

# Terms of Reference for NOKUT's Evaluation of Journalism Education

## Introduction

This document is a translation of the terms of reference for NOKUT's evaluation of journalism education (2025–2027), which is published in Norwegian here:

<https://www.nokut.no/utdanningskvalitet/prosjekter-i-nokut/evaluering-av-journalistikkutdanningen/><sup>1</sup>. 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:

|                           |  |
|---------------------------|--|
| <b>Institution</b>        | University of Bergen   |
| <b>Study programme(s)</b> | Journalism (bachelor)<br>Investigative journalism (master)               |
| <b>Institution</b>        | Volda University College   |
| <b>Study programme(s)</b> | Journalism (bachelor)  |
| <b>Institution</b>        | Nord University  |
| <b>Study programme(s)</b> | Bachelor in journalism<br>Master in journalism and communication studies |
| <b>Institution</b>        | OsloMet  |
| <b>Study programme(s)</b> | Bachelor in journalism   |
| <b>Institution</b>        | NLA University College   |
| <b>Study programme(s)</b> | Bachelor in journalism<br>Master in global journalism                    |
| <b>Institution</b>        | Kristiania University of Applied Sciences                                |
| <b>Study programme(s)</b> | Bachelor in journalism   |
| <b>Institution</b>        | University of Stavanger  |
| <b>Study programme(s)</b> | Journalism - bachelor  |

The seven 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 November 2027. NOKUT's national study programme evaluations should comply with the [European Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance in the Higher Education](#)

<sup>1</sup> In the case of discrepancies, refer to the original Norwegian-language document.

[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/national-study-programme-evaluations/>

### 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 journalism education addresses selected aspects of educational quality across the ten study programmes. Within these defined areas, the 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 17 September 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:

1. Steen Steensen (panel chair)
2. Maarit Jakkola
3. Henrik Preuthun Berggren
4. Hilde Kristin Dahlstrøm
5. Liv Skotheim, Bergens Tidende (employer expert)
6. Ingrid Larsen Rossvang (student expert)

For more information, see the evaluation website: <https://www.nokut.no/en/quality-enhancement/nokut-projects/evaluation-of-journalism-education/>

The panel should develop a shared understanding of educational quality in journalism education, 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:

- Steen Steensen is professor at OsloMet and professor II at Kristiania University of Applied Sciences and will not participate in the panel's assessment of the journalism study programmes at these institutions.
- Ingrid Larsen Rossvang is a student on Nord University's journalism bachelor's programme and will not participate in the panel's assessment of this study programme.
- Hilde Kristin Dahlstrøm is associate professor at NLA University College and will not participate in the panel's assessment of journalism education at this institution.

## 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: <https://www.nokut.no/en/quality-enhancement/nokut-projects/evaluation-of-journalism-education/#inputmeetings>

## 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 seven institutions, in addition to a representative from the media industry, a student representative and a representative from the Norwegian Union of Journalists. For more information about the consultation panel, see <https://www.nokut.no/en/quality-enhancement/nokut-projects/evaluation-of-journalism-education/#consultationpanel>

## 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 1 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 possibly other topics.

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

journalism education, 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.

In this evaluation, we distinguish between the terms “**work life**” and “**industry**.”

- **Industry (media industry):** Includes employers and businesses connected to journalism and media production.
- **Work life:** Refers to the labour market in general and is not limited to the media industry.

In this evaluation, the term **practice** is used for learning activities where students receive training in journalistic work.

- **Internal practice:** Practice carried out within the institution's own framework, for example in simulated newsroom environments and practical courses.
- **External practice:** Practice carried out with external employers.

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, 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: Relevant and up-to-date

In NOKUT's *Quality Areas for Study Programmes in Higher Education*, relevance is a key element. A relevant study programme is understood as academically up-to-date and aligned with the requirements for further studies and the labour market. For journalism education, this includes:

- Ensuring that the academic literature is relevant and reflects developments in the subject area and industry
- Offering a portfolio of courses, both mandatory and elective, that provides students with the necessary breadth and depth of knowledge
- Maintaining an academic environment characterized by research and development activities and continuous collaboration with the industry
- Providing bachelor's students with learning outcomes that qualify them for employment and master's studies

- Providing master's students with learning outcomes that prepare them for employment and doctoral studies

The concepts of *educational relevance* and *relevance in higher education* refer to how well study programmes prepare students for working life, both in the short and long term. A study programme must therefore be structured so that students achieve learning outcomes that are applicable in practice immediately, while also laying a solid foundation for further academic and professional development.

