



Higher Education Policy as it applies to EIE programmes in Norway

This document applies only to education at Level 6 and above of the European Qualifications Framework. All terms used in this document have the meaning specific for Norway and may have different meaning when used in any other country.

Overview of Quality Assurance

Norway has broadly two categories of higher education institution (HEI): University Colleges mainly providing vocationally oriented studies, like engineering, teacher training, various health professions etc, and Classical universities offer education in more classic academic disciplines, like natural sciences, history, languages, social sciences etc, without a specific vocation in mind. Some exceptions are medicine, dentistry and psychology. A University College is similar to a (former) Polytechnic University in UK, and to a Fachhochschule (University of Applied Sciences) in Germany.

The two types of institutions have different accreditation status:

- Universities are fully accredited, and have the right to establish academic degrees at all levels by decisions taken by the University Board.
- University Colleges are accredited to establish Bachelor degrees, but Master degrees and PhD degrees must be applied for to NOKUT for accreditation. However, a University College who is accredited to give a PhD degree in a topic is also accredited to establish Master degrees within the same topic.
- It is possible for a University College to apply to be accredited as a University, provided it has been accredited to give 4 PhD programmes. (However, this is a political decision, which now seems to be changed with the new conservative government).

Each HEI in Norway is required to have a quality assurance system checking its educational programmes. This system is evaluated by NOKUT (see next section) on a 5-10 years interval basis (see below). The process is similar to evaluation of study programmes, both in terms of process and outcome.

External Evaluation

NOKUT (Norwegian Agency for Quality Assurance in Education) (1) is the controlling authority for educational activity at all Norwegian HEIs. Through an evaluation procedure NOKUT decides on the recognition of the institutions' internal quality assurance systems and carries out checks to see if their educational provision meets national quality standards.

Thus NOKUT performs



- Accreditation of the institutional quality assurance systems
- Accreditation of new study programmes at institutions which are not fully accredited (Bachelor, Master, PhD)
- Evaluation of existing study programmes at University Colleges (Bachelor, Master, PhD) on a regular basis, usually every 5-10 years. Classical universities are not evaluated as frequently.
- Analyses and reports regarding the Norwegian Higher Education landscape

New programme creation

For accreditation of new study programmes, NOKUT evaluates an application from the HEI. The application must be written in a pre-defined structure, containing elements covering all the following themes:

- The legal organisational framework, including student involvement in the governance
- The qualifications and number of staff required
- The study programme, including description, content, assessment methods, relevance.
- The student admission rules and regulations, as well as sufficient recruitment basis to sustain a stable number of students over time.

Changes to existing programmes

All HEIs can change study programmes which they have self-accreditation for. For other study programmes NOKUT must in principle be contacted, but small changes can be done.

NOKUT also regularly evaluates existing study programmes, usually within 5-10 years intervals. The evaluation process consists of an evaluation by a committee nominated by NOKUT. The committee consists of experts in the field, as well as student representatives. The evaluation is based on

- A self-evaluation report
- An institution visit containing interviews with managers, faculty and students
- Input from employers or employer bodies regarding relevance

The evaluation can end up giving recommendations for improvements, or even withdrawal of an accreditation in the worst case.

Student influence of programme content

Students are involved in the quality assurance process on a regular basis, both externally as members of NOKUT committees, and internally as members of various bodies, as well as through evaluation of the delivery of each course.



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According to the University Law (2) every HEI shall have a Learning Environment Committee, focusing on all aspects of learning environment. In addition each study programme normally has a Study Committee with representatives from students and staff. This committee gives advice to the responsible Department regarding all aspects of the students' experience, from practical issues to how the programme is functioning, including commenting on changes.

Further, each course is normally evaluated by the participating students, giving feedback to the teacher(s) regarding how the teaching and learning is working out during the actual teaching period.

Industry influence of programme content

Industry is influencing programme content in several ways:

- Formally, externally, by being a member of NOKUT evaluation committees
- Formally, internally, by being a member of University Advisory Boards, and Faculty Advisory Boards
- Informally, by being invited to discussions with Departments and faculty
- Informally, by suggesting new studies to be started due to industry needs

Students with disabilities/special needs/unconventional needs

Nationally, the organisation Universell (3) is working to improve student access to higher education. Its roles are to contribute to:

- Improve accessibility to higher education for students with disabilities.
- Offer information and knowledge about universal design as an academic and strategic term in higher education and to implement universal design as a theme in appropriate curriculums.
- Support the Learning Environment Committees at the higher education institutions by giving advice on questions regarding organising, work processes and priorities.

According to the University Law (2) students with disabilities should be "supported as far as possible" by the HEI. However, the required academic achievement levels must not be lowered.

In practice the various HEIs will practice this requirement in different ways, depending on their resources. The Norwegian University of Science and Technology – NTNU - (4) is an example of a university with very good system for this. The most common support given is for physically challenged students, while mental problems including learning difficulties are not so



well covered. Support mostly covers access to buildings (Universal design), support during lectures for e.g. blind and deaf people, and special arrangements for exams.

The Student Welfare Organisation (e.g. in Bergen (5)) offers medical, psychological and advisory support for students. The HEIs in the relevant city are institutional members, while all enrolled students are student members.

Mobility and life-long learning processes

Norway is a full member of the EU educational system. SIU (6) is a national body administrating the national mobility schemes, and operates on behalf of the Ministry of Education and in close contact with EU and other mobility programmes worldwide.

Each HEI has an International Office responsible for taking care of all administrative aspects of student and staff mobility.

Norwegian students are urged to spend at least one semester abroad as part of their education, usually via an Erasmus exchange.

Many HEIs also offer part time studies for students who are working. Also, paid courses for employees at businesses are also available.

Information management

Institutional information is (obviously) available in Norwegian, but most institutions also have information in English, albeit to a varying extent and of varying quality. Most information is available without a login.

Any other relevant information

Add in here anything else you want to say, but keep it short please.

References:

- 1 NOKUT web page: <http://www.nokut.no/en/>
- 2 Norwegian University Law: <https://lovdata.no/> (in Norwegian)
- 3 Universell: <http://www.universell.no/english/>
- 4 NTNU special needs: <https://innsida.ntnu.no/tilrettelegging>
- 5 Student Welfare Organisation in Bergen (SiB) http://www.sib.no/en?set_language=en
- 6 SIU: <http://www.siu.no/eng>



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