

Principles for NOKUT evaluations



NOKUT (Norwegian Agency for Quality Assurance in Education) is an independent government agency under the Ministry of Education and Research.



NOKUT's social mission, tasks and role as an independent expert body is described in the Universities and University Colleges Act and is further specified in Ministerial Regulations. In addition, NOKUT performs administration responsibilities on behalf of the ministry.



NOKUT's purpose is to ensure and promote quality in education by:

- supervising, providing information about, and contributing to the development of quality in Norwegian higher education and tertiary vocational education
- recognising and providing information about foreign education, as well as providing information about the opportunities for recognising foreign education and qualifications in Norway



NOKUT's work is intended to contribute to society at large having confidence in Norwegian higher education and tertiary vocational education and recognised foreign education.



Every year, around 900 experts are involved in quality assurance, evaluation, accreditation and recognition of foreign educational courses and projects on behalf of NOKUT.

For more information about our work, please go to our website: nokut.no.



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Principles for NOKUT evaluations

1 What is a NOKUT evaluation

The Act relating to universities and university colleges § 2-1 fourth paragraph and the Regulations concerning quality assurance and quality development in higher education and tertiary vocational education § 1-5 second paragraph stipulate that NOKUT shall carry out evaluations to assess the quality of Norwegian higher education. A similar wording does not currently exist in the Tertiary Vocational Education Act, but NOKUT is free to employ evaluation as a tool in its work in this area as well (cf. the Regulations concerning quality assurance and quality development § 1-6). NOKUT is also free to carry out evaluations for other purposes, such as to provide information on the educational quality in a given subject area related to vocational or higher education or to facilitate quality enhancement (cf. the Act relating to universities and university colleges § 2-1 second paragraph).

NOKUT evaluations have different purposes that are not mutually exclusive, but rather supplement each other. First, NOKUT conducts evaluations to assess the quality of higher education and higher vocational education. The comparative aspects of those evaluations may give higher education institutions the opportunity to compare their study programmes with similar study programmes at other institutions.

Furthermore, NOKUT evaluations shall generate knowledge about the quality of higher education and higher vocational education. The evaluations thus provide important information for management, academic and administrative staff and students at higher education institutions, future applicants, alumni, partners, interest organizations, the Norwegian Ministry of Education, NOKUT, and other stakeholders. In this way, the evaluations contribute to public trust and confidence in the quality of Norwegian higher education.

Finally, NOKUT conduct evaluations to help further develop the quality of higher education and higher vocational education by identifying good practices and challenges and by offering advice on how such challenges may be approached. The evaluations have a learning-oriented approach and are intended to facilitate the sharing of experiences. The advice and recommendations in NOKUT evaluation reports are thus aimed at various actors and group of actors at higher education institutions, such as management, academic and administrative staff, and students, and relevant authorities.

NOKUT evaluations usually assess the quality of education of a set of study programmes within a particular subject area. However, they may also consist of thematic assessments with a focus on one or several quality areas for study programmes across subject areas.

2 What are the principles underlying NOKUT evaluations?

NOKUT evaluations are based on principles laid down in laws and regulations for NOKUT's activities, including the Public Administration Act, the Act relating to universities and

university colleges and the Regulations concerning quality assurance and quality development in higher education and tertiary vocational education. In addition, it builds on the Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance in the European Higher Education Area (ESG), internationally recognized quality standards for evaluations, for example the DAC Quality Standards for Development Evaluation, and guidelines for the evaluation of public sector operations from the Norwegian Agency for Public and Financial Management (DFØ).

The following principles are particularly relevant to the conduct of NOKUT evaluations:

1. Evaluations must be independent

- a. The evaluation processes and results are professionally independent, cf. Act relating to universities and university colleges § 2-1 first paragraph.
- b. NOKUT shall ensure that those who carry out the evaluation are independent and impartial.

2. Evaluations must follow strict quality requirements

- a. Evaluations shall be based on reliable and relevant data sources.
- b. Evaluations shall use designs and methods that are fit for purpose.
- c. Evaluations shall be performed by persons with relevant competence.
- d. Those who perform evaluations must exercise caution in conclusions about causation.
- e. Evaluations must be efficient in terms of cost and time.
- f. NOKUT shall ensure the quality of its external evaluations.

3. Evaluation processes shall be transparent and predictable

- a. Institutions must be notified of future evaluations as early as possible.
- b. NOKUT shall set appropriate deadlines for all phases of the evaluation process.
- c. Institutions must be informed about why and how the evaluation is carried out, including which data sources and criteria are used for the evaluation and what they are expected to contribute to the evaluation process.
- d. NOKUT shall facilitate the participation and involvement of stakeholders in the evaluation process.
- e. Institutions shall be given the opportunity to raise issues of concern about the evaluation process with NOKUT.
- f. Institutions shall be given the opportunity to review the evaluation report for errors of facts, typos and misrepresentations in the draft report. NOKUT will then correct any errors before the report is published.
- g. Institutions shall be given the opportunity to submit a position statement on the evaluation report. The statements thus received are presented to the board of NOKUT and published together with the evaluation report.
- h. Institutions shall be given the right to appeal the evaluation report on the basis of errors related to NOKUT's principles for evaluation. NOKUT shall inform institutions about the possibility and procedure for filing an appeal.

4. For evaluations carried out by an expert committee, NOKUT shall ensure that the committee has an appropriate composition

- a. The expert committee shall have competence in, and experience from, the subject areas and/or thematic areas that are relevant to the evaluation.
- b. For evaluations of educational quality, at least one of the members of the committee shall be a student.
- c. For evaluations of educational quality, at least one of the members of the committee shall represent the perspective of employers/professional practitioners or a community perspective.
- c. The expert committee shall, as far as possible, have a balanced composition in terms of gender, geography, and institutional affiliation.
- d. Institutions shall be given the opportunity to comment and provide input on the composition of the committee.
- e. Institutions shall be given the opportunity to comment on the selected experts before they are appointed.

5. Evaluation results shall be publicly available

- a. All evaluations carried out by NOKUT are public, cf. Act relating to universities and university colleges § 2-1 fourth paragraph and published on NOKUT's website.
- b. NOKUT shall contribute to the dissemination of evaluation results, cf. Act relating to universities and university colleges § 2-1 fourth paragraph.
- c. NOKUT shall contribute to the follow up of evaluation results.



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