

# NOKUT

## THE YEAR 2016

THE NORWEGIAN AGENCY  
FOR QUALITY ASSURANCE  
IN EDUCATION



**NOKUT**

# A WORD FROM THE DIRECTOR GENERAL



The time has come for summing up NOKUT's activities in 2016.

In the last few years, NOKUT has been delegated many new tasks, and 2016 was no exception. It is rewarding to know that we are an organisation worth investing in, and I believe we have managed to strike a good balance between our core activities and new development tasks.

In particular, I would like to highlight our adoption of new regulations on the supervision of higher education. After NOKUT took the initiative to change the focus of the institutions' quality assurance work in 2012, the Government and the Storting have now amended the overarching rules, and the amendments are reflected in the new regulations (the Academic Supervision Regulations). The new regulations shift the focus of the quality assurance work more explicitly to what goes on at programme level. This is where the students encounter their subject and the academic community, and the institutions must facilitate student learning and ensure that the students achieve the learning outcomes defined for

their programmes. We are glad to announce that we are now ready to start new and improved supervisory activities in 2017.

NOKUT shall contribute to society at large having confidence in the quality of higher education and tertiary vocational education. As a measure to enhance this contribution, NOKUT will conduct more frequent supervision of the sector in the time ahead.

As in previous years, NOKUT organised several well-attended breakfast seminars in 2016, in addition to a number of subject-related seminars and conferences. These events are important in order to raise awareness, stimulate debate and provide increased knowledge about the quality of higher education and tertiary vocational education. New this year was the first 'Education Celebration' event that first of all highlighted the awarding of four new Centres for Excellence in Education (SFU), and celebrated everyone whose day-to-day work helps to ensure that students get a sound education. We have great expectations for the four new academic communities that have now been granted SFU status and look forward to seeing the results of their work.

The annual student survey ('Studiebarometeret') has become an important survey for authorities and institutions alike. The survey has given us increased knowledge of how the students assess the quality of their study programmes. In 2016, the student survey was supplemented by a pilot survey conducted among teachers ('Underviserundersøkelsen'). Getting the teachers' assessments of the quality of education has been important in order to include them in the discussion of the quality of Norwegian higher education. In a white paper on tertiary vocational education, the Government has signalled that a survey will be established for students in vocational programmes as well. We are looking forward to that.

In autumn 2016, we reached an important milestone at NOKUT when we launched a digital application portal for our recognition schemes for foreign higher education. The portal is aimed at providing better services for the users and more efficient case

processing. This is important, particularly since NOKUT has seen a marked increase in the number of applications over time.

In 2015, the number of refugees coming to Norway increased sharply. In 2016 this led to a strong increase in the number of applications for NOKUT's general recognition of foreign higher education, especially from Syria. We see that this growth is continuing in 2017. The number of applications from traditional labour immigrant countries such as Poland and Lithuania did not increase in 2016, but the numbers started to rise again in 2017. The top three countries are now Poland, Syria and Lithuania.

In 2016, we established a new sought-after recognition scheme for foreign vocational education and training. This means that our recognition mandate

has been expanded in that we now also recognise education at upper secondary level. The scheme initially applies to two countries and selected qualifications.

We will also test a recognition scheme for foreign tertiary vocational education.

There is increased pressure on all our recognition schemes for foreign education, so we expect somewhat longer case processing time in 2017 as well.

NOKUT The Year 2016 provides a brief introduction to and overview of our activities last year.

Enjoy the magazine!

## NOKUT'S ROLE AND SOCIAL MISSION

NOKUT is an independent expert body organised under the Ministry of Education and Research. NOKUT's remit and tasks are defined in the Act relating to Universities and University Colleges and the Act relating to Tertiary Vocational Education, with pertaining regulations issued by the Ministry of Education and Research.

- NOKUT supervises almost 4,000 study programmes at about 160 places of learning in Norway. We do this to ensure that all study programmes at Norwegian universities, university colleges and tertiary vocational education institutions have satisfactory quality, that as many programmes as possible are outstanding, and that society is well informed about the status in the sector.
- In 2016, we received 7,650 applications for NOKUT's general recognition of foreign education. Our recognition schemes shall help 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 what the foreign qualifications are equivalent to.
- We obtain and facilitate information about educational quality, and are responsible for the Centre for Excellence in Education (SFU) arrangement. As a resource centre for foreign education, we provide advice and information about all the Norwegian recognition schemes.





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# 2016

## AT A GLANCE

### Four new SFU centres

Appropriations for the SFU initiative increased by as much as NOK 25 million in 2016.

‘The appropriations are historically high and a victory for everyone who works to enhance educational quality at this level. NOKUT has great faith in the initiative, and I look forward to following this year’s announcement of new centres,’ said Director General of NOKUT, Terje Mørland.

With the four new centres that were granted SFU status in 2016, there are now a total of eight Centres for Excellence in Education.



Senter for  
framifrå  
utdanning

The Centre for Excellence in Education (SFU) arrangement is a prestigious national initiative for higher education institutions. The initiative was established by the Ministry of Education and Research in 2010 and is managed by NOKUT.

[www.nokut.no/SFU-magasinet](http://www.nokut.no/SFU-magasinet)

### The message from the students is clear

In early February, we presented the result of last year’s student survey, Studiebarometeret.

The survey is conducted annually in the autumn, and the results are presented early the next year. Norwegian students are most satisfied with the job relevance of their study programmes, but think they have too little influence on the content and structure of their study programmes.

‘The students are generally satisfied with the quality of their study programmes, but the survey also uncovers great differences between different programmes and in how critical the students are. NOKUT expects the institutions to take the students seriously and take action where it is needed,’ said Director General of NOKUT, Terje Mørland.



STUDIEBAROMETERET

Studiebarometeret is a national survey of how students perceive the quality of their studies. In 2015, 29,000 students took part in the survey, i.e. 47 per cent of all students in the second and fifth year of study at Norwegian universities and university colleges.

The survey covers almost all Norwegian universities and university colleges, and comprises about 1,800 study programmes.

### Subject area accreditation in health and social care studies

AOF Haugaland was the second institution for tertiary vocational education in Norway to be authorised to establish and change study programmes without first applying for NOKUT’s approval, when NOKUT granted the institution’s application for accreditation of health and social care studies.

‘We congratulate AOF Haugaland on gaining subject area accreditation. The institution is dedicated to its quality assurance work. It has developed good procedures for following up the responsibility that comes with subject area accreditation,’ said Director General Terje Mørland after NOKUT’s decision was made known.

In addition to establishing new study programmes, AOF Haugaland can make material changes to the programmes it offers in the subject area. This also applies to programmes that NOKUT has approved earlier.

Subject area accreditation is similar to institutional accreditation of university colleges and universities in that the provider is authorised to establish and change study programmes. The authorisation applies to a limited subject area. The accreditation is aimed at making the institution better equipped to quickly adapt to the labour market’s need for qualified labour.

Only providers that have been authorised by NOKUT to establish study programmes in a limited subject area can establish new programmes themselves.



### Workshops and seminars in the recognition field

In early March, NOKUT organised a workshop on the education systems in Eritrea and Syria and academic credentials from these countries. Nearly 70 admission and approval staff from the university and university college sector attended the seminar.

In November, NOKUT organised two seminars as part of the ‘Academic Effort’ initiative: One of them carried the title ‘Integrating Refugees in Higher Education: How to move from Effort to a Robust and Effective System of Recognition and Inclusion’, arranged in collaboration with the Norwegian Association of Higher Education Institutions (UHR). The other was a seminar on ‘Education from Syria, Eritrea and Afghanistan – methods of recognition in Norway’.

Every year, NOKUT organises various seminars, workshops and conferences in the recognition field. The goal is to raise knowledge about education systems, qualifications and academic credentials in countries from which we receive applications. A lot of our knowledge and experience of education systems is gathered in NOKUT’s country database.

### The new teacher education programme

In 2016, the Ministry of Education and Research decided to change the primary and lower secondary teacher education programme from a four-year bachelor’s degree to a five-year master’s degree. NOKUT was assigned the task of helping to ensure high quality in the new programmes before the first admission of students in autumn 2017.

NOKUT assessed all the institutions that were to offer the new master’s programme. In mid-February, it became clear that six university colleges would have to apply to NOKUT for accreditation of their new five-year primary and lower secondary teacher education programmes. These were Volda University College, NLA University College, Østfold University College, Sami Special Field University, Stord/Haugesund University College and Sogn og Fjordane University College.

The level of activity has been high in 2016 to ensure a smooth transition to the five-year master’s degree programme. On 16 February, NOKUT organised information seminars for all the affected institutions, and on 16 June, an applicants’ seminar for the new teacher programmes. The deadline for applying for accreditation was 15 September. Accredited institutions were given until 31 January 2017 to adopt new master’s degree programmes pursuant to the current Academic Quality Assurance Regulations. The first groups of students will start their new teacher programmes in the autumn of 2017.



### NOKUT breakfast seminar on “Potential for More Learning?”

What does it take to motivate Norwegian students to learn more? A new NOKUT report shows that students call for clearer demands and expectations from the educational institutions.

