

**N O K U T**

**T H E Y E A R 2 0 1 5**

NORWEGIAN AGENCY FOR QUALITY  
ASSURANCE IN EDUCATION



# DEAR READER



Terje Mørland  
*Director  
General*



Finding a balance between a focus on excellence and a broad approach is a well-known problem for research initiatives, though somewhat less so for education. On several occasions in 2015, we expressed our belief that it is high time that the focus on excellent research was also accompanied by a focus on excellence in education. The signals and funding received from the Ministry of Education and Research for a new call for applications for Centres of Excellence in Higher Education indicate a growing focus on excellence in education. We want to see many such beacons across the country lighting the way for other educational institutions.

The focus on higher quality in education is also clearly evident in the government's proposed changes for the teacher education programmes. All primary and lower secondary teacher education programmes shall be master's degree programmes from 2017. Institutions without the authority to establish new master's degree teacher education programmes themselves must apply to NOKUT for accreditation. We will help these educational institutions to make the transition to the new level of education.

The Ministry of Education and Research recently assigned NOKUT the task of establishing an international advisory group to improve the quality of the teacher

education programmes. This is part of NOKUT's development work, and it will be completely separate from the accreditation process. The group is expected to come up with activities and measures to stimulate innovation and raise competence.

Everyone shall be happy with the quality of education at the institution they are studying at, be it a college of tertiary vocational education, a university college or a university. In order to map the status in this area, we have in recent years shifted the focus of our supervisory activities to devote more attention to existing study programmes and following up the study-related quality work, i.e. the quality aspects that are most important to individual students.

At NOKUT, we want to ensure that the colleges of tertiary vocational education, the university colleges and the universities are seen in conjunction with each other. They all have an important place in the tertiary education system. High-quality education shall be available at all levels. There is a constant need in the labour market for different levels of qualified labour. A master's degree is not always the qualification that is sought after.

We are also charged with assessing whether foreign education corresponds with the level of Norwegian education, so that

people who have studied abroad can use their qualifications in the Norwegian labour market. As the national resource centre for foreign education, we provide employers and educational institutions with advice and information about the Norwegian recognition schemes through our turbo evaluation schemes. There will probably be a growing need for this in the time ahead.

Many immigrants arrived in Norway in 2015, and the number of applications for recognition of foreign education increased. The many refugees and job seekers who arrived led us to rethink how we could use our experience to assess and recognise refugees' qualifications in new and more efficient ways. We launched the idea of a European Qualifications Passport. Being issued a qualifications passport will give refugees a document they can use across Europe. We have great belief in this project, which is now being discussed in the EU system.

NOKUT The Year 2015 provides a brief introduction to and overview of our activities last year. For more information, check out our website.

Enjoy the magazine!  
Terje

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# THE MOST

# 20

## JAN

- **Turbo evaluation:**  
Start-up of turbo-evaluation of foreign education in connection with admission to PhD programmes.

## FEB

- **NOKUT breakfast:**  
The national student survey Studiebarometeret 2.0.
- **NOKUT-seminar:**  
Education management for quality development of study programmes, in cooperation with the Arctic University of Norway (UiT) and the SFU centre ProTed.

## MAR

- **White paper:**  
Concentration for quality – structural reform in the university and university college sector.

## APR

- **NOKUT breakfast:**  
Labour market + higher education = perfect match?

## MAY

- **NOKUT conference:**  
Conference on higher education in cooperation with the University of Bergen.
- **Course and e-learning:**  
New e-learning platform and course in recognition schemes for foreign education, collaboration with IMDi.
- **GSU forum established:**  
Network for further development of the list of requirements for the Higher Education Entrance Qualification.

## JUN

- **Topic specific national assessment examinations:**  
NOKUT organises a national assessment exam in auditing.
- **NOKUT seminar:**  
What will it take to establish a five-year teacher education programme?
- **Cooperation in education:**  
Start-up of mapping of educational institutions' cooperation agreements.

# IMPORTANT EVENTS

## AUG

- **NOKUT workshop:**  
Information about Syrian education for sister offices in the Nordic countries.

## SEP

- **External evaluation:**  
NOKUT's work on the recognition of foreign education was approved
- **Recognition schemes:**  
Course in collaboration with IMDi.
- **NOKUT breakfast:**  
Effects of the SFU arrangement.
- **NOKUT seminar:**  
The national student survey Studiebarometeret.

## OCT

- **The SFU arrangement:**  
Expansion in the national budget for 2016.
- **The national student survey Studiebarometeret:**  
Distributed to students.
- **Recognition schemes:**  
Course in collaboration with IMDi.
- **NOKUT breakfast:**  
Does taking part of a programme abroad raise the quality of higher education?

## NOV

- **Nord University:**  
NOKUT announces supervisory activities.
- **NOKUT conference:**  
Qualifications without borders, Gardermoen.
- **Utdanningskvalitetsprisen:**  
Prize for quality in higher education awarded to the student-run NTNU Live Studio.
- **New development plan:**  
NOKUT adopts the plan for foreign education and competence.

## DEC

- **NOKUT seminar:**  
Learning outcome descriptions.
- **Topic specific national assessment examinations:**  
NOKUT organises national assessment exams in the teacher education programmes and the nursing programmes
- **NOKUT conference:**  
Changing vocational education, Drammen.
- **New criteria:**  
NOKUT's board adopts new criteria for the recognition of foreign doctoral degrees.

# THE FLOW OF REFUGEES



Stig Arne Skjerven  
Director of Foreign Education

*The year 2015 was extraordinary, and a challenging time for hundreds of thousands of refugees who arrived in Europe. During 2015, more than 31,000 asylum seekers arrived in Norway. That is almost three times as many as arrived in 2014.*

At NOKUT, we have already noticed increased pressure on our recognition schemes, and we expect even greater pressure in the time ahead. There has been a marked increase in the number of applications from Syrians. Up from a mere 119 in 2014, NOKUT received 431 applications for general recognition from Syrians in 2015. We also saw an increase in the number of applications from refugees from other countries, such as Iraq and Eritrea.

The flow of refugees has contributed to longer case processing times. At the end of 2015, the average case processing time was 1.6 months. That average has increased 0.3 months compared with the same time last year. We make continuous efforts to keep case processing times as short as possible, despite the growth in the number of applications.

Throughout the year, we have discussed the actual level of education of the refugees coming to Norway, especially those

from Syria. There are many different figures in circulation. However, there is a lot we do not know. To date, the refugees' qualifications are not being mapped.

An overview of the competences that refugees bring with them to Norway is important for municipalities, employers, the integration system and for the refugees themselves. People can find work more quickly and earn money, rather than living on benefits, and Norway can make use of valuable competences and labour.

NOKUT will prioritise developing our recognition schemes in the time ahead to help ensure that the competence that refugees bring with them is assessed to a greater extent.



## EUROPEAN QUALIFICATIONS PASSPORT FOR REFUGEES

A growing number of refugees are moving from country to country in Europe looking for safe havens and work. NOKUT, together with UK NARIC, has therefore proposed establishing a European Qualifications Passport for Refugees, to achieve a coordinated mapping of refugees' competences in Europe. A joint, multinational fast-track recognition procedure for foreign qualifications could help ensure that as many refugees as possible can take up employment or start studying sooner.



## HELPING HAND TO REFUGEES

*Together with Oslo and Akershus University College of Applied Sciences, NOKUT participated in an event to help refugees on 1 December, organised by the University of Oslo. This academic helping hand consisted of an information day for refugees who had started studying before they came to Europe. The refugees learned about how they can continue their studies in Norway.*

# RECORD NUMBER OF APPLICATIONS



*In 2015, NOKUT received 15 % more applications than in the previous year. This is partly because many of the refugees who come to Norway apply for recognition of their qualifications, and partly because the cooling of the Norwegian economy led to more people from Eastern Europe applying to have their education recognised.*

NOKUT received 7,556 applications for general recognition in 2015, compared with 6,572 in 2014. We expect to see a further increase in the number of applications in 2016. The three countries from which we receive the most applications have not changed since 2014: Poland, Lithuania and Serbia. The only new country on the top ten list is Syria, which climbed to fifth place in 2015.

Case processing times were slightly higher in 2015 than in 2014. It increased from 1.3 to 1.6 months. We expect a further increase in the time ahead. NOKUT constantly considers how we can keep case processing times as short as possible, without this being at the expense of the thoroughness of our assessments.

## THE UVD SCHEME PRESENTS NEW OPTIONS

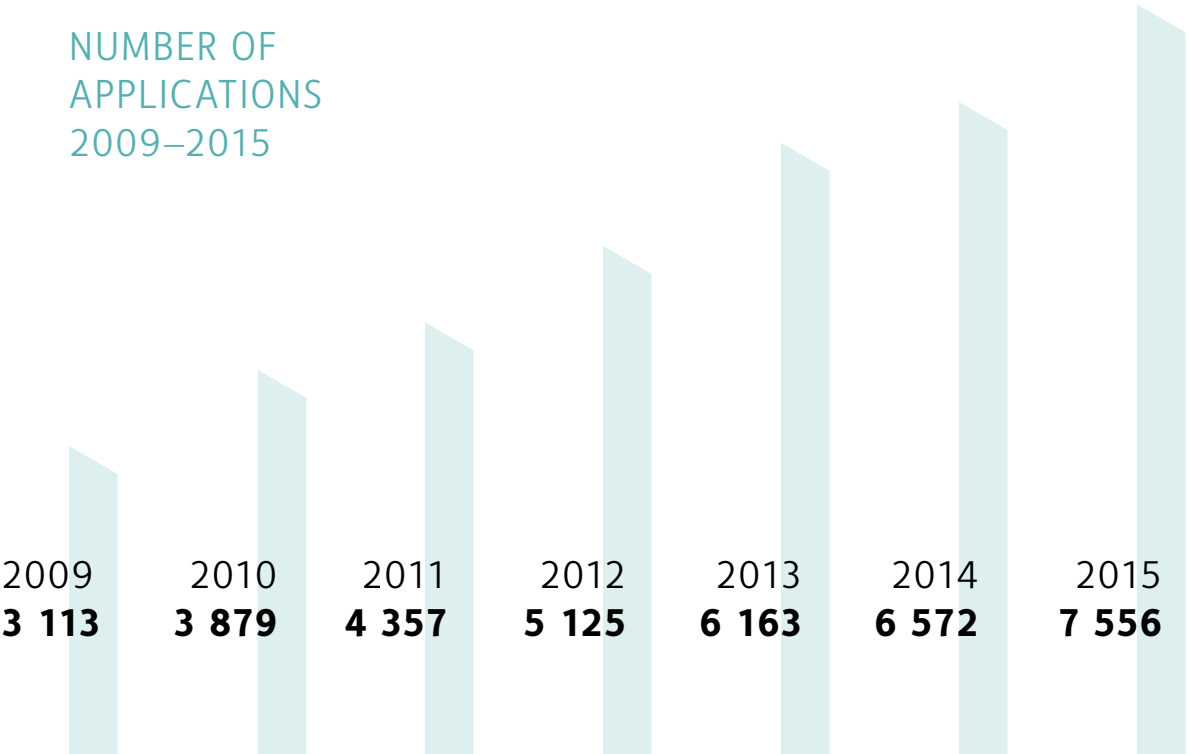
In recent years, NOKUT has established a recognition scheme for refugees called the UVD scheme. This scheme enables refugees and people without documentation to have their education assessed. They learn whether their education corresponds to the level of a comparable Norwegian education at a university or university college. The assessments are made through interviews which are time-consuming, but they are very useful to those whose educations are being recognised. This recognition will enable them to start using their qualifications in Norway more quickly.

In 2015, we assessed the educations of 120 people, of these 85 had their education recognised through this scheme. The applicants who took advantage of this scheme come from countries such as Iraq, Afghanistan, Syria, Somalia, Eritrea, Ethiopia, Burundi, Rwanda and Russia (Chechnya).

