

# **HOW DID THINGS TURN OUT?**

**The National Agency for Higher Education's quality evaluations 2004**

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# Foreword

Four years of the six-year quality evaluation system have now been completed. The fifth year of evaluation is in full swing and preparations are being made for the sixth and final year. At the same time ideas about the organisation of quality evaluations from 2006 are beginning to take shape. An important platform for the future has been laid by all the appraisals now completed – an extensive and impressive undertaking. During the period 2001-2004 about 1,000 programmes have been reviewed by almost 500 assessors. To this must be added all the contributions of students, postgraduates, teachers, those responsible for quality at the higher education institutions and their vice-chancellors as well as the staff of the National Agency for Higher Education.

International developments affect higher education in Sweden and evaluations of its quality. The next meeting arranged in connection with the Bologna Process, at Bergen in May 2005, will be discussing a proposal for the quality assurance of both programmes at higher education institutions in Europe and the evaluating agencies. The National Agency has taken a very active role in formulating the proposal that will be submitted to the Council of Ministers in Bergen. Other decisions that affect the future are the impending amendment of the Degree Ordinance which the government plans to submit to the Riksdag in May 2005.

In previous years, these annual summaries have presented three key terms: cooperation, the adoption of profiles and concentration, concepts that indicate the direction of the changes that are desirable in higher education in Sweden. This report provides examples of how these concepts can be applied in practice, something that the National Agency intends to return to in specific thematic evaluation.

The many programmes evaluated during 2004 included the new teacher training programmes, which had by no means taken shape when the evaluation was undertaken. Particular attention is paid to these programmes in this report. This also applies to programmes in languages, where the evaluations reveal that today all languages, apart from English, have to be regarded as small languages in the sense that they attract few students and have limited educational settings. In this areas it is gratifying to be able to point to examples of initiatives that have been taken to enable cooperation and also concentration.

An exciting period lies ahead of us. It is a challenge to be able to collaborate on Sweden's behalf in the international development of higher education and quality assurance. The National Agency looks forward to productive cooperation in these areas.

I would also like to take this opportunity to thank the International Advisory Board, whose constructive proposals have for the last five years helped us to develop our quality evaluations.

This summary is included in the annual report required of the National Agency for Higher Education by the government and has been discussed by its board.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Sigbrit Franke". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style with a prominent initial "S".

Sigbrit Franke  
Chancellor

## Summary

After about 160 assessors have been involved during 2004 in over 300 evaluations of various subjects and vocational qualifications, it is possible to assert that the standard of higher education in Sweden is good.

At the same time this year's evaluations have revealed major problems in one or two areas. One of these is teacher-training, where serious shortcomings have been identified. Here rapid measures are required both from the government and local authorities and from the higher education institutions. The National Agency itself intends to take further action in the form of specific reviews and studies and will, after only two years, undertake a renewed evaluation. The other area is languages. On completion of the 2004 evaluations virtually all programmes in languages had been appraised. The pattern that emerges is that even languages like French and German can now be characterised as small languages, or in other words language subjects with few students and limited educational settings. In 2003, the National Agency for Higher Education already indicated that a national language policy was needed, and this can now be seen to be more urgent. At the same time it can be noted that the higher education institutions are taking initiatives involving collaboration, adopting profiles and concentration where languages are concerned.

The Bologna Process, in other words joint efforts to ensure that European education will be better coordinated and internationally more competitive, is continuing and its impact is becoming increasingly apparent. This applies both to the degree system and evaluation of higher education. One proposal from the European Association for Quality Assurance in Higher Education (ENQA) contains principles for both the internal quality assurance of the higher education institutions and also external evaluation, together with how the evaluating agencies (such as the National Agency) can assure and develop the quality of their own operations. This proposal suggests that the evaluating agencies should apply for recognition. For some considerable time the National Agency for Higher Education has fulfilled the criteria for accreditation as an evaluating agency, but it is now drafting an official application to ENQA.

A special questionnaire survey shows that the assessors appointed by the National Agency consider that its evaluation model functions well. At special seminars arranged with undergraduate and postgraduate student assessors the same opinion is expressed. Both the seminars and the questionnaire survey provide important information on which to base the design of the quality evaluation system that will succeed the current one in 2007. Another important consideration will be what is happening within the framework of the Bologna Process.

The National Agency for Higher Education has sketched a concept for the future quality evaluation system that has been discussed with both vice-chan-

cellors and those responsible for quality, who have reacted positively. This draft includes audits of the way in which the higher education institutions' own quality control and quality development systems enhance quality, a smaller number of evaluations of subjects and programmes based on monitoring data, thematic evaluations, appraisals of "particularly eminent educational settings" and assessment of applications for entitlement to award degrees.

## Evaluations of subjects and programmes 2004

During 2004 a very large number of evaluations of subjects and programmes have been completed, which means that more appraisals have been made than in any previous year. For instance 339 undergraduate and postgraduate programmes have been evaluated compared to 2003 when the total was 195. Several language subjects were included among the 2004 evaluations: English, German, French, Spanish, Romanian, Italian and Portuguese. There are now only two language groups left to be evaluated: Finno-Ugric languages and East Asian languages. These subjects will be evaluated during 2005. During the years that have elapsed it has become increasingly clear that the problems of the small languages must be resolved. For this reason, this report contains an overall analysis of what has been observed during the quality evaluations of the language subjects undertaken by the National Agency.

Two very extensive evaluations conducted during 2004 have involved the discipline of education, on the one hand, and programmes leading to the award of teaching qualifications on the other. The evaluation of education is the most extensive up to now in terms of the number of programmes – it comprises 82 appraisals of undergraduate and postgraduate programmes. The evaluation of teacher-training programmes was undertaken both as part of the round of evaluations assigned to the National Agency and also in order to review the reform in teacher training implemented in 2001. This evaluation attracted great interest, during the evaluation process and when its report was finally published. Another report published during 2004 dealt with a number of local programmes – personnel and working life programmes at twelve higher education institutions.

The following subjects and vocational qualifications were included in the evaluations made during 2004:<sup>1</sup>

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1. The evaluations were made during 2004. All of the reports but three were, however, published in 2005 (for the reports see the References). Evaluation of undergraduate programmes and postgraduate programmes in a subject at one higher education institution is counted as two appraisals.

Table I: Evaluations and numbers of programmes appraised

<b>Evaluation</b>	<b>Number of appraisals</b>
Archive science, library and information science, history of books and libraries, information and media science, culture care and museology	20
Astronomy, physics, hydrology, meteorology	38
Dentistry, odontology	8
Dietetics, domestic science, nutritional science, nutritional economics, culinary arts, clinical nutrition and nutrition	16
Dutch	2
Education, Teaching qualification for folk high schools	82
English	34
French	19
German	18
History of ideas and sciences	14
Italian, Portuguese, Romanian	11
Personnel and working life programmes	12
Philosophy	26
Spanish	14
Teaching qualifications	25
<b>Total</b>	<b>339</b>

## **What do the evaluation reports reveal?**

### **Archive, library and media – young subjects that need more intensive postgraduate teaching**

What characterises all of these subjects, with the exception of library and information science at Borås/Göteborg is that they exist in limited and vulnerable settings. The panel of assessors addresses its advice to collaborate to museology and archive science in particular. On the other hand praise is given to those responsible for library and information science for the establishment of a Nordic graduate school and for the regular conferences arranged in the subject.

Lecturers with research qualifications are in short supply in most of these subject areas, due in part to the fact that they are new and there are few postgraduate studentships. Intensifying postgraduate teaching is therefore an important concern for museology in Umeå, cultural care in Göteborg, history of books and libraries in Lund and library and information science in Lund, Umeå and Uppsala. This enhancement is important both from the perspective of the quality of the subjects and their research links and also in terms of labour market needs. A matter of particular concern is the situation for undergraduate programmes at master's level in information and media science at Linköping.

The National Agency for Higher Education questions the entitlement to award master's degrees for the programme at Linköping on the grounds that the subject lacks structure and teachers with research qualifications.

### **Astronomy, physics, hydrology, meteorology – quality varies**

The quality of the programmes evaluated varies but is, on the whole, good. At the higher education institutions with sufficiently large educational and research settings, as a rule undergraduate programmes cover the discipline well and provide a sound basis for continued study at postgraduate level. From an international perspective Swedish postgraduate programmes are without exception of good standard. Men predominate in programmes in physics in Sweden. Only 10 per cent of the teachers are women and during the period 1996-2003 the proportion of women awarded PhD's was 16 per cent. Even though there is awareness at the higher education institutions that this imbalance between women and men is unacceptable, there is some degree of resignation about the possibility of bringing about changes. However, Lund University has adopted the principle that whenever a woman is appointed to a postgraduate studentship, if the total percentage of women postgraduates is less than 20 per cent, central funding is made available to enable the appointment of another woman postgraduate. Gender equality is also affected by whether the programmes are in themselves gender equal, as well as by the attitudes to gender equality of the staff and students. These issues are rarely discussed and it is therefore recommended that they should be raised by all those involved in the programmes.

