context, and the descriptions of the quality work of the participating universities.

All parties of the project have contributed to the report: each national quality assurance agency is responsible for the parts describing the national selection procedure in Section 2.3 and quality assurance framework in the appendices, the Panel members have written Chapter 3, and the participating universities have written the descriptions of their quality assurance work presented in the Appendices.

The term 'higher education institution' (HEI) was chosen to be used in the project, because the project was open to all higher education institutions in the Nordic countries. In practise, all the participating institutions were universities, thus the term 'university' is used when referring to them.

2 Description of the joint Nordic project

The current project was initiated by FINHEEC at the Network's annual meeting in Turku, Finland, in May 2004. The formulation of the project's theme and aims involved a lively discussion and exchange of ideas before an agreement was reached on how to proceed with the project. At the very beginning, the initial suggestion for the project theme was a benchmarking project concerning quality assurance systems between Nordic HEIs. The project soon got another direction, that is, to comprise all systematic quality assurance work in the HEIs, instead of merely concentrating on the quality assurance systems. In addition, an element of competition between the participating institutions was introduced to the project, the aim being to find the best example of quality work from the Nordic HEIs.

In the end, the agencies agreed that the project would be a comparative study of quality assurance work related to the educational activities in HEIs in the Nordic countries and each country would be represented by one institution. Each country could independently select its national representative in a manner most appropriate to the national context. Although, the competition element was included, the general aim was the promotion of good quality assurance practices in the HEIs. It was mutually agreed, that to avoid offering strict guidelines as to what good quality work is, the aim was to emphasise that the chosen HEIs are examples of good practices, but not the only way of doing things.

With this loose framework, the Project Group, established in the same meeting, set to work. The Project Group, which comprised of members from all participating agencies, carried out the project. It met four times and communicated intensely by email during the process. The Project Group began working on the project plan and set the project timetable.

Having a novel approach of inviting the HEIs to take part, the project has shaped and developed on the way. The ambiguous framework in the beginning, which left many issues to be agreed upon later, and the intent to find a method that suits all national circumstances, perhaps partly also caused this. These circumstances may also have resulted in creating something new as far as the method is concerned. Consequently, the realisation of project has not been traditional or methodologically eloquent; nonetheless, it has

been in accordance with the national developments of each country. Additionally, the discussions resulted in a learning experience for those directly involved, and allowed everyone to influence the process.

2.1 Project objectives

The project was set as a comparative analysis of Nordic HEIs' systematic quality assurance work. The primary objective of the project has been to support the Nordic HEIs in developing systematic internal quality work and share good practices of quality work in the HEIs.

The main emphasis has been on learning and sharing. With mounting pressures placed on higher education to handle demands of quality, seeing how the same questions are tackled elsewhere can help. The aim was not only to support the HEIs involved in the project, but also others by sharing the good practices through this report. The credit for this belongs, of course, to the participating universities, whose willingness to take part in the project and publicly share their quality assurance practices has enabled the whole process and will contribute to the ongoing dialogue concerning quality in higher education in the Nordic countries.

As far as the competition element is concerned, the aim was to find the best example of quality work from the Nordic HEIs. Alongside this, the Project Group wanted to underline benchmarking based on the idea that one kind of quality work may suit and function well in one institution, but not in another. As the operating contexts are so diverse, it would be difficult to find a quality assurance structure that fits all institutions or to demonstrate that one institution is clearly best in every aspect of quality work. Therefore, the attempt has been to look at different approaches to quality and find good practices, which can be used as benchmarks.

The third aim set for the project was to set forth the quality assurance agencies' arguments on why the participating HEI, selected for the project, has good internal quality work, and thereby, offer an opportunity to compare these arguments with each other to examine convergence and non-convergence and examine how the arguments possibly reflect the national quality assurance developments. The idea was to increase mutual understanding of the reasons behind the possible differences. This comparison will not for the most part be covered in this report; instead, it will concentrate on the HEIs. An additional objective for the project has been to provide the Nordic agencies with information of the support the HEIs feel they need in the quality assurance work. This, on the other hand, is discussed in the conclusion.

2.2 Project method

The Project Group agreed that the overall focus of the project was *systematic quality work considered from the perspective of education*. The following six themes were agreed on as a conceivable set of aspects for good practices of quality work:

1. Institutional responsibility, purpose and aims of quality work
2. Student involvement
3. The role of external stakeholders
4. Documentation & reporting
5. Follow up mechanisms of quality assurance
6. International dimension.

The project included two phases: a national selection procedure and a joint Nordic phase. The project began with a national phase in which each agency chose its representative for the project during autumn 2004. The national agencies were free to decide how to select its national representatives. Consequently, the selection procedures varied from a national competition to invitation. Therefore, the agencies were asked to briefly describe why and how it selected the national representative for the project. This included the presentation of the criteria used and why the agency considered the chosen HEI to have good quality work. The national agency's arguments should reflect the national approach by expressing what is special in each case nationally. It was agreed that these arguments could be used to understand more about the similarities and differences of the national contexts and the agencies' operational methods.

The selected universities were asked to submit a 10–15-page document describing their quality assurance practices (see appendices). Due to independence in selecting the national representatives, the six themes formulated for the project were not used by all the universities in their documentation.

For the project's second phase, an international Panel was invited to evaluate the quality assurance work of the participating universities, name good practices of quality work and decide upon the best example of quality assurance work from the universities. The Panel completed the assignment based on interviews and the written documentation from the universities. The purpose of the interviews was to verify and deepen the universities' documentation In addition, the Panel was provided with the argumentation by the agencies as background information to explain why the particular university had been selected to take part in the project. The interviews took place at a two-day workshop held in Helsinki in April 2005.

The Nordic Network announced the project results officially in its annual meeting in May 2005.

2.3 Selection procedures of the national participants

Each agency selected the national representative for the project independently. Depending on the method used, the national phase could be an evaluation, competition or invitation.

The selected participants were:
Copenhagen Business School (CBS), Denmark
University of Kuopio, Finland
Norwegian University of Life Sciences (UMB), Norway
University of Uppsala, Sweden

The following describes how each agency selected the national representative. To some degree an explanation for the selection method is given. The descriptions of quality assurance work in each of these universities are included in the appendices.

2.3.1 Denmark

Focus on quality assurance in higher education institutions in Denmark has increased in recent years. The 2003 legislation for Danish universities requires universities to systematically develop and improve the quality of their processes and output in terms of teaching and learning. The legislation furthermore obliges universities to ensure that institutional and programme quality is reviewed through external evaluations and that the necessary follow-up takes place. A further implication of the legislation is that universities must establish clear guidelines for information systems to be used in connection with evaluations and follow-up. This Danish development should be viewed in the international context where the quality of the universities is increasingly on the agenda. The European Bologna process has a distinctive focus on quality assurance and improvement as a means of ensuring comparability, visibility and transparency of the quality of higher education institutions at all levels.

EVA decided, therefore, in 2003 to initiate a series of audits of the Danish universities.

When the Nordic Project started, EVA had not completed any audits. The descriptions of the HEI's quality assurance systems were limited and could not form the basis for the selection. Furthermore, the selection had to

consider EVA's strategic plan for 2004–2006, which states that EVA will conduct two university audits annually and thereby cover all 12 universities within six years. Therefore, it would have been inappropriate to invite all universities to describe their quality assurance work. It could have easily collided with EVA's strategic plan or with other ongoing evaluations or projects initiated by EVA according to the action plan for 2004.

Against this background, EVA chose to invite one of the Danish HEIs, which it knew had worked with quality assurance for a number of years. EVA assumed that they would have a well-functioning system for quality assurance and that it would not imply a too heavy workload for the chosen HEI because the area would already be well described.

In August 2004, EVA therefore invited the Copenhagen Business School (CBS) to participate in the project. They were given a short project description including six themes on which their description of the quality work could focus.

2.3.2 Finland

FINHEEC invited all Finnish higher education institutions to take part in the project. This approach was chosen, because FINHEEC wanted to offer all HEIs the same learning opportunity. The HEIs were asked to submit a 5–6-page description of their quality work along with their application for the project. Altogether seven HEIs, 4 universities and 3 polytechnics, applied.

As selection criteria, FINHEEC used six recommendations made by a ministerial working committee, which analysed the present stage and development requirements for quality assurance in Finnish higher education in 2003. The committee recommended that universities and polytechnics develop quality assurance systems, which should

1. be comprehensive;
2. enable the participation of all members of the higher education institution in quality work;
3. be interrelated as part of the normal operations of the higher education institution;
4. be continuous;
5. be part of the operational steering and management system; and
6. be documented.

The applicants were invited to an interactive one-day workshop where they gave presentations to convince each other of the standard of their quality work. During the workshop, the applicants ranked each other in terms of the above-mentioned criteria, and at the end, three highest ranked applicants

were selected. A site visit was conducted to all the selected three institutions. The purpose was to validate written documentation and determine which institution the best fulfilled the criteria.

The site visits were conducted by an evaluation team, comprising four representatives of higher education institutions. A representative of FINHEEC acted as secretary for the evaluation team, but did not take part in the evaluation. Based on the site visits and the written documentation, the evaluation team analysed and evaluated the quality work done in the three institutions and made their decision on the national representative based on the committee recommendations. The representatives of HEIs, not FINHEEC, therefore, made the selection, although, FINHEEC confirmed the decision. FINHEEC chose this approach, because it did not want to articulate that the quality assurance work in one HEI was the best at the time when all the Finnish HEIs were developing their quality assurance systems and FINHEEC was developing the national audit method for their evaluation.

The University of Kuopio was selected as the national representative. The evaluation group considered it best fulfilled the criteria used, demonstrating it with concrete evidence. Overall, the University of Kuopio has approached quality work systematically and comprehensively, including all areas of operation. It has succeeded in building a system that reaches both the top and the bottom: the management is committed to quality work, quality work is clearly part of the university's everyday functions, and all members of the university are able to take part and contribute to it. It is evident that most in the university understand the significance of quality work and its relevance to their own work. The university has extensively trained its personnel regarding quality work. The university's quality work practices are documented systematically and extensively. Although the work is yet to be finished, it is clear that the University of Kuopio is nationally more advanced in terms of quality work than many higher education institutions.

2.3.3 Norway

As outlined in the Appendix 1.3, every accredited Norwegian higher education institution will have its quality assurance system for education evaluated by NOKUT at least every sixth year. The institutions were expected to have such systems in place from1 January 2004. As part of the cyclic evaluations, the first systems were evaluated in spring 2004, and then only at institutions having volunteered for an early evaluation. In addition, the quality assurance systems at four institutions, three private and one public (The Norwegian University of Life Sciences, UMB), had already been evaluated, following applications for different kinds of institutional accreditation. UMB had applied

to NOKUT for a change of status from "scientific college" to university. Approval of the quality assurance system was a prerequisite before the application for university status would be considered.

UMB's quality assurance system was evaluated by a committee appointed by NOKUT in January 2004, and the system was approved by NOKUT's board in March 2004. The following accreditation process resulted in a recommendation that university status should be conferred on this institution. Hence, the King in Council established the Norwegian University of Life Sciences (UMB) on 10 December 2004.

Why the Norwegian University of Life Sciences[3]*?*

As a participant in the Nordic Project, NOKUT was expected to nominate a higher education institution in Norway for comparison of the institution's quality work with similar institutions in the Nordic countries. NOKUT was free to decide how to pick a candidate. This happened when the higher education institutions in Norway were busy building up and implementing their systems for quality assurance of education, in addition to other burdensome activities required by the Quality Reform. Some of the workload was a consequence of NOKUT's own activity, including the first evaluations of quality assurance systems. To ask for additional reports on quality work was not considered justifiable.

However, the committee reports already written about evaluations of quality assurance systems, guided by principles (by law and by NOKUT) that gave the institutions equal frames and guidelines to relate to, constituted 8–10 examples of quality work similarly documented and assessed.

The reports were studied, some institutions selected and consulted, and among the most interesting ones, UMB was willing to take on the extra work. In the NOKUT evaluation report, the QA system at UMB was described and assessed based on to what degree it fulfils the ten criteria for such systems that NOKUT has developed (Appendix 1.3). The committee concluded as follows:

The Agricultural University College of Norway has established a satisfactory system for quality assurance, in accordance with the guidelines and criteria for such systems set by the Ministry of Education and NOKUT. The institution's quality assurance system is dynamic and geared towards continuous development. The system has a clear distribution of responsibilities and works according to well-defined strategic and operational goals. The institution has recently undergone reorganisation and the expert

[3] Until recently the Agricultural University College of Norway.

committee is convinced of the institution's dedication to the effective operation of the system.

As UMB's quality assurance system was already fully documented through the earlier evaluation process[4], NOKUT asked them this time to focus on the themes agreed upon in the Nordic Project Group. Both the overall quality assurance system and the quality work related to the six themes are well described in UMB's report (see Appendix 2.3), and show that UMB has a comprehensive grip on quality work related to education. Increasingly, the system must be conceived as integrated with the existing systems for management, planning and reporting, which guarantees continuous evaluation and revision.

2.3.4 Sweden

Awareness of and interest in quality assurance is relatively well established in Swedish higher education, because of two rounds of quality audits conducted during 1995–2002. Sweden therefore opted to offer all the higher education institutions in the country an opportunity to take part in the Nordic comparison.

A written invitation was issued by the National Agency for Higher Education on 22 June 2004 requesting a 10–15-page *description of the institution's systematic quality assurance procedures and their outcomes*. The institutions were urged to also describe the support *they would like to receive from the National Agency for their work in developing quality assurance.* No other instructions were given and no other aspects of quality measures were required in these descriptions. Sweden also complied with the original decision made by the Project Group that it would not specify any collective aspects.

Six responses had been received by the National Agency by October 31, the final date for their submission. A jury of three was appointed by the Agency, consisting of two members from the academy and one member representing the stakeholders.

The jury based its appraisal on the requirements specified in the invitation, that is, "a description of the institution's systematic quality assurance procedures and their outcomes". The jury considered that it would benefit a comparative Nordic study if the description covered the work of an institution in its entirety, including research and graduate programmes where these were offered. Thereafter the seven assessment aspects used in the previous quality audits (see Appendix 1.4) were applied.

[4] This report is available only in Norwegian.

The jury was able to determine that all six higher education institutions had provided interesting descriptions of various elements that formed part of their quality assurance systems. There was however, very much variation in the descriptions of the entire quality assurance process for the institution as a whole. Two of the six contributions offered the most comprehensive descriptions of systematic quality assurance. Of these, the description provided by Uppsala University was the most detailed and embodied all seven of the principal criteria. In its description, the University has also covered graduate programmes and research and included examples of the outcome of its quality assurance procedures.

Based on the jury's assessment, the National Agency for Higher Education decided to submit the quality assurance procedures of Uppsala University as Sweden's contribution to the comparative Nordic study of the best systematic quality assurance procedures at higher education institutions in the Nordic countries.

2.4 Composition of the Panel

In selecting the Panel, the Project Group decided to have a Panel whose members represented none of the Nordic countries to avoid any conflicts of interests. In addition, it was regarded as vital that one Panel member represented higher education institutions. Each agency was asked to suggest possible names of evaluation and quality experts for the Panel to select those all the countries agreed to. The Project Group formed a suitable group aiming to maintain a balance of geography, gender and agency approach/higher education institution approach, as well as fairness between the suggestions made by the four participating countries.

The Panel comprised three experienced quality and evaluation professionals in higher education:

Fiona Crozier, Deputy Director, Quality Assurance Agency for Higher Education (QAA), UK
Dr **Rolf Heusser**, Director, Center of Accreditation and Quality Assurance of the Swiss Universities (OAQ), Switzerland.
Professor **Jethro Newton**, University College Chester, UK (*Panel Chair*).

2.5 Evaluation task of the Panel

The Panel was invited to evaluate the quality work of the four participating universities based on the written documentation provided beforehand and the interviews conducted in the workshop. The Panel was asked to consider the chosen six themes (see p. 12) in reference to the project's overall focus in its evaluation task. In addition, the Panel was free to focus on supplementary themes, when appropriate, as long as it explained why the supplementing points of view were taken.

As part of the evaluation task, the Panel was asked to choose one university, which would be "best" in the sense that it could be used as a benchmark, to name good practices and examples, identify strengths in each of the participating higher education institutions in terms of the six themes, and give written feedback to all of the four universities. This included considering why something is excellent or poor in terms of quality, what generates the differences, and if something does not work, why not. Most of all, the Panel was asked to emphasise learning more than ranking in its work. The Panel was also requested to provide arguments for each of its considerations and conclusions, which are presented in Chapter 3. The Project Group did not take part in the Panel's decision-making.

Overall, the Panel's task of comparing the approaches to quality in four different universities with diverse histories, operational cultures and contexts and national higher education systems was challenging. The challenge was made no easier by the task of naming the best example of quality assurance work from the four universities, while at the same time maintaining the emphasis on learning and sharing of good practices.

2.6 Summary of the workshop

The project culminated in a workshop held in Helsinki 5–6 April 2005. The workshop participants included the three Panel members, three to five representatives from each of the universities, the Project Group, one representative invited from the Ministry of Education, Science and Culture of Iceland, and other participants from the national agencies. One university also brought student representation with them.

The idea of the workshop was principally to bring the universities together to learn from each other and offer an opportunity to compare each other's quality assurance practices. In addition, the workshop provided a forum for the evaluation of the quality assurance work in each of the universities. The evaluation consisted of interviews conducted by the Panel, which

was given independence to decide on the length and course of the interviews. The Panel interviewed each university for one and a half hours during the workshop, leaving some time for discussion after each interview. The interviews were based on the written material provided by the universities in advance; thus, the interviews verified and deepened the universities' documentation. The Panel structured their questioning according to the six themes of the project.

To enhance the mutual learning process and generate dialogue, the interviews were open to all the workshop participants. In practice, the Panel interviewed one university at a time and the rest of the participants listened as an audience. In the end, the audience was also able to question the interviewees. As a whole, having universities from four different countries together to be evaluated publicly and to discuss their quality assurance practices openly was an innovative approach. Nevertheless, the public interviewing method worked and served as a constructive tool for examining diverse approaches to quality assurance and a mutual exchange of experiences. The Project Group hoped that it also enhanced the experience of openness and fairness of the process, even with the aim of selecting one institution as the best example of quality assurance benchmark. Thus, it could be said that the method reflects the culture of openness, characteristic of all the Nordic societies.

3 Project results and conclusions of the Panel

Fiona Crozier
Dr. Rolf Heusser, MD
Prof. Jethro Newton (Panel Chair)

3.1 Introduction

In accepting the invitation to participate in the Nordic Project 2004/2005, the members of the International Panel were highly conscious of the importance attached to the project by all participants. The time and effort that each nominee expended on preparing their reports was much appreciated by Panel members. It became evident early on that the project and the Helsinki meetings would provide an excellent opportunity for discussion, reflection and learning.

The Panel members were impressed by the enthusiastic manner in which each of the four nominee institutions participated in the proceedings over the two-day period. The spirit of openness, and willingness to engage in dialogue and reflection, made the task of the Panel an enjoyable one. That each participating institution and national agency was keen to ensure that the interviews and discussions were held in public is most unusual, and is an undoubted strength of the 2004/2005 Project. It is something from which other national and international quality agencies, networks and associations can learn, and is itself an example of good practice. It was also to the credit of the participating bodies that each university included strong representation at the most senior level. This was a clear testament to the importance attached to the project and the proceedings. The active participation and contribution of a student provided a most welcome opportunity to obtain student input and perspectives at first hand.

3.2 Method used by the Panel in conducting the proceedings

Over the two-day period of the workshop, the Panel members had the opportunity to meet with representatives from each individual higher education institution, together with representatives from each national agency. In

addition to several private meetings of the Panel, including an initial meeting to agree the *modus operandi* to be adopted, the Panel members undertook to interview each institution based on the reports and supporting documentation made available to them by each university. As the Chair of the Panel explained at the outset of the proceedings, every effort would be made in each interview to encourage a climate of discussion and interaction, with opportunities for exchanges of views and the identification and sharing of good practice. A brief opportunity was also provided, at the end of each interview, for questions to be put to each nominee institution by representatives from other universities and national agencies. It is hoped that this added to the spirit of openness and dialogue.

Based on the outcomes of their initial private meeting, together with guidance provided in correspondence with the Project Chair, Anna-Maija Liuhanen, in advance of the Workshop, the Chair of the Panel also explained at the opening session how the Panel members would approach their task. The task that the Panel members had been asked to undertake was to decide upon the best example of quality work from the four national nominees and to identify and highlight good practices of quality work. The Chair explained that the Panel would endeavour to meet this obligation and fulfil its responsibility to arrive at judgements. However, the Panel also wished to ensure that the proceedings and outcomes of the workshop would be of maximum benefit to each of the four participating institutions. Accordingly, there would be a minimum focus on the 'competitive' aspects and a maximum focus on good practice and quality enhancement.

The Panel wished to acknowledge the importance of institutional culture and context, operating climate (institutionally and nationally), stage of development and university profile, and the nature and 'fitness for purpose' of individual quality systems. In relation to the latter, the Chair explained that the team would focus on the key characteristics of institutions' quality systems and approaches, but would not search for weaknesses or failures since this was more properly the responsibility of institutions' own quality systems. Also, in contrast to external audit of universities, where there are extensive opportunities for triangulation, the present project, by using a workshop and interview method to focus on universities' written reports, was quite different and did not easily lend itself to competition, comparison, or a ranking exercise.

In the interests of consistency and fairness, the Panel had agreed to restrict each interview to 90 minutes. The Panel took due account of the Project Group's invitation to each individual institution to present their report based on six themes: institutional responsibility for quality; student in-

volvement; role of external stakeholders; documentation and reporting; follow-up mechanisms; and international dimension. Based on this, and having studied each of the four nominees' reports, the Panel had agreed a common set of lines of enquiry, to form the basis for questioning and to be used as discussion points for each interview. These were announced to all participants at the beginning of the proceedings, and participants were encouraged to provide illustrative examples. The six areas were:

1. What is your university's approach to quality (strategy/policy), why did you choose it, and how do you know it works?
2. How do you involve students in your quality processes and how do you a) obtain, and b) provide feedback?
3. How effectively are your programmes aligned with the requirements and expectations of external stakeholders (e.g. employers and alumni etc.)?
4. What use do you make of data and management information for the purpose of quality monitoring and reporting on quality issues? How does this impact on your quality processes, how does it improve quality, and how is it used to inform stakeholders?
5. With reference to follow-up mechanisms for quality assurance: a) how do you review/evaluate your systems and how do you use this for organisational development purposes, and b) how do you ensure that loops are closed through following up issues raised in your quality procedures?
6. With reference to the international dimension: a) what kinds of international co-operation do you undertake, b) how are you engaging with Bologna mobility/co-operation requirements, c) are you involved in any joint QA initiatives or benchmarking? and d) how do you assure the quality of the student experience for international students enrolled at your university and those from your university enrolled as international students elsewhere?

To allow for differences of context and institutional profile, some supplementary questions were included in each interview.

3.3 Reporting method adopted by the Panel

In fulfilling its responsibilities for arriving at a judgement on the best example of quality work from the four national nominees, while simultaneously maintaining a maximum focus on good practice and quality enhancement, the Panel sought to establish a means of reporting which, while acknowledging a 'competitive' aspect, would enable good practices in quality work in each of the four institutions to be identified. Accordingly, in the following

section – 'Good practice identified by the Panel' – the Panel's views on examples of 'best quality work' are mapped against the six areas in which Panel members pursued their lines of enquiry. Where a university is deemed to have a particular strength in any of the six areas, this is highlighted.

In the subsequent section – 'Panel's decision – the Panel has sought to take a view on which nominee institution appeared to the Panel members to merit a judgement of 'best quality work'. The Panel would wish to qualify this in two ways. Firstly, the Panel's view is not derived from a ranking of all four nominee institutions. Secondly, the selection on one institution is premised not on a judgement of best processes *per se* in comparison with others, but rather the judgement is informed by an assessment of context. It is more a judgement of 'best in context'. In other words:

- how effectively is a university using its systems and procedures and applying its quality principles in its own context and operating environment (external and internal), and taking account of external stakeholders and students; and,
- how well is the university meeting the stated purposes of its quality policy and strategy?

3.4 Good practice identified by the Panel

From their reading of each of the institutional reports and related documentation and meetings held with nominee institutions the Panel identified the following examples and features of good practice. It should be noted that such practice, worthy of commendation, was evident in each university.

a) Quality strategy and quality system

The quality systems of both Copenhagen Business School and the University of Kuopio reflected well the institutional context, profile and needs of the respective institutions. Each had sound policies in respect of quality assurance and quality improvement, and quality strategies were clear and well embedded within overall institutional strategies. In the view of the Panel, at Uppsala University the active involvement of the Vice Chancellor in quality matters, the activities of the University's Quality Committee, and the range of projects (e.g. SAUNA) represented examples of good practice. The University also demonstrated a culture of evaluation and ongoing monitoring.

b) Student involvement

The Panel members were much impressed by the nature and level of student involvement at the Norwegian University of Life Sciences (UMB), and also by the ability of the student representative whom the Panel met to identify and evaluate challenges facing the university. The Panel gained a strong sense of the effectiveness of the University's arrangements for student course evaluation. The Panel also noted the excellent response rate to student surveys and the transparent manner in which the results of feedback were made publicly available and used for the purpose of 'closing loops'.

The encouragement of reflection on the part of the learner is a strong feature of the University of Uppsala's system of course evaluation, including as it does an emphasis on student outcomes arising from their course of study. The Panel also noted the good tradition of successful student involvement at the University of Kuopio. In turn, Panel members were impressed by the dynamic way in which key quality initiatives at Copenhagen Business School had been informed by student input (e.g. Learning Lab; Teaching and Learning Committee) and how this had then been fed back into the student experience.

c) Alignment with requirements of external stakeholders

In the view of the Panel, the links between CBS and each of its stakeholders appeared to be well established and effective. The level and type of involvement was notable, and this included 'round table' meetings with CEOs. Also impressive were the examples of three-way links between the School, students (e.g. involvement via project work; consultancy), and the business community. In turn, the Panel formed the view that the University of Uppsala's alumni system at faculty level functioned well, with appropriate structures and committees in place to ensure good interaction with industry and the labour market.

d) Use and impact of data and management information

Of all of the areas considered by the Panel, it appeared that the general area of the use made of data and management information for quality purposes was the least well developed. The UMB had available a comprehensive national and local data set within its management information system. This is clearly important from the point of view of transparency. It was not clear to the Panel, however, how far this was analysed and used to inform quality actions and initiatives. In turn, the Panel formed the view in the case of the University of Kuopio that while there was clear potential for robust, evi-

dence-based management decisions there was an insufficiently clear picture of how far the potential for using data for quality purposes was being maximised.

e) Follow-up mechanisms for quality assurance

In the view of the Panel, the University of Kuopio has in place the systems and structures that can provide a sound basis for effective follow-up on quality matters but the University's system has not yet reached the point where these are being used to full effect.

The Panel noted that the UMB constantly monitors matters relating to quality. The University attached a high degree of importance to the publication of results to illustrate the tangible benefits of its quality system and initiatives. This is to be commended. However, it was not clear to the Panel members what mechanism is available for 'standing back' and bringing together, for the purposes of evaluation, an overview across the range of projects and initiatives. The Panel would wish to note that this is an issue for consideration by all nominee institutions.

f) International dimension

The Panel members formed the view that both CBS and UMB exhibited particular strengths in this area. The Norwegian University of Life Sciences showed a strong but focused institutional ethos in this area and has in place good structures to support the exchange of students and teachers, and to support its international students. It is also evident that this is reflected increasingly in the content of programmes. The extent to which CBS has engaged with and is implementing key aspects of the Bologna process was noted by the Panel. This extended into areas such as student learning outcomes, and competence profiles. The CBS also has an impressive track record of external benchmarking and involvement in quality initiatives, often at international level.

The University of Uppsala, while having a strong international profile in many ways, has yet to engage fully with Bologna. In relation to benchmarking, the University's view to date has been that the benefits of benchmarking may not match the considerable effort required in such initiatives. It was evident to the Panel that the University's support structures for international students appear to be strong.

3.5 Panel's decision

Based on their reading of the available institutional reports, and taking account of the interviews and discussions conducted with each nominee institution, the Panel members would wish to commend the quality system of **Copenhagen Business School** as an outstanding example of best practice. The following strengths were identified:

- a coherent quality system, systematically applied;
- an established quality culture;
- good involvement of stakeholders;
- the learning lab initiative and the students' involvement in its inception and management;
- effective use of results from quality reviews and processes for the dual purpose of quality improvement and organisational learning;
- use of the above for opening up a high level of dialogue between staff and between staff and students;
- a strong focus on student outcomes;
- effective feedback loops;
- transparent information.

Effective use has been made, over a number of years, of a prominent independent, international expert on quality matters. This has served the University well. Even so, CBS may wish to reflect on whether, at this stage of its development, an additional or alternative perspective may be beneficial.

In the order in which the interviews took place, the Panel would also wish to comment on the other nominee institutions.

In the view of the Panel, the quality management system that the **University of Kuopio** has developed was well suited to the University's context and has considerable potential for further development at departmental level. In evolutionary terms, being relatively new, its systems were not yet fully implemented. The Panel would encourage the University to continue to work towards attaining an embedded quality culture. The quality management system appeared to be systematically applied, with good attention paid to stakeholder involvement and every effort being made to achieve transparency through a high level of staff-student understanding. In addition, it is to the credit of the University that it pioneered the quality manager network amongst Finnish higher education institutions.

The Panel considered **UMB** to be highly 'mission conscious', an undoubted strength, and to have an impressive emphasis on the notion of 'academic citizenship'. The degree of student involvement and engagement is strong as is the international dimension, not least the initiatives to build strong

links in non-European countries. In the view of the Panel, the University has adopted a quality framework that takes full account of context, including the requirements of the national framework. Nevertheless, the University may wish to reflect on whether the 200 or so quality assurance activities that are integral to its systems represent a degree of overload. It appeared to the Panel that the University was conscious of the complexity of its system and, accordingly, it is suggested that there may be merit in evaluating this area with a view to achieving a better balance between 'quality control' and 'quality enhancement'. Though the University's system is coherent and systematically applied, it is relatively young and yet to be fully embedded. The Panel believes that the institution possesses the right degree of self-confidence to continue to develop as a learning organisation.

Based on their deliberations, the Panel formed the view that **Uppsala University** benefits from sound support from the top layer of the institution, with the Vice Chancellor providing clear leadership in the development of a quality culture. It was also evident to Panel members that strong encouragement is given to departments, but while the range of initiatives and projects was a strong feature, the extent to which the benefits of such quality developments were shared across departments was not entirely apparent. For the Panel, this raised the question as to whether, notwithstanding the range of sound measures of quality assurance in faculties, the University's system as a whole was entirely cohesive and coherent. Nevertheless, it was apparent that the quality system was being used to address issues and to achieve improvements, and that the attention paid to the student dimension and to student needs and issues was impressive.

3.6 Panel's concluding remarks

In reading the available reports and other documentation, and based on the series of interviews and discussions held on 5 and 6 April 2005, the Panel members decided they would wish to commend the quality system of the Copenhagen Business School as an outstanding example of good practice. This decision reflects the range of strengths that the Panel identified and which are listed earlier in this report. The Panel is pleased to have been able to identify a considerable range of examples of good practice and quality enhancement in each of the higher education institutions with which discussions were held. In addition to the Panel's decision as described in Section 3.5, the Project Group is invited to note the many specific examples of good practice identified in Section 3.4 of this report.

The Panel would strongly and enthusiastically encourage the Nordic Network to continue to develop the very successful format of the project. Within this, it is felt that there is considerable merit in continuing to build on the approach, adopted for the first time in this year's project, whereby agencies and higher education institutions can work so closely together for the purpose of sharing and learning about quality work.