*NOKUT shall help enable people with a foreign education to make effective use of their qualifications in Norway, and ensure that employers and educational institutions are well informed about the equivalences between Norwegian and foreign qualifications.*



NUMBER OF APPLICATIONS 2009–2015



TOP TEN COUNTRIES 2015

	Poland	1255
	Lithuania	689
	Serbia	686
	Philippines	468
	Syria	431
	India	395
	Russia	378
	UK	376
	Ukraine	340
	USA	355

GROWTH IN EUROPEAN RECOGNITION WORK

An open labour market in the EU/EEA area means that many people move across borders to find work. It is easy for people in some occupations to start up in a new country, while for many other groups, the new country’s authorities must issue an authorisation before they can start working.

NOKUT is a joint, national information centre for this group of applicants, but other authorities are responsible for the actual recognition of their qualifications. There are around 180 recognition schemes for professional qualifications in Norway. There are a total of 18 state recognition offices, which are subordinate to 12 different ministries. The work is governed by the EU’s Professional Qualification Directive, which sets out rules for how qualifications can be recognised across Europe.

– A number of measures have been implemented in recent years to improve information about the recognition schemes and facilitate better user services, but NOKUT wants more, says Director of Foreign Education, Stig Arne Skjerven.

– We believe it’s high time that one joint application portal is established for all of the recognition schemes. A joint application

portal will not require the coordination of rules and regulations or data systems, and can therefore be implemented relatively quickly. The white paper on adult learning *Fra utenforskap til ny sjanse – Samordnet innsats for voksnes læring*, states that a joint online portal would be assessed as part of the follow-up work on the white paper. NOKUT looks forward to contributing to this work.

NATIONAL ENIC-NARIC OFFICE

NOKUT is Norway’s ENIC-NARIC office. ENIC and NARIC are networks of national offices that provide information about the recognition of foreign education and educational systems in different countries. NOKUT updates the country database. It contains information about educational systems and how qualifications from different countries are recognised in Norway. Students who are planning to study abroad use it to select programmes on the basis of relevant and credible information.

NATIONAL CONTACT POINT FOR THE EQF

The European Qualification Framework for Lifelong Learning (EQF) is intended to facilitate mobility and lifelong learning by contributing to the comparison of qualifications and qualification levels. The role of the contact point is primarily to advise

and provide information about the EQF and its relationship to the Norwegian Qualifications Framework for Lifelong Learning (NQF).

EXTERNAL EVALUATION OF NOKUT’S RECOGNITION OF FOREIGN QUALIFICATIONS

*In 2015, an international committee assessed NOKUT’s work on recognition of foreign education. The committee concluded that this work is very well organised and well-functioning with respect to the points it evaluated. It pointed out that the recognition procedures for the UVD scheme work very well.*

*It also highlighted the UVD scheme for refugees as an important international contribution to the development of the recognition field.*

*The committee also made special reference to the valuable dual role of NOKUT as an organisation that is tasked with both quality assurance of Norwegian higher education and the recognition of foreign education. They underlined that the link between these two fields will be even more important in the years to come.*

# RECORD NUMBER OF APPLICATIONS



**FIELDS WITH MOST APPLICATIONS FOR THE UVD SCHEME**

<b>ENGINEERING</b>	25 applications
<b>ECONOMICS</b>	24 applications
<b>AGRICULTURE</b>	20 applications
<b>SCIENCE AND MATHEMATICS</b>	20 applications
<b>TEACHER EDUCATION</b>	17 applications

**FIELDS WITH MOST APPLICATIONS FOR TURBO EVALUATION FOR EMPLOYERS**

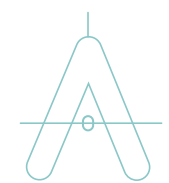
<b>ENGINEERING</b>	31 applications
<b>ECONOMICS</b>	29 applications
<b>AGRICULTURE</b>	28 applications
<b>SCIENCE AND MATHEMATICS</b>	27 applications
<b>TEACHER EDUCATION</b>	22 applications

FIELDS WITH MOST APPLICATIONS  
FOR GENERAL RECOGNITION



ECONOMICS

1639 applications



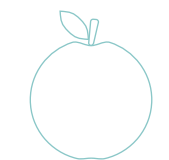
ENGINEERING

1607 applications



HEALTHCARE

796 applications



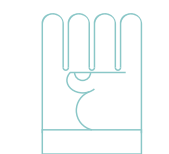
TEACHER EDUCATION

719 applications



SCIENCE AND MATHEMATICS

506 applications



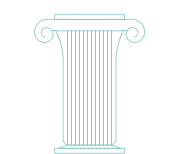
TECHNICAL/VOCATIONAL SUBJECTS

500 applications



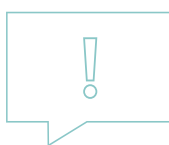
SOCIAL SCIENCES

430 applications



HISTORICAL-PHILOSOPHICAL SUBJECTS

362 applications



LANGUAGES

336 applications



SCIENCE OF EDUCATION

291 applications

# CHANGING FOREIGN EDUCATION FIELD – NEW TASKS IN 2015



## COURSE ON NORWEGIAN RECOGNITION SCHEMES

One important information measure in 2015 has been to provide training to the programme advisors in the introduction programme for newly arrived immigrants. Together with the Norwegian Directorate of Integration and Diversity (IMDi) and the Norwegian Directorate for Education and Training, two-day courses have been held in Oslo, Trondheim, Kristiansand, Bergen, Tromsø and Gjøvik.

NOKUT’s Director of Foreign Education, Sig Arne Skjerven, is very happy with how the programme has been received.

– The course evaluation shows that the programme advisors have found it useful. They are an important element in the work on integrating refugees. The advisors are tasked with giving the refugees the best possible advice so that their education can be recognised and they can take up employment. In order for them to be able to do this, it is important that they are familiar with the existing recognition schemes and how they can be used.

Would you like to test your knowledge of the Norwegian recognition schemes? [Try the e-learning programme here](#)

## TURBO SCHEMES – NOKUT’S ADVISORY SERVICES

### FOR EMPLOYERS

Two years ago, NOKUT launched a service to help employers in recruitment processes to assess education taken abroad. In 2015, 104 such assessments were made. Employers sought most advice about education from the UK, the Netherlands, the US and Italy.

### FOR EDUCATIONAL INSTITUTIONS ADMITTING PHD CANDIDATES

Early in 2015, NOKUT established a turbo evaluation scheme especially for universities and university colleges that admit PhD candidates. NOKUT received 67 such applications in 2015. Most of the applicants came from the UK, Italy, the US, Iran and China.

NEW RECOGNITION SCHEMES

RECOGNITION SCHEME FOR FOREIGN CRAFT AND JOURNEYMAN’S CERTIFICATES

In 2015, NOKUT was assigned the responsibility for establishing a recognition scheme for foreign craft and journeyman’s certificates. There has long been a demand for such a recognition scheme, which will enable more people with craft and journeyman’s certificates taken abroad to use it in Norwegian workplaces. This recognition scheme will start in 2016.

Several thousand applicants are expected each year. More information about this scheme will be available in the first half of 2016.

RECOGNITION SCHEME FOR FOREIGN TERTIARY VOCATIONAL EDUCATION

A proposal has been made to establish a recognition scheme for foreign tertiary vocational education. The scheme will be assigned to NOKUT, and be established with effect from 1 January 2017 at the latest.

NOKUT’S SERVICES RELATING TO FOREIGN EDUCATION AND QUALIFICATIONS

The development plan for NOKUT’s services relating to foreign education and qualifications shows how NOKUT wishes to develop its own services, and how we, as a national resource centre, can contribute to the development of the large field of recognition of foreign education and qualifications. The plan applies to the period 2016–2017.

PRIORITY DEVELOPMENT MEASURES:

- Implement a new application and case processing system
- Modernise the regulatory framework for recognition in line with European practice
- Upgrade online information tools
- Help ensure active use of the qualification framework
- Strengthen analysis and advisory work and create good arena

NEW SERVICES AND TASKS

- Develop new ways of assessing refugees’ qualifications
- Recognition scheme for foreign vocational education (NQF level 4)
- Recognition scheme for foreign tertiary vocational education (NQF level 5)
- Tasks in connection with the modernisation of the Professional Qualification Directive

INPUT FROM NOKUT

- Joint application portal
- Joint services for other recognition offices
- Statistics on recognition and qualifications held before arrival in Norway
- [Read the development plan for 2016–2017: NOKUTs tjenester om utenlandsk utdanning og kompetanse](#)



# BREAKFAST WITH NOKUT



Gard Sandaker-Nielsen  
Director of Communications

*Several times a year, NOKUT arranges breakfast meetings to inform participants about and discuss new and important findings or trends. Participants include politicians, employer and employee organisations and executives etc., lecturers and students at universities, university colleges and colleges of tertiary vocational education.*

The educational sector has plenty to discuss given the mergers and structural changes that are regularly mentioned in the media. NOKUT breakfasts have become an important arena for everyone interested in quality of education. Politicians and employer and employee organisations meet to debate topics with students, executives and lecturers. And they are highly appreciated. People turn up to listen to the discussions over a cup of coffee and a sandwich.

NOKUT’s Director of Communications, Gard Sandaker-Nielsen, appreciates the fact that the NOKUT breakfasts are well attended.

– We have turned the spotlight on issues and problems at these meetings that we believe the public should discuss and know more about. All of our meetings had full attendance in 2015. This indicates that we choose the right topics.

It is possible to follow all of the NOKUT breakfasts online.

**This year’s topics were:**

- Launch of the national student survey Studiebarometeret
- Cooperation between the labour market and academia
- Effects of the SFU arrangement
- Taking part of a study programme abroad

## QUALIFICATIONS WITHOUT BORDERS

The main topic of the NOKUT conference on qualifications without borders was today’s large-scale migration and the need for recognition of education from more and new countries. A total of 326 persons from Norwegian educational institutions, recognition offices or who work on advising people with foreign qualifications attended the conference on foreign education, which was held at Gardermoen. Day two was set aside for various workshops on Norwegian recognition schemes, basic case processing and how to work on challenging educational documents.

## CHANGING TERTIARY VOCATIONAL EDUCATION

This year’s vocational education conference on the topic ‘Changing tertiary vocational education’ gathered 220 people over two days to discuss robustness and innovation in a changing vocational education landscape. We asked how can we achieve robust, labour market relevant and innovative tertiary vocational education? Employees, owners, students and board members of private and state vocational education institutions, business and industry organisations, NOKUT and other authorities met to discuss the tertiary vocational education of the future. This is the most important conference of the year for the tertiary vocational education sector. The conference was held in cooperation with the National Council for Tertiary Vocational Education in Drammen in November.

## HIGHER EDUCATION

The NOKUT conference on higher education gathered 530 people with an interest in Norwegian higher education at a two-day meeting in Bergen in May. The conference was held in cooperation with the University of Bergen. At the conference, we asked the questions:

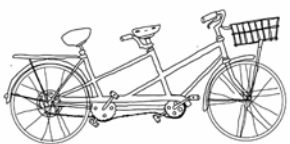
- How can structural changes raise the quality of education?
- How can we facilitate good learning?



### CLEAR ROLE IN SOCIETY

NOKUT's goal is to be an ambassador for quality in education and to play a clear role in society. The events we held in 2015 have contributed to this goal. We have held successful conferences for higher education, tertiary vocational education and foreign education in addition to seminars and breakfast meetings. We have placed emphasis on achieving increased visibility and sway in the media, particularly in connection with the breakfast meetings and new decisions. In line with the growing number of refugees who have come to Norway, we have seen a corresponding increase in public interest in NOKUT, our work and the new ideas and proposals we have presented. We experienced particular interest from the media and the public in our work on developing a fast-track scheme for mapping asylum seekers' qualifications. The NOKUT blog and NOKUT's Twitter account have been active throughout the year.

