

# Introduction for assessors in UKÄ's reviews

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# Introduction

Thank you for your interest in participating as an assessor in the task of reviewing the quality of higher education. We dare to promise that this will be exciting and rewarding work.

This document<sup>1</sup> is intended for assessors involved with any of the reviews which the Swedish Higher Education Authority (UKÄ) carries out within the national system for quality assurance of higher education. The system comprises the following four reviews, referred to as components:

- appraisal of applications for degree-awarding powers
- reviews of the higher education institutions' (HEIs') quality assurance processes
- programme evaluations
- thematic evaluations.

As an assessor, you are an expert, a student representative, or an employer and labour market representative, and together you form an assessment panel. The assessment panel is tasked with providing an overall assessment of either a programme or an HEI's quality assurance processes. With respect to thematic evaluations, the subject of review may vary.

Together with the guidelines<sup>2</sup> for each component, this document aims to serve as support for the assignment as an assessor and in the assessment work. The document consists of three parts. The first part contains a brief description of UKÄ's mission, followed by a description of the Swedish education system and the impact of the Bologna Process. The second part describes the assignment of the assessment panel in the review process and the main steps in the implementation of the review. The third part contains some practical information with which you must be familiar as an assessor.

Specific information about the various reviews can be found in the respective guidelines. Guidelines include the aim, assessment areas and assessment criteria for the relevant review.

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<sup>1</sup> The document *Introduction for assessors in UKÄ's reviews* can be found on UKÄ's website, [www.uka.se](http://www.uka.se)

<sup>2</sup> All guidelines are available on UKÄ's website, [www.uka.se](http://www.uka.se)

# Part 1

## UKÄ's mission and activities

UKÄ is a government agency that was formed in 2013 when the previous National Agency for Higher Education was dissolved. Since 1995, the National Agency for Higher Education had been tasked by the Government with conducting reviews of higher education. UKÄ's operations are controlled by the Government through instructions. UKÄ's work is split into three primary areas:

- Evaluate programmes and the HEIs' quality assurance of higher education and research. It is vital for students, employers and society at large that all Swedish higher education is of high quality.
- Monitor and analyse developments and trends in Swedish higher education. UKÄ is responsible for all official statistics on higher education.
- Exercise legal oversight of all universities and university colleges. This means that UKÄ evaluates whether the HEIs follow applicable laws and regulations.

UKÄ's quality assurance of higher education takes place through the appraisals of applications for degree-awarding powers; reviews of the HEIs' quality assurance processes; programme evaluations and thematic evaluations.

On our own initiative or on behalf of the Government, UKÄ evaluates and analyses Swedish higher education. UKÄ is also responsible for all official higher education statistics, i.e., UKÄ determines what information about HEIs will be collected and how it will be processed. The authority also reviews how effectively HEIs run their operations. The review highlights various aspects and conditions that are relevant to how the resources are used.

To monitor the rights of students, UKÄ reviews whether HEIs comply with laws and regulations, including the regulations and stipulations which the HEIs have determined themselves. If the HEI has not complied with the existing regulations for its operations, UKÄ points this out to the HEI and subsequently follows up whether the corrective measures the HEI has taken are sufficient. If deficiencies remain, they are reported to the Government. UKÄ also provides the administration services for the Higher Education Appeals Board (ÖNH) and the Higher Education Expulsion Board (HAN).

More information about UKÄ's mission and activities is available at: [www.uka.se](http://www.uka.se).

## Higher education in Sweden

### Higher education institutions

There are about 50 higher education institutions (HEIs)<sup>3</sup> in Sweden, of which the majority are public universities and university colleges. There are also a number of independent, non-public higher education providers. The primary difference between a university and a university college is that universities enjoy general entitlement to award degrees at the master and doctoral levels, while university colleges must apply for permission to award degrees at the master and doctoral levels in specific areas. Most independent higher education providers are small and only have programmes in one or a few areas.

The vast majority of higher education is provided by public HEIs, with around 90 per cent of the full-time equivalents (FTE). The Swedish parliament (Riksdag) takes decisions on the establishment of public HEIs, while the Government decides whether a university college has the right to become a university.

HEIs have three primary missions<sup>4</sup>: to pursue education and research; to collaborate with the surrounding community; and to work to ensure research findings are put to use. Public HEIs are their own government agencies and are immediately under Government supervision. Under the auspices of comprehensive legislation, HEIs take most decisions themselves. This involves, among other things, organisation; internal allocation of resources; the range, content and design of courses and programmes; and how many students may be admitted. The Government determines which qualifications may be offered and requirements for them in the form of scope and objectives. The right to issue qualifications may be designated in part by legislation, and in part by special authorisation decisions from UKÄ or the Government. Public universities may issue general qualifications at the first-, second- and third-cycle levels. Public university colleges have overall permission to issue qualifications at the first-cycle level and 60-credit master's degrees. Both universities and university colleges must apply for permission to issue qualifications in the fine, applied and performing arts, regardless of level. The same applies to professional qualifications. Independent higher education providers must always apply for degree-awarding powers, regardless of the type and level of the qualification. If

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<sup>3</sup> Higher Education in Sweden 2018 Status Report, UKÄ

<sup>4</sup> Chapter 1, section 2 of the Higher Education Act (1992:1434)

an HEI no longer meets the requirements to offer a qualification, permission to do so may be revoked.

The Riksdag decides on funding for education and research in higher education, while the Government defines the HEIs educational assignments in their appropriation directions. A funding cap is specified for the public HEIs' educational assignments. The funding cap comprises the maximum compensation which HEIs may receive for courses and study programmes offered at the first- and second-cycle levels. The size of the funding cap to be used is calculated based on the number of registered students (converted to full-time equivalents (FTEs)) and the number of credits awarded (converted to annual performance equivalents) in the courses offered by the HEI. However, the compensation for FTEs and annual performance equivalents differs for different subject areas.

The HEIs also receive funding for research and education at the third-cycle level directly from the Government, but some of the state funding is channelled via research funding agencies, such as the Swedish Research Council. Research is also funded by research funding bodies other than the state.

Higher education is free of charge except for students from countries outside the EU/EEC area or Switzerland. These students must pay both application fees and tuition fees, and the HEIs may charge a tuition fee covering the full cost, including administrative costs.

## **Laws and regulations governing higher education**

The Higher Education Act (1992:1434) was passed by the Riksdag and contains provisions for HEIs that are accountable to the Government. The law provides a framework for organisation and governance, but is not otherwise especially detailed. Among other things, Chapter 1 of the Higher Education Act indicates that higher education should be based on a scientific or artistic foundation, and on proven experience, research, artistic research as well as development efforts.