The National Agency for Higher Education is questioning the entitlement of Gävle University College to award bachelor's degrees in physics because of the lack of links with research. The entitlement of Jönköping University College to award bachelor's degrees is called into question because of the lack of mathematical content in its programme and for its lack of disciplinary depth in physics. The entitlement of Örebro University to award master's degrees in physics is called into question because of the lack of progressivity in the subject and lack of teachers and supervisors with research qualifications. This means that Örebro University also lacks the prerequisites to enable postgraduate programmes in physics to be offered.

### **Dietetics and nutritional studies – inter-disciplinary programmes on food and nutrition**

Programmes in dietetics offer vocational qualifications and other programmes in nutrition (domestic science, nutritional science, nutritional economics, culinary arts, clinical nutrition, nutrition) have vocational links. All of these subjects have been through the process of 'academisation' and several of them have made a great deal of progress in establishing links with research. Particular mention is made by the panel of the Karolinska Institute's programme in nutrition for its strong basis in research and its excellent international overview. Programmes in dietetics at the Universities of Göteborg, Umeå and Uppsala also maintain high standards and attract large numbers of applicants.

However, many programmes still suffer from a lack of teachers with PhD's and research qualifications. Outside the medical faculties, postgraduate pro-

grammes in the field of nutrition are limited. The panel therefore urges greater cooperation.

Several of the subjects take a very broad interdisciplinary approach that encompasses the humanities, social sciences, natural sciences and medicine. While a broad perspective is required in an area like food and nutrition, it can be difficult to attain theoretical and methodological depth. Criticism is expressed of Örebro University's Restaurant Academy at Grythyttan on this account and it is recommended to enhance its academic basis and identity before introducing a master's programme.

### **English – on the whole a positive development**

English is the predominant foreign language in Sweden. It is also the largest language subject in higher education. The demands made at the more advanced levels in undergraduate programmes have tightened in recent years. Degree papers testify to greater methodological and theoretical awareness and can stand up to international comparison. Standards are high at the universities and also at many of the university colleges. At Blekinge Institute of Technology, for instance, advanced undergraduate programmes and postgraduate programmes are offered and the college's regular graduate school sessions in English literature attract researchers from all over Sweden and abroad.

The most serious problem facing undergraduate programmes lies in the variations in the proficiency of beginner students, above all in writing skills, and this is reflected at more advanced levels as well. This appears to be a particular problem in teacher-training programmes.

The productivity of postgraduate programmes seems to have risen at most of the universities. During the last five years twice as many PhD's were awarded in all as in the corresponding period ten years ago. Numbers vary, however, between institutions. Together the universities of Lund and Uppsala account for more than half of the total. On the whole, postgraduate programmes function effectively. However, the situation at Örebro is disturbing. Because it lacks a sufficiently critical and creative setting, Örebro University is not considered to possess the prerequisites for postgraduate programmes in English.

### **Philosophy – a group of survey subjects dominated by men**

Subjects within the area of philosophy function today mainly as ancillary subjects or survey courses. There is no shortage of students but most of them study for only one or at the most two semesters. This means that educational settings at the third and fourth semester levels (C & D levels) and to an even greater extent at postgraduate level are limited and insufficiently critical and creative. The lack of cooperation further impoverishes already vulnerable settings. Greater cooperation in Sweden and with the other Nordic countries is one proposal to enable the higher education institutions to make improvements.

The philosophy subjects are dominated by men, this applies to teachers and to undergraduate and postgraduate students. The proportion of women taking postgraduate programmes in Stockholm is the lowest in Sweden. Teaching resources are unevenly distributed nationally, so that at certain places there is overcapacity. At others the teachers have heavy workloads with many substitute, hourly-paid and temporary appointments.

Stockholm and Lund offer the largest and most effective research settings.

Little attention is paid by the departments to problems such as the failure of students to complete their programmes and the need to raise enrolment figures. The programmes are urged to improve their information to students to enhance recruitment. The panel of assessors also points out that the volume of teaching is very low when seen from an international perspective. The panel considers that raising the number of taught hours is the most urgent measure needed to improve the quality of undergraduate programmes. Results, in the form of completion of undergraduate programmes, are on the whole relatively poor, with one or two exceptions.

In exercising its supervisory role, the National Agency for Higher Education will pay special attention to compliance with the individual curricula for postgraduate students at Göteborg University.

### **French – has lost ground**

French is one of the traditional school languages but in recent years it has lost ground, both in the school system and undergraduate programmes in higher education. The number of students taking advanced programmes is small and there is a particularly large drop-out between first and second semester programmes (A and B level). Overall, teachers are very well qualified, but the distribution is somewhat uneven. Undergraduate and postgraduate settings at the Universities of Lund and Stockholm attain particularly high standards. As in Italian and Spanish, beginner courses are now being offered in French. These courses attract many applicants but do not provide a recruitment base. Despite recruitment problems, the panel of assessors advocated discussion of raising the entry requirements.

The entitlement to award bachelor's degrees in French at Skövde University College and Södertörns University College is questioned, mainly because of the lack of qualified teachers.

### **History of ideas and science – broadening education**

The history of ideas and science plays an important role in providing a general background in higher education in Sweden. Many students opt to read courses corresponding to the first semester of study (A level) or short special courses. There are, however, few who continue to more advanced levels. The subject has many competent and well-qualified teachers and many satisfied students. The programmes are recommended to enhance their international content, by introducing more texts in Nordic languages and English for instance, and

to encourage more student exchanges. The goals and requirements for postgraduate programmes need to be clarified. Currently, postgraduate students are expected to write an extensive thesis in less time than previously, which has led to greater anxiety and stress.

Students in the subject have no clear perception of what the labour market can offer them. Here, the panel of assessors emphasises the viability in the labour market outside the academic world of the great amount of written work in different genres, the critical approach and the capacity to deal with different forms of source material. The higher education institutions are recommended to conduct more follow-up studies of their ex-students that can provide information about the labour market.

### **Italian, Portuguese and Romanian – difficulties in recruiting**

Undergraduate and postgraduate programmes in Italian at the universities of Göteborg, Lund and Stockholm maintain high standards. The volume of research at Stockholm University makes it Sweden's leading research setting. All of these subjects face recruitment problems. This also applies to Italian, which is taught relatively extensively in the upper-secondary schools. Financial salvation has been provided by offering courses for total beginners with no prior knowledge at a level that can scarcely be described as academic. These courses provide no significant recruitment base for continued study in the subject either.

Portuguese and Romanian are each offered at only one higher education institution, Stockholm and Lund. Sound cooperation between Portuguese and the FoRom graduate school in Spanish has helped to ensure a substantial increase in the number of theses submitted in recent years. Courses in Romanian using only web-based teaching are offered and these have succeeded in attracting Scandinavians living all over the world.

The National Agency for Higher Education is questioning the entitlement to award master's degrees in Italian at Uppsala University, mainly because of the lack of qualified teachers.

### **Teacher training – programmes that have not yet found their form**

The new teacher training programmes introduced in 2001 had still not found their form when the evaluation was undertaken during the autumn semester of 2004. During its appraisal the panel of assessors discovered many serious shortcomings. The problems identified by the panel are grave, and they vary in extent at the different higher education institutions. The National Agency for Higher Education considers that rapid and cogent measures must be adopted without delay and recommends the government as well as the higher education institutions and the local authorities to take the measures required as quickly as possible.

In view of the small number of students who had completed these programmes when the evaluation was undertaken, the National Agency has decided for the moment not to call into question entitlement to award degrees but instead to adopt a series of measures. All of the institutions have been requested to submit a written account of how they can guarantee that certain areas of knowledge that are essential for professional teachers will be dealt with in the programmes. Specific studies will be undertaken to review the quality of degree papers as well as types of examination and their impact on teaching and learning. Within the course of its supervisory activities, the National Agency will appraise the responsibilities and powers of the special boards for teacher training programmes. The findings of the evaluation will be followed up in a new evaluation in two years. If this reveals that these grave shortcomings persist, entitlement to award degrees will be called into question for the higher education institutions that fail to fulfil the quality requirements. A more detailed account of the reform in teacher training is provided later in this report.

### **Dutch – a small subject with high standards**

This programme, which is offered only in Stockholm, maintains a high linguistic standard both in the range and depth of its contents, enjoys good links with research and produces degree papers of good quality, even though they are few in number. Like most of the other “small” subjects, Dutch survives in a vulnerable setting with few students and limited teaching resources. In the long run the situation is untenable, as students could at short notice find that there are no teachers who can take responsibility for them. The programme tries to make up for its vulnerability by cooperating with other contiguous subjects and units.