### NOKUT SHALL CREATE ARENAS FOR EXCHANGING OPINIONS AND PUTTING IMPORTANT TOPICS ON THE AGENDA



Watch the animation film *Betre saman* (Better together), made exclusively for NOKUT's conference on higher education



# HOW DOES NOKUT HELP TO ENSURE AND PROMOTE QUALITY IN EDUCATION?



*Over the years, many instruments have been put at NOKUT's disposal in its work to assure, develop and provide information about the quality of higher education and tertiary vocational education in Norway. In addition to accreditation and supervisory activities, its work on quality also involves various types of evaluations, incentive programmes such as the Centres of Excellence in Higher Education (SFU) arrangement, the national student survey Studiebarometeret, and other data gathering processes regarding knowledge about quality in education.*

– NOKUT is working on renewing the portfolio of instruments we use to promote high quality in education. The composition of knowledge about the quality status and different instruments, which are dedicated to stimulating quality in education, e.g. the SFU arrangement, make up an increasing part of our work portfolio,' explains Director General of NOKUT Terje Mørland.

## THE MOST IMPORTANT INSTRUMENTS

**Knowledge about quality in education** – FOne of the important preconditions for assessing quality of education at Norwegian educational institutions is that we have a good knowledge base for our work. Good coordination of databases and better registration in existing databases are important in this context. Based on this, we prepare analyses, studies and statistics that provide insight into the quality status of different types of programmes.

**Supervision of study programmes and educational activities** – In order to ensure that students get a good education, NOKUT carries out different types of supervisory activities: thematic, indication-based and incident-based. In thematic supervisory activity, we examine several study programmes in the same field of study and assess the quality of the whole field. We can also initiate supervisory activities if we receive information that indicates that the quality of an educational institution or field is not good enough. We call this indication-based supervision. Supervisory processes that we initiate because we receive information that students' education at a specific educational institution or study programme is not of sufficient quality are called incident-based supervision.

**Periodic supervision of the educational institutions' systematic quality work** – NOKUT assesses how educational institutions manage and develop their own systematic quality work. We can group educational institutions together in some of the evaluations so that those with common features can be assessed together. This gives us a better overview of quality throughout a given field.

**Evaluations** – NOKUT carries out evaluations in order to assess the quality of higher education. This provides NOKUT with a good basis for following up quality development at the educational institutions. A number of such evaluations have been initiated. Some of them are being carried out together with other parties.

**Centres for Excellence in Higher Education (SFU)** – SFU status is awarded to academic communities that have already demonstrated excellent quality and innovative practices in education, and that have plans in place for further development and innovation. One of the important requirements the centres have to meet is that they disseminate their results and knowledge.

**Utdanningskvalitetsprisen** – NOKUT awards an annual prize to an academic environment at a university or university college that has shown excellence in its work on quality.

**Studiebarometeret** – The annual results of this national student survey give us insight into how students perceive the quality of education at their own educational institutions.

**Dissemination of results and insight** – NOKUT holds breakfast meetings and seminars for interested parties, where politicians, educational institutions, and other authorities and interest groups meet to discuss different aspects of quality in education and how it can be promoted. Active distribution of analysis and evaluation results, such as newsletters, blogs and articles in the media, and expert advice to the Ministry of Education and Research are other ways in which we exercise our CSR.

## NOKUT'S EVALUATION PROJECTS IN 2015

### TOPIC SPECIFIC NATIONAL ASSESSMENT EXAMINATIONS

NOKUT organized three successful national assessment exams on specific topics in 2015. In May, more than 500 bachelor's degree students from 13 different university colleges and universities took the national assessment exam in accounting and financial reporting. The examination results showed that there was significant variation between the different participating institutions.

On 1 December, NOKUT organized a national assessment exam in mathematic didactics for teacher education student at 15 educational institutions. And right before Christmas, it was nursing students' turn. They sat for exams in physiology, anatomy and biochemistry. Unfortunately, the nursing students performed poorly. The teacher education students, on the other hand, performed surprisingly well.

### INTERGRATED ACADEMIC EVALUATIONS

NOKUT and the Research Council of Norway are cooperating on the development of a model for integrated academic evaluation that covers both education and research. The project has particularly focused on developing a new model for evaluating study programmes as a precondition for combined evaluations in future. A model for evaluating the interaction between research and education is being tested

in the humanities in spring 2016.

### EUROMASTER

NOKUT will develop and test an arrangement for comparing Norwegian study programmes with corresponding study programmes abroad. We will use international peer reviewers in connection with the testing. NOKUT has established cooperation with quality assurance bodies in Sweden (UKÄ) and the Netherlands (NVAO). Together, we have developed a comparison method. The project compares master's degree programmes in the fields of molecular biology and economics from each country.

### LEARNING OUTCOME DESCRIPTIONS

NOKUT has mapped whether learning outcome descriptions at Norwegian universities and university colleges are in agreement with the Norwegian Qualifications Framework for Lifelong Learning (NQF). Experts found that many of the learning outcome descriptions were not in agreement with the framework. The report revealed a need for clearer guidance in relation to the qualifications framework and that NOKUT's expertise must be further developed so that we can provide better assistance to the educational institutions in this work.

### ANALYSES AND STUDIES

In NOKUT we work continuously to strengthen our efforts in studying and analyzing educational quality and quality work in higher education, thus helping to stimulate quality development. NOKUT's analyses and studies, articles in journals and summaries of research are important contributions that support and inform about quality work and the quality of education at educational institutions in Norway.

#### *The most important publications in 2015*

- Research as foundation for education: Centres of Excellence and good practices.
- Utdanningskvalitetsprisen 2004–2014: En vareopptelling med vurdering.
- Arbeidslivsrelevans i høyere utdanning. Undersøkelse om universiteters og høyskolars arbeidslivskontakt og studienes relevans for arbeidslivet.
- From counting credits to learning outcomes? Report from the working group on recognition of foreign doctoral degrees
- Bidrar delstudier i utlandet til å heve kvaliteten i høyere utdanning?
- Norske arbeidsgiveres syn på høyere utdanning fra utlandet.

# NOKUT’S SUPERVISORY ACTIVITIES IN 2015



*NOKUT is responsible for supervising more than 4,000 study programmes at around 160 higher education institutions and colleges of tertiary vocational education in Norway.*

NOKUT regularly reviews many study programmes to assess whether there is reason to initiate supervisory activities. Most of the programmes are in order, but every year we identify programmes that have so many shortcomings they have to be discontinued. In addition to checking that the quality of education meets the applicable requirements, we also want supervision to stimulate further development at the educational institutions.

## AUDITS – NOKUT’S STRONGEST INSTRUMENT

In 2015, NOKUT audited 12 study programmes. Only one of the programmes was approved. Audits are NOKUT’s strongest instrument. Before initiating an audit, NOKUT is in dialogue with the educational institution about the findings from the first phase of the supervisory activity.

In 2015, the audits led NOKUT to withdraw its approval of four tertiary vocational education programmes and one university programme. A further three tertiary vocational education programmes and there

university college programmes failed to meet the requirements. The educational institutions have been given a deadline in 2016 to document that the programmes meet the requirements of the applicable laws and regulations.

When NOKUT withdraws an accreditation or approval, it is the educational institution’s responsibility to find a solution that allows the students to complete the programme they have started. The educational institution’s solution must be approved by NOKUT. In many cases, NOKUT assists the educational institution with this work.

- Approved
- Given a deadline to remedy the situation – final decision autumn 2016
- Approval withdrawn

## AUDITS OF ACCREDITATIONS

Fagskolen i Sogn og fjordane, Førde	Engineering and electrics
Fagskolen i Vestfold	Deck officer and engineer officer
Buskerud and Vestfold University College	Marine technology operations
Buskerud and Vestfold University College	Navigation
Aviation School of Norway	Commercial pilot, plane
Aviation School of Norway	Commercial pilot, helicopter
Rudolf Steiner University College	Visual art
Studieforbundet Folkeuniversitetet, Mesterfagskolen	Master carpenter
Moteskolen AS	Fashion development management
Moteskolen AS	Fashion design and modelling
JCK AS, FACE Stockholm Make up School	Makeup artist
The University of Bergen	Master of Gender and Development



THE DIFFICULT COOPERATION AGREEMENTS

In spring 2015, NOKUT initiated supervision of universities and university colleges that cooperated with external parties on the provision of higher education. The supervisory activities covered 22 study programmes and more than 6,300 students. NOKUT found that several of institutions were offering higher education in cooperation with parties that were not authorised to provide such education. The frameworks for cooperation between and the responsibilities of the parties varied in the agreements. In some cases, the external parties appeared to have assumed full responsibility for the programme provided.

At three of the educational institutions, NOKUT decided that all of the programmes under supervision were to be audited, and we initiated an audit of individual programmes at one educational institution. Six university colleges and one university were also required to meet with NOKUT. Many of the educational institutions subsequently chose to terminate agreements with external parties.

ASSESSMENT OF QUALITY ASSURANCE SYSTEMS

All educational institutions offering higher education are required to have an approved quality assurance system in place to ensure that the the education they offer is if a high quality. In 2015, NOKUT evaluated 12 quality assurance systems at universities and university colleges.

NOKUT approved 11 of these systems. Two of the approvals were given following an expert re-evaluation of the systems, which were not deemed satisfactory after the first evaluation.

*NOKUT shall contribute to all study programmes at Norwegian universities, university colleges and institutions at tertiary vocational level being of satisfactory quality, that as many of them as possible are outstanding, and that society is well informed about the status in the sector.*

ASSESSMENT OF THE QUALITY ASSURANCE SYSTEMS

- Approved
- Not approved
- Approved following re-evaluation

- Ansgar University College and Theological Seminary
- Barratt Due Institute of Music
- Kristiania University College
- Norwegian School of Leadership and Theology
- Oslo and Akershus University College of Applied Sciences
- Sogn og Fjordane University College
- Stord/Haugesund University College
- Oslo National Academy of the Arts
- Bergen Academy of Art and Design
- Norwegian Institute for Children's Books
- Sámi University of Applied Sciences
- Norwegian University College of Dance

# NEW STUDY PROGRAMMES



*35 new study programmes were launched following NOKUT's consideration of the applications received in autumn 2014 and spring 2015. This is an increase of six compared with the previous period.*

Not all educational institutions are authorised to accredit new study programmes. All universities are authorised to do so, but most colleges of tertiary vocational education must apply to NOKUT for approval of new study programmes. Accredited university colleges are authorised to establish study programmes at bachelor's degree level, and at master's degree level in fields in which they already have programmes at doctoral degree level. Other university colleges need accreditation from NOKUT before they can start new study programmes.

In the 2014/2015 application round, NOKUT received 46 applications for new higher education study programmes. Twenty-four of them were at bachelor's degree level and 22 at master's degree level. The number of applications has been fairly stable for some time. In the 2013/2014 application round, we only received eight applications for accreditation of bachelor's degrees, however. This was more an exception than a rule.