Finally, the members of the International Panel invited to participate in the Nordic Project 2004/2005 wish to place on record their appreciation of the opportunity to participate in the project and, in particular, the discussions with colleagues from the four nominee universities and the national agencies. We would also like to express our thanks to Pirjo-Liisa Omar for her support and helpfulness throughout all stages of our involvement with the Nordic Project 2004/2005.

4 Conclusion

The objectives set for the Nordic Project 2004/2005 were to support the Nordic HEIs in developing systematic internal quality work, select the best example of quality work from the participating universities, promote learning and share good practices. Additional objectives were to examine the convergence and non-convergence in the selection procedures of the national representatives for the project and the agencies' argumentation as to why a particular HEI has good internal quality work, and hear what kind of support the universities need from the national agencies. The following will reflect on these objectives and the project's outcomes.

Experiences of the participating universities

The participating universities were asked to give feedback on the project. They found the project an interesting learning experience, because it offered an opportunity to measure one's own system with others. The universities noted that the writing of the report on the universities' quality work was a productive exercise in itself. In one university, the process led to an in-depth discussion of the quality systems in a dialogue with internal stakeholders. A general comment on the workshop was that it was useful to observe that systems can vary largely, yet they still assure quality. Some even found ideas to think about and perhaps transfer to one's own university.

The representation of higher education institutions on the Panel was welcomed positively by the universities. Similarly, the high standard of professionalism of the Panel members was acknowledged by the universities. It was also considered important to meet colleagues from other Nordic countries and discuss quality issues on a thematic basis. Based on the experience, the universities considered it worthwhile to arrange similar workshops for Nordic HEIs on other quality themes.

As development targets, the universities suggested that an alternative way of conducting the workshop would have been to take one theme at a time and involve all four universities in the discussion. This would have possibly created more dialogue between the universities themselves. The universities also thought that they might have been better prepared, had they known how the interviews would be organised: they only knew in advance that each interview would last a maximum of two hours. Due to the variation in the national processes to select the participating HEIs, it varied how much the

participants knew of the project's joint phase, which was seen as a disadvantage.

Reflections on the national quality assurance contexts

In the beginning, it was agreed that each country could select the participating HEI in a manner most appropriate for the national context and no common criteria for this phase were applied. When examining the national selection procedures, it could perhaps be concluded that they reflect the national situations of quality assurance in higher education.

Denmark introduced voluntary audits in 2003, but had not completed any audits at the time of the project's start. Thus, EVA did not have an all-inclusive view of the HEI's quality assurance work or documentation to be used in the selection of the Danish participant. Furthermore, EVA did not want to burden all HEIs by asking them to describe their quality assurance work for the project in addition to other ongoing evaluations or projects initiated by EVA. Consequently, EVA invited one Danish HEI, which it knew had worked with quality assurance for a number of years.

Finland invited all HEIs to participate and the selection of the national representatives was made by the HEIs themselves, because FINHEEC did not want to choose one HEI over the other, and thus express what kind of a quality assurance system the Finnish HEIs should have in the current national development phase. FINHEEC also thought the national selection phase in itself would offer a learning opportunity for the HEIs in a situation where they are all developing their quality assurance systems.

In Norway, all higher education institutions were expected to have a quality assurance system in place as of 2004, and the first HEIs were evaluated in spring 2004. NOKUT was cautious as to not wanting to burden the HEIs with extra work, and thus chose to invite one of the already audited HEIs, because they had existing documentation that could be used with minor changes.

In Sweden, quality assurance thinking is well established in higher education, because of two audit rounds between 1995–2002. Similar to Finland, Sweden therefore chose to invite all HEIs to participate and wanted to offer all higher education institutions an opportunity to take part in the Nordic Project. The selection was based on the same assessment aspects as used previously in the quality audits.

Generally, all countries modelled the selection procedure to suit the national context. Some wanted to invite all HEIs to participate seeing the process as a good learning possibility for all, while others were more concerned

about not demanding additional work from the HEIs. Common to all of the participating universities was that they are all nationally good examples and advanced in quality assurances work.

Feedback for agencies

One of the aims of the project was to provide the Nordic agencies with information of the support the universities feel they need in the quality assurance work. In the interviews, the Panel asked the participating universities of their expectations for the national quality assurance agencies. In general, all the universities were satisfied with their national agency and felt that the co-operation is conducted in good terms. The agencies were considered to work professionally. Depending on the universities' own context, some felt the agencies' role more significant than others did.

The universities in those countries that had recently introduced audits as part of the evaluation method expressed their happiness with this recent addition. One university commented in a figure of speech that the agency's requirements to establish a quality assurance system were at first a challenge similar to taking cod-liver oil; however, the university felt that these requirements were a necessary "medication" and that they will eventually prove to be healthy for the university.

Some expressed a wish for more national coordination of all the separate development activities and evaluations taking place in the HEIs to prevent overlaps of different external and internal evaluations. Similarly, it would help the universities, if the demands from the Ministries and agencies would be more coordinated. It was suggested that the agencies could support universities by actively informing about the international developments, especially the quality assurance issues within the Bologna process.

It was also expressed that changes in national evaluation have been done reasonably often, which is not always positive since systems need time to mature and institutionalise procedures. The universities also considered it vital that the national agencies operate independently.

Mutual learning perspectives

In many respects, this project contained novel characteristics. By inviting the Nordic HEIs to participate, the project involved the Nordic agencies and HEIs together for the first time in such a project. The method of openly sharing and comparing quality assurance approaches of Nordic higher education institutions has also been a new method.

The participating universities were very different in size, academic fields, age and academic traditions. Consequent to this diversity, it would have been difficult and unfair to compare the institutions and the different contexts of operation straightforwardly. Setting up a quality assurance culture is different in a large institution compared to a small institution or in a single disciplinary institution compared to a multi-disciplinary institution. Therefore, the Panel's approach of looking at the universities' quality assurance work and its successfulness in its own context has been wise. The diversity has benefited, nevertheless, the project by providing four very different examples of how to take care of quality. Precisely because of this diversity, this report can possibly contribute to a larger number of different kinds of HEIs by offering more variety for reflection.

The realisation of the project was not always straightforward consequent to the new approach of involving HEIs as part of the project, the attempt to find a method that suits all national circumstances, a somewhat loose framework in the beginning, and contradictory objectives of selecting the best Nordic example of quality work, while at the same time emphasising learning and sharing. Because of these premises, the project method has been mostly developed along the way. In effect, the Project Group feels that the project focus and method should have been more clearly defined in the beginning. This would have also given the participating universities the same starting point in the project. On the other hand, the loose framework has been the strength of the project, allowing innovative ideas to surface. For instance, the Project Group decided to bring all the participating universities together into one seminar, instead of using a more traditional method of individual site visits. From here, the open interviewing method was developed.

The Project Group is pleased to conclude that this project has been a good opening in the collaboration of the Nordic quality assurance agencies and HEIs in a project such as this. It has also proved that an open and sharing approach is possible and will benefit all those taking part in the process. The HEIs have been able to familiarise themselves with three other quality assurance approaches and the quality assurance framework of three other countries, and they have received evaluation feedback on their own quality assurance work. It would be fair to conclude that the project has provided new perspectives for quality assurance work and all the participants have thus learned from others' as well as from their own quality assurance work during the process. It is the Project Group's hope that something of the project's innovative method can be transferred to other circumstances and further developed. The Project Group also anticipates that this report is of use to many,

and that it will contribute to the ongoing dialogue concerning quality in higher education in the Nordic countries and worldwide.

The Project Group would like to express its thanks to the Panel for its contribution to this project. Much of the success of the project and its outcomes are the consequence of the Panel's expertise and discretion in taking the diverseness of the universities and their contexts into account in a professional manner. The Panel created an atmosphere of openness and sharing in the evaluation situation. Similarly, the Project Group would like to express its gratitude to the participating universities, without whom the project would not have been possible. Their readiness to take part in the project and publicly share their quality assurance practices, as well as enthusiasm to learn new ones, has been the basis of the whole process. All the participating universities are advanced in terms of internal quality assurance work and have many meritorious quality assurance practices which can be used as benchmarks.

On behalf of the Nordic Network, the Project Group congratulates CBS for being an excellent example of quality work, and encourages all the participating universities to continue their already creditable quality assurance work even further.

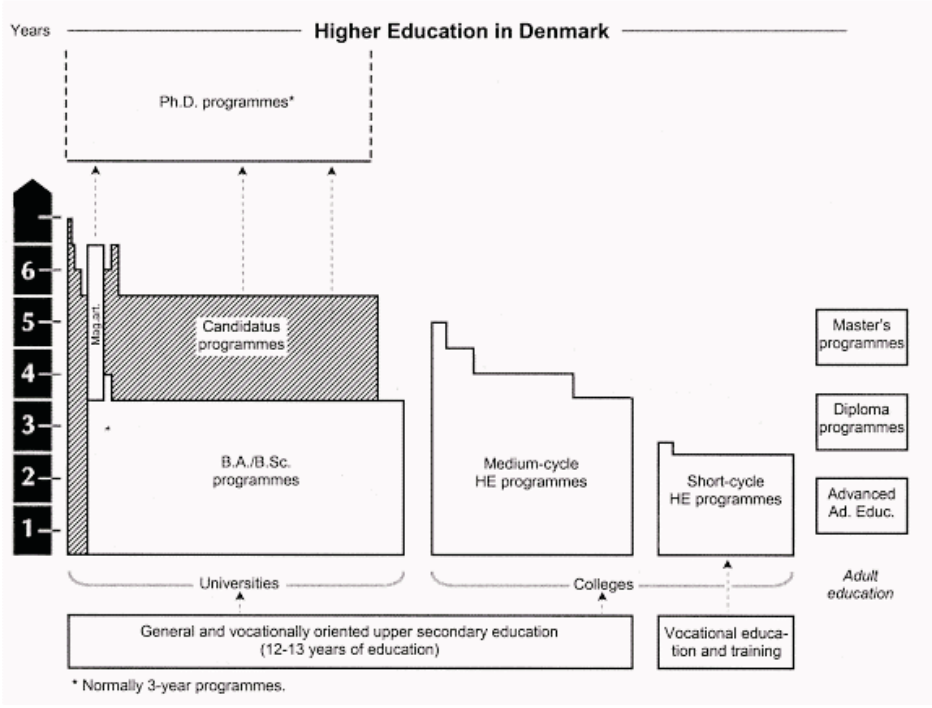
APPENDICES

APPENDIX 1:
National frameworks of quality assurance in higher education

1.1 Denmark: Quality assurance in Danish higher education

The Danish Higher Education System

The Danish higher education system is divided into short-cycle, medium-cycle and long-cycle higher education programmes; 44% of an age group completes a higher education programme. 'Of these, 9% complete a short-cycle, 23% complete a medium-cycle and 12% complete a long-cycle higher education programme.



Institutions can be grouped into two different sectors:

- the college sector, that is, the professionally oriented higher education sector
- the university sector.

The college sector comprises around 100 specialised institutions of higher education offering professionally oriented programmes. They often co-operate closely with other colleges or universities. Most colleges offering Academy Profession degrees have formed Academies ofProfessional Higher Education as a framework for regional co-operation. Most colleges offering Professional Bachelor's degrees have merged into Centres for Higher Education (CVUs). As from 2005, CVUs fulfilling certain quality criteria may be awarded the label of University College.

The university sector includes 12 universities; five of these are multi-faculty universities. The other seven are specialised in specific fields such as engineering, education, agriculture and veterinary science, pharmacy, information technology and business studies. It also includes 13 specialist university-level institutions in architecture, art, music etc.

The Danish Ministry of Education regulates almost all college sector higher education, whereas the university sector is under the auspices of the Ministry of Science, Technology and Innovation.

Quality assurance in higher education

According to the Ministry of Education, the Danish approach to quality involves a number of elements, including:

- *Examination system*

External examiners attend examinations at all educational levels in Denmark. The use of external examiners is a defining and characteristic feature of the entire Danish educational system. They are the guardians of academic standards. For each education or group of related educations, there is a corps of external examiners, which in principle provides nationwide coverage. The corps includes representatives of local trade and industry. This should ensure that the knowledge and academic standards attained by students are relevant and live up to the demands of the programmes of study and the requirements of the labour market.

According to the order on the external examiners from 1993 the examiners have two tasks:

1. Control. The external examiners must ensure that the regulations set out in the order, curricula etc. are observed. They must secure the students a homogeneous, just and reliable evaluation – in other words they are to attend to the legal rights of the students. The examiners also check that the students have achieved an academic standard of an adequate and required level.
2. Advice. The external examiners are to advise the institutions on the quality of their educations and their relationship with the labour market.

- *Quality legislation*

The short-cycle higher education programmes were subject to a major reform in 2000 where 15 new business academy programmes emerged. As part of the reform it became a requirement that providers of new programmes should establish a quality assurance system for each programme.

The Academies are obliged to employ a system of continuous quality development and assessment of results. Accordingly, these institutions must have procedures for systematic self-evaluation of central areas of institutional activity. These should ensure, for instance, that teaching meets the predetermined goals, that relevant teaching methods are implied, and that the institution initiate systematic and regular programme and course evaluations. It is up to individual institutions to determine their system of quality assurance. The Ministry does not impose a specific system or method.

The 2003 legislation for the Danish universities requires universities to systematically develop and improve the quality of their processes and output in terms of teaching and learning. The legislation further obliges universities to ensure that institutional and programme quality is reviewed through external evaluations and that the necessary follow-up takes place. A further implication of the legislation is that universities must establish clear guidelines for documentation systems to be used in connection with evaluations and follow-up.

- *Transparency and openness*

In May 2002, the Danish parliament passed legislation on transparency and openness in education. The aim of the legislation is to constitute an asset for potential students and their parents, in particular, in providing improved access to comparable information on education and institutions, thus enabling individuals to make an informed choice of education and institution. Furthermore, greater openness should provide institutions with systematic information, which enables them to compare themselves to similar institutions and

learn from the experience of others, thereby promoting the spread of good practice.

The role of the Danish Evaluation Institute

The Danish Evaluation Institute (EVA) plays an important role as an external, independent body for quality assurance and the development of Danish education.

The Danish Evaluation Institute, EVA, is an independent institution formed under the auspices of the Danish Ministry of Education. EVA was established in 1999 and continues the work of the Danish Centre for Quality Assurance and Evaluation of Higher Education (established in 1992).

EVA:

- develops methods for evaluating the quality of teaching and learning
- develops and highlights the quality of education and teaching through systematic evaluation
- advises and collaborates with public authorities and educational institutions on quality issues
- is the national centre of knowledge of national and international experience in educational evaluation.

In 2003 EVA developed a concept for university audit and initiated audits of two Danish universities. Both universities agreed to participate in the audits voluntarily. In 2004 EVA initiated a third audit and in 2005 a fourth. Again the universities participated voluntarily. There has been a slightly different focus in the four audits. Some have focused on teaching and learning activities. While others have focused on quality assurance of teaching and learning, research, innovation, as well as administration. Until now, EVA's audit concept for university education does not include the use of pre-defined criteria. Instead EVA has applied a fitness-for-purpose approach where the participating universities are assessed against their own aims and objectives of the quality assurance process. The audits are not based upon a fixed definition of what constitutes a well-functioning system for quality assurance. Instead, the starting point has been the existing quality assurance mechanisms at the university and the link to relevant university polices. In keeping herewith the audits has emphasised developmental aspects and measures for improvement. In accordance with EVA's general guidelines, there is no ranking of the participating universities.

From 2006, EVA will introduce criteria in the audits of the universities in accordance with ENQA's standards and guidelines for quality assurance in the HEI area.

In the first half of 2004, EVA developed a concept for audits of the short-cycle higher education programmes and institutions, and in the second half of 2004 EVA initiated an audit as a pilot project based on four short-cycle higher education institutions. The aim of the audit is to assess the strengths and weaknesses of the local quality assurance system. The focus is on the findings of the quality assurance work both in terms of organisation and implementation. The audit concept is based on criteria concentrated around four focus areas: 1. the organisation of the quality assurance work, 2. documentation of resources, processes and results, 3 implementation and follow-up procedures and 4. evaluation and development of the quality assurance system.

According to EVA's strategic plan for the next three years, EVA will conduct two institutional audits each year at the university level, as well as three audits annually within the area of short-cycle higher education.

In the area of medium-cycle higher education programmes, EVA's main activity is accreditation. The programmes were subject to a major reform in 2000. A professional bachelor degree was introduced and all programmes were automatically granted the right to make the award. It was furthermore stated in the legislation that the programmes would be subject to an approval process after an introductory period of five years. Simultaneously EVA developed a number of criteria based on the legislation. The criteria were developed to assist the programmes to achieve the aims of the legislation. Based on these criteria EVA has developed a concept for accreditation of the medium-cycle higher education programmes and institutions.

According to the strategic plan, EVA's key activity within this education area will be to conduct accreditation according to a standardised cyclic model of all medium-cycle higher education programmes over the next five years (app. 24 accreditations annually) starting with accreditations of four programmes involving 26 institutions in 2004.

1.2 Finland: Quality assurance in Finnish higher education

Quality assurance in the Finnish higher education comprises three elements: national higher education policy, national evaluation and the higher education institutions' own quality assurance. The higher education institutions bear the main responsibility for the quality of their activities. Universities and polytechnics are currently developing quality assurance systems, which will cover all the institutional activities: education, research and external engagement.

National higher education policy

Higher education is the responsibility of the Ministry of Education. It is offered in universities and polytechnics. Both sectors have distinctive profiles: universities emphasise scientific research and research-based instruction, whereas polytechnics provide professional higher education. There are 20 universities and 29 polytechnics in Finland.

The Finnish Parliament passes educational legislation and decides on the overall lines of education and research policy. All higher education institutions are accredited by the state in the sense that they cannot operate without being acknowledged by legislation (universities) or without a government granted licence (polytechnics). This guarantees minimum standards for the education provided in higher education institutions. In addition, the higher education institutions cannot start educational programmes without authorisation from the government. The government may also include a requirement for further development of operations or provisions.

All Finnish universities are government-run institutions and primarily financed from the state budget. The Universities Act ensures the autonomy of the universities and prescribes their functions, operation and objectives in general terms only. Within these limits, each university decides on the detailed organisation of its administration and the decision-making power of its administrative bodies. Polytechnics are either municipally or privately run and co-financed by the government and local authorities.

National evaluation

The Finnish Higher Education Evaluation Council (FINHEEC) is an independent expert body assisting universities, polytechnics and the Ministry of Education in matters relating to evaluation. The overall aim of FINHEEC is the long-term development of higher education through evaluation and the development of evaluation procedures in the institutions of higher education nationwide. Consequently, the Council strongly emphasises the role of the higher education institutions in evaluation, and developmental evaluation approach in its evaluation projects.

The types of evaluation conducted by the Council can be divided into three categories in terms of how they are initiated:

1. Evaluations initiated by the Council
- Evaluations of higher education institutions: Audits of quality assurance systems of the higher education institutions
- Programme evaluations
- Education policy and other thematic evaluations.

2. Evaluations of official nature
- Evaluations for the accreditation of the polytechnics
- Accreditation of non-degree professional courses offered by higher education institutions.

3. Evaluations commissioned by the Ministry of Education
- Evaluations focusing on quality and on centres of excellence in both sectors of higher education.

The evaluation method used in the evaluations consists of four phases: national coordinating body, self-evaluation, external evaluation team (including a site visit) and a public final report. The primary evaluations conducted by FINHEEC are the ones initiated by the Council. The evaluations under this category have neither positive nor negative formal sanctions; although, the Ministry of Education can use the evaluation results in its annual performance negotiations. Only the selections of the centres of excellence in education and adult education in the university sector, and the centres of excellence in education and regional impact in the polytechnic sector, have a pecuniary relation.

Evaluations for the accreditation of the polytechnics have already been taken care of by 2002. It is unlikely that evaluations for the accreditation of polytechnics are needed in the future, although they are still possible in principle.

Auditing of quality assurance systems of the higher education institutions

In order to respond to the objectives set in the Berlin Communiqué, FINHEEC has begun to audit the quality assurance systems of universities and polytechnics. The audits have replaced previous institutional evaluations of both higher education sectors and audits of quality work in the polytechnic sector. The auditing project was launched in 2004 with a planning phase with first pilots of the audits performed in spring 2005. In 2006, FINHEEC will implement 4 to 8 audits of quality assurance systems of different HEIs. FINHEEC invites HEIs to register for an audit, and will plan the respective timetables, accordingly. The audits will be conducted at six-year intervals.

The guiding principle of auditing will be that each higher education institution has a quality assurance system that best suits its own operations and set aims. The audits will aim

- to evaluate how the HEI's quality assurance system works as a quality management and improvement tool;

- to support the development of the HEI by providing feedback on the strengths and development challenges of the quality assurance system;
- to prove, through the description and evaluation of the HEI's quality assurance system, the functioning and credibility of the quality assurance system to the HEI's co-operation partners.

The HEI quality assurance systems will be evaluated from two perspectives: quality assurance system as a whole (links between the system and the objectives, strategic planning, resourcing and operative steering) and quality assurance of the main processes (degree-oriented education, research/research and development and regional engagement). The auditing criteria are based on three premises central to the functionality and development of the quality assurance systems: comprehensiveness, effectiveness and transparency. The audit criteria are set at three different levels, which reflect the developmental stage of HEI's quality assurance system – which may be operating at a starting, developing or advanced level. The audit targets and auditing principles and criteria constitute the general auditing framework used in all audits. Moreover, the audits can be customised to meet the development needs, quality assurance development stage and operative environment of individual HEI.

The audits has two possible conclusions:

1. The HEI passes the audit, or
2. There are essential deficiencies in the HEI's quality assurance system in terms of comprehensiveness, effectiveness and transparency, and therefore the HEI's quality assurance system calls for a re-audit.

In addition, the audits include an evaluation of strengths and development targets of the institution's quality assurance system and recommendations for the improvement of its quality.

The higher education institutions' own quality assurance

Under the educational legislation, educational institutions are obligated to evaluate their own operations and their effects, to publish the results and to take part in external evaluations. Higher education institutions can develop the quality and quality assurance of its operation and education it provides within the general framework set by educational legislation and policy. However, the higher education institutions have the principle responsibility for the development and quality of the education they provide. Thus, the realisation of quality assurance concerning, for example, aims, methods and development are determined by the higher education institutions.

1.3 Norway: Quality assurance in higher education – Legal and regulatory framework

The majority of Norwegian higher education institutions are owned by the state: six universities, five specialised institutions at university level, two academies of fine art and 25 regional university colleges. More than 90% of the student population in Norway attend state institutions. About twenty specialised, mostly small, institutions at the university level are private. The main academic fields of private higher education are business and management, ICT studies, theology, nursing and health care and teacher education.

The developments of the 1990s have created a need for more systematic quality assurance of Norwegian higher education. The reasons for this include the institutions' increased autonomy, international developments, the sharp rise in the number of students, new teaching methods, a changing environment for study and rising expectations in general with regard to transparency and documentation. Evaluations and other surveys showed that institutions worked in a targeted way on quality issues, but also that this work often was somewhat lacking in system and coherence, documentation, follow-up of decisions and linkage to management. The need to strengthen work on quality had long been recognised both by the political authorities and by the institutions themselves.

A new set of regulations on accreditation, assessment and approval in accordance with the University and College Act and the Private College Act was laid down by the Ministry for Education and Research on 2 March 2003. Both laws were amended in connection with the Government's 'quality reform' of higher education. The Quality Reform was a comprehensive reform of higher education organisation, degrees, credit and grading system and learning and evaluation methods, carried out to prepare for the requirements originating in the Bologna process.

The amendments represent the first stage in a process with the aim of merging the two laws into one and thus create greater equality between state and private institutions[5]. Through the reform process, a system of formal ac-

[5] A new law covering both the private and public sectors will replace these two laws from 1 August, 2005.

creditation for all higher education was introduced[6], and stricter demands in the field of quality assurance were imposed.

Chapter 3 (§13) of the University and College Act states that the Norwegian Agency for Quality Assurance in Education, NOKUT, is authorised to evaluate higher education institutions' systems for quality control and accredit institutions. NOKUT is not part of the government structure and acts independently inside a given framework of law and a Ministerial Regulation. Its main tasks are to:

- Make all accreditation decisions concerning higher education that go beyond the institutions' self-accrediting powers. These decisions cannot be modified by any other authority;
- Evaluate and pass judgement on the institutions' internal quality assurance through quality audits, carried out in regular cycles and including all accredited institutions. In addition to acting as a control mechanism, the audits are supposed to be conducted in a way that is conducive to quality enhancement;
- Carry out evaluations with the purpose of revising specific accreditation. Any institution can have accreditations revoked or suspended – for the entire institution as such, or for individual programmes – following a negative assessment in this type of evaluation;
- Carry out other types of evaluations with the general purpose of investigating, assessing and developing the quality of higher education in Norway. The Ministry may instruct NOKUT to undertake such evaluations;
- Issue general recognition – or credit count towards national degrees – to higher education from other countries, or to any other education that is not regulated by the Universities and Colleges Act or the Private Colleges Act. It shares this power with accredited institutions.

Quality Systems for Educational Activities

The "Regulation on accreditation, evaluation and approval according to the university and college act and the private college act" (2003) gives institutions of higher education greater responsibility for quality assurance of education than previously. All public universities and colleges in Norway were

[6] As of 1 January 2002 accreditation is mandatory and universal for all formally recognised higher education in Norway. Accreditation is not limited to a specified period, but will be considered valid until explicitly revoked, following an assessment. The new accreditation formula combines institutional and programme/course accreditation: Institutional accreditation gives universities and colleges certain rights to award national degrees or diplomas. Programme accreditation may be obtained for specific courses or programmes that the institution is not institutionally accredited to provide.

required to develop a quality assurance system by 31 December 2003, that satisfactorily documents the quality assurance work.

The legal framework gives institutions of higher education a large degree of autonomy in devising their quality assurance systems, but the system must encompass all processes that are significant for educational quality. The system must also include routines for student evaluation of teaching, self-evaluation and the institution's follow-up of evaluations, documentation of the institution's work with the total learning environment, as well as routines for the quality assurance of new provision. Routines for continually improving the system are also required. The system is the property of the institution and institution itself decides its design, in relation to its size and academic profile. The same applies to the documentation produced by the system. The institution itself decides what data it needs to identify variations in quality and select relevant quality improvement measures.

NOKUT states that a good quality assurance system is both a management instrument for the institution and a practical tool for the regular improvement of day-to-day activities. The system should, therefore, be founded on routines closely associated with the learning processes themselves and with the learning environment, and which motivate staff and students and involve them in the work. Work on quality should not be reduced to purely consisting of routines for inspection and control. The purpose of a quality assurance system is to ensure that educational activities are of a high quality and are developing toward further improvements. The system must be capable of revealing cases of deficient quality and otherwise of detecting good and bad quality. It must provide the institution with a basis for self-assessment and change.

Activities related to the quality assurance system should help to develop a culture of quality in the institution. The system must clarify the internal responsibilities within a framework that involves all parties, both staff and students, in communal efforts to attain high quality.

Evaluation of Quality Systems for Educational Activities

Institutional audits represent the systematic, comprehensive mechanism for external scrutiny of the quality of higher education in Norway. Institutional audits will be conducted in all accredited institutions, irrespective of category, and there must not be more than six years between each evaluation. The frame of reference for these evaluations is made up of the national criteria (outlined below) that have been set for internal quality assurance systems. Failure to provide internal quality assurance in accordance with the criteria

will result in the institution no longer being allowed to offer new provision. However, the audits cannot themselves lead to the loss of accreditation.

NOKUT's mission involves ensuring that the quality assurance functions satisfactorily and stimulates improvement. The evaluations shall support the institutions by providing guidance and recommendations for further work on developing their quality assurance systems and the quality of their studies.

NOKUT has established a set of 10 criteria that provide the basis for a system audit to be conducted at intervals of at most 6 years. Three factors have a central place: quality as experienced by the students, quality in terms of the fulfilment of recognised academic objectives and quality in terms of the broad social relevance of the educational programmes.

The evaluation criteria do not relate directly to the quality of the educational provision, but concern the quality assurance system itself and the quality work carried out by the institutions. They therefore focus on major characteristics of a satisfactory system, without specifying designs or methodologies. Emphasis is placed on ensuring that the system is well integrated and firmly linked to steering and management, that it provides the necessary information, that the information is analysed and disseminated to the appropriate levels of responsibility and management and that routines exist for the utilisation of knowledge in measures that are directed at improvement and development. Like the other management instruments of the institutions, the quality assurance system must be evaluated internally and developed in compliance with needs.

Criteria for evaluation of quality assurance systems

The quality assurance system shall involve the whole institution, applying to the areas of activity related to educational quality and the total learning environment. It must include all provision, external as well as internal, for which the institution is responsible. In evaluating the quality assurance system, emphasis will be placed on clarifying the following aspects and functions of the system:

1. How work on educational quality is made an integral part of the institution's strategic work.
2. How the objectives for the institution's work on quality are defined.
3. How work on quality is linked to steering and management at all levels of the organisation.
4. How work on quality is organised in routines and measures that ensure broad participation, with defined distribution of responsibility and authority for the various stages of the work.

5. How the institution retrieves and processes such data and evaluative information as are necessary in order to make satisfactory assessments of the quality of all study units, and how this information is accumulated at higher levels, including the top level of the institution.
6. How analysis of the information and assessment of goal achievement in work on quality are systematically provided for.
7. How the institution uses the results of work on quality as a basis for decisions and measures with a view to securing and further developing quality of studies.
8. How work on quality is made to contribute to resource management and priorities at the institution (human resources, infrastructure, service).
9. How the system ensures a focus on the total learning environment and the active participation by students in work on quality and the total learning environment.
10. How an annual Quality Report to the board of the institution gives a coherent overall assessment of educational quality at the institution and an overview of plans and measures for continued work on quality.

1.4 Sweden: The Swedish framework for quality assurance in higher education

Some facts about Swedish Higher Education Institutions

In Sweden, there are 39 higher education institutions HEIs, 12 universities and 27 university colleges that provide undergraduate and postgraduate education. Seven of the university colleges are private education providers. Postgraduate education is offered at 16 of the HEIs. There are about 329,000 students in undergraduate education and 18,600 active doctoral students.

All higher education is free of charge, in general also including education at the private education providers. Almost two-thirds of the activities at HEIs are financed by direct allocations from the government for undergraduate programmes or research. Funding is based on the number of students enrolled at the respective higher education institutions. If other public funding resources are included, the public purse accounts for nearly 90% of the funding of HEIs. Just under half of the activities of the institutions, are related to undergraduate programmes, the rest concern research and postgraduate programmes.

The expenditure for the activities of the HEIs was almost 1.8% of Sweden's GDP in 2002. If the costs of financial assistance to students and the central agencies are also included, the total cost represents 2.2% of the GDP.

The Swedish framework

Since the new Higher Education Act and the Higher Education Ordinance came into force in 1993, the detailed influence of the central government was reduced. Previously the central government had laid down the central goals. Today most decision-making and the responsibility for quality rests with the institutions.

The Swedish Government has given the mission to control the quality of the Swedish HEIs to The National Agency for Higher Education in Sweden (Högskoleverket). Since 1995, the National Agency has been conducting the following kinds of evaluation:

- National evaluations of subjects and programmes that lead to the award of a general degree or a vocational qualification.
- Quality audits at institutional level.
- Appraisal of the entitlement of higher education institution to award general degrees and vocational qualifications. Appraisal of entitlement to award postgraduate degrees in specific areas of research. The entitlement of an institution to university status.
- National evaluations of specific aspects of quality.

