## Table of contents

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Chapter</th>
<th>Section</th>
<th>Title</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Chapter 1</td>
<td>Section 1-1</td>
<td>Scope</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chapter 1</td>
<td>Section 1-2</td>
<td>NOKUT’s objective and powers</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chapter 1</td>
<td>Section 1-3</td>
<td>NOKUT’s supervisory activities</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chapter 1</td>
<td>Section 1-4</td>
<td>NOKUT’s exercise of its administrative authority</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chapter 1</td>
<td>Section 1-5</td>
<td>NOKUT’s responsibilities</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chapter 1</td>
<td>Section 1-6</td>
<td>NOKUT’s measures and instruments</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chapter 1</td>
<td>Section 1-7</td>
<td>Appointment of experts</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chapter 1</td>
<td>Section 1-8</td>
<td>Quorum and majority requirements</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chapter 1</td>
<td>Section 1-9</td>
<td>Relationship to the Public Administration Act</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chapter 1</td>
<td>Section 1-10</td>
<td>Facilitation and information</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chapter 2</td>
<td>Section 2-1</td>
<td>Requirements for systematic quality assurance</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chapter 2</td>
<td>Section 2-2</td>
<td>Periodic supervision of the institutions’ quality assurance practices</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chapter 2</td>
<td>Section 2-3</td>
<td>Revocation of the right to apply for accreditation of study programmes and authority to establish study programmes</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chapter 3</td>
<td>Section 3-1</td>
<td>Accreditation of study programmes</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chapter 3</td>
<td>Section 3-2</td>
<td>Accreditation of master’s degree programmes</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chapter 3</td>
<td>Section 3-3</td>
<td>Accreditation of doctoral degree programmes</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chapter 3</td>
<td>Section 3-4</td>
<td>Accreditation of artistic research fellowship programmes</td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chapter 3</td>
<td>Section 3-5</td>
<td>Accreditation of institutions</td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chapter 3</td>
<td>Section 3-6</td>
<td>Accreditation as a university college</td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chapter 3</td>
<td>Section 3-7</td>
<td>Accreditation as a specialised university institution</td>
<td>17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chapter 3</td>
<td>Section 3-8</td>
<td>Accreditation as a university</td>
<td>17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chapter 3</td>
<td>Section 3-9</td>
<td>Revision of accredited study programmes</td>
<td>18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chapter 3</td>
<td>Section 3-10</td>
<td>Revision of accredited institutions</td>
<td>18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chapter 3</td>
<td>Section 3-11</td>
<td>Application for accreditation</td>
<td>18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chapter 4</td>
<td>Section 4-1</td>
<td>The institutions’ right to award degrees and vocational qualifications in collaboration with other institutions</td>
<td>19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chapter 4</td>
<td>Section 4-2</td>
<td>Requirements for joint degrees – the institutions’ responsibilities</td>
<td>19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chapter 4</td>
<td>Section 4-3</td>
<td>Supplementary provisions</td>
<td>19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chapter 7</td>
<td>Section 7-1</td>
<td>Appeals board</td>
<td>19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chapter 7</td>
<td>Section 7-2</td>
<td>The appeals board’s decision</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chapter 8</td>
<td>Section 8-1</td>
<td>Entry into force and transitional provisions</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Chapter 1. General provisions

Section 1-1. Scope

These regulations concern quality assurance and quality development in higher education and tertiary vocational education, as well as the Norwegian Agency for Quality Assurance in Education’s (NOKUT) processing of cases and setting of standards pursuant to Chapter 1, Chapter 2 and Chapter 3 of the University and University Colleges Act, and the accreditation of educational programmes and educational providers pursuant to the Tertiary Vocational Education Act Section 2.

Section 1-2. NOKUT’s objective and powers

(1) NOKUT is a professionally independent government agency authorised to supervise the quality of higher education and tertiary vocational education in Norway.

(2) In accordance with Section 2-1 (2) of the Universities and University Colleges Act, NOKUT’s objective is to contribute to ensuring that the institutions provide study programmes at a high international level, and that society can be confident of the quality of Norwegian higher education, tertiary vocational education and recognised higher education from other countries.