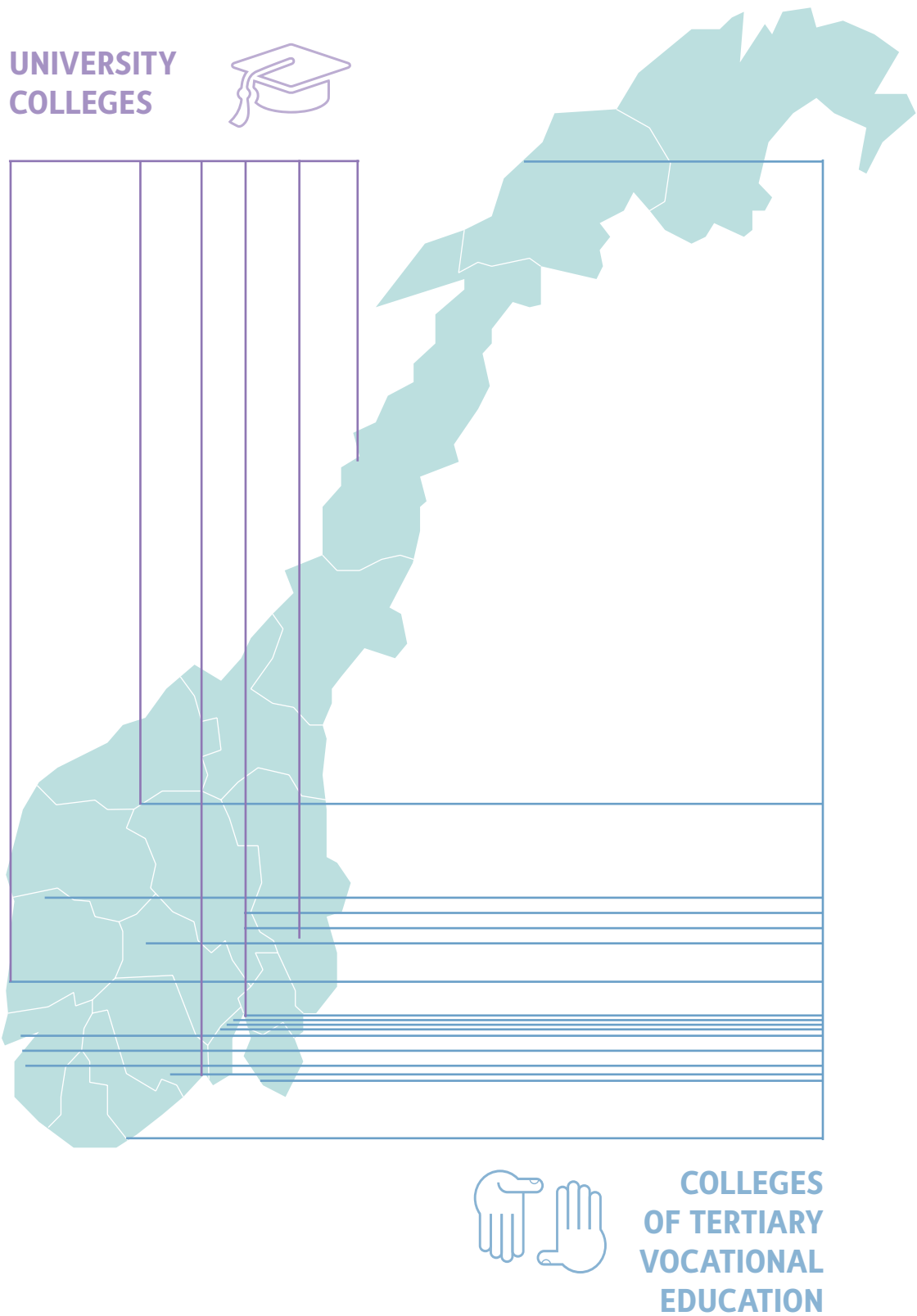
NOKUT received 70 applications for new vocational education programmes in the application period 2014/2015. The number

of applications for new tertiary vocational education programmes is falling, while the number of applications suitable for consideration, i.e. that are subjected to expert evaluation, remains stable. From the 2011/2012 application round and up until 2014/2015, more than 50 applications from each round have been considered by experts.

Of the 24 applications for bachelor's degree programmes NOKUT received in the 2014/2015 application round, we accredited four. We also accredited ten of a total of 22 applications at master's degree level. This is a normal level. The bachelor's degree level applications come from small, non-accredited university colleges with small academic communities, while the master's degree level applications come from accredited university colleges that often have well-established academic communities.

Over the last four years, the number of doctoral degree applications has varied from zero some years to seven other years. We received a total of 17 applications for PhD accreditation during this four-year period, thirteen of which were accredited. NOKUT approved 100 tertiary vocational education programmes and accredited 15 bachelor's degree programmes and 46 master's degree programmes during the same period.

NEW STUDY PROGRAMMES AT COLLEGES OF TERTIARY VOCATIONAL EDUCATION AND UNIVERSITY COLLEGES IN THE 2014/2015 PERIOD



**An accredited institution** can establish study programmes that are within the scope of its authorisation without having to apply to NOKUT for accreditation. Universities, specialised university institutions and the accredited university colleges belong in this category.

**Non-accredited university colleges** must apply to NOKUT to establish new study programmes.

Authorised to	University	University Colleges	Non-accredited University Colleges
Bachelor			
Master			
PhD			

- Study programmes the institution can establish.
- Study programmes the institution must apply to NOKUT for accreditation of.

**Colleges of tertiary vocational education with subject area approval** (provider) are authorised to establish study programmes within a limited subject area. In order to be granted such authorisation, the subject area must be accredited, and the provider must meet a number of conditions.

**Colleges of tertiary vocational education without subject area approval** (provider) must apply to NOKUT for accreditation of all new programmes. Only programmes that are approved by NOKUT can be called tertiary vocational education programmes. Schools that have approved tertiary vocational education programmes can call themselves colleges of tertiary vocational education.

# NEW STUDY PROGRAMMES

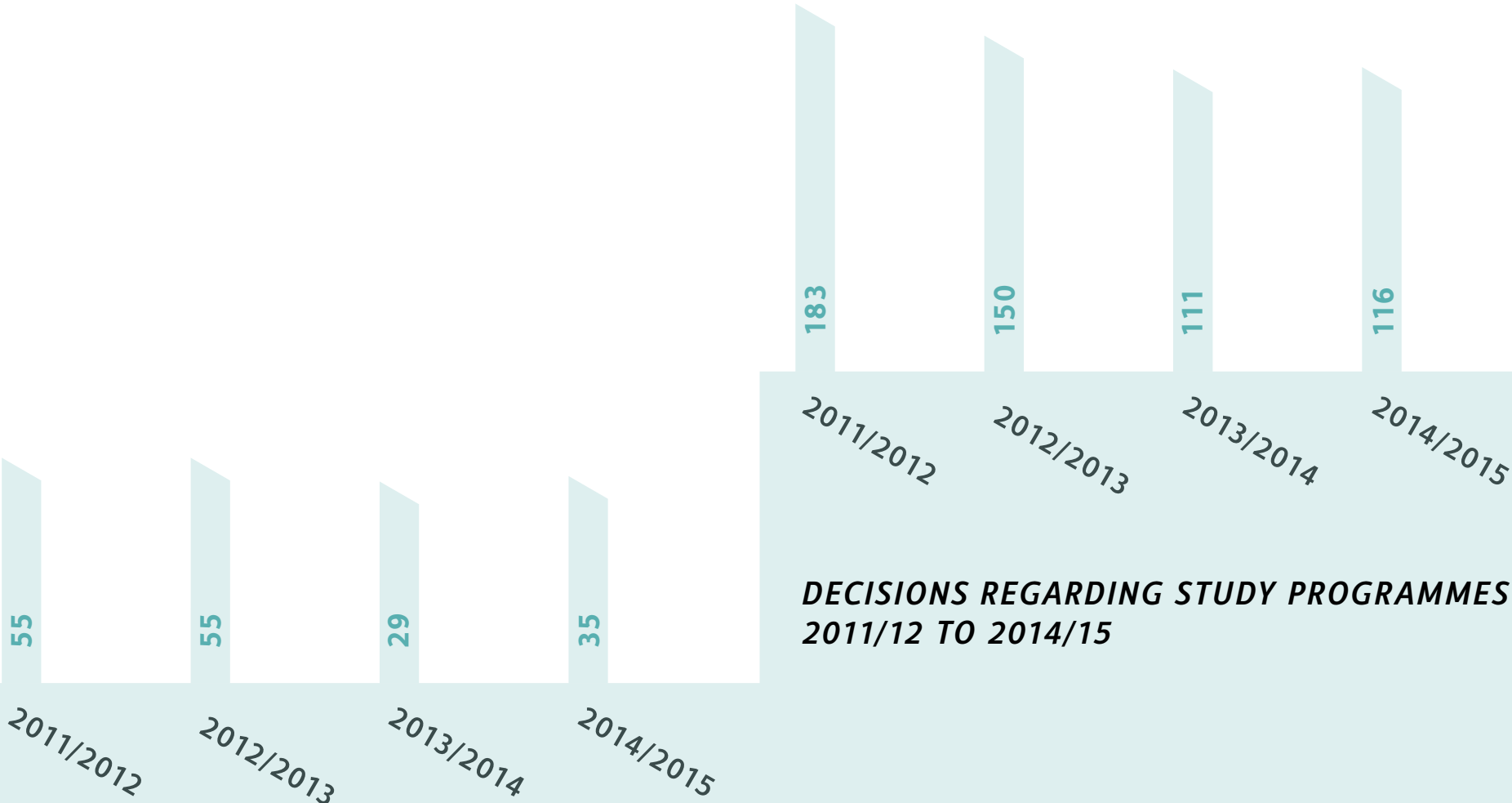


## Applications Autumn 2014/spring 2015

Tertiary vocational education programmes	70
Bachelor’s degree programmes	24
Master’s degree programmes	22
PhD programmes	0

## New educational programmes Autumn 2014/spring 2015

Tertiary vocational education programmes	21
Bachelor’s degree programmes	4
Master’s degree programmes	10
PhD programmes	0



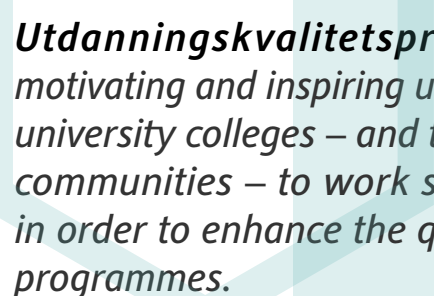
APPLICATIONS FOR STUDY PROGRAMMES  
2011/12 TO 2014/15

DECISIONS REGARDING STUDY PROGRAMMES  
2011/12 TO 2014/15

## STUDENT-RUN LIVE STUDIO AT NTNU RECEIVES UTDANNINGSKVALITETSPRISEN 2015

The NTNU Live Studio enables students to simulate the entire process of an architecture project, from the early sketches to the completed building. This concept saw them beat more than 15 other contenders in the competition to receive the award of NOK 1 million.

NTNU Live Studio enables students of architecture to explore the field of architecture up close in different and unique contexts in Norway and abroad. The project is an excellent example of active process cooperation between lecturers, students and other relevant parties. The awarding committee praised NTNU Live Studio for giving the students a sense of ownership, independence, authority and insight into their professional development and their own learning. The committee believes that this strengthens the quality of learning and promotes the development of the learning environment for students, the faculty's teaching staff and external partners.



*Utdanningskvalitetsprisen aims at motivating and inspiring universities and university colleges – and their discipline communities – to work systematically in order to enhance the quality of their programmes.*



# STUDENTS’ LEARNING TRAJECTORIES



Øystein Lund  
Director of Quality Assurance



***NOKUT is shifting the focus of its quality work. The students’ learning trajectories – the path they take from admission to graduation – will form the core of NOKUT’s future work with colleges of tertiary vocational education, university colleges and universities.***

A good study programme is composed and implemented in such a way that students have good opportunities to achieve high learning outcomes, and such that the education corresponds to society’s competence needs. The study programmes should encourage students to take an active role in the learning process, which is to be reflected in the assessment of students.

