



THE YEAR 2019

NOKUT 

Dear Reader

In 2019, the Norwegian Agency for Quality Assurance in Education (NOKUT) adopted a new strategy for the next five years. In the process of developing our new strategy, we involved educational institutions, students, businesses and NGOs, as well as sister agencies such as the Norwegian Agency for International Cooperation and Quality Enhancement in Higher Education (Diku) and the Norwegian Directorate for ICT and Joint Services in Higher Education & Research (Unit). We believe that our work has resulted in a clear development strategy for NOKUT's work towards 2025.

Our new strategy builds on developments from the previous strategy period. In addition to our accreditation and supervisory activities, NOKUT will continue to be an ambassador for educational quality, while also providing society with information about the quality of education. In 2019, we hosted a series of events where quality challenges and good supervised professional training were on the agenda. And the NOKUT podcast has become established as an important channel for ideas and inspiration for good teaching methods.

In 2019, we continued to step up our efforts related to experience-sharing and guidance as tools for quality development. We see these as effective ways to contribute to better and more effective quality assurance work at all educational institutions. During the year, some universities and university colleges also went through the periodic supervision of their quality assurance work. A number of them passed with flying colours, while others had to put in a little additional work to have their quality assurance work approved. For

the first time, we also inspected the quality assurance work at some tertiary vocational colleges.

What should be considered quality education and how to measure it is, not surprisingly, a hot topic for us at NOKUT. At the end of last year, we commissioned Kantar, a market research company, to conduct a representative survey of the population. The results show that over 80 per cent of the general public have a positive impression of the quality of Norwegian higher education. An almost equal proportion believe that Norwegian universities and university colleges offer education that is relevant to working life. We think it is very positive that the Norwegian population has such strong confidence in the quality of education provided by Norwegian institutions.

The demand for NOKUT's services related to foreign education and qualifications has increased significantly. We now have a wide range of periodic supervision schemes – from professional and vocational qualifications at the secondary school level to education at tertiary vocational colleges, all the way up to PhD programmes at university colleges and universities. In recent years, we have had a strong focus on digitalising and streamlining our application and case management processes. This has resulted in reducing case processing time and simpler accreditation processes. We are now in a position that allows us to automate some of our processes.

For the second time, we have received an international award for our work on assessing and recognising the qualifications of refugees. We are proud that

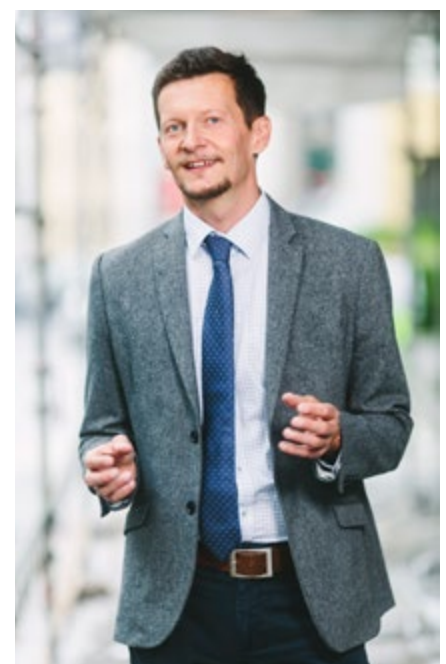
our work has been acknowledged in this way. In recent years, NOKUT has been an international leader in assessing the qualifications of refugees. At the UNESCO General Conference in Paris, the first eleven globally recognised qualifications passports were issued. The method was developed by NOKUT and is also used for the European Qualifications Passport under the auspices of the Council of Europe.

On the following pages, you can read more about our work in 2019 and what we do to secure society's confidence in the quality of Norwegian education and recognised foreign qualifications. Please also follow the links for more information on our website.

Enjoy the magazine!



Terje Mørland
Chief Executive



Contents

THE YEAR AT A GLANCE	4
NOKUT	7
New strategy for 2020–2025	8
A prominent education ambassador	9
Increased digitalisation yields results	10
NORWEGIAN EDUCATION	11
Successful pilot of a new accreditation model	15
Gathering knowledge about quality in tertiary vocational education	16
Vocational students study hard and rarely complain	17
More tertiary vocational colleges receive accreditation of subject areas	18
Strengthened experience-sharing and guidance	20
Our important administrative tasks	22
Myth-busting academic environment report	24
NOKUT podcast spreads ideas and inspiration	26
NOKUT raises the level of knowledge about supervised professional training in higher education	28
FOREIGN EDUCATION	29
Many roads lead to recognition	33
“Working to reduce case processing time”	35
New recognition scheme for foreign qualifications at the tertiary vocational college level	36
Global qualifications passport for refugees under establishment	38
Award for NOKUT’s work on the qualifications recognition scheme for refugees	40
Bachelor’s and doctoral degrees from Poland and Lithuania now automatically recognised	41
This is NOKUT	43



THE YEAR

At a glance

January



- Berit Kjeldstad received NOKUT's Honorary Award at Utdanningsfesten (Celebration of Education) for her continued efforts to ensure and develop the quality of education over the past 15 years.
- We launched a new recognition scheme for foreign qualifications at the tertiary vocational level.
- Anthology on excellence in higher education published by the Norwegian Centres for Excellence in Education (SFU).

March



- We organized a seminar on the South Korean education system and higher education qualifications. South Korean experts were invited.

February



- Results from the sixth national student survey were presented at a NOKUT breakfast meeting.
- We started a webinar series on the Refugees and Recognition project, abbreviated as the REACT project. NOKUT is coordinating the project.

April



- The vocational school student survey (Studiebarometeret) was sent to over 15,000 students, distributed among 74 tertiary vocational colleges. This was the second survey for vocational college students.

May



- NOKUT and the international expert group for primary and lower secondary teacher education held a National Conference on Primary and Lower Secondary Teacher Education and Practice Schools.
- NOKUT established two new departments: The Department for Quality Assurance and Legal Affairs and the Department for Evaluation and Analysis.
- University colleges and universities that educate nurses were invited to a seminar on the results of the national student survey.
- The academic environment report was presented at a NOKUT breakfast meeting.

June



- The proposal for a new Tertiary Vocational College Supervision Regulations has been sent for consultation.
- A draft of NOKUT's new strategy was posted to our website so that the strategy was open for input concerning the strategic development through the next five years.

July



- The NOKUT project Toolkit for Recognition of Refugees' Qualifications received the international Sepmeyer Award for Excellence in Credential Evaluation Research.

August



- NOKUT conducted a pilot for external quality assurance of the systematic quality assurance work at five tertiary vocational colleges.
- The national examination in annual financial statements was phased out.
- We asked for input on the types of education and quality challenges that NOKUT should prioritise.

September



- The project on supervised professional training presented a summary report at a NOKUT breakfast meeting.
- Results from the second vocational school student survey were presented at a NOKUT breakfast meeting.
- NOKUT presented the qualifications passport at the UN General Assembly.

THE YEAR

At a glance

October



- At the breakfast meeting at the Western Norway University of Applied Sciences, we asked: “What characterises good supervised professional training and how do we achieve it?”
- NOKUT, students and staff at tertiary vocational colleges shared experiences on systematic quality assurance work at seminars in Bergen and Oslo.
- We completed our first project with external quality assurance of universities’ and colleges’ systematic quality assurance work using our new method.
- NOKUT’s new strategy for the period 2020–2025 was adopted by NOKUT’s Board.

November



- The first global qualifications passports were issued by UNESCO. The method behind the qualifications passports was developed by NOKUT.
- NOKUT’s system for automatic recognition of degrees was extended to include bachelor’s and doctoral programmes from Poland and Lithuania.

December



- A survey of programmes for secondary education teachers with a master’s degree was presented at NOKUT breakfast.

A photograph of two women sitting at a wooden desk, looking at a laptop. The woman on the left is wearing a light blue sweater and has a gold watch on her left wrist. The woman on the right is wearing a light blue top. The background is softly blurred. The text 'NOKUT' is centered in the upper half of the image, and a paragraph of text is centered below it.

NOKUT

NOKUT shall be a competent and efficient government agency that ensures collaboration and a good division of labour with other government agencies.



New strategy for 2020–2025

Following a broad engagement process, NOKUT has adopted a new development strategy towards 2025. We are continuing to focus on the ambitions we set in our previous strategy plan. At the same time, we highlight new and important priorities for the years to come.

In recent years, NOKUT has been given many new tasks by the Ministry of Education and Research. Within foreign qualifications, we have expanded our offering with several new recognition and information services. At the same time, we are doing more to help secure and develop Norwegian education. We have done this by further developing our regulatory role, strengthening our work on evaluation and analysis, and using our knowledge more actively to be an ambassador for quality in skills and education. This work will continue.

“We will use the results of our work to further enhance our role as an ambassador for, and driving force behind, quality in education, contributing to increased awareness of the current quality in the education sectors and what it takes to create good quality education,” says Chief Executive Terje Mørland.

To get input from key stakeholders to help us set the direction of our future work, was an important part of this process. . In June, we published our strategy on our website and encouraged everyone to provide us with comments and suggestions. Throughout the autumn, we invited key stakeholders to dialogue meetings.

“Over all the feedback was that they very much appreciated having this dialogue with us about how NOKUT should develop. The input and dialogue meetings were very helpful to our strategic work,” he says.

In 2018, agencies and directorates under the ministry were reorganised. NOKUT’s mandate and professional independence, as described in the Universities and University Colleges Act, was continued. In addition, arrangements were made to allow NOKUT to have ordinary administrative tasks. We also acquired two new sister organisations following the establishment of the Norwegian Agency for International Cooperation and Quality Enhancement in Higher Education (Diku) and the Norwegian Directorate for ICT and Joint Services in Higher Education & Research (Unit). For us all to succeed, this requires good cooperation.

“Therefore, in our new strategy, we have emphasised clarifying NOKUT’s three roles: a regulatory role, a knowledge-sharing role and a motivator role. In addition, we have set out development goals as a guideline for how we will develop our work in the future. Our strategy will help us prioritise between our various tasks and help achieve the goals set for the knowledge sector,” concludes Mørland.

NOKUT's roles

Given our mission and responsibilities, NOKUT has three main roles. We have had these roles for a long time, but through this strategy process, we have now clearly defined them.

Regulatory role – NOKUT exercises authority and administers regulations. This is our core role and provides the foundation for all the other roles NOKUT performs.