‘Study effort and motivation are considered important to reduce the drop-out rate in Norwegian higher education. They are also key factors in getting more students to complete their education within the nominal length of study, and with a good learning outcome. This is part of the background for the report “Potential for More Learning?”, said Ole-Jacob Skodvin, Director of Analysis and Development at NOKUT.

In 2016, we organised six NOKUT breakfast seminars, wrote several op-ed articles and eight blog posts (the NOKUT blog). We also issued 16 newsletters. The newsletters contain board resolutions and information about our conferences and seminars.





### First ever 'Education Celebration' event

NOKUT's first 'Education Celebration Event' was arranged on 1 November, and it was a huge success. The goal of the event was to create an arena where the sector could be inspired; where it could celebrate itself, welcome the four new Centres for Excellence in Education and the 2016 Educational Quality Award.

The NOKUT Conference on Higher Education 2016 took place the day after. Creating a culture for quality in education at university colleges and universities requires a concerted effort by students, academic and administrative staff, management, authorities and society. The questions addressed at the conference were: How can we promote and take advantage of this collaboration? How do we reach for excellence and create enthusiasm for learning?

Most years since it was established in 2003, NOKUT has organised a conference on higher education. The goal of the conference is to address relevant topics that contribute to increased quality of education, and to raise awareness of these topics. The conference is also an important meeting arena for the university and university college sector. The conference attracts between 350 and 500 attendants every year.

### Getting new regulations in place

Developing new regulations on the supervision of educational quality in higher education (the Academic Supervision Regulations) was one of NOKUT's most important tasks in 2016. The purpose of the new regulations is to clarify the requirements and expectations that apply to quality in higher education.

Through the regulations, NOKUT also wishes to clarify the universities' and university colleges' responsibility for ensuring and further developing the quality of their own study programmes. This applies both to the establishment of new study programmes and to the development of existing programmes in their portfolio.

The decision by the Storting to introduce more stringent requirements for being granted the right to offer master's and PhD programmes also meant that more stringent requirements now apply for institutions' accreditation as a specialised university or university. These new demands were set out in the White Paper 'Concentration for Quality', often referred to as 'the higher education structure report'. In June, the Regulations concerning Quality Assurance and Quality Development in Higher Education and Tertiary Vocational Education, issued by the Ministry of Education and Research, were amended as a consequence of these requirements. NOKUT then specified the amendments in the new Academic Supervision Regulations, which were adopted in February 2017.

### New recognition scheme for foreign vocational education and training

NOKUT's new scheme for the recognition of foreign vocational education and training was launched in mid-November.

'This is an important recognition scheme that the social partners have long called for. An important goal of the new scheme is to ensure that people who are educated abroad can use their qualifications in the Norwegian labour market,' said Director General of NOKUT, Terje Mørland.

With the help of a panel of experts, NOKUT considers whether the education in question can be recognised as equivalent to Norwegian vocational education qualifications.

'One month after the scheme was launched, we saw that about 95 per cent of the applicants had Polish qualifications, and, as expected, building and construction subjects dominated,' said Joachim Gümüs Kallevig, Head of the Section for Recognition of Professional Qualifications.

The new recognition scheme for foreign vocational education and training initially applies to applicants from Germany and Poland with trade and journeyman's certificates in the following trades: concrete construction worker, hairdresser, meat cutter, plumber and wood construction carpenter. The applicants must have legal residence in Norway or an occupational connection to Norway in order to apply for recognition.



### New digital application portal launched in November

NOKUT has made the application process for recognition of higher foreign education digital through a new application portal, and integrated the portal with case processing support and a new archive system.

Experience gained since the launch indicates that it is an efficient and user-friendly portal for the applicants. Internally in the organisation, the new solution will give the case officers better support and automated document flow.

'This is an important milestone for NOKUT,' said Director General Terje Mørland. The new application portal is a huge improvement for our applicants, and will contribute to more efficient case processing. In higher education alone, we expect nearly 10,000 applicants in 2017.

All case processing and contact with NOKUT can now take place digitally. This means that those who apply for general recognition of higher education from abroad can track the application process and communicate with NOKUT through a message system. Applicants will also be able to download the recognition document.

- NOKUTS NYHETSBREV: [www.nokut.no/Nyhetsbrev](http://www.nokut.no/Nyhetsbrev)
- FØLG OSS PÅ TWITTER: [www.twitter.com/NOKUT\\_No](https://www.twitter.com/NOKUT_No)
- NOKUTS PUBLIKASJONER: [www.nokut.no/NOKUTs-publikasjoner](http://www.nokut.no/NOKUTs-publikasjoner)

### Nord University is given time to adjust

The report on Nord University was published in December. Nord University has challenges in achieving the same level of quality as comparable universities and in achieving the Ministry's new, more stringent requirements for university status. This emerged in NOKUT's preliminary supervision of the university status.

NOKUT is now giving the university a chance to do something about this.

'The university has undergone a major reorganisation process. The institution has not yet managed to get an overall quality assurance system in place. We will therefore carry out a supervision of the systematic quality work in 2018. We thereby follow the experts' advice to postpone a review of the university status,' said Director General Terje Mørland.

NOKUT has been assigned the task of supervising and contributing to raising the quality of Norwegian study programmes and institutions. In addition, we provide information about the quality status of higher education. The universities and university colleges are themselves responsible for the quality of the study programmes they offer.

### NOKUT as premise-setter and adviser to political authorities

In December 2016, NOKUT published the report 'What do we know about quality?' as one of several contributions to the Ministry of Education and Research's White Paper on quality in higher education. In the report, NOKUT identifies factors that have a bearing on the students' learning outcome and the relevance of the study programmes, and shows how these factors can be measured and assessed.

The report shows where we have good sources of information and methods for assessing the quality of education, but also areas where the quality of, or access to, data is not good enough and that more work is therefore needed.

In the time ahead, NOKUT will intensify its work on obtaining, processing and communicating information about educational quality in the education sector and society at large.

In 2016, NOKUT published several analysis reports, summaries and memos, as well as reports relating to statistics from the student survey and reports on SFU topics.

# QUALITY IN NORWEGIAN EDUCATION

NOKUT shall supervise the quality of Norwegian higher education and tertiary vocational education. We do this by supervising institutions and study programmes based on national and international standards, incentive schemes (SFU and the Educational Quality Award) and by obtaining, compiling and analysing information about education and quality.

NOKUT shall contribute towards attaining satisfactory quality in all study programmes at Norwegian universities, university colleges and institutions at tertiary vocational level, outstanding quality in as many programmes as possible, and good information to society about the status in the sector.

We will do this by:

- granting recognition and supervising institutions and study programmes on the basis of national and international standards
- managing and developing policy instruments to stimulate quality development
- acquiring, compiling and analysing information about education and quality
- disseminating information about education and quality
- creating arenas for debate and putting important topics on the agenda
- advising the authorities and educational institutions.

NOKUT is responsible for supervising more than 4,000 study programmes at around 160 tertiary vocational colleges, university colleges and universities in Norway.

We carry out this supervision by accrediting (recognising) new study programmes and institutions on application from the institutions. We also supervise existing institutions and study programmes on our own initiative. Our supervisory activities are based on the requirements and guidelines set out in the Academic Supervision Regulations, the Regulations relating to Tertiary Vocational Education and overarching legislation. In addition to checking that the quality of education meets the minimum requirements in laws and regulations, the supervisions shall also encourage further quality development by the institutions.

## RESPONSIBILITY FOR THE QUALITY OF OWN STUDY PROGRAMMES



Øystein Lund, Director of Quality Assurance at NOKUT, underlines that, although NOKUT is tasked with both ensuring and raising the quality of higher education and tertiary vocational education, the educational institutions have chief responsibility for the quality of their own study programmes.

‘NOKUT’s role as the “guardian” of educational quality at universities, university colleges and tertiary vocational colleges is well-known at the institutions. NOKUT’s other role, as supervisor and quality developer, was strengthened by the Storting in 2009 and is something we emphasise more and more,’ says Øystein Lund. He sees no risk in NOKUT both contributing to raising the quality of education and supervising the institutions that provide education.

‘Most supervisory authorities have this dual role as both developer and supervisor. This does not constitute a conflict, although it is important to be aware of the roles. The supervisory work and the development work contribute, each in their own way, to raising the quality of education for students at Norwegian educational institutions,’ says Lund.

He makes it clear that NOKUT never advises universities, university colleges or tertiary vocational colleges about what they should do on an independent basis.

‘We point out deficiencies based on defined minimum requirements and criteria. The institutions are responsible for safeguarding and raising the quality of their own study programmes in order to meet these criteria.’

‘We also have a national responsibility for establishing and disseminating general knowledge about the quality of education,’ Lund continues.

NOKUT fulfils this responsibility through the annual student survey and the new teacher survey and various development projects, such as the establishment of the SFU initiative and topic specific national assessment examinations. There is also the NOKUT portal, which contains statistics that are relevant and important for assessing the quality of higher education. We use the portal in our own supervisory activities, but it is also accessible to the educational institutions and others.