The focus on students’ learning trajectories will not be at the expense of the supervisory activities currently carried out by NOKUT, Director of Quality Assurance at NOKUT, Øystein Lund assures us:

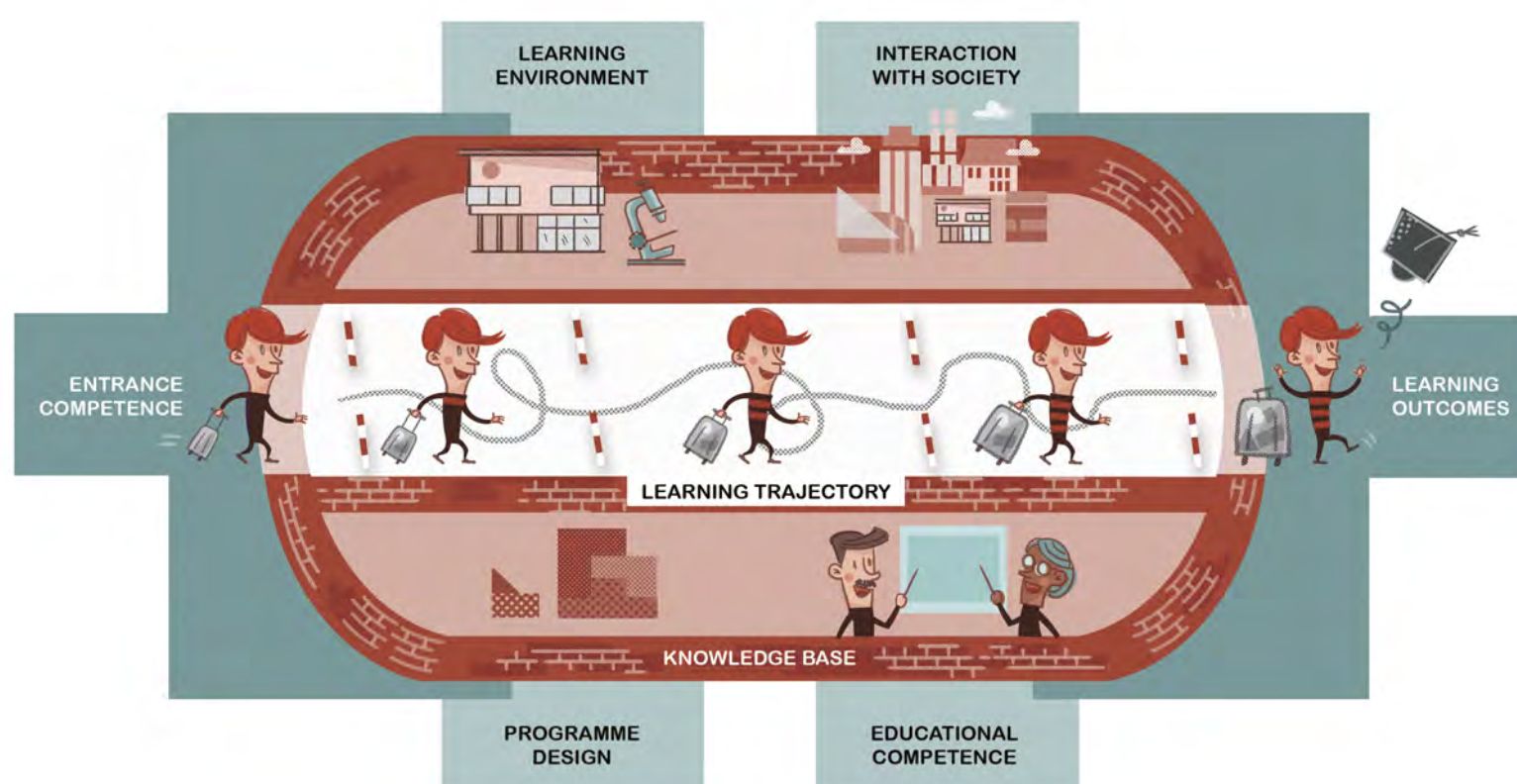
– We will continue to accredit new study programmes, carry out supervision of existing programmes and regular evaluation of the educational institutions’ quality work. What’s new is that we will now focus more on the quality work that is done to improve the study programmes. The focus will be on what and how students learn. We will look at how the educational institutions facilitate good learning and find out how external factors influence students’ learning trajectories. We will keep an eye on all educational institutions, including those entitled to establish their own programmes.

The programmes shall also contribute to the general education of students. Good study programmes introduce students to a large academic and social fellowship. They shall also highlight how their abilities and qualifications can be applied in the best interests of society.

## WHAT INFLUENCES THE LEARNING TRAJECTORY?

By focusing on the student, NOKUT gains a broad understanding of the process from admission to achieved learning outcomes. In order to understand what makes this path meaningful and stimulating for students, we look at several influence factors: They can be classified into four groups:

- The areas that are the precondition for education taking place at all, namely the existence of an academic environment in which students have the opportunity to acquire high-quality knowledge.
- The processes the student undergoes from the start of the study programme, through the learning trajectory where knowledge is created and acquired, up until the learning outcome has been achieved.
- Factors that are crucial to the success of the student’s learning.
- The work on programme design which is intended to unite all these aspects.



## MORE INFO ABOUT THE ELEMENTS IN THE FIGURE

**Learning trajectory** – a student’s life at an educational institution, from admission until receiving the diploma.

**Entrance competence** – The prerequisite knowledge and other qualities (such as motivation and abilities) that the student brings to the programme.

**Learning outcomes** – the competence the student is expected to have achieved after completing the programme.

**Knowledge base** – knowledge foundation, a living and developing foundation. It is

updated through contact with international academic and expert environments.

**Educational competence** – everything that facilitates students’ learning, such as the organisation of teaching and learning activities, academic supervisors’ and lecturers’ academic and didactic competence in addition to the programme management at the educational institution.

**Interaction with society** – relevant programmes that there is a demand for in society and that are developed in cooperation with society and the labour market.

**Learning environment** – physical, organisational and psychosocial factors, how

they affect student welfare and how they facilitate good learning.

**Programme design** – good study programmes are organised to ensure that factors that contribute to good learning and students achieving a good learning outcome are present. A good programme design is characterised by, among other things, good and relevant learning outcome descriptions at the correct level that are adapted to the unique nature of the subject.

# THE NEW EDUCATIONAL LANDSCAPE



Terje Mørland  
Director General

*Structure, mergers and quality. These three words reflect the development in higher education in Norway over the last year. How can we structure the educational landscape so that students acquire the knowledge they need to be able to find work in the Norwegian labour market? And what about the tertiary vocational education sector?*

In March 2015, the government presented its white paper Konsentrasjon for kvalitet – strukturreform i universitets- og høyskolesektoren. It is important that Norway readjusts to meet the changes in society and secure jobs and welfare in the future. At a press conference in connection with the white paper on structural reform, Minister of Education and Research Torbjørn Røe Isaksen said:

– Norway must create new jobs, support innovation and solve the major challenges in the health, education and welfare sectors. The new structure will provide a basis for improving the quality of higher education and research. This is crucial if Norway is to achieve the restructuring that is required over the coming years.

An important key to this is improving the quality of higher education and research. The Minister of Education and Research believes that there are too many small and fragmented academic environments at too many educational institutions in Norway.

– It is thus necessary to change the structure of the university and university college sector, and concentrate resources at fewer, but stronger institutions.

Director General Terje Mørland has pointed out on a number of occasions that the students may suffer as a result of such processes. The job of merging different academic communities and cultures, creating enthusiasm for the mergers and establishing support for the decisions is difficult and demands a lot of resources.

– Today’s students are entitled to good follow-up and high-quality education during the merger process. The educational institutions must have a clear strategy for ensuring the quality of education before, during and after mergers. Conscious priorities have to be made to prevent these processes from affecting today’s students.

A number of universities and university colleges discussed possible mergers during 2015. Some of them managed to reach agreements, while others are still negotiating. Many merged universities became a reality on 1 January 2016.

## WHAT ABOUT THE COLLEGES OF TERTIARY VOCATIONAL EDUCATION?

In 2016, the Ministry of Education and Research will complete a white paper on tertiary vocational education, while the white paper on quality in higher education will be ready in 2017. Mørland emphasises that the Ministry of Education and Research must see the two white papers in conjunction with each other.

– In the middle of all this talk of mergers, it's important to ensure that the diversity of the educational system is maintained. There must be a difference between upper secondary vocational education programmes, tertiary vocational education programmes and bachelor's and master's degree programme. There must be room for both large and small programmes. The time is now ripe to discuss the place of colleges of tertiary vocational education in the tertiary education system, Mørland said at NOKUT's tertiary vocational education conference.

## STRUCTURAL REFORM IN HIGHER EDUCATION

*The Structural reform is intended to strengthen the quality of education and research in Norway. Access to higher education shall be good across Norway, and the regional role of institutions must be further developed. Academic communities shall also be established that are robust and world-leading. The reform shall also contribute to a more efficient use of resources.*

## MERGERS

Four of the mergers discussed in the white paper on structural reform were announced in 2015. Three expanded universities and one new university college came into existence in January 2016:

1. University College of Southeast Norway: Buskerud and Vestfold University College and Telemark University College
2. The new NTNU: The Norwegian University of Science and Technology (NTNU), Sør-Trøndelag University College, Aalesund University College and Gjøvik University College
3. Nord University: The University of Nordland, Nesna University College and Nord-Trøndelag University College
4. UiT the Arctic University of Norway: UiT the Arctic University of Norway, Narvik University College and Harstad University College

In addition, four private university colleges also merged:

5. VID Specialised University: The School of Mission and Theology, Diakonhjemmet University College, Haraldsplass Deaconess University College and Betanien University College



# 2015 – THE YEAR OF TERTIARY VOCATIONAL EDUCATION



*Minister of Education and Research Torbjørn Røe Isaksen launched 2015 as the year of tertiary vocational education at NOKUT’s tertiary vocational education conference in 2014. So what happened in 2015?*

The reason 2015 was named the year of tertiary vocational education was that the Grund Committee submitted the official Norwegian report NOU 2014:14 Fagskolen – et attraktivt utdanningsvalg to the Minister in November. The follow-up to the report would thus take place in 2015 – which was therefore named the year of tertiary vocational education. The place of colleges of tertiary vocational education in the present educational system was discussed throughout 2015. Many asked how more people can be encouraged to take tertiary vocational education and how such education can be made more prestigious.

The report pointed out several issues that must be dealt with:

- Tertiary vocational education’s unclear place and low status in the Norwegian educational system
- Business and industry’s lacking sense of ownership in relation to colleges of tertiary vocational education
- The need to improve the quality of tertiary vocational education
- Inexpedient and ineffective manage-

ment of the tertiary vocational education sector, including an inexpedient structure

- Inadequate funding through an unsatisfactory financing system

***The two sectors must be seen in conjunction***

The official Norwegian report was an important topic at NOKUT’s tertiary vocational education conference.

– The measures proposed in the report to strengthen discipline communities and introduce more professional management and leadership in the sector as a whole will contribute in particular to improving the quality of tertiary vocational education. This is a necessary and challenging boost for colleges of tertiary vocational education,’ said Director General of NOKUT Terje Mørland about the report and the discussions it has given rise to.

– We now have a golden opportunity to decide what we want the colleges of tertiary vocational education to be and contribute to Norwegian society. To take advantage of this opportunity, we have to dare to discuss the organisation of our upper secondary, tertiary vocational and higher education seen in conjunction with each other. This is something we have so far not been good at in Norway.

**2016 – ALSO THE YEAR OF TERTIARY VOCATIONAL EDUCATION**

The Ministry of Education and Research has worked on a white paper on tertiary vocational education in 2015, but it will not be finished until 2016. At NOKUT’s tertiary vocational education conference, State Secretary Bjørn Haugstad therefore extended the year of tertiary vocational education to include 2016. The input received by the Ministry on funding, structure, organisation, ownership, the role of the tertiary vocational education sector in the educational system and improvement of the quality of tertiary vocational education will be included in this work.

**ACT AND REGULATIONS DISTRIBUTED FOR CONSULTATION**

The Government worked on amendments to the Tertiary Vocational Education Act and the Regulations concerning Quality Assurance and Quality Development in Higher Education and Tertiary Vocational Education in spring 2015. The proposed amendments were distributed for consultation in August. In them, the Government announced a status boost for tertiary vocational education in the form of stronger rights and better arrangements for students in tertiary vocational education. The Government proposed to give these students the same rights as students at universities and university colleges. It also wants to establish a national appeals board for students in tertiary vocational education. This would give the students the opportunity to appeal certain decisions to a national appeals board like university and university college students can do today.