Knowledge role – NOKUT collects, analyses and disseminates knowledge about the standard of quality in Norwegian education. We perform a corresponding

role in the area of recognising foreign education and qualifications.

Ambassador role – NOKUT is an ambassador for, and driving force behind, quality in education. We also strive to ensure that an efficient system is in place that enables foreign education and qualifications to be recognised and used in Norway. NOKUT wants to ensure

that the results and knowledge we produce are put to use. As an extension of our regulatory and knowledge role we stimulate quality enhancement by putting important issues on the agenda and creating forums where challenges regarding quality and good practices can be discussed. We also provide knowledge-based advice on developing regulations and other policy instruments.

Development goals

The development goals set out in our strategy serve as a guide for how we should develop our work over the next few years.

Norwegian education:

- simpler and more consistent regulations for the sector
- better and more effective quality work at all universities, university colleges and tertiary vocational schools
- more systematic and readily accessible information about the standard of quality at subject area and study programme levels

Foreign education:

- faster and more efficient processes for recognising foreign education and qualifications
- information about the equivalence of foreign education in Norway
- improve knowledge about the results and impact of the recognition schemes for foreign education

NOKUT as an organisation:

- clearer priorities based on assessments of benefit, quality and efficiency
- better and more efficient services and work processes through digitalisation
- more systematic competence development, knowledge sharing and continuous improvement of methods and processes

A prominent education ambassador

For several years, we have worked strategically to be a clearer and more prominent ambassador for educational quality. In 2019, through our work on social media, the NOKUT podcast, the NOKUT blog and NOKUT breakfast meetings, we further enhanced our visibility, disseminated knowledge and generated debate about our work.

“In a representative survey conducted by Kantar, a market research company, in November 2019, 25 per cent of respondents stated that they knew about NOKUT and almost no one had

a poor impression of us. For a government agency like NOKUT, I think that's very good. Visibility and media outreach are not an end in themselves, but important tools for NOKUT to achieve our goals and to help ensure that society has confidence in NOKUT and all the important work being done at tertiary vocational colleges, university colleges and universities,” says Director of Communications Gard Sandaker-Nielsen.

In the autumn of 2019, we produced a new profile film, which provides a clear

summary of all sides of NOKUT's work. In addition, we have an animation video about the national student survey and one about the qualifications passport for refugees. You can watch the films here.

Among our social media innovations is the video series “NOKUT report in 45 seconds”, where we present key findings from reports in a simple way.

In 2019, we held eight well-attended breakfast meetings, several topical seminars and the NOKUT conference on

higher education, as well as an Utdanningsfesten (Celebration of Education). At Utdanningsfesten, we awarded NOKUT's honorary award to Berit Kjeldstad for her persistent efforts to ensure and develop the quality of education over the past 15 years.

"We find that the topics and knowledge we have put on the agenda generate debate, and that other authorities, institutions, businesses and organisations are using this knowledge in their own work," concludes Sandaker-Nielsen.

Director of Communications Gard Sandaker-Nielsen and Director of Administration Kathrine Dahlslett Graff.



Increased digitalisation yields results

NOKUT is constantly working to improve the services we offer. In 2019, we had a strong focus on digitalising and streamlining our application and case processing processes.

"In recent years, we have invested heavily in digitalisation as a means of streamlining work processes and improving communication with users. Among other things, we have facilitated the automation of parts of our case processing work and data-sharing with other organisations," says Kathrine Dahlslett Graff, Director of Administration.

Digitalisation and other measures have already yielded results. Since 2018, the processing time from when the applications for recognition of foreign higher education are complete until decisions are made has been halved from 22 to 11 days. NOKUT has also taken

measures to make the accreditation process for Norwegian education more efficient and to reduce the case processing time.

"With the same resource use, we can now process more applications than before. At the same time, the case processing time has been reduced. This means that we can use our staff's competence and capacity for tasks other than application processing, in line with the priorities outlined in our new strategy plan," she explains.

Dahlslett Graff is aware of the importance of having a good and stimulating working environment and an organisational culture that is based on NOKUT's values in a sensible, accommodating and innovative way. In 2019, we strengthened our work on corporate governance, including through more professional project management.

In addition, the transfer of new administrative tasks from the Norwegian Ministry of Education and Research and the responsibility for regulatory administration triggered a reorganisation of the part of NOKUT that cooperates with Norwegian educational institutions.

"Overall, the changes have led to a better distribution of tasks, with all activities related to regulations and supervision in one department and evaluations, surveys and analyses in another. The transfer of the new tasks has helped to strengthen NOKUT's expertise in regulatory management. We will use this expertise in our work to facilitate simpler and more consistent regulations for the sector," concludes Dahlslett Graff.

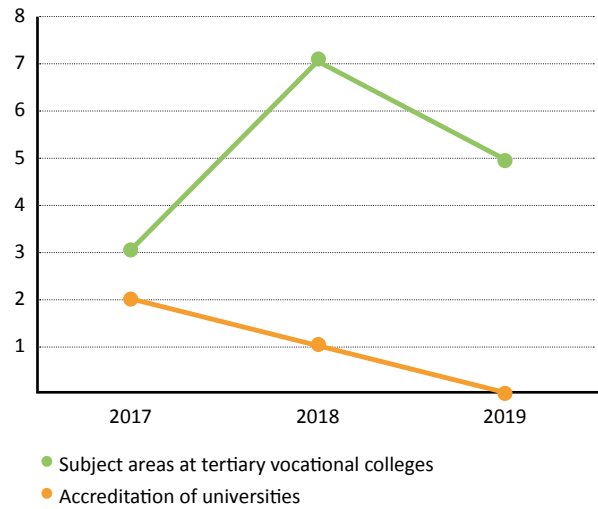
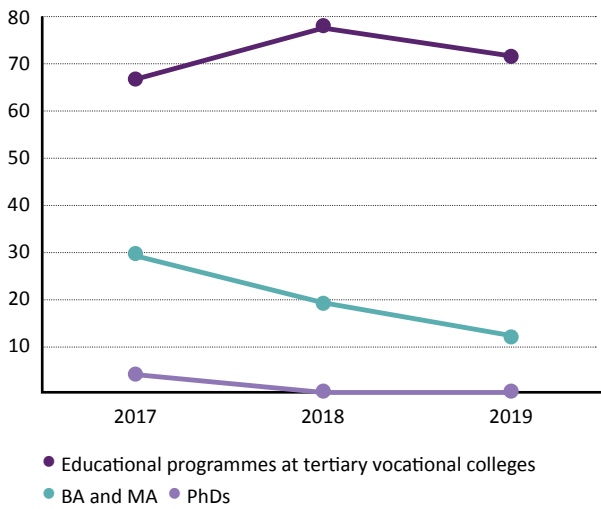


NORWEGIAN EDUCATION

NOKUT shall contribute to:

- ensuring that all education programmes at Norwegian universities, university colleges and tertiary vocational schools satisfy national quality criteria and that as many as possible maintain a high international standard
- ensuring that all universities, university colleges and tertiary vocational schools understand and comply with the regulations
- ensuring the sector and society are well-informed about quality at universities, university colleges and tertiary vocational schools

NUMBER OF ACCREDITATION APPLICATIONS



Norwegian universities and university colleges have broad authorisations. They have gained society’s confidence by having a statutory responsibility for their own educational quality. To guarantee that society has good reason for this confidence, NOKUT has a clear mandate to exercise various forms of supervision of the quality of educational quality. Through guidance, accreditation, external quality assurance and sharing experience, we shall contribute to high awareness of the regulatory requirements and good and effective quality assurance work at the institutions.

ACCREDITATION

NOKUT accepts applications for the accreditation of study programmes from university colleges and tertiary vocational colleges that do not have their own academic authorisations to accredit such programmes. Tertiary vocational colleges can also apply for subject area accreditation. Through institutional accreditation, university colleges can apply to be an accredited university college, specialised university institution or university. Once they have received accreditation from NOKUT, the institution can apply for a change to its institutional category. This change will be decided by the King in Council.

We are responsible for:

- accreditation of study programmes
- accreditation of subject areas
- institutional accreditations

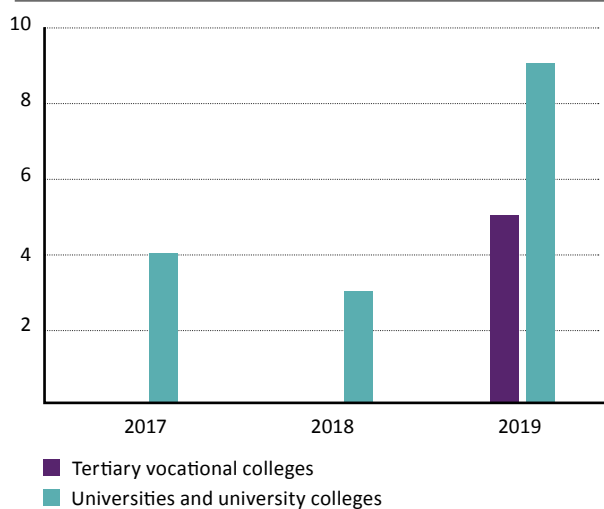
Academic accreditation authority

University: All universities have this authorisation at all levels.

University college: Accredited university colleges are authorised to start educational programmes at the undergraduate level, in addition to the master’s level in subject areas where they already offer accredited doctoral programmes. The remaining university colleges must have accreditation from NOKUT before starting new programmes.

Tertiary vocational college: Most tertiary vocational colleges must apply to NOKUT for accreditation of new educational programmes. Once a tertiary vocational college has a subject area accreditation, it can create its own study programmes within the subject area without applying to NOKUT first.

NUMBER OF INSPECTIONS OF QUALITY ASSURANCE WORK



FINANCIAL INSPECTIONS IN 2019

Institution	Board resolution
Asker Kunstfagskole	Not satisfactory / some shortcomings
Designinstituttet	Not satisfactory / some shortcomings
Frøesarmeeens offiserskole	Not satisfactory / some shortcomings
Hald internasjonale senter	Not satisfactory / some shortcomings
Ålesund kunstfagskole	Not satisfactory / some shortcomings

In addition to the five inspections at private tertiary vocational colleges receiving public funding, in 2019 NOKUT conducted financial inspections of 17 private university colleges, 48 private tertiary vocational colleges and 14 student welfare associations. We carry out these supervisory inspections in order to have a good overview of financial reports, the financial situation and developments, as well as various risks.