The purpose of the quality audits was to establish an instrument for the promotion of continual improvement and renewal in the operations in the Swedish HEIs. During two rounds of quality audits, from 1995–1998 and 1999–2002, the quality assurance procedures of 33 of the 39 higher education institutions in Sweden have been appraised. The quality audits followed the peer review system, including an institutional documentation (self-evaluation) and an external evaluation. The audits were documented in reports. To assess the effects of the audits follow-ups were also made.

The self-evaluations were a maximum of 25 pages. An audit team formed the external evaluators. This team was employed by the National Agency and normally consisted of five auditors, of whom two members were drawn from the Swedish and Nordic Universities and University colleges, one member from the non-academic world, such as organisations, business or industry. One member was a student representative and the fifth member was the secretary from the National Agency. The Chair of the team was generally a current or former Vice-Chancellor. Before the start of the audits, a written guide was presented to both the HEIs and the members of the audit team.

The second round had three major aims:

1. to follow up the recommendations given in the first round;
2. to find out to what extent the HEIs had built up systems for self-regulation; and

3. to find out to what extent quality work had been established in the organisation of the HEI.

During the second round, the HEIs were given the choice of two versions: with or without a site visit. About half of the HEIs chose the alternative without a site visit that was replaced by a shorter meeting with the management of the HEI. (The experience of the audit teams was that the alternative without a site visit was inadequate. It reduced the possibility of making a fair appraisal. The shorter meetings with the management could not replace a site visit. Several of the HEIs also agreed with this view).

The following main assessment aspects adopted by the National Agency have been applied in the audits:

- Strategy for quality implementation
- Leadership
- Stakeholder involvement
- Participation of staff and students in quality enhancement
- Integration of quality enhancement into university work
- Evaluatory and follow-up systems
- External professional relations

Conclusions from the two rounds, and what do they mean?

The same type of recommendations often turned up in the second round, such as recommendations related to management and development of goals and strategies. Does this mean that no progress had been made? In fact, a report shows that 70% of the HEIs account for improvements concerning governance and organisation. This category of recommendation has the greatest proportional decline. Furthermore, half of the HEIs demonstrate improvements concerning their work goals and strategies, evaluation, student influence, co-operation with other stakeholders, internationalisation and educational development. Does this mean that most of the HEIs have self-regulating systematic quality assurance procedures?

The quality improvement can be divided into four consecutive phases:

- The initial planning phase
- The implementation phase
- The monitoring phase
- The concluding evaluation and improvement phase.

After both rounds of audits, two-thirds of the institutions are still considered to be in the first two phases of the introduction of a quality assurance system.

Nevertheless, the report reveals that virtually all the institutions have improved their quality assurance procedure.

The assessors emphasised the importance of the enthusiasm and advocacy of individuals in the institution's governance structure, such as Vice-Chancellors or Pro-Vice-Chancellors. Thus, quality assurance, like many other things, is highly dependent on individuals and therefore, also vulnerable. This makes it difficult for the HEIs to create systems for quality assurance that can guarantee stability over time.

The model applied by the National Agency in its quality audits is based on a theoretical structure that comprises goals-operations-outcomes-evaluation/improvement (as described above).

1. If all four components/phases exist, an institution is considered to possess completely acceptable quality assurance procedures.
2. If the four components/phases follow one after the other, the institution's quality assurance procedures are considered to be systematic.

How much scope does the model, applied by the National Agency in its audits, provide for "being different"? It is important to stress that quality assurance and improvement may be achieved in several different ways, even if the Agency's audits have been conducted using the theoretical structure referred to above.

The future of the Swedish quality audits

The National Agency has decided that the quality audits will not be repeated in a similar way for a third time. The future of the next generation of quality audits is under discussion.

In addition to the quality audits, the National Agency has started thematic evaluations that are focussed on specific quality aspects on the institutional level. Two have just been completed, dealing with internationalisation and co-operation with society.

Evaluations of subjects and programmes

Since 2001, the government has entrusted the National Agency with evaluating all the programmes within a six-year period leading to the award of a general or vocational qualification on the bachelor level or higher. This also includes postgraduate programmes. After six years, the evaluation will be repeated, that is, following a six-year cycle. The purpose of the evaluations is

- To contribute to quality development at the department or equivalent.
- To monitor whether the programmes comply with the goals and regulations laid down in the Higher Education Act and Higher Education Ordinance.
- To provide information for students and others involved in choosing a programme.

If the department or equivalent does not fulfil minimum requirements given in the national regulations, the National Agency may withdraw the right to give awards up to the undergraduate level.

The evaluation follows the same peer review system as described above for the quality audits, including a self-evaluation and an external assessment. The self-assessment should not exceed 15–20 pages. The written guide for the self-assessment is being revised yearly. A follow up is also included, three years after the evaluation is completed.

APPENDIX 2:
Institutional descriptions

2.1 Systematic and continuous quality work at Copenhagen Business School (CBS)

1 Introduction

With a student population of 14,974, Copenhagen Business School (CBS), which was established in 1917, is one of the largest institutions of higher education and research at university level in Denmark and among the largest business schools in Europe. CBS offers a broad perspective on business studies and research, ranging from social sciences to the humanities.

The sharing of good practices in order to learn from each other both internally and externally has for quite a long time been of paramount importance to the quality work at CBS. CBS therefore welcomes this project of strengthening the internal quality culture at Nordic universities through comparative analysis of systematic quality work in the Nordic countries.

2 The national context

In 1992, a national evaluation agency for higher education was set up by the Danish Ministry of Education with the aim of evaluating programmes nationwide over a 7 year cycle. In 1999 the agency got a much broader scope with the added responsibility of initiating and conducting evaluations of teaching and learning from primary school and youth education level to the level of higher education and adult and post-graduate education. The agency may initiate evaluations on request, and it also conducts accreditation of private courses.

According to the new University Act of July 2003, Danish universities are still obliged to conduct subject and programme evaluations, and in the event that subjects or programmes are related, a coordinated evaluation between two or more universities must be carried out. Danish universities are free to use the Danish agency or any other recognised international agency. CBS has emphasised the necessity for an international perspective and has recommended that the Danish Evaluation Institute forms consortia with corresponding agencies in other countries to conduct international comparative evaluation of subjects and programmes. According to an agreement with the

Danish Rectors' Conference, in 2003 the Institute offered its first audit of the universities' internal quality assurance systems on request. So far, an audit has been conducted at two Danish universities in 2004.

Although the aim of the 2003 University Act, which replaces all elected leaders with appointed leaders and the former Senate with a Board of Directors having an external majority and an external chair, was to give more autonomy to the universities, all degree programmes offered by the university are subject to the approval of the Minister of Science, Technology and Innovation. The Danish Evaluation Institute does not conduct accreditation of programmes offered by publicly funded universities.

Finally, the use of external examiners is characteristic of the Danish educational system at all levels from the senior classes of primary schools and onwards to the graduate level of higher education. Traditionally, external examiners have joined internal examiners in grading individual examinations. In other words, at a typical Danish examination the student faces a teacher from the institution in question and an external examiner. The main tasks of the external examiners are to guarantee that the aims and demands of examinations are in accordance with the curricula; that examination procedures are in accordance with the appropriate rules; and that students receive equal and just treatment and their efforts a relevant and trustworthy appraisal. In order to secure and strengthen the independence of the external examiners *vis-à-vis* the higher education institutions, the chairpersons of the external examiners' bodies within the various discipline areas must annually submit a report on the findings of external examiners to the various departments. These annual reports should be based on individual reporting by those external examiners involved in the examinations during the year in question.

3 The aim of CBS' quality work

The quality work undertaken by CBS aims at

- developing an internal quality culture safeguarding institutional autonomy and public accountability
- promoting the development of CBS as a learning university
- stimulating internal capacity for self-reflection and change
- promoting the exchange of ideas, experiences and good practice
- enhancing and empowering CBS students.

The work is characterised through the following:

- being embedded in the CBS mission and strategic focus areas;
- involving the university as a whole;
- being a continuous, systematic activity;

- focusing on both quality improvement and quality assurance;
- having an international orientation;
- being stakeholder-related;
- having strong support from CBS leadership and management;
- using external quality expertise.

As the quality work at CBS involves the university as a whole based on a stakeholder-related concept of quality launched by Harvey and Green (1993)[7], this report will first give an overall view of CBS' quality work focusing on quality in the notion of transformation, that is, quality work from the teaching and learning perspective, and then provide a more detailed response to the themes of the NOQA-project description.

4 CBS' mission and strategic goals

According to the mission statement

> *"CBS wants to be among the best institutions of higher education in Europe, thus meeting the goal of being a major contributor to value creation in business and society, training graduates who are competitive in the international job market and developing new research-based knowledge in partnership with companies and other organisations."*

At CBS, management for quality has been an integrated part of the ongoing strategic process since the beginning of the 1990s. Since 1993, CBS has set goals, defined success criteria and outlined performance requirements for all major areas. Methods have been developed and applied for the ongoing evaluation of research, teaching and administration, and key focal areas have been identified. According to the CBS 'Strategic Update '98', CBS focuses on the following three overarching strategic goals driving its core activities:

- An international profile based on a regional foundation;
- Expanded partnership with business;
- Development as a 'Learning University'.

Although all quality activities at CBS are related to these overarching goals, which were originally formulated for a four-year period from 1998–2002; however, their relevance and future-orientation make them suitable for a longer period, the aspect of developing into or being a learning university has special implications for the systematic and continuous quality work at CBS.

[7] Harvey, L. & Green, D (1993). Defining Quality in Assessment and Evaluation in Higher Education. An International Journal 101 (1993): 8–35.

4.1 CBS as a learning university

Copenhagen Business School demonstrates its capacity for change through the development as a learning university. The term originates from the combination of the classic notion of the university as a forum for learning and knowledge and the modern concept of 'the learning organisation'. The concept and its definition were discussed with the CRE (now EUA) Audit team in both 1996 and 1998, and the two definitions given are still operational.

CBS develops a learning environment based on learning rather than teaching and individual talent support rather than mass education. At the same time, CBS initiates development to become a learning organisation featuring flexibility, innovative capacity, a balanced mix of systematic analysis and experiments, external and internal peer reviews and ongoing quality development. CBS views the capacity for continuous organisational renewal as a key requirement for building an innovative learning environment for students and researchers.

The strategy depends on development of new pedagogical methods, ability to combine research-based teaching and experience-based learning, increasing use of multimedia-aided learning, focus on mobilising the students' resources for the learning process, project-based courses with interdisciplinary groups and action learning programmes.

For the organisation as a whole, the strategy depends on commitment to continued quality development and competence enhancement, building external and internal networks, creating an innovative organisational culture for all staff groups, encouraging venture spirit and testing new organisation principles.

5 The concept of quality adopted at CBS

While accepting the view that there is no definitive and final definition of quality, CBS has adopted the stakeholder-related definition of the concept of "quality" as defined by Harvey and Green (1993), by which quality means different things to different people and is relative to processes or outcomes. The widely varying conceptualisations of quality are grouped into five discrete but interrelated categories. Quality can be viewed as exceptional, perfection, fitness for purpose, value for money and transformation.

Since 1994, CBS has launched projects and quality activities within all five categories as part of its continuous quality improvement process.

5.1 Learning features or mechanisms to secure quality in the notion of 'exceptional'

In its mission statement, CBS has formulated its ambition to be among the best institutions of higher education in Europe; that means quality in the notion of exceptional. It is very important for CBS as an international university, for academic partners in national, regional and international networks, for corporate partners, both national and international, for the Ministry and Parliament funding CBS and for the students deciding at which university they want to study, to know how exceptional CBS is. The learning features or quality assurance activities used for that purpose are:

- Benchmarking among the CEMS academic partners (Community of European Management Schools) (1995) on the initiative of CBS;
- CRE-Audit (1996) and CRE Follow-up Visit (1998);
- EQUIS Accreditation (1999/2000);
- EQUIS Re-Accreditation 2004/2005;
- ESMU Benchmarking 2001/2002; 2002/2003; 2003/2004; 2004/2005;
- Internally initiated research evaluation at departmental level (ongoing since 1994).

Various people within the organization are responsible for these activities depending on relevant qualifications and under the supervision of the Vice President on behalf of the executive leadership and management group. The dean and head of the department under evaluation are responsible for the internal research evaluation at departmental level.

ESMU benchmarking is a self-improvement tool for universities. It allows for comparison with others in order to identify comparative strengths and weaknesses and learn how to improve processes. ESMU benchmarking requires institutions to conduct a rather comprehensive self-assessment of each area included in the benchmarking, which is assessed and scored on a scale from 1–5. From the self-assessments in each particular area, an ESMU assessor drafts a good practice statement. New areas are benchmarked every year. The following universities have been involved in the benchmarking processes: Université Catholique de Louvain, Helsinki School of Economics, University of Technology of Compiegne, University of Munich, University of Amsterdam, University of Maastricht, University of Aveiro, Universidade Catolica Portuguese, University Carlos III of Madrid, University of Lleida, Lund University, Uppsala University, Universität Zurich, Swiss Federal Institute of Technology (Zurich), London School of Economics and Political Science and Copenhagen Business School. CBS has participated in the benchmarking in the following areas:

Table 1: ESMU benchmarking subject areas

	CBS result	Best result
Strategic Management, Policy and Strategy (2001)	5	5
Management of Teaching, Learning and Assessment (2001)	4	4+
Marketing the University (2001)	3	3
Management Information Systems (2002)	3.8	4
Internal Quality Assurance (2002)	5	5
Student Services (2002)	4	4.5
e-Learning (2003)	2	5
External Funding (2003)	4	5
Institutional Research (2003)	3	4
Research Management (2004)	Ongoing	
The University Creating a Regional Knowledge Base (2004)	Ongoing	
Change Management (2004)	Ongoing	

Source: ESMU Assessors' Reports.

As will be evident from the above, CBS has generally done comparatively well in the benchmarking reviews often being best or second best. However, both in these cases and in cases where CBS has done less well, the benchmarking projects have stimulated reflection and led to decisive action learning from good practice from the other participants getting better scores than CBS. The report on Marketing the University was a contributing factor in the decision to establish a strengthened communication platform; the report on e-Learning has resulted in an ongoing effort to formulate an overall operational CBS strategy for e-Learning; and the report on Student Services has contributed to the establishment of a major initiative on student services. The report on Institutional Research has, inspired by the University of Amsterdam, resulted in an eight-page newsletter published four times a year.

As for future plans, CBS has decided to apply for AACSB accreditation to supplement the EQUIS accreditation. In combination, EQUIS and AACSB are expected to get very broad recognition and consolidate the reputation of CBS.

5.2 Learning features or mechanisms to secure quality in the notion of 'perfection'

In a CBS context, the notion of quality as perfection refers to the strategic development as a learning university. It is important to CBS that the staff, academic and non-academic, have the competences to manage their job perfectly and are enabled and encouraged to keep improving their effectiveness. The quality activities are:

- Staff development;
- Benchmarking (internal and external);
- Development of a CBS quality culture.

At CBS a special unit, the CBS Learning Lab (for further details, see Section 6.1), is responsible for staff development in relation to teaching and learning. The internal benchmarking is a transfer of 'good practice' from one environment to another as part of the staff development programmes. The external benchmarking refers to some of the ESMU themes of relevance to the CBS administration.

At CBS there is a simultaneous concern for promoting quality activities through propagation of a quality culture, the nurturing of responsibility among the greatest possible number of 'actors', encouragement of initiatives and innovation and the spread of good practice.

CBS sees 'quality culture' in institutions as more important than formal QA procedures. Quality at CBS is seen as a concept of multiple significance, distinct for each of the various stakeholders involved. Largely, quality development or quality improvement is a question of information and motivation and thus of strengthening the mutual confidence between the levels and environments involved. In the context of CBS, quality initiatives are seen in terms of a process of continuous quality improvement, satisfying the various stakeholders that these initiatives lead to change and improvement. Creating a quality culture requires providing a context in which to facilitate quality improvement.

5.3 Learning features or mechanisms to secure quality in the notion of 'fitness for purpose'

The notion of quality as 'fitness for purpose' is important to the stakeholders in the business community, to the employers of CBS graduates and to national and international corporate partners,. CBS uses the following quality initiatives striving for increased partnership with business:

- Dialogue with the business community;
- Advisory Boards;
- Networking;
- Dialogue with graduates (alumni).

Many degree programmes and many departments attach advisory boards to their activities to have a continuous dialogue with the business community about the profile of knowledge and skills of their graduates. The departments or the study boards are responsible for this. As part of its strategy, CBS has set

up several business research centres recently, where a great deal of the networking with the business community within applied research occurs. An important group of stakeholders is also the CBS alumni, who give feedback to CBS about the quality of their education after having gained some job experience. CBS has just formulated an alumni policy with the corporate relation officer together with the newly established Communications Department.

5.4 Learning features or mechanisms to secure quality in the notion of 'value for money'

5.4.1 Enhancement or accountability

Although CBS has a very strong focus on enhancement or improvement, it is also necessary for CBS to demonstrate accountability as part of the quality management. Accountability means the requirement to demonstrate responsible actions to one or more external constituencies. These may be: governments providing funds to CBS, the Ministry of Science, Technology and Innovation, Parliament, taxpayers, students following degree programmes and courses offered by CBS, graduates using their knowledge and skills from CBS in a job situation and employers offering jobs to CBS graduates. All these examples refer to quality in the notion of 'value for money'. The Danish Evaluation Institute's (former the Danish Centre for Quality Assurance and Evaluation of Higher Education) self-adopted strategy has been to combine the perspective of improvement with that of accountability. The Institute has not had a substantial impact on the continuous internal quality monitoring at the institutional level, although the Danish evaluation model does provide a great deal of information that could form the basis for very useful procedures for internal quality monitoring including students, graduates and employers. At CBS, greater responsiveness to external demands for accountability, transparency, credibility etc. is not seen as an antithesis to self-regulation, but rather as an element of public responsibility, safeguarding autonomy.

5.4.2 Learning features or mechanisms in order to secure quality in the notion 'value for money'

The quality assurance activities are:

- External evaluations by the Danish Evaluation Institute;
- Performance indicators;
- Performance agreement.

It is important to establish a proper balance between internal improvement functions and external accountability functions. Several CBS disciplines and programmes have been subject to external evaluation. The study board in

question has been responsible for the self-evaluation report and organising the peer review visit. The recommendations of the final public report have been dealt with by the relevant study board. Performance indicators have been set up within several areas, such as research publication, student exchange, PhD production etc., and various staff members are responsible for reporting on actual achievements.

CBS sees the "Performance Agreement 2000–2003" (to be renewed in 2005) with the Ministry of Research and the Ministry of Education – now taken over by the Ministry of Science, Technology and Innovation – as the first step towards the principle of 'Management by Objectives'. CBS must annually report on the fulfilment of the success criteria set up in the Agreement, but so far this has not been linked to funding. With the annual reporting, CBS is also in a position to argue for changes of the aims, means and success criteria. Aims, means and success criteria within all strategic areas of CBS have been formulated in the Performance Agreement, and with the annual reporting system it is possible to keep them up to date. The content of the Performance Agreement is communicated throughout the university via senior and middle management.

5.5 The learning features or mechanisms to secure quality in the notion of 'transformation'[8]

As a learning university, the most important aim of the teaching and learning at CBS is to enhance and empower students, which refers to quality in the notion of 'transformation'. CBS needs to ensure that students develop knowledge, skills and abilities, but also that they are empowered as critical lifelong learners. The quality activities in this respect are:

- Continuous quality improvement;
- A pedagogical profile according to accepted pedagogical principles;
- Curriculum development;
- Ongoing student evaluation of disciplines and programmes;
- Benchmarking (internal and external).

The stakeholders are CBS students, CBS teachers/researchers and CBS external examiners.

[8] Harvey, L. and Knight P.: *Transforming Higher Education*. Open University Press, 1996

5.5.1 Programme delivery

At faculty level the faculty boards have agreed upon pedagogical principles for implementation of transformative learning.[9] Generally speaking, teaching methods at CBS are varied and include lectures, class instruction/dialogue, workshops, independent student work (cases, exercises etc.), business role plays, group seminars, group projects and interdisciplinary projects, developing the interpersonal skills of the students.

One of the general objectives of the degree programmes at CBS is to develop the students' teamwork capabilities and their abilities for independent reflection and problem analysis. Hence, group-based project work has a high priority in all CBS degree programmes. Most of the degree programmes at CBS involve large numbers of students, and it is a constant challenge for CBS to be able to combine mass education with individual learning. Group projects play an important role in all the programmes[10] in part because they offer a much more intensive learning space than the traditional lecture while at the same time being crucial for the acquisition of not only knowledge, but also in particular transferable skills.

There are substantial differences in the pedagogical approaches used in the different degree programmes. However, across-the-programmes efforts are made to alternate between different learning modes and tools.

5.5.2 e-Learning

CBS has been experimenting with e-Learning since 1995, when CBS launched its first business case study on CD-ROM. Since then several interactive tools have been developed to support the students' learning process – especially in relation to project work. In the late 1990s, CBS acquired a web-

[9] In 1998 the Faculty of Economics and Business Administration in co-operation with the CBS Learning Lab formulated a set of pedagogical principles, endorsed by the Faculty of Languages, Communication and Cultural Studies in 2001 (see http://uk.cbs.dk/uddannelser/l_ring_kvalitet/gruppe__3/p_dagogiske_principper). A new pedagogical strategy is under development and is expected to be finalised in the autumn of 2005. Though there are differences between the two faculties, both adhere to the idea that students must take responsibility for, and be active participants in, their own learning process. Studies build on the concept that the classroom experience accelerates students' learning process, but the most important part of the learning process takes place out of the classroom. Another important dimension of the pedagogy is the research-based education context, where the study content builds on contemporary research results and the learning process is a reflection and representation of a research setting. The continuous dialogue and critical reflection are the foundation of this learning context where knowledge is created rather than disseminated. In addition to this emphasis on reflection and research based education, there is a strong relation to practice in all degree programmes.

[10] All bachelor degree programmes contain a major bachelor project in the final semester of the programme, and most programmes include several minor group projects. Graduate degree programmes usually involve several group projects.

based platform for e-Learning, the SiteScape Forum. E-Learning is supported by courses offered by the CBS Learning Lab and by designated discretionary funds. SiteScape is used by most programmes at CBS and thus most students have access to it. 7,347 individuals used SiteScape during March 2003. In SiteScape, students can access study material and messages posted by programme administrators or faculty and interact with teachers and other students on the course.

Some courses have been fully redesigned to take full advantage of the e-Learning possibilities. In most courses, SiteScape is primarily used to supplement in-class teaching or solely for distributing material electronically. SiteScape is integrated into the student intranet e-Campus. CBS participated in an ESMU benchmarking of e-learning in 2003 and achieved a score of 2 out of a max. 5. 5 was the best grade given. This was mainly due to the lack of an overall e-Learning strategy for the entire institution. The result was unsatisfactory and has resulted in a project to develop a strategy for e-Learning, allowing CBS to realise the full potential of ICT in relation to programme delivery. Hence, a major study conducted by the CBS Learning Lab was published in spring 2004 analysing experience in, advantages of and barriers to e-Learning at CBS. As a follow up to the study, a strategy process has been initiated, which will be presented as an e-Learning strategy to the Board later this year.

5.5.3 Student Assessment

Student assessment is widely regulated by law in Denmark through statutes and acts concerning, for example, the grading system, the examination as such, complaints procedures and use of external examiners. The study boards formulate their own assessment policies reflecting the teaching and learning policy of the degree programme and, of course, the requirements provided in the Danish legislation. Thus, the general Danish standards have been laid down by the Ministry and are monitored by the corps of external examiners appointed by the Ministry. The most interesting point for CBS is how these standards compare to those in other countries. The performance of CBS students while on exchange to some of the most prestigious universities in the world gives an indication of the quality of the education at CBS.

Student assessment methods vary and depend on the content and format of the course or student activities in question and on what is being assessed. In general, assessments should:

1. Help students develop knowledge while assessing what they know;
2. Help students develop their critical, analytical and synthetic abilities while evaluating the abilities of students to communicate these higher-level intellectual abilities;
3. Encourage students' development of interactive and personal skills (team working, interpersonal skills, self-motivation, self-promotion etc.) while evaluating their ability in at least some of them.

At CBS, the exam forms vary from traditional written and oral examinations to seminars, take-home assignments, synopses, seminar presentations and project exams in groups. A special variant of the seminars and project exams is the use of student opponents, aiming at developing the students' verbal argumentation skills and critical examination of practical and theoretical issues. As in the case of teaching/instruction methods, there is a rather large variation across degree programmes as to the number and types of student assessments. However, extended use of IT, group exams and case studies are regarded as key means of enhancing learning at CBS.

5.5.4 Competence profiles and curriculum development

A number of national and international analyses and reports point out how important it is for students to possess personal as well as academic competences to make them well-equipped to function in a constantly changing labour market that places increasing demands on employees. The demands that future employees are faced with are summarised in the following model by Harvey and Knight:[11]

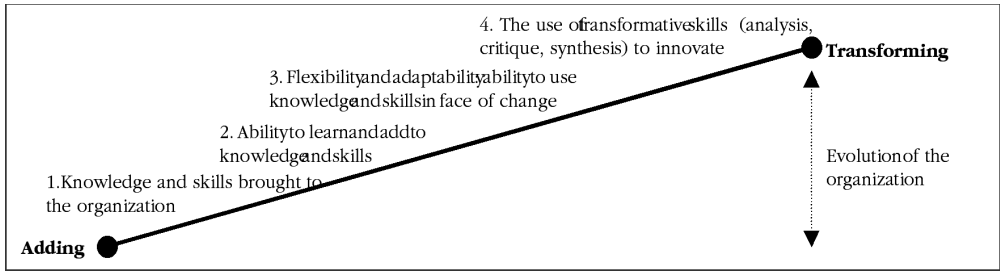


Figure 1. Demands of future employees

[11] Harvey and Knight, *op.cit*.

A graduate must possess "transformative skills."[12] According to Harvey and Knight, a company, when hiring a graduate, will look at his or her overall competence profile. Companies are not interested in graduates who only possess academic competences but prefer those who also have transferable skills that enable them to enhance company transformation. Harvey and Knight present an "enhancement continuum" that stretches from "adding to the organisation" to "transforming the organisation." The value of a graduate to the company increases when he or she is located further to the right in the model. This indicates a situation where the graduate is not only capable of bringing to the company the knowledge and ideas acquired through formal education, but where he or she can also help to carry the company forward by using critical and methodological skills. An important part of "transformational potential" is possession of transferable skills that allow the graduate to manoeuvre among different areas of constantly changing knowledge.

Benefits to employers, apart from 'intelligence,' include factors such as flexibility, ambition, logical thinking, analysis, creativity, innovation, ability to learn quickly and independently, well-developed communication skills and specialist knowledge. Such benefits are indicative of four underlying reasons for the employment of graduates:

- The knowledge and ideas that they bring to an organisation
- Their willingness to learn and speed of learning
- Their flexibility, adaptability and ability to deal with change
- Their logical, analytic, critical, problem-solving and synthetic skills and the impact they have on innovation.

5.5.5 Methodological projects to support quality improvement at CBS in relation to Teaching and Learning

The Teaching and Learning Committee (for further details, see Section 6.2) has initiated the following projects to support internal quality improvement at CBS:

1. Group work and skills development in BSc and BA programmes from 1st and 3rd years of study;
2. Improvement of counselling;
3. A survey of the dropout rate of students at the Faculty of Languages, Communications and Cultural Studies;
4. Copenhagen Business School's 'good practice' for the embedding of transferable skills in the curriculum according to the educational objectives of the university;

[12] Competences that enhance a graduate's transformation potential.

5. Development of an 'Evaluation Catalogue' to inspire the evaluation policy of the CBS Study Boards.

The projects are to a wide extent based on internal and external benchmarking. For each project a steering committee has been established with strong student participation and with the Vice-President as chair.

Ad 1 and 2

The survey analysed group work in the 1st and 3rd years. The conclusions showed that the following skill development could be observed in connection with the students' way of handling group work:

- "Students develop greater awareness of their own interaction with other people; they develop abilities to adjust counterproductive behaviour in relation to people with whom they have to work."
- "Students develop increased tolerance in the sense that they get better at accepting other people's idiosyncrasies and the strong and weak points they may have."
- "Students develop skills in clarifying their own boundaries for what they accept from other people they have to work with and in digging in their heels if their boundaries are transgressed."
- "Students develop greater oral and written communicative competence."
- "Students develop competence in defining tasks and get far better at handling, structuring and dealing with studies of complex issues."
- "Students get better at planning and coordinating long-term co-operation to solve complex tasks, and they also get better at keeping to work plans and agreements once they have been made."

The report also concluded that group work appears to increase disciplinary socialisation. Concerns were raised about whether this potentially has a negative impact on group work in situations where people with different educational backgrounds participate. However, CBS remains convinced that the benefits of including group work as a pedagogical element in the programmes by far outweigh the disadvantages, especially since group work facilitates skills related to decision making and leadership. However, when group work becomes an important component in the pedagogical set-up, counselling of the groups becomes critical. Therefore, the CBS Teaching and Learning Committee is presently conducting a project intended to improve counselling.

Ad 3

Such a survey was conducted at the Faculty of Languages, Communications and Cultural Studies in 2002. The survey concluded that:

- Students' backgrounds matter. The dropout rate is higher for young students, students with low entry grades and students from outside the Copenhagen area. Gender and the qualifying admission degree did not seem to have any significance for the dropout rate.
- Not surprisingly, the dropouts appear to be less motivated, to spend less time on their studies and to have spent less time on searching for and obtaining information about their programme before applying and enrolling.
- The students that consider dropping out after the first month list as their main reason for doing so disappointment with the thematic focus or the programme, lack of competence in the chosen foreign language and personal matters.

This initial information resulted in an extended survey that addressed all students, not only dropouts. The results were subsequently communicated to all the study boards, in order for them to take discretionary action.

Unfortunately, except for the BSc, dropout rates have increased since 1999. At the MSc and MA level, students often get well-paid jobs before graduation and hence do not finish their theses. Obviously, this does not excuse the fact that results in this area have not been achieved and that further development is necessary.

Table 2. Percentage of students that have dropped out after the scheduled period of study

	1999	2000	2001	2002	2003
BA	37%	44%	43%	40%	46%
BSc	31%	32%	30%	25%	27%
MA	16%	16%	22%	26%	27%
MSc	14%	15%	15%	16%	19%

Ad 4

In 2002, the CBS Teaching and Learning Committee launched a project on personal competences under the headline: "Copenhagen Business School's 'good practice' for embedding transferable skills in the curriculum according to the educational objectives of the school." The purpose of the project was through internal benchmarking to identify 'good practices' at CBS, according to the Harvey and Knight model and the good practices at Luton University, and to use the virtual tool SiteScape to share 'good practices' (experiences

and knowledge) across the various courses and subjects. SiteScape was selected because it offers the following capabilities and options:

- The latest examples of 'good practice' can be added to this updateable system as and when they are identified;
- A cross-subject and cross-structural exchange of knowledge between 'sender' and 'recipient' can occur quickly and simply;
- The 'user' can draw attention to a practice from his or her own work that could be of use and interest to others at CBS;
- Information can be disseminated widely to all relevant parties at CBS.

The exchange of and learning from 'good practices' was, however, more time-consuming and demanding than first supposed, and a dual strategy had to be developed to fulfil the aim that before the end of 2004, all study boards were to have defined competence profiles for all CBS degree programmes.

In a joint effort by the coordinator of the Teaching and Learning Committee's 'Competence Project' and the CBS Learning Lab, a guiding document[13] was drafted for the study boards to facilitate the development of competence profiles. The document includes a general model for the curriculum development of programmes and courses at CBS, as well as a blueprint for the process. The blueprint included consultation with key stakeholders, which are identified as:

- Course coordinators;
- Alumni;
- Members of the Advisory Board;
- Other members of the business community;
- Teachers.

