

Regulations concerning NOKUT's supervision and control of the quality of Norwegian higher education

Adopted by NOKUT's Board of Governors 27 January 2011

Translation as of May 2011.

This translation is for information purposes only. Legal authenticity remains with the official Norwegian version as published in Norsk Lovtidend.

Chapter 1 General

§ 1-1 Mission and scope

These Regulations concern the supervision and control of educational provision that is governed by *The Universities and Colleges Act* of 1 April 2005, §§ 3-2 and 3-3, and *Ministerial Regulations concerning the Quality Assurance and Quality Development of Higher Education and Tertiary Vocational Education*, §§ 3-1 and 3-2, issued by the Ministry of Education and Research 1 February 2010.

The general aims of NOKUT's supervisory activities are to contribute to the assurance of a high international level of quality at providing institutions and public confidence in the quality of Norwegian higher education and tertiary vocational education. NOKUT's supervisory role includes control of the institutions' internal quality assurance systems for educational activities and their observance of standards and criteria, expressed in these Regulations, in all their educational provision.

NOKUT's supervisory activities shall be conducted in such a way that they also stimulate a continuous development of educational quality.

§ 1-2 NOKUT's supervising mechanisms

1. Institutional accreditation
2. Evaluation of institutional quality assurance systems
3. Programme accreditation
4. Supervision of current educational activity, including the revision of programme accreditation and general supervision of a less intrusive nature.

§ 1-3 The competence of external experts

1. NOKUT appoints panels of external experts for initial accreditations, for revisions of study programmes and institutions and for evaluations of institutions' quality assurance systems.
2. The institution has the right to comment on NOKUT's proposed panel of experts before the panel is appointed.
3. General demands concerning experts:

- a. Experts must not have a work relation with the institution or the programme concerned, or indeed any other disqualifying connection.
- 4. Expert competence for the accreditation of study programmes:
 - a. Experts must have competence related to, and experience from, a similar type of study programme. At least one of the experts must have formal competence at a higher level than the programme under accreditation.
 - b. When programmes of the second or third cycle are accredited the expert panel must include international competence.
 - c. When programmes of the third cycle are accredited a doctoral student must be included in the panel.
- 5. Expert competence for the revision of accredited study programmes:
 - a. Experts must have competence related to, and experience from, a similar type of study programme. At least one of the experts must have formal competence at a higher level than the programme under accreditation.
 - b. The expert panel must include relevant international competence.
 - c. A student (or doctoral student) must be included in the panel.
- 6. Expert competence for the accreditation of institutions and the revision of accredited institutions:
 - a. The panel must include leadership experience from an institution on at least the same level as the institution under accreditation.
 - b. The panel must include at least one member connected with a relevant foreign institution.
 - c. The panel must include one expert with competence from community or business arenas.
 - d. The panel must include one student with experience from an institutional board, management or other major representative function.
 - e. At least one of the panel members must have the competence of full professor when the accreditation concerns university or specialised university status. For accreditations concerning university college status the corresponding demand is associate professor.
- 7. Expert competence for the evaluation of quality assurance systems:
 - a. All members of the expert panel must have experience from quality assurance work or evaluation processes.
 - b. At least one of the panel members must have leadership experience from a higher education institution.
 - c. At least one of the panel members must be connected with a relevant foreign institution.
 - d. The panel must include a student with experience from an institutional board, management or other major representative function.
 - e. At least one of the panel members must have the competence of full professor.

§ 1-4 Applications for accreditation

1. Applications for the accreditation of study programmes are processed on an annual basis, following two defined deadlines.
2. If NOKUT adopts new deadlines for applications, these will be announced on NOKUT's website no less than 6 months before a new deadline becomes operative.

3. In special cases, when an application does not meet set requirements, NOKUT may impose a quarantine period of up to 2 years for similar applications from the same institution. The institution will be notified in advance when a quarantine ruling is imminent.

§ 1-5 Duty of information

1. The institution must provide requested information within a given deadline. NOKUT's decisions are based on information that has been presented inside the deadline.

Chapter 2 Institutional accreditation

The regulations in this chapter define quality standards that are required for the accreditation of institutions in the categories of university college, specialised university and university respectively. The same standards apply for the supervision of formerly accredited institutions, ref. Ch. 5.

The standards, given in bold type, have been issued by the Ministry of Education and Research in their *Ministerial Regulations concerning the Quality Assurance and Quality Development of Higher Education and Tertiary Vocational Education*. NOKUT has defined the supplementary criteria.