An important aspect of relevance is *content relevance*. This concerns whether the study programme's content and learning methods are designed to provide optimal and useful learning for the professional field the education targets. Evaluation Theme 1 "Relevant and up-to-date" is closely linked to content relevance and assesses the extent to which the study programme is academically relevant, oriented toward the labour market, and pedagogically well-designed.

### **Why have we chosen this theme?**

The theme was developed based on input meetings where all seven institutions and all three stakeholders highlighted challenges related to how study programmes remain relevant and up to date. In these meetings, several institutions and stakeholders pointed to uncertainty about the future relevance of current journalism education and the need to adapt to changes in the role of journalists and the communications field.

Areas mentioned in all meetings and identified as critical for strengthening the study programmes to ensure future relevance were digital transformation and artificial intelligence (AI). Other aspects raised included content quality, academic breadth, and the need for continuous updates, including topics such as data journalism and digital source criticism.

The need for ongoing updates and relevance was also reflected in concerns expressed by some study programmes and stakeholders that students and graduates represent a relatively homogeneous group and do not sufficiently reflect the diversity of society.

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

### **Key Questions for Theme 1**

1. To what extent are journalism programmes up to date and relevant?
2. What strengths and weaknesses of the study programmes characterize their ability to remain up-to-date and relevant?

Under this theme, the expert panel may, for example, examine:

- **Programme design, teaching, and learning methods:**
  - Programme specifications including learning outcomes, structure, flexibility, and teaching materials, including digital tools
  - Integration of research-based and practice-based knowledge
  - Bachelor theses, master's theses, or equivalent project work
- **Competence:**

- Academic staff's research and development competence, experience from and collaboration with the industry
- Industry involvement in programme development, teaching, and internships
- Digital competence
- Students' and graduates' views, as well as industry perspectives
- Institutions' work to promote diversity within the education

## Evaluation Theme 2: Integration of Theory and Practice

### What is this theme about?

This theme addresses how journalism programmes maintain the balance and integration between theoretical knowledge and practical experience. Practice refers to both internal and external internships, while theoretical knowledge includes subject theory and, for example, reflections on practice. Journalism as a discipline requires both academic insight and practical skills, and study programmes must therefore be designed so that students develop comprehensive competence relevant for further studies and professional work.

Practice and collaboration with the media industry are central components of the study programmes, but there are significant variations between institutions in terms of organization, scope, and content. Some offer internal practice, others external partnerships, and the length of practice periods varies. This diversity provides academic distinctiveness but also raises questions about how theory and practice are actually integrated into the education.

A study programme with a strong focus on practice risks weakening its theoretical foundation, while a theory-heavy programme may lack the practical insight demanded by the industry. All programmes and stakeholders have stated that achieving this balance is challenging but crucial for educational quality.

In NOKUT's *Quality Areas for Study Programmes in Higher Education*, it is emphasized that study programmes must be designed so that students achieve learning outcomes relevant to working life. This requires active interaction with the professional field, including forums for collaboration, feedback from graduates, and systematic work at the study programme level.

Under this theme, the evaluation will examine:

- How theory and practice are structured and coordinated within the study programme
- How practice builds on, applies, and develops theoretical knowledge, and how knowledge and experience from practice are used in teaching
- How students develop the ability to reflect and understand the profession
- How research methods and theory are balanced with professional practice in the education

The expert panel will look closely at how study programmes make the integration of theory and practice concrete in course descriptions, assessment methods, pedagogical approaches, and

collaboration with the industry. For the institutions, this provides a basis for reflecting on how the study programme can be further developed to strengthen this integration.

### **Why did we choose this theme?**

A recurring topic in the input meetings was the need for a good balance and integration between theoretical knowledge and practical skills in journalism education. This applies to both bachelor's and master's programmes and was expressed across all institutions. There is broad agreement that theory and practice must be well integrated to ensure the relevance and quality of the education.

Several institutions have good arrangements for practice, but they themselves point out challenges in linking these to theoretical reflection and social understanding. Institutions offering master's programmes report difficulties in balancing academic level and practical skills, especially for students who are already employed. There is also a need to evaluate and further develop assessment methods that reflect both practical and theoretical learning outcomes.