Section 1-3. NOKUT’s supervisory activities

Within the framework defined in laws and regulations, NOKUT shall supervise the quality of higher education and tertiary vocational education that is subject to Norwegian law. NOKUT decides itself when to initiate a supervision procedure. Supervisory activities include both control activities and assistance with the institutions’ quality development work.


Section 1-4. NOKUT’s exercise of its administrative authority

When carrying out its administrative duties defined in laws and regulations, NOKUT shall have an organisation and a work method that further the purpose of NOKUT’s work, and that ensure that society has confidence in NOKUT as a professionally independent government agency.

Section 1-5. NOKUT’s responsibilities

(1) In general:
- To oversee that the institutions comply with the requirements set out in laws and regulations within NOKUT’s administrative area of responsibility.
- To carry out targeted development work for the purpose of ensuring that the quality of higher education and tertiary vocational education is of a high international standard.
- To provide guidance and advice in relevant areas, and to provide information to the sector and society at large.
- To ensure that NOKUT’s activities are in accordance with international rules, standards and practices.
(2) Higher education:
- To accredit institutions and study programmes.
- To revise existing accreditations.
- To carry out periodic supervision of the institutions’ quality assurance practices.
- To carry out evaluations in order to assess the quality of higher education.

(3) Tertiary vocational education:
- To recognise tertiary vocational education and subject areas.
- To revise tertiary vocational education and subject areas.
- To approve quality assurance systems for providers of tertiary vocational education.

(4) General recognition:
- To recognise higher education (general recognition).
- To facilitate coordinated national practices for recognition pursuant to Section 3-5 (5) of the Universities and University Colleges Act, and to advise and assist the institutions.
- To disseminate information about the institutions’ decisions concerning recognition of higher education.
- To serve as and run an information centre pursuant to the Lisbon Convention, and be Norway’s representative in the ENIC network, cf. Article X.3 of the Lisbon Convention.
- To keep and maintain a list of Higher Education Entrance Qualification for applicants with a foreign education (the GSU list).

Section 1-6. NOKUT’s measures and instruments

In accordance with the purpose of NOKUT’s activities, NOKUT may use other instruments and implement other measures than those stipulated in laws and regulations. NOKUT decides itself which measures are appropriate.

Section 1-7. Appointment of experts

(1) NOKUT shall appoint experts to conduct evaluations in connection with:
   a) supervision of universities’ and university colleges’ quality assurance practices, cf. Section 2-2
   b) accreditation of study programmes and higher education institutions, cf. Chapter 3
   c) recognition of study programmes or providers of tertiary vocational education, cf. Chapter 5
   d) revision if academic assessments are to be carried out.

The experts shall submit reports on the evaluation and make recommendations to NOKUT.

(2) NOKUT issues regulations on criteria for the experts’ qualifications, the appointment of experts, their remit and rules of procedure for their work.

Section 1-8. Quorum and majority requirements

NOKUT’s Board forms a quorum for the consideration of matters pursuant to these regulations when the chair, or the chair’s deputy, and four other members are present. In the event of parity of votes, the chair has the casting vote.
Section 1-9. Relationship to the Public Administration Act

The Public Administration Act applies when deciding matters pursuant to these regulations, with the following exceptions and specifications:

a) Decisions made pursuant to Section 2-2, Section 2-3, Section 3-1, Section 3-2, Section 3-4, Section 3-5, Section 5-1, Section 5-2, Section 5-3, Section 5-4, Section 5-5, Section 6-1 and Section 6-2 are deemed to be individual decisions pursuant to the Public Administration Act Section 2 first paragraph letter (b).

b) Only the party directly affected by a decision may appeal against a decision made by NOKUT.

c) NOKUT’s professional assessment of factual matters in connection with decisions made pursuant to Section 2-2, Section 2-3, Section 3-1, Section 3-2, Section 3-4, Section 3-5, Section 5-1, Section 5-2, Section 5-3, Section 5-4 and Section 5-5 cannot be appealed.

d) NOKUT’s professional assessment in connection with decisions on the awarding of funds for quality-promoting measures at the institutions cannot be appealed.


Section 1-10. Facilitation and information

(1) Institutions covered by NOKUT’s supervisory and control activities must make arrangements that enable NOKUT to carry out its responsibilities pursuant to laws and regulations.