As shown in Figure 2, the model is centred on the expectations of possible future business practices. These expectations have an impact on the content and the pedagogical methodology of the curriculum. According to the Figure, CBS expects its teachers to follow the agreed pedagogical principles for the teaching and learning process and to use assessment methods, taking into account the assessment of the complete competence profile (knowledge and skills).

[13] Ib Andersen, Thomas Baldur-Felskov, Pia Bramming, Lene Lillebro, Jens Tofteskov: "Competence profiles, Qualification profiles and a model for curriculum development," CBS 2003.

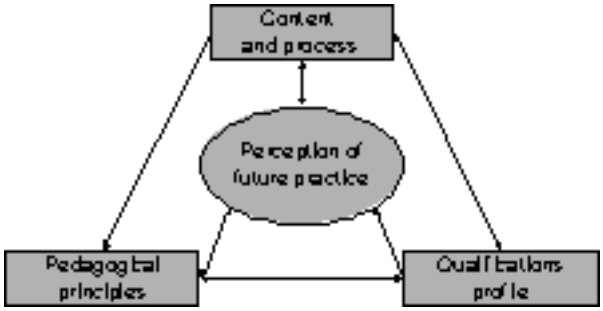


Figure 2. Competence/Qualifications profiles and impact on curriculum development

The goal of the process was not only an attempt to make the degree structure for the CBS programmes more transparent, but the desired outcome was to develop a dynamic model for defining final competences based on the continuous changes of the job situation, the pedagogy of the programme and how such a model can steer curriculum planning and contribute to increased employability of the CBS graduates. Furthermore, CBS combines its own model with the Danish "Qualifications Framework," a systematic description of an education system's degrees that emphasises the description of final competences[14] to respond at the national level to the demand for clarity and transparency at the European level. Not all study boards have finished their work. To speed up the process the study boards are being supported by the CBS Learning Lab through, for example, workshops and individual consulting on request.

Since the school is considered to be at the forefront with its practices in this field, CBS was invited to conferences last year by both the Ministry of Science, Technology and Innovation (27 January 2004) and the Ministry of Education (2 April 2004) to share knowledge with other universities and colleagues on its work on competence profiles and the impact on curriculum development.

Ad 5

An evaluation project has been conducted under the auspices of the CBS Teaching and Learning Committee. The project, based on internal identification of good practices and externally highly inspired by good practices at the University of Loughborough, UK, has been disseminated on a CD-ROM and on a website that describe different aspects and forms of evaluative activities

[14] The Danish Bologna Follow Up Group's QF working group: "Towards a Danish "Qualifications Framework" for higher education." Copenhagen, January 2003.

(unfortunately only available in Danish). The aim of the CD-ROM is to inspire the CBS study boards to broaden their scope of evaluation, as the CD-ROM describes in detail 13 different ways of evaluation as supplement to the mandatory student questionnaire evaluation. It was stressed that the CD-ROM serves as inspiration. The study boards are expected to choose one or more additional evaluation methods after a more general discussion of the most suitable evaluation policy. The CD-ROM was also sent to the leaders and managers at the other Danish universities to stress CBS' willingness to share knowledge. For several study boards at other universities, the CD-ROM has served as a welcome opportunity to start discussing various evaluation possibilities. Experienced committee members from CBS have been invited as guest speakers, and CBS has been highly commended for this evaluation tool.

6 Institutional responsibility

In a decentralised organisation such as CBS, leaders at all levels are responsible for implementing quality strategies and quality initiatives. The heads of department are mainly responsible in relation to research, the study boards are mainly responsible in relation to education, and the University Director is mainly responsible in relation to the administration. At CBS, there is a very strong executive leadership and management team commitment to the continuous quality improvement process and the quality assurance activities, and since 1994, the Vice President has been particularly dedicated to quality improvement and quality assurance. This does not mean that the continuous quality improvement process at CBS is a top-down process. It is very much a bottom-up driven process.

The operational responsibility for programme quality rests with the study board, which consists of an equal number of students and researchers/teachers. At the central level, the following units provide support for the study boards:

- The CBS Learning Lab, a pedagogic development and advisory unit;
- The Teaching and Learning Committee, which was established with the overall aim to initiate activities that enhance the implementation of CBS' pedagogical principles;
- The CBS Evaluation Unit, which assists the study boards in their programme evaluations.

6.1 The CBS Learning Lab (CBS LL)

CBS LL, a pedagogic development and advisory unit, was established in 2001, directly under the President and the former Senate and with the Dean of the Faculty of Economics and Business Administration as chair of the board. Other members of the board are the Vice-President, the Dean of the Faculty of Languages, Communication and Cultural Studies, a very dynamic and innovative Study Board Director, a division librarian and two students. The aim of CBS LL is to enhance the quality of the CBS degree programmes and to create and communicate new knowledge in the field of competence development and learning processes in higher education. CBS LL offers a range of services and products to CBS' degree programmes, teaching as well as to administrative staff and students. Services include:

- Courses aimed at enhancing the pedagogical competences of faculty, as well as giving them a better understanding of the complex interaction between degree programme design and organisation, the integration of ICT (Information and Communication Technology) and the learning processes of the students. These courses include the mandatory 11-day course for all newly employed assistant professors at CBS.
- Consultative services to management and the study boards regarding quality development of degree programmes, design and development of degree programmes, integration of ICT in the teaching and learning processes and procurement of expert knowledge from the outside.
- Project management of major development projects – such as development of new degree programmes or development of degree programmes based on e-Learning concepts or virtual space learning.

CBS LL was evaluated and commended by an external panel from the Danish Evaluation Institute in 2003. The report particularly noted that the unit enjoyed support from the executive leadership and management group of CBS and that CBS LL highly contributed to the internal quality improvement of CBS. Recommendations for further development included a suggestion to include the Faculty of Languages, Communication and Cultural Studies more actively, to pay special attention to part-time teachers' role in pedagogical development and to strengthen and explicate the documentation of the theoretical 4 underpinnings of the unit's work. Following this, the CBS Learning Lab activities directed at the Faculty of Languages, Communication and Cultural Studies have been intensified, and higher priority has been given to documentation and publication.

Since autumn 2004, CBS LL also offers courses in English, for example,

1. Assistant Professor Program in Teaching Competence (AUK);
2. Question-based Case Teaching;
3. Master's Thesis Supervision;
4. Learning in Theory and Practice;
5. Learning to Teach.

6.2 The CBS Teaching and Learning Committee

The CBS Teaching and Learning Committee was established in 2001 to a large extent on student initiative and having strong student representation, as mentioned above, with the overall objective to initiate activities to support the implementation of the agreed pedagogical principles. This is seen to include:

- Contributing to establishing the teaching and learning process as a transformation process with focus on the value added to students;
- Ensuring that skills and qualities are integrated into the academic syllabus;
- Ensuring that students are prepared for lifelong learning;
- Transferring 'best practice' experiences from one study environment to another;
- Summarising 'best practice' experiences in order to stimulate and support the debate on teaching and learning in the CBS Board.

The CBS Teaching and Learning Committee is chaired by the Vice President and consists of representatives from CBS LL, students and academic staff. At present the CBS Teaching and Learning Committee has commissioned four major projects, all of which are described in Section 5.2.2.

6.3 The Evaluation Unit

This unit offers support and services to the study board evaluation procedures by designing questionnaires and processing results. Two types of evaluation are used in the student evaluation process: the standardised questionnaire and the tailor-made questionnaire. The criteria included in the student questionnaire evaluation relate to:

- The course as a whole;
- The workload;
- The extent to which students engage in work-related activities;
- The content;
- The students' own contribution; and
- The rating of teachers.

7 Student involvement

Students play a crucial role for the quality work carried out at CBS. Students are not regarded as customers or clients; rather, they are partners in the teaching and learning process. Over the past 6 years, the enrolment of students in the various CBS programmes increased by 35% from 3,158 to 4,257. There are 14,823 students at CBS.

As mentioned above, in accordance with the University Act students are represented in all governing bodies at Danish universities, from the supreme Board of Governors to the academic councils and the study boards. Students have the strongest influence in the study boards, as these consist of equal numbers of academic staff representatives and student representatives. The study board is required by law to select a chairman from among the academic staff representatives and a vice-chairman from the student representatives. The study board is required to ensure the organisation, realisation and development of educational and teaching activities, including aims to:

1. assure and develop the quality of teaching and learning and follow-up on evaluations;
2. produce proposals for curricula and curriculum changes;
3. approve the organisation of teaching and learning and assessments that are part of the exams;
4. handle applications concerning credit and exemptions;
5. make statements on all matters of importance to teaching and learning within its area and discuss issues related to education and teaching as presented by the President or anybody authorised by the President.

As mentioned, students are also represented on the boards of both the CBS Learning Lab and the Teaching and Learning Committee.

One or more students serve as project coordinator of the various methodological projects initiated by the Teaching and Learning Committee. The students took the initiative to set up the committee and have, since its establishment, been the driving force behind the various projects. In order to give students the freedom to set up their own projects, the committee has allocated a small portion of its budget towards involving and engaging more students in the improvement and assurance of the quality of teaching and learning. Some of the more progressive CBS study boards also finance the participation of their student representatives at conferences on quality issues. Reports on the performance of the CBS students at these conferences are very encouraging. A huge success was reported from a conference in Australia where CBS students presented a paper on the quality improvement of the CBS BSc in Economics and Business Administration. This special study board

with an annual enrolment of around 600 students has worked systematically and continuously on quality issues over quite a long period. With a stable leadership dedicated to quality improvement and quality assurance on the academic side and with the help of very enthusiastic students also dedicated to quality, the study board has succeeded in raising the quality of the programme over a number of years to the extent that this programme had the fourth highest number of applicants nationwide in connection with the 1 September 2004 enrolment. Examples of initiated improvements included:

1. change of curriculum design;
2. stronger focus on redesigned internal evaluation;
3. introduction of student recording of working hours;
4. closing the feedback loop on evaluations;
5. further development of the reporting system of evaluation results to the various course coordinators;
6. strong emphasis on integrating personal skills in the academic curriculum;
7. participation in the survey analysing "Group work and skills development in the BSc programme from 1st to 3rd years of study";
8. enhancement of the pedagogical profile according to CBS' pedagogical principles in close co-operation with the CBS Learning Lab.

The CBS BSc Study Board was taken as an example of major changes. Other study boards could equally be mentioned.

CBS considers the involvement and the commitment of its students as a prerequisite for the creation and the fulfilment of the aim to create a quality culture at CBS.

From reports on Quality Initiatives at CBS by Professor Lee Harvey the following observations are made:

> *"In previous reports I have indicated how impressed I have been with the important role played by students in quality initiatives. My experience from this visit is that student involvement continues to be an important element of quality development. As I have indicated before, the direct involvement of students in initiating and implementing quality policy is something that is relatively unusual in higher education institutions. It is an approach that should be nurtured and for which CBS should be commended. During this visit, I again met and talked with a range of students. Some people are people I have met before but I was equally impressed by the knowledge, acuity and commitment of the new students I met on this visit.*
>
> *I noted in my last report that student involvement was aimed at continuous improvement rather than making unreasonable demands that may alienate staff.*

This continues to be the case, although I suspect that in relation to the changes on the HA course (BSc in Economics and Business Administration), the student point of view is being put with considerable confidence and with some considerable force" (Third Report, April 1997)

"I continue to be impressed with the level of student involvement in quality improvement initiatives. Indeed, I use CBS as a paradigm case of effective student representation. It is the only institution I know where students have high levels of representation on decision-making bodies, where students are encouraged to be involved and listened to and where, as a result, there is a very sophisticated student presence in the quality committees of various sorts." (Fourth Report, March 1999)

8 The role of external stakeholders

As continuous development and adjustment of the programmes offered and continuous monitoring of their quality are strong priorities at CBS, measures have been taken to strengthen – and, importantly, explain and communicate – the involvement of the business community.

Because CBS was originally founded and funded by a group of prominent and visionary Copenhagen business people, it has always been acutely aware of its obligations to the (local) business community. Similarly and just as importantly, the local business community has always felt ownership of CBS, employing its candidates, volunteering as sparring partners and members of its governing bodies, advisory bodies, formulating expectations, demanding and supporting various types of knowledge production, assessing the quality of its programmes and students and directly contributing to courses (with individual business people acting as external examiners and external teachers), inviting students to do real-life project work in companies as an integrated part of the course work, etc., etc. So while the mode of co-operation has changed over the years, the practitioner-academia gap has never been a major issue at CBS.

In the last decade, the development of a corporate partnership programme, as well as the creation of a large number of applied research centres, has added further momentum and intensity to the engagement with the corporate world. Thus, all executive programmes have advisory boards and as does CBS Executive. Likewise, the CBS Graduate School of Business has an advisory board for the overall strategic development of the MSc/MA field. Some of the MSc/MA programmes also have their own advisory boards to get continuous feedback on the expected future practice for graduates, ensuring continuous curriculum development. The intention is to have adviso-

ry boards on all MSc/MA programmes. At the Bachelor level, some programmes have advisory boards (e.g. BSc in International Business, BSc in Business Administration and Organizational Communication and BSc in Business Administration and Politics). Some programmes have chosen not to have advisory boards but to supplement ongoing informal contacts with the business community when there is a special need, for instance as part of a reform of a programme. The development of new programmes always involves surveying the business community. The fact that most students do real-life project work on location, in companies and organisations, should not be underestimated – neither should the fact that CBS employs large number of external teachers, supervisors and external examiners amongst academically trained practitioners in the business community. Together, this constitutes a very big network of contacts and interfaces.

8.1 Career Placement

A number of initiatives have been made in the area of career placement, the most important being the establishment in 2004 of a proper placement and career-counselling unit known as the Career Office. The Career Office provides a platform for further development of the area, as well as a permanent framework for various activities that has been instigated over last years. These activities have included: A career initiative conducted in 2003 in collaboration with various professional associations. 1,300 students participated in one or more workshops addressing issues, such as writing of applications, trail job interviews and general information about the labour market.

- The web based "CBS Job Forum" that enables firms to advertise for interns and student positions.
- The "Project Exchange", which is an electronic exchange where companies and students can meet and match with each other. Use of the Project Exchange is free of charge and has proven to be an effective tool for creating jobs and connecting students in want of a business project, or the empirical foundations of a research thesis, with a company interested in such engagement.
- Special company presentations that have been arranged by CBS in co-operation with Young Business Economists and AIESEC. These take place either at CBS or at the company's premises, and CBS assists companies in targeting relevant student groups, marketing the event and following up on the presentation.
- Direct mail to students. CBS offers companies assistance in targeted recruitment of trainees and new employees – identifying the relevant degree programmes and level of study.

- Internship Program in Innovation and Business Development for MBA students from CBS partner universities and graduate students from CBS with at least 3 years of professional experience. The programme is worth 30 ECTS points.
- Full-time MBA students are required to conduct a real-life strategy project in a company in groups of 4–5 students with different competence profiles.

8.2 Alumni

Although alumni associations received little attention by CBS in the past, by the time CBS started to take action, no fewer than 22 Alumni Associations were registered. Most were connected to the specialisations of the graduate programmes and Open University programmes and had been initiated by the alumni. There is also a long tradition of involving alumni on the corporate advisory boards of many of the Master's degree programmes, the BSc in International Business and Business Administration, the BSc in Business and Corporate Communication, as well as the Open University Programs as external teachers and examiners.

However, CBS found that there was a need for an official CBS alumni organisation to strengthen activities in the area. Hence, a general alumni association, the Alumni Forum, was established in 2002 with the launch of a website and a newsletter. The newsletter contains news about CBS alumni, alumni profiles, corporate relations updates, membership activities, etc. The first "homecoming party" was held in September 2004. 60,000 graduates were invited to the event that included both social and professional elements, and 330 graduates participated.

Obviously, an alumni tradition is not established by organising one event, and it must be expected that it will take some years before the full potential is realised. However, the 2004 event must be characterised as a success from the feedback CBS received. The long-term goal is to establish a life-long networking relationship with the people who entrusted their education to CBS.

8.3 The Employment of Graduates

CBS monitors the employment of graduates and the labour market through surveys and analyses conducted by professional associations and unemployment funds. This is possible in Denmark because of the very high percentage of graduates that are members of professional organisations and unemployment funds. More than 80% of all MSc graduates are members of an unemployment fund; the same is true for more than 70% of the BSc graduates.

This information focuses on different types of programmes, not different institutions. Information about the employment of graduates from specific institutions is at present not produced regularly in Denmark.

CBS has become increasingly aware of the need to develop a more precise picture of the career pattern of its graduates. CBS would like to find out more about its graduates from specific programmes, as opposed to the present information that presents numbers in abstract categories of programmes or that represents all graduates from a certain type of programme in Denmark. It should be mentioned that the traditional lack of focus on graduates from specific universities in Denmark is related to the fact that programmes are regulated centrally by ministerial orders and thus presumed to produce graduates with approximately the same qualities.

In his fourth report from March 1999 Professor Lee Harvey made the following observations about employer involvement:

> *"Part of the strategic development of CBS is to increase co-operation with the business community. I continue to be impressed by the links that CBS has and the way it works at developing and maintaining these links. There not only seems to be a lot of interest from 'working life' at the Board level but also at the programme level. This includes developing:*
> - *Research links*
> - *Work-based learning*
> - *Supplementary and continuing education*
> - *Involvement on advisory boards and external examiner ships*
> - *Efforts to market CBS graduates, nationally and internationally.*
>
> *As mentioned earlier, there is an identifiable desire by employers for graduates who have a range of skills and attributes in addition to subject knowledge. However, any attempt to develop graduate skills and abilities should be very clear about what the role of higher education is. There should be no attempt to 'train' graduates for jobs in industry. What is needed is graduates who are intelligent and have appropriate academic knowledge and higher level skills such as critique, analysis, synthesis and creative problem solving. However, employers expect these to be accompanied by explicitly developed personal attributes, including flexibility, adaptability, time-management and a range of 'self skills' including self-motivation, self-confidence and self-promotion. In addition, and vital to the modern workplace, is the need for graduates to have good interactive abilities – teamworking, oral and written communication skills and interpersonal skills and tact."*

9 Documentation and reporting

The documentation and the reporting takes place through

- Reports (written or electronically (CD-Rom)
- Meetings (monthly and/or annual)
- Appraisal interviews.

9.1 Reporting system

All quality activities are documented in reports or virtually, for example, the CD-ROM evaluation catalogue. The projects initiated by the Teaching and Learning Committee or the CBS Learning Lab are documented in reports and can be found on their web pages. In connection with external audits or evaluations, both the self-evaluation report and the final peer review report are made public and discussed in the relevant bodies (Board of Governors, Academic Counsels, Study Boards, Advisory Groups, the executive Leadership and Management Group and in further bodies (informal) at faculty or departmental level).

The study board directors or programme directors and heads of department produce annual reports on their area of responsibility (e.g. external and/or internal evaluations of work of the various research groups in a department and quality evaluation of study programmes.) These annual reports are passed to the Dean as a basis for strategy development and control of results. The Dean synthesises all the reports received in his annual report to the President, and finally the President produces his annual report to the Board of Directors. There is a chapter on quality improvement and quality assurance in all the reports.

As described in Section 2, the chairperson of the CBS external examiners' body now submits an annual report on the findings of external examiners based on individual reporting by those external examiners who have been involved in the examinations during the year in question. This report is discussed both at centralised and decentralised level.

As stated above, Professor Lee Harvey has served as an external expert at CBS since 1994. Over the years, Professor Harvey has visited CBS several times for workshops, seminars and discussions with students and other relevant stakeholders. He has recorded his impressions in five reports. Working with Professor Harvey has been very inspiring and stimulating for the internal continuous quality improvement of programmes and for the development of the quality culture at CBS.

9.2 Meetings

At monthly meetings with study board directors, the programme directors and the director of the CBS Learning Lab, the deans discuss the introduction of new quality initiatives and the follow-up of ongoing quality initiatives. These meetings also serve as a forum for exchange of ideas and for learning from each other.

9.3 Appraisal interviews

At the individual level, CBS conducts annual appraisal interviews, which are confidential dialogues between individual employees and their immediate superiors. The purpose of these interviews is to discuss performance and future development with the employees and to link these to the unit's and CBS' goals and strategies while at the same time focusing on competence development in relation to the internal evaluation results (student questionnaires) of the individual employee.

10 Follow-up mechanisms of quality improvement and quality assurance

As one of the strategic goals of CBS is to develop as a Learning University, the follow-up mechanisms or learning features are very closely related to the stakeholder-related definition of the concept of quality, as defined by Harvey and Green (1993) and adopted by CBS in 1994. The mechanisms applied are:

1. Audit;
2. Follow-up audit;
3. Accreditation;
4. Re-accreditation;
5. Internally initiated research evaluation;
6. Benchmarking, internal and external;
7. Dialogue with the business community;
8. Dialogue with graduates (alumni);
9. Internal evaluation of teaching and learning;
10. External subject and programme evaluation;
11. Continuous and systematic development of competence profiles and the impact on curriculum development;
12. Performance agreement between CBS and the Ministry of Science, Technology and Innovation.

Kristensen (2003)[15] has analysed of the learning feature "Benchmarking". In the same paper, the features CRE Audit, CRE Follow-Up Visit, and the EQUIS Accreditation are also analysed. The analysis is based on the following six characteristics:

1. Learning organisations have mechanisms that enable them, as organic entities, to learn:
   i) from their own experiences;
   ii) from the experience of others.
2. Learning organisations learn for a purpose, including:
   i) to enable them to contend with external factors or adapt to their environment;
   ii) to be more efficient at producing outputs; and
   iii) to be more effective in producing other or better outputs.
3. Organisational learning is a continuous process of systematic, proactive, continuous improvement, involving a cycle of enquiry, action, feedback and organisational memory.
4. Organisational learning involves a culture of facilitating/enabling the capacity of employees to increase their learning.
5. A learning organisation develops radical ideas, thinks the unthinkable, experiments and takes risks.
6. There are processes in learning organisations to enable reflection on, or evaluation of, the learning.

Furthermore, CBS submits an annual report to the Ministry. The annual report includes detailed information about performance indicators (e.g. number of graduates, research production, staff development and the overall accounts). It gives a detailed description of the fulfilment of the goals set in the Performance Agreement and in other relevant strategy statements. A more detailed description of the development in special focus areas (e.g. quality activities) is included. Goals and expectations for the coming year and areas of special focus are also included.

[15] Kristensen, B: "Benchmarking in the perspective of a "learning institution" and as a means to search for best practices". ENQA Workshop Reports 2: Benchmarking in the Improvement of Higher Education", Helsinki 2003.

11 International dimension

In order to be fully international, CBS must provide internationalised programmes to an internationalised student body by international staff and participate in the international research community. Being committed both to internationalisation and the idea of the learning university means that CBS strives to internationalise its organisation as such.

To support the process of internationalisation, CBS has an International Committee, an International Office and a Language Center. The International Committee is the academic and political body that makes recommendations to the President on internationalisation policies. The Committee consists of 5 members of faculty and 5 students. The International Office is responsible for the coordination and implementation of all activities related to establishing and maintaining exchange agreements with universities abroad. It also handles all matters relating to the exchange of students to and from CBS. The Language Centre was established to ensure sufficient language capabilities of students going abroad, faculty teaching in English and to support incoming students.

11.1 The adaptation of the Bologna Declaration at CBS

In accordance with the strategic aim of internationalisation, CBS has, from the very beginning of the Bologna process in 1999, actively sought to adapt those aspects of the Bologna process that were not already at place in 1999: promoting a European dimension in education, facilitating mobility, assuring quality and being actively engaged in lifelong learning.

At the time of the Bologna Declaration, the 3+2+3 degree structure was in place at CBS (it was introduced in Denmark at a national level in 1992). Since the early 1970s, students have been involved in the governance of universities in Denmark, an involvement that, as mentioned above, was instituted in the University Act. Furthermore, a system of credits based on ECTS credit points is being introduced at all Danish universities and is now fully implemented at CBS as the principal mode of measuring student activity.

At CBS, the European dimension is actively promoted on a number of different levels: CBS students are encouraged to study abroad for a semester or two – this year it is expected that approx. 850 students will be going abroad. Most of those will be visiting one of CBS' more than 300 partner universities.

At the same time, CBS has during the past ten years been actively engaged in attracting foreign students to CBS in order to create an international environment at the institution. Now around 1,000 foreign students a year visit CBS. To achieve this, CBS offers an increasing number of degree programmes in English.[16] In addition, to ease the foreign students' way into Danish society, CBS has also introduced a housing programme and a "buddy programme".[17]

As the only business school in Denmark, CBS is involved in the CEMS programme, hence offering students the chance to get both a joint degree and a double degree.[18]

With regard to the readability and comparability of degrees, a special effort has been made at a national level to implement the Lisbon Recognition Convention. As part of this effort, and with a special view to further the employability of students, at CBS all study programmes are currently working on a definition of qualification profiles. This is being made at a national level according to the Danish "Qualifications Framework" for Higher Education, which was presented at a Bologna seminar on Qualification Structures in Higher Education in Europe held in Copenhagen in March 2003.

As CBS has played an active role in the Bologna Process through its Vice President's involvement as a member of the Danish follow-up group, representing the Danish Rectors' Conference, CBS wants, through its intensive work with qualification profiles, to describe the qualifications with reference to the objectives of higher education, in particular with regard to four major objectives of higher education: (i) preparation for the labour market; (ii) preparation for a life as active citizens in a democratic society; (iii) personal development; (iv) development and maintenance of an advanced knowledge base.

Finally, with regard to life-long learning, there is at CBS, as in Denmark generally, a long tradition of continuing education. At CBS, continuing education takes place on a number of different levels: (i) CBS Executive organises a series of executive Master programmes; (ii) under the auspices of the faculties a number of part-time graduate diploma programmes are offered in

[16] At present CBS is teaching 17 degree programmes in English and has established an International Summer University, running from the end of June till the beginning of August. See http://www.cbs.dk/cbs_international/menu/gruppe__5/summer_university.

[17] Most of these activities supporting the exchange of students are coordinated by the International Office; for further information, see http://web.cbs.dk/intoff/.

[18] CEMS is an acronym for Community of European Management Schools. CEMS comprises seventeen leading European universities and forty-five major European companies as CEMS corporate partners.

both business administration and languages; and (iii) the Centre for Continuing Education offers a range of continuing education courses of various lengths.

12 Further perspectives

12.1 Participation at international level

For CBS it has been very important to become stimulated and inspired in the quality work from the European Area, and through its own systematic and continuous quality work leaders at CBS are now able to contribute either as peers or facilitators to the development and embedding of a systematic and coherent quality culture in other universities throughout Europe.

12.2 Being a Learning University

In his latest report from his visit to CBS in November 2001, Professor Lee Harvey writes:

> *"CBS has adopted a strategic approach to its own self-improvement that has gradually shifted from reactive to proactive mode, from exploratory initiatives to integrated strategy. Three interrelated things, in my view, have driven the transformation of CBS*
> - *The drive, imagination and desire of the leaders within CBS;*
> - *The external evaluations;*
> - *Structural changes both physical and organisational*
>
> *The change at CBS since the early 1990s is remarkable and the university can, I believe, rightly refer to it self as a learning university. CBS emphasises learning and is also an organisation eager and ready to learn and evolve.*
>
> *The problem with being a learning university is that it is a status that has constantly to be earned."*

CBS will therefore, continue to strengthen its quality culture through learning from others and exchanging examples of good practice with Nordic and European universities.

At CBS it is a well-known fact that once you get started, the quality work never ends!

2.2 The quality management system of the University of Kuopio

1 Mission and vision of the University

The University of Kuopio is governed by the University Act, with its subsequent amendments, and also by government policy programmes and education and research plans.

The University of Kuopio has an international reputation in the fields of health and environmental sciences, with particular strengths in biotechnology, information technology and business administration. The mission of the University is to enhance competence in scientifically based education in Finland as a whole and especially in the eastern part of the country.

The vision of the University for 2010 has been presented in the action and economic plan (AEP) presented to the university administration on 6 Feb 2002. According to this plan, the University is developing as a vital, active, innovative and internationally respected science-based university well known for its excellent research and high level of education. In its vision for 2010, the University forms the central core of the Kuopio Science Park, in close co-operation with the Kuopio University Hospital, a variety of Research Institutes, Kuopio's Savonia Polytechnic and local enterprises and business service organisations.

2 Institutional responsibility, purpose and aims of quality work

Strategic management and the Quality Management System

In 1996 the University of Kuopio began creating a comprehensive Quality Management System, which would cover all the University's activities and fields at all levels, support strategic management and promote the continuous systematic development of the work of the University.

The vital importance of quality work has been further emphasised by the rapid growth of international research co-operation and student exchange programmes, and by the new degree structures promoted in the European High Education Area, in particular by the introduction of joint degree programmes. Accordingly, in 2002 the University invested significantly in quality work by appointing a full-time Quality Manager.

The University's Quality Management System is based on the principles of the international **ISO 9001:2000 standard**. The fundamental considerations on which our system is based are therefore:

a) Customer focus;
b) Leadership;
c) Involvement of people;
d) Process approach;
e) Systematic approach to management;
f) Continual improvement;
g) Factual approach to decision making;
h) Mutually beneficial supplier relations.

The University's leadership is strongly committed to quality work, which is **directed by the University's Management Team**. The Main Quality Manual and any changes to it must be approved by the University's Governing Board. The annual management reviews of the Quality Management System, which are essential for strategic management, are carried out every spring by the Management Team in advance of the annual financial negotiations with the Ministry of Education.

The financial agreements between the Ministry and the University are negotiated for periods of three years at a time. Financial negotiations between the University leadership and the faculties and separate institutes of the University take place in the autumn. Deans of faculties are responsible for financial negotiations with heads of departments.

Financial agreements between the University and its component departments are negotiated for the same periods as those between the University and the Ministry of Education. These agreements are published annually in both electronic and printed format. In the annual negotiation of these agreements, the progress of quality work in the different departments is monitored. In autumn 2003 all departmental agreements included a specific date for the first planned organisational audit. All departments are committed to participation in regular audits by the end of 2006.

The Governing Board organises **two to three seminars** annually to assist departments to conform with and commit to overall quality goals and policies.

The annual **performance review meetings,** held by Heads of Departments with each member of their staff, play a vital role in the implementation of the University's strategy. After the national salary reform planned for 2005, these discussions will also include the determination of the personal element of the individual's salary within the framework established by the University and the departments.

The University's **Quality Manager** coordinates and produces guidelines for the quality work of the departments and their internal audits, and also

prepares and maintains the University's Main Quality Manual. The Quality Manager is also responsible for planning and organising external audits and evaluations in co-operation with the University's various departments and other bodies, as laid down in the Main Quality Manual. All departments have appointed a member of staff as their Quality Officer to liaise with the Quality Manager.

Among the essential starting-points of the Quality Management System are the analysis of customers and partners, surveying their expectations and needs, determining quality goals, systematising and implementing quality work, determining indicators for processes and results, and improving quality by analysing audits, evaluations and indicators using strategic management methods. The purpose of the implementation and development of a university-wide quality management system and of the evaluation and development of quality work is to use the factual information provided by critical and systematic evaluation of the work of the University to provide a clearer foundation for the University's decision-making and future development.

The Quality Management System covers all the University's core functions (research, teaching and social interaction), as well as all the related support functions and the function of sustainable development. We have sought to create a system, which would be, after the necessary processing and documentation of the initial phase, as flexible and easy to use as possible and would, so to speak, merge into strategic management, with a view to supplementing and supporting previously existing structures. Thus the system would also facilitate the departments' own development work according to their own needs.