### **Education – a large and multifaceted subject area**

Education is not a coherent subject but is characterised by diversity and variation where the names and conceptual reach of courses are concerned, the directions they take, their structure and the degrees awarded. There is a risk that this diversity may lead to lack of clarity about the subject’s identity and to its impoverishment. The panel of assessors points out that the subject seems to have become weaker at many higher education institutions in recent years, but still finds that both undergraduate and postgraduate programmes in the subjects evaluated function on the whole well. The higher education institutions are recommended to consider these programmes carefully so that they can clarify the different specialisations and names given to them.

There is a clear predominance of women in education subjects. Women form the majority of students and teachers up to the level of senior lecturer, whereas the majority of senior lecturers with PhD’s and professors are men.

One general observation is that most of the higher education institutions have difficulties in persuading students to continue their studies at third and

fourth semester level (C & D level). A wide range of courses at different level fills an important need in providing further training for current practitioners. The postgraduate programmes in education that exist are relatively extensive and at many higher education institutions education is the subject that has most postgraduates and in which most PhD's are awarded.

Most of the departments have some form of link with teacher training. There is a great deal of freedom to decide locally on the nature and extent of the courses in education required in teacher training programmes. For this reason its importance varies from the 60 credit points it has been given in Örebro to only a few credit points elsewhere. In those places where education as a discipline is expected to develop ways of cooperating with teacher training programmes, more or less intensive efforts are being made to both distance itself from and meet the needs of these programmes.

Many of the students study part-time and work as well, which is said to add to the low throughput at many places. Very few surveys of alumni have taken place that could demonstrate the professional relevance of the subject and a general recommendation is to undertake follow-up of this kind more extensively.

### **Personnel and working life programmes – similar but still different**

These subjects which offer complete degree programmes with similar names are popular and meet a need in today's labour market. Despite the similarity in the names of the programmes, they differ both in structure and content. Some of them mainly consist of specifically designed courses, whereas others comprise a number of general courses. These programmes, which lead to the award of a general degree, are viewed both by future employers and students as if they offered a vocational qualification. Adoption of profiles and clarity of information about the programmes are the recommendations made in this context.

The students, who are generally pleased with the programmes, display however little interest in postgraduate study, which is explained as being due to their vocational ambitions and that the research links that exist are often not directly linked to the subject area.

### **Spanish – rapid expansion**

Spanish is a subject that has undergone rapid expansion in the Swedish educational system but because of the few PhD's awarded there are relatively few teachers with research qualifications. There are now a fairly large number of postgraduate students thanks to FoRom (the national graduate school in the Romance languages), which bodes well for the development of the subject. Spanish suffers, however, from the difficulties experienced by the higher education institutions in reallocating resources to its advantage. Undergraduate and postgraduate programmes at the universities of Göteborg and Stockholm

maintain high academic standards. As in the other languages, courses for beginners are offered at a number of higher education institutions, but with meagre results.

The National Agency for Higher Education is questioning entitlement to award master's degrees at Umeå University and Linköping University because of shortcomings in academic quality and inadequate teacher qualifications. For the same reason, Umeå University is considered to lack the capacity to offer postgraduate programmes in the subject.

### **Programmes in dentistry – good quality with different profiles**

The four dentistry programmes provide an excellent example of how different teaching profiles and educational planning can lead to the same goals. All of the higher education institutions fulfil the quality criteria and have abundant access to qualified teachers who possess excellent academic and clinical qualifications and show commitment to clinical training in dentistry. There is a risk, however, that the supply of teachers could deteriorate rapidly, as many of those currently employed will be retiring in the next few years. The situation is particularly critical at the Karolinska Institute, where the problem has been aggravated by the substantial reduction in the volume of the dentistry programme in the mid-1990s. These cuts led to the dismissal of the younger teachers one by one, and this has resulted in resignation among the younger members of the staff and postgraduate students.

The entire programme including postgraduate study can take up to twelve years: three years of specialist training follow the five-year undergraduate course, after which postgraduate study occupies another four years. Moreover many study postgraduate programmes part-time, which further prolongs their studies. The higher education institutions are recommended to develop the possibilities of combining specialist and postgraduate studies and enabling more students to take postgraduate programmes full-time.

Internationally, dentists have a high degree of mobility on the labour market. To ensure this mobility, training must be comparable and of equivalent standard from an international perspective. The panel of assessors draws particular emphasis to the importance of international exchanges for students and teachers.

### **German – high quality but lack of students**

In terms of quality undergraduate programmes in German in Sweden are good, about two-thirds of the teachers have PhD's. Most of the teachers have also completed a basic teacher training programme or some other methodological training programme. Even so, the situation for German as a modern language is alarming because of the shortage of students. Attempts are being made to improve recruitment by creating programmes in which it is combined with some other subject, often economics. Another way of recruiting students

has been to offer courses for beginners even though they do not provide a significant recruitment base. Since this evaluation was initiated in the spring of 2003, six higher education institutions have decided not to offer bachelor's programmes in German.

Where postgraduate programmes are concerned, it is pointed out that theses are far too extensive and take too long to complete. The recommendation made is to adapt the thesis work to the current funding system and to increase cooperation on courses in postgraduate programmes.

### **Good quality – despite questions about entitlement to award degrees**

In view of the completion of a total number of 339 evaluations during 2004 with the entitlement to award degrees called into question in only 12 programmes, the conclusion can be drawn that the quality of the programmes appraised is on the whole good. Entitlement was called into question for nine undergraduate and three postgraduate programmes. At the same time the evaluation of the teacher training programmes led to grave criticism that to varying extents concerned all the higher education institutions entitled to award teaching qualifications. In many cases this criticism is so serious that it should be regarded as a challenge of their entitlement to award these degrees. For this reason the National Agency for Higher Education will be conducting a renewed evaluation in two years. If the grave shortcomings persist, the Agency will call into question the entitlement to award qualifications of the higher education institutions that fail to comply with quality criteria.

## Some themes

### Languages in higher education

On a number of occasions during the past years the National Agency for Higher Education has expressed concern about the situation of the language subjects in higher education. Initially this anxiety concerned the programmes in languages that attracted very few students – the classical languages together with Oriental and African languages. The problems in these programmes have affected both undergraduate and postgraduate courses and mainly arise because there are too few qualified teachers to enable soundly based academic teaching to be offered and the educational settings are too limited. The evaluations have led to warnings to the higher education institutions concerned that their entitlement to award degrees in which these languages are major subjects may be withdrawn. In every case the institution has taken measures to avoid this.

Altogether, during the six-year period, the National Agency will have evaluated about 40 languages that are offered to at least bachelor's level at higher education institutions in Sweden.

Table 2: Evaluations of programmes in languages 2001–2005

2001	2002	2003	2004	2005
Sign language	<b>Slavic languages</b> Bulgarian	<b>Oriental languages</b> African languages	German Dutch	<b>Finno-Ugric languages</b> Estonian Finnish Sámi Hungarian
Modern Greek Classical Greek Latin	Polish Russian Czech Serbian	Aramaic/Syrian Hebrew Hindi Tamil Kurdish Persian Swahili	<b>Romance languages</b> French Italian Portuguese Romanian Spanish	<b>East Asian languages</b> Japanese Chinese Korean
Swedish Nordic languages	Croatian/Bosnian <b>Baltic languages</b> Latvian Lithuanian Celtic languages	Turkic languages	English	

Most of the languages evaluated are small languages in the sense that they have relatively few students. However, among them are languages that are spoken by large groups of immigrants and/or are important for commercial and/or cultural reasons. Nevertheless, these language programmes often face problems in funding and finding a sufficient number of teachers.

The lack of cooperation between language departments at the various higher education institutions is not infrequently referred to during the period, and the same applies to failure to adopt profiles. It is therefore interesting to note that the Vice-Chancellor of Stockholm University has conducted an enquiry in collaboration with Uppsala University and Mälardalen and Södertörn University Colleges into the position of the languages at these institutions. The outcome is a proposal to cooperate to some extent by sharing the various subjects (apart from English) between them. Certain languages could be offered at

both Stockholm and Uppsala, but the higher education institutions would be able to take turns in offering courses in different semesters. According to this proposal Södertörn University College would offer no language programmes of its own, except for Nordic languages and English.

### **Government assignment on small languages**

In the spring of 2002 the government assigned the National Agency the task of reviewing the language subjects which had relatively small volumes of teaching and research. This enquiry found that funding posed the largest problem. If the authorities want to maintain multifaceted language programmes in Sweden, the ordinary funding allocations will have to be incremented by extra grants. The National Agency therefore proposed that the government should extend the system of special commitments for language subjects. These commitments would include more subjects than at the moment and be accompanied by earmarked resources. A higher education institution would be given the responsibility of guaranteeing the survival and development of a subject and resources to do so. Other higher education institutions that also opted to offer programmes in the subject would not receive any specific funding. This enquiry has not yet had any results. This year's evaluations indicate that today even German and French can be considered small languages.