‘In recent years, we have also strengthened our analysis expertise,’ says Lund. ‘We try to share this expertise through such instruments as reports, seminars, conferences and breakfast meetings.’

‘It is also NOKUT’s task to guide the educational institutions in how to meet requirements set out in laws and regulations. NOKUT provides guidance in application processes, but also increasingly in cases where accreditation already exists, and where the same requirements apply. You could say that we help them to take responsibility for good educational quality,’ explains Lund.

NOKUT’s advice and guidance shall take the academic communities one step further, so that they provide the students with knowledge in the best possible way.



# NOKUT'S SUPERVISORY ACTIVITIES IN 2016

## Recognition of new study programmes

In the 2015/2016 application round, NOKUT received a total of 96 applications for new study programmes. That is 18 fewer than in the last round. The biggest decrease was in the number of applications for new tertiary vocational study programmes.

In 2015/2016, we received 53 applications for new tertiary vocational programmes and 43 applications for new bachelor and master's programmes.

We received two applications for PhD accreditation before the deadline expired on 1 November 2015. They were assessed in 2016, and both were granted.

- The two accredited PhD programmes are:
- Nautical operations, a joint degree offered by UiT the Arctic University of Norway, the University College of Southeast Norway, Stord/Haugesund University College and NTNU (Ålesund University College)
  - ICT Engineering at Bergen University College

## Recognition of new tertiary vocational programmes

An accredited institution can establish study programmes that are within the scope of its authorisation without having to apply to NOKUT for accreditation. The same applies to tertiary vocational colleges with subject area accreditation. They are authorised to establish study programmes within a limited subject area.

The educational provider must apply to NOKUT for such authorisation. So far, only two tertiary vocational colleges have been granted such authorisation.

The first was the subject area 'green design and environment subjects' at Veia, Norway's State school for gardeners and horticulturists. In 2016, AOF Haugaland was granted subject area accreditation for health and social care studies.

## Revising study programmes

NOKUT regularly supervises many study programmes to assess whether there is reason to initiate a revision of their accreditation. The most serious cases are subjected to a full review of compliance with all the criteria in the Regulations relating to Tertiary Vocational Education or the Academic Supervision Regulations.

In 2016, NOKUT revised 20 study programmes at nine institutions. Five study programmes maintained their accreditation/recognition. Five accreditations/recognitions were withdrawn, while for nine study programmes, deficiencies were found and a deadline set in 2017 for rectifying them. In 2016, the revisions led NOKUT to withdraw its approval of four tertiary vocational education programmes and one university programme.

## Revising study programmes

Aviation School of Norway	Tertiary vocational programmes: commercial pilot, plane and commercial pilot, helicopter
Rudolf Steiner University College	One-year programme in visual art (60 credits)
University College of Southeast Norway	Bachelor's degree in marine technical operations and bachelor's degree in navigation
Østfold University College	Eight courses in property and construction subjects
Nord University	Bachelor's degree in navigation, maritime economics and management
University College of Southeast Norway	Bachelor's degree in economics and management
Fagskolen i Vestfold (tertiary vocational college)	Maritime tertiary vocational education programmes: 'ship officer' and 'engine officer'
Petroleumsteknisk akademi AS	Tertiary vocational education programmes in drilling technology and well service
ITC – Boreksolen	Tertiary vocational education programme in petroleum drilling

● Accreditation/recognition maintained ● Recognition withdrawn ● Deadline for rectification set – final decision in 2017 ● Discontinued by provider

## Evaluation of the quality assurance systems

All educational institutions offering higher education shall have an approved system in place for quality assuring the education they provide. In 2016, NOKUT evaluated nine quality assurance systems at universities and university colleges, and approved eight of them. At the University College of Agriculture and Rural Development, NOKUT found significant deficiencies and gave the institution a deadline of one year to develop its system.

NOKUT has now conducted two rounds of evaluations of quality assurance systems at universities and university colleges. In 2017, we will start round three, which involves supervision of universities and university colleges' systematic quality work. The new element in this round is that the Academic Supervision Regulations stipulate requirements for systematic quality work, and that we will focus on the study-related quality work.

## Evaluation of the quality assurance systems

The Writers' Academy in Hordaland Bergen School of Architecture Fjellhaug International University College Lillehammer University College Nerf University College Atlantis Medical University College Rudolf Steiner University College	Approved
The Norwegian Dance College	Approved following re-evaluation
The University College of Agriculture and Rural Development	Deadline for improvement set– final decision in 2017

# IMPORTANT DEVELOPMENT PROJECTS

## LARGE-SCALE SUPERVISORY PROJECTS

### Supervision of study programmes in child welfare, social education and social work (the BSV supervision)

**The supervision covers:** All places of learning offering these study programmes, in total 38 bachelor's programmes at 14 educational institutions.

**Status:** The expert report has been sent to the institutions. They must now respond to the assessments made by the expert committees and document how they have corrected the deficiencies identified in the study programmes. The deadline is autumn 2017.

### Supervision of vocational technical colleges.

**The supervision covers:** All the 141 vocational technical study programmes, provided by a total of 23 institutions.

**Status:** The supervision focuses on web-based programmes and the development of good learning outcome descriptions. On this basis, NOKUT initiated revisions of two study programmes in 2016:

- ITC Boreskolen: the tertiary vocational programme Petroleum Drilling Technique – discontinued by the provider
- Vocational school in Hordaland: vocational education for electricians and vocational education for building constructors – revision initiated

NOKUT regularly carries out large-scale supervisory activities where selected subject areas or quality aspects are assessed in the same process. We conducted several such supervisions in 2016. They were supervisions of all child welfare, social education and social work programmes, supervisions of vocational technical colleges and supervisions of universities and university colleges that cooperate with external providers on offering higher education.

### Cooperation agreements

**The supervision covers:** 220 study programmes at universities and university colleges that cooperate with external parties on the provision of higher education.

**Status:** The supervision started in spring 2015, and NOKUT found examples that several of these universities and university colleges offered higher education in cooperation with institutions that were not authorised to provide such education. The frameworks for cooperation and the responsibilities of the parties varied. In some cases, the external parties appeared to have assumed full responsibility for the programme provided.

In connection with this supervision, NOKUT initiated revisions of the accreditation of four different educational institutions. This resulted in withdrawal of the accreditation for the bachelor's degree programme in economics and management at the University College of Southeast Norway. Two institutions were given a deadline until 2017 to correct deficiencies. This concerned the eight study programmes in property and construction subjects at Østfold University College and the bachelor's programme in navigation, maritime economics and management at Nord University. The revision of the experience-based master's programme in property development at The Norwegian University of Life Sciences (NMBU) has so far not resulted in a decision.

## COMBINED SUBJECT-SPECIFIC EVALUATIONS INTERACTION BETWEEN RESEARCH AND EDUCATION

Despite the fact that Norwegian higher education is supposed to be research-based, NOKUT's evaluations have so far given insufficient attention to the link between education and research. That is why NOKUT and the Research Council of Norway are now collaborating on developing a model for conducting joint evaluations of research and education in relation to specific study programmes.

One of the goals of the project is to create better tools for evaluating aspects of educational provision that have so far not been sufficiently assessed in NOKUT's evaluations and supervisory activities.

A working group has developed a model and found indicators of educational quality. A key element of the combined model is the interaction between research and higher education. The results so far have been used to develop an interaction component in the newly developed model.

The first joint evaluation will be tested in connection with the Research Council's evaluation of social science subjects in spring 2017. The findings made in the project will be incorporated into NOKUT's work on developing the processes involved in the supervision of educational quality at Norwegian places of learning.

## IS A MASTER'S DEGREE A MASTER'S DEGREE? INTERNATIONAL BENCHMARKING OF MASTER'S DEGREE PROGRAMMES

NOKUT is leading a pilot project to compare different aspects of master's degree programmes in Norway, Sweden and the Netherlands. The goal of the project is to develop and test a model that can find indicators of quality at programme level across national borders. Another goal for the project is to contribute to quality enhancement through discussion and the sharing of experience.

The method was ready for use in the summer of 2016. The first operational phase was completed in autumn 2016, when representatives of the study programmes from the three countries came together for a series of seminars.

So far, the group has agreed on what factors are especially important for achieving high quality at master's degree level in economics and molecular biology in the three countries. They also discovered that there are structural differences in how the study programmes are organised. This can be valuable in the work of further developing the quality of the study programmes.

The feedback from the programmes that have participated has been very positive. They feel that the discussions have made them more aware of their own choices and practice, and given them input on how other programme communities solve common challenges.