(2) NOKUT is entitled to necessary and relevant information and reports, and it may carry out such investigations as are necessary to carry out its supervisory responsibilities pursuant to laws and regulations.

Chapter 2. Internal quality assurance system for universities and university colleges

Section 2-1. Requirements for systematic quality assurance

(1) Universities and university colleges shall fulfil their responsibility for quality in education through systematic quality assurance practices that ensure, and contribute to enhancing, the quality of the study programmes. Furthermore, the institutions shall facilitate continuous development of the quality of education, be able to uncover deficient quality in the study programmes and ensure satisfactory documentation of their quality assurance practices. The institutions shall quality assure all factors that have a bearing on the quality of education, from the information provided to potential applicants until the programme is completed.

(2) The institutions shall carry out periodic evaluations of their study programmes. Representatives of employers or society at large, students and external experts, who are relevant to the study programme, shall contribute to the evaluations. The results of the evaluations shall be made public.

(3) NOKUT shall, in consultation with the sector, issue regulations on criteria for the institutions’ quality assurance practices. The criteria shall be in accordance with the requirements set out in Standards and guidelines for quality assurance in the European Higher Education Area, ESG, as far as they are appropriate.

Section 2-2. Periodic supervision of the institutions’ quality assurance practices

(1) NOKUT shall supervise the institutions’ systematic work on ensuring and further developing the quality of education. NOKUT shall advise the institutions on how to further develop their quality assurance practices. The supervision shall result in an assessment of whether the quality assurance practices are satisfactory, seen as a whole. If NOKUT finds serious deficiencies in the quality or the quality assurance practices, the institution shall be given a deadline of up to one year to rectify matters.

(2) No more than eight years shall elapse between each supervision at individual institutions. NOKUT decides the content and scope of the supervision, and sets a schedule.

(3) For institutions without institutional accreditation, NOKUT may choose to supervise the institution’s quality assurance practices by supervising the accredited study programmes.

(4) NOKUT shall issue regulations on the supervision of the institutions’ quality assurance practices. The regulations shall be in accordance with the requirements set out in Standards and guidelines for quality assurance in the European Higher Education Area, ESG, as far as they are appropriate.


Section 2-3. Revocation of the right to apply for accreditation of study programmes and authority to establish study programmes

(1) If NOKUT decides that the quality assurance system of an institution that offers accredited study programmes is unsatisfactory, the institution will forfeit its right to apply for accreditation of new study programmes. The institution is entitled to demand that a new evaluation be carried out of the quality assurance system when a year has elapsed since NOKUT made its decision. If NOKUT, following a new evaluation, finds the quality assurance system satisfactory, the institution may again apply for the accreditation of new study programmes.

(2) If NOKUT decides that the quality assurance system of an institution accredited as a university college, specialised university institution or university is unsatisfactory, the decision shall be forwarded to the Ministry. The Ministry will then revoke the institution’s authorisation to establish new study programmes pursuant to the Universities and University Colleges Act Section 3-3 (1) and (2). The institution is entitled to demand that a new evaluation be carried out of the quality assurance system when a year has elapsed since the Ministry revoked the institution’s right to establish new study programmes. If NOKUT, following a new evaluation, finds the quality assurance system satisfactory, the Ministry shall grant the institution authorisation to establish new study programmes for which the institution is accredited.

Chapter 3. Accreditation of study programmes and institutions in higher education

Section 3-1. Accreditation of study programmes

(1) The requirements set out in Chapter 3 shall be applied when institutions establish study programmes based on authorisations granted pursuant to Section 3-3 of the Universities and University Colleges Act.

(2) University colleges and specialised university institutions may apply to NOKUT for the accreditation of study programmes that the institution is not authorised to establish itself.

(3) Institutions that are not subject to the Universities and University Colleges Act may apply to NOKUT for accreditation of study programmes.
(4) It is a condition for accreditation being granted that the requirements of the Universities and University Colleges Act are met. Regulations adopted under the authority of Section 3-2 of the Universities and University Colleges Act shall form the basis for the accreditation.