The criteria do not exhaustively express the standards. A standard is met when all the related criteria are met, while a comprehensive assessment must also demonstrate the full achievement of the standard. Accreditation depends on all the standards being met.

§ 2-1 Standards and criteria for accreditation as university college

§ 2-1 a) Higher education, research and academic or artistic development work, including the dissemination of knowledge, must be the institution's primary activity.

1. The institution's primary activity must be clearly distinguishable from other activities.
2. Governance, internal regulations, appeals board, learning environment committee and quality assurance system must be in accordance with directions laid down in the Universities and Colleges Act.

§ 2-1 b) The institution's internal organisation and infrastructure must be adapted to its tasks and activities.

1. The institution must be organised in a way that reflects and supports its activities.
2. The institution must have satisfactory administrative and information services for its students.
3. The institution must have satisfactory physical and spatial resources and facilities (rooms, equipment, library, etc.), adapted to its primary activities, and provide a suitable learning and working environment for students and staff.
4. The institution must have satisfactory routine processes for the establishing of new educational provision and for the revision of established provision.
5. The institution must have satisfactory routine processes for the competence development of its staff, related to the institution's primary activities.
6. The institution must provide good conditions for the operations of a student democracy and facilitate the active participation of students in decision-making processes.

§ 2-1 c) The institution must conduct research and academic or artistic development work related to its subject areas.

1. The institution's research and development work must be carried out in interaction with its educational activities.
2. Academic publishing must be at the same level as that of discipline communities in institutions of a comparable type.
3. Development work must be documented.

§ 2-1 d) The institution must have permanent staff who conduct R&D work in the core disciplines of its educational provision.

1. The institution must have sufficient academic staff to conduct teaching, research and development activities in its subject areas.
2. The institution's staff must have a relevant competence profile.

§ 2-1 e) The institution must have at least one educational programme with accredited right to award a first cycle degree, having also graduated first cycle candidates for at least two years.

1. The institution must have stable recruitment of new students and satisfactory candidate production.

§ 2-1 f) The institution must be connected with national and international networks related to higher education, research and academic or artistic development work.

1. The institution must participate actively in at least one national and one international cooperative network, related to its primary activities.

§ 2-2 Standards and criteria for accreditation as specialised university

§ 2-2 a) Higher education, research and academic or artistic development work, including the dissemination of knowledge, must be the institution's primary activity.

1. The institution's primary activity must be clearly distinguishable from other activities.
2. Governance, internal regulations, appeals board, learning environment committee and quality assurance system must be in accordance with directions laid down in the Universities and Colleges Act.

§ 2-2 b) The institution's internal organisation and infrastructure must be adapted to its tasks and activities.

1. The institution must be organised in a way that reflects and supports its activities.
2. The institution must have satisfactory administrative and information services for its students.
3. The institution must have satisfactory physical and spatial resources and facilities (rooms, equipment, library, etc.), adapted to its primary activities, and provide a suitable learning and working environment for students and staff.
4. The institution must have satisfactory routine processes for the establishing of new educational provision and for the revision of established provision.
5. The institution must have satisfactory routine processes for the competence development of its staff, related to the institution's primary activities.

6. The institution must provide good conditions for the operations of a student democracy and facilitate the active participation of students in decision-making processes.

§ 2-2 c) The institution must have stable research and academic or artistic development activities of high quality related to its subject areas.

1. The institution's research and development work must be carried out in interaction with its educational activities.
2. The amount and level of academic publishing must be equivalent to that of comparable universities or specialised universities.
3. Development work must be documented and of high quality.

§ 2-2 d) The institution must have permanent staff who conduct R&D work in the disciplines that are included in the institution's educational provision.

1. The institution must have sufficient academic personnel to conduct teaching, research and development activities in its subject areas.
2. The institution's staff must have a relevant competence profile.

§ 2-2 e) The institution must have at least one accredited educational programme of at least five years' duration, of a consecutive or integrated type, that gives the right to award a second cycle degree, having also graduated second cycle candidates for at least two years.

1. The institution must have stable recruitment of new students and satisfactory candidate production.

§ 2-2 f) The institution must have a stable activity in its education of research candidates and the right to award doctoral degrees, or alternatively an accredited comparable stipend programme for artistic development work, cf. § 3-1, third article.

1. The institution must have stable recruitment of a reasonable number of research students and candidates who achieve third cycle qualifications within reasonable time.

§ 2-2 g) The institution must be connected with national and international networks within higher education, research and academic or artistic development work, also participating in national collaborative arrangements concerning research education or corresponding stipend programmes in the arts.

