

Terms of Reference for NOKUT's Evaluation of Law

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Introduction

This document is a translation of the terms of reference for [NOKUT's evaluation of law \(2026–2028\)](#), which is published in Norwegian here: [NOKUTs evaluering av rettsvitenskapsutdanningene](#). 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
Norwegian Business School	Bachelor of law Master of law (2-year)
Molde University College	Bachelor of law
University of Agder	Law, bachelor's programme Law, master's programme (2-year)
University of Bergen	Master's programme in law (2-year) Master's programme in law (5-year)
University of Inland Norway	Bachelor of law
University of Oslo	Law - master (5-year)
University of Stavanger	Law, bachelor's programme Law, master's programme (2-year)
University of South-Eastern Norway	Bachelor of law
UiT The Arctic University of Norway	Law - master (5-year)

The nine institutions were initially informed about the evaluation in June 2025, and the evaluation will formally commence with the publication of the evaluation terms of reference in April 2026. The evaluation report is scheduled for publication in Spring 2028.

NOKUT's national study programme evaluations should comply with the [Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance in the European 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: [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 law addresses selected aspects of educational quality across the thirteen 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.

Background to the Evaluation

In line with the proposed [framework for the evaluation of research and higher education](#), it is an objective that NOKUT and the Research Council of Norway coordinate evaluations of education and research within the same disciplinary areas. In the coming period, the Research Council of Norway will be evaluating research in the humanities and social sciences. However, the Research Council conducted a separate evaluation of research in law, which was completed in autumn 2021, and the results of this evaluation are currently being followed up by the institutions.

Although law is therefore not included in the forthcoming research evaluation within the humanities and social sciences area, the results of the 2021 research evaluation remain sufficiently relevant for an evaluation of law programmes to align with the objectives of the framework. The Research Council of Norway evaluates each disciplinary area approximately every ten years, and it will therefore be many years before law is evaluated again.

Given that it will be a long time before another evaluation of law can be carried out if the framework alone is followed, we consider this to be an appropriate time to initiate such an evaluation. There are, however, additional factors that have influenced this decision. In 2015, it became possible to offer law as separate bachelor's and master's degree programmes, and in 2021 the degree-awarding powers in law were extended, allowing more institutions to offer master's degree programmes, subject to approval by NOKUT. Significant changes have therefore taken place in recent years, making this an appropriate time to conduct an evaluation.

For example, new programmes, such as the master's degree programmes at BI, UiA and UiS, are still under development. We believe it is beneficial for these programmes, at an early stage, to be able to compare themselves with and learn from institutions that have offered master's degree programmes in law for a long time. It may be easier to make necessary adjustments at an early stage than several years later. Similarly, we believe that established educational environments may benefit from comparing themselves with newer ones, which may have different structures or priorities within relevant quality areas.

We plan to include all institutions in the evaluation, including those that only offer bachelor's degree programmes. As all new institutions follow a 3+2 model with separate bachelor's and master's degree programmes, there is also a sound basis for comparison for institutions that only offer bachelor's programmes. This will similarly provide them with an opportunity to further develop through such an evaluation.

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 2 March 2026. 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:

- Tone Linn Wærstad, University of Oslo (panel chair)
- Claes Martinsson, University of Gothenburg
- Birgit Feldtmann, Aalborg University

- Knut Bergo, BI Norwegian Business School
- Stig Eidissen, The Norwegian Association of Local and Regional Authorities (KS) (employer/practitioner representative)
- Irene Dotterud-Flaa, University of Agder (student)

For more information, [see the evaluation website](#).

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:

- Tone Linn Wærstad is employed at the University of Oslo and will not participate in the committee's assessment of the study programme at UiO.
- Knut Bergo is employed at BI Norwegian Business School and will not participate in the committee's assessment of the study programmes at BI.
- Stig Eidissen holds a part-time position as Associate Professor at the School of Business at UiT The Arctic University of Norway and supervises master's students at the Faculty of Law at UiT. He will not participate in the committee's assessment of the study programme at UiT.
- Irene Dotterud-Flaa is a student at the University of Agder and will not participate in the committee's assessment of the study programmes at UiA.

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, relevant accreditation reports, relevant research articles, the JUREVAL research evaluation, and various 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

From October 2025 until February 2026, 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](#).