### **This year's evaluations**

During 2004 the National Agency has evaluated higher education programmes in languages that are or have been more extensive in higher education and which are also included in the syllabuses in compulsory education and/or the upper-secondary schools. This applies to English, German, French, Spanish and Italian. This year's evaluations also included Dutch, Portuguese and Romanian.

### **Undergraduate programmes**

If a small language is defined as one that attracts few students, the term now covers the vast majority of languages apart from English and, to some extent, Nordic languages. The evaluations reveal that there are now more small languages. This development is partly because many pupils no longer opt for languages in the upper-secondary schools as they feel greater effort is needed to get good grades than in many other subjects. As a result fewer and fewer are qualified for enrolment to university language departments. With the current funding system fewer students means less resources. Programmes dwindle at every level and this, in the long run, creates problems in recruiting qualified teachers. At the moment a substantial amount of teaching is provided by guest teachers or teachers without permanent appointments, often paid on an hourly basis.

The situation is different to some extent for English, which is offered to at least bachelor's level at 24 institutions. The general opinion is that there is no

shortage of applicants even though there are a number of limited educational settings. The assessors also point out that the subject maintains high standards on the whole and that the higher level undergraduate programmes are academically more advanced than they used to be and of good international standard.

Generally speaking the proficiency of newly enrolled students in English is sound where oral skills are concerned. However, written skills are described as inadequate in many cases and this has an impact even at more advanced levels in the undergraduate programmes.

A relatively large number of the courses offered in languages are short five or ten credit point programmes that focus on proficiency and language for special purposes. A comparatively small proportion of the students in language programmes, including English, continue after the first semester and even fewer proceed to third or fourth semester programmes (C and D levels).

### **Courses for beginners**

To secure funding for language subjects, many higher education institutions have established courses for beginners. This applies to Italian, Spanish, French and German. While this is understandable from an economic aspect, it is more doubtful in terms of quality and with respect to the use of educational resources in general. German, French and Spanish are all taught in the compulsory and upper-secondary schools and Italian in the upper-secondary schools, so that higher education institutions should not take it upon themselves to offer beginners' courses. It may well be asked whether teaching of this kind is compatible with the academic standards required. Moreover, the evaluations of German, French, Spanish and Italian show that these courses are not successful in providing recruitment bases.

### **Teacher training**

Concern is expressed in several of the reports about the reduction in the language courses required in the new teacher training programmes. Upper-secondary school teachers are now required to take only 60 credit points instead of 80 previously. In addition, fewer than five per cent opt for teaching qualifications in any foreign language other than English. It is also pointed out in some cases that the enrolment qualifications of students who have opted for languages in their teacher training programmes are lower than for other students in the same subjects and, in certain cases, their results worse. There is no clear evidence for this, but further analysis is needed.

### **Postgraduate programmes**

Today there are as many postgraduate students in English as there were ten years ago and there are relatively large number in Spanish as well. There is a clear rise in the numbers taking German and French. A relatively large number were enrolled before the 1998 reform of postgraduate studies and there is a risk

that the restrictions on enrolment that this imposed will lead to a reduction in the total number of postgraduate students. On the other hand it seems as if the programmes have achieved better results in quantitative terms. The number of theses has risen noticeably during the last ten years. In English and German this figure has more or less doubled. In French during the last five-year period three times as many PhD's were awarded as during the corresponding period ten years earlier. Students enrolled in the reformed postgraduate system since 1998 are now beginning to submit theses and a relatively large number of newly qualified PhD's can be expected to appear in the next few years. It is more than likely that this increased efficiency can be ascribed to the excellent conditions offered to postgraduate students by the graduate schools.

The decline in applications to many language programmes has been matched by a reduction in the number of senior lectureships. This applies to most languages. As a result the newly qualified PhD's will to an increasing extent have to seek posts outside the academic world. For English and Spanish the situation is somewhat different. Teachers with research qualifications are needed in both languages. In English this mainly applies to teachers with qualifications in linguistics. For a number of years the vast majority of theses submitted have been on literary subjects. Those with PhD's in English literature have therefore found it more difficult to find appointments at higher education institutions. This imbalance now seems to be evening out.

### **Internationalisation**

It is pointed out that undergraduate students in French, Spanish, Italian and English participated to a relatively limited extent in exchange programmes with institutions in countries where these languages are spoken. The same observation has been made in previous evaluations of language subjects, such as Slavic languages and Baltic languages. It is remarkable that study abroad is not a general feature of language programmes and that the students take so little advantage of the possibilities open to them. In some cases this seems to be because they are not given adequate information by the higher education institutions. The situation is often different in postgraduate programmes, where it is normal to spend some time at a higher education institution in a country where the target language is spoken.

### **A national policy for languages**

The EU goal that every citizen in the Union will have mastery of two languages in addition to their native language is becoming increasingly distant. Neither in the school system nor higher education are there adequate incentives for young people to devote time and energy on learning languages other than English. One possibility would be to give more weight to language grades in selection for higher education. The National Agency has in other contexts already advocated a national policy for languages that can help to attain the

EU goals. This should include languages that are not currently represented but are needed for other reasons, such as minority languages like Yiddish and Romany. It is now time to formulate a policy of this kind.

## **Teacher-training reform**

The evaluation of the programmes that lead to the award of teaching qualifications involved an appraisal of the quality of their offerings. At the same time a follow-up was made of the 2001 reform and in this connection a series of special studies were undertaken. When the evaluation was done only a very small number of students had been awarded degrees according to the new system and therefore there was nothing on which a final judgement could be based. The report contains many critical comments. It is obvious that the reform had not had time to bed down by the time the evaluation took place, either in terms of structure, organisation or content.

### **Lack of structural clarity**

The organisation of the new teacher training scheme is complicated for both the higher education institutions and the students. It introduces a new structure comprising three main fields: general educational areas, subject areas and specialisations. The general educational areas must contain 10 credit points of placement study and 30 credit points of interdisciplinary courses. Further placement study for a total of 40 credit points altogether must take place during the programme. Students are also required to produce a degree paper for 10 credit points within one area. Within the framework of this structure, students must choose the main vocational area, or in other words type of school, in which they intend to teach. With the wide choice of combinations open to the students and the extensive range of courses offered by the institutions, the outcome is often that there are no natural links between the different elements. In the worst cases this means that the programme lacks coherence and fails to provide the appropriate skills for teaching in the type or types of schools that students intend to focus on.

Cooperation with the local authorities to arrange placement study requires great adaptability on the part of the higher education institutions and the local authorities. The panel of assessors notes that this adaptability and cooperation is difficult to attain. The local authorities may also incur costs in the form of extra compensation for teachers who also act as supervisors. No funds have been provided to defray these costs.

Teacher training should be a concern for the higher education institutions as a whole. The special faculty boards for teacher training established at all the higher education institutions are responsible for coordination internally as well as with the outside world, particularly where placement studies are concerned. They are also expected to deal with issues relating to research links and appro-

ropriate postgraduate programmes. There are differences in the way the higher education institutions have organised these boards.

### **Student choice and institutional flexibility**

Freedom of choice is an important aspect of the reform but it creates problems. It presupposes that the institutions can develop various courses that correspond to the intentions of the reform as expressed in the Higher Education Act, Higher Education Ordinance and the travaux préliminaires. These courses must also fit in with the inclinations of the students. Students must be able to feel secure about their choices and have a clear idea of what they will lead to. There must be adequate counselling resources available.

The situation today is not satisfactory. The panel of assessors' wording is that "the students were faced with a programme whose logic they did not understand and which they were not given a great deal of counselling to help them understand". The higher education institutions offer a wide range of courses, sometimes without teachers qualified to teach them. At the same time the resources allocated for student counselling may be totally inadequate so that there are long delays before students can discuss their choices.

It is therefore necessary to introduce some stringency into the programmes, mainly in the general educational area. The institutions must have reasonable scope for planning, the students must be able to put together programmes that are coherent and that correspond to their intentions about the kind of teaching they want to go in for. This means that the institutions must create explicit alternative study routes, also in order to ensure that the qualifications gained by the students correspond reasonably well to the teaching needs of the community. The National Agency for Higher Education urges the government to review the Degree Ordinance to ensure that requirements in the general educational area are clearly defined.

### **Do students feel challenged?**

A specific questionnaire survey (Common areas – A study of some areas of knowledge in the courses taken by all teacher trainees) has been conducted by Ulf P. Lundgren and Elisabet Nihlfors within the framework of the evaluation and is included in the third section of its report. The survey was undertaken in 2004 and covered students newly enrolled in teacher training programmes in 2000 and 2001. It mainly concentrated on two areas.

How much do the students read?