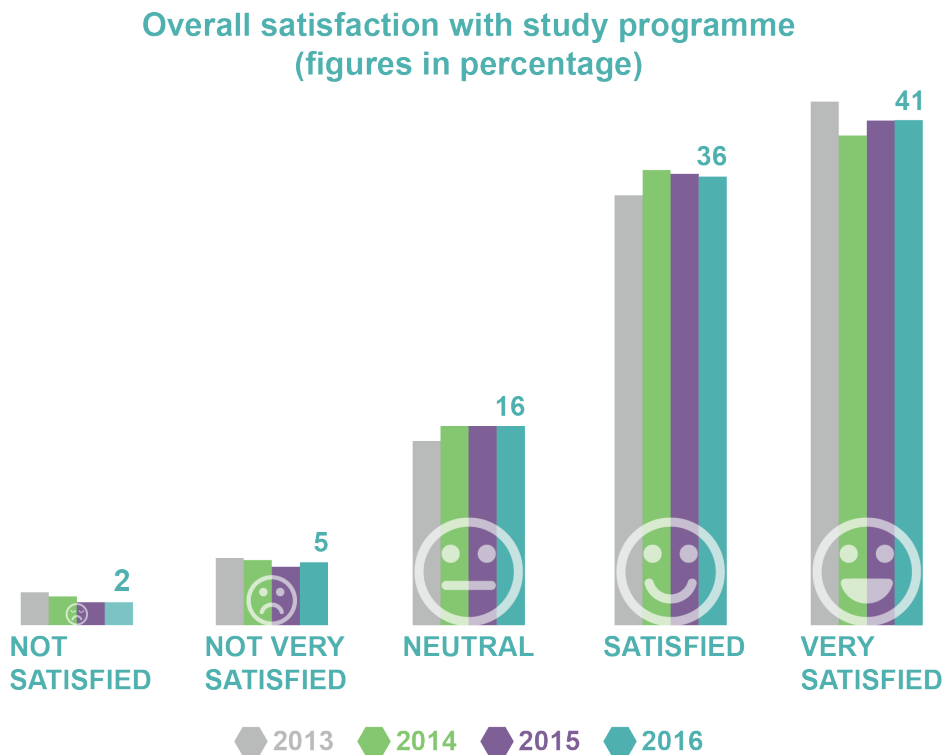


# STUDIEBAROMETERET THE ANNUAL STUDENT SURVEY

Every year, we ask Norwegian students what they think about the quality of the study programmes they are taking. The questionnaire is sent to more than 60,000 second and fifth-year students divided between 1,800 study programmes at all the country's universities and university colleges.

The 2016 survey was the fourth time NOKUT conducted the survey. The results are presented at the start of February every year and used actively in NOKUT and the institutions' work on quality-raising.

The survey gives the students a unique chance to say what they think about the education they are taking. The results show that the students are largely satisfied with the education, but that there are great variations between different study programmes. Police students are most satisfied, while students taking the five-year teacher education programme and the odontology programme are least satisfied.



# TEACHERS' ASSESSMENT OF EDUCATIONAL QUALITY

NOKUT wishes to highlight teachers' and academic communities' perceptions of the quality of education at Norwegian educational institutions. That is why NOKUT conducted the teachers' survey ('Underviserundersøkelsen') in 2016.

More than 2,500 employees at 25 universities and university colleges took part in a pilot survey of educational quality. Teachers are a decisive factor for the quality of education. It is therefore important that their views are heard and taken into account.

The survey covered teachers in the following study programmes: engineering, historical-philosophical subjects, primary and secondary teacher education, architecture, sociology, political science and economics. They were asked to assess the teaching and learning process, students' abilities, commitment and effort, the curriculum and programme design,

and management and administration of the study programme. The results show that teachers at Norwegian universities and university colleges believe there are great variations in Norwegian students' academic abilities and study effort.

They also report that they spend a lot of time on teaching and student guidance, that lectures are still the dominant form of teaching, but that they want to use student-active learning methods more.

The 2016 survey was preparation for a full-scale survey to be conducted in the spring of 2017. This survey will be sent to all academic staff at all universities and university colleges in Norway. The teacher survey is intended as a supplement to the annual student survey ('Studiebarometeret').



'The teachers' opinions can be very useful for the authorities, educational institutions and academic communities in their work on further developing the quality of Norwegian higher education and individual study programmes. We hope that the results of this survey will stimulate discussions about educational quality and help to ensure that the topic can be discussed on the teachers' terms,' says Director of Analysis and Development Ole-Jacob Skodvin.

## The most important analyses from the student survey:

- What explains students' overall satisfaction? A review of the main findings of the 2014 Norwegian national student survey
- Studiebarometeret 2015 – Adding a year – explaining satisfaction in teacher education in a time of reforms
- The influence of faculty expectations on students' workload: Searching for academic challenges
- Potential for More Learning?
- Studiebarometeret 2015 – implementation and response rate
- Studiebarometeret 2015 – main trends

Read the reports at [www.nokut.no/studiebarometeret/analyser](http://www.nokut.no/studiebarometeret/analyser)

# TOPIC SPECIFIC NATIONAL ASSESSMENT EXAMINATIONS

Since 2015, NOKUT has conducted a testing program for national assessment examinations in selected study programmes. A preliminary summary concludes that such exams can promote quality, but that a number of improvements are needed if the arrangement is to become permanent.

‘Our analyses of the results show that topic specific national assessment examinations can give us important information about the students’ level of knowledge, and that they make it possible for academic communities to compare themselves with others. This can contribute to increased quality in the education,’ says Director of Quality Assurance Øystein Lund.

He believes that the pilot has been successful, and that it has led to many interesting results, insights and discussions:

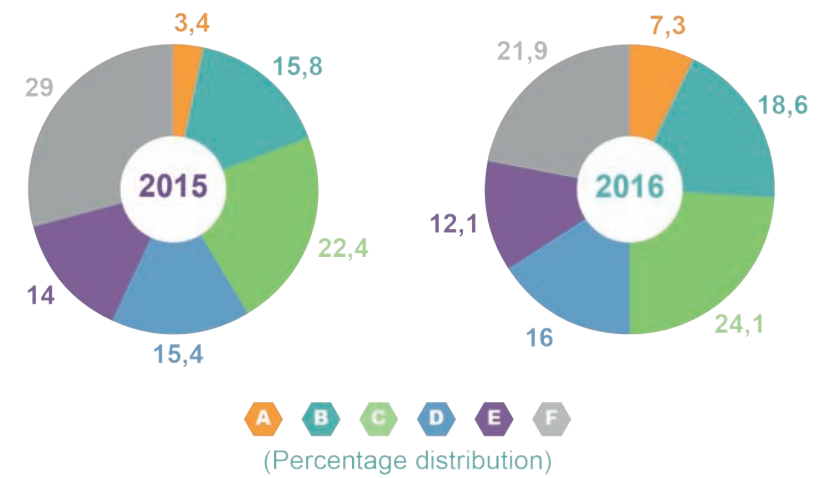
‘The project has been debated at times, but we feel that we have had a very good dialogue and good collaboration with the academic communities

involved. This has been a decisive factor in order to be able to carry out the pilot,’ he believes. The Ministry of Education and Research must now decide whether they want to continue with national part exams.

In 2016, national assessment examinations were held in the subjects annual accounts in the bachelor’s programme in auditing and accounting, mathematics didactics in both the teacher education programmes, and in anatomy, physiology and biochemistry in the bachelor’s programme in nursing.

In general, the results are better for the exams held in autumn than for the exams held earlier in the year. This may be because the Ministry of Education and Research decided in September that national assessment examinations will count in the diploma.

National overview of grades for the nursing programme, topic specific national assessment examinations in anatomy, physiology and biochemistry

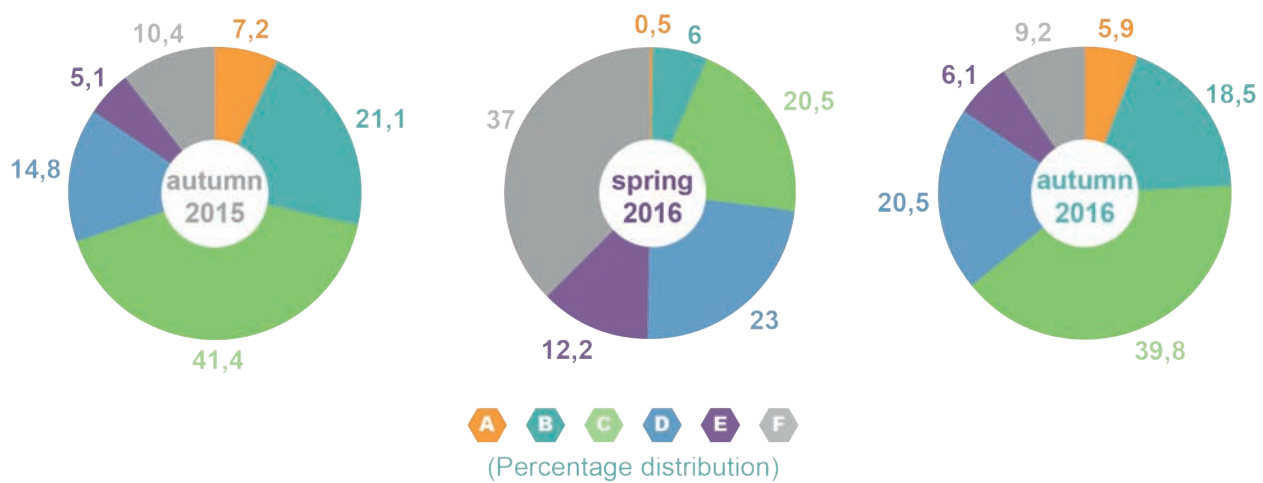


**Anatomy, physiology and biochemistry in the bachelor’s programme in nursing**  
Half of the nursing students got a C or better on the national module exam in anatomy, physiology and biochemistry in 2016, while 22 per cent failed. This is a better result than for the students who took the exam in 2015. Twice as many students got an A compared with 2015.