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 [Evaluation of Law](#).

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 the period from October 2025 to February 2026, 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.

The evaluation themes are formulated at an overarching level in order to allow consideration of the level and specific characteristics of the study programmes included in the evaluation. In this evaluation, both themes share a common focus, as both aim to examine whether the programmes provide students with skills and competences that are important for working life and/or for further studies. In the first theme (academic content), the evaluation will take a broad approach, whereas in theme two (teaching and assessment) the evaluation will examine selected elements of the programmes in greater depth and focus on a limited number of specific skills and competences.

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 law programmes, 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, studies and the labour market.

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: Academic content of the study programmes

In this theme, we will examine whether the content of the programmes effectively contributes to providing students with the skills and competences that are important for working life and/or for further studies. As law programmes may be organised in two different ways, either as integrated master's degrees or as separate bachelor's and master's degree programmes, this theme will also consider how the structure of the programmes contributes to ensuring that students acquire the competences they need. In this theme, account will be taken of the fact that the level and scope are not the same for bachelor's and master's degree programmes. For institutions offering bachelor's degrees, the evaluation will consider whether the programme provides a sound basis for further studies at master's level and to what extent the programmes themselves provide skills and competences that are relevant for working life. For institutions offering both bachelor's and master's degree programmes, the content of the two programmes will be considered in conjunction.

Why have we chosen this theme?

In the consultation meetings, many stakeholders expressed a desire to examine how well the study programmes provide students with the knowledge, skills and competences they need for entering working life or for pursuing further studies. Within this theme, legal methodology, practical skills and international law were highlighted as areas where the programmes may have potential for further development. There was also an expressed interest in examining how the programmes are structured. Points raised in this regard included the balance between law as a generalist or specialist education, what should be compulsory and what should be elective, and how legal methodology is integrated across the different programmes. The consultation panel pointed to a need to initiate a discussion on what should be common across programmes and the extent to which there is scope for distinctiveness and specialisation within law programmes. The expert panel will take the balance between elective and shared content across programmes as an overarching dimension in its discussions and in its assessments related to evaluation theme 1.

In the input meetings, digital competence and the use of artificial intelligence (AI) were also mentioned as topics that the evaluation should address. However, the challenge is that developments in this area are rapid, and that there are parallel processes in the sector addressing these issues, including the Malthe-Sørenssen Committee. We therefore consider that this is not suitable as a separate theme in the evaluation, nor as a specific type of competence to be examined, but that it may be relevant to address it under both this theme and theme 2.

Based on the input received through meetings with institutions and other stakeholders, this theme will in particular map and assess how programme content contributes to providing students with the following knowledge, skills and competences:

- Knowledge and competences in legal methodology, including the ability to apply legal methods across different subject areas and types of problem
- Knowledge and competences in international law, such as EEA law and human rights
 - including the role of international law in Norwegian law
- Skills in analysing and explaining legal issues, reasoning and solutions across different legal genres, both in writing and orally
 - Examples of this may include practical training, legal theory and case analysis, as well as more practical and labour market-relevant skills such as drafting contracts, administrative decisions, litigation/procedural work, and communicating legal issues to non-lawyers, etc.
- Ability for critical and ethical thinking, including knowledge of, and skills in, research

- Students' understanding of their role in society
- Ability to identify their own need for further knowledge and to continue developing their competences

The list is not intended to be an exhaustive account of the knowledge, skills and competences that are important in law programmes. The selection is based on input received from stakeholders and the expert panel, as well as our assessment that it provides opportunities for the further development of the study programmes following the evaluation. There are also interconnections between some of the elements in the list, such as the role of international law in Norwegian law and legal methodology, which the panel may examine in greater detail.

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

Key Questions for Theme 1

- a) To what extent is the academic content designed to ensure that students acquire the knowledge, skills and competences that are important for working life and/or further studies?
- b) What are the strengths, weaknesses and enhancement opportunities in how the study programmes, through their content, facilitate students' acquisition of the knowledge, skills and competences described in the mandate?

The purpose of the two questions is that question (a) should allow institutions and the expert panel to adopt a more overarching perspective on the content of the programmes. In connection with this question, the evaluation will also provide a basis for discussing what general competences should be common across programmes and the need for different forms of specialisation.