REGULATIONS AND SUPERVISION

NOKUT supervises the quality assurance practices at universities, specialised university institutions, university colleges and tertiary vocational colleges, and should stimulate quality development.

We are responsible for:

- external quality assurance of the institutions' systematic quality assurance work
- supervision of the accreditation of study programmes, subject areas and institutions
- supervision, analysis and control of financial and administrative matters

In addition, we manage regulations for the Norwegian Ministry of Education and Research, provide guidance for institutions, and contribute to the sharing of experience among the institutions.

PhD audit Nord University

In 2019, NOKUT audited the PhD accreditation for studies involving supervised professional training at Nord University. This audit placed particular emphasis on the Government's stricter requirements from 2016 for accreditation of doctoral studies. The expert committee has submitted a report that concludes that the PhD programme does not meet the accreditation requirements. The matter was considered by NOKUT's Board in February 2020. NOKUT's made a decision in line with the recommendations of the committee. Nord University has been given two years to document that the study programme meets all requirements.

AUDITED STUDY PROGRAMMES IN 2019

Institution	Subject area	Board resolution
Telemark Tertiary Vocational College	Vocational education programmes: civil engineering, online and mechanical engineering, location-based	Some shortcomings and deadline for rectification 2020
Nord University	PhD in studies of supervised professional training	Some shortcomings and deadline for rectification 2022

EVALUATION AND ANALYSIS

NOKUT conducts various types of evaluations, assessments and analyses. We do this in order to contribute to increased knowledge about various aspects of higher education and tertiary vocational college education that are important for the quality of the studies.

NOKUT is responsible for:

- evaluations
- national surveys such as the student survey, Studiebarometeret, and the teacher survey
- national module examinations
- summaries and analyses of the quality assurance at the subject area and study programme levels
- projects
- the NOKUT portal
- international Advisory Panel for Teacher Education
- evaluating educational quality

Thematic projects

In 2019, NOKUT worked on the following thematic projects:

- Primary and lower secondary teacher education
- Programmes for secondary education teachers with a master’s degree
- Partnerships between the business sector and tertiary vocational colleges
- Educational design and management at tertiary vocational colleges
- Supervised professional training and work relevance in higher education
- International student mobility in higher education
- The transition from upper secondary education to higher education
- Feedback to and mentoring of students in higher education
- Time pressures in teaching and mentoring of students in higher education
- Student-driven learning and diversity
- Quality in academic environments and education

INCREASED PLATFORM OF KNOWLEDGE AND INFORMATION

NOKUT aims to contribute to the education sector and to society being well informed about the quality of educational courses. We do this by disseminating the knowledge we have, putting important issues on the agenda, and giving academic policy advice. We want to be a prominent ambassador for quality and create arenas for debate and dialogue on quality challenges. In addition, we showcase academic environments that do well – to inspire others.

We do this through:

- analyses and reports
- NOKUT podcast
- NOKUT breakfast meetings
- seminars and conferences



Successful pilot of a new accreditation model

In the autumn of 2019, NOKUT piloted a simplified accreditation process for tertiary vocational education programmes. During October, eight accreditation applications from five different tertiary vocational colleges were assessed according to the newly developed process.

The applications were submitted to NOKUT on 15 September and were processed by 31 October. The processing time was reduced to only seven weeks.

NOKUT has a strategic ambition to reallocate resources from accreditation to supervision and guidance of tertiary vocational colleges. In addition, the case processing time will be reduced further.

To achieve this, we have developed a new case processing model where fewer requirements are checked and expert panels are used to take on many cases at once instead of having one committee per case. NOKUT's administrative officers also complete

more of the work before the cases are sent on to the experts.

"NOKUT's administrative officers will, to a greater extent, provide advance assessments to the panel, based on information about study programmes that are already accredited," says Clara Hasselberg, Head of Section for Quality Assurance of Study Programmes in Institutions in Department for Quality Assurance and Legal Affairs.

The pilot used a panel consisting of four people, three of whom were experts with technical expertise and the fourth was a student representative. To give students more responsibility, the student representative Torstein Gaasdalen was

appointed to chair the panel, which Hasselberg believes was beneficial to the process.

"We wanted to test how it worked to place a greater responsibility for the experts' work on a student, and with Gaasdalen's solid experience from previous work as an expert for NOKUT, the process worked as we envisaged," says Hasselberg, who adds that the other participants on the expert committee also responded positively to the experiment.

NOKUT is piloting a second round of the process in spring 2020, and we aim to implement the new simplified accreditation process from autumn 2020.

Gathering knowledge about quality in tertiary vocational education

In connection with the launch of this year's national vocational school student survey, new thematic pages on quality in tertiary vocational education were also launched. This will make it easier to find collective knowledge about the Norwegian tertiary vocational college sector.

Every year, NOKUT produces a lot of information and knowledge about the tertiary vocational college field, through oversight inspections, the national vocational school student survey and other sources. Until this autumn, this knowledge had not been seen in a thematic context, so NOKUT decided to do something about it.

“The new thematic pages gather knowledge about quality in one place, in what we hope is a user-friendly and

easily accessible way,” says Director of Evaluation and Analysis Ole-Jacob Skodvin.

The idea is to move away from long reports and focus on shorter texts, articles and interactive graphics.

“In addition, we have created an interactive map that provides a simple overview of all the campuses in the country, both private and public,” says Skodvin.



Ole-Jacob Skodvin

Director of Evaluation and Analysis

MAP OF QUALITY IN TERTIARY VOCATIONAL EDUCATION IN NORWAY



THREE THEMES HAVE BEEN PUBLISHED

- Link to working life in creative subjects
- Collaboration on quality in education between vocational technical colleges, industrial activities and universities and university colleges
- Organisation of technical tertiary vocational education

As planned, these themes will be gradually developed and expanded.

[Read more about quality in tertiary vocational education at nokut.no](https://nokut.no) (in Norwegian)

Vocational students study hard and rarely complain

The results of the second vocational school student survey were presented in September, confirming the findings from the first survey in 2018: The students are satisfied with their programmes, but they feel the contact with working life could be improved.

Among the most popular types of education, students pursuing Health and Social Care are the most satisfied, with almost nine out of ten saying they are satisfied with their studies.

“It is very gratifying to see that the vast majority of students are satisfied with their programmes,” says Skodvin.

At the same time, he warns against believing that the vocational college sector is all a bed of roses.

“Based on what the students say, we see that there are certain tertiary vocational colleges and educational programmes that are facing challenges. Getting negative feedback one year may be a random occurrence, but if it happens two years in a row, it should ring a bell,” warns Skodvin. He encourages all tertiary vocational colleges to examine the results and use them actively in their efforts to raise the quality of education.

WANT CLOSER COOPERATION

One of the core tasks of tertiary vocational colleges is to be closely linked to the business community and to provide relevant education. Although the students generally agree that their programmes are relevant to working life, they feel the extent to which the business community contributes directly to their education and the

opportunities for establishing business contacts are limited.

“The students say they learn what they need to be relevant to the business community, but have limited contact with companies during their studies. The tertiary vocational colleges and the business community should collaborate more to facilitate increased contact,” says the Director of Evaluation and Analysis, who emphasises that these numbers vary somewhat from study to study.

FULL WORK WEEK

[The national student survey](#) indicates that a full-time vocational college student spends more time a week on schoolwork than a person with a normal full-time job, averaging 38.7 hours a week. That’s an increase of 0.4 hours from last year and just over an hour more than a normal working week. But when you add on the fact that full-time students have on average five hours of paid work a week in addition to their studies, the total workload ends up at an overwhelming 43.8 hours.

For part-time students, the total workload is even greater, with a total of 46.8 hours a week of work and education.

“When we see how much time students spend on their studies,

often in conjunction with a part-time job, we can assume that the students are motivated and serious. At NOKUT, we think that is a good thing,” concludes Skodvin.



More tertiary vocational colleges receive accreditation of subject areas

With increasingly larger and more robust institutions, the tertiary vocational college sector is regarded as a mature part of the education sector in 2019. An increasing number of tertiary vocational colleges are also receiving accreditation of subject areas.

In September, Østfold Tertiary Vocational College became the first one in Norway with two accredited subject areas. In December, Kristiania Tertiary Vocational College followed up with two accredited subject areas. At the beginning of 2020, Kristiania Tertiary Vocational College received accreditation of its third subject area – as the first in Norway.

“It is a positive development that the tertiary vocational colleges are working strategically and from a long-term perspective, with the goal of securing subject area accreditations. These subject area accreditations provide exciting opportunities for interdisciplinary, work-relevant studies across established disciplines and professions,” says Director of Quality Assurance and Legal Affairs Øystein Lund.

Tertiary vocational education should provide skills and expertise that can be used directly in a constantly changing world of work. With a subject area accreditation, the tertiary vocational colleges themselves are authorised to create new and make changes to existing programmes.

“This means that a tertiary vocational college can more quickly adjust its study programmes according to the needs of the business community,” Lund explains.

Although several subject areas have been accredited, many tertiary vocational colleges have yet to apply to NOKUT for accreditation. For those colleges, it is important that NOKUT’s case processing time not be too long.

“In 2019, we tested a new model for accreditation of tertiary vocational education programmes. The results are promising. We managed to dramatically reduce the processing time,” says Lund.

NOKUT has in 2019 piloted a method for external quality assurance of the quality assurance work at tertiary vocational colleges.

“Five tertiary vocational colleges were selected to participate in the pilot. We will continue this work in 2020,” concludes Lund.



Øystein Lund
Director of Quality Assurance
and Legal Affairs



OVERVIEW OF ALL SUBJECT AREA ACCREDITATIONS 2012 TO 2019

Tertiary vocational college	Subject area	Board resolution
Norges grønne fagskole – Veia	Green design and environmental studies	Accredited in 2012
AOF Haugaland	Health and social care	Accredited in 2016
Fagskolen Kristiania	Design, communication and technology	Accredited in 2017
Fagskolen Innlandet	Civil engineering	Accredited in 2018
Fagskolen Østfold	Health	Accredited in 2018
Bårdar Akademiet	Commercial performing arts, interpretation and presentation	Accredited in 2018
Studieforbundet AOF Norge	Health and social care	Accredited in 2019
Fagskolen Østfold	Technical	Accredited in 2019
Fagskolen Tinius Olsen	Technical	Accredited in 2019
Fagskolen Kristiania	Health and social care	Accredited in 2019
Fagskolen Kristiania	Economics and administration	Accredited in 2020
Fagskolen i Hordaland	Electrical engineering	Processing in 2020
Fagskolen i Hordaland	Civil engineering	Processing in 2020
Norges grønne fagskole VEA	Changes to existing subject area	Processing in 2020
Fagskolen i Innlandet	Technology	Processing in 2020
Medlearn	Health and social care	Processing in 2020
Norsk fagskole for lokomotivførere	Train performance and train preparation	Processing in 2020
NOROFF	Technology and digital media	Processing in 2020

Strengthened experience-sharing and guidance

Through dissemination of knowledge, experience-sharing and guidance, NOKUT aims to contribute to better and more effective quality assurance work at all universities, university colleges and tertiary vocational colleges.