§ 2-3 Standards and criteria for accreditation as university

§ 2-3 a) Higher education, research and academic or artistic development work, including the dissemination of knowledge, must be the institution's primary activity.

1. The institution's primary activity must be clearly distinguishable from other activities.
2. Governance, internal regulations, appeals board, learning environment committee and quality assurance system must be in accordance with directions laid down in the Universities and Colleges Act.

§ 2-3 b) The institution's internal organisation and infrastructure must be adapted to its tasks and activities.

1. The institution must be organised in a way that reflects and supports its activities.
2. The institution must have satisfactory administrative and information services for its

students.

3. The institution must have satisfactory physical and spatial resources and facilities (rooms, equipment, library, etc.), adapted to its primary activities, and provide a suitable learning and working environment for students and staff.
4. The institution must have satisfactory routine processes for the establishing of new educational provision and for the revision of established provision.
5. The institution must have satisfactory routine processes for the competence development of its staff, related to the institution's primary activities.
6. The institution must provide good conditions for the operations of a student democracy and facilitate the active participation of students in decision-making processes.

§ 2-3 c) The institution must have stable research and academic or artistic development activities of high quality related to their subject areas.

1. The institution's research and development work must be carried out in interaction with its educational activities.
2. The amount and level of academic publishing must be equivalent to that of comparable universities.
3. Development work must be documented and of high quality.

§ 2-3 d) The institution must have permanent research and teaching staff in the disciplines that are included in the institution's educational provision.

1. The institution must have sufficient academic personnel to conduct teaching, research and development activities in its subject areas
2. The institution's staff must have a relevant competence profile.

§ 2-3 e) The institution must have at least five accredited programmes of at least five years' duration, of the consecutive or integrated type, that give the right to award a second cycle degree and first cycle programmes in several different subject areas. The institution must have produced first and second cycle candidates in most of these subject areas.

1. The institution must have stable recruitment of new students and satisfactory candidate production.

§ 2-3 f) The institution must have stable activity in its education of research candidates and the right to award doctoral degrees in at least four subject areas. Two of these must have significant relevance for regional developmental purposes, while also being nationally relevant. One of the four subject areas may be replaced by an accredited stipend programme for artistic development work.

1. At least two of the institution's doctoral programmes must have stable recruitment of a reasonable number of research students, as well as candidates who achieve third cycle qualifications within reasonable time.
2. For other doctoral programmes the institution must have admitted a reasonable number of research students who for at least two years have had reasonable progress in their doctoral studies.

§ 2-3 g) The institution must be connected with national and international networks within higher education, research and academic or artistic development work, also participating in national collaborative arrangements concerning research education or corresponding stipend programmes in the arts.

Chapter 3 Evaluation of the institutions' quality assurance systems for educational provision

The quality assurance system must produce the information the institution needs in order to be able to assess the quality of its own educational provision. Quality assurance must include all courses and programmes, provided on campus or elsewhere, covering all its elements and all modes of delivery.

The institution must apply defined routine processes in an annual cycle, producing, assessing and making use of information about each separate course and programme, as well as the educational activity in general. The system must contribute to an institutional assessment of educational outcomes, the detection of sub-standard quality, the implementation of enhancement measures and continuous development work. Significant information and assessments must be adequately documented.

The institution designs and calibrates its system, including the use of data and the generation of documentation, as it finds adequate in relation to its own size, academic profile and other local characteristics. (Ref. *Ministerial Regulation Concerning the Quality Assurance and Quality Development of Higher Education and Tertiary Vocational Education* of 1 February 2010, § 2-1.)

§ 3.1 NOKUT's evaluation

1. External experts appointed by NOKUT will assess the institution's continuous and systematic work to ensure and enhance the quality of its educational provision.
2. The experts must undertake a rounded assessment of the quality assurance system and the institution's active use of it, where the criteria expressed in § 3-1.3 are seen as an integrated whole, ref. *Ministerial Regulation Concerning the Quality Assurance and Quality Development of Higher Education and Tertiary Vocational Education* of 1 February 2010, § 2-2.
3. The institutions' quality assurance systems will be evaluated with reference to the following set of criteria:
 - a. Stimulation of quality work and quality culture**

NOKUT must assess whether the quality assurance system promotes broad participation in quality work among staff and students and their representative assemblies, whether it stimulates quality work characterised by openness, commitment and a will to improve, and whether information and assessments are documented and accessible.
 - b. Aims, plan and links to management**

