

Terms of Reference for NOKUT’s Evaluation of Post-Experience Master’s Programmes in Management

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Introduction

This document is a translation of the terms of reference for [NOKUT's evaluation of post-experience master's programmes in management \(2025 – 2027\)](https://www.nokut.no/siteassets/utdanningskvalitet/evalueringer/emil/evalueringmandat-for-evalueringen-av-erfaringsbaserte-masterprogrammer-i-ledelse.pdf), which is published in Norwegian here: <https://www.nokut.no/siteassets/utdanningskvalitet/evalueringer/emil/evalueringmandat-for-evalueringen-av-erfaringsbaserte-masterprogrammer-i-ledelse.pdf>¹

It includes information about the purpose of the evaluation and about the expert panel, the evaluation background and scope, the evaluation process, the final report, and a tentative milestone plan.

The following study programmes are included in the evaluation:

Institution	Study programme
BI	Executive MBA (Oslo)
University of Inland Norway	Master of Public Administration
Nord University	Master of Knowledge Management
NHH	Executive MBA (specialisation: Management control)
NTNU	Master of Management
OsloMet	Executive Master of Public Management
University of Agder	Master in Leadership
University of Stavanger	Executive Master of Business Administration
UiT The Arctic University of Norway	MBA
University of South-Eastern Norway	Executive Master of Management
VID	Master of value based leadership

The eleven institutions were initially informed about the evaluation in March 2025, and the evaluation will formally commence with the publication of the evaluation terms of reference in December 2025. The evaluation report is scheduled for publication in the autumn of 2027.

NOKUT's evaluations of educational quality should comply with the [European Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance in the Higher Education Area \(ESG 2015\)](#). These have been operationalised in our [principles for external evaluation activities](#). You can find more information about NOKUT's evaluations here: <https://www.nokut.no/en/quality-enhancement/evaluations-of-quality-in-education/>

Purpose of the Evaluation

Evaluations of quality in higher education are a central part of NOKUT's external quality assurance activities (cf. the Universities and University Colleges Act §§ 16-2 and 16-3). They are intended to support quality enhancement within the institutions, contribute to evidence-based policy for higher education, and foster public trust in higher education.

The evaluation of post-experience master's programmes in management addresses selected aspects of educational quality across the eleven study programmes. Within these defined areas, the

¹ In the case of discrepancies, refer to the original Norwegian-language document.

evaluation report will identify strengths and weaknesses, map challenges, and provide recommendations for action—both at the national level and for each study programme.

NOKUT emphasises that the evaluation should take the academic distinctiveness of the programmes into account and that it should be useful to the participating institutions. We therefore involve programme representatives and other key stakeholders in the selection of evaluation themes, inviting them to highlight aspects of educational quality they find particularly important or challenging in these programmes, and that they would like to gain more insight into.

Expert Panel

The assessments of educational quality are carried out by the evaluation's expert panel, who work on behalf of NOKUT. NOKUT is responsible for the evaluation methodology, data collection and quantitative analysis, dialogue with evaluation participants, and providing administrative support to the panel throughout the evaluation period. This includes serving as the secretariat for the experts as they prepare the final report.

The institutions participating in the evaluation received NOKUT's proposal for the expert panel on September 9, 2025. The proposal was based on input received from stakeholders and NOKUT's [principles for external evaluation activities](#). The institutions were given the opportunity to comment on the proposal before the panel was formally appointed.

This is the expert panel:

- Susanna Alexius, Stockholm University and Stockholm School of Economics
- Anna Blombäck, Jönköping International Business School (panel chair)
- Øyvind Hilmarsen, Norwegian Seafood Research Fund (FHF) (student expert)
- Jon Lereim, Prosjekt Norge
- Frank Meier, Copenhagen Business School (deputy panel chair)
- Berit Sund, KS (employer expert)

For more information, see the evaluation website: [Evaluation of Post-Experience Master's Programmes in Management | Nokut](#)

The panel should develop a shared understanding of educational quality in post-experience master's programs in management, and the evaluation must take into account the distinct characteristics and context of the programmes.

