

Guidelines for the evaluation of third-cycle programmes



Guidelines for the evaluation of third-cycle programmes Published by the Swedish Higher Education Authority 2024, replaces the guidelines issued in 2018

Registration Number: 412-00066-21

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Introduction

These guidelines show how the Swedish Higher Education Authority (UKÄ) evaluates third-cycle programmes at Swedish higher education institutions. The guidance is based on the national system for the quality assurance of higher education and research.

Universities and higher education institutions (HEIs) in Sweden are responsible for ensuring that education and research are of high quality. UKÄ's role is to ensure that the universities and HEIs fulfil their responsibility for quality and therefore conduct various types of reviews. The overall goal of UKÄ's reviews is to help to ensure that the education and research conducted at universities and HEIs in Sweden maintains a high quality. Provisions on UKÄ's responsibility for quality assurance of the activities of universities and HEIs are found in Sections 1 and 2 of Regulation (2012:810) with instructions for the Swedish Higher Education Authority.

UKÄ conducts the following reviews:

- Appraisals of applications for degree-awarding powers.
- Reviews of the quality assurance work of higher education institutions.
- Programme evaluations.
- Thematic evaluations.

When appraising applications for degree-awarding powers, UKÄ reviews whether the higher education institution offers a high-quality education. When reviewing the quality assurance work of higher education institutions, UKÄ assesses whether the work conducted by the institution ensures that its education and research maintain a high level of quality. In programme evaluations, UKÄ assesses whether selected programmes maintain a high level of quality, while in thematic evaluations quality is assessed within a specific area across higher education institutions.

UKÄ's reviews are based on the provisions of the Swedish Higher Education Act (SFS 1992:1434) and Higher Education Ordinance (SFS 1993:100), the government written communication *The quality assurance of higher education* (2015/16:76, 2015/16: UbU9, written communication from the Riksdag 2015/16:155) and the *European Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance in the European Higher Education Area*¹ as well as national and international guidelines on

¹ *Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance in the European Higher Education Area (ESG)*, 2015. UKÄ has also commissioned a Swedish translation, *Standarder och riktlinjer för kvalitetssäkring inom det europeiska området för högre utbildning (ESG)*, 2015.

research². You can learn more about the national system for quality assurance on the UKÄ website.

The method has been developed in consultation with higher education institutions, the Swedish National Union of Students (SFS) and employer and professional organisations, as well as in dialogue with UKÄ's reference groups and selected members of the European Association for Quality Assurance in Higher Education (ENQA). These guidelines cover the points of departure for and purpose of programme evaluations, the knowledge-based selection and method, the various stages of the process and the main content of programme evaluations. Before each evaluation, UKÄ prepares instructions and supplementary information concerning the specific content of the evaluation, its structure and timetable.

² *The European Charter for Researchers and Code of Conduct for the Recruitment of Researchers* and the national framework for quality assurance of research developed by the Association of Swedish Higher Education Institutions (SUHF).

Evaluation of third-cycle programmes

Points of departure and purpose

Pursuant to the Higher Education Act and Higher Education Ordinance, all higher education in Sweden shall maintain a high level of quality. Higher education institutions are responsible for the quality assurance of their first-, second- and third-cycle courses and programmes. UKÄ is responsible for conducting evaluations of a sample of the programmes offered by Swedish higher education institutions³. The purpose of UKÄ's programme evaluations is to both check the results of programmes – i.e., that they meet the requirements and high standards prescribed in the Higher Education Ordinance – and to contribute to enhancing the quality of the higher education institution's courses and programmes.

Main principles for evaluation of third-cycle programmes

Programme evaluations of the third-cycle level are based on third-cycle programmes in their entirety, which comprises thesis work, courses and other parts. The method is based on the assumption that the two levels of third-cycle education, licentiate degrees and doctorate degrees, are evaluated as a group. This is because both degrees are covered by the same requirements for research quality that apply to the general and the fine, applied and performing arts programmes that lead to qualifications at third-cycle level. Degree of doctor and degree of doctor in the fine, applied and performing arts have different qualification descriptions and will be assessed using the same procedure but in relation to the respective qualification descriptions.

The evaluations will be based on the third-cycle subject areas and the specialisations indicated in the general study plans that the HEI has established and in which the HEIs offer third-cycle education. A selection of the third-cycle subject areas that the HEI offers and which lead to licentiate and doctorate degrees will be included in the evaluations.

The path to obtain a doctorate may look very different, depending on such things as the field's traditions and the size of both the subject area

³ *The quality assurance of higher education* (2015/16:76, pp. 15–19).

and the HEI. Moreover, third-cycle programmes are based on the individual doctoral student and the specific thesis project.

Both consideration and reflection are required when describing and assessing third-cycle programmes as a coherent whole. This makes it necessary for both the self-evaluation reports and their assessment to consider the variation inherent in an individual programme. Even if the thesis or the documented artistic research project is not included as a basis for the evaluation, examination of the processes that lead to the finished thesis or the documented artistic research project are relevant. It may, for example, include the HEI's various peer review processes associated with the thesis work by including supervision, seminars, workshops and conferences.

Knowledge-based selection

UKÄ selects a sample of the programmes for evaluation. The selection is based on the knowledge and experience accumulated from our previous quality reviews, efficiency analyses, statistics and supervisory cases, as well as our monitoring of the sector and dialogue with higher education institutions. UKÄ initiates a programme evaluation for the following reasons:

- We have reason to believe that there is a risk that a specific programme is failing to meet statutory requirements.
- We have reason to believe that more knowledge is required about a programme in order to, for example, illuminate the challenges and need for development at a national level.