Quality policy

The quality policy of the University of Kuopio has the following aims:

- to maintain the Quality Management System, which supports the University in managing its basic responsibilities reliably and efficiently at all levels, while taking into consideration the needs of individuals, society and the environment.
- to ground the continuous development of strategic management and university operations in the analysis of the results of the evaluations
- to remain as an innovative, nationally and internationally appreciated and eligible partner for the purposes of study, work and research community co-operation.
- to promote the wellbeing of staff and students.

The University of Kuopio's Quality Management System is documented in the Main Quality Manual and in other quality documents, which supply more precise action plans, methods and instructions. The University's quality policy has been approved by the university administration as the foundation of the Quality Management System.

Quality objectives of the processes

Core processes

Research

- Research is ethically sustainable and its methods are valid and reliable;
- Research results can be exploited to benefit social decision-making and economic life;
- Research is of an internationally high standard, with the University conducting research in co-operation with international teams as an equal partner:
- University research teams continue to have 'centre of excellence' status and the University is successful in competing for external funding.

Teaching

- Graduates continue to find employment or go on to postgraduate education;
- Students are supported by teaching staff and career services and graduate in accordance with their personal study plans;
- Wide-ranging cross-disciplinary studies can be undertaken at the University;
- Teaching produces in-depth learning and skilled application of scientific findings;
- Teaching and learning are cost-effective;
- Students are involved in developing the teaching and administrative work of the University;
- The higher education provided by the University is recognised nationally and internationally as being of high quality, and there is always at least one teaching department with "centre of excellence" status;
- Scientific postgraduate education is efficiently supervised and forms an integral part of the work of scientific research groups;
- The University is sensitive to the region's and the surrounding society's adult education requirements in accordance with its operating profile and responds rapidly to demand;
- Adult education provides a way into basic higher degree education.

Social interaction and cultural mission

- The University has significant influence in the region and in Finland as a whole;
- The University maintains a good public image;
- The staff of the University enjoy close relations with local business and public institutions;
- The University is involved in supporting and starting up enterprises;
- The staff of the University participate actively in public debate and act as experts in their field;
- The University co-operates with all the various levels of education;
- The University plays a genuine part in the regional provincial planning process;
- Studia generalia lectures open to the public are arranged regularly in co-operation with the Summer University of Kuopio.

Support processes

Strategic management

- The management recognises opportunities, manages development, and creates a common vision, values and direction;
- The management persuades expert staff to share their current knowledge and to develop new knowledge within the framework of common values. All staff are aware of the basic mission of the University of Kuopio;
- The management process is pro-active competence management;
- The University's Management Team monitors selected indicators, based on the vision, mission and aims of the University, and formulates strategic planning based on regular risk management and other evaluations;
- The University values its personnel as its most important resource and actively pursues an equal opportunity policy;
- The University's communication is dynamic and displays its commitment to fulfilling the vision.

Human resources

- The University strives towards the creation of a stable, safe and motivating working environment by making long-lasting and permanent contracts and by providing an appropriate, motivating and supportive working community, by encouraging continuous education, and by facilitating the participation of personnel in the development of their own work and working environment;
- Our goal is that retiring staff will be in good health, with a full career behind them, and will remain active citizens after retirement.

Support resources

- Support resources are sufficient to support the core processes of the University, while remaining as environmentally friendly, open and flexible as possible.

The more precise objectives of the support processes are presented in the quality manuals of the relevant operating departments.

3 The role of external stakeholders and enhancing customer satisfaction

The University of Kuopio's significant partners are given the opportunity to share in the discussion of the University's strategies and policies. The University has both an Advisory Board and an Evaluation and Development of Social Engagement Board, which play their part in monitoring and promoting the University's social involvement. The University's Governing Board also has one external member.

The University participates in a variety of ways in the work of planning regional strategy and of developing Eastern Finland which is carried out in different organisations, and is a partner in the Cross Border University project linking Russian and Eastern Finnish universities. The University is also engaged in the Varkaus regional business development project.

The University is enterprise-friendly in its commitment to promoting and supporting the financial exploitation of inventions and innovative products produced with university involvement.

Characteristic of public administration are political direction, changes in political leadership and a shared legally oriented culture, as well as the maintenance of services by tax revenues. Legislators also determine in many ways the content and boundaries of services.

The national government, represented mainly by the **Ministry of Education** in Finland, is the most important financer of the University. The Ministry agrees annual financial targets and budgets with the University and demands comprehensively high-quality and cost-effective operations. The Ministry also expects teaching and research to be organised with the purpose of supplying graduates who will make a useful contribution to the scientific community and to society, both in Finland and the world.

The **students** form another fundamental customer group, which is thus one of the main partners in developing university functions. Students expect a pleasant study environment, professional teaching which is student-centred and facilitates individual choice, modern learning environments and degrees which will guarantee good jobs. They also insist on the opportunity to par-

ticipate in working groups and decision-making bodies during their time as students.

Finnish society and economic life demand that graduates possess, in addition to knowledge of their subject and the relevant professional skills, general language and communication, team-working and leadership skills.

The **international scientific community** and Finnish society expect the University to make an innovative, ethically sustainable and relevant research contribution.

The City of Kuopio, Kuopio University Hospital, other universities and polytechnics, local communities, regional enterprises and research institutes are close partners and important stakeholders of the University. All these bodies expect reliable and confidential partnership, scientific and academic competence and methodical long-term planning from the University.

Customer and stakeholder experiences and their level of satisfaction are measured regularly in accordance with the provisions of the Main Quality Manual.

4 Documentation and reporting

Quality Manuals

The legal basis for the work of the University, its mission, vision, strategy and values, quality policy objectives and organisation, strategic management, customer needs, implementation of processes, evaluations and development measures are described in the Main Quality Manual and in the supplementary, more specific quality manuals of the various departments.

The basic framework of all these documents is:

1. Management System
2. Resources
3. Processes
   - 3.1. Core processes
     - *3.1.1. Research*
     - *3.1.2. Teaching*
     - *3.1.3. Social interaction and cultural mission*
   - 3.2. Support processes
4. Evaluation and development functions.

As a result teaching-related responsibilities, organisational matters, planning and development are described in all the University's quality manuals under item 3.1.2, support processes for teaching under item 3.2, and evaluation and development of teaching under item 4.

All the quality manuals are published on the University's Intranet, and the Main Quality Manual on the university's home page at http://www.uku.fi/hallinto/laatu, both in Finnish (35 p.) and English (abridged version 21 p.). All quality manuals are maintained in both electronic and identical print copies. Quality manuals and systems for all faculties and departments are in preparation, and around fifteen have already been completed and published on the Intranet.

Our quality manuals all contain descriptions of processes in compliance with the ISO 9001:2000 standard. In these descriptions, customers and customers' needs are identified, and responsible staff members, products and resources are determined, along with critical points. The implementation of each process together with the relevant indicators and measures to improve the process are described.

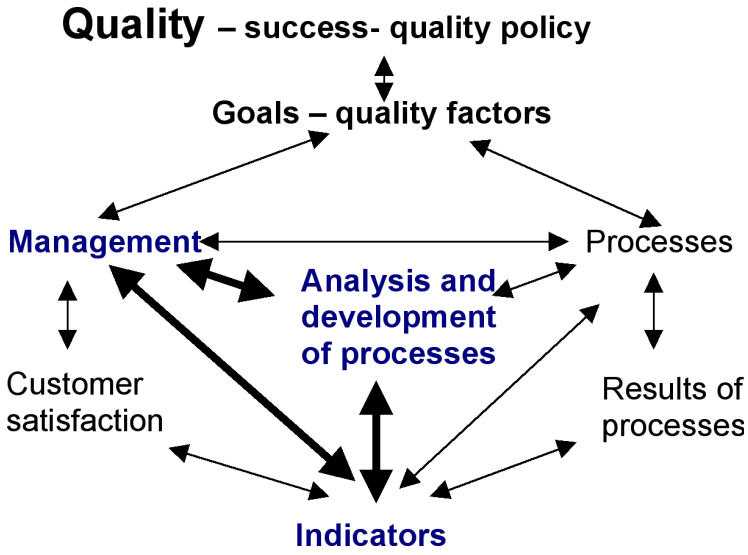
Documents and records

Control of documents and records is documented in the Main Quality Manual and the supplementary quality manuals. Quality documents include the manuals with their appendices, operational instructions, reports of management reviews, audit reports, customer feedback forms and other records, such as Minutes of meetings and memoranda.

5 Follow up mechanisms of quality assurance

Fact-based approach to decision-making

The following diagram presents the University of Kuopio's approach to the subject of continuous systematic quality development



External and Internal Audits

Internal audits of the Quality Management System play an essential role in developing the system according to the **ISO 9001:2000 standard**. An effective and efficient internal audit process is needed to evaluate the strengths and weaknesses of the Quality Management System. The internal audit process provides an independent tool for obtaining objective evidence that the existing requirements have been met.

Internal audits were begun in the University of Kuopio in autumn 2003. By the summer of 2005, 20 departments will have been audited, and by the end of 2005, 30 departments. The remaining initial audits (about 15) will be carried out in 2006 as agreed in the 2003 financial negotiations.

The Main Quality Manual contains a provisional schedule of audits and evaluations until 2010. This schedule is revised annually in the Management Review carried out by the Management Team. The audits focus in turn on the functioning of the department and on the degree programmes and research.

Internal audit of the teaching process covers the auditing of degree programmes and teaching support processes and also serves as self-assessment material for external and international evaluations.

In 2003–2006, the main focus of the audits is on auditing teaching, as in December 2004 the University contracted with SFS Inspecta for an external audit of the teaching process, resulting in possible certification. The external auditing will begin in November–December 2005, and the full audit of the University's teaching will be carried out by the end of 2006.

Evaluations

In the Main Quality Manual, the performance, scheduling and analysis of internal and external audits of different functions is described, along with the performance, scheduling and analysis of national and international evaluations of the University's teaching and research. Also mentioned are the processing and evaluation of student and customer surveys. Departments gather feedback from their courses according to their own planning, and their feedback practices are described in their own quality manuals.

Academic planning committees in the various faculties annually evaluate teaching and learning, and based on this evaluation, determine development needs and measures for improving teaching processes. They then present these needs and measures to the faculties for the necessary decisions.

The Board for the Evaluation and Development of Teaching is responsible for the planning of evaluation and development measures for all the University's teaching processes, in collaboration with the Quality Manager, the

central administration's planning and development department, and the academic planning committees. Quality assurance of the process of approval of the new degree programmes will be determined during 2005.

Management Reviews

Once a year, in the spring, the Management Team discusses the quality indicators and measurements of the previous year, and carries out a thorough review of the internal audits and other evaluations with summaries of evaluations given by the Quality Manager.

The following matters are dealt with in the Management Review:

1) Statement of quality policy and quality objectives;
2) Results of the previous year's audits;
3) Results of the previous year's evaluations and of strategic risk management analyses;
4) Customer feedback and achievement of quality objectives;
5) Performance of core processes in relation to demands;
6) Current state of corrective and preventive measures;
7) Measures agreed in previous management reviews;
8) Summary of financial negotiations;
9) Summary of internal evaluations;
10) Changes which may affect the Quality Management System;
11) Suggestions for improvements.

The findings of the Management Review are set out in a written report, and this report is approved and adopted by the administration during the spring seminar. The report is also made available on the University's web site, and the original is stored in the office of the Quality Manager.

The annual Management Review is an important element of both strategic management and quality work. The first review was held on 11 May 2004, and the next will be held on 4 April 2005. Thereafter management reviews will be carried out annually, but always before the financial negotiations with the Ministry of Education. During these reviews, the quality indicators (40 items using information gathered from the previous five years), the financial performance of the University, the most important matters arising from the audits and the results of the previous year's financial negotiations with the Ministry of Education together with the Ministry's feedback are discussed in depth.

In the first Management Review report, several matters arose which required improvement. These were recorded along with schedules and the people responsible. This shows the commitment of the University leadership to

quality work and its readiness to use quality work for the purposes of strategic management.

The majority of the quality indicators describing the University's teaching process are aggregated from the figures at faculty level. Departments can use in addition their own internal indicators.

The Management Team will carry out its own directed self-evaluation in autumn 2005, and then regularly halfway through each management team period. Faculty Advisory Boards carry out their own corresponding management reviews in January–February, which analyse in particular the progress and development needs of the faculty's own teaching and research processes.

6 Participation of staff and students

The University of Kuopio has a three-cornered administration model – there are representatives of both staff and students on all decision-making bodies and working groups, including the Management Team and the Governing Board. This guarantees the opportunity for staff and students to influence university matters, including broad strategic choices, during both preparation and decision phases.

Staff

Innovative, motivated and active personnel form an essential part of any expert organisation. The entire staff of the University are committed to quality work and can participate in decisions about quality work at all levels of the administration.

The Quality Manager arranged quality information meetings in all departments in 2003–2004 and met 600 people in the 50 meetings held. 37 people have taken part in process description training, 37 in auditor training for staff and 38 in specialised auditor training for managers. In addition, in 2001–2002 seven people participated in a wider training programme called 'Quality Training for the Science Park'. Departments and the Students' Union have appointed Quality Officers. The Quality Manager meets these Quality Officers 2–3 times a year and keeps in contact by regular quality messages.

In autumn 2004, indicator training was arranged for 25 people. In March 2005, management review training will be organised for 30 heads of department, to be followed in May by basic auditor training, and in the autumn by advanced auditor training for strategic management and administration. In February, in co-operation with SFS Inspecta, a standards familiarisation meeting open to all staff will be organised, together with documentation training for Quality Officers. These training courses will be organised by the Univer-

sity of Kuopio's own Centre for Training and Development, in some cases in co-operation with Savonia Polytechnic. A number of people have also taken part in quality training organised by external bodies.

The Quality Manager has taken part in process description, audit training, Balanced Scorecard and Management Review courses with a variety of quality training organisations.

Students

At the University of Kuopio, students are actively involved in administration and preparation bodies. Students have been and will continue to be participants in quality working groups. At orientation meetings for new students, the quality work of the University is briefly described and a quality leaflet handed out. Information about quality work will also be included in student prospectuses from autumn 2005. The Quality Management System has also been presented in training sessions for students representing the Students' Union on administrative bodies. Students can have their own representative participating in internal audits, and two student representatives have already taken part in both auditor training and actual audits. In February 2005 audit training will be organised for a wider group of students.

The University is planning to introduce a course on Quality Management (1 credit), which would be included in all the different degree programmes, so that every student graduating from the University of Kuopio would have a clear understanding of the basic principles of quality work on entering working life.

Feedback is collected from students at the end of every course and processed by lecturers and academic planning committees. A summary of the feedback is provided for the annual faculty management review. In connection with the process of developing the new degree structure to be implemented in 2005, students' experiences of the workload on different courses have also been evaluated.

The outcome of the annual 'How are you doing?' questionnaire determines how graduate students have experienced employment and working life in relation to their studies. A corresponding questionnaire for students with higher postgraduate degrees clarifies the employment situation of these licentiates and doctors. These responses are analysed every autumn. The results of these questionnaires constitute one of the indicators for the management review and are published on the University's website.

7 Quality co-operation

In Finland

Co-operation with Savonia Polytechnic embraces quality training and regional effectiveness indicators, and also the development of flexible 'study paths' in line with the Bologna process.

The University is currently drawing up more specific common quality objectives and indicators for English-language Master's programmes, based on the Guidelines on Quality Provision in Cross-Border Higher Education (EDU/EC/CERI(2004)3). The University's Learning Centre is actively involved in the Network Learning Quality Project coordinated by the University of Helsinki. The University has also been involved in initiating quality work in the Mikkeli University Consortium.

The Quality Manager has been involved in starting up the Finnish university network for quality managers and has visited three other universities to report on the quality work of the University of Kuopio. Representatives of a number of universities and polytechnics have visited Kuopio to learn about its Quality Management System.

International quality co-operation

The Quality Manager has visited the Norwegian University of Science and Technology (NTNU) in Trondheim to benchmark their work on the new degree structure, and their Planning Manager will be visiting Kuopio in spring 2005 to study the University of Kuopio's quality work.

Planning has also been instigated to set up an international peer-review group between partner universities (Surrey, Bradford, NTNU, St. Petersburg State Polytechnic University and The University of Kuopio) to determine the comparability and possible mutual recognition of the quality systems of these universities, and if necessary the possibility of making them more uniform to cater, for example, to the needs of students.

8 Support activities for quality work

In order to enhance the professional skills of the staff and at the same time the operations of the whole University, the University regularly organises wide-ranging management training programmes and pedagogical education for teaching staff.

Approximately 40 lecturers have completed the pedagogical education programme organised by the University (40 credits), and over a hundred have participated in short-term training programmes. About 50 members of staff have completed the management-training programme (10 credits), 15 of whom chose quality work as the subject of their final project. Monitoring the occupational wellbeing of personnel, staff training and induction has also been dovetailed with quality work. What is more, the systematic risk analysis carried out in the University together with information management and security issues all serve to support the significance of comprehensive quality work.

	2003	2002	2001	2000	1999
Scientific research					
1) Research training units/researchers in training					
unit led by University of Kuopio staff	7/41	7/50	6/48	6/50	6/51
unit led by others	15/29	15/32	13/32	13/32	13/32
2) Own research centres of excellence and participation in others					
Academy of Finland	1	1			
international	2	2			
3) Referred publications/professor		**8.9**	**8.3**	**8.5**	**8.8**
4) New doctoral degrees	78	82	60	56	79
5) Placement of students with doctorates in work					
(full-time permanent or temporary)	96%	N/I			
(fully or partially corresponding to qualifications)	94%	N/I			
6) Placement of doctors in professorships within ten years	N/I	N/I			
Teaching and study					
7) Teaching centres of excellence	-	-			
8) Student/teacher ratio	19.2	20.1	20.1	18.1	18.3
9) Degrees completed on schedule	undetermined	undetermined			
10) Applicants selected /all applicants (%)	37.6%	41.8%			
11) Total cost of degrees by discipline (e/degree)					
Pharmacy	16,780	23,210	25,780	21,660	
Medicine	67,580	56,200	68,590	57,580	
Natural and Environmental Sciences	48,980	68,820	59,010	51,930	
Social Sciences	51,320	42,510	31,020	34,480	
Health Sciences	15,760	20,550	20,060	12,380	
12) Completed first degrees	398	384	367	379	390
13) Placement of new graduates in work					
(full-time permanent or temporary)	84%	85%	84%		
(corresponding very well / well to qualifications)	75%	72%	69%		
14) Transfers from adult education	1.9%	1.5%	2.		
Social interaction					
15) Co-operation agreements currently ongoing	**53**	**53**	**47**	**31**	**10**
16) Spin-off enterprises (not yet defined)					
17) External / university members on advisory boards					
18) Regional effectiveness report					
19) University joint research projects					
20) Degrees completed in university centres under University of Kuopio regulations					
21) Coming from region / locating in region					

Support processes and staff					
22) Administrative staff person-years as% of total staff (University's own budget)	23%	23%	23%	22%	21%
23) Additionally funded staff person-years as% of total staff person-years	42%	43%	43%	39%	36%
24) Basic funding e/total person-years (University's own budget)	60,069	63,079	61,390	64,300	63,030
25) Basic funding e/completed credits	479	504			
26) Annual equipment depreciations e/acquisitions e	90.9%	55.6%			
27) Work Ability Index	24	19			
28) Work Ability Index (% excellent/good)	90%	88% (1998)			
29) Student Wellbeing Index	N/I	N/I			
30) In-service training participants /staff person-years					
External financing					
31) EU framework programmes ex1000	2,085	1,407			
32) Academy of Finland%/ Academy total grants e	3.9%	3.1%			
33) (AF+TEKES⋆)%/total university budget e	10%	8.8%			
34) Revenue-earning operations%/ total university budget	1.8%	1.6%			
35) Ministry of Education review of previous year of operations					
Future-orientation					
36) Teacher and researcher exchanges (less than one week + more than one month)	20+25	20+32			
37) International congresses hosted by University of Kuopio	N/I	N/I			
38) Incoming /outgoing exchange students	94/148	96/142	76/127		
39) Credits completed in a foreign language /all credits	4,354	4,462	2,618		
40) Regional and national expert tasks/year	N/I	N/I			
41) Results of strategic risk evaluations	measurements in preparation				
42) Environmental audits	to be started in 2006				
43) Completed internal audits	2	-			
Background information	e x 1000	e x 1000			
Academy of Finland funding of University of Kuopio		5,926	4,519		
Total Academy of Finland university funding	150,526	147,260			
TEKES⋆ funding of University of Kuopio	4,917	4,756			
Total University of Kuopio budget	108,580	105,168			
Total revenue earned	1,916	1,681			
Basic funding (Ministry of Education accounting model)	50,229,421	49,409,773			

⋆ TEKES = National Technology Agency of Finland

2.3 Quality Assurance of Education at the Norwegian University of Life Sciences (UMB)

Introduction

This report describes the quality assurance system for education at the Norwegian University of Life Sciences (UMB, previously the Agricultural University of Norway). The quality system was developed parallel with implementation of the Norwegian Quality Reform of Higher Education. The Quality Reform was a comprehensive reform of higher education organisation, degrees, credit and grading system and learning and evaluation methods, carried out to prepare for the requirements originating in the Bologna process.

UMB has been selected by the Norwegian Agency for Quality Assurance in Education, NOKUT, to represent Norway in the Nordic Comparative Quality Assurance Project.

The report begins with a set of general principles – "how we think about" quality assurance. The rest of the report describes the architecture, contents and dynamics of the system under the 6 themes suggested by the Nordic comparative project:

1. Institutional responsibility, purpose and aims of quality work
2. Student involvement
3. The role of external stakeholders
4. Documentation and reporting
5. Follow-up mechanisms of quality assurance
6. International dimension.

Each of the themes is illustrated with one or more examples from the University's quality assurance system. Appendix 1 is a list of quality indicators used in the Annual Report on Educational Quality for the academic year 2003–04. The indicators give a concrete picture of the kinds of data and issues covered by the University's quality system at this stage of development. The entire quality system is described in more detail on the following web-page: www.umb.no/kvalitetssikring.

Principles guiding the quality assurance work

Through our work to develop a quality assurance system for education, the University has developed a set of basic guiding principles. Accordingly, our system was designed to be:

Legitimate

The ability to deliver and document high educational quality is fundamental for the University's success in an increasingly competitive, international higher education market. Quality development and quality assurance are therefore made an integral part of the University's strategic plans and priorities. The University's quality assurance system is to comply with requirements set by the Norwegian Agency for Quality Assurance in Education, NOKUT, and should be developed in conjunction with international trends in quality assurance in higher education.

Integrated

The quality assurance system supports and is supported by existing management, plan and reporting systems to as great an extent as possible, rather than being conceived as a separate system. The quality assurance system is dynamic and subject to revision both continually and periodically.

Close to the student

The quality assurance system is organised as a set of "quality areas" experienced by students from the pre-application to the post-graduation phase. The concept of educational quality is broad and includes the quality of programme and course offerings, the quality of the learning environment, and promotion of educational quality through the University's management system.

Improvement-oriented and dynamic

To justify the considerable time and money spent on quality assurance work, the quality system must be oriented toward bringing about concrete improvement. It includes mechanisms to promote excellence, as well as mechanisms to detect and correct deviations from the University's quality standards. The work is inquisitive and critical, dynamic, and targeted at areas suspected of needing improvement. To be effective, quality assurance activities must be supported by a genuine desire to improve, a "quality culture."

Driven by managerial responsibility and wide ownership

The University's quality standards and the aims of the quality assurance system are set by the University board. An "operative group" led by the Rector approves the structures and procedures of the quality system and ensures that the procedures are adequate to guarantee that the quality standards of the University are met. The operative group is supported by a permanent coordinator function in the central administration for evaluation activities, information and reporting.

For each quality area, the head of the relevant department or division in the University organisation is responsible for developing and implementing quality assurance activities. A bottom-up approach ensures ownership and motivation. Those who work most directly with each area, also decide what quality information they need to ensure that quality standards are met and how the data are to be collected, analysed, presented and used. We want the system to be understood as a set of tools to help the teachers and staff do their jobs well and produce high-quality results – not a set of meaningless requirements imposed by others.

Based on a synthesis of quality perspectives

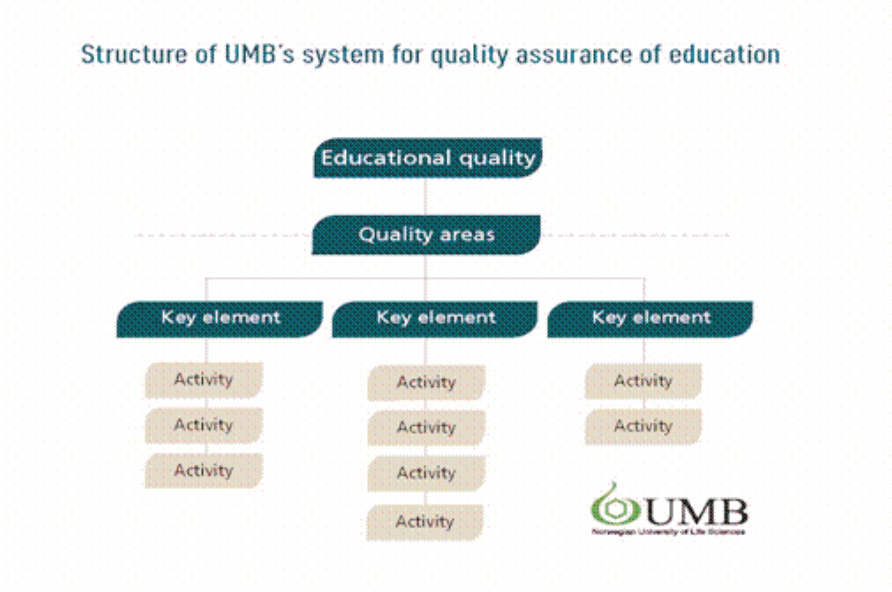
The quality assurance system synthesises three perspectives in its evaluation of educational quality, those of:

1) students
2) staff and other members of the academic fields and
3) actors in society who use the competence and graduates generated by the University.

In addition, quantitative indicators for a wide range of quality variables are compiled from existing institutional and national databases.

1 Institutional responsibility, purpose and aims of quality work

The diagram below shows the architecture of UMB's quality assurance system. It consists of 14 quality areas ("kvalitetsområder"). For each quality area, a number of key elements ("nøkkelelementer") are to be quality-controlled. One or more quality assurance activities have been formulated for each key element. Text descriptions of the quality areas, key elements and quality assurance activities specify goals and quality standards, responsibility and procedures for information gathering, analysis, reporting and response. The format of the descriptions is standardised.



1.1 Goals for quality assurance and quality standards

UMB's quality assurance system defines goals for quality assurance work at two levels:

- the students' education experience as a whole, and
- each of the 14 quality areas in the system.

At the next level, a concrete and verifiable quality standard has been defined for each key element. This hierarchy of objectives provides a set of ambitions for quality in education at UMB and for the quality assurance work.

Examples below show how the goals and standards in the quality system are constructed in a hierarchy. Appendix 2 gives an example of how the system is built up with quality areas, key elements and detailed descriptions of quality assurance activities.

Goals and responsibilities for the 14 quality areas

1. Educational programmes offered

Objective(s): UMB's study programmes shall be scientifically-based, maintain a high level of academic and pedagogical quality and prepare students for service to society within UMB's area of expertise

Overall responsibility: Education Committee

2. Academic guidance

Objective(s): Students shall have access to relevant, reliable and correctly-timed academic guidance, provided in a manner that makes students feel welcome at UMB and in their respective academic environments

Overall responsibility: Education Committee

3. Master's degree theses
Objective(s): A Master's degree thesis at UMB shall deal with a relevant issue, use acknowledged scientific methods and be completed within a specified (standard) period of time
Overall responsibility: Education Committee

4. Doctorate theses
Objective(s): Doctorate degree training at UMB shall be conducted according to international standards. A Doctorate degree thesis at UMB shall deal with a relevant issue, use acknowledged scientific methods and be completed within a specified (standard) period of time. Research results should be publishable in international, peer-reviewed journals
Overall responsibility: Research Committee, Education Committee

5. Educational resources
Objective(s): Both at UMB and UMB's partner institutions, students shall have access to educational resources of high scientific and pedagogical standing
Overall responsibility: Rector

6. Credit transfer
Objective(s): Credits from other institutions included in the diploma issued by UMB must derive from courses that have (at least) equivalent quality as the tuition offered by UMB
Overall responsibility: Education Committee

7. Physical learning environment
Objective(s): The physical learning environment shall meet generally accepted standards, and in no way be dangerous to the students' health
Overall responsibility: Committee for the Learning Environment

8. Information, library and ICT
Objective(s): Information, library services and information and communication technologies (ICT) shall be adapted to the students' needs
Overall responsibility: UMB's managing director

9. Student administration
Objective(s): UMB shall have a professional and user-oriented student administration
Overall responsibility: UMB's managing director

10. Universal accessibility for disabled persons
Objective(s): Educational offerings at UMB shall be accessible for everyone
Overall responsibility: Committee for the Learning Environment

11. Socio-psychological learning environment
Objective(s): UMB shall promote wellbeing and non-discrimination among students
Overall responsibility: Committee for the Learning Environment

12. Student welfare
Objective(s): The welfare services provided by UMB shall be in accordance with the students' needs, and contribute to maintaining supportive and unique social and learning environments
Overall responsibility: Committee for the Learning Environment

13. Management quality
Objective(s): UMB's planning and management system shall use available management instruments to assure academic excellence and effectively assure the quality of educational services
Overall responsibility: UMB's managing director

14. Internationalisation
Objectives(s): UMB's educational activity shall become increasingly international and the academic programmes, learning environment and student culture shall have an international dimension
Overall responsibility: Rector and Education Committee

Through active participation of stakeholders in system design, effective use of information and communication technology and goals-oriented management in the years ahead, the quality assurance work will contribute to the realisation of UMB's vision for its educational services. The quality assurance system is expected to give the following benefits:

- Increased efficiency within UMB as a whole including more effective information flow and promotion of implementation measures at all organisational levels.
- Clarification of responsibility and management tasks at all levels. Development of a basis for setting strategic priorities for educational activities.
- Clarification of the teaching staff's tasks and responsibilities with regard to developing educational services and the learning environment. Development of a basis for joint development of learning objectives involving students, teachers and external actors.

- A continuing high level of student participation in development of the learning environment, and increased accountability on the part of the University for implementing action plans and other improvements.

Hierarchy of goals and standards in UMB's quality assurance system

Overall goal for UMB's quality assurance work

The Board of the Norwegian University of Life Sciences has set the following overall goal for the quality assurance system: "The quality assurance system shall guarantee that students spend their time at UMB effectively and receive an education of high academic quality."

In addition, the quality assurance system at UMB should be credible and contribute to realising the institution's vision for its educational activities as expressed in the Strategic Plan for 2005–2008: "The Norwegian University of Life Sciences shall produce graduates who contribute new knowledge to society within the University's area of expertise and who contribute to sustainable development. The education shall have a clear international perspective. UMB shall contribute to lifelong learning and competence-building in business and society."

The following sub-goals apply to the quality assurance system:

- ensure that UMB's education maintains the desired quality
- enhance quality development throughout the entire institution
- document quality assurance work and evaluate quality status.

Example of a goal for a quality area

The goal for quality assurance work in the area "Credit transfer" is that "Credits from other institutions included in the diploma issued by UMB must derive from courses that have (at least) equivalent quality as the tuition offered by UMB."

Example of quality standards for key elements

The quality area "Credit transfer" consists of 4 key elements with corresponding quality standards:

1 Approval of credits from other Norwegian higher education institutions
Quality standard: Credits taken at other Norwegian higher education institutions are subject to approval according to Norwegian regulations and UMB's rules and regulations

2 Exchange- and co-operation agreements
Quality standard: All exchange agreements between UMB and other higher education institutions shall be subject to procedures to ensure that the educational offerings have quality corresponding to that of UMB courses.