In recent years, NOKUT has been focusing on further developing our work with experience-sharing and guidance, among other things by arranging meeting places for the educational institutions and NOKUT. With several fully booked seminars, this work has shown that both the sector and NOKUT need this type of meeting place.

Hege Brodahl, Head of Quality Assurance of Institutions in Department for Quality Assurance and Legal Affairs, says the seminars have great value in a number of respects.

“We often plan our topics according to needs reported by the sector. The seminars also contribute to the sharing of experience between the

institutions and between NOKUT and the institutions.”

Brodahl says that the seminars are also useful for NOKUT as they provide better insight into any uncertainties regarding regulations and better sector knowledge, while also enabling NOKUT to dispel some of the myths related to the regulations.

“It’s positive both for the institutions and for NOKUT,” says Brodahl.

FULL-SCALE AUDITS

In our external quality assurance of the systematic quality assurance work of universities and university colleges, NOKUT checks whether the institutions’ work meets the requirements set out in applicable regulations. In addition, our audits should stimulate the institutions to pursue further development.

This was the first year for full-scale implementation of our new periodic audits of the quality assurance work conducted at universities and university colleges.

Brodahl explains that these audits will take place every six to eight years, and that all university colleges and



The debate was lively when NOKUT organised a seminar for the tertiary vocational college in Hordaland in September. The seminar was held in Bergen.



Hege Brodahl

Head of Quality Assurance of Institutions in Department for Quality Assurance and Legal Affairs

universities will be audited by 2024. The goal is an audit based on trust and respect for the institutions' autonomy, while at the same time being robust and clear enough to ensure that they are conducting satisfactory quality assurance work that promotes improvement and development.

"Some institutions have been given notice that they must improve their quality assurance work, but in general, our first audits indicate that the university colleges and universities are in control of the quality of the education they provide," she says.

PILOT AT TERTIARY VOCATIONAL COLLEGES

Just as with higher education, NOKUT also oversees tertiary vocational colleges.

"In 2019, we prioritised piloting a more systematic follow-up to the quality assurance work conducted by tertiary vocational colleges, in the same way

as we have been working with higher education since 2003," says Brodahl.

Five tertiary vocational colleges participated in a pilot project. Fredrikstad FagAkademi AS and AOF Østfold have both had their systematic quality assurance work approved, while Norsk Hestesenter (The Norwegian Equestrian Centre), Treider Fagskoler AS and Fagskolen Aldring og helse (Tertiary Vocational College for Aging and Health)

have some deficiencies in their quality assurance work that will need to be rectified by autumn 2020.

"This has proven to be an effective way for NOKUT to have systematic contact with all tertiary vocational colleges over time, just as we do with universities and university colleges. At the same time, we gain a broader platform of knowledge on the quality of education in the sector," Brodahl concludes.

AUDITS OF SYSTEMATIC QUALITY ASSURANCE WORK

UNIVERSITIES AND UNIVERSITY COLLEGES

MF Norwegian School of Theology, Religion and Society
 Norwegian Academy of Music
 The Oslo School of Architecture and Design
 Nord University
 University of South-Eastern Norway
 Inland Norway University of Applied Sciences

College of Green Development (previously the College of Agriculture and Rural Development)
 Western Norway University of Applied Sciences

OsloMet – Oslo Metropolitan University
 NMBU – Norwegian University of Life Sciences
 University of Agder
 University of Stavanger

TERTIARY VOCATIONAL COLLEGES

AOF Østfold
 Fredrikstad FagAkademi AS

Fagskolen Aldring og helse (Tertiary Vocational College for Aging and Health)
 Norsk Hestesenter (The Norwegian Equestrian Centre)
 Treider Fagskoler AS

COLOUR CODING

Approved
 Some shortcomings, deadline for rectification in 2020
 Processing in 2020

Our important administrative tasks

From only having the responsibility for our own two supervision regulations, NOKUT is now responsible for 12 regulations that govern the work at universities, university colleges and tertiary vocational colleges.



Håvard Tvinnereim

Head of Section for Legal Affairs in the Department for Quality Assurance and Legal Affairs

When the Norwegian Ministry of Education and Research transferred these regulatory tasks, the Ministry wrote that NOKUT shall work with implementing regulations, providing guidance and information, and following up on compliance with the provisions of the regulations. In addition, we will answer questions about how to understand the relevant regulations, and we will be responsible for assessing whether the regulations need to be adjusted.

“There is an expectation from the Norwegian Ministry of Education and Research that our regulatory work will be knowledge-based to a much greater extent than it was before. NOKUT’s role as a regulatory administrator is to act more systematically, with more of a long-term perspective and user-centric approach than the Ministry has taken,” says Håvard Tvinnereim. He is the Head of Section for Legal Affairs in the Department for Quality Assurance and Legal Affairs, and is responsible for monitoring the tasks transferred from the Norwegian Ministry of Education and Research.

SIMPLE REGULATIONS

In our strategy for the next few years, NOKUT has set a development goal of making regulations simpler and more consistent.

“In order to achieve this goal, we will work to strengthen our own expertise and further develop a knowledge-based methodology. We will also work to communicate the regulations so that they are understood by those who need to use them. This is a priority area for 2020,” he says.

Tvinnereim explains that one of the first measures they initiated was to map the regulations in order to understand their nature and overall scope.

“We wanted to establish a systematic development and maintenance

programme for all the regulations for which we are responsible. At the same time, we conducted several surveys to ensure that our development work is based on solid and evidence-based data,” he explains.

DEVELOPMENT GOALS:

Simpler and more consistent regulations for the sector

To achieve this goal, we will:

- continue to develop expertise and establish an appropriate organisation of work on regulatory management
- communicate the regulations so that they are understood and followed
- further develop a methodology that ensures regulatory development is evidence-based, and seek to avoid regulation where it is not necessary or where the objective can be achieved by other means
- highlight the process of further developing NOKUT’s Academic

Supervision Regulations and NOKUT’s Tertiary Vocational College Supervision Regulations with a particular focus on the fact that the institutions are primarily responsible for following them up

- review all other regulations for which NOKUT is responsible with the aim of simplifying their structure, content and scope
- stimulate institutions to simplify local regulations and procedures where appropriate



TWOFOLD APPROACH

Regulatory administration is a new, key role for NOKUT. Our role is to interpret and implement systematic maintenance and development of the regulations.

This work is twofold: one aspect comprises study and development, while the other part of our work covers information and guidance. With regard to the further development of regulations, we will take a user-oriented, fact-based approach and identify the actual challenges facing the sector. In addition to this, there is our responsibility to provide guidance.

“Questions are flowing in, which is providing us with a wealth of information about how users understand the regulations and what kind of help they need. We will bring this insight into our broader regulatory work,” he says.

INTERDISCIPLINARY COOPERATION

Tvinnereim believes that NOKUT is very well placed to be a good regulatory administrator.

“To be a good regulatory administrator, you have to take an interdisciplinary approach, something we try to do in all our tasks. It is important to not only have lawyers working on the regulations, but also to involve employees with different fields of expertise and

knowledge of the institutions and our analysis and supervisory work. In our change work, we do not just look at the regulations, but we take into account the full breadth of policy instruments and measures that can be implemented,” he says.

“The main point is that you have to take an interdisciplinary approach and remember that the law is not just for lawyers.”

In a recently started project, NOKUT is looking at risk-based policy instruments. Staff working with regulatory administration and regulatory tasks on a daily basis work together with those responsible for evaluation and analysis.

Together, they will establish a systematic approach in this area and achieve good regulatory management.

Regulations administered by NOKUT

- Regulations concerning supervision of the quality of tertiary vocational education (Tertiary Vocational College Supervision Regulations)
- Regulations concerning supervision of the educational quality in higher education (Academic Supervision Regulations)
- Regulations concerning tertiary vocational education (Tertiary Vocational School Regulations)
- Regulations concerning crediting higher education
- Regulations concerning suitability assessment in higher education
- Regulations concerning fees at universities and colleges
- Regulations concerning terms and conditions of employment for the posts of post-doctoral research fellow, research fellow, research assistant and resident
- Regulations concerning appointment and promotion to teaching and research posts (Personnel Regulations)
- Regulations concerning tenure track appointments
- Regulations concerning infraction fines under the University and University Colleges Act and the Tertiary Vocational Act
- Regulations concerning private universities, university colleges and tertiary vocational colleges – requirements for accounting, etc.
- Regulations concerning student welfare associations



Assistant Director of the Department for Evaluation and Analysis, Stephan Hamberg, presented the report "Academic environment and educational quality" at a breakfast meeting in Oslo on 9 May.

Myth-busting academic environment report

With the report "Academic environment and educational quality", NOKUT aims to facilitate increased knowledge about and attention on what "a good academic environment" looks like and how this can best be regulated.

At the same time, we are helping to uncover misconceptions about NOKUT's requirements for the academic environment.

[In the report \(In Norwegian\)](#), we have examined what characterises a good academic environment. One key finding is that it is not possible to provide a definitive answer to what a good academic environment is or how it should be composed. Different subject areas and types of education have different needs, and the mix of expertise and size of the academic environment must necessarily vary.

Therefore, the common features of "a good academic environment" that we have identified are at an overall level and not at a detailed level.

"We have found a number of common characteristics for what creates a good academic environment. These traits are related to the competence profiles that contribute to academic development and learning outcomes, positive collaboration among staff, a thoughtful use of external teachers, focus on joint development of programme offerings and inclusion of students in academic communities," explains Stephan Hamberg. He is the co-author of the report and the Assistant Director of the Department for Evaluation and Analysis.

Furthermore, the report looks at the current regulation of the academic environment through NOKUT's supervision regulations, and whether this is broad enough to accommodate the large variety of subject areas and types of education. In addition, the report examines whether the regulations are adapted to the structural landscape where study programmes are often offered in parallel at several campuses.