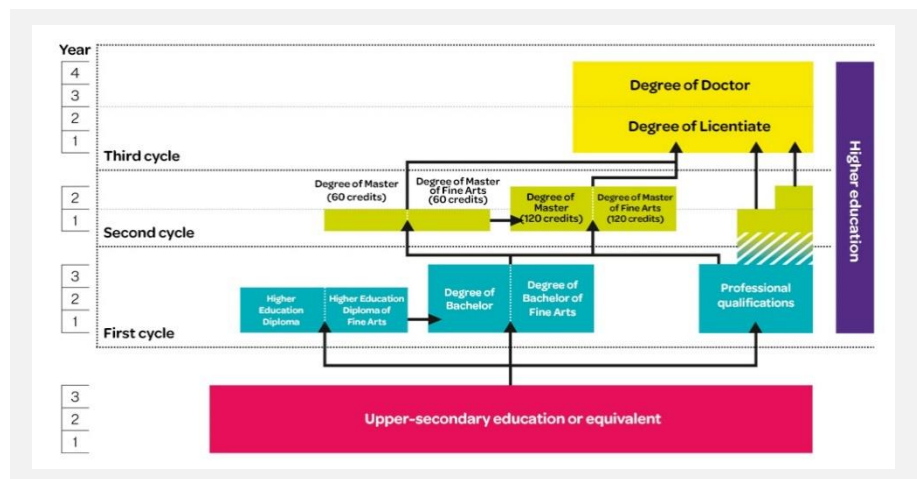
The Higher Education Act is supplemented by the Higher Education Ordinance (1993:100); the Ordinance (1993:221) for the Swedish University of Agricultural Sciences; and the Ordinance (2007:1164) for the Swedish Defence University, which are decreed by the Government. The ordinances include, for example, rules for employing teachers and doctoral students; entry requirements for applicants to higher education; and rules for syllabi and grades. The annexes to the ordinances contain "qualifications ordinances", which include descriptions of and qualitative targets for all degrees.

The public HEIs are also controlled by the Government's appropriation directives to each HEI. The equivalent legislation for independent higher education providers is the Act (1993:792) Concerning Authority to Award Certain Qualifications. There are also often contracts with the Government laying out requirements for the independent education providers.

Find more information about the laws and regulations governing higher education at [www.uka.se](http://www.uka.se).

## Programme and degree structure

The current programme and degree structure which the Swedish Riksdag passed in 2006 is the result of Sweden joining the Bologna Process. The change was the basis of the 2007 Higher Education Reform and entails that all qualifications are situated within the levels of first-, second-, and third-cycle education. The picture below illustrates the various degree levels.



Higher education is organised into courses, which fall under one of these three levels.

The scope of a programme is expressed as higher education credits. One academic year is typically 40 weeks, which corresponds with 60 higher education credits for full-time studies. Courses at the first- and second-cycle levels can be assembled into a degree programme, and students may either follow a programme or take freestanding courses.

There are three types of qualifications in higher education: general qualifications; qualifications in the fine, applied and performing arts; and professional qualifications. General qualifications and qualifications in the fine, applied and performing arts are offered at the first-, second-, and third-cycle levels. The first-cycle level has two qualifications: a higher education diploma (120 higher education credits) and a bachelor's



degree (180 higher education credits). The second-cycle level also has two qualifications: a 60-credit master's degree and a 120-credit master's degree. There are also two qualifications at the third-cycle level: degree of licentiate (120 higher education credits) and degree of doctor (240 higher education credits).

There are just over 50 professional qualifications, at the first- or second-cycle level. Study programmes leading to these qualifications are primarily for so-called regulated professions, i.e., professions requiring special qualifications to practice them. In several cases, the profession is associated with a professional status qualification. Each qualification has targets for what students are to have achieved. Qualitative targets are organised into three categories:

- Knowledge and understanding
- Competence and skills
- Judgement and approach.

All general qualifications with the same scope (for example, all bachelor's degrees or all master's degrees) have the same qualitative targets, which are kept at a general level. This is also applicable to all qualifications in the fine, applied and performing arts. However, each professional qualification has its own targets. The Qualifications Ordinance, Annex 2 of the the Higher Education Ordinance lays out the qualitative targets.

## **Higher education in Sweden and the Bologna Process**

The Bologna Process is a collaboration between about 50 European countries on education at university level. The Bologna Process is based on the Bologna Declaration and aims to make Europe a cohesive area for higher education. Cooperation will also make it easier for students and job seekers to move across national borders in Europe. As an aspect of the Bologna Process, in 2007 Sweden introduced a new programme and degree structure, through which Sweden has adapted its higher education system to the rest of Europe. The new structure entails:

- A new credit system, in which one year of study corresponds with 60 higher education credits for full-time studies.
- A level division comprising the three levels first cycle, second cycle and third cycle.
- Everyone who obtains an academic degree in Sweden has a document (Diploma Supplement) that makes it easier to use the degree abroad.

The purpose of the Bologna Process was originally for Europe to be a cohesive European Higher Education Area by 2010. The three overarching goals of the Bologna Process are to:

- promote mobility
- promote employability
- promote Europe’s competitiveness and attractiveness as a continent for education.

These three overarching goals also have a number of operational objectives. Sweden has essentially carried out the operational objectives of the Bologna Declaration during the period of 2001–2010 and Sweden's Riksdag has ratified the Lisbon Convention, which involves mutual recognition of study programmes in other countries.

One of the operational objective is the implementation of a system of clear and comparable qualifications. An additional operational objective is the promotion of the European collaboration in quality assurance of higher education, which in turn resulted in the establishment of the European Association for Quality Assurance in Higher Education (ENQA) in 2000<sup>5</sup>. The overarching goals and operational objectives continue to apply through 2020. At the ministerial conference in Leuven, Belgium in 2009 a decision was taken to focus on six priority areas:

- The social dimension – high-quality education should be available to all, in which underrepresented groups should be given special support to participate and carry out their studies.
- Life-long learning – learning throughout life should be encouraged through different forms of education and by introducing a National Qualification Framework (NQF).
- Employability – the labour market increasingly needs well-educated workers. HEIs must meet this need, among other methods, through traineeships in study programmes.
- Student-centred learning – HEIs must specify learning objectives in study programme syllabi.
- Internationalisation and mobility – by 2020, at least 20 per cent of those who obtain a degree will have studied or had a traineeship abroad during their studies. Mobility is to be a distinctive characteristic of European higher education.
- “Multidimensional transparency tools” – it is to be possible to compare European HEIs to one another, related to the Bologna Process.

These six priority areas have in turn laid the foundation for formulating ENQA’s standards and guidelines for quality assurance of higher education (ESG).