Here the answer seems to be that teacher trainees do not study as much as those studying for other vocational qualifications. Half of the students who responded state that they spend less than 30 hours a week on their studies. Comparison with a similar study four years ago shows that the proportion who estimate that they spend more than 30 hours a week on their studies has declined between 2000 and 2004. Comparisons are also made with programmes in medicine and engineering, for instance, which suggest that these require

considerably more effort. It is clear that the higher education institutions need to review the demands made in the different subject areas and the National Agency assumes that these will be made more stringent.

What training is given in central areas for teachers?

Setting grades as well as measuring pupil progress requires teachers to know about examinations and attainment assessment. Teaching in these areas is, according to the students, offered to only a limited extent. Of those who began their programmes in 2001, 48 per cent say that they have received no teaching on testing. And 80 per cent claim not to have received any teaching on international studies that provide important comparative knowledge about educational levels in other countries.

Even when it comes to knowledge about the development of reading and writing, fundamental areas for all forms of teaching, it is uncertain how much teaching students are given. A specific study carried out during the evaluation shows that at only one-third of the higher education institutions is there compulsory teaching in these subjects in the general educational area.

### **Research links and teachers' qualifications**

One important point of departure for the new teacher training system was that it should enable stronger links with current research in areas relating to the teaching profession. For this purpose the Swedish Research Council established its Committee for Educational Science. New faculty boards were also created to uphold teacher training against strong faculties and to support research and stimulate postgraduate programmes in this area.

Research links can be provided in higher education in a number of ways. To begin with students should be given insight into current research and previous research that is significant for the area they are studying. The assessors feel that this occurs too rarely in teacher training programmes. The panel writes: /The students/ "all too rarely come into contact with ongoing research nor are they shown how to access the accumulated knowledge generated by research."

Secondly, during their studies students should themselves conduct enquiries and apply research methodology. According to the panel of assessors the programmes focus far too much on the application of specific methodologies. However, when the evaluation was made, a very small number of students had made so much progress that they had completed a degree paper, the first opportunity for them to demonstrate their ability to apply research theories and methodology.

If a programme is to have research links, teachers are needed who themselves have experience of research. A small proportion of the teachers in teacher training programmes have PhD's. This situation has not yet been affected by the reform. The National Agency urges the higher education institutions to set about appointing teachers with research qualifications without delay and to give priority to the quality of the degree papers produced.

## Conclusions

The National Agency considers the problems indicated so serious that they need to be dealt with quickly. The National Agency urges the government as well as the local authorities and higher education institutions to take measures without delay. The National Agency also intends to act by means of specific follow-up evaluations. (More information about the evaluation of the teacher training programmes can also be found in the section headed What do the evaluation reports reveal?).

## Educational breadth<sup>2</sup>

Higher education should impart a critical approach and capacity for reflectiveness, which can also be expressed by the concept of scholarship or breadth of education. The National Agency for Higher Education considers that breadth is a very important aspect of quality. Educational breadth is not referred to particularly often in the Agency's evaluation reports, instead mention is made of the critical and creative settings of the programmes or the academic basis provide for critical reflection and consideration. It is only in one of last year's evaluation reports, the evaluation of programmes in the history of ideas and of science, that particular attention is paid to breadth. The history of ideas is a popular subject that many students take in order to broaden their learning. The skills of historians of ideas are also sought after by other programmes and at all of the higher education institutions evaluated the subject played an important academic role. Its teachers often give the concept of educational breadth wider circulation by publishing their research findings in popular form.

The National Agency for Higher Education is supplementing its quality evaluations with additional studies which will highlight the question of educational breadth from different perspectives. The intended readership consists mainly of teachers, students and educational planners. Texts published on the Agency's web-site or in printed form will offer examples of how breadth can be incorporated and examples of what it can imply. A separate series of publications will focus on educational breadth from the perspective of different disciplines. An external reference group has been working with the theme of educational breadth on the Agency's behalf.

A Mirror for Students, the comprehensive questionnaire survey of students undertaken in 2001-2002, aimed, among other things, to probe student experiences of the kind of activities considered to encourage critical thought and analytical capacity and which enable positive personal development. A similar study of postgraduate students, A Mirror for Postgraduate Students 2003, has also been conducted. During 2002 the National Agency for Higher Education also arranged an essay competition with the theme Learning in

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2. The term education breadth is used here to refer to the concept of *bildung* or *scholarship*.

the Knowledge Society for undergraduate students and for postgraduates.<sup>3</sup> A student manifesto with reflections on the concept of educational breadth has also been published.<sup>4</sup> The National Agency has also drawn attention to the much discussed experimental liberal studies course at Jönköping International Business School. There students taking the programme in commercial law in 2001 had a compulsory course, for which they received no credits, intended to broaden their educational perspectives. Student evaluations of this experiment were positive.<sup>5</sup>

The first contribution to the National Agency's series of publications deals with educational breadth and mathematics.<sup>6</sup> This report considers the significance of mathematics in a wider context. During 2005 there will be publications dealing with the subjects of drama, astronomy and law from the point of view of educational breadth.

A number of scholars have contributed material on the theme of a broad education. On the National Agency's web-site there are the personal reflections of Sven-Eric Liedman, Bernt Gustavsson and Carl-Henrik Svenstedt. Birgitta Arneklo-Nobin has contributed to the discussion with a report entitled *Is the ultimate aim of higher education a professorship or is it to be regarded as just a milestone in one's life? Or neither?*<sup>7</sup>

In June 2005 the National Agency for Higher Education will be arranging a conference in conjunction with Södertörns University College, Bodö University College, Stockholm University College of Acting and the University College of Film, Radio, Television and Theatre on the subject of education for citizenship. The principal speaker will be the philosopher and literary scholar Martha Nussbaum. The aim of the conference is to provide scope for discussion and innovative ideas about the concept of a broad education.

All of the activities listed here within the framework of the theme of broadening education demonstrate differences in perspective and therefore stimulate readers to reflect on what learning may involve. Where students are concerned, the National Agency hopes that the theme will contribute to their personal development during their studies in higher education.

Is there a conflict between breadth and depth in higher education? This is one of the issues to be discussed within the scope of this theme. A survey of the endeavours in the area of liberal studies at 35 institutions makes it clear that some of those involved experience obstacles at their institutions to the

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3. Liberal studies – paradise and personal project. Some entries in the National Agency's essay contest for students, Högskoleverkets rapportserie 2002:3 R (In Swedish only).

4. On studies, scholarship and life: Who are you going to be? (In Swedish only).

5. Core Curriculum – an educational journey. Högskoleverkets rapportserie 2003:5 R (In Swedish only).

6. Mouwitz, Lars, Education and mathematics, Högskoleverkets rapportserie 2004:29 R (In Swedish only).

7. *Is the ultimate aim of a higher education a professorship or is it to be regarded as just a milestone in one's life? Or neither?* Högskoleverkets rapportserie 2004:34 R (In Swedish only).

development of broader perspectives in higher education. The most frequent obstacle is that their activities are not encouraged administratively, funding systems militate against them and that the financial aid system for students present obstacles when they want to acquire greater educational breadth.<sup>8</sup>

The National Agency for Higher Education will continue to pay attention to the theme of educational breadth.

## The assessors

The substantial number of appraisals and the extent of the evaluations conducted during 2004 has meant that the National Agency has engaged more assessors than previously. The panels of assessors involved in making the 15 evaluations of subjects and programmes have included a total of 164 assessors. This is considerably more than in the previous year. In 2003, for example, the total number of assessors was 99. Of the assessors, 81 were women and 83 men, in other words 49 per cent were women. The proportion of women in the panels has risen from 36 per cent in 2001 to 49 per cent in 2004. Variations in the proportions of women and men in the panels of assessors depend among other things on which subjects are evaluated in which years. During 2004 several major language subjects have been appraised, subjects in which relatively many of the senior lecturers and professors are women. The panels have comprised 36 undergraduate and 23 postgraduate students. Sixteen of the assessors can be classified as labour market representatives. 62 per cent of the subject experts have been international experts, primarily from the other Nordic countries.

Table 3: Composition of the panels of assessors 2004, totals

Subject experts	89
Undergraduate and postgraduate students	59
Labour market representatives	16
Total	164

The employer perspective is adopted in a number of ways in the evaluations. Labour market representatives can be included in the panels of assessors but they are also invited to the feed-back conferences that conclude each evaluation. Employers were also involved in the evaluation of the various vocational qualifications – in medicine, dietetics and dentistry, and also in the evaluations of archive and library science and of physics. The panel of assessors for the evaluation of the personnel and working life programmes also contained a labour market representative. In addition a special ‘hearing’ was organised with employers. This was a positive experience as it provided access to a wider range of opinions from the labour market than has otherwise been possible in many cases.