3 Approval of credits taken at non-Norwegian higher education institutions without an exchange agreement
Quality standard: Credits taken at non-Norwegian higher education institutions without an exchange agreement will be approved as part of a UMB degree only if the institution is evaluated as having corresponding educational quality as UMB.

4 Approval of credits from internships and practical work in companies and organisations
Quality standard: Credit may be given for internships and practical work in companies and organisations according to criteria set by the Education Committee.

1.2 Integration in strategic planning

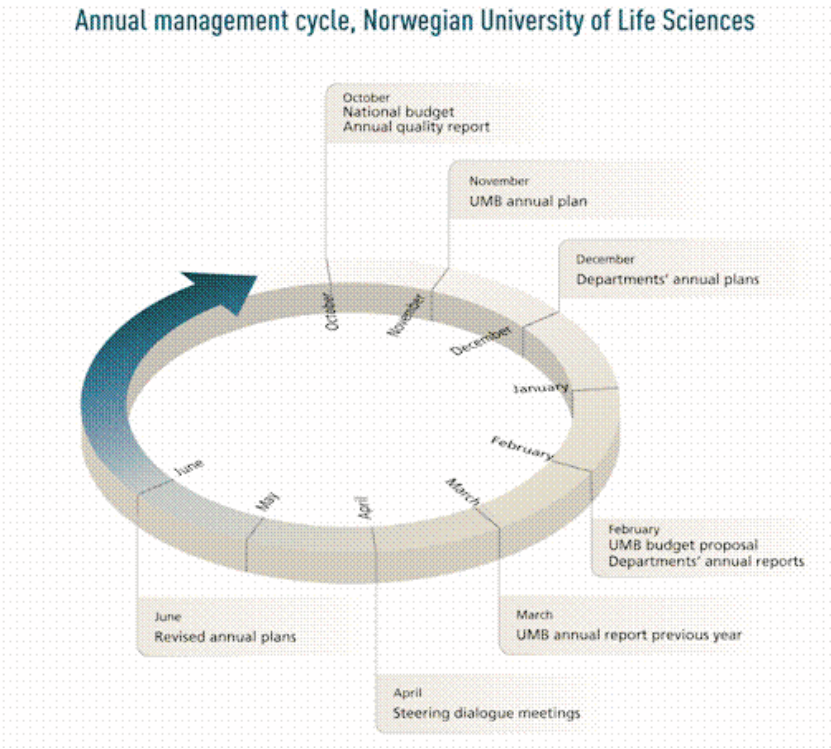
Quality assurance of education is profiled in the new Strategic Plan for the Norwegian University of Life Sciences 2005–2008, ratified by the University Board in November 2004. The plan states that "The University of Life Sciences shall use its resources such that …an effective quality assurance system detects areas requiring quality improvement in teaching and research." (unofficial translation).

As a basis for strategic planning and to allow a timely response to quality issues, the University Board receives an annual report on educational quality. The information in the quality report is generated by the quality assurance system and other sources, and includes many quantitative and qualitative indicators of various aspects of educational quality (see Appendix 1). The report gives an overview of the status and implementation of the quality system, describes quality improvement activities and evaluates the degree to which the educational quality norms have been attained, as well as strengths and weaknesses for each quality area. Changes in quality can also be tracked from year to year.

The annual quality report provides an objective platform for quality management by synthesising available qualified information from various sources and presenting an overview of strengths and weaknesses in academic offerings and the learning environment.

1.3 Integration in management

Work on quality assurance in education is integrated into UMB's management procedures at the institutional and departmental level via the University's management cycle. This consists of a recurring cycle of reports and plans at the academic department level and the institutional level, coupled with "steering dialogues" at multiple levels (see Figure).



At the institutional level the management cycle consists of the annual plan and budget, annual report and steering dialogue with the Ministry of Education and Research.

At the departmental level the management cycle consists of the annual report and annual plan and steering dialogue with the UMB's top management. At the sub-department level the management cycle consists of personnel plans, more or less formalised evaluation of teaching and research activities and one-on-one dialogues between the individual staff member and their supervisor ("medarbeidersamtaler"). Educational quality is now integrated into the management cycle at all three levels.

The annual quality report, described above, is followed up at both the institutional and departmental level.

1.4 Responsibility for quality work

As part of its work with the Norwegian Quality Reform of Higher Education, UMB has recently reorganised with new departments and management roles. The quality system describes the hierarchy of responsibility for quality assurance as it follows the new organisational structures. The diagram below specifies who has overall responsibility for various aspects of quality assurance. The tasks are more clearly specified in the textual description of the system.

There are several kinds of responsibility for quality assurance. These form a hierarchy which generally speaking follows the same lines of organisation as the University itself and the affiliated University Foundation for Student Life ("Studentsamskipnaden", SiÅs). The students' role in the system is described in more detail in Section 2 of this report.

The teaching and administrative staff are generally responsible for daily operations, while the management at various levels is responsible for ensuring that the University's defined standards are met. The managers are also responsible for the quality system itself, its contents and its implementation. An "operative group" consisting of key management and student representatives and led by the Rector, is responsible for systems operation and development. The Director of Academic Affairs is responsible for keeping the system contents updated and the Director of Information is responsible for the system's technical facilities.

The system description specifies the person responsible for ensuring that quality standards are met for each quality area. A person (or position) responsible for each key element and quality assurance activity is also designated. The textual descriptions of quality assurance activities also include links to descriptions of daily operational routines, in which responsibility for those routines is also designated.

1.5 Revision and further development of the quality system

The system is under continual revision and development. Those responsible for daily operations, students and other stakeholders are involved in developing and revising the routines. The person with overall responsibility for each quality area is also responsible for ensuring that the quality assurance procedures are in place and revised periodically.

2 Student involvement

2.1 The national framework

A high level of student participation in the political process is ensured through the University and College Act §19: "Student representatives shall comprise at least 20 per cent, and never fewer than two, of the members of all collegiate bodies with decision-making authority, as long as the delegating body does not unanimously decide otherwise."

In addition, NOKUT's requirements for quality assurance systems in higher education include two points specifically addressing participation, which function as quality assurance regarding participation of students:

- The system shall include the specification of quality assurance routines and measures that ensure broad participation, with clearly defined responsibilities and authorities for the various levels.
- The system shall include the students' active participation in quality assurance and a focus on the total learning environment.
- Institutions are given a high degree of autonomy regarding how the participation is to be organised and which other actors are to be included in addition to students.

2.2 Student participation at UMB

Together, students and staff make up UMB's" academic citizenry". UMB's quality assurance system is characterised by broad participation of staff, students and external users. Students play a major role by sitting on numerous University committees and by giving feedback on quality issues. UMB has a longstanding tradition of strong and systematic student participation. Mutual feedback between the student body and UMB's staff helps to improve the quality of education.

Student participation is assured through both formal and informal bodies. The participation arenas can be classified as academic, political and social.

Academic participation

Students give feedback through daily contacts with the teaching staff and other employees at UMB. Students are represented on academic committees, for example, in connection with the revision of study programmes, following up individual cases and in more extensive academic changes. There is a separate student committee ("fagutvalg") in each department in addition to the committees on which students serve together with staff. Students are expected to give formal feedback regarding their own learning situation through course and programme evaluations and questionnaires.

Political participation

UMB complies with the University and College Act regarding mandatory student representation in all decision-making bodies and in some instances exceeds the minimum requirement of 20% student representation. By including students in all formal bodies, UMB students are ensured *de facto* participation.

In addition to participation in formal decision-making bodies, UMB also aims to include student representatives in informal forums. Students are as a rule included in sub-committees, reference groups, project groups and the like. This is viewed as a way to ensure the relevance and quality of the work, as student representatives often have a somewhat different perspective and insight than the University staff.

UMB has its own student government network to look after student interests and to further student issues in all UMB's governing bodies. The highest student body is the general assembly. Between these assemblies, the Student Parliament is the functional authority, with the Student Board managing day-to-day operations. The Student Parliament is entitled to comment, and is responsible for the election of student representatives to various decision-making bodies. UMB student democracy is organised at both the institutional and departmental level. Students at UMB are member of the Norwegian Student Union, the interest group for students at Norwegian universities and scientific colleges.

UMB encourages and supports student democracy, helping it to function effectively. In co-operation with the University Foundation for Student Life (SiÅs), students are assured access to office space for their activities. In certain decision-making bodies, student representatives receive pay from UMB or SiÅs, depending on their role. The conditions for this are laid down in formal agreements.

A two-hour period each week reserved as class-free University-wide, in order to allow students to participate in various student activities. UMB and student bodies also carry out joint projects.

Social participation

The students' social welfare is an important aspect of the overall learning environment. The Student Union is the natural arena for social activities. Close co-operation between the Student Union, the University Foundation for Student Life (SiÅs), student government and UMB creates an excellent foundation for the students' social activities and student welfare. Co-operation between USB and SiÅs is regulated by formal agreements.

2.3 The role of students in UMB's quality system

Students are heavily involved in giving feedback about how they perceive and experience the quality of the services and offerings of the University. There are a number of channels for students to give such feedback. The textual descriptions of each quality assurance activity describe in detail how the feedback is to be obtained and how it is to be followed up with improvement activities.

UMB has extensive experience with student evaluations and has seen first-hand how such evaluations provide essential information about strengths and weaknesses in course and programme offerings, guidance, student services and the physical and psychological learning environment. Although student evaluations do not "measure" quality, students' evaluations are valid indicators of what students experience as users. Our experience is that students are sincerely engaged and want to do their part to improve the course and programme offerings. Reply rates are consistently at least 60% of those who receive the survey. Student comments and ratings provide a wealth of detailed information with a great potential for productive follow-up.

The University would be wise to listen and respond to the voices of the users. The quality system helps ensure that those responsible for various functions at the University receive feedback from students and other users, and that they take action based on that feedback.

The following are some examples of how students have been involved in quality assurance in recent years, over and above their participation in formal decision-making bodies:

- midway dialogue course evaluations (organised by the departments and teachers)
- course evaluations (organised by the administration as web-based evaluations to allow aggregation)
- programme evaluation
- evaluation of academic guidance
- evaluation of introduction week
- evaluation of block teaching
- evaluation of marketing and information materials
- students participated in evaluations of UMB's quality system and the evaluation leading to accreditation as a university
- alumni evaluation of study programmes
- Forum for Doctoral Students (FODOS) provides input on quality and quality assurance of doctoral programmes
- comment box on student information centre internet pages

- inquiries/comments by telephone, e-mail or in person to the student information centre (7,000 e-mails and as many telephone calls handled in 2003–04)
- UMB has a culture of involving students in committees, sub-committees, advisory groups, reference groups, project groups including the marketing group, reference group for digital competence, editorial committee for the new strategic plan etc.
- the President of the student government is a member of the "Rector's management team"
- monthly University summit ("Toppmøte"), an informal forum where the leaders of the student union, SiÅs, student government and UMB management (Rector, Pro-rector, Managing Director, Director of Academic Affairs) meet and discuss issues of concern to the students. Many improvements have been initiated after issues were taken up in the summit.
- weekly meeting between the President of the student government and the Director of Academic Affairs
- The President of the student government was in the group that developed the quality assurance system. Student representatives are routinely included in the work to develop the system further
- Student representatives may take a special course for credit called "students in leadership" which increases students' competence and ability to fill their roles in a professional manner.

3 The role of external stakeholders

3.1 The national framework

Prior to the Quality Reform of Higher Education, all final examinations at Norwegian higher education institutions were subject to control by an external examiner. After the quality reform, this requirement has been loosened up somewhat in the University and College Act §50, by allowing external examiners to evaluate the assessment procedures (examination questions, criteria for mark-setting) rather than assessing the students' work or examination papers directly.

The University and College Act specifies that 4 of 11 members of the Board are to be external. There are no national requirements in Norway for involving external actors in approval of new course or programme offerings. However, NOKUT specifies in its criteria for approval of quality assurance systems in higher education that "The system shall include the specification of quality assurance routines and measures that ensure broad participation, with clearly defined responsibilities and authorities for the various levels."

UMB believes that such participation should include participation of external actors and users in development and approval of new study programmes.

3.2 Co-operation with external stakeholders

UMB fosters close co-operation with other universities and with sectors and branches of business that receive and employ graduates of the University. The co-operation has often been formalised as the following alliances:

- Food Alliance (UMB – Norwegian Food Research Institute)
- Aquaculture Alliance (UMB – Norwegian Food Research Institute – Institute of Aquaculture Research)
- Alliance of UMB – Norwegian College of Veterinary Science (NVH)
- Triple Alliance (UMB – NVH – University of Oslo)
- Alliance for Development Cooperation (UMB-Noragric – Centre for Soil and Environmental Research – Norwegian Institute of Land Inventory – Norwegian Crop Research Institute – Norwegian Forest Research Institute)
- UMB also has particularly close collaboration with the Institute of Aquaculture Research and with co-operative farmers' organisations.
- UMB is a member of NOVA (the Nordic University of Veterinary and Agricultural Science). NOVA provides an important forum for contact, co-operation and scientific exchange among the Nordic countries in the area of veterinary science and agriculture. Development of new courses and programmes under the auspices of NOVA involves close co-operation with scientists from the other Nordic universities. This collaboration and joint teaching and research have a very positive and catalytic effect on the quality of the offerings. It also stimulates reciprocal quality control by the sister institutions.

The academic departments at UMB have their own forums for contact with branches and other users of their competence, research and graduates. Many academic departments hold workshops, roundtables or user conferences regularly to ensure close contact with users. UMB participates also in forums organised by users, for example, the agricultural co-operative organisation (Landbrukssamvirke). Finally, faculty members have extensive personal networks with the branches, as well as to other teaching and research institutions nationally and internationally. These networks provide, in numerous and varied ways, opportunities for quality improvement and quality assurance through external input and collaboration.

External stakeholders are represented by 4 of the 11 members of the University Board, but it is unusual to include external stakeholders in the departmental boards or committees. On the other hand, external actors are very

much present in many research projects and their steering committees. Students benefit from such co-operation through opportunities to participate in research projects or internships in the branch, as well as excursions and guest lectures. Case studies and problem solving taken directly from the sectors are also integrated in coursework.

3.3 The role of external stakeholders in UMB's quality system

The networks of co-operation described above provide a solid platform for involving external stakeholders in UMB's quality assurance system.

Programmes of study

External stakeholders are normally involved in the development of new study programmes and revision of existing programmes. External actors may provide initial ideas and suggestions as to potential new programmes, research projects or areas in which they expect to need increased competence in the future. They give feedback during programme development or programme revision through participation in hearings, reference groups etc. or on a more informal level. As part of UMB's quality assurance procedures for the approval of new programmes and programme revision, institutes must report on the involvement of stakeholders.

External examiners

Following up the provisions concerning external examiners in the new University and College Act, some Norwegian higher education institutions have restricted the use of external examiners primarily to assessment of assessment procedures. UMB has chosen rather to continue using external examiners extensively, to ensure strict quality control of examination results. UMB's use of external examiners is much more extensive than that required by national law. The University's Education Committee gives this a high priority, despite the considerable expense of using external examiners to assess students' work directly.

The examination regulations state: "External assessment can include one or a combination of several of the following arrangements:

- External examiner participates in the assessment of all exam papers
- External examiner checks and approves the exam questions and the Examiner's Guidelines
- External examiner participates in the assessment of a random selection of exam papers."

Supplementary Provisions for the same chapter define when the various arrangements can be used. For final examinations, external examiners are al-

ways required to assess the students' work, as well as assessment procedures, unless the examination is a multiple-choice test or more than 50 students take the examination. In the latter case, it is enough for the external examiner to assess 50 final exams. For continuous assessment (during the semester), the external examiner must, as a minimum requirement, approve the assessment procedures for the course.

External programme evaluations

The Board of UMB has approved a schedule of external evaluations of all programmes of study at six-year intervals. The evaluation committee normally includes a representative of external stakeholders and of highly regarded scientists in the field being evaluated.

Feedback from alumni and employers

The quality system includes periodic systematic feedback from alumni and from employers of graduates. For example, an alumni survey recently completed (with a response rate of over 70%!) gave much useful information about the employment history of the graduates and about strengths and weaknesses in the programme offerings *vis-à-vis* what they needed in their jobs. In particular, feedback from both graduates and stakeholders in the agricultural sector underline the importance of developing Bachelor and Master students' general analytical skills, communication skills and a broad social and ethical understanding of their field, as well as technical depth within the area of specialisation.

4 Documentation and reporting

4.1 The national framework

NOKUT's criteria for approval of quality assurance systems in Norwegian higher education include requirements for documentation and reporting:

- the system must include specifications of quality assurance routines
- the system must include collection and handling of data and information from evaluations which are necessary to assess the quality in all study programmes, as well as enabling a general assessment at the institutional level
- the system must contain an assessment of information and the degree to which quality objectives have been achieved
- the system must include an annual report on quality assurance for the University Board, presenting a general assessment of the quality in education and an overview over the design and measures implemented as part of the quality assurance work.

As for the other requirements set by NOKUT, institutions have autonomy in how they structure their data collection, analysis and reporting, with the exception of the annual quality report which is required of all institutions.

4.2 Data sources and methods of data collection

Many kinds of management data are continually generated and collected at all management levels of UMB's organisation. In order to systematise the various kinds of information and how they are used in quality assurance work, we have defined three main types of information collection (A–C). For each of the approximately 200 quality assurance activities in the system, the method and frequency of data collection is specified in the description of the activity.

A. Dialogue-based data collection

Students and teaching staff interact in numerous arenas where important information for quality assurance in education is presented. Such arenas include the weekly meetings between the Director of Academic Affairs and the student President, the monthly summit meeting, and various University bodies and user-groups.

Positive and negative feedback is recorded in the minutes or memos of these meetings. Responsibility for following up various measures is assigned, and their implementation is checked at later meetings.

B. Systematic data collection

Evaluations of various kinds are organised specifically for quality assurance purposes. We call this systematic quality information, and it can be collected either continuously or periodically. UMB has in recent years conducted many such evaluations, for example:

- "Student survey 2003; UMB-students' satisfaction with SiÅs" (tns/Gallup)
- Application for accreditation of the Agricultural University of Norway as a university (revised application and two appended documents)
- "Student survey," a marketing survey conducted by a student, Siri Lyseng, as part of a Master's thesis
- Student evaluation of guidance services, 2002
- Student evaluation of marketing materials and information prior to enrolment, 2002
- Qualitative profile survey of new students, 2002
- Student evaluation of the introductory week, 2004
- Student evaluation of block teaching, 2004

- Student course evaluations, conducted in all courses each semester since autumn 2002
- Student input to programme evaluations, since spring 2003
- ”Reputation survey” by Statskonsult and Gallup in connection with student recruitment and the application for university status, 2004
- Internal teacher survey of teaching practice and work situation before and after the quality reform, summer 2004
- Evaluation of a pedagogical trial in Examen philosophicum, 2004
- Participation in survey of ICT-supported teaching by Norgesuniversitetet 2004
- Evaluation of student welfare 2004.

Periodic, systematic data collection includes regular surveys among students and staff (user surveys), analysis of internal and external databases and specific evaluations commissioned by the Education Committee, the University Board or other bodies.

Continuous, systematic data collection implies frequent, targeted and systematic collection of data on goal achievements, for example,, via logbooks, checklists or other forms, frequent user feedback etc. The achievement of various success criteria and the implementation of improvement measures are regularly assessed. Such systematic control is used for physical parameters that can be measured, or in areas covered by rules and regulations (e.g., fire safety regulations, specifications for student workplaces, safety training), where defects can have significant consequences for students or the University, or even present a threat to human health and life.

C. Data collection via non-UMB institutions

Other organisations having partial responsibility for the learning environment of UMB students include the University Foundation for Student Life and the municipality of Ås. These contribute vital services, which form an integrated part of the students' total learning situation. Such services typically include student housing, bookstore, sports activities and health services. The evaluation of these services is an important aspect of assuring the quality of student welfare services.

Data from other sources are also used in quality assurance, especially the national student administration system FS, and other national databases (e.g., the database for higher education DBH and the research database ForskDok). FS generates reports on the number of students, exams, student progression etc. for each study programme.

4.3 Documentation and reporting

The quality assurance system is based on cycles of data collection, evaluation, deviation analysis, local and central handling and follow-up of generated information. The management loop is actively used in this process. The quality assurance activities themselves generate information that enables the production of reports and statistics, for use by the University management, staff and students.

Annual report on educational quality

The annual report on educational quality is an example of such compiled data. Appendix 1 gives an overview of the indicators included in the annual quality report for the academic year 2003–04. This was the second annual quality report produced by UMB and the methodology for reporting is still under development. The entire annual quality report for 2003–04 can be accessed in Norwegian at www.UMB.no/adm/kvalitetssystem/arsrapport_03_04.doc (high-speed connection recommended).

The annual quality assurance report at UMB is prepared by the Department of Academic Affairs based on information and reports from the departments, the Education Committee, the Committee for the Learning Environment, other administrative sections, the student government and SiÅs. The information in the report is generated both by the quality assurance activities (evaluations, monitoring etc.) and national and institutional databases. Those responsible for the various quality areas in the quality assurance system submit reports about their implementation of the quality system, the degree to which quality goals have been attained, quality improvement actions taken during the year, as well as overall strengths and weaknesses.

The report is discussed by the University Board in the autumn as part of the preparation of the next year's annual plan and budget (see Figure showing the annual cycle in Section 1). The report describes quality assurance activities at UMB and gives a general description of the status of the quality in its education. It also points to areas in need of improvements. The quality report is followed up at all levels. Areas in which poor quality has been exposed may be considered for special action in connection with the preparation of the budget for the coming year. The broad overview and synthesis the report provides is particularly useful in the formulation of priorities and actions in UMBs total education strategy and other strategies at both the institutional and departmental level.

Management loop

As discussed in Section 1, the UMB management loop is also used continually as the main channel for reporting and follow-up of quality information. UMB's annual plan, budget and annual report include chapters on educational quality, as do the academic departments' annual plans and reports. Quality strengths and weaknesses noted in the reports will be followed up by remedial actions in the coming plans. The implementation of planned quality improvement actions is then reported on in the next report cycle. There is thus continuity between reporting and follow-up in the management loop.

Minutes of meetings and decisions

Handling of quality data and follow-up activities are also documented through minutes of meetings and decisions made at the meetings. For example, course evaluations are formally handled by the education committee in each academic department and decisions about follow-up activities are documented in the minutes. Some of the less formal bodies such as the summit also use minutes to document both the comments and how they have been followed up.

Special forms for documentation

A number of quality assurance activities include special forms for documenting the information and how it is followed up. The student information centre, for example, has specific procedures for following up questions and complaints so that the handling of the comment or complaint is documented. A form is also used to document teachers' comments and follow-up actions to course evaluations.

Transparency

Accessibility of reports and status information to a wide range of stakeholders is vital for the support and commitment of students, teachers and administrators to the quality assurance system. The UMB quality assurance system makes extensive use of open web-based applications, easily accessible to all through our home page at www.umb.no. The system is searchable and provides full access to descriptions of activities, routines, standards, background documents (strategic plans, reports etc.). As the system develops, we expect to add increasing functionality by developing interactive databases for some quality parameters.

UMB strives to develop indicators and measures of quality, which can be readily aggregated and compared internally at UMB and analysed over time. Benchmarking with comparable institutions elsewhere is also a goal that requires careful analysis of indicators to give measures that are comparable.

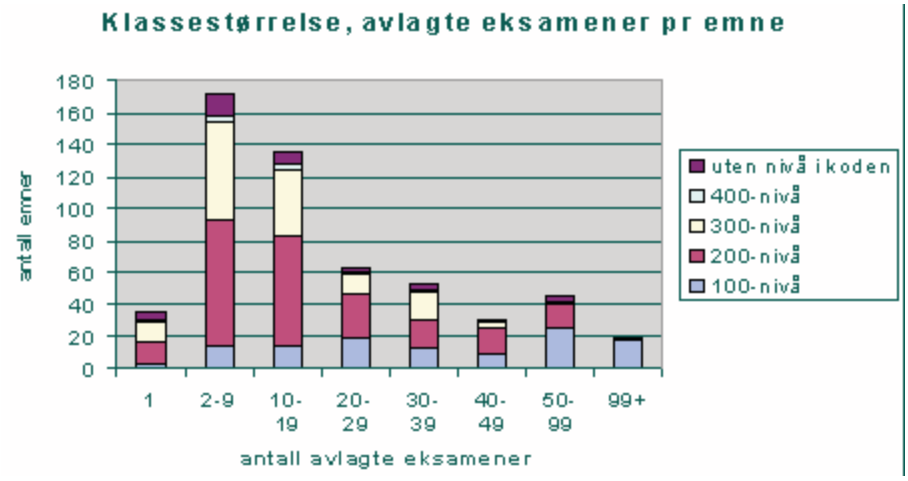
To the greatest extent possible without violating laws protecting personal information, the results of evaluations are published on the web or are otherwise available. This ensures transparency regarding evaluation data and conclusions regarding quality. UMB publishes course evaluation data, but withholds written comments and does not publish the results in "ranked" formats.

The minutes of decision-making bodies are available before and after meetings to students and other members of the UMB community.

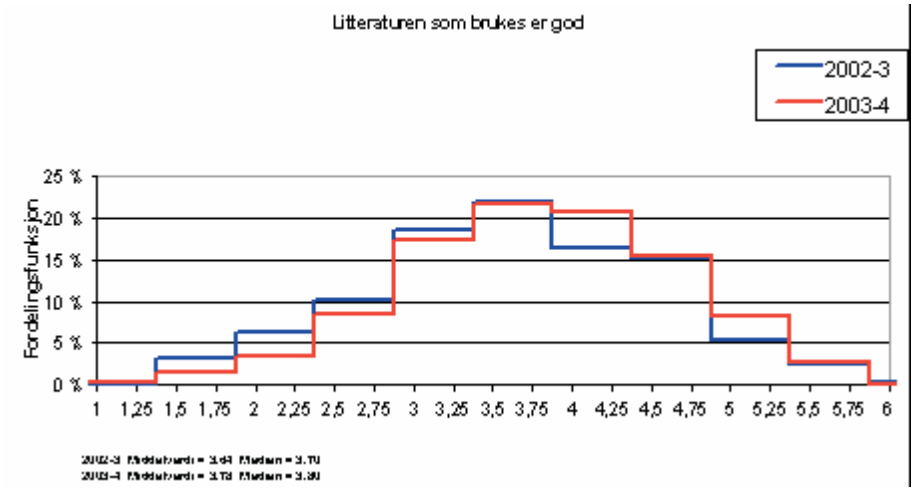
Examples of documented educational quality parameters

The following graphs show examples of indicators and data presented in Annual Report on Educational Quality 2003–04. Such documented information about the positive qualities and strengths of the offerings at UMB helps build identity, provide a platform for developing other offerings building on these strengths, and is useful when marketing programmes. The quality system and student evaluations now give us the opportunity to "take the pulse" of the learning situation and to use this information to further develop high educational quality.

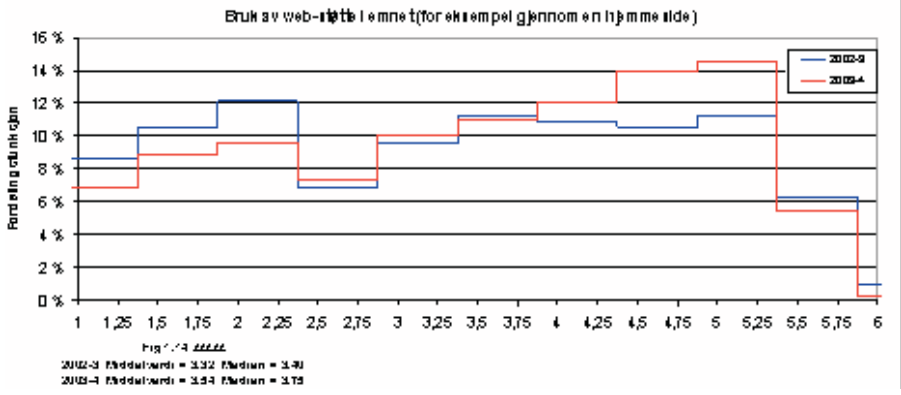
1. Class size. The graph shows the frequency distribution in the autumn semester 2003 with respect to the number of students who took the exam. Education at UMB is characterised by small class sizes – perhaps too small for efficient use of our resources.



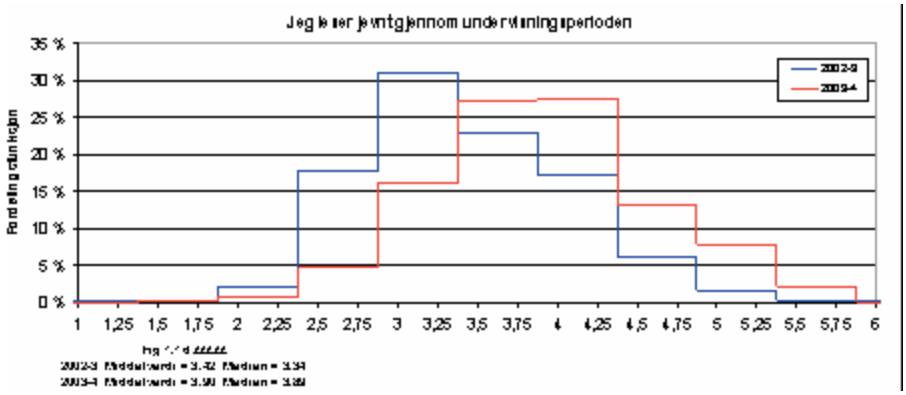
2. Student evaluation of literature. The graph shows the frequency distribution of the average scores for each of approximately 400 courses in 2003–04. The graph shows that student satisfaction with course literature is too low, but improved somewhat after the quality reform. On the scale of satisfaction from 1 (lowest) to 6 (highest), the mid-point is 3.5.



3. Web-supported teaching. The graph is in the same format as the last graph, showing the frequency distribution of average satisfaction in about 400 courses. The graph is bipolar, reflecting that some courses use web support and some do not. A clear improvement can be seen in 2003–04. This is most likely due to focused efforts in 2002 and 2003 to build competence and provide support for teachers to develop web pages.



4. Student activity. In this question, students are asked to evaluate how evenly they study throughout the semester. Before the quality reform the students reported studying very unevenly, with intensive effort before exams. After the quality reform a clear shift toward more continual studying can be seen. This is most likely due to pedagogical revision of all courses in the quality reform, emphasising student activity and teacher feedback throughout the semester. Such changes are very significant for the students' learning.



5. Academic content. The curve below reflects a very high level of student satisfaction with the selection of topics covered in the courses. Students were also very satisfied with the dialogue between teachers and students, academic guidance given in the course, the way the material was illustrated with concrete examples and a number of other parameters.