**Mathematics didactics in the teacher education programmes for years 1–7 and 5–10**  
Students who took the national module exam in mathematics in the autumn of 2016 achieved far better results than students who took the exam in May the same year. A total of 24.4 per cent were awarded an A or B, and the average grade was C. In spring 2016, only 6.5 per cent were awarded an A or B, and the average grade was E. Fewer students failed in autumn: 9.2 per cent compared with 37 per cent in spring 2016.

**Annual accounts in the bachelor’s programme in auditing and accounting**  
The proportion of students awarded a C or better increased by 15 percentage points from 2015, and the proportion who failed decreased by 9 percentage points. The average grade went up from D to C. We are not certain about the reason for these differences, but some of the subject teachers believe that the exam questions in 2016 may have been somewhat easier and less demanding than in 2015, but that the set of exams in 2016 was nonetheless better adapted to the bachelor’s level in auditing and accounting.

National overview of grades on topic specific national assessment examinations for the teacher education programmes







## CENTRES FOR EXCELLENCE IN EDUCATION



### THE SFU INITIATIVE IS AN IMPORTANT BEACON FOR EDUCATIONAL QUALITY

Ole-Jacob Skodvin, Director of Analysis and Development at NOKUT, is certain that the Centres for Excellence in Education (SFU) initiative has helped to raise awareness of education and the importance of good teaching.

‘Both the authorities and the universities and university colleges are now more concerned with measures that promote good educational quality. We hope that this is just the start of a wave that will continue to change the Norwegian education community and that will give the students increasingly better education,’ he says.

Skodvin explains that NOKUT, through the SFU initiative, rewards work that unites students, teachers, support services and the knowledge base of the educational activities in developing better educational quality.

‘This year we had nine good finalists. We hope that the applicants who were not successful this time continue their good work, and that many new educational communities work to be awarded SFU status.’

### FOUR NEW SFU CENTRES

In 2016, four new educational institutions were made Centres for Excellence in Education. The centres’ areas of work are wide-ranging: from including entrepreneurship in education in all disciplines and getting more students to choose information technology programmes, to problem-solving with the help of computers, and the use of digital technology and interactivity as an artistic tool.

‘The institutions that have been granted SFU status are among the best in the world in terms of education. They inspire and lead the way for everyone who wishes to take Norwegian education to the next level, and they have shown that efforts pay off,’ said Director General of NOKUT Terje Mørland.

One thing the academic communities that were granted SFU status in 2016 have in common is that they respond to important challenges in society. The communities have taken existing study programmes as their point of departure and have good, innovative plans in place for further development through the centre. They also want to share what they do through collaborations across institutions and disciplines.



NTNU and Nord University:  
ENgage – Centre for Engaged  
Education through Entrepreneurship



The University of Oslo:  
CCSE – Center for Computing in  
Science Education



Lillehammer University College:  
CEFIMA – Centre of Excellence in  
Film and Interactive Media Arts



NTNU and Nord University:  
ExcITED – Excellent IT Education



In 2016, NOKUT announced a call for applications for up to six new centres. Each of the new centres could be allocated funds of NOK 4–8 million a year over a five-year period, with the possibility of an extension for another five years. The result was four new centres. There are now a total of eight Centres for Excellence in Education.

## THE SFU MAGAZINE AND SFU REPORTS

In cooperation with the SFU centres, NOKUT publishes two annual issues of the magazine containing news from Norway's foremost educational communities. In this magazine, the centres share developments, research and best practice in higher education with other educational institutions.

SFU related reports published in 2016:

- Heading for excellence?
- From hub to SFU
- How to document quality
- Health and social care programmes – additional obstacles on the way to SFU status?
- The SFU process in an institutional perspective
- SFU from the students' perspective
- The Potential of Centres of/for Excellence in Higher Education
- Sigma: A Case Study of an Enduring Centre for Excellence

## SFU | MAGASINET



## ABOUT THE SFU INITIATIVE

SFU status is awarded to academic communities that have already demonstrated excellent quality and innovative practices in education, and that have good plans in place for further development and innovation. One of the important requirements the centres have to meet is that they must disseminate their results and knowledge.

The overarching goal of the initiative is to contribute to the development of excellent quality in higher education and to highlight the fact that teaching and research are tasks of equal value for universities and university colleges.

An important objective of the initiative is to encourage excellent R&D-based education. In particular, the SFU initiative shall promote and reward the work that takes place in interaction between students, teachers, support services and the knowledge base of the educational activities.

Read more at [www.nokut.no/en/Centres-for-Excellence-in-Higher-Education/](http://www.nokut.no/en/Centres-for-Excellence-in-Higher-Education/)



## NEW TEACHING MODEL WINS AWARD



The Norwegian University of Life Sciences (NMBU) won the Utdanningskvalitetsprisen award and a prize of NOK 1 million for having developed and achieved great international success with a new teaching model in the master's programme in agroecology.

The teaching model helps students to solve complex, global challenges through participation, involvement, reflection and dialogue.

'The winner shows that a systematic focus on educational quality pays off. I am convinced that students learn more when they have to deal with actual problems and reflect on their experience during the process, the way they do on this master's programme,' said Minister of Education and Research Torbjørn Røe Isaksen before presenting the award to this year's winners.

The Ministry of Education and Research's award for excellent work on the quality of Norwegian higher education was presented for the sixteenth time this year. The goal of the award is to reward excellent work on the quality of Norwegian higher education, and to encourage institutions and academic communities to work systematically on further developing the quality of their study programmes. The prize money is NOK 1 million and is only awarded to one initiative.

Action learning means that students, teachers and other stakeholders cooperate with each other and reflect on shared experiences and real challenges in an international context. Students get in contact with the field they will encounter in working life early on in the programme.

The model is a valuable contribution to the qualification of candidates who are capable of solving complex global challenges.

## ANALYSES AND STUDIES

At NOKUT, we work continuously to strengthen our study and analysis work to ensure that it stimulates quality development to the greatest possible extent.

NOKUT's own analyses and studies, articles in journals and summaries are important contributions to disseminating the work on quality and the quality of education at educational institutions in Norway.

Analyses and publications in 2016:

- What do we know about quality?
- Working Life Relevance
- The bachelor's degree as an independent degree
- Feedback and supervision in higher education
- What do university rankings really say about the quality of education?
- Potential for More Learning?

Read more at [www.nokut.no/en/Facts-and-statistics/Publications/](http://www.nokut.no/en/Facts-and-statistics/Publications/)

## IMPORTANT DEVELOPMENT ACTIVITIES 2017 IMPLEMENTING THE NEW ACADEMIC SUPERVISION REGULATIONS

The new Academic Supervision Regulations were adopted in February 2017. In 2017, the universities, university colleges and NOKUT will dedicate a lot of time to adapting their supervisory activities to the requirements of the new regulations.

NOKUT will organise several seminars and workshops in 2017. We also plan to visit all the big universities and university colleges to map out wishes and needs and establish a good dialogue on how NOKUT can encourage further work on safeguarding and raising the quality of studies.

NOKUT is in the process of developing applicant guidelines for the Academic Supervision Regulations, in addition to guidelines for accredited institutions, so that they can accredit their own study programmes in accordance with the new regulations.

# RECOGNITION OF FOREIGN EDUCATION

NOKUT shall help to 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 what Norwegian qualifications the foreign qualifications are equivalent to. We do this by, among other things, recognising the foreign education of individuals and by providing information about foreign education and recognition systems in Norway. We also provide advice to authorities, employers and educational institutions on foreign qualifications.

NOKUT's general recognition of foreign higher education is our biggest recognition scheme. The refugee surge in 2015 led to a growth in the number of applications for NOKUT in 2016, especially from Syria. We see that the increase continues in 2017. Many refugees do not have academic credentials with them. In some cases, it is also not possible for NOKUT to verify the documents with the authorities of the country where the applicant studied. We have therefore conducted a pilot of new recognition procedures in 2016 that target refugees in particular. We call the new scheme NOKUT's qualification assessment for refugees. The scheme is interview-based.

From and including 2016, NOKUT's responsibilities were extended to include the recognition of vocational education and training. From 2017, we are also testing a recognition scheme for foreign tertiary vocational education, initially as an assessment scheme.

Important activities in 2016 therefore included the recruitment of new employees, the development and initiation of a new recognition scheme and establishing contact with new groups of stakeholders. Work on introducing and expanding the new recognition schemes continues in 2017.

A lot of time was spent on the transition to a digital application and case processing system for NOKUT's recognition of foreign education in 2016. Digitalisation of the case processing system is a considerable investment that has already started to result in better services for the users, and that, after an initial phase, is also expected to pay off in the form of more efficient case processing in 2017.