8. Liberal Studies in Swedish higher education – a survey with examples from 34 institutions of higher education, Högskoleverkets rapportserie 2002:35 R (In Swedish only).

### **How do undergraduate and postgraduate students assessors view their task?**

Two special projects were arranged in order to acquire information about how the assessors view their task and their opinions on how the evaluation model used by the National Agency functions. In one of them undergraduate and postgraduate student assessors were invited to seminars. These involved assessors in the 2003 and 2004 evaluations. The seminar with the assessors for 2004 was held when the evaluations were at about the half-way stage. The aim of both seminars has been to probe opinions on how the evaluation process can be developed and improved. The second seminar was also intended to offer support to the undergraduate and postgraduate student assessors while the evaluations were taking place. The other project consisted of a questionnaire survey of the 99 individuals who acted as assessors in the 2003 evaluations.

The National Agency's basic assumption is that undergraduate and postgraduate student assessors are on an equal footing with the other members of the panels. The student assessors have always been positive about their task and the process adopted by the Agency. Generally speaking the student members of the panels feel that they enjoy the respect of the other assessors. The division of tasks in some panels has meant that the student assessors have not been involved in appraisal of more general issues but have focused only on the question of student influence. In one of the panels the chair has circulated with an undergraduate and postgraduate student sharing the post with a professor in the panel. This approach was considered a positive experience.

### **What do assessors think of the evaluation model?**

The main aim of the questionnaires to which the 2003 assessors were asked to respond was to find out what they thought of the evaluation model used by the National Agency. The evaluations have three aims: to develop quality, to monitor quality and to provide information. Where development and monitoring are concerned, a considerable majority of the assessors (90 per cent and 83 per cent) consider that these aims are attained with the model used. However, the figure was lower for information (39 per cent). It is important to note that it is the evaluation report that the assessors are asked to produce, not to inform potential students. The information aim is attained mainly through the short presentations of the evaluations published by the Agency on its web-site [stud-era.nu](http://stud-era.nu) together with other relevant information for students.

The framework of the evaluation model means that three aspects of the programmes are appraised: circumstances, process and outcomes. Here too the majority of assessors respond in the affirmative when asked whether the model makes it possible to understand the circumstances and the process. Where the outcomes of programmes are concerned, the assessors are more hesitant, however. They claim that it is possible to sum up outcomes in quantitative terms. On the other hand it is more difficult to say anything about quality as a whole

from the random samples that are made of term papers. The results of this questionnaire survey will provide one of the elements on which the design of the future quality evaluation system will be based.

## Results and effects

During the last four years about 1,000 appraisals have been made. The starting point for quality evaluations has been described in earlier analyses in which the National Agency for Higher Education's quality evaluations have been summarised (see References). In 81 cases programmes have failed to fulfil the quality criteria for higher education and instead entitlement to award degrees has been called into question. One-fifth of these cases have concerned post-graduate programmes, four-fifths undergraduate level. This must be described as a good result for higher education in Sweden when no more than eight per cent of the programmes evaluated have failed to attain satisfactory standards. The programmes also stand up well to international comparison. The programmes that have been questioned most often between 2001-2004 are the shorter programmes in engineering and programmes in languages. As has previously been mentioned, all the teacher training programmes were criticised severely even if the entitlement to award degrees is not at the moment called into question. What other effects have the evaluations had and how does the National Agency for Higher Education identify them?

The effects of the quality evaluations can be grouped in different categories:

- Concrete measures such as altered syllabuses, enhanced teacher qualifications.
- Organisational changes, the establishment of special units for quality issues at the higher education institutions, for instance merging departments and subjects, closing programmes down.
- Increased awareness, i.e. the evaluations have demonstrated methods of quality appraisal and evaluation in higher education.
- The evaluations have also contributed to greater awareness of quality issues overall.
- The use of evaluations as the basis for decisions.
- Greater contact between higher education institutions.
- New tasks and enquiries. Quality evaluations have given rise to new assignments and enquiries. For example the National Agency was given the task of providing a basis for the quotas of places to be assigned by the government to the higher education institutions and for the institutions' planning of what programmes to offer and it was also asked to analyse a new system of allocating resources. The evaluations also lead to the initiation by the National Agency of continued enquiries and studies.

The evaluations have an impact at various levels in the community. They can affect students, a programme or a department, a higher education institution, and they can also have an influence at the political level. Information about

the findings and the effects of the evaluations mainly reach the general public through reports in the media.

The National Agency identifies the effects and the impact of the evaluations and how they are used in a number of ways: via action plans, feed-back conferences and specific studies.

### **Action plans demonstrate measures**

In certain cases the evaluations have given rise to criticism from the National Agency so that entitlement to award degrees has been called into question. When this entitlement is questioned, the higher education institution involved has one year in which to respond with a plan of action listing the measures taken to improve quality. If the National Agency considers that the action plan is inadequate entitlement to award degrees can be withdrawn. During the past year the National Agency has examined action plans relating to evaluations published earlier. In every case but one, the Agency has decided that there is no longer any reason to question entitlement to award degrees. The exception is the degree in Forest Engineering awarded by the Gammelkroppa School of Forestry, where the Agency is recommending the government to withdraw entitlement.

The concrete effects of the evaluations revealed by the action plans often involve enhancement of the qualifications of the teachers. Lecturers have been awarded PhD's, posts have been expanded, more appointments have been made. Teachers have also been given greater scope for research. Other measures include changing the content and organisation of programmes. This can involve new objectives, new syllabuses and curricula, a programme of specific quality enhancement measures, national cooperation, integration with other subjects. In some cases programmes have been withdrawn. For a number of the programmes in engineering that were criticised, the solution has been enhancement of their contents or a shift in the focus of the programmes and with it a change in the name of the degree awarded.

The action plans show the major importance of teacher qualifications in enabling programmes to offer a critical and creative setting.

### **Feed-back conferences reveal more effects**

The feed-back conferences provide even more examples of the concrete effects the evaluations have had. They demonstrate that the evaluations have provided support and arguments in the internal negotiations for educational resources at a higher education institution and that extra resources have in fact been made available for the programme evaluated. Many testify to the changes in the organisation of programmes, such as new structures, new courses, new teaching methods, new directives, net-based teaching. Evaluations have also led to greater cooperation both nationally and internally in the higher educa-

tion institution itself. Student societies and student councils have been established, interdisciplinary seminars, cooperation and contact between teachers have been initiated and sections have learnt to collaborate. Here as well there are examples of new contacts being established with the community. Evaluations have also led to the organisation of study visits and study-days and to further training for teachers. The evaluations have given rise to greater awareness of different ways of improving quality, for example through directives on quality development, internal benchmarking projects and alumni studies. The feed-back conferences have provided examples of higher education institutions undertaking benchmarking while carrying out self-evaluation. Other effects have been that evaluations have prompted reflection on the role of the programmes offered by the higher education institution from a national perspective, and also about future developments.

Three years after the publication of an evaluation report, the National Agency carries out a written follow-up to find out if and how the institution has dealt with the recommendations for improvement contained in the report, and also if the evaluation has had any visible effects. During 2005, follow-up like this will take place of the evaluation reports published in 2001 and 2002.

## **Examples of further studies**

The National Agency makes further use in different ways of the results yielded by the evaluations. These may take the form of proposals to the government about measures to be adopted or specific studies undertaken by the Agency itself. One example of a problem area to which several evaluations have drawn attention and which the Agency has studied in more depth involves course evaluations. Several of the evaluations of subjects and programmes show that course evaluations, which are mandatory, are regarded as a mere routine by both students and teachers. There are shortcomings in the follow-up of their results, in particular, or in other words the feed-back of the outcome of course evaluations to students. The National Agency has therefore undertaken a special project on course evaluations on the initiative of the Agency's student advisory board. A report has been produced in the form of an anthology to circulate examples of good practice in the use of course evaluations.<sup>9</sup> An introductory section on the aim of course evaluations is followed by three sections containing examples of good practice: the first dealing with overall quality procedures and policies, the second on the responsibilities of teachers and students for effective course-evaluation systems and the third presenting methods and techniques to make course evaluations work.

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9. Course assessment of student influence and quality development. An anthology containing examples taken from eleven institutes of higher education. Högskoleverkets rapportserie 2004:23 R.

Another study consisted of an international questionnaire survey of the situation of postgraduate students, an international Mirror for Postgraduate Students. It was based on the Swedish survey published in 2003. In order to provide greater understanding of its results and to compare the situation in Sweden with postgraduates elsewhere, the National Agency took the initiative of extending the study. Ireland, Finland and Catalonia have joined the survey and will be collecting their own data which will be used among other things as the basis for comparative analyses.

The evaluation of the teacher training programmes has resulted in several new studies: one involved the quality of degree papers submitted in these programmes, a specific study of examinations used in teacher training and how it affects the ways in which students learn, an evaluation of teacher training offered as distance teaching and a review of the powers of the special teacher training boards.