NOKUT is responsible for ensuring that the experts are impartial in the given case. For example, experts may not participate in the panel's assessment of a study programme at an institution where they are employed or are students. In such cases, the panel members should also not participate in their own institution's internal work related to the evaluation. Assessments of impartiality entail:

- Anna Blombäck is member of a Programme Advisory Board at UiS and will not participate in the panel's assessment of their study programme.
- Øyvind Hilmarsen is a student on UiT's MBA and will not participate in the panel's assessment of this study programme.
- Jon Lereim has previously been employed at BI and will not participate in the panel's assessment of their study programme.

- Jon Lereim teaches at USN and will not participate in the panel's assessment of their study programme.
- Frank Meier takes part in Copenhagen Business School's teaching collaboration with Nord University and will not participate in the panel's assessment of the study programme at Nord University.
- Berit Sund has previously been employed at NHH and will not participate in the panel's assessment of their study programme.
- At KS, Berit Sund is responsible for following up the National Executive Leadership Programme for the municipal and specialist health services, which is delivered by BI on behalf of KS and Helse Sør-Øst. Sund will not participate in the panel's assessment of BI's Executive MBA.

Preparatory Work

Mapping

As part of the preparations for the evaluation, NOKUT has carried out a mapping of the included study programmes. The mapping is based on registry data from DBH, data from the National Student Survey, the programmes specifications, local periodic evaluations and programme reports (where periodic evaluations were unavailable), graduate surveys, and relevant accreditation reports. This mapping contributed to NOKUT's knowledge base for dialogue with evaluation participants and other stakeholders, for the development of the terms of reference, and for the subsequent evaluation work.

Input Meetings

In May and June 2025, NOKUT held digital input meetings with stakeholders. During these meetings, we provided information on the purpose and process of the evaluation and invited input on which topics it would be useful to take a closer look at in the evaluation, as well as on what kinds of experience, perspectives, and expertise we should include in the expert panel. An overview of the input meetings and a summary of the feedback we received can be found here: [Evaluation of Post-Experience Master's Programmes in Management | Nokut](#)

Consultation panel

The evaluation includes a consultation panel, which meets twice during the project period. In the first meeting, the consultation panel provided feedback on NOKUT's proposed evaluation themes, which were based on NOKUT's mapping and on the input meetings. We received feedback on the wording of key questions, on the communication of what each theme encompassed, and requests for expansion of evaluation themes. NOKUT and the expert panel used the consultation panel's feedback to help adjust the terms of reference. In the second meeting, NOKUT will ask the consultation panel for feedback on a draft self-assessment form.

The consultation panel consists of one representative from each of the eleven study programmes, in addition to employer and employee representatives. For more information about the consultation panel, see [Evaluation of Post-Experience Master's Programmes in Management | Nokut](#).

Scope of the Evaluation

The scope of the evaluation is defined by the evaluation themes, which specify which aspects of educational quality the evaluation will examine. Each theme is operationalised through key questions that are intended to guide the expert panel's assessment work. The evaluation themes and key questions are based on NOKUT's preparatory work, the input we received in May and June 2025, and

feedback from the consultation panel and the expert panel. Input and feedback have been reviewed in light of the evaluation's purpose, time frame and resources.

The evaluation themes are formulated at an overarching level to encompass the diversity of study programmes included in the evaluation.

We have also considered the existing knowledge base and ongoing projects in order to avoid duplication of work. For instance, the Government has appointed a [committee on artificial intelligence in higher education](#). Among other things, the committee will provide advice on how institutions and academic communities can best approach AI, and on how they can guide students in good AI use. The committee is to deliver its recommendation by the 1st of October 2026. Therefore, AI use will not be a separate theme in this evaluation.

To support quality enhancement, NOKUT will invite programme representatives and other key stakeholders to knowledge exchange webinars on topics such as AI use and flexible education.

By «evaluation theme», we mean the aspects of quality that the evaluation aims to generate knowledge about and contribute to developing.

By «key questions», we mean the issues or questions that the expert panel is to address in the evaluation report. The key questions specify what the panel should investigate and assess under each evaluation theme. The questions are intended to ensure an evaluation that generates knowledge about educational quality in post-experience Master's programmes in Management, and that leads to recommendations for enhancement. The key questions must be open enough to accommodate the complexity and local distinctiveness of the programmes, whilst still being answerable by the panel within the evaluation's time frame and resources.

The lists of bullet points indicate what the panel intends to examine to address the key questions.