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<sup>5</sup> ENQA is an organisation that works to promote the quality assurance of higher education in Europe

## **European Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance (ESG)**

Achieving the Bologna Process's goals, for example, of increased mobility between countries among students and employees, requires mutual trust in one another's educational systems and for the countries to acknowledge the quality of one another's educational systems and institutions. The role of quality assurance is therefore of fundamental importance.

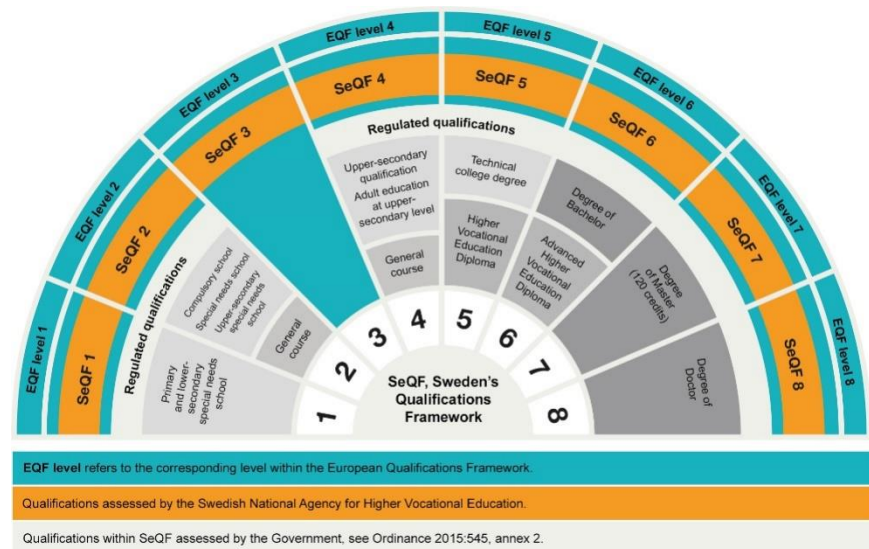
To contribute to a joint understanding of quality assurance concerning teaching and learning across national borders, standards and guidelines for quality assurance in the European area for higher education have been developed (ESG). These common guidelines are intended to be applied in each country in Europe, irrespective of legal framework, educational system and other circumstances. They contribute to uniformity between countries and provide an important complement to the laws and regulations governing the HEIs' operations, among other things. The ESG are not mandatory, but serve an important function in improving uniformity within Europe and the ability to make comparisons between countries.

To create international legitimacy for higher education in Sweden, it is therefore important that the ESG are taken into account. The current Swedish quality assurance system, which was adopted in 2016, is based on applicable laws and regulations as well as the principles for quality assurance that have been adopted within the framework of the Bologna Process (ESG).

## **European Qualification Framework**

An additional result of the European partnership is the establishment of the European Qualification Framework (EQF), which is a common European frame of reference and a translation system that connects the qualification systems of different countries. The purpose is to make it easier to study, understand and compare qualifications from different countries and systems. Eight reference levels form the core of EQF. Each level depicts the knowledge, skills and competence an individual should have reached in order to obtain a qualification – regardless of how this is achieved. The eight levels span the entire range of qualifications, from the most basic to the highest levels of academic and vocational education. In 2015 the Government decided to introduce the Swedish National Qualifications Framework (SeQF). SeQF is adapted for Swedish conditions but is based on the European Qualifications Framework. The Swedish framework is also divided into eight levels and covers the entire Swedish education system, from primary school to doctoral degree. Levels 6–8 correspond with the three levels for Bologna, i.e., the framework for higher education.

The framework also covers learning that takes place outside of the public education system, i.e., knowledge acquired at the workplace, privately, or in various associations. All study programmes have been allocated into levels, which are determined by the Government. Since 1 March 2016, organisations that issue qualifications outside of the public education system, for example from working life, may apply to the Swedish National Agency for Higher Vocational Education for SeQF level placement.



The Swedish National Qualifications Framework (SeQF) is based on the European Qualification Framework (EQF)

More information about Swedish higher education and education policy in a European perspective is available at the Eurydice network. The Eurydice online encyclopaedia of European national education systems has comparable and up-to-date descriptions of higher education in 38 countries. A section with particular significance for quality auditing describes the quality assurance systems in Sweden and other countries, [https://eacea.ec.europa.eu/national-policies/eurydice/national-description\\_en](https://eacea.ec.europa.eu/national-policies/eurydice/national-description_en).

Information on how far each country has come with adapting their educational systems to the common goals can be found on the Bologna Secretariat's website: <https://www.ehea.info>.

Information on the European Qualifications Framework (EQF) and the Swedish Qualifications Framework (SeQF) can be found on the website for the Swedish National Agency for Higher Vocational Education: <https://www.seqf.se>.

## Part 2

### Assessment panel's assignment

UKÄ has a six-year plan (2016–2022) for conducting the four different reviews, referred to as the components. Regarding applications for degree-awarding powers, UKÄ assesses the applications as they are received. However, there are two dates per year which mean that decisions are taken during a certain period. For applications received by 15 March, a decision is taken by 25 December the same year, and for applications received by 15 October, a decision is taken by the following summer.

Each review (except for appraisals of applications for degree-awarding powers) begins with UKÄ conducting a survey of the HEIs, study programmes, or the theme to be reviewed. The HEIs to be included in the review will subsequently be contacted and asked to nominate experts. The Swedish National Union of Students have a special task from the Government to nominate student representatives for UKÄ. Similarly, labour market organisations are asked to nominate employer and labour market representatives for UKÄ's assessment panels. UKÄ then appoints the assessment panel based on the nominations received<sup>6</sup>.

UKÄ takes gender equality issues into account in all areas of the government agency's operations, both internally and externally. This means, among other things, that a gender equality perspective is incorporated into the recruitment of reviewers.

### Assessment panel's composition

UKÄ's review method is based on a peer-review procedure, carried out by assessment panels comprising experts from the higher education sector, student representatives, and employer and labour market representatives. The number of assessors hired depends on the content and scope of the assignment.

Collectively, the panel is to have sufficiently broad and extensive expertise to assess all assessment areas included in the review. This also means that you are all on the assessment panel on the same terms, and each individual's competence is equally important for completing the review. A chairperson is appointed in each assessment panel; occasionally, a vice chairperson is also appointed. For appraisal of

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<sup>6</sup> For appraisals of applications for degree-awarding powers, a list of incoming applications is sent to all HEIs, labour market organisations, and the Swedish National Union of Students with an invitation to nominate assessors. Unlike the other components, all HEIs may nominate assessors, not just those included in the review, i.e. those who have applied for degree-awarding powers.

applications for degree-awarding powers, a chairperson will be appointed if needed.

## **Your task as an assessor**

UKÄ places high demands on assessment panel members regarding both expertise and impartiality.