## **Cooperation, profiles and concentration**

During each of the four years in which appraisals have been made of subjects and programmes as part of this quality evaluation system, the assessors, virtually irrespective of the subject or programmes concerned, have made recommendations that can be summarised by the concepts of cooperation, adoption of profiles and concentration. These have been the solutions proposed to remedy the problem of limited educational settings and scant resources. The issue of limited settings that are not critical and creative enough and the lack of economic resources is related to the current system of procuring funding to enable postgraduate programmes to be offered. The National Agency has used the evaluations as a basis for its demonstration of the need to create other methods of development than application for authorised areas of research. It is now some years since a number of higher education institutions applied to the government for authorisation to conduct research in a specific discipline and with it the right to award PhD's and/or be granted university status. These applications have still not been referred to the Agency.

Several higher education institutions have adopted the proposals about cooperation, profiles and concentrating their programmes and activities. There are different kinds of examples of the courses of action chosen by the institutions. Mälardalen University College and Örebro University are planning a merger on the grounds that this will enable the creation of a European research university with a number of internationally competitive research environments. Another example is the proposed network university to link Södertörn University College, the Royal Institute of Technology and the Karolinska Institute. Skövde University College and the University Colleges of Trollhättan/Uddevalla and Borås have also announced their collaboration. As a result of the evaluation of the various language subjects collaboration is now proposed between higher education institutions surrounding Lake Mälaren. National

collaboration is also being studied in the language subjects. Some higher education institutions have chosen to adopt profiles as Institutes of Technology or Professional Colleges (University College of Borås). Other examples are institutions involved in discussions about focusing on advanced teaching levels (Uppsala University) or adopting undergraduate teaching profiles (University College of Gotland). The mission statements of the higher education institutions contain further examples of the idea of adopting profiles.

The solutions that have been presented for dealing with the problematic situation of the language subjects that do not involve cooperation imply concentration. Some languages ought to be concentrated to fewer institutions. In German, for instance, this development is already under way. As many as six institutions have closed down their programmes in German.

Within the next ten years the National Agency plans to arrange a specific thematic evaluation on cooperation between the institutions – what have the plans announced so far led to?

Another form of cooperation takes place between the higher education institutions and their surrounding communities. The National Agency has devoted a special thematic evaluation to closer examination of this form of cooperation.<sup>10</sup> This has highlighted various forms of cooperation: for examples popular education/research communication, support for company start-ups and knowledge transfer, designing programmes to meet labour market needs and providing students with the possibility of community contact during their studies. As in the subject and programme evaluations, here too the institutions are recommended to cooperate with each other and to pool their efforts to a greater extent than is currently the case. A number of institutions are identified as particularly effective, given their specific circumstances, in their cooperation with the surrounding community. A special anthology of examples of good practice has been produced.<sup>11</sup>

## **Recommendations to the government**

Four years of evaluations and the observations that they have yielded have not only resulted in the National Agency recommending the higher education institutions to adopt various measures or initiating its own studies. The National Agency has also submitted a number of recommendations to the government. One was that the government should encourage cooperation, the adoption of profiles and concentration. Another important recommendation made by the Agency to the government is to review the system of allocating resources. The National Agency has also raised the question of the link between economic

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10. Cooperation with the surrounding community in higher education, Högskoleverkets rapportserie 2004: 38 R.

11. Cooperation with the surrounding community – examples of good practice, Högskoleverkets rapportserie 2005:9 R.

incentives and educational outcomes – an issue that needs to be investigated. One question linked to the allocation of resources to the higher education institutions concerns the problem of the current division into disciplines. Here too the Agency has drawn the issue to the government's attention.

The quality evaluation system applies to both undergraduate and postgraduate programmes. The evaluations have demonstrated the lack of clarity in a system in which the Agency is not empowered to call into question entitlement to award postgraduate degrees but can merely recommend the government to do so. The National Agency considers that it is important for the government to specify exactly what consequences this could have for postgraduate programmes.

As soon as the first evaluations had been made of language subjects, the National Agency drew the attention of the government to the problems faced by the small languages.

As a result of the evaluation of the teacher training programmes, the National Agency for Higher Education is recommending the government to review the degree ordinance and clarify requirements in the general educational area.

In this last case the recommendation concerns a specific programme. Other recommendations have concerned general measures that affect the conditions on which higher education is offered in Sweden. Several of these recommendations have led to results.

# International perspectives

## The Bologna Process

In most European countries higher education is being influenced strongly by the process that began in Paris in 1998 and developed at a meeting in Bologna in the following year attended by the ministers of education from 29 European countries. In the Bologna Process six measures are advocated to guarantee the international competitiveness of universities and higher education in the European countries. These are

- development of a comparable and transparent degree system
- development of two-cycle degree system (Bachelor and Master)
- development of a credit system for courses (ECTS)
- creation of positive circumstances to enable mobility in Europe
- development of European cooperation in the quality assurance of higher education
- emphasising the European dimension in higher education

Meetings of ministers focusing on various topics have subsequently taken place every two years. The most recent, in Berlin 2003, in which 40 countries participated, laid stress on four areas:

- development of the degree system through the formulation of clear objectives for the different degrees that can meet individual, academic and labour market needs. These objectives must be adapted to their levels so that the differences between Bachelor's and Master's level are explicit and can be assessed
- development of a system for the recognition of degrees by demanding that all students awarded degrees from 2005 and onwards will automatically be provided with a description of the contents of their courses in English (Diploma Supplement)
- development of a third cycle in the degree system (Doctoral level).
- development of a system of quality assurance by adopting shared evaluation principles.

The next meeting of ministers is scheduled in Bergen in May 2005<sup>12</sup> and will follow up implementation of the tasks above and also move the process forward. The end date for the process is 2010, when the measures espoused at these meetings are expected to have been put into effect. Sweden is playing an active role and was one of the first to introduce the Diploma Supplements and is now planning changes in the degree system.

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12. An excellent survey of the various phases of the Bologna Process can be found on the home page for the Bergen meeting: [www.bologna-bergen2005.no](http://www.bologna-bergen2005.no)

## **ENQA and evaluation of higher education in Europe**

The meeting of ministers at Berlin in 2003 gave the European Association for Quality Assurance in Higher Education (ENQA) the task of drafting, in consultation with the European University Association (EUA), European Association of Institutions of Higher Education (EURASHE) and the National Unions of Students in Europe (ESIB), a proposal on quality assurance on which a decision could be made at the Bergen meeting. This process, in which representatives of the National Agency for Higher Education have played a very active role, has now resulted in proposed principles for the internal quality assurance of the higher education institutions, external evaluation of higher education and also how the evaluating agencies (such as the National Agency) can assure and develop the quality of their own operations.<sup>13</sup>

It is proposed that the higher education institutions should devise and develop objectives and processes for quality assurance. These are to be based, among other things, on continuous monitoring and evaluation of programmes, consistent methods of assessing students, ensuring that the teaching staff of the institutions are qualified and the provision of objective and up-to-date information about programmes.

According to the proposal, higher education is to be evaluated regularly. Evaluations are to be based on the institutions' own internal quality assurance, to apply predetermined criteria and be carried out by external assessors. In addition, they are to lead to the publication of a report. The findings of the evaluations may lead to recommendations and action plans, which are to be monitored.

One of the requirements for the evaluating agencies is that they should be autonomous, or in other words bear the responsibility themselves for their operations. They are also to be subject to regular evaluation based on self-evaluation, appraisal by external experts and a published report. Implementation of the recommendations resulting from evaluations is to be monitored.

The National Agency for Higher Education already meets the requirements to be made of the evaluating agencies according to the proposal. However, ENQA'S proposal is that recognition as an evaluating agency may only be granted after formal application has been made. The National Agency is currently drafting its application.

ENQA's report will be submitted to the Ministers of Education at Bergen, where they will then decide if there is to be any further development.

## **Other changes in the evaluation of higher education in Europe**

Two trends seem to exist in the evaluation of higher education in Europe within the framework of the general principles indicated above. One is towards

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13. The entire report is available on the ENQA web-site [www.enqa.net](http://www.enqa.net). Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance in the European Higher Education Area, 2005 (In Swedish only).

auditing the higher education institutions' own quality assurance systems. Models based on this approach have been developed in Norway and Switzerland, where regular evaluations of this kind now take place. In England and Scotland quality audits of the higher education institutions have been taking place for many years and they have undergone successive modifications. Descriptions of the Norwegian and English systems can be found in last year's report.<sup>14</sup> Denmark and Finland are now also developing models for the evaluation of higher education institutions.

The other trend involves accreditation.<sup>15</sup> This is normal at programme level in many central European countries (for instance Germany, Austria and the Netherlands), and is linked in many cases to the introduction of the new European degree system (Bachelor/Master).