NOKUT must assess whether the quality assurance system is described in a way that clearly identifies the goals, processes, agents and arenas that are included, whether it is linked to management and decision-making bodies at different levels, whether the distribution of tasks and responsibilities is defined, and whether provision is made for

the system itself to be regularly evaluated and developed with the institution's needs in mind.

c. Documented information of educational quality

NOKUT must assess whether the quality assurance of all operative courses or programmes is based on information that is systematically retrieved from several sources, and whether the system has defined processes for the launch of new provision.

d. Analysis, assessment and reporting

NOKUT must assess whether the information that is generated by the system is analysed, assessed and adequately presented to responsible management and relevant decision-making bodies.

e. Use of information for quality improvement

NOKUT must assess whether improvement measures are routinely contemplated and implemented on the basis of analysed information from the quality assurance system. This concerns both the correction of revealed instances of non-conformance with accreditation standards and measures aimed at further quality enhancement.

Chapter 4 Programme accreditation

Regulations in this chapter express quality standards for the accreditation of new provision. At the same time, they are reference criteria for control assessments (revisions) of established provision, ref. Chapter 5. The regulations concern provision in the first cycle (Bachelor level, 30 – 180/240 ECTS credits), provision in the second cycle (Master level, 90/120/300 ECTS credits), and provision in the third cycle (Ph.D. level, including institutionally based stipend programmes for artistic development work).

Related criteria are thematically grouped from § 4-1 to § 4-6. All criteria carry the same weight and must be met, following an assessment of what makes up the lowest acceptable level.

For the accreditation of the institution's own provision §§ 4-1 to 4-4 apply.

For the accreditation of joint degrees §§ 4-1 and 4-5 apply.

For the accreditation of participation in cross-institutional stipend programmes § 4-6 applies.

§ 4-1 Basic conditions for accreditation

1. Demands expressed in the Universities and Colleges Act concerning the following arrangements will be assessed:
 - a. Internal regulations and governance
 - b. Appeals Committee
 - c. Learning Environment Committee
 - d. Educational Plan
 - e. Diplomas and Diploma Supplement
 - f. Quality assurance system
2. Demands expressed in national curriculum frameworks, where such apply, and in relevant Regulations issued by the Ministry of Education and Research must be met.

3. Estimates of student recruitment, as relevant in relation to the establishing of a satisfactory learning environment and stable provision, must be presented.
4. A plan of the students' expected workload must be presented.
5. When part(s) of the programme is taught outside the degree-awarding institution formally agreed documents must be in place to regulate issues of importance for the students.

§ 4-2 Study plan

1. The educational provision must have an adequate title.
2. The provision must be described with reference to learning outcomes:
 - a. Learning outcomes must be expressed in terms of a candidate's intended achievements in knowledge, skills and general competence, as related to the National Qualifications Frameworks.
 - b. The provision's relevance for working life and/or continued studies must be clearly expressed.
 - c. Content and design of the provision must be satisfactorily related to the description of learning outcomes.
 - d. Teaching and student work must be suited for the achievement of intended learning outcomes, as expressed in the plan.
 - e. Exams and other means of testing must be suited for the assessment of the students' attainment of intended learning outcomes, as expressed in the plan.
3. The provision must have satisfactory links to research and academic and/or artistic development work, adapted to its level, volume and other characteristics.
4. The provision must be attached to student exchange and internationalisation arrangements, adapted to its level, volume and other characteristics.

§ 4-3 Discipline community/-ies attached to the provision

1. The composition, size and collective competence of the relevant discipline community/-ies must be adapted to the provision as the plan describes it and adequate for the conduct of relevant research and development work.
2. At least 50 per cent of the academic FTEs allotted to the provision must be members of the institution's own academic staff. Of these, professors (full or associate) must be represented among those who teach the core elements of the provision. For the different cycles specific demands apply:
 - a. For first cycle provision, at least 20 per cent of the relevant discipline community/-ies must have competence as professors (full or associate).
 - b. For second cycle provision, at least 10 per cent of the relevant discipline community/-ies must be full professors, and an additional 40 per cent associate professors.
 - c. For third cycle provision, PhD or stipend programme for artistic development work, at least 50 per cent of the relevant discipline community/-ies must be full professors, and the rest associate professors.
3. The discipline community/-ies must be active in research and/or development work. For the different cycles specific demands apply:
 - a. For first cycle provision, documented results at a level that is satisfactory in relation to the content and level of the provision.