To be able to carry out the task effectively and as fairly as possible, it is important that all panel members understand their tasks and take responsibility for their assignments. Much of the work, such as reviewing documents, making evaluations, writing reports and formulating interview questions, will be done remotely and in the way determined jointly by UKÄ and the assessment panel. To ensure a fair and effective review process, it is important to respect the method, work approach, and the schedule. Your tasks and your responsibilities as an assessor are described below:

### **As an assessor on an assessment panel, your task involves:**

- undergoing an introduction to the assignment and training in UKÄ's evaluation methods and process
- participating in meetings throughout the evaluation process and being thoroughly familiar with preparatory documents for the meetings
- participating in introductory meetings<sup>7</sup> with HEIs (the chairperson usually participates)
- reviewing, discussing and evaluating the various assessment material
- in writing, entering the judgments in UKÄ's assessor tool (UKÄ Bedömarvy), justifying the judgments, and specifying the material on which the judgments are based
- in the assessment panel, jointly preparing questions for interviews or site visits
- in the assessment panel, sharing responsibility for conducting interviews or site visits
- within the specified timeframe, summarising the evaluations in a joint statement including the assessment panel's proposed overall assessment and proposed decision.

### **Your task as chairperson also includes:**

- representing the assessment panel in the introductory meeting with the HEIs
- representing the assessment panel in any chairperson meetings
- discussing with UKÄ the structure and implementation of the work in the assessment panel
- discussing and solving any challenges together with UKÄ as needed

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<sup>7</sup> There is no introductory meeting for appraisal of applications for degree-awarding powers.

- taking overall responsibility for factual matters, evaluations and completion of the assessment panel's reports.

**Your task as a student representative also includes:**

- conveying the student perspective in discussions about the assessment criteria
- ensuring that the evaluations establish a student perspective when relevant.

**Your task as an employer and labour market representative also includes:**

- conveying matters related to working life/labour market and collaboration and participating in discussions about the assessment criteria
- ensuring that the evaluations establish a working life and collaboration perspective when relevant.

**Your task as an assessor in programme evaluations (and in some cases of appraisals of applications of degree-awarding powers)**

As an assessor employed by an HEI that is included in the evaluation, it is important that the role of assessor and the role of HEI representative are separated. In your role as an HEI representative you can participate in writing the HEI's self-evaluation. When the evaluation and the assessment panel's work has begun, a member of the panel should not represent their HEI within the evaluation. You should for example not participate in interviews as an HEI representative, or participate in the panel's discussions of the programme in question at your HEI.

**UKÄ's tasks and responsibilities include:**

- introducing assessors to the assignment and to UKÄ's evaluation and work methods
- providing information to and communicating with the HEIs before, during and after the review
- planning the evaluation, handling the logistics and serving as contacts for the HEIs and assessors
- clearly specifying what is expected of each and every assessor and ensuring the panel agrees on a common work method within the given timeframes
- compiling and equipping the assessors with the material required for the evaluation
- planning interviews or site visits
- assisting the assessment panel with calibration of the assessments
- ensuring the evaluations are well-founded and carried out predictably, transparently, and equitably
- ensuring the assessors' report drafts are proofread by external proofreaders



- providing feedback on the assessors' report draft and deciding formally on the outcome of the reviews.

## **Overarching description of the different steps of the review process**

The basic principles and procedure for the reviews are similar, whether they involve a programme evaluation, review of an HEI's quality assurance processes, appraisal of applications for degree-awarding powers or a thematic evaluation. However, there are variations among the different types of reviews. For example, appraisals of application for degree-awarding powers do not include a chairperson meeting or an introductory meeting with the HEI. Time required and, for example, the number of assessment panel meetings for a review also differ. Information about implementation of the reviews in the various components can be found in the guidelines for each component. All guidelines are available on UKÄ's website, [www.uka.se](http://www.uka.se).

Throughout the review process, UKÄ will have regular contact with you as an assessor. Do not hesitate to contact UKÄ if you have any questions.

Annexes 1–4 include an overview of each assessment process:

- programme evaluations at the first and second-cycle levels (annex 1)
- programme evaluations at the third-cycle level (annex 2)
- review of HEIs' quality assurance processes (annex 3)
- appraisal of applications for degree-awarding powers (annex 4).

### **Chairperson meetings**

At chairperson meetings, UKÄ meets with the chairs of the various evaluations within a single component and review round. The relevant reviews are discussed at the meeting.

### **Introductory meeting with the HEIs**

The process of conducting programme evaluations, reviews of HEIs' quality assurance processes and thematic evaluations begins with an introductory meeting for the HEIs included in the round of reviews. At the introductory meeting, the review process and assessment criteria are presented, as well as an overarching schedule for the review. The assessment material which the HEI must submit to UKÄ and the assessment panel's composition are presented. The chairperson of the assessment panel usually participates in the introductory meeting to answer any questions from the HEIs and to report information from the meeting back to the rest of the assessment panel.



## Assessment panel meeting 1

Prior to the meeting, you will receive information from UKÄ about what you need to do before for the meeting, such as reading the assessment material. Some parts of the meeting may be carried out jointly with other reviews within the same component and review round.

The first assessment panel meeting aims to clarify the assignment and expectations, and to review and discuss the assessment material, areas and criteria. For appraisal of applications for degree-awarding powers, the aim is also to make preliminary assessments and to start the process of formulating questions for the interviews.

At the meeting, you will also receive other information that is important for the specific review in which you are participating. For example the schedule, structure and delegation of work in the panel will be discussed and determined. You will also receive information about how to work in UKÄ Bedömarvy.

## Assessment material

Information about assessment material of the reviews in the various components can be found in the guidelines for each component. All guidelines are available on UKÄ's website, [www.uka.se](http://www.uka.se).

## Assessor tool – UKÄ Bedömarvy

The system has two points of access for external users: UKÄ Direkt, where HEIs register the material requested by UKÄ; and UKÄ Bedömarvy, where assessors can access the material. UKÄ Bedömarvy has prepared forms where you enter your evaluations of the various materials, justifications for your assessments, your questions prior to the interviews, and your overall assessment.

To work in UKÄ Bedömarvy, use a web browser: Mozilla Firefox, Internet Explorer, Chrome or Safari. Any issues you may have with your web browser are likely due to using an older version that is not supported by UKÄ Bedömarvy. Download and install a newer version. To be able to open and read documents, you will also need a PDF reader. These programmes can be downloaded free from the internet if you do not already have one installed. It is important to have a stable internet connection when working in UKÄ Bedömarvy. If your connection to the internet goes down and you continue writing, your work may be lost. Therefore, save frequently when working in UKÄ Bedömarvy.