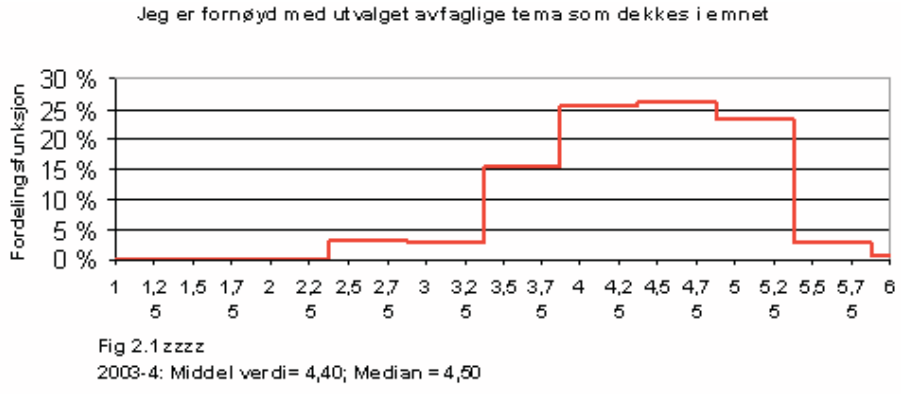
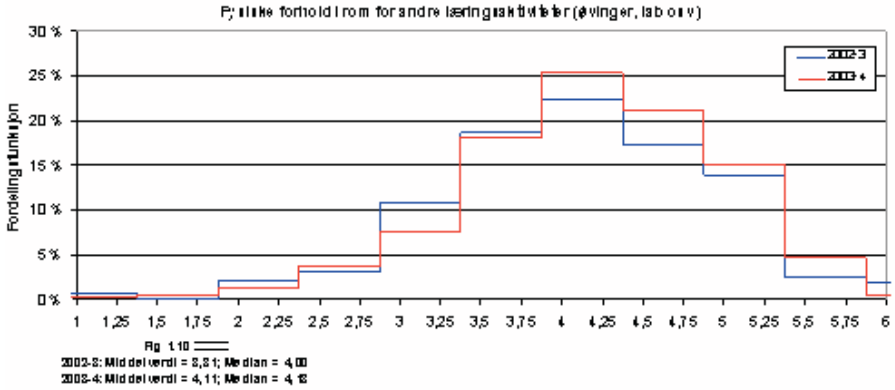


Fig 2.1 zzzz
2003-4: Middel verdi= 4,40; Median = 4,50

6. Satisfaction with teaching rooms. The graph shows that students are reasonably, but not entirely satisfied by the physical conditions in non-lecture teaching rooms. It is interesting to see that the scores have improved slightly in 2003–04, probably due to focused efforts to increase the number of rooms for group work.



5 Follow-up mechanisms of quality assurance

5.1 The national framework

NOKUT's requirements for quality assurance systems contain two points that address the issue of how quality information is followed up by quality improvement work:

- The system must contain the use of quality assurance results as a basis for decision-making and implementing measures, with the aim of securing and further improving quality in education.
- The system must include a specification of how quality assurance work contributes to the institution's resource management and priorities (human resources, infrastructure, service).

5.2 Specification of follow-up procedures in UMB's QA system

Follow-up of quality information with improvement actions is perhaps the most critical part of a quality system. In order to justify the considerable resources invested in a quality system, the system MUST lead to focused application of resources to bring about improvement. This is the true "test by fire" of whether one has a functioning quality assurance system.

Specification of follow-up routines

For each of the approximately 200 quality assurance activities in the system, routines for following up quality deviations are specified. The activity descriptions specify how the quality information is to be checked and how deviations are handled and by which decision-making bodies. An example for an important follow-up activity is given in Appendix 2 of this report, follow-up of course evaluations.

When information indicating a quality failure becomes available, many responses are possible. For serious and repeated deviations, the issue should be addressed in annual reports and plans at the institutional and departmental level (in the management loop). Deviations that continue for more than one year may be taken up in steering dialogues and in employee dialogues. Areas needing improvement will also be addressed in strategic plans and budget allocations.

There are also many more immediate responses. For example, teachers can adjust their teaching according to mid-semester and final evaluations more or less immediately if the problem can be easily solved. Problems with information or guidance services can be addressed in the medium term. Problems of a more systemic nature, such as excessively long completion times for doctoral students, require a deeper analysis and long-term effort and actions to bring about improvement.

At UMB the capacity for response in the area of the total learning environment was greatly improved with the establishment of a Committee for the Learning Environment in 2003 in accordance with the new University and College Act. The committee's mandate is to participate in the design of measures that affect the students' learning environment. At UMB this committee has already after just one year made a significant impact on the learning environment by prioritising measures to improve the total learning environment totalling 3 million Norwegian crowns in 2004, including computer rooms, lecture halls etc. This committee also plays an active role in the planning of physical rehabilitation of buildings and is able to spotlight issues such as universal access for the handicapped and improvement of the psychosocial environment.

Responsibility for follow-up of quality information follows the same lines of responsibility as UMB's organisation, specifically:

- The University Board has overall responsibility for the quality system and the quality of education. The Board discusses and ensures adequate follow-up of the annual report on educational quality through annual plans, special allocations and institutional strategic plans. Academic, financial and administrative resources for quality assurance are allocated in UMB's annual plan.

- The Rector and the operative group led by the Rector has overall responsibility for making sure that the quality system functions as intended and is developed according to the guidelines annually established by the University Board. The Rector is responsible for coordination of the quality assurance system.
- The Education Committee receives and comments on the annual report on UMB's educational activities. The Education Committee is responsible for large portions of the quality assurance system and it follows up quality information through approval of quality assurance activities, coordination of educational strategies, initiation of evaluations, formulation of regulations and special allocations.
- The Committee for the Learning Environment also proposes and ranks measures within its mandate, and submits these to the University Board in connection with the discussion of UMB's annual plan and budget. These proposals are also reviewed by the Education Committee. The Committee for the Learning Environment also approves quality assurance activities within its mandate.
- The department heads are responsible for the operation of the quality assurance system at the department level, in accordance with the system's division of responsibilities. The departments are involved in at least 60 of the approximately 200 quality assurance activities: quality of programmes and courses, some aspects of admissions, student guidance, student assessment (examinations), student progression and other functions. The department heads are part of the rector's management team and they inform the rector regarding quality and development work. Systematic follow-up of the departments' quality assurance work is secured via the instruments of the management loop: annual plan, management dialogues and annual report.
- Teachers are responsible for the quality of their courses.
- The University administration facilitates the implementation of the system, organises data collection and coordinates the departments' planning and reporting work. Provision of student administrative services, including information and guidance of new and already enrolled students, is an important quality area that is the responsibility of the academic administration. Other administrative units (e.g., personnel, service and maintenance) also have specified roles and responsibilities in the system. For example, the personnel department is responsible for providing support to teachers including programmes for coaching, competence-building and career guidance. The managing director is responsible for the operation and maintenance of large parts of the quality assurance system.

- The University administration receives an annual report from SiÅs regarding student welfare services, which is followed up through participation in the SiÅs board.

Steering instruments for quality

As part of the quality area "Management quality," UMB is presently working to revise the internal budget allocation system so that it will more clearly reward high educational quality. The issue is complex and difficult because it involves developing quantitative and qualitative judgments or "formulas" for assessing the quality of educational offerings that can result in higher or lower budget allocations to the academic departments concerned. The present "results-based" budget allocation system is generally felt to stimulate quantity of credit production at the expense of adequate reward for educational quality.

Similarly, teaching portfolios, pedagogical competence and results of student course evaluations are expected to play a more prominent role in hiring and promotion policies in the future.

Financial and other steering instruments are powerful agents for quality improvement and it is of critical importance that the signals given through the budget allocation system correctly reflect the goals and strategic priorities of the University.

Selected examples of follow-up of quality information at UMB, 2002–2004

We have clear indications that quality work can give positive results and improvement of educational quality, even over a period of just a few years as in the case of UMB. The data from student course evaluations presented in the previous section show that quality parameters can quickly improve when resources are used for competence-building, investment and revision of course and programme offerings.

On a more macro level, we have several other examples of quality improvement following an evaluation and focused quality improvement work:

- The University Board allocated 3 million Norwegian crowns for improvement of the learning environment in 2004 (follow-up of student evaluations of computer rooms, lecture halls, etc.)
- A Student Information Centre was established in 2003 (follow-up of student evaluation of information and guidance services)
- Graphics and contents of the University's web pages were revised and improved in 2003–04 (follow-up of student evaluations)
- A programme of competence-building in pedagogical use of ICT was established in 2003–04 (response to student dissatisfaction with use of ICT in teaching)

- Several departments organised pedagogical development projects to improve teaching materials, use of ICT etc. (response to student evaluations)
- Student advisors in the academic departments participated in courses on counselling methodology and resources for academic advising were increased (response to student evaluations).

Seeing such concrete examples of how improvements can be made and student satisfaction improved over a relatively short term, strengthens UMB's commitment to quality assurance work as a method for achieving the goal of high quality academic offerings and a high quality learning environment.

6 International dimension

6.1 The national framework

The requirements set by Norwegian law and NOKUT for quality assurance systems is in itself an internationalisation project and part of the Bologna process. In an international marketplace for higher education, transparency and accountability in each institution's quality assurance work is an absolute requirement. It opens the door for credit transfer and provides international credibility for students considering studying at the institution. Norwegian students considering taking a higher degree or working outside Norway will also be dependent on the institution's accreditation and reputation for high quality programmes.

6.2 UMB's internationalisation goals

UMB's goals for internationalisation are set in UMB's internationalisation strategy (currently being developed) and UMB's strategic plan. More specific goals are being formulated as part of the strategic plan for education. These will specify targets for numbers and types of exchange agreements, numbers of students in and out, information in English, course offerings in English etc. Internationalisation is thus highly prioritised in the University's goals and strategies. Internationalisation is also designated as a separate chapter in reports and planning documents in the management loop, and is a subject for discussion in steering dialogues. Work to revise the budget allocation system to reflect quality will also consider mechanisms to reward internationalisation.

6.3 International programmes and student exchange

UMB currently has 8 international Master's programmes offered in English:

- Management of Natural Resources and Sustainable Agriculture
- Tropical Ecology and Management of Natural Resources

- Development and Resource Economics
- Development Studies
- Agroecology
- Biosystem Engineering
- Intensive Fish Farming
- Feed Manufacturing Technology.

A new bachelor programme in Development Studies is scheduled to start up in 2005. UMB has developed a diploma supplement, translated all course-work, required general information and regulations into English and applied for the ECTS label in November 2004.

The student body at the University has an international character, and the University, as well as student clubs and organisations, works actively to integrate international students in the campus culture. The propensity of UMB students to travel widely, both during their studies and on vacation, adds to the international flavour of the University.

- 10% of the students are non-Norwegian, including 50 PhD students
- 30% of the students study abroad
- 30% of the courses are offered in English
- UMB collaborates with approximately 80 universities abroad.

As part of the programme evaluations, UMB will evaluate the international content of study programmes and strive to make the content relevant both for Norwegians who will be working in an increasingly international environment, and for international students. During programme approval, the departments are required to describe the international content of programmes, although it is not a criterion for approval that the contents be international. Many courses use international textbooks and teachers normally also bring international research experience to the classroom.

6.4 Quality assurance of internationalisation efforts

The quality assurance system includes many points pertaining to internationalisation. The following are topics for which UMB has standards and procedures for quality assurance:

- information in English
- guidance of international students
- services for our students who study abroad
- approval of credits earned at other institutions.

Presentation of an example study plan showing how students may have an opportunity to study abroad, is a criterion for programme approval.

Appendix 1. Indicators used in the annual report on educational quality 2003–04

Management for educational quality

- Approval status of the quality assurance system
- Number/percent of quality assurance activities described/approved
- Inclusion of educational quality in various phases of the managerial cycle and strategic plans (UBM's annual plan, budget, report; strategic plans and sub-plans; department and division annual plans and reports, steering dialogues, reporting on the use of quality reform funds)

Course and programme offerings

Organisation of offerings

- Programmes offered
- Number of courses offered
- Number of study points offered
- Distribution of courses by size in study points
- Distribution of courses by size in number of exams written (class size).

Course contents

- Student evaluation of the amount of work in each course compared to the norm of 30 hours per ECTS credit.
- Student number of work hours per week in the block teaching periods
- Student evaluation of the difficulty of each course compared to the student's background knowledge
- Student evaluation of the amount of overlapping with courses taken previously
- Student satisfaction with academic course contents (selection of topics covered in the course)
- Student satisfactions with the organisation and progression in the course
- Student satisfaction with the way course content is illustrated with practical or applied examples
- Student evaluation of the suitability of the course for being taught intensively in a block period.

Teaching/learning methods

- Degree of change in learning methods after the quality reform (survey of teachers in 4 departments)
- Type of change in learning methods after the quality reform (survey of teachers in 4 departments)
- Student satisfaction with the combination of learning methods used
- Student evaluation of how much they learned from the lectures

- Student evaluation of how much they learned from other learning methods
- Student evaluation of their own preparation for classes
- Student evaluation of how evenly they study throughout the teaching period
- Student total evaluation of each course
- Student total evaluation of instruction given by the main teacher.

Admissions

- Number of students admitted and percent of women in various admissions categories
- Number of programmes in which admission was selective (not all qualified applicants were accepted)
- Lowest point sum for admission (''competition points'') to each study programme
- Average point sum for admission (''competition points'') to each study programme.

Evaluation of student learning

- Degree of change in the evaluation methods after the quality reform (survey of teachers in 4 institutes)
- Type of change in the evaluation methods after the quality reform (survey of teachers in 4 institutes)
- Student satisfaction with the way their learning is evaluated.

Progression

- ECTS credit production per student per semester.

Quality of graduates

- Frequency distribution of grades for courses at various levels (autumn semester 2003)
- Average grade for ''hovedfag-'' and Master's theses by department
- Percent pass, fail and no-show among students registered to take exams
- Failed exams as a percent of exams taken, for courses at various levels.

Course literature

- Student evaluation of the quality of course literature.

ICT-supported learning

- Student satisfaction with ICT support in each course
- Results of programme evaluations.

Further education

- Number of credits of coursework offered
- Production of credits
- Number of participants in courses that give formal competence
- Number of participants in short courses.

Academic guidance

- Student satisfaction with academic guidance in connection with each course
- Student satisfaction with academic guidance about UMB total course offerings (report from the Student Parliament)
- Student evaluation of the dialogue between students and the teacher in each course.

Work with the Master's degree thesis

- No indicators this year.

Work with the Doctoral dissertation

- Percent of students who complete within the normal period (for all of Norway).

Academic resources

- Number of full-time equivalent positions in various kinds of teaching positions
- Percent of women in various kinds of teaching positions
- Teachers' research activity (reference to the UMB annual report 2003).
- Percent of those holding teaching positions with Doctoral/PhD competence
- Number of employees who do not meet formal pedagogical competence
- Funds for teaching-related competence-building allocated to the academic departments
- Number of UMB employees (in teaching positions or technicians) who passed the course in university pedagogics
- Number of UMB employees who completed further education in ICT-supported education
- Cost per student (based on Chapter 1 of the main account).
- Number of registered students per employee, calculated using 3 different methods
- Amount of teaching per academic staff member (number of courses, number of ECTS credits)
- Teacher evaluation in changes in the use of work time for teaching-related activities after the quality reform (teachers in 4 departments)
- Library holdings, by category
- Library purchasing budget, by category.

Credit transfer

- No indicators this year.

Internationalisation

- Number of new exchange agreements
- Existing exchange agreements
- Teacher exchange through ERASMUS
- Number of students travelling in and out under various kinds of exchange arrangements
- Proportion of women among students travelling in and out under various kinds of exchange arrangements
- Proportion of students travelling out who use exchange agreements
- Proportion of Bachelor- and Master students who travel in and out
- Distribution of students travelling in and out by academic department
- Ministry of Research and Education subsidy for students travelling out using an exchange agreement
- Ministry of Research and Education subsidy for students travelling in using an exchange agreement
- Number of full time equivalent students travelling out
- Number of full time equivalent students travelling in
- Percent of students offered an international study period as part of their study programme (an example of a study plan showing this possibility has been made)
- Number and percent of courses offered in English (always or "on demand")
- Distribution of courses offered in English by course level
- Student evaluation of study period abroad and student services for students travelling out (data available but not analysed)
- International students' satisfaction with the way they are received at UMB.

Academic administrative services

- No indicators this year.

Physical learning environment

- Allocations to improvement of the physical learning environment
- Student satisfaction with physical conditions in classrooms
- Student satisfaction with physical conditions in rooms for other kinds of learning activities
- Number of student workplaces, by type of room

- Establishment of new rooms for student use
- Floor area per registered student
- Student satisfaction with access to equipment and computers
- Percent of area in teaching buildings with wireless coverage
- Establishment of new computer work stations.

Information, library and ICT

- Number of positions in student computer services
- Number of inquiries/comments to the Student Information Centre
- Availability of information in English (UMB's study regulations, course descriptions, programme descriptions, general information, news etc.).

Universal availability

- Allocations to actions to improve universal access to education at UMB.

Psychosocial learning environment

- Student evaluation of their own degree of co-operation with other students in each course
- Student evaluation of communication and dialogue between students and the teacher in each course
- Indicator data on how well students thrive at UMB as a place of study ("Student survey 2003," a Gallup survey of several Norwegian higher education institutions).

Student welfare

- Number of students who participate in short courses offered by the psychologist
- Number of students who consult the psychologist
- Indicator data on student satisfaction with the welfare arrangements at UMB ("Student survey 2003," a Gallup survey of several Norwegian higher education institutions).

Appendix 2. Architecture of UMB's quality assurance system. Examples of key elements and quality assurance activities.

EXAMPLE 1. Key elements for quality area "Educational programmes offered"

1. Regulations
2. Programmes of study offered
3. Courses offered
4. Quality of matriculating students

5. Evaluation of student learning
6. Academic quality of graduates
7. New student initiation period (academic part)
8. Instructional materials and textbooks
9. ICT-supported learning.

EXAMPLE 2. Five quality assurance activities for "Courses offered", a key element under quality area "Educational programmes offered"

1 Approval of courses to be offered
Operative responsibility: Academic departments
Status: Active, approved by the Education Committee 10 March 2004

2 Student evaluations of course offerings
Operative responsibility: Director of Academic Affairs
Status: Active, approved by the Education Committee 10 March 2004

3 External evaluation of courses
Operative responsibility: Education Committee
Status: under development

4 Follow-up of course evaluations
Operative responsibility: Academic departments
Status: Active, approved by the Education Committee 10 March 2004

5 Annual revision of portfolio of courses offered
Operative responsibility: Academic departments
Status: Active

EXAMPLE 3. Description of a quality assurance activity, "Follow-up of course evaluations." Note that all of the approximately 200 quality assurance activities in the system are described using the same template.
Quality area: Educational programmes offered
Key element: Courses offered
Overall responsibility: Education Committee

Activity 1.3.4 FOLLOW-UP OF COURSE EVALUATIONS
Links and documents: Form "Follow-up of course evaluation"
Limitations: Applies to all ordinary courses offered at UMB
Quality standard for courses: UMB shall provide socially and academically relevant courses of a high scholarly and pedagogical level.
Operative responsibility: Academic departments

Routines:

1. Course evaluations are handled by the teacher and departmental education committee according to the form "Follow-up of course evaluations." The form is used to document the teacher's comments and suggestions for improvement, how the evaluation has been handled in the education committee, decisions about improvements and implementation of improvements. The departments archive the forms.

2. The responsible teacher in the course reviews the student evaluations and other available quality information, makes comments and proposes changes to be made before the course is offered again.

3. The departmental education committee reviews the student evaluations and other quality information and the teacher's response. The education committee recommends to the department board a plan of action for courses offered by the department and for co-ordinated actions for the department as a whole.

4. Implementation of the actions is reported and handled at least once a year by the departmental education committee.

5. Each department is to have its own routines for informing students about how their course evaluations are followed up and what actions have been taken. Each institute's routines for informing students are to be described, approved by the departmental education committee and communicated to the students.

Control: The head of the department has operative responsibility for implementation of the routine. The institute's annual report includes an overview of follow-up work. This functions as a check on the implementation of the routine, formulation of action plans and implementation of actions.

Handling of deviations: Repeated poor evaluations from students, inadequate implementation of the routines or inadequate follow-up of activities are to be discussed in steering dialogues. Random cases may be inspected in connection with the steering dialogue.

Activity developed by: Reference group for quality assurance
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2.4 Systematic quality assurance at Uppsala University

Preface

The quality assurance procedures at Uppsala University were audited by the National Agency for Higher Education in 1996 and 2000. The findings of the most recent audit are presented in the National Agency's report *"Förnyad granskning och bedömning av kvalitetsarbetet vid Uppsala universitet"* (Renewed audit and appraisal of quality assurance procedures at Uppsala University), National Agency 2001:R.

The appraisal is on the whole positive. In their conclusions the auditors state that they are impressed by the vigour and the desire to make changes that characterised the development process and the many fundamental strategic measures adopted. The 2000 audit concluded with a few recommendations for the continued process of development and quality assurance, which mentioned, for instance, a clearer policy for co-operation with the surrounding community, measures to enhance student influence, initiatives to increase social and ethnic diversity and also procedures that would allow greater weight to be ascribed to teaching skills when making appointments.

We hope that this report will provide evidence that improvements have been made and make it clear we have continued to adopt a systematic process for assuring quality, which has been and still is applied with increased intensity.

It is in this context that Uppsala University submits its contribution to the *"The Best Quality Assurance Procedures at Higher Education Institutions in the Nordic Countries"* project. We look forward with interest to the comparative analyses that it will be possible to make between higher education institutions from a Nordic perspective.

Bo Sundquist
Vice-Chancellor

1 Introduction

The background to the description that follows of the quality assurance procedures at Uppsala University is the invitation from the National Agency for Higher Education to participate in "*The Best Quality Assurance Procedures at Higher Education Institutions in the Nordic Countries"* project. The invitation made it clear that the National Agency wanted a description of "systematic quality assurance procedures and their outcomes". The aim is to "evince the

arguments in each country for 'good quality' in the sector, in which comparisons may be made of both similarities and differences". The aim is also to contribute to the development of a joint Nordic approach to quality assurance procedures at higher education institutions.

From the point of view of Uppsala University an approach, which enables a comparison between higher education institutions in the Nordic countries is interesting in the light of the differences that exist between systems of higher education and the national systems for quality evaluation. Universities are constantly undergoing renewal of both teaching and research, instigated by teachers and other staff members. By the very nature of things, universities are subject to renewal of their activities through the constant influx of new students to their programmes. Graduate students help to renew research and newly graduated doctors revitalise the teaching faculty.

A university that finds itself in the front line in terms of teaching and the formation of knowledge operates, however, in an international market where there is keen competition with other universities that are all undergoing this process of continual renewal. It is therefore important for the organisation and content of what it offers to be challenged and compared with other universities and that these appraisals supplement the evaluations to which it is always exposed through publications, funding applications, degree programmes and during the public presentation of Doctoral theses.

Quality assurance procedures at Uppsala University were officially adopted in 1993, when the University appointed a management group for quality issues. This group dealt, for instance, with issues concerning the formulation of principles and methods for quality assurance and quality development. Its work generated a great deal of new knowledge and insights that have been thoroughly documented in a series of reports. Where the University's overall quality assurance procedures were concerned, the group maintained, for instance, that one important feature for a university is to stimulate processes that result in the development of programmes and research in a positive direction.

The description below concentrates however, mainly on the current systematic quality assurance procedures in undergraduate and graduate programmes. It aims to offer an overall presentation of the goals of quality assurance procedures and the way in which these procedures form an integral element of the University's organisation and also to briefly describe their outcomes.

2 Some facts about Uppsala University

Uppsala University is a research university in which there is a great deal of diversity. Teaching and research takes place in nine faculties: theology, law, humanities, social sciences, languages, education, medicine, pharmacy, science and technology. 39,000 students are enrolled in its undergraduate programmes, which comprise 40 degree programmes and 1,400 single-subject courses. Student exchanges take place with 370 foreign universities in 40 countries. There are 2,400 graduate students, and more than 400 PhDs are awarded every year. About 5,000 scholarly works are published annually and the University participates in over 3,600 international research partnerships. It has a staff of 5,800, of whom 3,800 are teachers and researchers. Of its professors, 15% are women. Uppsala University has an expenditure of almost SEK 4 billion, 60% on research and graduate education.

3 Systematic quality assurance procedures at Uppsala University

Systematic quality assurance procedures at Uppsala University are intended to develop its performance within its three main tasks: teaching, research and co-operation with the surrounding community. The quality assurance procedures should help to ensure that Uppsala University attains the goals laid down for 2010, which entail strengthening the University's international standing in the global and national scientific and academic communities. Quality assurance procedures are a shared concern for the staff and students at the University. The University is to endeavour to ensure that students take an active part in the work of developing programmes. Equality between men and women and social and ethnic diversity is to be taken into account and understanding for other countries and international conditions is to be encouraged.

Systematic quality assurance at Uppsala University involves planned structures and processes for development, enhancement and renewal in the form of ongoing review and monitoring. Some of the processes described are periodic while others can be characterised as systematic strategic measures based on the long-term goals and strategies that exist for the University.

Systematic quality assurance in a large and complex university must take into account the need for both central and shared quality assurance and development systems and also particular needs at various levels in its heterogeneous organisation. What will be presented below should therefore be seen as a sample of activities intended to reflect the complex structure of the quality assurance procedures at Uppsala University.

Governance and quality assurance

The overall responsibility for quality assurance at Uppsala University lies with the University Board. The Board makes decisions about the University's long-term quality assurance programme. The current programme was adopted in 2002. It is supplemented each year by an annual action plan for quality development, which is adopted by the Vice-Chancellor.

At the overall University level, there is a quality committee chaired by the Vice-Chancellor, with representatives from the three disciplinary domains – humanities and social sciences, medicine and pharmacy, science and technology – together with undergraduate and graduate student representatives. One of the committee's tasks is to formulate proposals for the development and action plan referred to above. The work of this committee is supported by a unit for quality and evaluation in the University's administrative offices, led by the commissioner appointed by the Vice-Chancellor to take responsibility for quality. This unit coordinates central measures to promote quality development and provides support for the quality assurance procedures of the departments and faculty boards. One important point of departure for the central quality assurance procedures is the annual action plan for quality development which lays down the themes for the University-wide evaluations that are to take place. One of the aims of these university-wide evaluations is to provide a basis for decisions on relevant measures to be adopted by the departments and faculty boards in their quality assurance procedures.

The governance of Uppsala University was reorganised in 1999. Its management consists of the Vice-Chancellor, Pro-Vice-Chancellor and University Director together with three Deputy Vice-Chancellors and the Dean of the Faculty of Education. At the same time three disciplinary domains were established, each with its own board. The chairpersons of these boards are nominated by the domain and appointed by the Vice-Chancellor with the title of Deputy Vice-Chancellor. Evaluation of the governance organisation is planned to take place during spring 2005.

The Higher Education Act lays down that faculty boards are to be responsible for ensuring close links between research and teaching, that activities are adapted so that high standards are attained in both teaching and research and that effective use is made of the resources available in order to maintain high quality standards. The faculty boards are collegial bodies in which most members are teaching staff with academic qualifications. They also contain undergraduate and graduate student representatives. A central element in the quality assurance procedures of the faculty boards and the bodies that answer to them is the assessment of who is eligible and best qualified

for appointment to teaching posts and decisions on syllabuses and degree requirements.

In each of the disciplinary domains and the Faculty of Education, the Deputy Vice-Chancellor/Dean and the departmental chairs are responsible for the quality development of activities at various levels as laid down in the delegation instructions. Clarification of the powers delegated by the Vice-Chancellor to the Deputy Vice-Chancellors, deans and departmental chairs was issued in 2004 together with a description of the duties of a departmental chair. Quality assurance has been ensured through written transmission and acknowledgement of the delegation of these powers.

The system of the appointment of commissioners by the Vice-Chancellor was introduced in 1997. The Vice-Chancellor appoints these individuals to deal with overall governance issues that affect all faculties. Commissioners have been appointed in this way for undergraduate teaching, graduate programmes, quality assurance, gender equality, IT issues, culture and traditions and also co-operation with the surrounding community.

Much of the work of the University's administrators involves providing various forms of support for quality assurance procedures in undergraduate and graduate programmes, for instance, through the operations of the offices for each of the disciplinary domains. In addition, there are three specific sections of the University administration that deal with quality development, the development of educational methodology and leadership development in co-operation with representatives of the departments, faculties and undergraduate and graduate students.

The University's activities are also governed by a number of programmes that contain regulations and guidelines reviewed by the Board. Not only do these regulations lay down operational requirements, but the process itself also helps to ensure that these programmes can serve to illustrate various aspects of good quality. The most important guidelines in terms of quality assurance procedures are the Mål och strategier for Uppsala universitet (Goals and strategies for Uppsala University) and the Kvalitetsutvecklingsprogram (Quality development programme).

The University Board receives notification every year of the effects of quality assurance procedures and performance in undergraduate and graduate programmes and in research. This takes the form of the annual report, which has to be adopted by the Board and also specific studies of the attainment of goals in the three main tasks, for example, in undergraduate and graduate teaching. In addition, the current findings of the university-wide evaluations are also presented and any appraisals made by the National Agency for Higher Education of the way in which Uppsala University operates.

4 University-wide evaluations

A description is given below of five university-wide evaluations initiated by Uppsala University with the intention of providing a systematic basis for the promoting quality development in the University.

The SAUNA project

On the recommendation of the Vice-Chancellor, the Board decided in spring 2000 to implement a programme of renewal for the University – Strategic Austerity at Uppsala for New Advances known as the SAUNA project. The aim was to offer an analysis of the University's different activities with the assistance of colleagues from some internationally outstanding universities. To provide incentives for renewal it was proposed that cuts should be made in some specific funding so that the resources saved could then be allocated to the most promising innovation proposals. This method had previously been tested in the Faculty of Science and Technology. The different disciplinary domains were asked to produce two reports, the first covering academic production and the results achieved in undergraduate programmes during the last five years. The second report was to present how the domain would implement savings of 5% of the funding for research and graduate programmes and 2% of the funding for undergraduate teaching, together with an account of how this funding could then be used for renewal if reallocated to the domain. The University administration and the University library were also assigned corresponding tasks. A group of students nominated by the student union was asked to submit comments on the reports.

The material was collected and sent to three advisory panels abroad at the University of California, the University of Edinburgh and the University of Helsinki. The final reports from these appraisals were submitted to the Vice-Chancellor in October 2001. The savings and the renewal projects were implemented between 2002 and 2004.

In January 2003 an internal review of these decisions took place. This revealed that implementation was being carried out as planned. Measures had been taken in all of the disciplinary domains to organise undergraduate programmes so that new students encountered professors more frequently in their courses and in the introductory courses in particular. There had been an improvement in the scope allowed for those promoted to senior lectureships to conduct their own research. The teacher recruitment process had been reviewed and appointment procedures supplemented with guidelines for the process. Coordination of the resources for chemistry in the various faculties had been initiated. An appraisal of a new organisational system for the disciplinary domain of the humanities and social sciences had been complet-

ed and research in the Faculty of Education had been enhanced. A new administrative unit had been created to coordinate and develop the use of ICT to renew teaching methods (see below under the heading Educational Development).

In addition, many renewal projects were launched in the different disciplinary domains and faculties, including the development of new programmes, the creation of new posts and the use of ICT in teaching. One example of the latter is a project in the disciplinary domain of medicine and pharmacy called MedFarmDoIT. The aim of this project was to encourage the use of IT in teaching in order to make learning more flexible. During autumn 2004 the unit for quality and evaluation carried out an evaluation of MedFarmDoIT. Several renewal projects in the University library and the University's administration were also the outcome of the SAUNA project.

Evaluation of graduate programmes

On the recommendation of the quality committee, the Vice-Chancellor decided to conduct a University-wide evaluation of graduate programmes and this began in 2002. The first phase took place in May 2002, when all graduate students were asked to complete a questionnaire on their research and work environments, supervision and thesis work, the seminars offered by their departments, courses included in graduate programmes and the opportunities offered to teach and acquire teaching qualifications. The questionnaire was formulated in consultation with various groups of graduate students and representatives of the faculties. The results were summarised in separate reports for each department. These revealed what their own graduate students thought of their programmes. They disclosed strengths and weaknesses in the graduate teaching offered at the departments and the information they contained could provide a basis for the adoption of specific measures. In phase 2, which required each institution to conduct its own self-evaluation, these reports provided the departmental chairs with a tool that enabled them to raise and discuss the study situation of the graduate students. The responses to the questionnaires provided a valuable basis for the self-evaluations. In phase 3 the faculty boards analysed the departmental self-evaluations and then decided on measures that could be adopted to improve the quality of graduate programmes. In addition a report has been published that provides an overall description of graduate teaching at Uppsala University focusing on comparisons between faculties.