- b. For the second cycle, documented results at a high level of quality.
 - c. For third cycle provision, documented results at a high international level of quality, with satisfactory disciplinary breadth.
4. The discipline community/-ies must participate actively in relevant national and international networks and collaborative arrangements/projects.
 5. For provision with vocational practice/internship arrangements the discipline community/-ies and the practice teachers must have relevant experience from the practice field.

§ 4-4 Support functions and infrastructure

1. The institution must have rooms, library services, administrative and technical services, ICT resources and working conditions for their students that are satisfactory and adapted to the provision as described in the study plan and the number of enrolled students.

§ 4-5 Additional regulations concerning the accreditation of single modules that are constituent parts of a joint degree programme

1. It must be clearly defined which part(s) of the programme is/are the responsibility of each cooperating institution.
2. There must be satisfactory procedures in place for the quality assurance of the programme as a whole.
3. The programme's constituent parts must make up a whole, as seen in relation to the programme's level and intended learning outcomes.
4. The part(s) that are provided by the Norwegian institution(s) must meet the standards and criteria for programme accreditation defined in § 4-1 to § 4-4.

§ 4-6 Specific regulations concerning institutional participation in cross-institutional stipend programmes in art subjects

1. The institution's participation in the programme must be formally regulated and documented.
2. Participation, roles and responsibilities must be explicitly described.
3. The institution's as well as the students' rights and obligations must be clearly described in a specific contract form.
4. The size and competence of the relevant discipline community must be adapted to the teaching, student counselling and development work that is needed in order to ensure and enhance the artistic quality and level of the programme.
5. The institution must actively conduct relevant artistic development work with sufficient breadth and at a high international level of quality in connection with its participation in the programme.
6. The institution must demonstrate how the students' participation in the programme is integrated into the activities of the relevant discipline community and its development work.
7. The institution must actively participate in the cross-institutional elements of the programme.

8. The institution must be able to offer its students the necessary compulsory and optional courses inside its own area of specialisation.

Chapter 5 Supervision and control of established activities

Supervision and control of existing activities may entail the revision of programme or institutional accreditations, as well as measures of a less intrusive nature, ref. § 1-6 in *Ministerial Regulations Concerning the Quality Assurance and Quality Development of Higher Education and Tertiary Vocational Education*, issued by the Ministry of Education and Research. In these (NOKUT's) regulations the term 'general supervision' refers to measures that do not include revision.

§ 5-1 The basis of NOKUT's supervision and control of established activities

1. NOKUT is entitled in its own right to carry out supervision of all established activities in Norwegian higher education, regardless of whether the activities are accredited or established through an institution's self-accrediting powers.
2. The supervision of established activities is carried out with reference to quality demands expressed in the standards and criteria at the programme and institutional levels respectively, ref. chapters 2 and 4. In addition, the supervision will include an assessment of the institution's ability to sustain its activity and produce satisfactory documented results.

§ 5-2 General supervision

1. General supervision may be to request specified information from an institution, to launch a dialogue with an institution, to ask for certain explanatory comments, or to issue a time limit for the correction of a specified failure to comply with quality requirements. The choice of measures to be applied will be decided in each individual case.
2. Institutions that receive a positive accreditation decision from NOKUT must return a brief report after three years, explaining how the activity has actually developed compared with the (prognostic) description that was given in the application for accreditation.

§ 5-3 Revision of accreditation

1. Revision of accreditation may be launched with no specific pretext or as a result of general supervision, ref. § 5-2.
2. Revision of accreditation will always take place on the background of an assessment carried out by a panel of experts, ref. § 1-3.
3. If NOKUT finds that a specified provision or an institution no longer meets the accreditation demands the institution must be given a reasonable time limit, never exceeding two – 2 – years, to carry out corrective measures.
4. If NOKUT makes a decision to withdraw the accreditation of a specified provision the institution must without delay withdraw the provision. The institution must find ways that make it possible for the students to complete the programme. The measures must be accepted by NOKUT.

5. If NOKUT makes a decision to withdraw the accreditation of an institution, NOKUT's assessment and decision must be passed on to the Ministry of Education and Research for a final decision.

Chapter 6 Final regulations

§ 6-1 Commencement and transition provisions

1. These regulations are enforced with immediate effect.
2. Concerning the description of learning outcomes, activities that were established before these regulations take effect are given a transition period until 31 December 2012 for programme descriptions to be adapted to demands expressed in § 4-2.2.
3. Regulations concerning standards and criteria for programme and institutional accreditation in higher education of 25 January 2006 are cancelled.