Torbjørn Røe Isaksen,

«**A NEW TERTIARY VOCATIONAL EDUCATION POLICY THAT LIFTS THIS PART OF THE EDUCATION SECTOR TO BECOME A REAL AND HIGHLY REGARDED ALTERNATIVE TO HIGHER EDUCATION WILL CONTRIBUTE TO MORE AND BETTER DIVISION OF TASKS BETWEEN THE COLLEGES OF TERTIARY VOCATIONAL EDUCATION AND UNIVERSITIES AND UNIVERSITY COLLEGES. THIS CAN IN TURN FREE UP RESOURCES AND IMPROVE QUALITY IN THE TERTIARY VOCATIONAL EDUCATION SECTOR AND IN THE UNIVERSITY AND UNIVERSITY COLLEGE SECTOR ALIKE.**»

## NOKUT'S COMMENTS ON THE REPORT

NOKUT agrees with much of the Grund Committee's description of the situation in the tertiary vocational education sector, but has comments on the following aspects:

**Automatic recognition** – Relevant vocational qualifications achieved in one part of the educational system must be recognised by other parts of the system. Recognition must be granted on the basis of expert assessment. Automatic transfer schemes or rights to admission following completed tertiary vocational education programmes is not the way to achieve this. Such an approach could undermine academic quality.

**Quality improvement is needed throughout the tertiary vocational education sector** – Many of the smallest colleges of tertiary vocational education are facing considerable challenges relating to quality. That is why quality improvement must not focus on just part of the tertiary vocational education sector and leave the rest of the sector behind. In addition, significantly stricter requirements must be introduced for small colleges of tertiary vocational education that do not want to work towards a merger and institutional accreditation.

**The need for a body controlled by the colleges of tertiary vocational education** – NOKUT is of the opinion that there is a need for an overarching body for – and from among – the parties that run these colleges to provide them with an arena where they can discuss organisational, legal, structural and strategic issues.

**Tertiary vocational education programmes** are short courses of vocational study adapted to the Norwegian labour market. The duration of the programmes vary between six months and two years. At present, there are about 100 colleges of tertiary vocational education in Norway with a total of about 16,000 students. Of these colleges, 60% are private institutions. The remaining 40 % are public. About one third of the students attend colleges located in Oslo and Akershus counties.

## NOKUT'S USER PANEL FOR TERTIARY VOCATIONAL EDUCATION

In 2014, NOKUT established a user panel for tertiary vocational education on a trial basis. In this panel, colleges of tertiary vocational education and institutions that wanted to achieve this status could communicate their views and questions about application processes and NOKUT's supervision. The user panel comprised experienced experts, providers and representatives of the organisations in the tertiary vocational education sector. The panel was intended as part of NOKUT's quality assurance of work with colleges of tertiary vocational education. The panel was little used, and was discontinued following an evaluation in December 2015. NOKUT will now find other, more specific ways of receiving feedback from the institutions.

# THE STUDENTS' VOICE



Ole-Jacob Skodvin  
Director of Analysis and Development

*It is important that the students' own appreciation of their education is communicated. NOKUT's national student survey Studiebarometeret 2.0 gives them the opportunity to influence the quality of their education.*

The survey was run for the first time in 2013–14 and followed up with a second round in 2014–15. NOKUT presented the results from the second round 1 February 2015. This time, nearly 25,000 students from about 60 universities and university colleges had the opportunity to provide feedback on their study programmes.

The final response rate for the survey was then 42 %. This represents an increase of 10 % compared with the year before. The high number of respondents makes the feedback more representative and lends more weight to the students' voice. For the educational institutions, this means that they get an even better tool in their quality work.

Ole-Jacob Skodvin, NOKUT's Director of Analysis and Development, is very pleased with the high response rate. However, he is concerned that so many students are

dissatisfied with parts of their programme of study.

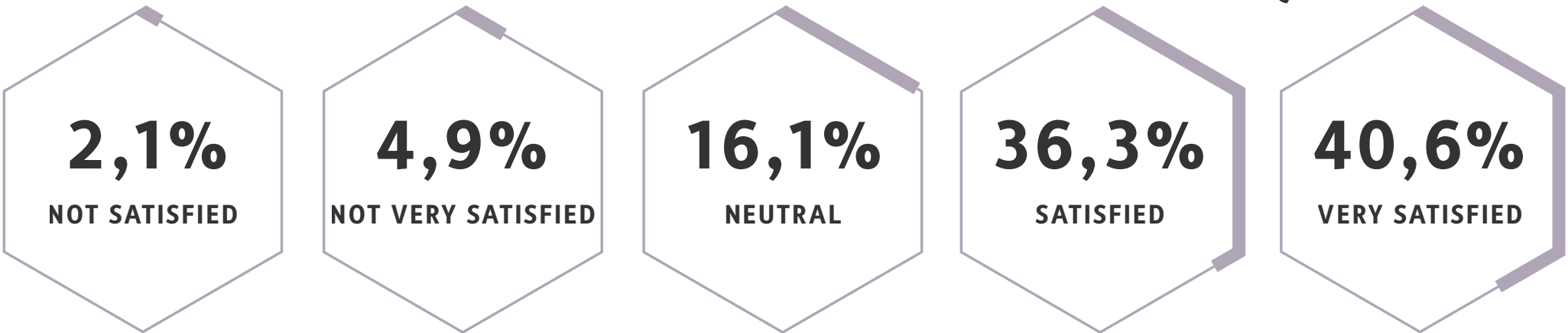
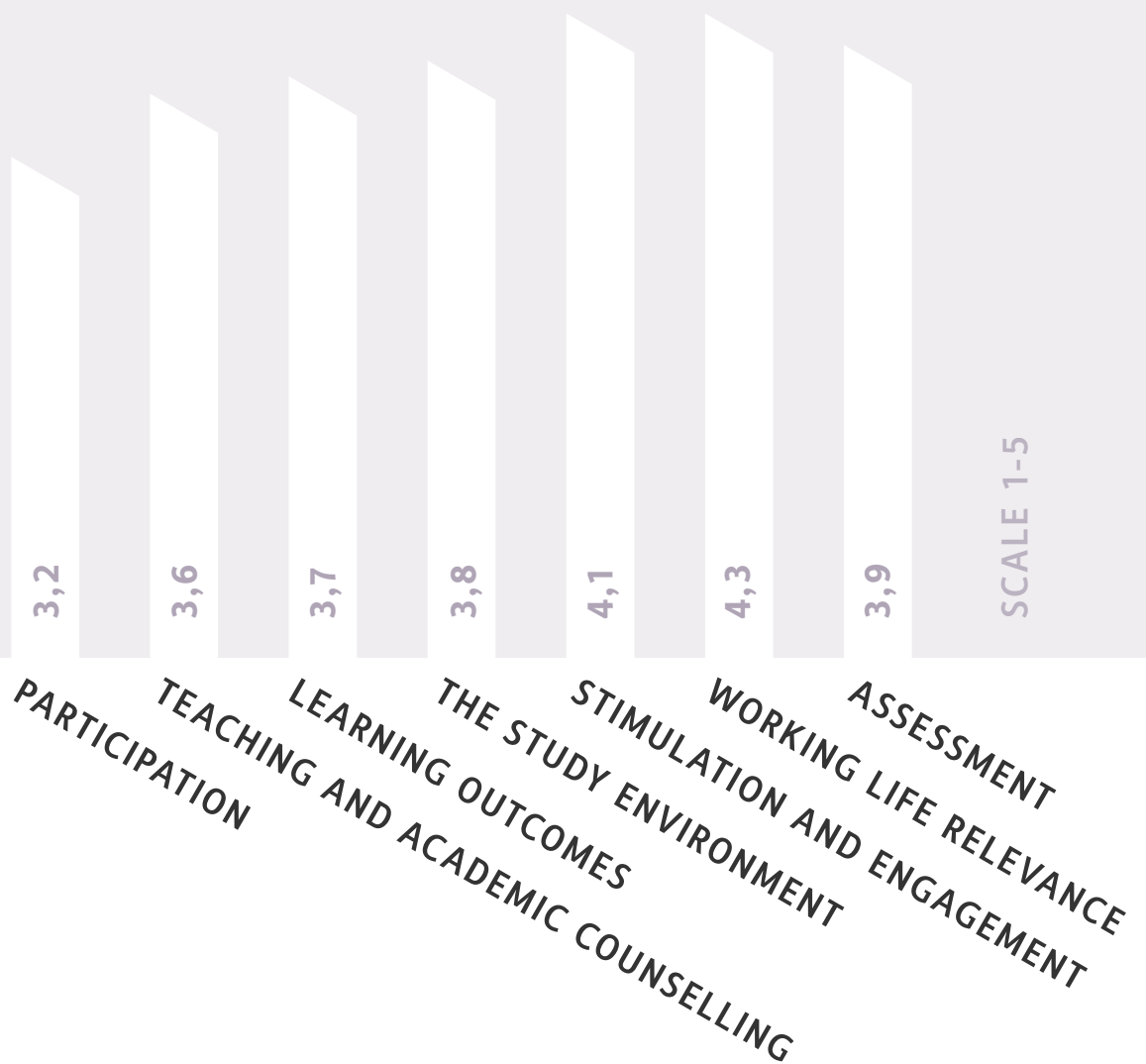
– The students' response in Studiebarometeret 2.0 varies greatly between individual study programmes and between the different quality aspects that we asked questions about. In particular, many are very dissatisfied with individual feedback and academic follow-up. At the other end of the scale we find working life relevance and learning outcomes, which receive consistently positive feedback. The universities and university colleges now have a job to do to find out why students are so dissatisfied with the feedback they receive and put the necessary measures in place.

NOKUT conducted a study of feedback to and follow-up of students in 2015. You can read this study here: [Personal feedback and advising in Norwegian higher education: Explaining student dissatisfaction](#)

## THE MOST IMPORTANT ANALYSIS REPORTS IN 2015

- [What explains students' overall satisfaction? A review of the main findings of the 2014 Norwegian national student survey](#)
- [Personal feedback and advising in Norwegian higher education: Explaining student dissatisfaction](#)
- [Studiebarometeret 2014 – tiltak for høy svarprosent](#)
- [Studiebarometeret 2014 – gjennomføring og svarinngang](#)
- [Studiebarometeret 2014 – analyse av validitet og reliabilitet](#)
- [Studiebarometeret 2014 – Gjennomføring og hovedtendenser](#)

**THE STUDENTS’  
ASSESSMENT OF  
THEIR OWN STUDY  
PROGRAMMES**



Read more about the results and analyses of the results at [Studiebarometeret.no](http://Studiebarometeret.no).

*Studiebarometeret is a national student survey that goes out to all students in the second year of bachelor’s and master’s degree programmes as well as fifth-year students in integrated master’s degree programmes. The results from the survey are published on the web portal Studiebarometeret.no, where applicants, students, institutions and others can find information about and compare students’ perceptions of the quality of individual study programmes throughout Norway. Most educational institutions now use the results from Studiebarometeret in their development work. Some have replaced their internal student surveys with Studiebarometeret.*

# THE STUDENTS' VOICE



Therese Eia Lerøen  
Head of NSO

## STUDENT INVOLVEMENT – COMMITMENT TO BETTER QUALITY OF EDUCATION

In Norway, two student organisations work to safeguard and promote the interests of students. One is an organisation for tertiary vocational education students (Organisasjon for norske fagskolestudenter, abbreviated ONF); the other is the National Union of Students in Norway (Norsk studentorganisasjon, abbreviated NSO), which represents 33 different student unions at Norwegian universities and university colleges.

### *How does your organisation work on quality of education?*

- In direct contact with rectors and other sector players through the bodies of the Norwegian Association of Higher Education Institutions (UHR); the Board, the Education Committee, the Research Committee etc.
- Assisting our member organisations (student democracy organisations at universities and university colleges) in their efforts to promote quality of education at the individual institutions.
- Meetings with the political leaders (minister and state secretary) and bureaucrats in the Ministry of Education and Research.
- Member of the European Students' Union (ESU), influencing policy in the field of education at the European level.