### **Key Questions for Theme 2**

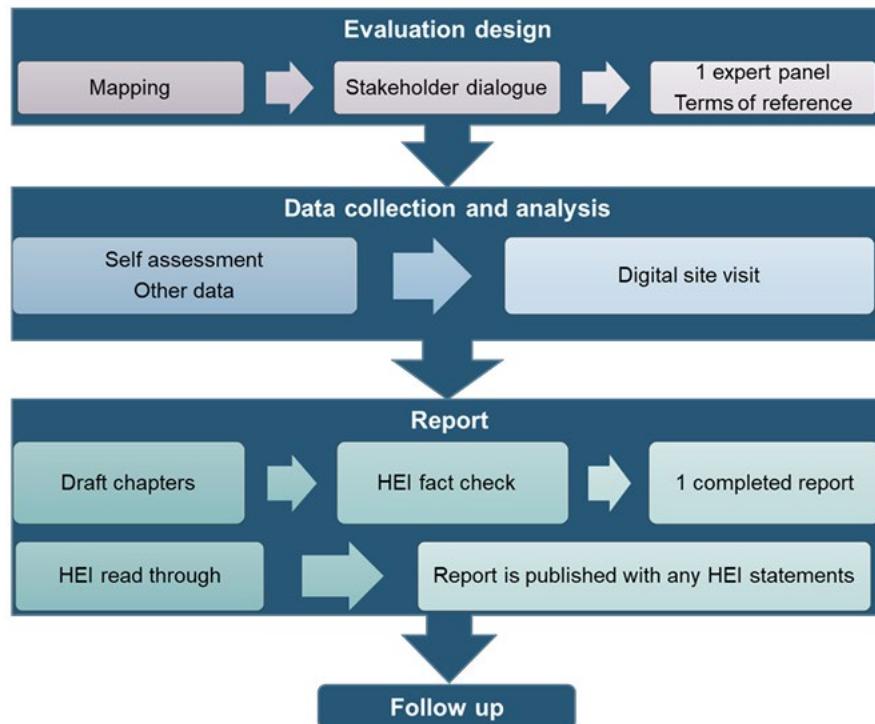
1. To what extent do the study programmes have an appropriate integration of theory and practice to achieve the intended learning outcomes?
2. What are the strengths and weaknesses in how the study programmes balance theory and practice?

Under this theme, the panel may, for example, examine:

- Programme design and organisation of practice:
  - Integration of theory and practice
  - Quality assurance of practice
- Industry connections and practice agreements [=bransjetilknytning og praksisavtaler]
- Competence of internal and external practice supervisors and their familiarity with study plans
- Supervision and learning activities:
  - Supervision model [=veiledningsmodel] with roles and responsibilities
  - Learning activities and arenas for reflection
- Assessment, progression, and quality assurance:
  - Students' learning outcomes
  - Evaluation/assessment of the media industry
  - Reflection notes [=refleksjonsnotater] and student work [= studentarbeid]
  - Examiner guidelines and other feedback

### **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
- register data from DBH
- any local student and graduate surveys
- student survey
- other documents relevant for the evaluation

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 followup 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.

| 2025                    |  |
|-------------------------|--|
| <b>May-June</b>         | NOKUT has input meetings with key stakeholders   |
| <b>September</b>        | The HEIs receive the proposal for the expert panel                                       |
| <b>October</b>          | The consultation panel discusses the proposal for the evaluation themes                  |
| <b>December</b>         | NOKUT publishes the Terms of Reference and invites HEIs to a digital information meeting |
| 2026                    |  |
| <b>February</b>         | The consultation panel discusses the proposal for the self-assessment form               |
| <b>March-May</b>        | Each HEI writes one self-assessment  |
| <b>October-December</b> | The expert panel completes digital site visits   |
| 2027                    |  |
| <b>September</b>        | The HEIs receive relevant report chapters for fact checking                              |
| <b>October</b>          | The HEIs receive the final report and can submit a public statement to NOKUT             |
| <b>November</b>         | Report launch  |
| June 2028               |  |
| <b>By November 2029</b> | Follow-up webinar  |
|                         | Written feedback on the 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 Katrine Kronen at [katrine.kronen@nokut.no](mailto:katrine.kronen@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 [katrine.kronen@nokut.no](mailto:katrine.kronen@nokut.no) with copies to [stein.erik.lid@nokut.no](mailto:stein.erik.lid@nokut.no) and [postmottak@nokut.no](mailto: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](mailto:postmottak@nokut.no) with copies to [katrine.kronen@nokut.no](mailto:katrine.kronen@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.