Answering this question requires a broad mapping and comparison of the different study programmes. In question (b), our intention is to examine the content in greater depth by focusing specifically on whether the academic content of the programmes provides students with the knowledge, skills and competences outlined above.

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

- Structure of the programmes
 - Different models for law programmes in Norway
 - Norwegian law programmes compared with equivalent programmes in Sweden and Denmark
 - Transitions between law programmes in Norway
- Academic content of bachelor's degree programmes
 - The relevance of the bachelor's degree for working life
 - Opportunities for admission to master's degree programmes
 - Progression within the bachelor's degree
- Academic content of master's degree programmes (both integrated master's degrees and the 3+2 model)
 - The relevance of the master's degree for working life
 - Progression within the master's degree
 - What is compulsory and what elective options are available (including the possibility of a multidisciplinary profile)

- How different types of knowledge, skills and competences are emphasised
 - Consider differences between institutions
 - Opportunities for comparison with Sweden and Denmark
- Research-based teaching
- Use of literature
 - The balance between the use of Norwegian and international literature
 - The balance between the use of textbooks and research literature
- The research competence of the academic staff
- The practical competence of the academic staff (experience from working life)
- English as a legal language

Evaluation theme 2: Teaching and assessment

This evaluation theme focuses on teaching and assessment methods, and on how they are designed and implemented to enable students to acquire important knowledge, competences and skills.

Under this theme, the expert panel will first consider the teaching and assessment methods used across the study programme at an overarching level, before examining in greater depth how teaching and assessment are designed and delivered to achieve the following:

- Knowledge and skills in legal methodology, including the ability to apply legal methods across different subject areas and types of legal problem
- Skills in analysing and explaining legal issues, legal reasoning and legal solutions in a precise and clear manner across different legal genres, both in writing and orally
 - The focus here will be on practical and labour market-relevant skills, such as drafting contracts, administrative decisions, advocacy and litigation, and communicating legal issues to non-lawyers.

Why have we chosen this theme?

Almost all institutions highlighted teaching and assessment as a desirable evaluation theme, arguing that these are central to student learning. The institutions raised perspectives relating both to quality and to the need for variation in teaching and assessment methods. During the input meetings, several participants specifically emphasised the importance of examining how legal methodology and practical skills are taught. Based on the input received, we have therefore chosen to explore these areas in greater depth. To shed light on this theme, the expert panel will examine the following key questions:

Key Questions for Theme 2

- To what extent are the teaching and assessment methods appropriately designed to enable students to acquire the knowledge, skills and competences required for working life and for further study?
- What are the strengths and weaknesses in the different study programmes' approaches to the teaching and assessment of students' knowledge and competences in legal methodology and practical, labour market-relevant skills?

The purpose of the two questions is that question (a) should enable institutions and the expert panel to take a more overarching view of teaching and assessment within the study programmes. Answering this question requires a broad mapping and comparison of the different programmes.