### *What should NOKUT do for students?*

- Ensure good and sufficient quality in all study programmes.

### *What can the students do to improve the quality of education?*

- Respond to evaluations and surveys.
- Participate actively in teaching activities. Contribute to establishing dialogue.
- Provide concrete feedback, also outside of evaluations.
- Get involved in student democracy and different boards, committees and councils at their institution.

### *What would you do if you were director general of NOKUT and minister of*

### *education and research for a day?*

Director general of NOKUT:

- Incorporate requirements concerning university and university college teaching qualifications in the Regulations concerning supervision of the educational quality in higher education.
- Speed up case processing for refugees who come to Norway.
- Improve quality assurance of practical training placements.
- Increase focus on quality of teaching.
- Introduce a mentor scheme for all students in consultation with the Ministry of Education and Research.
- Focus on improving the quality of the teaching activities that actually takes place.

Minister of Education and Research:

- Realise #studentkravet (the demand to increase financial support for students and link it to 1.5 times the National Insurance basic amount (G) and build at least 3,000 student accommodation units per year).
- Draw up a strategy for access to and diversity in higher education.
- Give all students access to a student ombudsman.
- Make university and university college teaching qualifications a regulatory requirement.
- Forskriftsfestet krav til universitets- og høyskolepedagogikk.
- Allocate funds to new buildings with innovative teaching rooms.





Silje Kjørholt  
Head of ONF

***How does your organisation work on quality of education?***

ONF works on quality of education by building student democracy and political influence in matters we believe will be important to quality in tertiary vocational education in the long term. This includes membership of student unions, equal rights and obligations for students in tertiary vocational education as for other students, increased funding and state ownership of public colleges of tertiary vocational education.

***What should NOKUT do for students?***

NOKUT should include students in tertiary vocational education in the national student survey and prepare separate statistics for tertiary vocational education. We need to know how students in tertiary vocational education feel about their studies and establish a basis for developing the quality of tertiary vocational education.

***What can the students do to improve the quality of education?***

Students can get involved in student democracy at their college and in ONF and be a clear mouthpiece for the students' voice.

They can also get involved in committees that work on quality in relation to their specific disciplines and be a driving force for measures to strengthen relevance for work through contact with employers.

***What would you do if you were director general of NOKUT and minister of education and research for a day?***

I would increase funding for colleges of tertiary vocational education and the number of places, particularly in the programmes most in demand with business and industry. I would recognise tertiary vocational education as higher vocational education with credits and student union membership. In addition, I would hold the colleges of tertiary vocational education accountable for their own quality of education. I would also introduce institutional accreditation and ensure a relevant composition of members on the boards of the colleges of tertiary vocational education.



# CENTRES FOR EXCELLENCE IN HIGHER EDUCATION WORK



Centres for Excellence in Education

*In the autumn 2015 it became clear that the Centres for Excellence in Higher Education (SFU) arrangement will be continued. NOKUT will announce a new call for applications for a further three to six Centres for Excellence in Higher Education.*

In previous calls for applications, NOKUT announced a specified number of centres with a fixed amount of NOK 3 million. This practice has now been changed. Educational communities may now apply for between NOK 4 and 8 million in funding for a centre. This change means that we could get a maximum of six new centres, but there could also be fewer.

## SFUs MAKE A DIFFERENCE

The Nordic Institute for Studies in Innovation, Research and Education (NIFU) has analysed the dissemination effects of the SFU Initiative. The analysis shows that educational institutions show a raised awareness in their work on educational quality. The possibility of being awarded Centre for Excellence status is now included in the strategic processes and priorities on a par with the arrangements for Centres of Excellence in Research (SFF) and Centres for Research-based Innovation (SFI). Resources are allocated, a commitment to quality in education arises, and a wish to link education and research more closely together is created. Read the report: [Sentre for fremragende utdanning \(SFU\): I samvirke med institusjoner og fag.](#)

## THE SFU MAGAZINE

In cooperation with the SFUs, NOKUT publishes a magazine containing news from Norway's foremost educational communities. In the magazine, the centres share information on development, research and best practice in higher education with other educational institutions.

Want to find out what the SFUs are up to? [Read the SFU Magazine here.](#)



From the report on

**“SFU WAS NOT A FLASH IN THE PAN FOR US,  
the effects of the SFU Initiative  
BUT A STEP IN THE PROCESS OF DEVELOPING  
QUALITY OF EDUCATION.”**

## THE FOUR CENTRES FOR EXCELLENCE IN HIGHER EDUCATION

- **Center of Excellence in Biology Education (bioCEED)** is a collaboration between the University of Bergen (UiB), the University Centre in Svalbard (UNIS) and the Institute of Marine Research. The centre uses the partners' different strengths in the fields of education, research and working life relations to meet new requirements of the biology programmes. They are developing new methods for enhancing and integrating the learning of biology, practical skills and tasks relevant to society throughout their study programmes.
- **The Centre of Excellence in Music Performance (CEMPE)** is located at the Norwegian Academy of Music. CEMPE educates excellent musicians who are qualified to work on a competitive international music scene.

- **Centre for Research, Innovation and Coordination of Mathematics Teaching (MatRIC)** is located at the University of Agder. MatRIC is a national centre for improved teaching and learning in mathematics, natural sciences, engineering, economics and teacher education programmes.
- **Centre for Professional Learning in Teacher Education (ProTed)** is a collaboration between the University of Oslo (UiO) and the Arctic University of Tromsø (UiT). The centre's objective is to develop integrated teacher education programmes. This entails a comprehensive study programme design that unifies academic disciplines, profession-oriented subjects, school subjects, theory and practice.

ProTed is the oldest of the centres, and has worked on excellence in teacher education since 2011. An international expert committee conducted a midway evaluation of ProTed in 2015. On the basis of this evaluation, NOKUT decided to award ProTed centre status for a further five years.

*Status as a Centre for Excellence in Higher Education is awarded to academic communities that are able to demonstrate excellent quality and innovative practice in education. One of the important requirements the centres have to meet is that they must disseminate their results and knowledge. The centres must have clear plans in place for further development and innovation. The SFU Initiative is a parallel to Centres of Excellence in Research (SFF) and other elite research centre schemes.*

# THE NEW NOKUT



Kathrine Dalslett Graff  
Director of Administration

***From its establishment in 2003 with 35 employees, NOKUT had at the end of 2015 grown into an organisation with 103 employees divided between five departments with a broad range of duties. The year 2015 was characterised by adjustment to an increased number of applications, new tasks and preparation for the introduction of a new application and case processing system.***

The NOKUT organisation has developed rapidly in 2015, but Director of Administration Kathrine Dahlslett Graff believes that the new organisational structure provides a good basis for carrying out the tasks assigned to NOKUT in a good and efficient manner.

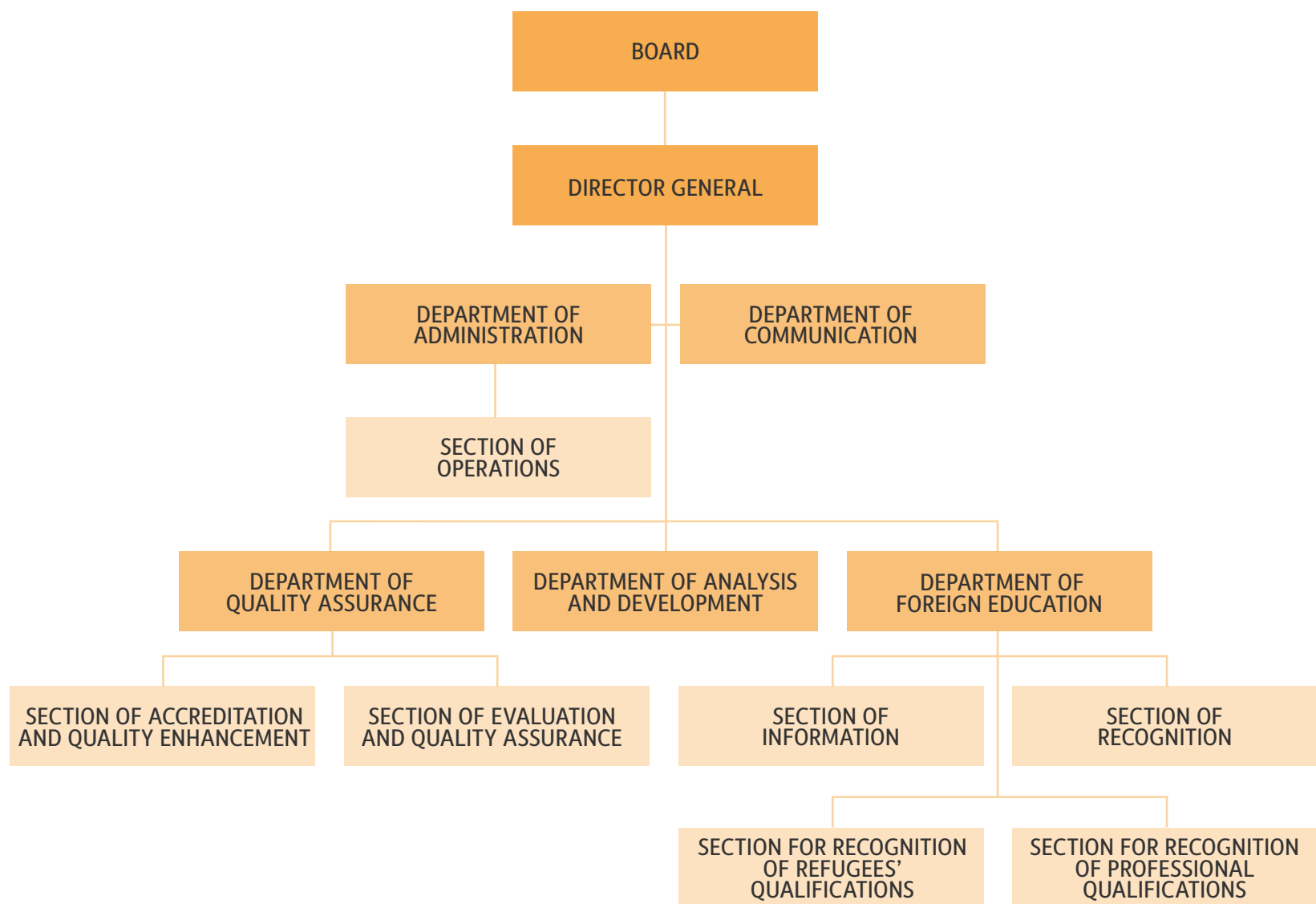
– A well-functioning organisation is a prerequisite for performing our tasks in an expedient manner. In 2015, a lot of time was spent recruiting new staff and adapting and developing the organisation and infrastructure, and on culture development and competence-raising measures. This work will continue in 2016, but otherwise we are focusing all our attention on the implementation of our new collaboration solution. It integrates self-service solutions for external users with case processing support and archive functions. The general case processing and archive system is already in place, but the user portal for the foreign qualifications area will not be ready until autumn 2016.

## WHERE WILL NOKUT GO FROM HERE?

In early 2016, the Gjerdrem Committee presented its evaluation of the knowledge sector in the report Kunnskapssektoren sett utenfra ('An outside view of the knowledge sector' - in Norwegian only). In this report, the committee proposes to establish a new administrative agency under the Ministry of Education and Research. It was proposed to place NOKUT's Department of Foreign Education here. NOKUT is sceptical of this and does not see how moving the department to a new directorate focusing on internal service and administration of higher education programmes could make it better or more efficient. Recognition of foreign education is a service we primarily provide to job-seekers and employers, not to educational institutions. Therefore, it is preferable to see these services in conjunction with other recognition and authorisation services based on qualifications acquired abroad. NOKUT is anticipating a review of the whole recognition field. Any relocation of NOKUT's foreign education area should be seen in light of such a review..