As a result of the findings of the University's internal evaluation of graduate teaching, the graduate programme board at the Faculty of Arts has decided to review the supervision situation for graduate students, organise sem-

inars for supervisors, propose guidelines for the formulation of individual syllabuses and measures to improve the way in which seminars are held. In the Faculty of Languages a decision has been made to introduce a joint enrolment procedure.

The faculty board for social sciences has adopted a programme of measures divided into eight areas of analysis: the relationship between departments and their graduate students, reading courses, supervision, throughput, acquiring teaching qualification and teaching, preparation for post-doctoral careers, national and international contacts and funding for studies. Review of this programme in spring 2005 will take the form of visits to the departments to allow them to account for the measures that have been adopted.

The research committee of the Faculty of Law appointed a special working group to propose measures on the basis of the report and discussions that had taken place during a one-day training conference with the departmental supervisors. This working group proposed not only better routines for providing graduate students with information, but also reorganisation of the programme of required courses. In addition graduate programmes are to be given more explicit theoretical dimensions and links established with concrete issues in jurisprudence. The working group considered that the views of graduate students had played a decisive role in the planning. The group also proposed review of the contents of the reading lists and examinations and clarification of the kind of content required in the individual syllabuses. The faculty will also offer a tailor-made course for its supervisors during spring 2005.

In the Faculty of Science and Technology the chair of the graduate teaching committee visited each department accompanied by a graduate student to follow up their self-evaluations. A discussion about the strengths and weaknesses of their graduate programmes took place with the graduate students and the departmental chair. Measures have been adopted at both departmental level and by the faculty board to improve the quality of graduate programmes.

In the disciplinary domain of medicine and pharmacy, the departments have drawn up programmes of measures with a timetable. The chairperson of the graduate programme committee and its secretary are making departmental visits to review these programmes. Improved routines to enable graduate programmes to be monitored each year and to provide graduate students from abroad with better information have been established. Another measure adopted has been obligatory annual training for supervisors. Experiences from the evaluation of graduate programmes were also reviewed in a joint seminar at the University entitled *"Att lära från varandra"* (Learning from each other) in spring 2004. Departmental chairs and directors of studies exchanged ex-

periences and examples of good quality assurance practices for graduate programmes.

Course evaluations

For a long time, there has been a great deal of commitment to course evaluations, not least from the University's management. Special guidelines for course evaluations at Uppsala University have been in existence since 1997 and have been revised on two occasions in connection with a review of the way in which these evaluations function at the University. Written summaries have been made of the outcome of these reviews and made available to teachers and students. Many departments have devoted a great deal of work to these evaluations and the student union has made constructive contributions. The unit for quality and evaluation has implemented a number of specific measures to develop sound evaluation routines and to foster an approach that sees the results of these evaluations as one aspect of the basic information needed for systematic quality assurance at departmental level. At least two full-day seminars are arranged each year to develop the skills of teachers and students in using course evaluations in a professional manner.

During the last year, an attempt has also been made to enable all of the University's teaching staff to use web-based course evaluations without specialised evaluation expertise or computer skills. The relatively frequently used platform that provides web support for teaching also offers an opportunity to use web-based course evaluations.

Uppsala University image

The Uppsala University image project started in autumn 2002. A survey was undertaken to probe the attitudes of staff, specific groups of students, guest researchers and representatives of the commercial sector and the mass media. The questions dealt with the characteristics of a good university in general and the features linked with Uppsala University in particular. The image that emerges from the survey is that Uppsala University represents quality, academic traditions, vigorous international research and a dynamic study environment.

The outcome of this survey has provided a sound basis for further information activities both internally and externally. In the project report a number of measures are proposed, such as creating a shared internal approach to issues relating to Uppsala University as a brand, developing contacts with the mass media, intensifying marketing and the development of information material. It is hoped to be able to repeat the same kind of survey in about five years.

External IT audit

A joint initiative by 13 Swedish and Norwegian universities made it possible to conduct an external IT audit during 2002. A firm of consultants was commissioned to make the audit. This revealed that Uppsala University had more or less the same level of IT costs as other Swedish and Norwegian universities but that the standard was higher. It could be seen that there had been a major improvement since the previous audit in 1997. The audit report stated that a good platform had been created for further work to increase efficiency, reduce the level of risk and improve internal monitoring of IT operations at Uppsala University. After the audit a group was established at the University to set priorities for the measures entailed by the report. The Vice-Chancellor decided on a programme of such measures and these are to be completed by spring 2005. It has also been proposed that the Board should ask the faculty boards to devise IT strategies for inclusion in operational plans from 2006.

5 Central planning and monitoring instruments

Under this heading, an account will be provided of the instruments used at Uppsala University for planning and monitoring and which form an integral element in its quality assurance procedures.

Project Plan 96

In 1996 the Board adopted Project Plan 96, which called for extensive refurbishment of teaching and research facilities with regards to the buildings, premises and equipment. The plan is intended, for example, to provide better conditions for both research and teaching. Project Plan 96 involves thoroughgoing renovation not only of the University's premises, but also of the equipment for teaching and research. Larger environments have been created for students, teachers and researchers and this has also encouraged co-operation between subjects and faculties by providing forums for new constellations of teachers and researchers. The bulk of the work took place in 1996–2004. Virtually all departments have been given new or refurbished premises for their research and teaching with adjoining library facilities. In 2004 the Board decided on continuation of the refurbishment process, for instance through the construction of a learning centre – "Pedagogikum" – for the departments and units involved in the discipline of education in the broad meaning of the term, including teacher training programmes. This project forms part of an extensive plan to provide premises adopted in December 2003 and which it is intended to update annually.

Strategic funding

In the operational plan for 1998, the Board placed funding at the disposal of the Vice-Chancellor for specific strategic measures in research and graduate teaching. This funding has been used, for instance, for the establishment of the virtual faculty of information technology research and teaching, the establishment of professorships in various subject areas to provide financial incentives for the faculties to increase the recruitment of women to professorships and post-doctoral research posts. The establishment of graduate schools can also be included in these special measures. Similar allocations were made at the disciplinary level.

General Management Information System (GLIS)

Alongside the system for registering student attendance, credits earned and degrees awarded at Uppsala University called UPPDOK, which forms part of the national system called LADOK, since autumn 2001 Uppsala University has also had a management information system known as GLIS. This system was developed at the University and affords all of the University's staff easy access to statistical information from the system for administrative support (student records, finance, personnel information, premises) in the form of web-based reports. GLIS is used, for instance, to monitor operations at various levels. Improved access to statistics has also led to clear improvements in the material on which decisions can be based. Forecasts are also more reliable and of better quality when chronological and historic data is available.

On-Line Publication Documentation System (OPUS)

Increasing attention has been paid in recent years to publication as an indicator of the quality of research. To enable efficient reporting of academic publication at Uppsala University a special publication database (OPUS) has been developed. This contains references to everything published by researchers and other members of the University's staff, irrespective of where in the world publication has taken place. The starting year for the database is 1995, but some earlier publications are also listed. OPUS includes all forms of publication, such as theses, books, articles, reviews etc. Both academic works and works for general readers are included in the database.

The work of creating a database intensified in connection with the SAUNA evaluation referred to earlier, which also included an analysis of academic production in each faculty. One version of the database was then evaluated and the outcome of the experiences gained was OPUS, an integrated system that came on line in 2004.

OPUS has simplified the work that had already started of producing bibliographies and material for the appraisal of the quality of research by faculty boards, departments and individual researchers. The database has also made it easier to provide material on which to base the allocation of resources in the disciplinary domains of science and technology and medicine and pharmacy.

6 Support for departments and faculties

Educational development

One outcome of SAUNA was the creation of a section for the development of educational methodology and interactive learning (UPI) in 2003 by merging three units. Apart from continuing to stimulate educational development, this measure was intended by the administration to ensure continuous and systematic development of the use of ICT in teaching. The task assigned to the UPI was to provide methodological training, initiate and implement various educational development projects and provide departments with consultancy services.

At Uppsala University there has been systematic development of training courses for university teachers for almost 30 years. About 250 teachers and graduate students participate each year in the basic four-week training courses that are also offered in a Net-based version. Just over 160 teachers take part each year in different advanced courses. There has been particular focus on training for supervisors and on ICT-based teaching methods. One aim is to ensure that all university teachers have been given at least ten weeks of training in methodologies for higher education. In addition a number of development projects are under way in which the faculties are assuming responsibility for the subject-specific content of advanced training courses.

For some years a systematic project has been in progress to implement the educational programme. One of the aims of this project has been to inspire departmental discussion by both students and teachers of central methodological issues in which both groups can express their views. In phase 1 a department's teachers and a selected group of students respond to the same questions about the importance and also the application of a number of educational principles and approaches based on the educational programme. In phase 2 the internal educational consultants running the project collate and analyse the responses. Their results are presented in phase 3 at seminars with both students and teachers, where participants decide in small groups which questions to discuss, such as the evaluation of student performance. The ideas and proposed improvements are then reviewed with the departmental admin-

istrators. As it has turned out that similar educational issues are discussed at different departments, the project concludes in each disciplinary domain with a joint meeting where representatives from the various departments can exchange experiences. The report on this project will take the form of a volume of ideas for teachers. Revision of the educational programme is also planned.

A model teaching qualifications portfolio has been developed which enables qualitative assessment of teaching qualifications. This model has been evaluated and is now being implemented systematically at Uppsala University with the help of seminars for teachers, recruiting bodies, for instance, and as one element in the training courses. This portfolio has also provided a model for the work of many other higher education institutions on educational qualifications. The model has been further developed through systematic work on scientifically based criteria for teaching skills. These criteria have been incorporated into Uppsala University's guidelines on appointment procedures for teaching staff.

Management development

One central unit in the administration's personnel section is responsible for the implementation of development measures for those in managerial positions at all levels in the University, and also in-service training for other members of the staff. Evaluations have resulted in the development of a number of new training courses. Some examples of those offered to senior staff/managers are leadership training, communication skills, recruitment, "The Financial Simulation" and project management training.

The Vice-Chancellor has launched a programme for senior academic administrators called "Apply for a management position?" In the next two years Uppsala University will be electing new faculty boards, deans, disciplinary domain boards and deputy Vice-Chancellors and also recruiting a new Vice-Chancellor and Pro-Vice-Chancellor. To enable those interested to prepare to stand for these positions, a series of seminars, attended by the Vice-Chancellor and Pro-Vice-Chancellor, was arranged during autumn 2004.

Uppsala University aims to increase the proportion of women in leading positions. To provide greater awareness of what needs to be done when future educational measures are adopted, an inventory is to be made during 2004–05 of the scope and obstacles that exist in senior academic management positions.

Quality development in the administration

During 2002 Uppsala University participated together with seven other European universities in a benchmarking project organised by ESMU (European Centre for Strategic Management of Universities). This was intended to enable the participating universities to operate more effectively in selected areas by comparing working methods, strengths and weaknesses. This could be described as trying to determine and adopt the "best practice" in the areas selected. The process started with a self-evaluation with the results then being assessed by a number of experts in the different areas. Discussion took place in seminars with representatives of the other participating universities and the experts involved in the appraisals.

The three operational areas studied and assessed during 2002 were service to students, management information systems and other administrative IT systems, together with issues relating to building plans and the provision of premises. Uppsala University's experience of participation in this project is on the whole positive. Valuable critical appraisal of strategies and working methods was prompted by the self-evaluation process and discussions with colleagues from other countries provided new approaches to various problems. At the same time, this process places a great burden on the sections involved in the international project and which already have heavy workloads. No decision has yet been made, therefore, on continued participation in this project.

Quality development in the University library

The activities of the University library's quality group have been dominated in recent years, alongside the ongoing quality assurance routines, by quality issues relating to the rapid growth of electronically circulated scientific information. Uppsala University leads the field in digital publishing in Sweden. Digital publication of the doctoral theses submitted at Uppsala University and other scientific reports requires high standards. An extensive international network of contacts has been established, including for instance a bilateral agreement with the library at John Hopkins University, Baltimore.

The decentralisation of library services has involved measures to train users, both in the form of lectures and in problem-oriented small-group activities. To increase integration between the library units and the departments around them, annual quality seminars are arranged with both teacher and student representatives.

7 The National Agency's evaluations of subjects and programmes

The unit for quality and evaluation has developed routines to provide support for the subjects and programmes subject to evaluation by the National Agency in its six-year national evaluation cycle. Not only can departments seek counsel and assistance from the unit, but it also conducts follow-up studies to ascertain what former students feel about their programmes a few years after graduating. A questionnaire is circulated with questions probing what students now think of their studies in retrospect, what employment they have found and the practical value of their programme etc. The responses are tabulated according to subject or programme so that departments can be provided with reports for use in their self-evaluation of subjects or programmes.

When the National Agency for Higher Education has reached a decision about the evaluation and the assessors' recommendations have been presented, they are dealt with by the departments or faculties concerned. Although routines differ all of the faculties are involved in following up the National Agency's evaluations. For example, the faculty management in the Faculty of Arts visit the departments when the reports have been published to discuss their recommendations. The faculty board for social sciences requests a written account from the departments concerned of their opinion of the appraisal made by the assessors and if this has led to any action. A departmental representative is then invited to take part in a meeting with the faculty board at which the evaluation is discussed.

As a result of its own evaluations and the subject evaluations conducted by the National Agency, the Faculty of Languages has implemented an extensive reorganisation of its departmental structure. Seven departments have become two. The aim has been to improve the situation for research and teaching. The new organisation was implemented during 2004. In this connection, intensive endeavours are being made to develop joint routines for monitoring both undergraduate and graduate programmes.

In the disciplinary domain for science and technology, the graduate programme committee follows up the evaluations of graduate programmes made by the National Agency. For undergraduate programmes, it is mainly the appropriate programme board that analyses the opinions expressed in the National Agency's evaluations. The most important element from the point of view of quality assurance procedures is, however, the initial evaluation phase involving self-evaluation. It is during this process, in particular, that new insights emerge about a department that can lead to the adoption of new measures.

8 Systematic development of programmes and courses

Co-operation on development work

Systematic development work takes place in different forms within programmes and courses. This means, for instance, that future employers and representatives from the labour market are active in the development of vocationally oriented programmes in all the disciplinary domains. Where teacher training is concerned, moreover, the co-operation of many departments is required. The faculty board for educational sciences has the responsibility for coordinating teacher training, in which about thirty of the University's departments are involved. The board has produced directives applying to syllabuses, monitors the results of course evaluations and commissions the development of new courses when required. Conferences are arranged regularly, at which representatives of the various departments discuss both the content and the organisation of teacher training programmes.

Examples of co-operation with potential employers and vocational representatives can be found in the disciplinary domain for medicine and pharmacy. Undergraduate programmes in medicine and pharmacy consist largely of vocationally oriented programmes. One aim is to adapt the programmes through a continuous process of quality enhancement to changes in the labour market and in professional practice. The responsibility for ongoing quality assurance lies with the undergraduate programme committees, the programme committees and the graduate programme committee. All of these groups contain representatives of future employers and the appropriate professional categories. Because of the agreement between the University and the local health authority (landsting) on clinical training and research, a consultative group has also been established with representatives of the local health authority and the University. This group has worked together to propose quality criteria for clinical training. A clinical training centre is run in collaboration between Uppsala University Hospital, the local health authority and Uppsala University. All those studying medicine or the caring sciences at Uppsala University can acquire clinical skills at the centre. Programmes in the caring sciences have also been allocated special funding for quality enhancing measures and this has been used mainly to create senior lectureships and clinical lectureships to strengthen the links between the programmes and future professional practice, and to enhance subject expertise and skills.

Internal programme evaluations

Additional systematic quality assurance procedures have been implemented by reforming several degree programmes based on extensive evaluation measures.

Programmes in pharmacy have been revised after systematic evaluation of the Master's and Bachelor's programmes in the science of pharmacy that took place between 2000 and 2002. The reforms of these programmes are intended to raise their quality and to provide the students with greater preparation for future professional practice. The measures adopted include an alumni project with professional pharmacists, training for supervisors, uniform formulation of course evaluations, continual in-service training for teaching staff and the introduction of training in communication skills in the programmes.

A review of the programme in medicine is planned to raise its quality and to introduce a greater degree of student activation in the teaching. This review will be based on the National Agency's evaluation in 1997 of all the programmes in medicine in Sweden, a self-evaluation made in 1997, a questionnaire sent to house officers undergoing pre-registration internships in 1999, a student survey in 1999, a proposed educational programme from 1999 and a survey of teacher attitudes in 2000. The reformed programme was circulated in draft to the departments involved in summer 2004 for comment. Some criticism was expressed in the responses and they will be taken into consideration in the revisions of this proposed new programme in medicine. Questionnaire surveys are regularly made to find out what medical students, who have recently completed the programme, feel about their studies.

In connection with the launch of the new teachers training scheme in 2001, two formative evaluations of the programme began. These were intended to monitor the development of teacher training and find out stage-by-stage how students were reacting, and to enable regular reports to be submitted to the faculty board. Because of these evaluations, the faculty board has been able to modify and improve the teachers training scheme during its initial phases. Examples of measures that have been based on evaluation reports are the enhancement of student counselling services in the programme, more explicit and effective organisation of the practical placement periods, greater subject-specific focus in the content of courses, the development of new courses, clearer progression in the courses in general educational theory etc. The formative evaluation of the development of the programme will be concluded in 2005. The formative evaluation of student reactions monitors the first three cohorts of students and will end during 2006.

In 2001 the interdisciplinary Master's programme in engineering started called Systems in engineering and the community (STS). An extensive formative evaluation has been conducted since the beginning of the programme mainly by allowing the first cohort of students to evaluate different aspects of the programme as it has progressed.

Course evaluation routines

All faculties have routines for monitoring the results of course evaluations, which have been adapted to the prevailing circumstances in the faculty concerned. These can be exemplified by the methods adopted in some of them.

The quality assurance system for undergraduate programmes in the Faculty of Law requires students to participate in continuous quality assessment in each course, for instance, through interaction between teachers and students. Every time a course has been offered at least one written course evaluation is made. An official system of oral discussions with student representatives has been established so that courses are discussed after the end of each course and sometimes – for courses covering an entire semester – half way through. Course directors submit course reports, based in part on student and teacher evaluations of the completed courses, to the department's programme committee. These reports also include some statistics, summaries of student responses to the course evaluations, minutes of the discussions with student representatives and the most recent examination papers. They provide a basis for discussion, follow-up and any changes made in the syllabuses. The reports are made available to all the students in the department and provide outsiders with a reliable account of what has taken place on each course.

A fundamental element of the quality assurance system for undergraduate programmes in the Faculty of Science and Technology is provided by the "programme councils", who mainly monitor course evaluations. Within the framework of current medical training, Net-based course evaluations are used, which are then followed up by the programme committee for programmes in medicine. The students responsible for compiling the questionnaire responses make a list of proposals to be adopted when the course is next offered which is then discussed with the course administrators.

Examples of other initiatives

Other forms of systematic programme and course development work in the various disciplinary domains can be described by offering a few examples. The quality group in the Faculty for Social Sciences focuses in undergraduate programmes, for instance, on the issue of "Teaching and examination methods". One question is how it is possible with straitened resources to activate students so that quality and throughput can be raised. The idea is to create a catalogue of examples of good practice that other departments in the faculty can adopt.

The faculty board for science and technology decided in 2004 to allocate specific resources to measures that would focus on newly enrolled students. In adopting this priority the faculty intends to help to raise through-

put without lowering the demands made in its courses. Helping students to start their programmes effectively will augment their quality. Within the framework of the faculty's systematic quality assurance approach, therefore, a first-semester conference is organised for the entire faculty and more time has been made available for counselling for each student enrolled. All first-year students are offered help with their study techniques, personal support and better feedback of their results. The faculty is also working to develop contacts with the labour market with a mentorship programme and new routines for degree projects.

The application of the "Supplemental Instruction" educational model, which is used in all the programmes offered by the Faculty of Medicine to improve students' results, is consistently being developed on the basis of the experiences gained. Yet another example of quality procedures at course level in the Faculty of Medicine can be found in the web-based teaching that has been introduced in vocational and environmental medicine. This is popular with the students as it spurs them to seek information and develop their critical capacities. Quality in the programme in biomedicine is enhanced by the allocation of funds for teaching oral and written communication to the students. A scrutiny of the methodological approaches is also being undertaken in the Faculty of Medicine, as well as a discussion of examination methods.

9 Student participation, gender equality and social and ethnic diversity

One of the main aims of involving students in quality assurance procedures at Uppsala University is to increase student influence. This is laid down, for instance, in the University's mission statement and in its quality development programme. The participation of students in quality assurance procedures is governed by the University's guidelines on working conditions for students. As these guidelines show, students participate in routine quality assurance procedures largely at departmental and faculty level.

In view of the size of Uppsala University, what takes place at faculty level is supplemented by a number of university-wide committees in which quality issues are dealt with. Students are represented at the weekly meetings of the University management. In addition to the quality committee, there is a student participation group, which allows representatives of the student unions and the student colleges (nationer) to meet the University's management regularly and discuss various aspects of the teaching in more informal surroundings. This group has no power to make decisions but its discussions have in many cases led to measures that have improved quality at the University, for example, in the induction of new students for which a handbook has been

produced as a result of these discussions. Today both teachers and students consult this handbook frequently. There is also a great degree of co-operation between the University and various student associations. One example that can be cited is the work in the Faculty of Science and Technology and the Faculty of Medicine where for several years there has been well-developed co-operation with the associations of students on different programmes to improve course evaluation routines.

Less formal co-operation also takes place at both faculty level and in the different administrative units. Both the student office and the unit for quality and evaluation co-operate, for instance, with student unions on various quality aspects, often at the instigation of students. During the last two years, several joint projects have been undertaken.

Uppsala University also has a gender equality committee appointed by the Vice-Chancellor, and chaired by one of the Vice-Chancellor's commissioners. The Board and the Vice-Chancellor have overall responsibility. Direct responsibility for gender equality issues rests with the chair of each faculty board, the departmental chairs and every senior official or manager in the University. Gender equality involves co-operation between employer and employee and between the University and the student unions.

Work on gender equality is based on the central gender equality plan, which consists of the overall plan for a three-year period, supplemented by a programme of concrete measures for each operational year. Gender equality is to be mainstreamed into every aspect of Uppsala University's operations, which means that overall it forms one aspect of all the ongoing and routine activities in different sections of its organisation. The plans also contain objectives that can be monitored and specify concrete measures and the officials responsible for their implementation.

At the end of the three-year period, the gender equality committee submits an overall report on the attainment of the objectives to the Vice-Chancellor and the Board. The reports of the gender equality committee are to be included in operational evaluations so that they can easily be identified and provide a basis for analysis of the attainment of objectives. The extent to which these have been attained must be appraised at the end of each operational year and accounted for in the programme of measures for the year to come. This applies to all of the gender equality plans within the organisation. Responsibility for ensuring that this takes place rests with those responsible for drawing up the plans.

Alongside work on gender equality issues, there is also a committee for social and ethnic diversity and, since 2003, a plan of action for these areas. In recent years, a series of systematic measures have been adopted to stimulate ethnic and social diversity among students and staff. Some examples that can be cited are the language workshops, college programmes, trials taking place in the Faculty of Law to raise the number of students with foreign backgrounds by adopting alternative eligibility requirements and several projects undertaken by the University's student union, which should all in the long run lead to a growth in the recruitment of students from non-academic and/or foreign backgrounds. The examples cited here are being evaluated to determine what effects they have.

The National Agency for Higher Education evaluated gender equality, student influence and social and ethnic diversity at Uppsala University in 2000. This was followed up in 2003. The National Agency nominated Uppsala University as the higher education institution at which greatest progress had been made in the process of stimulating gender equality, student influence and social and ethnic diversity. Uppsala University was awarded a diploma by the National Agency with the citation that it had "during three years consistently and purposefully improved its operations in all of the quality aspects evaluated".

10 Internationalisation and co-operation with the surrounding community

The programme for internationalisation at Uppsala University was reviewed in 2001 and extends until the academic year 2005–06. The University's profile as an international research university, the transnational nature of research and the international networks of its researchers lead to extensive international contacts, which strongly influence both undergraduate and graduate programmes. The growth of international co-operation has resulted in a rise in quality and at the same time offers a form of benchmarking that can confirm the internationally competitive standing enjoyed by the University. It also provides the University with excellent opportunities of acquiring more international assignments and offers the students enhancement of their international perspectives. One concrete example can be found in the participation of supervisors (or assistant supervisors) from abroad in graduate programmes.

Specific measures have been adopted based on, for instance, the University's goals in the field of international solidarity. Uppsala University has also positioned itself systematically in Asia, in particular in China. The University

currently has agreements with the four highest ranked Chinese universities, for instance. The programme in Chinese has recently been extended to cover four semesters (80 credit points). The University offers programmes in about 40 foreign languages.

Internal development work within the framework of the Bologna Process has stimulated an increase in international research and teaching exchanges, with, for instance, new international partnership agreements, joint programmes etc. Demand from incoming students has led to a larger number of courses being offered in English and these also attract Swedish students. As a result, those who will later travel abroad are better equipped for their exchange. In addition, training in Swedish is offered to incoming students.

All the faculties with respect to internationalisation implement extensive quality assurance procedures. In the Faculty of Arts, for instance, extensive internationalisation of undergraduate and graduate programmes is taking place, and a Master's programme with a major subject is being developed to fit in with the Bologna Process. This means that more courses are offered in English, there are more student exchanges and co-operation on Joint Degrees is being developed.

The theological faculty is involved in various international co-operation projects relating to Master's programmes and has together with other universities evolved different kinds of peer review systems. This is a form of evaluation that has close links with the programmes and provides useful and interesting observations that can lead to developments in the teaching offered. With support from the Council for the Renewal of Higher Education, a comprehensive educational development project for graduate programmes (PUFF) has been undertaken in close contact with higher education institutions in other countries. The project lasted from 2001 to 2004. Its aim was to discuss with teachers and graduate students what forms would be appropriate for graduate courses in the faculty. At the concluding conference in June 2004, further links were established between these discussions and the Bologna Process and its implications for programmes in theology.

There has been an action plan for co-operation with the surrounding community since 1999. The University is an important motive force for commercial development at both regional and national level. Proximity to the University's research activities and its teaching programmes provides great scope for the development of cutting-edge expertise and stimulates the establishment of enterprises. As one stage in the creation of good infrastructure for co-operation, a number of organisational modifications have been made in recent years. In 1998, the development company called UUAB (Uppsala University Development Ltd.) was transferred by the state to Uppsala Uni-

versity and a number of subsidiary companies have been founded. Changes have been made in the way in which the Foundation for Cooperation between Uppsala University, Industry and the Community (STUNS) operates. A regional agency for co-operation, Regionsförbundet Uppsala län, has been established and the University actively participates in its work with regional growth agreements and expansion programmes.

Uppsala University is currently undergoing evaluation by the National Agency for Higher Education of its internationalisation and co-operation with the surrounding community. This evaluation process has been characterised by the commitment of the work of the different reference groups composed of representatives for the different areas and student representatives.

11 Conclusion

In view of the work undertaken by the National Agency for Higher Education on evaluating the teaching activities of the higher education institutions, the presentation above has concentrated on the systematic quality assurance of undergraduate and graduate teaching.

However, at a research university there are strong links between research and teaching. Systematic quality assurance procedures are applied continually to research at every department and faculty at Uppsala University. These include the system for recruiting researchers and basing the allocation of funding on quality assessment to enhance the success of current programmes of research and the long-term attainment of the profiles sought. These assessments are made from a national and international perspective by researchers at the University with extensive experience of the work of the research councils and of international review bodies.

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Annexes

1 Mål och strategier for Uppsala universitet (Goals and strategies for Uppsala University) 6 June 2006, UFV 1999/1525
2 Kvalitetsutvecklinsprogram (Quality development programme) 13 June 2002, UFV 2002/982).
3 Handlingsprogram för Uppsala universitets kvalitetsutveckling år 2004 (Action programme for quality development at Uppsala University, 2004). 16 December 2003, UFV 2003/2389.
4 SAUNA VI. Uppsala University 2003
5 Programmes and Courses Taught in English. Uppsala University 2003–2004.
6 Nationell kvalitetsbedömning av internationalisering av grund- och forskarutbilning vid Uppsala universitet (National quality evaluation of the internationalisation of undergraduate and graduate programmes at Uppsala University) 6 April 2004. UFV 2004/186.
7 Nationell kvalitetsbedömning av samverkan med det omgivande samhället vid Uppsala universitet (National evaluation of co-operation with the surrounding community at Uppsala University). 6 April 2004. UFV 2004/185.

APPENDIX 3:
Project timetable

May 2004	Nordic meeting in Turku – project launched
June 2004	Project plan ready
August 2004	Country descriptions for the Project Group
September 2004	First meeting of the Project Group
October 2004	Panel members invited
January 2005	Agencies submit their national nominees and arguments
3 February 2005	Project Group meeting in Oslo to discuss the HEI nominees and agency arguments, and plan for April's workshop
February 2005	Panel members and participating universities are informed of project development
February 2005	Project Group prepares project material
March 2005	Material to Panel and universities
5–6 April 2005	Workshop in Helsinki
6 April 2005	Project Group meeting in Helsinki
29 April 2005	Panel submits feedback
April–May 2005	Writing of the report
24–25 May 2005	Nordic meeting in Copenhagen Project results announced

APPENDIX 4:
Workshop participants

Workshop 5–6 April 2005 in Helsinki

Jury members

Fiona Crozier, Assistant Director, QAA
Dr Rolf Heusser, MD, Director, OAQ
Prof. Jethro Newton, Dean, University College, Chester

Denmark

Pia Bramming, Associate Professor, Copenhagen Business School
Claus Nygaard, Associate Professor, Copenhagen Business School
Bente Kristensen, Vice-President, Copenhagen Business School
Christel Sølvhjelm, Evaluation officer, EVA
Søren Friis Larsen, Evaluation officer, EVA
Inge Enroth, Evaluation officer, EVA

Finland

Matti Uusitupa, Rector, University of Kuopio
Sirpa Suntioinen, Vice Rector, University of Kuopio
Päivi Nerg, Director of Administration, University of Kuopio
Ossi V. Linqvist, Chair, FINHEEC
Ossi Tuomi, Secretary General, FINHEEC
Pirjo-Liisa Omar, Advisor, FINHEEC
Anna-Maija Liuhanen, Senior Advisor, FINHEEC

Norway

Knut Hove, Rector, University of Life Sciences (UMB)
Peter M.K. Greve, Head of Student Parliament, University of Life Sciences (UMB)
Siri Margrethe Løksa, Director of Academic Affairs, University of Life Sciences (UMB)
Faye Benedict, Academic Quality Advisor, University of Life Sciences (UMB)
Anne Svinddal, Academic Quality Advisor, University of Life Sciences (UMB)
Astrid Børsheim, Advisor, NOKUT
Gro Hanne Aas, Advisor, NOKUT

Sweden

Bo Sundqvist, Vice Chancellor, University of Uppsala
Annika Lundmark, Senior Advisor, University of Uppsala
Kristina Edström, Senior Advisor, University of Uppsala
Ove Axelsson, Professor, University of Uppsala
Maivor Sjölund, Project Manager, University of Uppsala
Eric Lindesjöö, Project Manager, NAHE

Iceland

Ásgerður Kjartansdóttir, Advisor, Ministry of Education, Science and Culture of Iceland