As an assessor, you will receive a message via e-mail with your login information. Contact UKÄ if you have not received login information or if you have any questions. Thorough instructions for the various features of UKÄ Bedömarvy can be found in the document *User Guide for UKÄ*

*Bedömarvy*. The relevant user manual can be found in the list to the left in UKÄ *Bedömarvy*.

## **Individual review and assessment**

After the initial assessment panel meeting, the work continues as you review the assessment material and make a preliminary assessment of the assessment criteria and areas. This work is done remotely and individually by all assessors on the panel. The individual review should be finished by the date agreed by UKÄ and the assessment panel.

As previously noted, you have access to the assessment material via UKÄ *Bedömarvy*. The individual assessment involves reviewing the material and filling in your assessments of each assessment criterion in an assessment form. The form is also available in UKÄ *Bedömarvy*. For each assessment criterion, make the assessment of what you could infer from the material as well as any questions, for example, where you were unable to make an assessment based on the available material.

For appraisals of applications for degree-awarding powers, the individual assessment process involves, prior to the first assessment panel meeting, reading the HEI's application and making an individual assessment. However, you will not enter your assessments into a form in UKÄ *Bedömarvy*. At the meeting, the assessment panel will discuss the material together, make preliminary assessments and begin the process of formulating questions for the interviews.

## **Assessment panel's position**

After the remote individual assessment process is completed, you and the rest of the assessment panel will go through your individual assessments and discuss and calibrate your assessments together. The assessment process should result in a preliminary report. The process of writing the preliminary report is based on your joint discussions and positions on the various assessment criteria.

For appraisals of applications for degree-awarding powers, as previously stated, the individual assessment is carried out before assessment panel meeting 1, and at the meeting, the joint review and assessment process begins. After this first assessment panel meeting, you will continue the process of analysing the assessment material and formulating questions for the interviews. Before the interviews, the assessment panel has a preliminary meeting to go through the questions and make any final preparations for the interviews. The interviews are carried out in connection with the preliminary meeting.

## Writing the report

Based on the preliminary evaluations, you will begin to write a preliminary report. It is important to begin this process at an early stage to facilitate calibration of your assessments, and also to identify what information is needed from the interviews or site visits. It is also important that the report-writing process begins at an early stage so that the schedule can be maintained and to ensure the final report is of high quality. UKÄ will review and comment on the report on several occasions throughout the process. The purpose of UKÄ's quality assurance is to

- help ensure that the assessments are calibrated
- ensure that all assessment criteria have been evaluated
- ensure that the assessment is clear and well-founded
- ensure that it is clear which material the assessment is based on.

For appraisals of applications for degree-awarding powers, the process of writing the preliminary report begins immediately after the interviews are conducted.

## Interviews and site visits to HEIs

The purpose of interviews and site visits is to supplement the HEI's self-evaluations and collect information. Through the interviews conducted with different groups and individuals, as an assessor, you can also have information clarified as needed and check that you have properly interpreted the existing information.

For programme evaluations, the interviews are conducted online. For appraisal of applications for degree-awarding powers, the interviews are conducted either online or on-site at UKÄ's premises. When reviewing HEIs' quality assurance processes, the assessment panel interviews representatives of the HEI on two occasions in conjunction with the site visits to the HEI. While the interviews are to fulfil their primary purpose of gathering information and supplementing the written assessment material, they are also significant for establishing trust in the assessment panel and its evaluation work. Careful preparation in both form and content for the interviews and site visits is therefore important. As an assessor, you will only meet representatives of the programme and HEI in conjunction with the interviews and site visits.

The groups and individuals interviewed may differ depending on what type of review is being carried out. The following groups are usually interviewed:

- students and/or doctoral students
- teachers and/or supervisors
- overarching leadership and/or individuals with operational responsibility

- labour market representatives (applicable when reviewing the HEIs' quality assurance processes).

UKÄ will request information from the HEI regarding which HEI representatives will participate in the interviews well in advance of the interview. The HEIs themselves determine which individuals will represent teachers and/or supervisors, and overarching leadership and/or individuals with operational responsibility. Student interviewees should first and foremost be appointed by a student organisation that either belongs to a student union or another student organisation at the HEI. If the student union/organisation is unable to recruit students, UKÄ will ensure that students are recruited for the interviews.

The information obtained from the interviews will help form an overall picture and provide greater understanding so that you can make assessments. As an assessor you prepare for the interviews by formulating questions regarding anything you are missing or consider unclear in the documentation to which you have access during the assessment work. Formulate questions you want to ask at the interviews so that they provide answers to the unclear information you have identified. The best way to identify missing or unclear information is by writing a draft of the report before the interviews. It is often in the process of the actual assessment work that missing information for the assessment emerges.

In addition to preparing interview questions, the assessment panel is to clearly allocate roles and tasks before the interview; distribute the questions among the assessment panel members; and agree on which member of the assessment panel will take notes. When one of you asks questions, another assessor should take notes on the responses so that the person asking the questions can concentrate on asking follow-up questions to ensure the responses are clear.

## **Final assessment**

After the interviews and site visits, you will prepare the preliminary report and submit it to UKÄ. UKÄ will assure the quality of the report. As previously stated, the purpose of UKÄ's quality assurance is to ensure that the assessments are legally sound, to ensure that all assessment criteria have been evaluated, that the assessment is clear, well-founded, and that the material upon which the assessment is based is clear. After the assessment panel has made any corrections and clarifications, UKÄ submits the report for proofreading. UKÄ processes the proofreader's comments and submits the report back to the assessment panel for approval. The report is then sent to the HEI for review.

## **Review of preliminary report and decision**

Reviewing gives the HEI the opportunity to comment on factual errors and misunderstandings in the report, but not on the actual assessments. The period for comment is three weeks. The assessment panel reads the HEI's responses and make changes to the report where relevant. The assessment panel subsequently submits the report to UKÄ, which takes a decision. All assessors must support the basis of the review process and the report with the overall assessment that the panel ultimately submits to UKÄ. The overall assessment is given on a two or three-point scale. See the guidelines for each component for information about the scale and its classifications.

For appraisals of applications for degree-awarding powers, in some cases the assessment panel may recommend that UKÄ permits an extension for the appraisal. If a decision is taken to grant an extension for the appraisal, the applicants have the opportunity to submit specific additional information based on the shortcomings noted by the assessment panel. The deadline to submit additional information is six months from the date of the decision to grant an extension. When the additional information has been received, the assessment panel takes a position on whether the documents credibly demonstrate that the shortcomings have been remedied.

Once the decision is taken, your assignment as an assessor has been completed.