# RECOGNITION OF FOREIGN VOCATIONAL EDUCATION AND TRAINING



'An important goal of the new recognition scheme for vocational education and training is to ensure that more people who are educated abroad get to use their qualifications in the Norwegian labour market,' says Stig Arne Skjerven, Director of Foreign Education.

NOKUT started recognising European vocational education and training in autumn 2016. Recognition of trade and journeyman's certificates will make it easier to use vocational qualifications in Norway.

Poland and Germany were the first two countries for which NOKUT granted recognition of such certificates. The occupations concerned were concrete worker, hairdresser, meat cutter, plumber and wood construction carpenter.

With the help of a panel of experts, NOKUT considers whether the education in question can be recognised as equivalent to Norwegian vocational education and training. The vocational content is the decisive element when deciding whether recognition as equivalent can be granted. Among other things, this means that the education must be based on completed education of at least three years' duration and comprise at least one year's documented practical training. The applicants must have legal residence in Norway or an occupational connection to Norway in order to apply for recognition.

'This is an important recognition scheme that the social partners have long called for. In 2017, we will increase the number of vocational education and training programmes covered by the scheme. An important goal of the new scheme is to ensure that people who are educated abroad get to use their qualifications in the Norwegian labour market,' says Stig Arne Skjerven, Director of Foreign Education.



# THE NEED FOR ESTABLISHING A EUROPEAN QUALIFICATIONS PASSPORT FOR REFUGEES



The current instability many countries are experiencing, combined with increased mobility and better access to information in social media, makes immigration a possibility for many more people.

In order to support and ensure that newly arrived refugees and immigrants are able to participate in the labour market and/or continue studying in Europe, NOKUT and UK NARIC have proposed to establish a scheme called the European Qualifications Passport for Refugees. A swift multinational system for the recognition of foreign qualifications can make it easier for refugees to study or work. This means that individual refugees can also travel between different European countries without having to wait a long time to have their qualifications assessed and recognised.

## What does a qualification passport contain?

It is a document that contains an assessment of the highest achieved qualification in the refugee's home country, and that provides relevant information about their work experience and language proficiency. The document shall also provide information about the education system where the education was taken and about the road ahead, for example the need for authorisation and recognition. This information shall help to make it easier for the authorities of European countries to facilitate settlement.

It is important that the European Qualifications Passport for Refugees is valid for a limited period, for example up to five years. This will give refugees sufficient time to apply for recognition in the country where they live, and it will not weaken the national recognition schemes in the member states.

In 2016, NOKUT made active contributions to the establishment of the European Qualifications Passport for Refugees. A pilot project in Greece is implemented under the auspices of the Council of Europe and the Greek authorities, in cooperation with the UNHCR and recognition offices (ENIC-NARIC) in Greece, Italy, the UK and Norway.

# NOKUT'S RECOGNITION WORK IN 2016

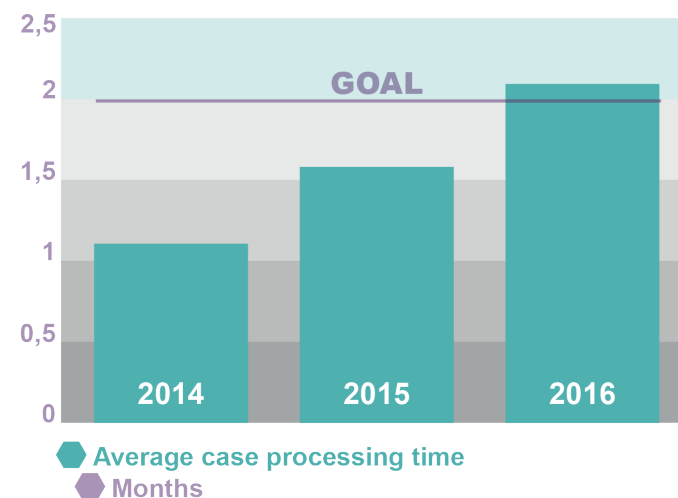
NOKUT received a total of 7,650 applications for recognition of foreign higher education in 2016, a small increase from the year before. The biggest change in 2016 was the huge increase in the number of applicants from Syria. The top three countries are now Poland, Syria and Lithuania.

Top 10 countries 2016, general recognition

1083		Poland
871		Syria
586		Lithuania
533		Serbia
445		UK
411		Philippines
339		Russia
339		India
276		USA
256		Romania

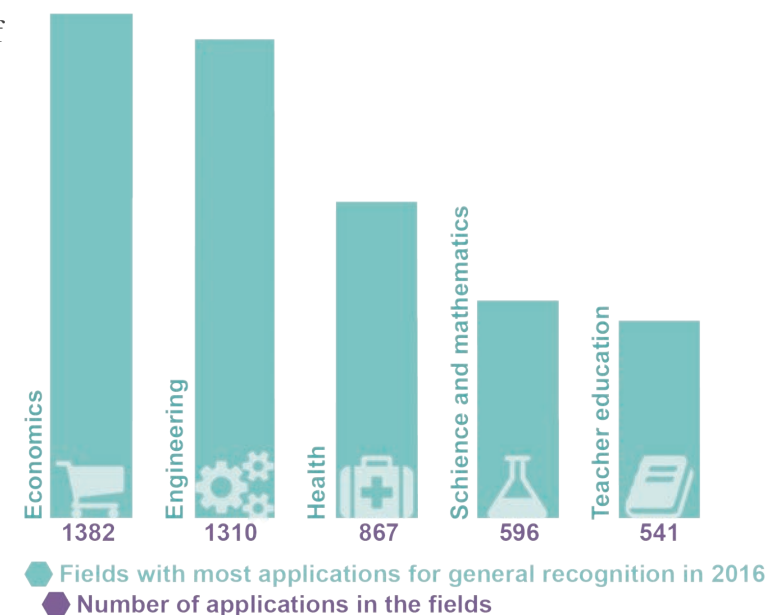
## Case processing time increased in 2016

The average case processing time in 2016 was 2.1 months. It increased gradually throughout the year. Among other things, this was due to an increase in time-consuming processes to assess applications from typical refugee countries like Syria and Eritrea. The number of applications from these countries increased for each quarter. The transition to the new digital application portal also 'stole' resources from the case processing. We also see that there has been a sharp increase in the proportion of applications from refugees at the start of 2017.



## Foreign education programmes most commonly granted recognition

In 2016, most applications for recognition concerned business school subjects and engineering subjects. The same subjects topped the list in 2015. So did the next three groups of subjects on the list – health sciences, natural sciences and teacher education programmes.



# THE UVD PROCEDURE NOW COVERS EIGHT COUNTRIES

NOKUT regularly reviews the countries from which we receive applications for recognition of education to see whether we can trust the academic credentials from these countries. NOKUT does not have sufficient confidence in the documents issued by eight particular countries. These are Afghanistan, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Iraq, Liberia, Sierra Leone and Somalia, in addition to the two new countries added to the list in 2016: Yemen and Libya.

Applications for recognition of education from these countries will automatically be transferred to the recognition procedure for persons without verifiable documentation (the UVD procedure). This is a recognition scheme for applicants who cannot be granted recognition due to missing, insufficient or

unverifiable documentation.

As part of the UVD procedure, the applicants' education and qualifications are mapped before they are interviewed by experts in the field. Based on the results, the experts decide whether the qualifications are genuine and equivalent to a corresponding Norwegian education.

In 2016, NOKUT carried out 123 UVD assessments, of which 80 were granted recognition. The most common reason why the experts are unable to recognise an education as equivalent to a Norwegian education is that it cannot be substantiated that the candidates actually have the qualifications they claim. In 2015, NOKUT carried out 120 such assessments.

# TURBO EVALUATIONS

NOKUT offers two types of fast-track evaluations, or turbo evaluations, of foreign documents and study programmes; one for employers and one for universities and university colleges. Cases covered by this scheme shall be considered

within five working days. No binding decision is made, but an advisory opinion is issued. In 2016, NOKUT received 162 requests for turbo evaluations. This is a small increase from 2015, when the number was 155.

## Employers

NOKUT helps employers to understand documents from jobseekers or employees with foreign higher education. The evaluation is not a legally binding decision, but an opinion intended to help employers.

NOKUT considers:

- whether the education is recognised in the country where the person studied
- the degree the foreign education corresponds to in the Norwegian education system
- what subject area the education was taken in

## Universities and university colleges

NOKUT assists the university and university college sector in the admission of PhD students educated abroad. NOKUT provides a brief assessment of the scope and level of the foreign higher education. The assessment is not an assessment of the academic content or the applicant's grade level. The university or university college must conduct an academic assessment of the applicant itself.

NOKUT prepares a brief assessment, which says something about whether:

- the education is recognised in the country where the applicant studied
- which degree the foreign education corresponds to in the Norwegian education system

# IMPORTANT DEVELOPMENT ACTIVITIES IN 2017

## PRELIMINARY ASSESSMENT OF FOREIGN TERTIARY VOCATIONAL EDUCATION

In March 2016, the Ministry of Education and Research gave NOKUT the task of establishing a scheme for the recognition of foreign tertiary vocational education. Until the Ministry decides that Section 14 of the Tertiary Vocational Education Act shall enter into force, advisory opinions shall be issued on tertiary vocational education taken abroad.