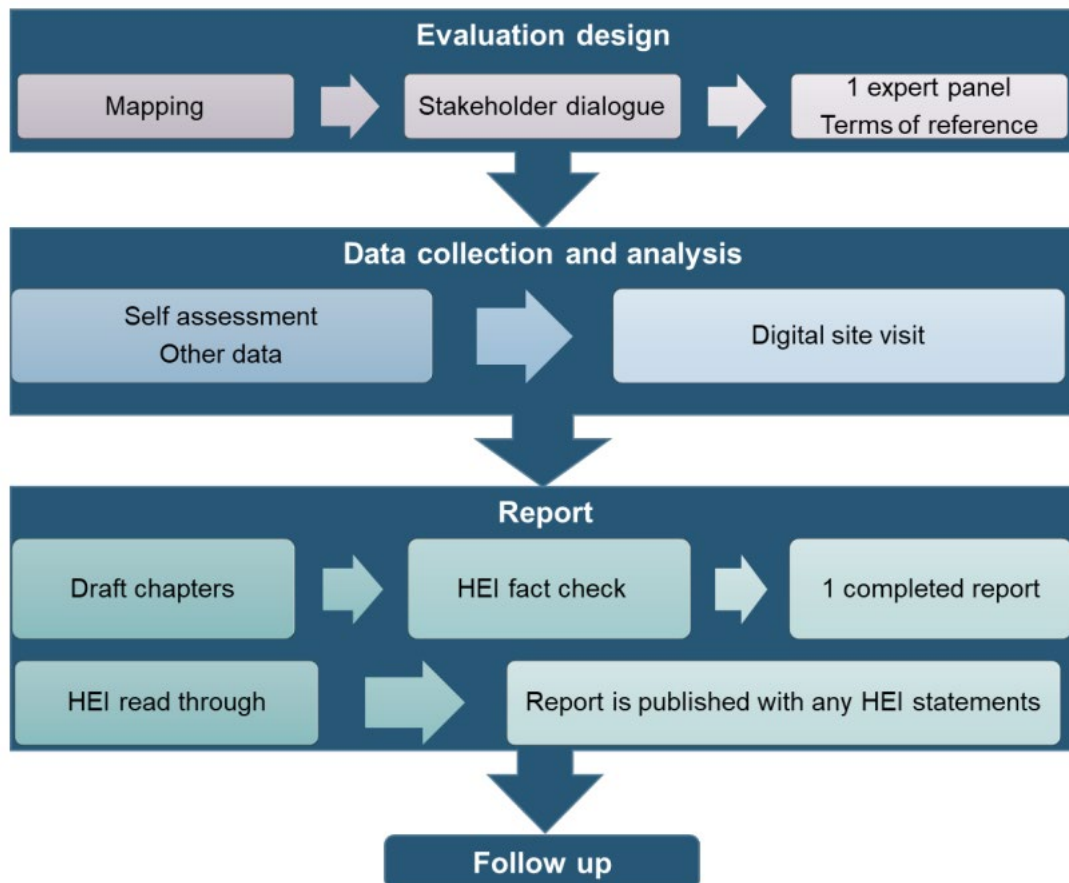
With question (b), our intention is to examine the issue in greater depth by focusing specifically on the teaching and assessment that are intended to provide students with knowledge and competences in legal methodology and practical, labour market-relevant skills.

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

- Teaching methods in general (primarily in compulsory courses)
 - Including active student learning
- Teaching methods in courses where legal methodology is a central component (both compulsory and elective courses)
- The use of practical training, practice-oriented teaching and clinical legal education, and how collaboration with the labour market is integrated into these activities
- How supervision is used within the programme, and the quality and extent of such supervision
- How feedback is provided to students, and the quality and extent of such feedback
- The balance between organised teaching and independent study
- Whether teaching provides students with knowledge and competences in legal methodology
- Experiential and labour market-relevant teaching
 - Practical training, moot courts, legal aid clinics and similar activities
- Whether teaching facilitates the development of practical, labour market-relevant skills
- Assessment methods in general (primarily in compulsory courses)
 - The administration of examinations, including access to permitted aids and resources
- Whether assessment methods measure knowledge and skills in legal methodology
- Whether assessment methods measure students' practical, labour market-relevant skills
- Grade pressure and the extent of examination resits
- How pedagogical ideas and theories are implemented in teaching
 - Whether teaching and assessment methods are informed by pedagogical and educational research and development work
- The pedagogical competence of academic staff
 - Teaching, assessment and supervision
- Staff–student ratios
- The extent of research-based teaching

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
- 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
- other such as accreditation reports, research evaluations, various studies, and research articles

Data may also be obtained from other sources where necessary. 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. We will also make use of secondary literature, such as previous reports and research articles, where relevant to the evaluation.

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

The final report will specify how NOKUT has used artificial intelligence in its work on the evaluation.

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 fourfold:

- 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.

Tentative Milestone Plan

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

Timeframe	Activity
Oct 25-Feb 2026	Stakeholder input meetings
Feb 2026	Institutions receive proposal for expert panel
March 2026	Consultation panel meeting on proposed evaluation themes
April 2026	Publish evaluation terms of reference Digital information meeting about the evaluation
May 2026	Consultation panel meeting on draft self-assessment form
June-Oct 2026	Institutions prepare their self-assessment (16-18 weeks incl. summer holiday)
Jan-March 2027	Digital site visits with expert panel and observer
March 2028	Launch of evaluation report
October 2028	Digital follow-up meeting
By March 2030	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 Magnus Strand Hauge at Magnus.Strand.Hauge@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 Magnus.Strand.Hauge@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 Magnus.Strand.Hauge@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.