# Part 3

## Practical information

This section presents UKÄ's administrative procedures that apply to you as an assessor. You can always ask UKÄ's administrative personnel if something is unclear, can be reached by e-mail: [adminutv@uka.se](mailto:adminutv@uka.se)

### Assignment agreement for assessors

An assignment agreement is signed for the review and the relevant time period. Compensation is specified excluding holiday pay (12 percent). The assignment agreement is signed by both the employer (pursuant to UKÄ's rules of procedure) and you as the external assessor/expert/extra reader in two originals.

All Swedish assessors must, among other things, fill in a personal details form and register as a wage earner in the account registry with Danske Bank. If you do not register as a wage earner with Danske Bank, reimbursement is paid through a paying-out form. Non-Swedish assessors must fill in both a personal details form and submit a copy of their passport and taxpayer identification number (TIN) for UKÄ to be able to apply for the necessary tax decision for foreign residents. All forms and the additional information about our bank procedures that are needed before the task will be sent to you in a welcome email by the administrative personnel as soon as the assessment panel is officially appointed by UKÄ.

### Insurance

You are insured when working on assignments from UKÄ from and including the time that the assignment agreement is signed.

### Disqualification

Your assignment as assessor presumes integrity and impartiality. An assessor may not be biased with regard to the HEIs they are tasked with reviewing. The rules of disqualification for government agencies (sections 11 and 12 of the Administrative Procedure Act) aim to avoid conflicts of interest that could call into question objectivity. The rules of disqualification apply to UKÄ employees and to individuals carrying out tasks for the authority. The disqualification rules are based on the individual deciding if there are conditions that may pose a conflict of interest.

In conjunction with an appointment or employment, information about conflicts of interest will be given by filling out a special form provided by UKÄ. UKÄ has developed guidelines aiming to facilitate an understanding of how the laws pertaining to conflicts of interest should be applied (reg. no. 222-506-13). UKÄ must be informed if conditions change or if information emerges during the course of the project that may entail an individual being biased.

## Hotels and travel

As a public authority, the Swedish Higher Education Authority (UKÄ) has a responsibility to taxpayers to ensure our travel is efficient and cost effective.

All travel and hotels should be booked well in advance and via our travel agency. You order your own trips through Big Travel by e-mail: uka@bigtravel.se or phone: +46(08)-120 90 494. When ordering, indicate UKÄ, adminutv, and project number as reference. You will find the project number in the welcome email.

Book second class train tickets. If travel time by train, one way including connections, exceeds four hours, a flight may be booked. Flights are booked at the lowest possible cost, which usually means coach or economy class.

Connecting journeys to and from the train or flight should be by public transport if it is practicable. Taxis should be used sparingly and only under special circumstances, and they must be approved in advance by the project manager at UKÄ. Special circumstances include:

- departure prior to 7.30
- arrival home after 20.30
- the traveller has heavy baggage
- lack of time
- poor connections via public transport
- disability.

Tipping for domestic taxi fares is not reimbursed by UKÄ since this is included in the price. Note that taxi trips must be approved by UKÄ in advance.

Trips paid by UKÄ may not be used for personal gain, for example in the form of collecting travel points. If travel by car is the most appropriate mode of transport, UKÄ will reimburse expenses at SEK 18.50/10 km (tax free). UKÄ also reimburses parking fees if the receipt is submitted.

### Reimbursement for travel expenses

Reimbursement for travel expenses (for example, taxi travel) is received by submitting the original receipt. Submit the original receipt no more

than two months after the trip is completed to: adminutv, Universitetskanslersämbetet, Box 7703, 103 95 Stockholm. For reimbursement to be paid on the 25th of a month, the bill and original receipts must be submitted to UKÄ no later than the 1st of the same month.

## **Meals**

In conjunction with meetings, UKÄ plans and pays for shared meals for participating assessors. UKÄ's representation must be restrained and may not harm trust in the agency. UKÄ plans meals to ensure compliance with the applicable regulations and budgets. UKÄ does not pay for alcohol. It is not permitted for assessors carrying out an assignment for UKÄ to attend an invitation to lunch or dinner by the HEIs under review.

Beyond reimbursement of travel expenses, the Authority does not reimburse expenses for meals and other expenses assessors have in connection with travel.

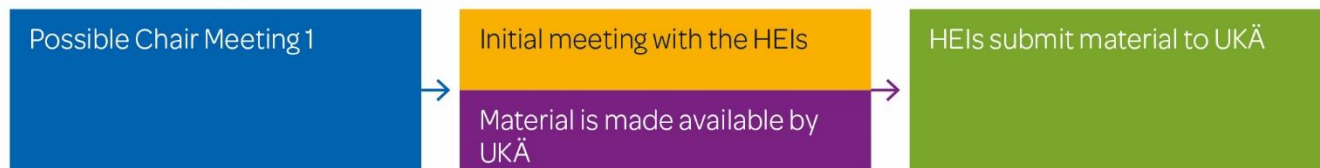
## **Principle of Public Access to Official Documents**

UKÄ is obliged to apply the principle of public access to official documents. This means the general public, often individuals and representatives of the media, are entitled to read documents received by a government agency or formulated by the agency, and which are stored with the agency.