(5) NOKUT issues regulations on criteria for the accreditation of study programmes. NOKUT may stipulate separate criteria for the revision of study programmes. The criteria shall be in accordance with international standards that Norway is obliged to observe.

(6) For study programmes that an institution is not authorised to establish itself, NOKUT decides which changes must be submitted to NOKUT.

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Section 3-2. Accreditation of master’s degree programmes

(1) Master’s degree programmes shall be defined, delimited and have sufficient academic breadth.

(2) Master’s degree programmes shall have a broad, stable academic environment comprising a sufficient number of staff with high academic expertise in education, research or artistic research and academic development work within the field of study. The academic environment shall cover the subjects and courses that the study programme comprises. Staff members in the academic environment in question must have relevant expertise.

(3) The academic environment must be able to demonstrate documented results at a high level, and results from collaborations with other academic environments, nationally and internationally. The institution’s assessments shall be documented so that NOKUT can use them in its work.

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Section 3-3. Accreditation of doctoral degree programmes

(1) The institution shall offer education and research in the doctoral programme’s field of study of a quality and scope that ensure that the programme can be completed at a high academic level. The institution shall offer a wide range of first and second-level degree programmes within the doctoral degree programme’s field of study.

(2) The doctoral degree programme’s field of study shall constitute a scientific whole, and the individual parts that make up the programme shall be internally coherent.

(3) The doctoral degree programme shall be affiliated to an academic environment with a high level of expertise in education and research. The academic environment shall be able to document research results, including publication, at a high international level, and results from collaborations with other national and international academic environments.

(4) The academic environment shall have depth and breadth in all important parts of the doctoral degree programme, so that the doctoral candidates can participate actively in different academic relations and be introduced to different perspectives.

(5) The doctoral degree programme shall be affiliated to a stable academic environment consisting of a sufficient number of staff with professor and associated professor qualifications within the breadth of the field of study. An overall assessment shall be carried out of whether the academic environment has a sufficient number of employees to cover subjects and courses and the supervision provided in the field of study. The academic environment shall consists of employees with the relevant expertise. The institution’s assessments shall be documented so that NOKUT can use them in its work.

(6) The institution shall document that it has the capacity and recruitment potential to admit at least 15 research fellows to the doctoral degree programme during the first five years after its inception. In addition, the institution shall substantiate that it has the capacity to maintain a doctoral degree
environment comprising at least 15 research fellows over time. Persons appointed under the Industrial PhD and Public Sector PhD schemes can count towards the number of research fellows pursuant to this paragraph and Section 3-8 (5). At least eight of the research fellows must have their main place of work at the institution. The institution may also accept doctoral candidates with other financing.

(7) The Sámi University of Applied Sciences is exempt from the requirement in the sixth paragraph. The Sámi University of Applied Sciences must ensure that doctoral candidates are provided with a high-quality academic environment, among other things through binding cooperation with other institutions.

Section 3-4. Accreditation of artistic research fellowship programmes

(1) Institutions may apply to NOKUT for accreditation of artistic research fellowship programmes offered by the individual institutions, as equivalent to doctoral degree programmes.

(2) Accreditation may be granted on the basis of the institution’s contribution to the artistic research fellowship programme.

(3) The requirements set out in Section 3-3 (1) to (6) apply correspondingly.

Section 3-5. Accreditation of institutions

(1) Institutions that offer accredited study programmes may apply to NOKUT for accreditation as a university college, specialised university institution or university.

(2) The institution’s primary activities must be education, research or artistic research, academic development work and dissemination.

(3) The institution’s organisation and infrastructure shall be adapted to its activities.

(4) NOKUT shall carry out an overall assessment of the institution’s organisation, quality assurance practices and results to verify that the institution qualifies for the authority that follows from institutional accreditation. The institution shall document that the requirements in laws and regulations are met.

(5) NOKUT’s accreditation decision pursuant to the first paragraph shall be submitted to the Ministry, which makes the final decision concerning the institutional category, cf. the Universities and University Colleges Act Section 1-2 (2).

(6) NOKUT shall stipulate criteria for the accreditation of institutions. NOKUT may stipulate separate criteria for the revision of institutions.

Section 3-6. Accreditation as a university college

(1) The institution shall have education, stable research activity or artistic research and academic development work of high quality.