In 2016, NOKUT established an internal working group and an external reference group to assist in the task. There is also dialogue with the Ministry on several matters of principle. Which countries and subject areas the new recognition scheme will include is not clear yet.

## THE PILOT PROJECT NOKUT'S QUALIFICATION ASSESSMENT FOR REFUGEES

NOKUT has completed a pilot project that involved testing a new method for assessing refugees' qualifications – NOKUT's qualification assessments for refugees. The conclusion is that it may serve as an important supplement to NOKUT's existing recognition schemes.

The assessment document is valid for three years. The goal is that, during this period, applicants will have an opportunity to get a job or start further studies, improve their language skills, or – if they still need it – apply for formal recognition or authorisation of their education.

In October 2016, NOKUT got the go-ahead from the Ministry of Education and Research to continue working on this scheme for applicants who are unable to use ordinary recognition schemes or the UVD procedure.

Provided that sufficient resources are allocated, NOKUT will start the scheme in 2017 under the title NOKUT's qualification assessment for refugees.

### Several subject-related seminars were arranged in 2016:

- a workshop for the university and university college sector on education from Eritrea and Syria
- a workshop on Belarus and Ukraine
- 'Integrating refugees in higher education' (seminar for the university college and university college sector in cooperation with the Norwegian Association of Higher Education Institutions (UHR))
- seminar on education from Syria, Eritrea and Afghanistan for recognition offices and the welfare services



# HIGH-PROFILE ROLE IN SOCIETY



‘I’m glad that people listen to NOKUT when we give advice that we think is important. Because we will use our expertise to ensure fresh thinking in both the public administration and society at large,’ says Mørland.

**THE NOKUT BLOG:** The Director General blogs about relevant topics from NOKUT’s wide area of responsibility. The blog is popular and gives NOKUT an opportunity to directly address the sector and other parties interested in our areas of responsibility.

Read the blog here: [www.nokut.no/nokutbloggen](http://www.nokut.no/nokutbloggen)

## We organised the following breakfast seminars in 2016:

- Studiebarometeret 3.0
- Results of the national module exam for the nursing programmes
- Potential for more learning?
- International university rankings: A true measure of quality?
- Feedback and supervision: What explains students’ dissatisfaction?
- Is an academic bachelor’s degree good enough for working life?



## IMPORTANT ROLE AS POLITICAL ADVISER

NOKUT shall actively encourage the development and improvement of higher education, tertiary vocational education and the system for recognition of foreign qualifications. We do this by, among other things, communicating best practice, giving political advice in our area of expertise and being a high-profile ambassador for quality of education.

NOKUT plays an important role as the Government’s adviser in education policy matters.

‘In areas where NOKUT has special expertise, we see it as an important task to give advice to the Ministry of Education and Research. We highlight our professional assessments to ensure that the politicians have a good basis for making decisions,’ says Director General Terje Mørland.

Mørland emphasises in particular NOKUT’s input in connection with work on the White Paper on educational quality and the White Paper on tertiary vocational education in 2016. Proposals for the latter included the establishment of a separate student survey and an award for tertiary vocational colleges.

In relation to recognition, he highlights the new qualification assessments for refugees who cannot use NOKUT’s ordinary recognition schemes, and the fact that NOKUT has long pointed to the need for an extensive review of all the recognition schemes.

‘The proportion of refugees who applied for recognition of foreign education increased strongly in 2016, and it has therefore been important for NOKUT to support the universities and university colleges’ Academic Effort with a view to integrating refugees with a residence permit more quickly in society. In November 2016, NOKUT and the Norwegian Association of Higher Education Institutions invited relevant stakeholders to a seminar on how to proceed from the Academic Effort to academic integration,’ Mørland concludes.

• **NOKUT’s NEWSLETTER:**  
[www.nokut.no/Nyhetsbrev](http://www.nokut.no/Nyhetsbrev)

• **FOLLOW US ON TWITTER:**  
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• **NOKUT’s PUBLICATIONS:**  
[www.nokut.no/NOKUTs-publikasjoner](http://www.nokut.no/NOKUTs-publikasjoner)

## RAISING AWARENESS OF THE QUALITY OF EDUCATION

Also in 2016, NOKUT organised several well-attended breakfast seminars; five in Oslo and one in Trondheim together with NTNU. The feedback shows that NOKUT’s breakfast seminars have become an important arena for people who are concerned with education, politics and social issues.

Among the topics discussed last year were the national assessment examinations and how they may contribute to enhancing the quality of higher education. The results of the annual student survey were presented on 2 February, and led to an important debate in the public sphere and in the sector. A dedicated survey and analysis that shows that there is a potential for more learning, was presented at the breakfast seminar in June.

‘NOKUT’s breakfast seminars have been a strategic focus area for several years, and we are pleased that we have succeeded in getting people up in the morning to discuss how to further raise the quality of education together. We look forward to more good meetings in 2017,’ says Director of Communications Gard Sandaker-Nielsen.

NOKUT also organised a number of subject-specific seminars and conferences on Norwegian and foreign education.

New this year was the ‘Education Celebration’ event that was organised in connection with the awarding of the four new SFU centres. These events are important for raising awareness and to encourage further development of the quality of education.

‘In the media context, NOKUT was more visible than ever, not only in Norway, but also in international trade journals. The NOKUT blog and NOKUT’s Twitter account have been in active use throughout the year, and we see that our statements, comments and facts presentations are increasingly listened to and emphasised,’ concludes Sandaker-Nielsen.

## LISE IVERSEN KULBRANDSTAD NEW CHAIR OF THE BOARD



In November 2016, the Ministry of Education and Research appointed Lise Iversen Kulbrandstad as the new Chair of the Board of NOKUT. The appointment applies from 1 January 2017 until 31 December 2020. Kulbrandstad is a professor of Norwegian didactics at the Faculty of Education and Natural Sciences at Inland Norway University College and also holds an adjunct professor position at Karlstad University.

The Ministry appoints NOKUT's board, which consists of members from the university and university college sector, business and industry, one academic from a Nordic country, students and a representative of the staff. The Board has overall responsibility for NOKUT's activities and decisions.

Lise Iversen Kulbrandstad was asked in November to be NOKUT's new Chair of the Board. She has worked in the education sector all her career and describes herself as a person with a burning interest in educational issues. Therefore, she immediately said yes to the assignment.

'I didn't need time to consider when I was asked to be Chair of the Board of NOKUT. I knew it would give me an opportunity to contribute to the work of promoting educational quality in a way I hadn't before. And I look forward to it!'

As a former rector of Inland Norway University College, Kulbrandstad is well familiar with NOKUT.

'The application procedures we had to go through to be granted accreditation of our master's degree and PhD programmes were sometimes irksome, but we always learnt from them. Moreover, we saw that we became better at designing good study programmes, that we became more systematic in our work and, not least, that we put educational quality on the agenda more often,' she explains.

Receiving the results of the annual student survey was a useful experience, in her view. 'We were proud to have study programmes that were highly rated, but probably learnt the most

from the programmes we had to give extra attention to because they were given a low score,' she says.

When asked why NOKUT is important, the new Chair replies as follows: 'Simply because educational quality is important. NOKUT puts educational quality on the agenda in many different ways in tertiary vocational education and higher education.'

At the same time, Kulbrandstad points out that it is also NOKUT's task to help to ensure that society has confidence in the level of quality in the two sectors and in recognised foreign education. 'The task of contributing to confidence in society is one of the things that make NOKUT's role important.'

Can we expect changes in NOKUT's focus and engagement now that you have been appointed Chair of the Board? 'As Chair of the Board, I am primarily concerned with leading the board and working together with the management on NOKUT's assignments and on the good, exciting development phase NOKUT is already in. What I have experienced these first few weeks is a highly committed board and management and high, broadly composed expertise. This will provide a good basis for cooperation on all NOKUT's tasks.'

## BORGHILD ROALD NOKUT'S CHAIR OF THE BOARD FROM 2013 TO 2016

Borghild Roald was Chair of the Board of NOKUT in the period 1 January 2013 to 31 December 2016. At the time, she was a professor of medicine at the Faculty of Medicine at the University of Oslo. She was also the international coordinator at the faculty and established and led the Centre for Paediatric and Pregnancy Related Pathology at Ullevål University Hospital.



Borghild Roald stepped down as Chair of the Board of NOKUT in December 2016. She hopes that NOKUT will continue to be a high-profile, agenda-setting institution. 'Never lose sight of the main focus: a broadly-based, concerted effort to ensure good quality in education programmes that society needs and can rely on,' she advises.

Before Roald was appointed Chair of the Board, she did not perceive NOKUT as particularly relevant for the studies she was involved in at the University of Oslo. 'My years on NOKUT's board has completely changed my view. I think that NOKUT's work on highlighting, setting the agenda for and providing useful analyses of all tertiary education has raised the level of knowledge and awareness of the quality assurance work and of NOKUT in the public.'