Sometimes institutional evaluation is linked to accreditation, as is the case for instance in both Norway and Switzerland. The form this takes in Norway is that an institution considered not to have an adequate quality assurance system loses the right to establish new programmes. In Switzerland major deficiencies in the system lead to economic sanctions.

## **Joint European education and its quality assurance**

One development that has gathered way in recent years, not least because of the special EU project Erasmus Mundus, has comprised programmes/degrees that are shared by several higher education institutions in several countries (joint/double/multiple degrees). Even though legislation in many countries does not yet permit the award of a degree by more than one higher education institution, they often collaborate on creating programmes in which the students can take various elements at different universities in different countries. Hitherto this has mainly involved master's programmes, the level for which the EU Erasmus Mundus project provides support.

Quality assurance for joint, cross-border programmes requires harmonisation of evaluation methods and on behalf of ENQA the National Agency for Higher Education is currently conducting an EU-funded project on the development of appropriate methods. This project (Transnational European Evaluation Project/TEEP II) follows on from an earlier attempt to evaluate at a European level (TEEP I). It is being undertaken in the form of a trial evaluation of three European programmes: CoMundus – European Master of Arts in Media, Communication and Cultural Studies, EURO-AQUAE – Euro Hydro Informatics & Water Management and EMLE – European Master in Law and Economics. The National Agency is collaborating in this project with quality assurance organisations from France, Hungary, the Netherlands, Spain and the UK. Its report will be presented in June 2006.

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14. How did things turn out? Höskoleverkets rapportserie 2004:15 R.

15. Accreditation – an open question. Höskoleverkets rapportserie 2003:4 R (In Swedish only).

## **Evaluation of internationalisation at the higher education institutions**

In a special thematic evaluation of internationalisation in undergraduate and postgraduate programmes in Sweden, the National Agency for Higher Education recommends the institutions to pay greater attention to monitoring and evaluating their internationalisation endeavours.<sup>16</sup> The follow-up, evaluation and quality assurance of exchange agreements for students is not extensive enough. The National Agency recommends the institutions to increase their exchange of experiences with each other.

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16. Borderless higher education? On the internationalisation of undergraduate and graduate programmes. Högskoleverkets rapportserie 2005:1 R.

# Towards a new quality evaluation system

Even though the current quality evaluation system has two more years to run, the time has already come to begin to reflect on what is to happen after 2006. The plans for the future quality evaluation system are now beginning to take shape. During the remaining two years the National Agency will be testing new approaches within the framework of the present model. In addition the Agency has drafted a concept on which the design of the future quality evaluation system could be based. This concept has been discussed in different contexts.

## **A variety of approaches**

In one of the evaluations published during 2004, evaluation of personnel and working life programmes, a different approach to the evaluation process was tested. The panel of assessors met students from all of the higher education institutions involved at a “hearing”. Labour market representatives were also invited to a “hearing” with the panel. Instead of site visits, the panel held discussion meetings with representatives of the three institutions, one by one. This was a positive experience even though it becomes more difficult to make specific recommendations for each institution if no site visits are made.

Development of the methods used in the evaluation process has also taken place during the preparations for 2005. The evaluations of the master’s programmes in engineering have been prepared in close collaboration with the higher education institutions. LADOK (the National Student Records Database) has been consulted on the decision about the statistical information to be submitted by the institutions. Particular attention will also be paid to the international perspective in this evaluation. A special evaluation will be made of postgraduate programmes in the discipline of technology where focus will be at faculty rather than departmental level. Here as well specific statistical data will be collected and processed before the self-evaluations are made.

The preparations for the 2006 evaluations comprise several specific studies.

Another study that can be seen as a version of a quality evaluation has been the initiation and participation in a comparative Nordic study of quality assurance procedures at higher education institutions. This study is intended to indicate the institution that has the best quality assurance system in the Nordic countries. A number of higher education institutions were invited by the National Agency to submit entries. Sweden is represented by Uppsala University. During the spring of 2005 the best contender will be selected.

## **Draft concept for a new quality evaluation system**

What should the basis of a new quality evaluation system look like? The point of departure for the National Agency's draft is its conviction that it is inappropriate to repeat the same quality assurance system twice in succession. The system of evaluating subjects and programmes must be developed, new features and methods of quality appraisal must be devised. One of the most important points of departure in this process comes from the international context in which Swedish higher education is involved and above all developments within the framework of the Bologna Process. The three main aims of quality evaluation will still apply: development, monitoring and information. Evaluations will continue to focus on the student perspective. A comparative international approach is important. The major evaluations of subjects and programmes that have been undertaken have substantially improved the capacity of the higher education institutions to take their own augmented responsibility for quality development and quality assurance. Now the majority of departments have tested an evaluation and quality development model and they have been offered concrete examples of how evaluations can be conducted. Increased responsibility for the higher education institutions themselves also corresponds to international trends in evaluation. At the moment work on the new quality evaluation system is still in the preparatory phase and opinions are being sought from many quarters. The National Agency for Higher Education is also waiting for the opinion of the government.

### **What do the vice-chancellors think?**

The vice-chancellors of the state-run and independent higher education institutions have been invited to submit their opinions on the design of a future system. The predominant impression is that the vice-chancellors share the view that in future the higher education institutions should take more responsibility themselves for quality evaluations. In addition, two different approaches can be discerned in their responses. On the one hand, less monitoring and less work is desired, on the other some form of system for evaluations of subjects and programmes. Some would like more focus on findings. The importance of demonstrating the continuity in the evaluation process to the international community is also pointed out.

### **The National Agency for Higher Education's proposal**

The proposed future quality evaluation system comprises five elements:

- Audits of the institutions' own quality assurance and quality development systems.
- A smaller number of subject and programme evaluations determined on the basis of data from monitoring.
- Thematic evaluations.
- Appraisal of "particularly eminent educational settings".
- Appraisal of applications for entitlement to award degrees.

**Audits of the institutions' own quality assurance and quality development systems.** Here the role of the National Agency would be to audit and assess how the quality assurance procedures function at a higher education institution, or in other words look for evidence of impact on quality. One central concern is to ensure that these procedures are focused and that evaluations cover every level in the institution. Greater focus on the institutions' quality assurance systems fits in with both the wishes of the vice-chancellors and with international developments.

**A smaller number of subject and programme evaluations determined on the basis of data from monitoring.** One way of linking monitoring and evaluations is to use data from monitoring to determine what to evaluate. This selection could be based on other criteria as well, such as complaints from students or opinions expressed by employers. Subject and programme evaluations could cover all the higher education institutions or alternatively one or more of them.

**Thematic evaluations.** Hitherto the National Agency has conducted quality evaluations with the following themes: gender equality, student influence, diversity, cooperation with the surrounding community and internationalisation. Thematic evaluations have played an important role in directing attention to specific aspects of quality and it is suggested they should continue. Potential themes for evaluation are cooperation between the higher education institutions and the supportive measures offered by the institutions to their students.

**Appraisal of "particularly eminent educational settings".** Appraisal of "particularly eminent educational settings" is a new feature in quality evaluation of higher education in Sweden. However, it is undertaken in a number of other countries, such as Finland, Norway and the United Kingdom. The idea is that designation as a "particularly eminent educational setting" will be based on a special application and nomination procedure. The requirements for nomination will be extremely stringent and the designation will apply for a limited period.

**Appraisal of applications for entitlement to award degrees.** Appraisals of these applications will continue. Which undergraduate degrees will be subject to appraisal in the future will depend on the amendments to the degree ordinance that will result from the government bill on higher education this spring. Where the appraisal of entitlement to award postgraduate degrees is concerned, the impending decision on the continued existence of the system of authorised areas of research will play a decisive role.

## **What happens now?**

To enable further work on its proposal three methodological development projects are being undertaken by the National Agency. These concern appraisal of higher education institutions, the use of monitoring data for identi-

fyng which subject and programme evaluations to undertake and appraisal of “particularly eminent educational settings”. These projects will involve gathering experiences from both Sweden and other countries. Reference groups have been appointed or soon will be. A trial study is taking place and more are planned.

Initial discussions of the contents of the proposal have taken place with the vice-chancellors and those responsible for quality at the higher education institutions. Their reaction has been positive, on the whole.

The meeting of ministers of education in Bergen in May 2005 and the decisions they will reach will have a major impact on the organisation of the future quality evaluation system. The impending government bill on higher education will also be of decisive importance.

In the process of designing and implementing the new quality evaluation system, the National Agency will cooperate with representatives of the Swedish higher education institutions, with student organisations and other stakeholders. The quality assurance measures implemented during the current quality evaluation system will continue to apply. The International Advisory Board, which has monitored the Agency’s quality evaluations continually since they started in 2001, is meeting for the last time in April 2005 and will then express opinions on the future system. The National Agency for Higher Education will continue to seek the opinions of international experts in the field of evaluation.

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