## NOKUT GROWS WITH NEW TASKS

*As a consequence of the increased number of applications for recognition of foreign education, new services in the area of foreign qualifications and the many new tasks that the Ministry of Education and Research has assigned to NOKUT, 2015 was a year marked by growth and adaptation. In order to carry out its tasks efficiently, the Department of Foreign Education was reorganised into four instead of two sections. In the Department of Quality Assurance, work was concentrated in two sections, while the Section of Operations was hived off from the Department of Administration as a separate section.*



**OVERALL RESPONSIBILITY AS A NATIONAL RESOURCE CENTRE FOR QUALITY ASSURANCE IN EDUCATION AND COMPETENCE-RAISING**



Borghild Barth-Heyerdahl Roald  
*Chair of the board*

NOKUT entered a new strategic plan period in 2015. The new strategy is based on the assumption that NOKUT has the potential to take more overall responsibility as a national competence centre in the broad area covered by its remit. We are well on our way to achieving this, with a high level of activity and good goal achievement in all result areas. Chair of the board of NOKUT Borghild Barth-Heyerdahl Roald looks ahead:

– The Board’s overriding ambition for the period up to 2020 is for NOKUT to be a more visible ambassador for quality of education and competence-raising. In order to succeed, we have to take a broad approach and rationalise, renew and develop our core areas: recognition

and supervision. At the same time, we have to reinforce other measures that could stimulate positive development and utilisation of the competence that exists in Norwegian society – regardless of whether it comes from Norwegian or foreign educational institutions.

In 2016, NOKUT will focus particularly on the work of ensuring that students receive a relevant education of high quality.

– We see a need to raise the quality, not just in higher education, but also in tertiary vocational education. We will also do more to help people with foreign education to find relevant jobs in Norway, and to help employers to find good and relevant candidates, says Roald.



# HIGHLIGHTS OF 2015



## DEPARTMENT OF FOREIGN EDUCATION

### WE ASKED THE HEADS OF SECTION

In 2015, the number of heads of section at NOKUT increased to seven, divided between the Department of Quality Assurance, the Department of Foreign Education and the Department of Administration. We asked them about their highlights of 2015 and about what they are looking forward to in 2016. You can read their answers here

*The Department of Communication and the Department of Analysis and Development do not have heads of section.*



Joachim Gümüs Kallevig  
*Section for Recognition of Professional Qualifications (NQF level 4)*



Hanne-Gerd Nielsen  
*Section of Recognition*

***From a NOKUT perspective, what was the most important individual event/innovation in 2015?***

Being assigned the task of establishing a recognition scheme for foreign vocational education – an innovative move in a national and international context.

***What is special/the best thing about working at NOKUT?***

A dynamic environment with incredibly capable staff.

***What are you looking forward to most in 2016?***

I am most looking forward to the introduction of the new recognition scheme for vocational and professional education.

***What is the best thing about working at NOKUT?***

The best thing is all the lovely, committed and highly capable colleagues. The fact that the services we provide are so important, both to society and to individuals, also contributes to making NOKUT a place that you're proud to work in.

***From a NOKUT perspective, what was the most important individual event/innovation in 2015?***

In 2015, NOKUT updated the criteria for assessment and recognition of foreign doctoral degrees, and in autumn 2015, NOKUT's Board adopted the new set of criteria. While the previous criteria were very formalistic and excluded many doctoral degrees from recognition, the present set is more modern, flexible and in accordance with qualifications frameworks/ learning outcomes and the principles of automatic recognition.

***What are you looking forward to most in 2016?***

That would have to be the introduction of an electronic application and case processing system. That will help to make our services better for the applicants.



**Tove Knudsen**  
Section of Information

***What is the best thing about working at NOKUT?***

The best thing about working at NOKUT is the colleagues – NOKUT's staff comprises capable and committed people from many different countries with an incredible range of educational backgrounds and language skills. There are no 'grey bureaucrats' here!

***From a NOKUT perspective, what was the most important individual event/innovation in 2015?***

I would particularly like to draw attention to the cooperation between NOKUT and the Norwegian Directorate of Integration and Diversity (IMDi) on a course for programme advisors in the introduction programme for newly arrived immigrants. The topic of the course was recognition schemes for foreign education. The course was offered in all six regions of Norway, and received very good feedback. E-learning modules were also developed on the topic for use by Job Opportunity counsellors, first-line NAV staff, career counsellors, adult education teachers and other players.

***What are you looking forward to most in 2016?***

I look forward to the implementation of an electronic application solution for people applying for recognition of foreign education. That will make our services even better and more efficient.



**Marina Malgina**  
Section for Recognition of Refugees' Qualifications

***From a NOKUT perspective, what was the most important individual event/innovation in 2015?***

In autumn 2015, NOKUT and its sister organisation UK NARIC presented the idea of a European Qualifications Passport for refugees to the European Commission and the Council of Europe. Being issued a qualifications passport will give refugees a document they can use across Europe.

***What is special/the best thing about working at NOKUT?***

NOKUT is a dynamic workplace with many employees who are socially involved and dedicated to their field – a stimulating professional environment where you never stop developing.

***What are you looking forward to most in 2016?***

I am particularly looking forward to the implementation of the pilot project to test a new type of qualification assessment for refugees (NOKUT's qualifications passport for refugees) and to continuing the work on the proposal for a European Qualifications Passport for refugees and the implementation of the EU-funded project to develop the recognition tool and guidelines for assessing refugees' qualifications. In this project, NOKUT will be heading a consortium comprising five leading European recognition bodies: UK NARIC (UK), CIEP (France), NUFFIC (the Netherlands), CIMEA (Italy) and ArmENIC (Armenia).

# HIGHLIGHTS OF 2015



## DEPARTMENT OF QUALITY ASSURANCE



Hege Brodahl  
*Section of Evaluation and Quality Assurance*



Bjør Ragnar Stensby  
*Section of Accreditation and Quality Enhancement*

***From a NOKUT perspective, what was the most important individual event/innovation in 2015?***

The most important event in 2015 for the Department of Quality Assurance was probably the internal restructuring.

***What do you remember best from the NOKUT year 2015?***

The most special thing about 2015 for me personally was that I left my job at the Norwegian Academy of Music to start working for NOKUT.

***What are you looking forward to most in 2016?***

In 2016, I look forward to concluding some ongoing processes, such as putting new regulations in place, developing new methods and establishing new procedures for our work.

***What do you remember best from the NOKUT year 2015?***

The Department of Quality Assurance was restructured. As a result, I gained new colleagues and a new area of responsibility (accreditation of higher education). It was and still is exciting to work in a somewhat different way than you're used to.

***What is special/the best thing about working at NOKUT?***

The special thing is also the best thing; that NOKUT is an independent expert body which is also subject to political management. There is no 'superior' body that can review NOKUT's decisions in supervisory matters. This carries with it a special responsibility, which also makes the job more exciting.

***What are you looking forward to most in 2016?***

What I am looking forward to most in 2016 is to put in place new Academic Supervision Regulations.

## DEPARTMENT OF ADMINISTRATION



Karl Johan Berg  
*Section of Operations*

***From a NOKUT perspective, what was the most important individual event/innovation in 2015?***

The completion of a new information security management system (SSIS) was a major advance in 2015. The management system is important in order to ensure that personal data processed by NOKUT is not disclosed and that we ensure that we maintain IT security in all our information systems.

***What is special/the best thing about working at NOKUT?***

The best thing about working at NOKUT is the people. I have a good relationship with everyone at NOKUT, which makes my job easier. A good working environment is important to me.

***What are you looking forward to most in 2016?***

The archive and case processing system Public 360 was introduced at NOKUT on 1 January 2016, and was later transferred to the Section of Operations. I can already see that many NOKUT employees are satisfied with the new system, and it will rationalise case processing, meeting activity and collaboration in NOKUT. I am looking forward to seeing Public 360 fully implemented, so that it will run more smoothly. The Section of Operations is a relatively new section. We have strengthened the IT operations resources in the past year. I also look forward to seeing the results of this in 2016.



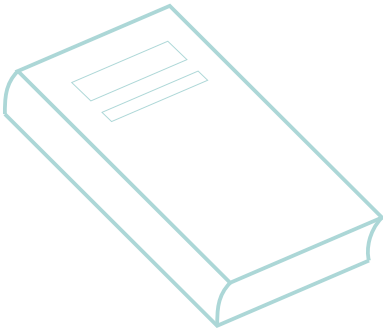
# THIS IS NOKUT



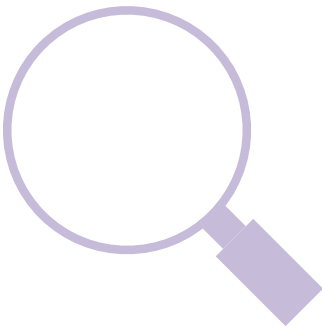
NOKUT is short for 'Nasjonalt organ for kvalitet i utdanningen' (Norwegian Agency for Quality Assurance in Education).



NOKUT is an independent expert body under the Ministry of Education and Research with just over 100 employees divided between five different departments.



NOKUT monitors quality, identifies deficiencies and provides information about the state of education at colleges of tertiary vocational education, universities and university colleges and recognised foreign education.



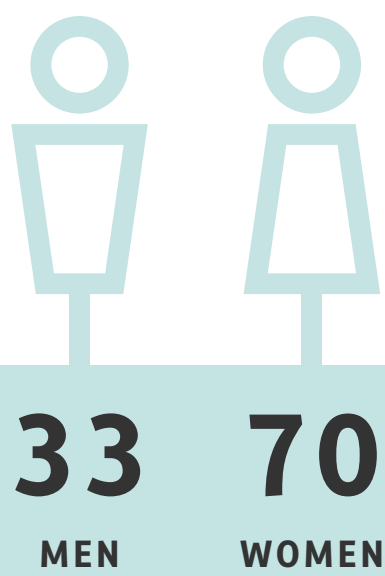
NOKUT supervises and contributes to developing the quality of Norwegian study programmes and educational institutions.



NOKUT has several recognition schemes for foreign education, which are intended to help to enable people with such education to use their qualifications in Norway.



NOKUT is responsible for the national student survey Studiebarometeret, the incentive arrangement Centres of Excellence in Higher Education, and the Utdanningskvalitetsprisen award (prize for quality in higher education).



*USE OF  
ALLOCATED FUNDS  
IN 2015*

In 2015, NOKUT was allocated a total of NOK 131,591,000 over the Ministry of Research and Education’s budget. Of this amount, 39 % was reserved eller designated to projects including the topic specific national assessment examinations, combined subject evaluations, benchmarking, the SFU arrangement, the national student survey Studiebarometeret and mapping of learning outcomes.

NOKUT spent NOK 123,624,000 in total. The main reason why we did not spend all the funds allocated to us in 2015 was that the payments made to the above-mentioned projects were smaller than expected.

# NOKUT THE YEAR 2015



**EDITORIAL BOARD**

Lene Beate Ruud

**DESIGN**

Erlend Storaker / Storaker Design

**PHOTO**

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/Shutterstock.com

*Side 32* - Skjalg Bøhmer Vold  
/NSO

*Side 33* - Katarina Sand

### **NOKUT'S WEBSITE**

You can find more information about our services and tasks on our website at [www.nokut.no](http://www.nokut.no).

### **FOLLOW US ON TWITTER**

Here we post information about our own work and comment on and share good stories about quality of education at colleges of tertiary vocational education, universities and university colleges. [@NOKUT\\_no](https://twitter.com/NOKUT_no)

### **THE NOKUT BLOG**

Director General Terje Mørland blogs about relevant topics from NOKUT's broad area of responsibility. This blog is popular and gives NOKUT an opportunity to directly reach the sector and other parties interested in our areas of responsibility. [Read the blog here.](#)