'We no longer make jokes or call NOKUT "knock out" at university colleges and tertiary vocational colleges.' Roald sees the development NOKUT has undergone during her period as Chair of the Board as very positive. 'NOKUT had already started processes with a new focus and other challenges when I became Chair of the Board.'

They included the development of supervision of all tertiary education in Norway, the foreign education field and the important analysis work.

I consider the development to have been very positive in all these areas!'

She also mentions that NOKUT, when she started as Chair of the Board, had challenges in relation to its location. 'I consider the move to Lysaker to have been very successful. I have high hopes in the unrealised potential of being located next to the Research Council of Norway.'

Is there anything in particular you would like to emphasise from your time as Chair of the Board?

- The new supervision model. It has been and will be important for the positive development of the collaboration between NOKUT and the education sector.
- Centres for Excellence in Education (SFU). Highlighting and rewarding the continuous work to raise the quality of education through good examples that others can follow is stimulating!
- Lifting the status of the tertiary vocational colleges.

Roald concludes by thanking the excellent administration and highly capable, well-balanced board of directors. 'Being Chair of the Board of NOKUT has been constructively challenging, enjoyable and stimulating.'



# A COMPETENT, RELIABLE, AND EFFICIENT ADMINISTRATIVE BODY

NOKUT shall further develop an efficient, highly competent and user-oriented organisation, among other things by using digital tools that will increase the quality of and make case processing more efficient and free up resources for other tasks, and by further developing expertise, work processes and the organisational culture. We shall also contribute to a more efficient division of labour and cooperation with the Ministry of Education and Research and other administrative agencies in the field of education and research.

## DEVELOPMENT PLAN FOR CULTURE AND COMPETENCE UP UNTIL 2020

The NOKUT organisation has undergone strong development in 2016 as well. Due to new tasks, the number of employees increased by about 20 per cent during the year.

‘The development plan contains measures that will be implemented in order to develop the culture and expertise in the organisation in the desired direction,’ says Director of Administration Kathrine Dalslett Graff.

In 2016, particular focus was given to activities that contribute to establishing a common management platform and strengthening project management skills. Financial follow-up and increased knowledge about plain language were also important.



NOKUT's values

## DIGITALISATION OF NOKUT NEW APPLICATION PORTAL AND NEW WORK TOOL FOR NOKUT



‘NOKUT's new electronic application and communications solution shall gradually be taken into use for all our services relating to Norwegian and foreign education. In addition to giving our users better services, an important goal is to simplify cooperation and sharing of information between public agencies,’ says Director of Administration Kathrine Dalslett Graff.

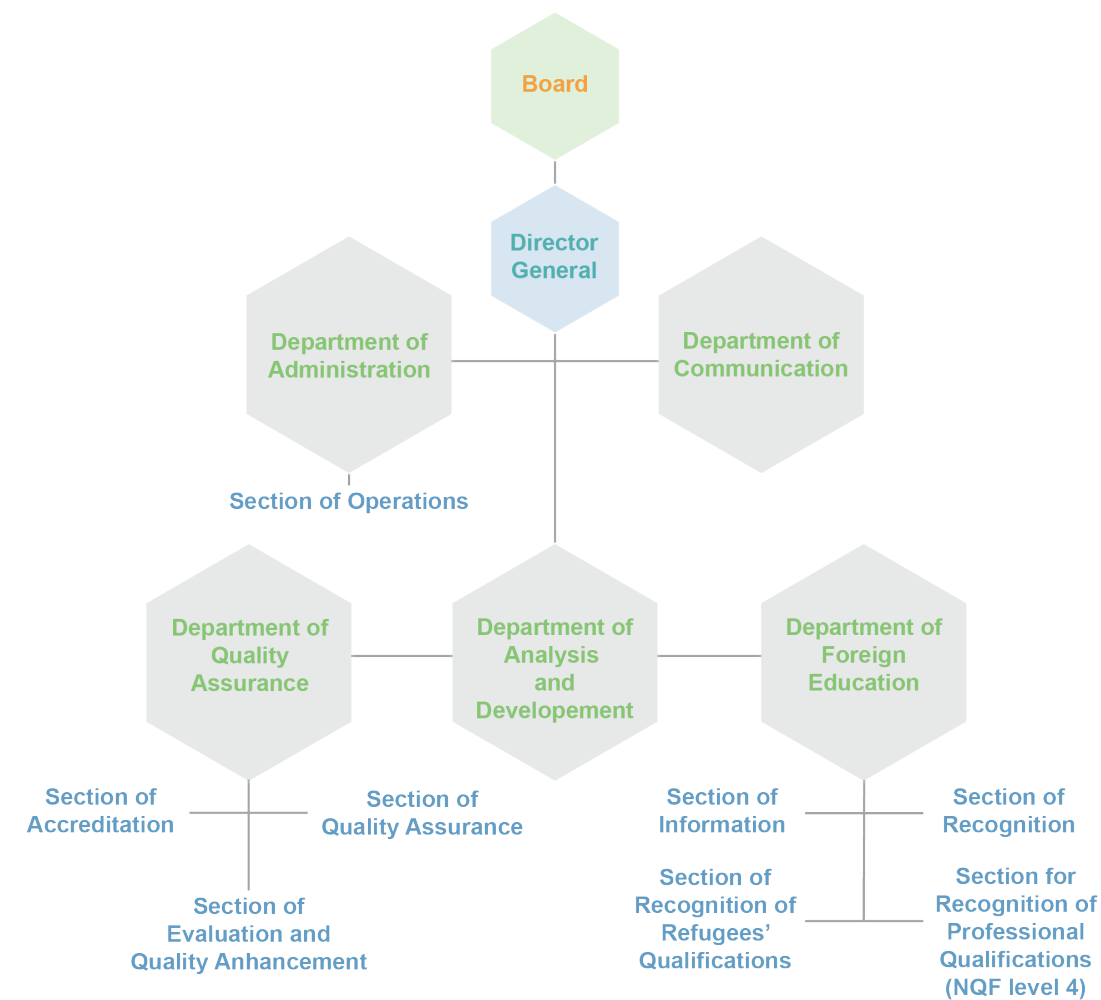
The goal of this investment has been to develop a comprehensive interaction solution with self-service options for external users, integrated with case processing support and the archive. This is intended to raise the quality of NOKUT's services and make them more accessible, at the same time as it will make the use of internal resources more efficient in the long term.

The application portal for recognition of foreign education was launched in November. Experience so far indicates that the system has been instrumental in making NOKUT's services more accessible and giving applicants better support during the application process.





# THIS IS NOKUT



## Funds allocated in 2016

In 2016, NOKUT was allocated a total of NOK 140,125,000 over the Ministry of Education and Research's budget.

NOKUT was assigned several new tasks in 2016, at the same time as the scope of our day-to-day tasks has increased. At the end of 2016, NOKUT had 125 employees and the organisation currently consists of the Department of Administration, the Department of Communication and three field specific departments, with a total of seven sections.

## NOKUT's staff



91



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GET TO KNOW  
LEONIE HERTEL



HIGHER EXECUTIVE OFFICER IN THE  
SECTION FOR RECOGNITION OF  
PROFESSIONAL QUALIFICATIONS

NOKUT HAS A TOTAL OF 20 EMPLOYEES FROM IMMIGRANT  
BACKGROUNDS. THIS MAKES UP APPROXIMATELY ONE IN  
FIVE EMPLOYEES.

WHERE DO YOU COME FROM?

I originally come from Frankfurt in Germany, but I've lived in different places in Western Europe for the past years.

WHAT HAVE YOU STUDIED AND  
WHERE?

I studied European Studies at Maastricht University and took a master's degree in Regional and Multi-Level Politics at Edinburgh University.

WHAT HAVE YOU WORKED WITH  
PREVIOUSLY AND WHERE?

Before I moved to Norway, I worked for the Scottish sister organisation of the Norwegian Association of Local and Regional Authorities (KS) in Brussels.



GET TO KNOW  
MARCO MIKA MERIGO



APPRENTICE IN THE DEPARTMENT  
OF ADMINISTRATION

NOKUT HAD ONE APPRENTICE IN 2016.

WHAT HAVE YOU STUDIED AND  
WHERE?

I have taken upper secondary level 1 (Sales and service) and 2 (Sales, service and security) and am now on a two-year apprenticeship path that will result in a trade certificate upon completion of the final exam. I will take this exam after my two years with NOKUT.

WHAT EXPERIENCE HAVE YOU GAINED  
FROM BEING AN APPRENTICE  
AT NOKUT?

I have worked in the whole Department of Administration and acquired a lot of useful knowledge.

I have dealt with travel expense claims, budgets, fees, time-keeping, financial systems, day-to-day operations, ICT, archiving, HSE and recruitment. This experience will help me to pass the final apprenticeship exam.

WHAT IS NEXT FOR YOU?

I have applied for admission via the vocational pathway ('Y-veien') to the bachelor's degree programme in management and marketing at Inland Norway University College (Rena) this autumn. To be admitted, I need to pass my final exam this summer. I then want to study in Oslo after completing the bachelor's degree in Rena. I hope to stay in touch with NOKUT as a student!

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



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