"Our findings indicate that requirements for academic environments are flexible, but that there is a need for dialogue with the sector regarding

GOOD ACADEMIC ENVIRONMENT



the challenges related to detailed requirements for associate professor competence. Furthermore, there may be a need to put the students more clearly at the centre of the regulations in order to clarify who a good academic environment should benefit," says Hamberg.

Through interviews with people in academic environments, it has emerged that there are some misconceptions about NOKUT's requirements. This particularly applies to an excessive focus on the minimum requirements for associate professor competence and

a somewhat narrow understanding of the term "research-based education".

"It is a challenge that the academic community does not seem to be aware of their own latitude in terms of applying these requirements. Here, there is a need for information and awareness about the terms we use," concludes Hamberg.

What is an academic environment?

NOKUT states that the academic environment associated with programme offerings includes people who directly and regularly contribute to the development, organisation and implementation of the study programmes. This definition is meant to include people who make various contributions to study programmes beyond teaching, mentoring or other facilitation of learning.

This may be, for example, laboratory work, research, development work, transfer of experience from supervised professional training, practical teaching, educational and professional use of digital technology, innovation and collaboration with business and industry.



NOKUT podcast spreads ideas and inspiration

Since the beginning of 2017, the NOKUT podcast has established itself as one of NOKUT's foremost communication tools. But can you catch the reference in the episode titles (The one...)? We'll reveal the answer at the end of the article.

"In the NOKUT podcast, we talk to the people who are most closely involved with teaching on a daily basis. The goal is to spread good ideas and provide inspiration to other teachers around the country," says Senior Adviser Inger-Lise Kalviknes Bore. The NOKUT podcast's editorial staff are: Senior Adviser Aslaug Louise Slette, Adviser Eirin Kristiansen and Communications Adviser Kristian Bergh.

Through ten episodes in 2019, the podcast has provided a platform for those of us who are passionate about

The NOKUT podcast by the numbers

NUMBER OF EPISODES:	10
NUMBER OF GUESTS:	20
NUMBER OF STREAMS:	7 215
NUMBER OF CUPS OF COFFEE:	Countless

educational quality to share our experience. Guests from all over the country have contributed their knowledge to the benefit of others. Over the course of the year, the NOKUT podcast has been streamed over 7,000 times. That's

more than twice as many streams as the year before, and the growth has remained stable throughout the year.

The NOKUT podcast has also been made available on major platforms such as Spotify and Apple Podcast, making it even easier for listeners to find it. Throughout the year, the podcast has covered a wide range of topics – from cooperation on supervised professional training and a live broadcast of the NOKUT Conference, to the issue of assessments.

“It is very inspiring that our podcast has been so well received, both in terms of listener numbers and positive feedback. And it has certainly also been fun to have the opportunity to provide examples of all the good work being done in higher education,” says Bergh.

“A GREAT MEDIUM”

In “The one about feedback and peer mentoring”, Elin Kubberød and Inna Marie Dahlen from the Norwegian University of Life Sciences visited the studio. Kubberød is an associate professor and Dahlen is a student, and together, they provided tips and tricks on how to succeed with peer mentoring and feedback to students.

“We thought it was great fun to be involved and think it is a great medium for discussing important issues related to higher education. I was also flattered to be invited, as it acknowledges the quality of our study programme,” says Dahlen.

Did you benefit from participating in the podcast?

“Yes, it gave us a channel to spread our philosophy on education and, not least, the chance to promote our study in a good way. We have also received enquiries from other educational



Adviser Eirin Kristiansen and Communications Adviser Kristian Bergh from the NOKUT podcast editorial staff with Associate Professor Elin Kubberød and student Inna Marie Dahlen, both from the Norwegian University of Life Sciences.

institutions and completely different programmes that are interested in how they can implement peer mentoring. It is important for us to spread our message about the impact of this tool and for others to start using it,” says Kubberød.

She goes on to say that there have been several other interesting episodes of the NOKUT podcast, which they promoted through their social media channels.

“Especially ‘The one about cooperation on supervised professional training’

and ‘The one about students as peer mentors’ are very interesting podcasts with good perspectives that we need in higher education,” concludes Kubberød.

Episodes from 2019 pervision

- The one about assessments
 - The one from the NOKUT Conference
 - The one about students as peer mentors
 - The one about co-research as a form of assessment
 - The one about student projects with external clients
 - The one about teaching across campuses
 - The one about cooperation on supervised professional training
 - The one about feedback and peer mentoring
 - The one about academic community for staff and students
 - The one about meriting teachers
- [Listen to all the episodes](#) (in Norwegian)

Fun fact: “The one...” is a reference to the TV series Friends, where all the episodes were called “The One...”.



NOKUT raises the level of knowledge about supervised professional training in higher education

Higher education and relevance to working life is a hot topic, and supervised professional training has been highlighted as a tool for increasing the relevance of education.

The Norwegian Ministry of Education and Research is working on a report on work relevance, in which supervised professional training will form a key part. At the same time, we know that there are some challenges when it comes to supervised professional training and that the quality can vary. NOKUT's project on supervised professional training provides awareness of relevant challenges, gathers knowledge of factors that are important for succeeding with supervised professional training, and creates arenas where key players can share their knowledge and experiences.

Good examples

In the work on improving the platform of knowledge, it is useful to look at some of those who succeed with their supervised professional training schemes. This was highlighted in the report "Supervised professional training in higher education – good examples", which NOKUT presented at a breakfast meeting at the University of Agder on Wednesday 5 June.

"In the report, we present several examples of organising and implementing supervised professional training that we hope can inspire others," explains Ingvild Andersen Helseth, Senior Adviser in the Department for Evaluation and Analysis. She is co-author of the report and

project manager for NOKUT's project on supervised professional training.

The example highlighted in the report is linked to four different study programmes: Nursing at the University of Agder, Child Welfare Officer at the University of South-Eastern Norway, Primary and Lower Secondary Teacher Education at the University of South-Eastern Norway, and Entrepreneurship and Innovation at the Norwegian University of Life Sciences. Although the subject areas vary widely, the report identifies quite a few commonalities.

"We have seen that good communication is crucial for students' learning outcomes and their experience of supervised professional training. One common theme running through the academic environments we talked to is that they emphasise good dialogue with those providing supervised professional training as a key reason for their success. It is also important that communication and collaboration work well internally in the academic community," says Helseth.

"THE GOAL IS TO INSPIRE OTHERS"

Although the report identifies some commonalities, what works in one place cannot necessarily automatically be transferred to other places.

"Something that works well in one context may not work equally well in another. The goal is therefore to inspire others to reflect on what they can learn from the way these four environments organise, implement and further develop supervised professional training," concludes Helseth.



Senior Adviser in Department for Evaluation and Analysis, Ingvild Andersen Helseth presents the results from the project on supervised professional training.

NOKUT's project on supervised professional training

The evaluation of relevance to working life is part of NOKUT's thematic focus on quality in supervised professional training in higher education. The project started in 2018.

- The first phase involved a broad mapping of different aspects of quality in supervised professional training. This was completed in 2019 and has resulted in 13 interim reports and one collective report. [Read the reports](#) (in Norwegian)
- The second phase includes an evaluation of the work relevance in various disciplines and an examination of the regulations that regulate supervised professional training in higher education.









This work will be completed in 2020.



FOREIGN EDUCATION

**NOKUT shall contribute to:
ensuring that an efficient system that enables
foreign education and qualifications to be
recognised and used in Norway is in place**

**TOP TEN APPLICANT COUNTRIES
IN 2019 – HIGHER EDUCATION**

	Poland	813
	United Kingdom	665
	India	558
	Lithuania	482
	USA	380
	Philippines	363
	Serbia	320
	Syria	320
	Ukraine	294
	Pakistan	288

More than 60 per cent of those applying for recognition of university and university college education come from European countries, with applicants from Eastern European countries in the clear majority. A total of 6,596 people applied for recognition of their qualifications in 2019. This is a decrease of six per cent from 2018.

Significant changes from 2018: Syria dropped from the top of the list to seventh place, while India went from seventh place in 2018 to being the third largest applicant country in 2019. New countries on the list are the United States, Ukraine and Pakistan, while Iraq, Turkey and Russia have fallen out of the top ten.

NOKUT has an important role as recognition authority for foreign qualifications. Recognition is important for individuals with foreign qualifications who wish to enter the Norwegian labour market. It is also important for employers and educational institutions, who must have confidence in recognised foreign qualifications. In this work, NOKUT needs to have sufficient knowledge of both the Norwegian and foreign education systems. We also use this knowledge to provide information about our work.

RECOGNITION SCHEMES

NOKUT has three schemes for the recognition of foreign education or training.

- **Vocational education and training:** In this recognition scheme NOKUT assesses the level, scope and the vocational content of the qualification. The qualification is compared to a qualification provided at Norwegian upper secondary schools in the same subject. A total of 19 qualifications from Lithuania, Latvia, Estonia, Poland and Germany can be assessed at the moment. In 2021, we will expand the list to cover more countries and/or qualifications.
- **Education at the tertiary vocational educational institutions from foreign educational institutions:** We compare the foreign education against the Norwegian system. We assess the education to see if it is comparable in level with the Norwegian tertiary vocational education. Our decision will briefly describe the subject area, including by specifying the profession, industry or sector for which the

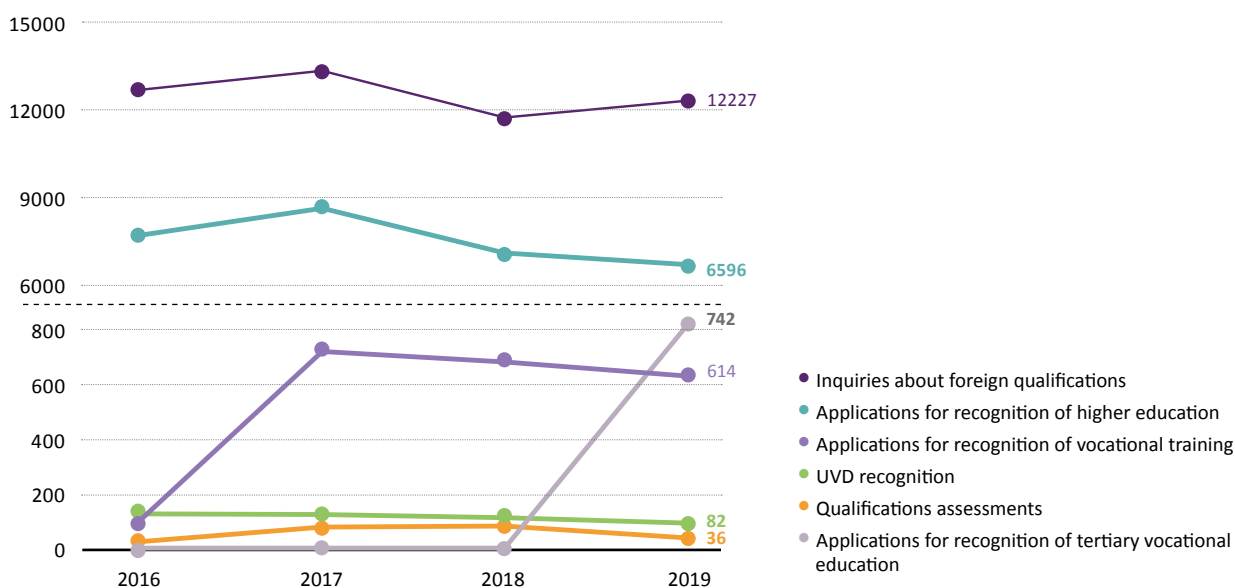
education provides qualifications in the country where it has been completed.