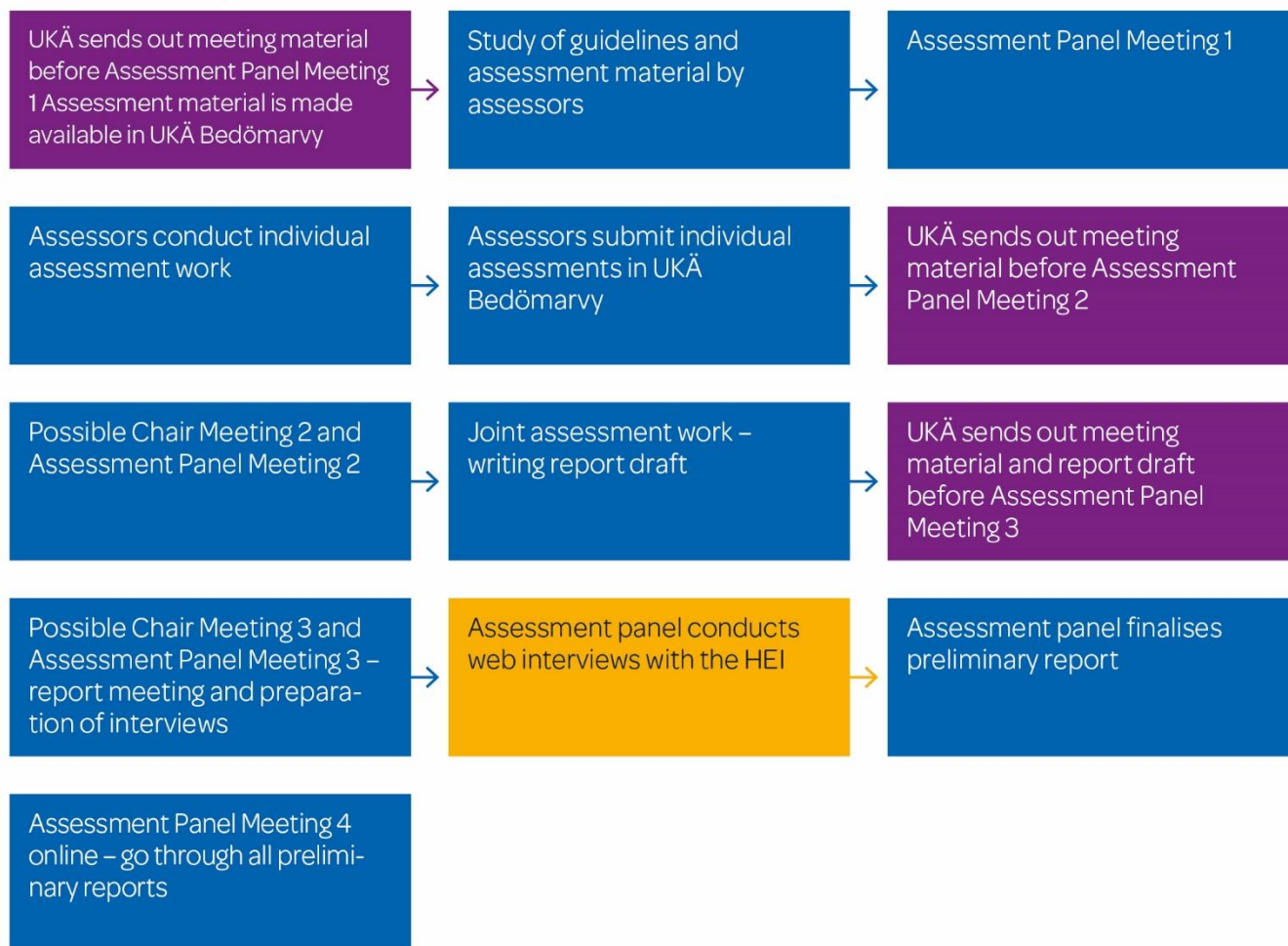


## Assessment process overview for first- and second-cycle level programme evaluations

### Phase 1: Start-up process



### Phase 2: Review process



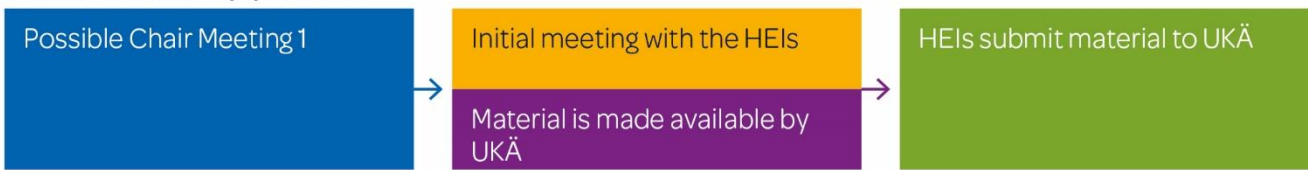
### Phase 3: Decision-making process



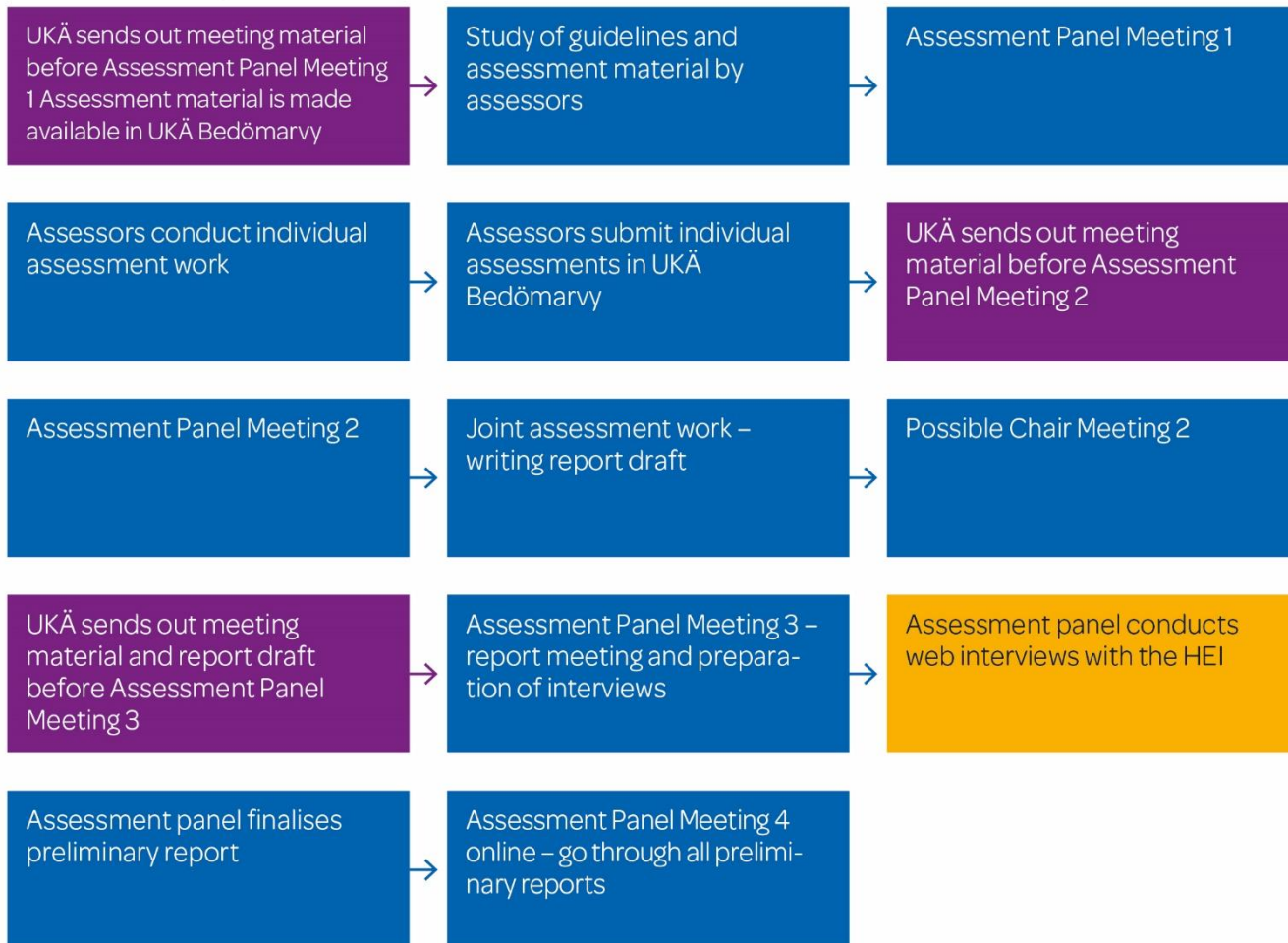
■ Assessors   
 ■ HEIs   
 ■ UKÄ   
 ■ All