The work on the evaluation themes is intended to shed light on educational quality from different perspectives. The expert panel may use findings from one theme to inform work on the other theme, and the evaluation report may include reflections, assessments, and recommendations that cut across the evaluation themes.

The panel's assessments will be based on the evaluation's data (see Data Collection and Analysis for more information on the data), relevant international research, and the panel's own knowledge and experience from working in research, education, and management.

To support the development of recommendations for enhancement, the panel may examine what hinders and promotes educational quality within the evaluation themes.

[Evaluation Theme 1: Research-based and Experience-based Education](#)

This theme concerns the balance and integration between research-based and experience-based education within the study programmes. The evaluation applies an understanding of research-based education that includes research-active teaching staff, programme content grounded in research, students developing competence in research methods and critical thinking, students participating in ongoing research projects, and students carrying out an independent research or development

project. Experience-based knowledge is here understood particularly as the knowledge acquired by students and teaching staff through professional practice.

Why have we chosen this theme?

This is a central theme in post-experience Master's programmes, where students are experienced professionals learning to connect research-based knowledge to work experience and strengthening their ability to work reflectively and analytically with professional challenges in the workplace. The theme was raised in almost all input meetings, especially in relation to the labour market relevance of the study programme, the interaction between the study environment and working life, the utilisation of students' work experience in teaching, and the facilitation for students to use their own workplace as a starting point for their assignments.

To shed light on this theme, the expert panel will examine the following key questions:

Key Questions for Theme 1

- What are the strengths, weaknesses and enhancement opportunities in the integration of research-based and experience-based knowledge within the study programme?
- How well does the study programme facilitate students' use of research-based and experience-based knowledge in the development of their own management and leadership practice?

Under this theme, the panel will examine elements such as:

- **Programme design and pedagogical idea:**
 - Reference to research-based and experience-based knowledge in the programme specification and learning outcomes
 - Underlying pedagogical idea describing research-based and experience-based approaches to teaching and learning
- **Teaching and other learning activities:**
 - Teaching and other learning activities that facilitate students' use and integration of research-based and experience-based knowledge
 - Teaching and other learning activities that support students' critical thinking, analysis, and reflection on the connections between research-based and experience-based knowledge
 - Teaching and other learning activities that support students' capacity for new management and leadership actions
 - Academic staff and students' assessment of research-based and experience-based teaching and other learning activities
- **Assessment strategy and assessment types:**
 - Assessment strategy that enables the evaluation of research-based and experience-based competence
 - Assessment types that promote students' use and integration of research-based and experience-based competence
 - Academic staff's experiences of working with the assessment of research-based and experience-based knowledge

- Students' experiences with different assessment types
- **Relevance:**
 - Contact and collaboration with graduates and employers / professional practitioners
 - Strategy to ensure and develop the relevance of the study programme
 - Different stakeholders' views on the relevance of the study programme (for example, management, academic staff, students, and employers)
 - Students' experiences of using research-based and experience-based knowledge in the development of their own management and leadership practice

Evaluation Theme 2: Students' Final Independent Assignment / Master's Dissertation

This evaluation theme concerns the quality of students' final independent assignment (which, in all but one programme, is a master's dissertation), how students are prepared for this assignment through the study programme, how students approach the assignment, and how they are supervised throughout the process.

Why have we chosen this theme?

The final independent assignment is a central learning arena in the study programmes and provides students with the opportunity to demonstrate their learning outcomes. During many input meetings, participants expressed a desire to examine the independent work and the teaching of the philosophy of science and research methodology in more detail. This included, for example, whether and how students are well prepared to undertake such an assignment, students' experiences of teaching on methods, different approaches to the assignment (including co-writing), students' supervision needs, academic requirements for the assignment, academic standards, and concerns regarding students' use of AI in their work.

To shed light on this theme, the expert panel will investigate the following questions:

Key Questions for Theme 2

- a. To what extent does the final independent assignment demonstrate methodological competence, labour market relevance, independent analysis and reflection, and grounding in research and experience-based knowledge?
- b. What are the strengths, weaknesses, and enhancement opportunities in the preparation for and completion of students' independent work?