(2) The institution shall have employees in teaching and research positions in important subject areas included in its study programmes.
(3) The institution shall have accreditation for at least one study programme that confers the right to, alone, award a first-level degree, and shall have graduated first-degree candidates for at least three years.

(4) The institution shall be affiliated to national and international networks in higher education and research or artistic research and academic development work.


Section 3-7. Accreditation as a specialised university institution

(1) The institution shall have a clear academic profile and provide stable education, research or artistic research and academic development work of high international quality.

(2) The institution shall have a sufficient number of employees with a high level of expertise in education, research or artistic research in the subject area that the institutional accreditation concerns.

(3) The institution shall have the right to award doctorates or have accreditation for an equivalent artistic research fellowship programme, cf. Section 3-4. A specialised university institution can offer several doctoral degree programmes if they are complementary.

(4) A significant part of the institution’s study programmes, research or artistic research and academic development work shall be in the same discipline as the doctoral degree programme.

(5) The institution shall document that at least five doctoral candidates on average have graduated from the doctoral degree programme or an equivalent research fellowship programme per year over a three-year period. The doctoral degree programme shall have admitted at least 15 candidates on average over a five-year period.

(6) The institution shall, alone, have accreditation for at least one study programme at second-degree level in the same discipline as the doctoral degree programme. The institution shall have graduated candidates at first and second-degree level from all study programmes that cover the disciplines in the doctoral degree’s academic profile.

(7) The institution shall participate actively in national and international networks in higher education, research or artistic research and academic development work. The institution shall participate actively in the national collaboration on researcher training or an equivalent artistic research fellowship programme, cf. Section 3-4.


Section 3-8. Accreditation as a university

(1) The institution shall have a sufficient number of employees with a high level of expertise in education, research or artistic research, academic development work and dissemination within the institution’s academic fields.

(2) The institution shall provide stable education, research or artistic research and academic development work of high international quality.

(3) The institution shall, alone, have the right to award doctoral degrees in at least four disciplines. The four doctoral degree programmes shall be representative of the institution’s academic profile. Two of them shall be important to the value creation of regional enterprises, while also having national importance. Accredited participation in the artistic research fellowship programme, cf. Section 3-4, can count as one doctoral degree.

(4) The doctoral degree disciplines shall cover significant parts of the institution’s academic fields.
(5) The institution shall have a stable researcher training programme and be able to document that it has graduated at least five doctoral candidates on average from at least two of its doctoral degree programmes or an equivalent research fellowship programme per year over a three-year period. Each doctoral degree programme shall have accepted at least 15 candidates on average over a five-year period.

(6) The institution shall, alone, have accreditation for at least five study programmes at second-degree level. The institution shall have graduated candidates at first and second-degree level from study programmes that cover the disciplines in the doctoral degrees’ academic profile.

(7) The institution shall participate actively in national and international networks in higher education, research or artistic research and academic development work. The institution shall participate actively in national researcher training collaborations and, if relevant, equivalent collaboration on the artistic research fellowship programme, cf. Section 3-4.


Section 3-9. Revision of accredited study programmes

(1) NOKUT may freely initiate a revision of an accredited institution. The revision shall be based on an evaluation undertaken by experts, cf. Section 1-7 (1).

(2) If NOKUT finds that a study programme is not in accordance with the requirements, the institution shall be given a reasonable deadline of up to two years to implement measures.

(3) If NOKUT subsequently finds that the conditions for accreditation are not met and decides to revoke the accreditation of a study programme, the institution shall immediately withdraw the study programme. In the case of doctoral degree programmes or artistic research fellowship programmes, NOKUT may revoke the accreditation for parts of the study programme. The institution shall implement measures, approved by NOKUT, that enable the students to complete the programme.


Section 3-10. Revision of accredited institutions

(1) NOKUT may freely initiate a revision of an accredited institution. The revision shall be based on an evaluation undertaken by experts, cf. Section 1-7 (1).

(2) If NOKUT finds that an institution no longer meets the requirements for accreditation, cf. Section 3-5 to Section 3-8, the institution shall be given a reasonable deadline of up to two years to rectify deficiencies. If the conditions for accreditation are not met after the expiry of the deadline, NOKUT shall revoke the accreditation.