- **Education from universities or university colleges:** We compare the foreign education against the Norwegian educational system. The decision describes the duration of the education programme, the number of credits it is worth and if it is equivalent to a Norwegian bachelor’s degree, master’s degree or PhD. In addition, NOKUT has developed three specialized schemes for specific applicant groups.

These are as follows:

- **Automatic recognition of bachelor’s degrees and PhDs from the Nordic countries, Lithuania and Poland:** This is a standardised statement which specifies how these degrees are recognised in Norway. The statement can be downloaded and used immediately without having to submit an application for recognition.

RECOGNITION OF FOREIGN QUALIFICATIONS – DEVELOPMENT FROM 2016 TO 2019



INFORMATION AND NETWORKING

- Recognition procedure for persons without verifiable documentation (UVD procedure):** This is an interview-based scheme for people without verifiable documentation who have good language skills in Norwegian or English and a permanent residence permit in Norway.
- NOKUT's qualifications assessment:** This option is for applicants who cannot be included in NOKUT's recognition of foreign higher education and who do not fall under NOKUT's recognition procedure for persons without verifiable documentation (UVD procedure).

NOKUT works actively to provide the best possible information to our applicants and to guide and train other stakeholders who work with recognition of qualifications.

We do this by:

- developing e-learning programmes for advisors in higher education or the public sector
- maintaining NOKUT's country database
- maintaining the GSU list (general university and college admissions certification for foreign applicants)
- organising seminars and conferences

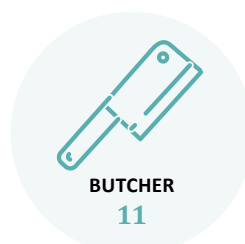
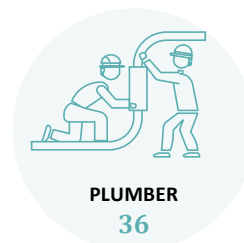
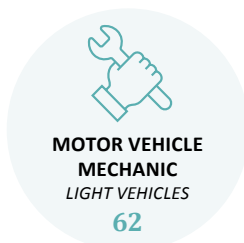
In addition, NOKUT is:

- the Norwegian assistance centre for the EU Professional Qualifications Directive:** This includes providing information about recognition and authorisation of regulated professions, having the responsibility for obtaining statistics for 166 regulated professions from 16 recognition offices, as well as updating and quality assuring information on the Altinn internet portal regarding regulated professions. In addition, we issue confirmations for Norwegian architects who want to work abroad.
- the Norwegian ENIC-NARIC centre:** This includes national responsibility for providing information on foreign qualifications and educational systems in addition to the Norwegian educational system. Our information tasks include providing guidance and information for NOKUT's user groups in the field of foreign education.

Turbo evaluation for employers and institutions

- Turbo evaluation for employers:** NOKUT offers a fast track that can help to understand the documents. The evaluation is carried out within five working days.
- Turbo evaluation for admission to a PhD programme:** NOKUT offers an evaluation of the scope and level of foreign higher education to educational institutions that have chosen relevant applicants for further assessment for admission.

TOP TEN VOCATIONAL QUALIFICATIONS IN 2019



IMPROVED KNOWLEDGE BASE

NOKUT contributes to the improvement of the knowledge base on the recognition of foreign qualifications, and provides policy advice to the Norwegian Ministry of Education and Research. Our reports also help to improve our own recognition and assessment procedures. In 2019, they have served as an important starting point for the further development of our services. Improving the knowledge base on the recognition of foreign qualifications is an important priority for NOKUT.

In 2019, we completed four reports, and we will compile more reports in 2020.

- Experience report: Recognition scheme for foreign vocational training
- Report to the Norwegian Ministry of Education and Research on the mapping of recognition schemes for regulated professions

- Report from the EU project ORION, which is the basis for NOKUT's proposal for adjusted criteria for general recognition of foreign higher education
- Report to the Nordic Council of Ministers on digitalisation and recognition, where NOKUT chaired the Nordic working group and where a report will be submitted in January 2020



Many roads lead to recognition

NOKUT recognises foreign qualifications from vocational training at upper secondary schools and qualifications corresponding to the tertiary vocational college level, to university colleges and universities – all the way up to the PhD level.

“Through our work, we make it easier for people with foreign qualifications to gain access to the Norwegian labour market and education sector. At the same time, we help employers and educational institutions to trust that a person has the necessary qualifications to be hired or admitted to a study programme,” says Acting Director of Foreign Education Helén Sophie Haugen.

NOKUT uses several methods to provide holders of foreign qualifications with documentation of their competence. NOKUT’s recognition scheme for foreign higher education has been around as long as NOKUT has existed, and is the largest in terms of number of applications. In 2019, there were 6,596 applications. During the year, we recognised a total of 7,302 applications. It is important that everyone who applies to NOKUT

should have a real opportunity to have their qualifications assessed, regardless of the status of their documentation.

“This is why we have developed a recognition scheme for people without verifiable documentation, called the UVD procedure, where we use experts to interview applicants. In 2019, 110 cases were referred to UVD, and we made 82 recognition decisions,” explains Haugen.

For those applicants who are not eligible for the UVD procedure, we perform a qualifications assessment in which the applicant receives a document containing information on the highest achieved qualification, work experience and language skills. In addition, we provide guidance on the way forward. In 2019, 50 cases were referred to this assessment scheme, and we issued 36 qualifications assessments.

“We have gained solid experience and strong expertise, and we have received acknowledgement internationally for establishing alternative recognition schemes for applicants with insufficiently documented education,” says Haugen.

For vocational training, we work closely with stakeholders in the world of work. An expert committee has been appointed for each type of qualification, which then advises NOKUT.

“The scheme was established on the initiative of the social partners, and qualifications that are in high demand in the labour market are given priority. There are about 100 experts assigned by NOKUT to perform these assessments,” she explains.

We received 614 applications for recognition of vocational training in 2019. We processed 806 cases, which is just over 100 more than the year before. The share of recognitions granted also increases every year.

In 2019, we approved 306 applications.

“The largest group who received recognition of their qualifications in 2019 were wood products carpenters, followed by motor vehicle mechanics. It shows that our latest expansion was perfectly in line with the needs of the labour market,” says Haugen.

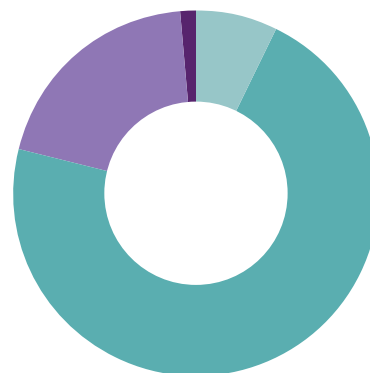
NOKUT is also responsible for the new recognition scheme for foreign qualifications corresponding to the tertiary vocational college level. Read more on page 36.

“The fact that we have such a wide range of methods in use makes us well-equipped to expand our portfolio. From 1 January 2020, we have also been given the responsibility for the recognition of schoolteachers, heads of kindergartens and educational supervisors in kindergartens,” concludes Haugen.



Helén Sophie Haugen
Acting Director of Foreign Education

APPROVED APPLICATIONS CORRESPONDING TO NORWEGIAN DEGREES IN 2019



University college graduate
398

Bachelor's degree
3855

Master's degree
1066

PhD
69

“Working to reduce case processing time”

The processing time for applications of recognition of foreign qualifications varies, depending on the country of origin, the qualification itself and the different recognition schemes. Some applications only take a few hours to process, while others take many months.

“We are constantly working to reduce the processing time so that applicants do not have to wait so long for an answer,” says Acting Director of Foreign Education Helén Sophie Haugen.

Automatic recognition of bachelor’s degrees from the Nordic countries, Poland and Lithuania led to fewer applications from these countries. NOKUT is currently working on a digital solution where applicants can be offered automatic recognition through our application portal. NOKUT is also working to improve and streamline the recognition process in ways other than through digitalisation. Our largest single initiative is the introduction

of new criteria for the recognition of foreign higher education. This initiative is ready to launch in spring 2020. We have halved the processing time for complete applications for recognition of foreign education compared with 2018. The processing time has dropped to an average of eleven days.

“We still have work to do both in terms of reducing the time lost before the application process starts internally at NOKUT and in terms of ensuring that applications are complete in the first place. We need to help applicants submit all the documentation NOKUT needs to make a decision. Our goal is to process applications significantly

quicker than we do today,” says Haugen.