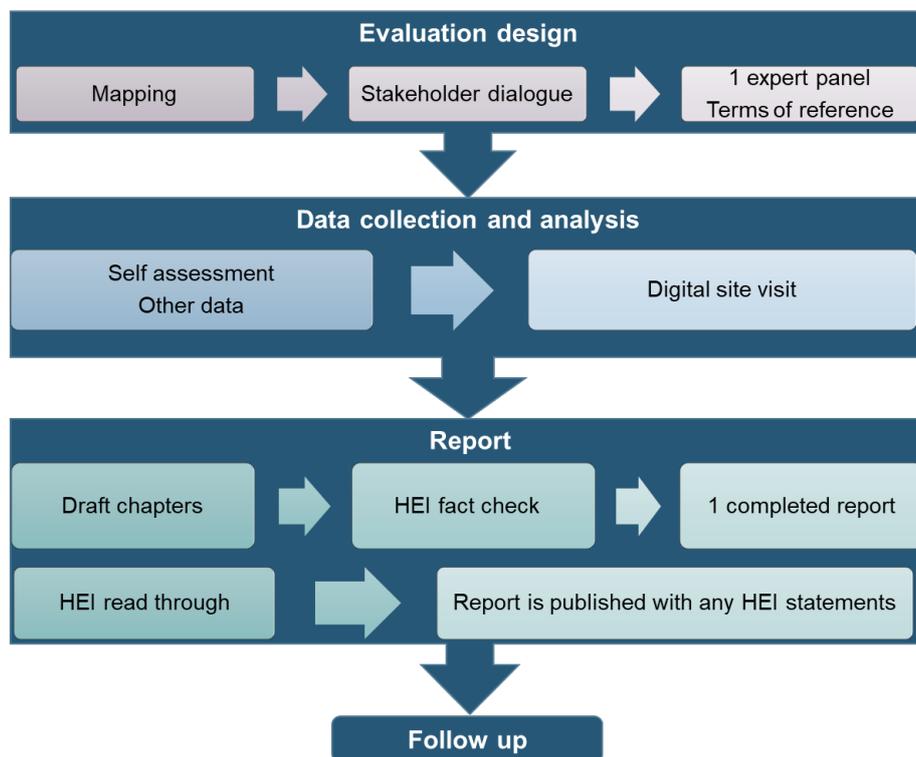
Under this theme, the panel will examine elements such as:

- Quality in the independent work:
 - Use of relevant research, theory, and experience from working life in the research question, analysis, and reflection in selected theses
 - Relevance of methodology for the thesis, methodological implementation, independent analysis, and critical reflection in selected theses
 - The thesis's labour market relevance
- Preparation, teaching, supervision, and completion:
 - Choice of topic, problematisation, and research questions

- Scope and content of teaching in methodology throughout the study programme, as well as the structure and content of seminars and support activities linked to the assignment
- Scope and content of academic, methodological, and processual supervision
- Clarity of requirements and expectations for the assignment, including guidelines for co-writing, AI use, and academic integrity
- Reported time spent and duration of period students work on the assignment
- Academic staff and student experiences of preparations for the assignment, teaching and supervision during the process, and student work on the assignment

Evaluation process

The evaluation process is illustrated in the figure below.



Planning

During the planning phase, NOKUT carried out a mapping of the study programmes included in the evaluation and conducted input meetings with evaluation participants and other stakeholders. Based on this preparatory work, NOKUT recruited the expert committee and developed the evaluation terms of reference. The publication of the terms of reference marks the end of the planning phase.

Data collection and analysis

Based on the key questions presented in this document, the evaluation's data will include:

- Self assessments from the institutions, with appendices
- selected final independent assignments
- digital site visits with group interviews
- programme and module specifications
- any local periodic evaluations and programme reports
- any local student and graduate surveys

- register data from DBH
- student survey, and potentially also interviews

The data collection is designed to facilitate triangulation of methods and data sources, enabling the panel to assess alignment and discrepancies between documents, quantitative data, and the experiences and perspectives of various stakeholders regarding the study programme.

Each institution submits one self-assessment. To ensure the self-assessment process is beneficial, institutions are encouraged to organise an inclusive process involving management, teaching staff, administrative staff, students, and employers. This allows for dialogue about experiences of strengths, weaknesses, challenges, and opportunities. Wherever possible, the self-assessment should be supported by relevant examples. The consultation panel will provide feedback on drafts of the self-assessment template.

The site visit will be digital. The visit is led by the expert panel, which will interview key stakeholders associated with the study programme. These may include management at both programme and faculty level, teaching staff, students, graduates, and important external partners, such as employers. NOKUT will facilitate an observer arrangement, so that each visit includes an observer from one of the other study programmes included in the evaluation.