## Assessment process overview for third-cycle level programme evaluations

### Phase 1: Start-up process



### Phase 2: Review process



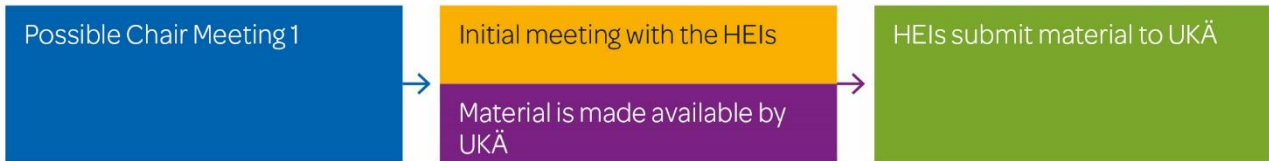
### Phase 3: Decision-making process



■ Assessors   
 ■ HEIs   
 ■ UKÄ   
 ■ All

# Assessment process overview for review of HEIs' quality assurance processes

## Phase 1: Start-up process



## Phase 2: Review process



## Phase 3: Decision-making process

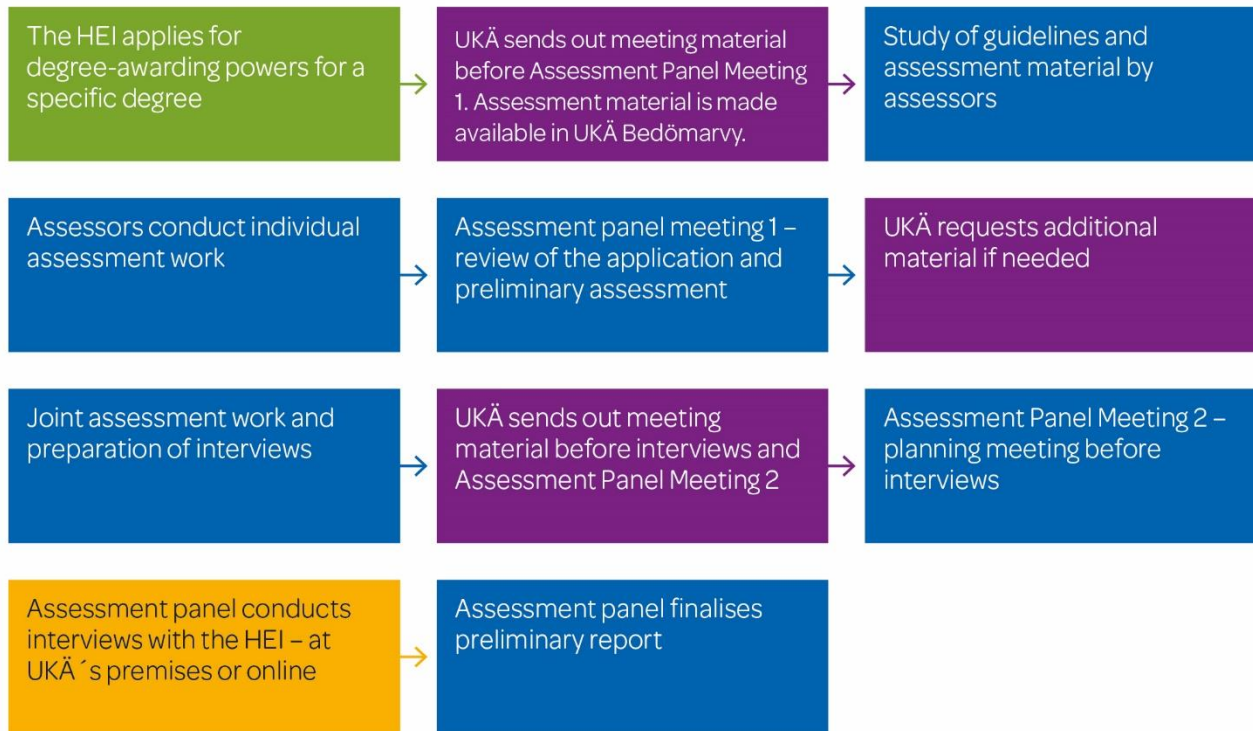


■ Assessors 
 ■ HEIs 
 ■ UKÄ 
 ■ All

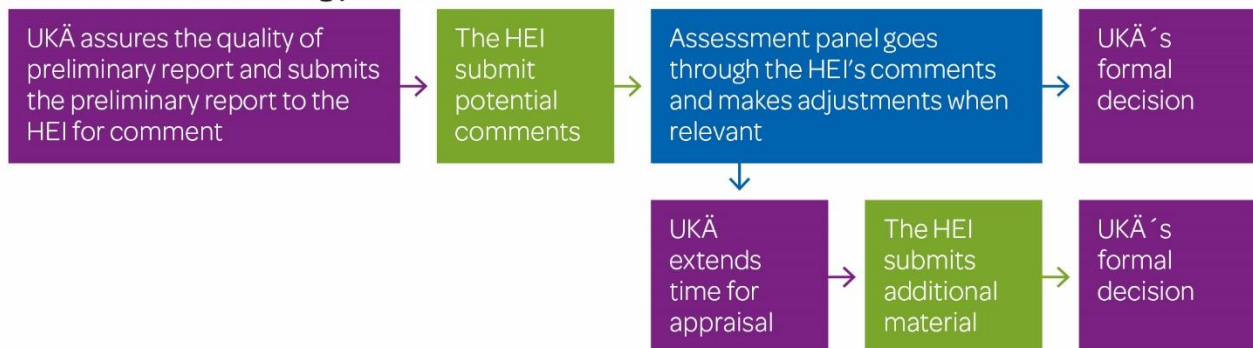


## Assessment process overview for appraisals of degree-awarding powers

### Phase 1: Review process



### Phase 2: Decision-making process



■ Assessors  
 ■ HEI  
 ■ UKÄ  
 ■ All

The Swedish Higher Education Authority (Universitetskanslersämbetet – UKÄ) is to contribute to strengthening Swedish higher education and Sweden as a knowledge society. We review the quality of higher education programmes; we analyse and follow-up trends within higher education and we monitor the rights of students.

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