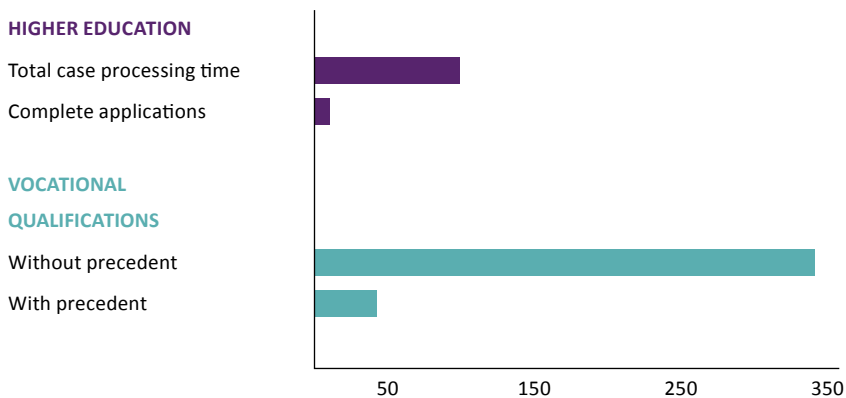
Use of precedent

When it comes to the recognition scheme for vocational education and training, there are major differences in the case processing time between cases where countries and qualifications have not been previously assessed by NOKUT and cases where there is a precedent. For applications without a precedent, the case processing time in 2019 was 342 days, while for applications with a precedent it was 44 days.

A precedent can be set in two ways: When experts assess a qualification from a given period as equivalent or when the application for recognition is rejected because it does not meet the criteria.

NOKUT can then use the precedent cases as a basis for assessing similar qualifications. For example: If an expert committee has assessed the qualifications for a certain carpenter training programme in Lithuania to be equivalent to the Norwegian qualification, we do not need to reassess this for every new application. Thus, precedent allows us to ensure the equal treatment of applications with the same foreign qualification from a specific period.

CASE PROCESSING TIME IN 2019 – DAYS



New recognition scheme for foreign qualifications at the tertiary vocational college level

On 1 January, a new recognition scheme was launched for foreign tertiary vocational education or qualifications comparable to tertiary vocational education.

“The recognition scheme was introduced because of the lack of a system for assessing education corresponding to the tertiary vocational college level. It should make it easier for people with such education to integrate into the Norwegian society,” says Silje Molander. She is Head of Section for Recognition of VET and TVET in the Department for Foreign Education.

APPLICATIONS FROM AROUND THE WORLD

In total, NOKUT received 742 applications for recognition of qualifications from 85 countries. The five countries with the most applications were Poland, Syria, Lithuania, the UK and Sweden. We approved 124 applications, whereas 399 were rejected. The main reasons for rejections were an inadequate scope or level of education for qualifications.



Silje Molander

Head of Section for Recognition of VET and TVET in the Department for Foreign Education

Requirements for recognition

The requirements for recognition of a qualification as equivalent to a Norwegian tertiary vocational college are that the education must be completed and passed, it must be possible to perform an authenticity assessment including verification if necessary, and the education must be quality assured through accreditation or the like.

The education must be above the upper secondary level, be vocational, and the scope must correspond to Norwegian vocational college education, i.e. six months to three years.

NOKUT assesses whether the foreign qualification can be recognised as Norwegian tertiary vocational education.

We also create a tertiary vocational education profile to determine what the qualifications are used for in the country of origin.

“The new scheme allows people with foreign education to use their education to work in Norway. Recognised qualifications can also qualify for admission to a Norwegian university college or university,” she continues.

The countries with the highest number of recognised qualifications at the end of 2019 were Lithuania, Poland, Syria, Sweden and Russia.

“In the case of many countries, it is challenging to distinguish between education corresponding to tertiary vocational education, higher education



and vocational training, largely because education is organised differently in various countries. Thus, many foreign applicants don't know what a Norwegian education at a tertiary vocational level entails," explains Molander.

CHALLENGING

Many of the applications are difficult to verify, and it takes time to evaluate the qualifications.

"Particularly challenging are qualifications from countries that have undergone reforms and regime changes in recent times. Another challenge are qualifications obtained in countries that are currently affected by conflict," says Molander.

According to Molander, another challenge is that NOKUT's decision must state which profession and which industry or sector the foreign tertiary vocational education qualifies for in the country of origin. The labour market in other countries, not least outside Europe, is often very different from what we have here in Norway, and it is difficult to obtain this kind of information.

"We continuously work to establish good networks that can help us with the information we need to make decisions. This can take time, so before these networks are in place, we have to focus on solving one challenge at a time," concludes Molander.

TOP TEN APPLICANT COUNTRIES IN 2019

	Poland	158
	Syria	78
	Lithuania	67
	Latvia	21
	Sweden	17
	United Kingdom	17
	Russia	15
	Serbia	15
	Turkey	14
	Germany	10



Global qualifications passport for refugees under establishment

In the autumn of 2019, UNESCO successfully tested its first qualifications passport project in Zambia. Now they plan to extend the scheme.

At the UNESCO General Conference in Paris in November, the first eleven globally recognised qualifications passports were issued. This is the result of an ongoing pilot project in Zambia. At the same time, it was decided that UNESCO's pilot project would be extended to Iraq and Colombia. The qualifications passport for refugees is a standardised statement that contains information about the applicant's highest qualifications, work experience and language skills, as well as advice and guidance on how they should proceed moving forward. The goal is

to facilitate applicants' opportunity to work or continue their studies, improve their language skills, or apply for formal recognition or authorisation if they still need it.

METHOD DEVELOPED BY NOKUT

The method behind the qualifications passports was developed by NOKUT in the wake of the 2015 refugee crisis, when there was a great need to map the skills of newly arrived refugees. The Council of Europe quickly took an interest in the project and has developed its own qualifications

passports based on NOKUT's method.

Marina Malgina, Head of Section for Interview-based Procedures in the Department for Foreign Education, has been central to the work on the qualification passports, from when the idea was first launched to the current pilot project in Zambia.

"As soon as the idea of qualifications passports was launched, we realised that it could be an intergovernmental solution to an intergovernmental challenge. It is amazing that UNESCO

Autumn 2019 in Zambia:
A refugee from DR Congo is interviewed by Senior Adviser Marius Jensen from NOKUT and two colleagues from our sister office ZAQA in Zambia.



Anwar Horani

Anwar Horani was born and raised in Syria and graduated from Al-Baath University in Syria as a physiotherapist in 2010. Horani and her husband were forced to flee their homeland as a result of the civil war and ended up in a refugee camp in Greece, where she came into contact with EQPR (European Qualifications Passport for Refugees), which is a project led by the Council of Europe. The EQPR is based on a method developed by NOKUT.

In March 2017, Horani became one of the first to receive an EQPR, and thanks to this she got the opportunity to participate in the International Health

course at OsloMet in 2018. While she was taking the course, she received an internship as a physiotherapist at the university clinic. Horani has worked in the Health Forum for Women in the Sagene district of Oslo since March 2018. She is also a counsellor in the Norwegian Diabetes Association.

Here, you can watch an interview with Horani which was shown at the UN General Assembly, where NOKUT presented the qualifications passport: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=u-BB9le-ahFU>



Stefania Giannini, UNESCO

has started work on qualifications passports based on our method and experiences,” says Malgina.

FEW REFUGEES HAVE ACCESS TO EDUCATION

Today, only three per cent of eligible refugees among the world’s millions

of refugees have access to higher education. It is a difficult situation for those concerned, but losing out on competent and skilled people is also a challenge for society at large.

“The Qualifications passport for refugees is a vital tool to make sure we don’t miss out on more talent and to safeguard education as a human right,” explained Stefania Giannini, Assistant Director-General for Education in UNESCO, when the project was presented at the General Conference.

FUNDING FROM NORWAY

The Norwegian Ministry of Education and Research has provided financial support to UNESCO for the implementation of the pilot project and has now confirmed that they will continue to provide funding for the project in the future. NOKUT will also continue to be involved in the UNESCO project, and we are looking forward to contributing further with our experience and knowledge.



NOKUT has the honour of being the first ever winner of the Sepmeyer Award for Excellence in Credential Evaluation Research. Adviser Erlend Bern Aaser and Head of Section Marina Malgina, Section for Interview-based Procedures.

Award for NOKUT's work on the qualifications recognition scheme for refugees

NOKUT's work on the recognition of refugees' qualifications is being noticed and appreciated by the international community. In July, the project [Toolkit for Recognition of Refugees' Qualifications](#) received the Sepmeyer Award for Excellence in Credential Evaluation Research.

"It's a toolkit that simplifies the recognition of refugees' qualifications, both for applicants and for those performing the assessment. We have received good feedback on use of the toolkit. Among other things, the project has been referred to as a best practice for the recognition of refugees' qualifications in the supplementary text of

the Lisbon Recognition Convention," explains Marina Malgina, Project Manager for the toolkit project and Head of Interview-based Procedures in the Department for Foreign Education.

The methods were developed as part of an Erasmus+ project (2016–2018) led by NOKUT. With many years of experience in the field, NOKUT has helped to develop a common European practice for recognition. This was done in collaboration with the ENIC-NARIC offices ArmENIC (Armenia), CIEP (France), CIMEA (Italy), NUFFIC (the Netherlands), UK NARIC (United Kingdom), UHR (Sweden) and KMK (Germany).

The Sepmeyer Award for Excellence in Credential Evaluation Research is a newly created award, and NOKUT had the honour of being the first winner. The award was presented by the American credentials evaluation service International Education Research Foundation (IERF). The award was created in connection with IERF's 50th anniversary and is named after Inez Sepmeyer, one of IERF's two founders.

Bachelor's and doctoral degrees from Poland and Lithuania now automatically recognised

NOKUT's scheme for automatic recognition of bachelor's and doctoral degrees was expanded in November 2019 to include education programmes from Poland and Lithuania.

NOKUT has been testing an optional scheme for automatic recognition of degrees from the Nordic countries since the summer of 2018. In November, the scheme was extended to apply to candidates from Poland and Lithuania who have degrees corresponding to Norwegian bachelor's and doctoral degrees. Master's degrees are not included in this round as the two countries have several types of master's degrees that are difficult to compare with Norwegian degrees.

Automatic recognition means that the candidates can download a document from NOKUT's website that shows that their degree is automatically recognised in Norway.

The document confirms that the degree is equivalent to a Norwegian degree in level and scope, and that it is not necessary to apply to NOKUT for recognition.

"It immediately provides clarification as to what the foreign education corresponds to in Norway. This can be useful when applying for a job or further education," says Joachim Gümüs Kallevig, Head of Section for Recognition of Higher Education in the Department for Foreign Education.

POSITIVE EXPERIENCE

Our experience with automatic recognition for the Nordic countries has



Joachim Gümüs Kallevig

Head of Section for Recognition of Higher Education in the Department for Foreign Education

been positive. We now have fewer applicants from these countries, and many confirmation documents were downloaded during the first year of the scheme.