Evaluation Report

In the third phase of the evaluation, the expert panel writes the evaluation report, supported by NOKUT as the secretariat. The evaluation report will contain a chapter for each study programme, including the panel's assessments and recommendations, as well as chapters that consider study programmes across institutions.

NOKUT sends the draft evaluation report to the institutions for review. (This draft does not include chapters on other institutions' study programmes.) Each institution will have the opportunity to report any factual errors or misunderstandings to NOKUT. Institutions may not submit new information for consideration.

The completed evaluation report (in its entirety) is also sent to the institutions for review prior to publication. Each institution may then choose to submit a public statement. These statements are presented to NOKUT's board and published alongside the evaluation report.

Use of Artificial Intelligence in the Evaluation Process

NOKUT uses the AI tool M365 Copilot. In the evaluation, M365 Copilot is primarily used for the following purposes:

- Automatic transcription of digital meetings
- Summaries of meetings based on transcription or minutes
- Retrieval of information in documents
- Compilation and summarisation of texts
- Critical review of texts from NOKUT and the expert panel
- Translations
- Other administrative support

Follow-Up of the Evaluation After Publication of the Report

As part of NOKUT's internal project evaluation, we will collect feedback on the evaluation from experts and contact persons at the institutions. We will use this feedback to improve NOKUT's work on evaluations.

The HEIs are responsible for considering the recommendations they receive in the evaluation report and following up the evaluation results.

NOKUT also follows up the evaluation results and recommendations. The intention is to create space for dialogue and reflection and to contribute to enhancement through sharing of experience and knowledge across institutions. NOKUT's follow-up of the evaluation results will be threefold:

- NOKUT asks the institutions to submit a brief written overview on their prioritised development areas within six months of the evaluation report being published.
- NOKUT invites representatives from programme management, faculty management and students to a digital follow-up meeting within six months after the evaluation report has been published. The meeting will facilitate reflection on the evaluation results, the panel's recommendations and the institution's plans for further development.
- NOKUT requests written feedback on the HEI's follow-up work within two years of the evaluation report being published.
- NOKUT invites participants to a follow-up webinar within two years of the evaluation report being published. The webinar will address the recommendations from the report, the follow-up work that has been done and the quality development that has taken place since the evaluation was carried out.

Tentativ milestone plan

This is a tentative milestone plan. Any changes will be communicated to the institutions as early as possible.

Timeframe	Activity
May–June 2025	Stakeholder input meetings
Sep 2025	Institutions receive proposal for expert panel
Oct 2025	Consultation panel meeting on proposed evaluation topics
Dec 2025	Publish evaluation terms of reference Digital information meeting about the evaluation
Feb 2026	Consultation panel meeting on draft self-assessment form
Mar–May 2026	Institutions prepare their self-assessment (10 weeks)
Oct–Dec 2026	Digital site visits with expert panel and observer
Nov 2027	Launch of evaluation report
June 2028	Digital follow-up meeting
By Nov 2029	Written feedback on follow-up of the evaluation results Follow-up webinar

Contact, complaints and appeals

We greatly appreciate the dialogue we have with the HEIs and other stakeholders, and welcome questions, input, and feedback throughout the evaluation period. Such enquiries can be sent to project manager Inger-Lise Kalviknes Bore at inger-lise.kalviknes.bore@nokut.no.

In line with NOKUT's [principles for external evaluation activities](#) (point 3 e), HEIs may also raise concerns related to the evaluation with NOKUT. Institutions that wish to submit a complaint or raise

concerns related to the evaluation process can send an email to inger-lise.kalviknes.bore@nokut.no with copies to stein.erik.lid@nokut.no and postmottak@nokut.no.

Each institution also has the opportunity to appeal the evaluation report on the basis of errors related to NOKUT's [principles for external evaluation activities](#). An institution cannot appeal the professional conclusions made by NOKUT's experts. Appeals should be sent to postmottak@nokut.no with copies to inger-lise.kalviknes.bore@nokut.no within four weeks of the publication of the evaluation report. The appeal will be considered by a committee consisting of three representatives from NOKUT's board (the chair, deputy chair, and student representative). The committee may require the evaluation report to be rewritten or withdrawn.