(3) NOKUT’s decision to revoke an institution’s accreditation shall be submitted to the Ministry, which makes the final decision in the case, cf. the Universities and University Colleges Act Section 3-3 and Section 1-2 (1) and (2).


Section 3-11. Application for accreditation

(1) NOKUT shall prepare guidelines for the form and content and the processing of applications for accreditation of study programmes and institutions pursuant to Chapter 3. To make the application procedure more efficient, NOKUT may stipulate application deadlines.
Chapter 4. Joint degrees

Section 4-1. The institutions’ right to award degrees and vocational qualifications in collaboration with other institutions

(1) Universities and university colleges may award degrees and vocational qualifications in collaboration with other Norwegian or foreign institutions (joint degrees).

(2) The accreditation provisions in Section 3-1 of these Regulations apply, insofar as they are appropriate, to study programmes that will form part of the basis for a joint degree and that the institution itself does not have the authority to establish. In such cases, NOKUT may also accredit parts of a study programme. It is a condition for collaborations on joint degrees between Norwegian institutions that the institutions together meet the standards and criteria for accreditation of study programmes stipulated by NOKUT.

Section 4-2. Requirements for joint degrees – the institutions’ responsibilities

(1) Universities and university colleges that award joint degrees shall enter into agreements with collaborating institutions that regulate the division of responsibility between the parties, including the awarding of degrees and the form and content of diplomas.

(2) The institution shall ensure that the collaborating institutions are accredited or officially authorised to provide higher education in accordance with the systems that apply in the country in question, and that the study programmes in question are accredited as higher education at the level of the joint degree.

(3) Students admitted to study programmes that will form part of the basis for a joint degree between the institutions shall be ensured a period of study of a certain scope at the collaborating institutions.

(4) If the collaboration on a joint degree is terminated, the institution shall enter into an agreement with another institution that can take responsibility for the students completing the study programme and taking the exam, or implement other measures that enable the students to complete the programme. Such measures shall be approved by NOKUT in cases where NOKUT has accredited the relevant study programmes at the institution, cf. Section 4-1 (2).

(5) Universities and university colleges shall notify NOKUT of which joint degrees the institution awards.

Section 4-3. Supplementary provisions

NOKUT may issue regulations containing supplementary provisions relating to joint degrees.

[…]

Chapter 7. Appeals

Section 7-1. Appeals board
The Ministry shall appoint an appeals board that decides all appeals against decisions made by NOKUT.

When considering cases relating to tertiary vocational education, the appeals board shall have five members with personal deputies. One of the members of the board shall be a student. In cases concerning higher education, the appeals board shall have six members, two of whom shall be students. The chair and the chair’s deputy shall meet the statutory requirements for court of appeal judges.

The chair shall not be employed by or be a member of the board of an institution that is subject to the Tertiary Vocational Education Act or the Universities and University Colleges Act.

**Section 7-2. The appeals board’s decision**

(1) The appeals board forms a quorum when the chair, or the chair’s deputy, and three other members are present. In the event of parity of votes, the chair has the casting vote.

(2) The appeals board’s decisions cannot be appealed.

**Chapter 8. Concluding provisions**

**Section 8-1. Entry into force and transitional provisions**

(1) The Regulations enter into force immediately. The Regulations of 8 September 2005 No 1040 on accreditation, evaluation and recognition pursuant to the Universities and University Colleges Act and the Regulations of 23 April 2008 No 391 on recognition pursuant to the Tertiary Vocational Education Act are repealed from the same date.

(2) Institutions accredited pursuant to the Universities and University Colleges Act shall meet the requirements set out in Section 3-5 to Section 3-8 for accreditation as a university college, specialised university institution or university by 31 December 2018. Accredited study programmes shall meet the requirements for accreditation set out in Section 3-1 to Section 3-4 by 31 December 2018.

(3) For institutions authorised to accredit primary and lower secondary teacher education programmes at master’s degree level, the requirements set out in Section 3-1 of the former regulations apply until 31 January 2017.

(4) An institution may be granted accreditation as a specialised university institution or a university if it is able to substantiate that the requirements in Section 3-7 (5) and Section 3-8 (5) will be met by 31 December 2018.