"We saw an effect almost immediately after the scheme was launched. As this is ground-breaking work both in Norway and in Europe, we were unsure of how this offer would be received, but the experience has been entirely positive!"

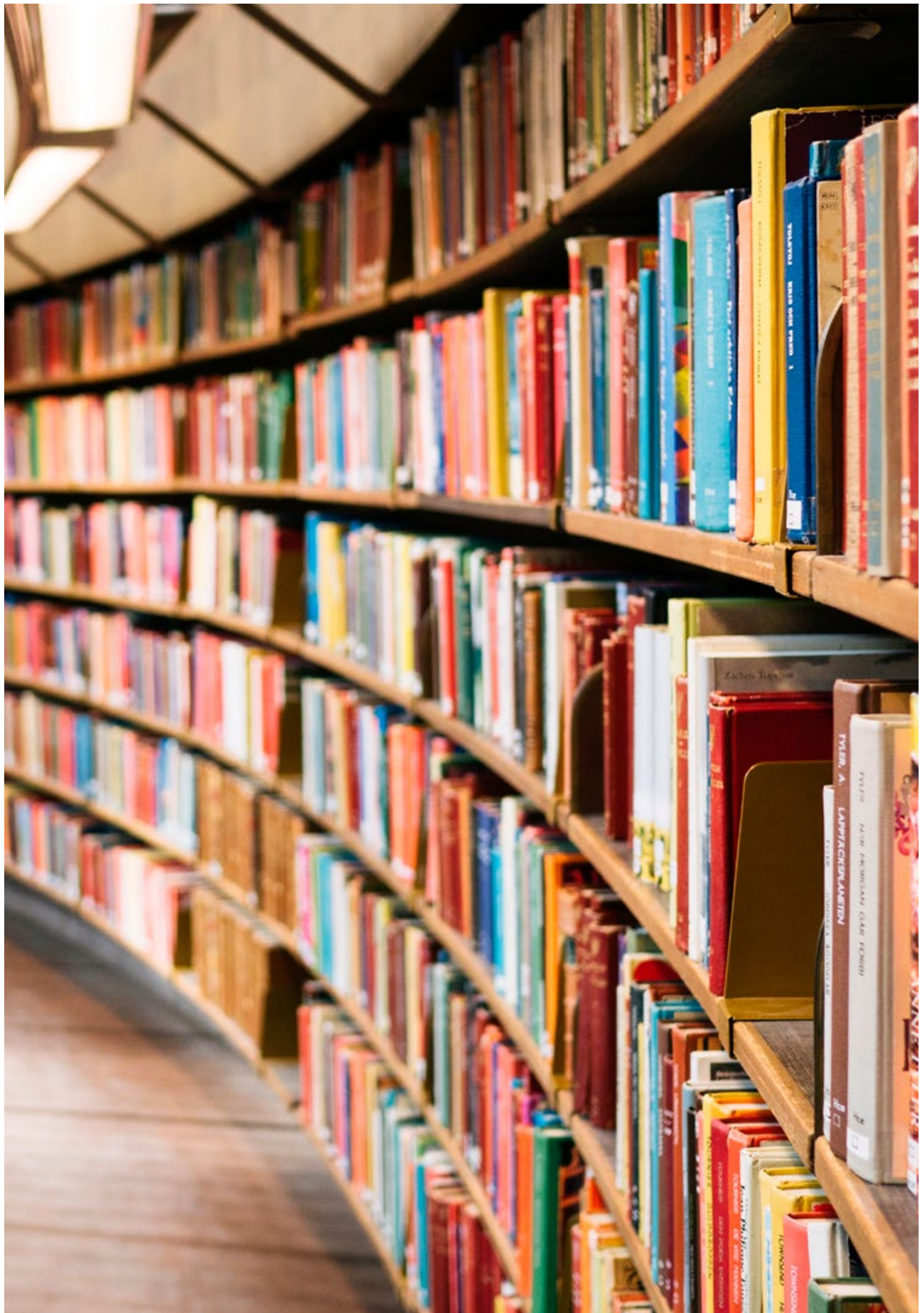
Poland and Lithuania are among the countries from which NOKUT receives the most applications for recognition of education. In total, these countries account for 15 per cent of all applications received by NOKUT. About half of

these could be included in the automatic recognition scheme, and there has already been a decline in the number of applicants from Poland.

"Since the first weeks of automatic recognition for Polish and Lithuanian qualifications, we are seeing the same trend as we saw with Nordic qualifications. These experiences are important in order to extend the scheme further. This will allow us to offer this service to even more people who have come to Norway to work or continue their studies," concludes Gümüs Kallevig.

IN LINE WITH EUROPEAN GOALS

The ministries of education from the 48 countries participating in the Bologna Process have adopted a common goal of automatic recognition of comparable degrees within the European Higher Education Area. In the EU, work is also underway to have degrees automatically recognised between member countries. NOKUT's work in this area puts Norway in a good position to achieve this goal. It is also part of NOKUT's strategy to keep expanding the scheme and to take more of a leadership role with regard to automatic recognition of education.



This is NOKUT



NOKUT is an independent administrative expert body that reports to the Norwegian Ministry of Education and Research.



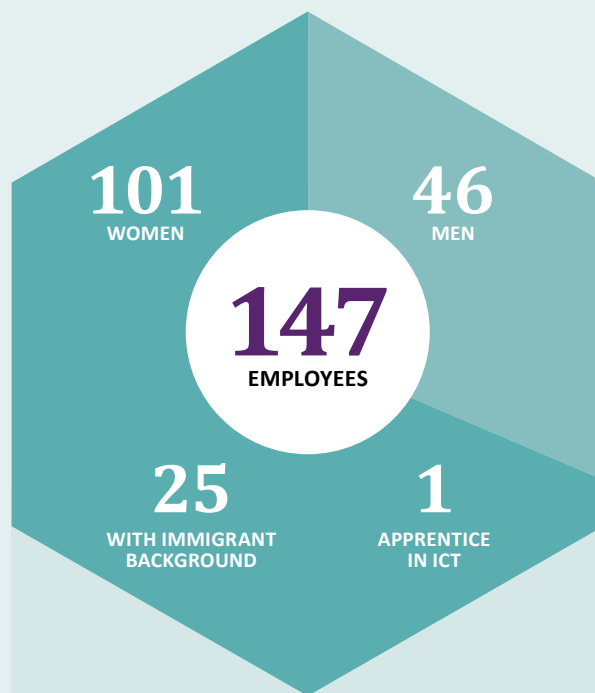
NOKUT's overall mandate, authority and professional autonomy are specified in the University and University Colleges Act. In addition to the professionally independent tasks set out in laws and regulations, NOKUT has been delegated ordinary administrative duties by the Ministry.



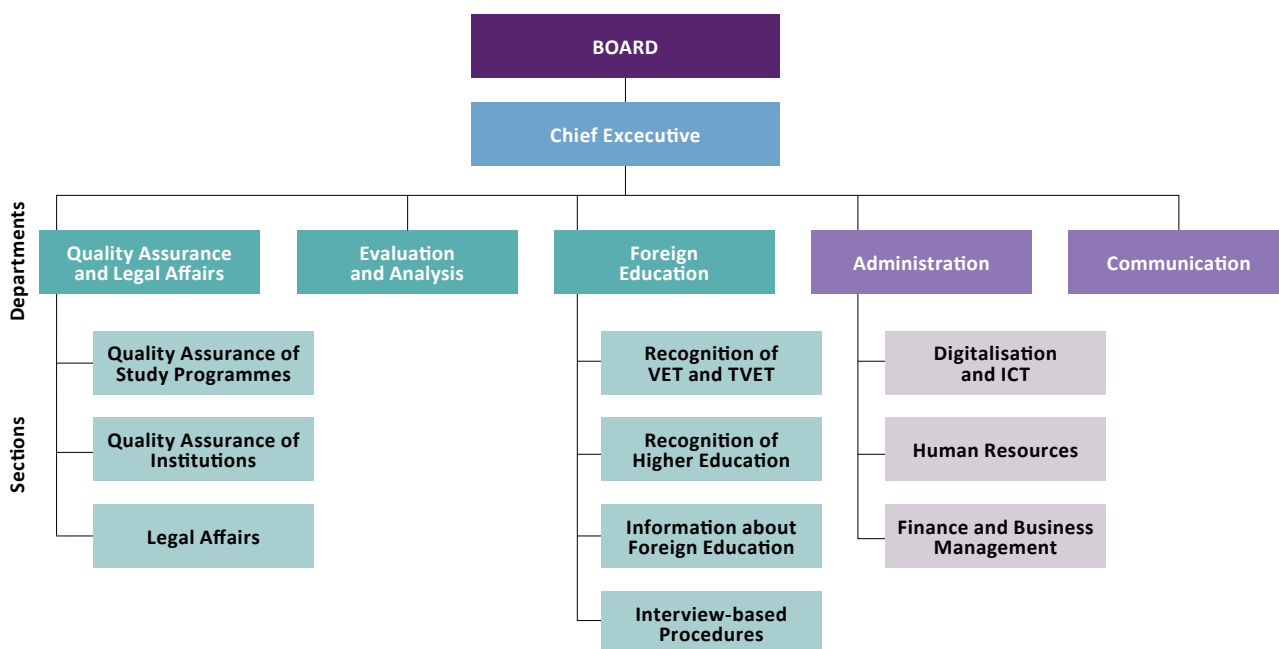
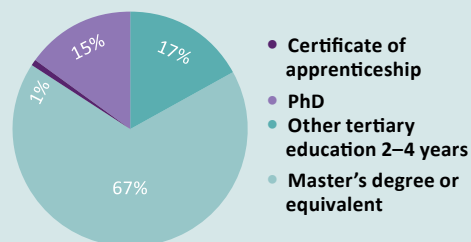
Each year, NOKUT uses 900 external experts for our accreditation and quality assurance work, evaluations, recognition of foreign education and projects.



NOKUT was allocated NOK 187,224 million in 2019 in the Norwegian Ministry of Education and Research's budget.



Educational levels of our staff



Follow us on social media and listen to the
NOKUT podcast.



Podcasts



NOKUT is Eco-Light-
house certified



NOKUT



DRAMMENSVEIEN 288 | PO Box 578, N-1327 LYSAKER, NORWAY | TELEPHONE: +47 21 02 18 00 | WWW.NOKUT.NO
DESIGN: 07 Media | FOTO: NOKUT, Unsplash.com