The Government may also task UKÄ with conducting an evaluation in order to, for example, obtain a picture of the national situation on which to base a decision, or to follow up a given programme.

Evaluations of one or more programmes may also be conducted at a single higher education institution or at all higher education institutions to provide a national overview of the quality of a given programme.

In order to be exempted from an evaluation, the higher education institution must submit a decision to discontinue the programme in question before the evaluation begins. A programme may also be exempted from an evaluation if no new students have been admitted to the programme at the higher education institution for the last two years. The higher education institution must then submit an account of why no new students have been admitted to the programme during that period.

Quality-enhancing evaluations

UKÄ strives to design and implement programme evaluations so that they enhance the quality of programmes and fields of study in greatest need of improvement and where the benefits will be greatest.

We therefore adapt our programme evaluations so that they address the most pressing challenges and needs within the programme to be evaluated. Such an adaptation is made prior to every evaluation and applies to all programmes included in the evaluation.

Programme evaluations shall complement and support the quality assurance work at each higher education institution and be resourceefficient. Evaluations are based on assessment criteria with targeted questions, in order to create space for higher education institutions to describe and evaluate its programme based on its own conditions and profile. This is intended to ensure that evaluations are closely related to the programme and enhance quality.

Another important aspect in ensuring that evaluations enhance quality is dialogue between the involved parties. This includes dialogue to decide which programmes should be evaluated, to adapt the content and implementation of the evaluation to needs, and to increase the exchange of knowledge and experience concerning the evaluated programme.

Programme evaluations should create added value for the higher education institution's organisation. Developing the programme is both a common objective and the long-term effect of the evaluation process.

The flowchart illustrates the main elements of the evaluation process:



Dialogue: Pilot study and adaption



In this section, we discuss the pilot study conducted by UKÄ and how UKÄ adapts the design and implementation of the evaluation to needs.

Pilot study

Before beginning an evaluation, UKÄ will conduct a pilot study, the results of which will be reported to the assessment group and representatives of the higher education institutions, students and employer and professional organisations.

The pilot study builds on the knowledge of the programme that UKÄ has prepared prior to selecting the programmes to be evaluated. The scope of the pilot study varies depending on how many programmes are included in the evaluation and whether the intention is to provide a national overview of the programme. The pilot study includes a compilation of UKÄ's knowledge about the programme. It also includes statistics, such as the number of applicants per place, the number of admitted full-time equivalent students, the number of degrees awarded, student completion, establishment and, if possible, an overview of staff and research activities associated with the education activities. The statistics are prepared to provide an overview of any special circumstances that should be considered.

The pilot study also contains a compilation of results and analyses from previous reviews and government assignments undertaken by UKÄ. Compilations of current trends and needs may also be included to increase knowledge about the programme.

Adaption

Based on the pilot study, UKÄ will hold a first dialogue meeting with assessors and representatives of the higher education institutions, students and employer and professional organisations concerning how

the content and implementation of the evaluation should be adapted to best meet the need to develop the programme, and to ensure that the evaluation is fit for purpose. To this end, the dialogue meeting will address which qualitative targets or programme objectives should be evaluated and why. The meeting will also discuss whether there is anything else that should be considered in the implementation of a specific programme evaluation and what other documents should be considered in addition to self-evaluations and interviews.

The dialogue meeting also provides an opportunity to discuss whether there are any specific areas of the programme in which several higher education institutions face common challenges. If so, UKÄ may invite the institutions to attend a workshop to highlight the challenges and facilitate the exchange of experiences and solutions. For further information, please refer to the section “Exchange of experience and focus areas”. After the pilot study and dialogue meeting, UKÄ will decide on the structure of the evaluation and which qualitative targets should be included.

Implementation of the evaluation



In this section, we discuss the method and main content of the evaluation, which documents will be included, the opinion and decision and the follow-up of the programme evaluation.

The evaluation begins with a kick-off meeting attended by representatives of UKÄ and the higher education institutions, at which UKÄ informs about the content and implementation of the programme evaluation and provides clarification of any uncertainties.

Collegial review

The method used for programme evaluation is based on collegial review by an assessment group, which will review and assess the documents on which evaluation is based. The assessment group consists of external independent experts, student representatives and representatives of employer and professional organisations.

Recruitment

UKÄ recruits the assessment group and introduces the members to the assignment prior to the first dialogue meeting. Recruitment is preceded by a nomination process in collaboration with the higher education institutions, student unions (via the Swedish National Union of Students (SFS)) and employer and professional organisations. UKÄ appoints assessment groups. Between them, the members of the assessment group shall have sufficiently broad and in-depth expertise to evaluate the programme based on all assessment criteria included in the evaluation.

Higher education institutions have the opportunity to offer an opinion on the composition of the assessment group, including the subject knowledge of the experts or any conflicts of interest, before UKÄ confirms the appointments.

Competence and roles

External experts must have good knowledge and experience of the subject area and the design of the programme to be evaluated. External experts assess all of the assessment criteria.

Doctoral student representatives bring a doctoral student's perspective to the assessment of all assessment criteria. For example, on types of instruction and contact with staff.

Representatives of employer and professional organisations assess the usefulness of the programme in preparing students for working life in relation to the chosen qualitative targets.

The combined knowledge and experience of external experts, doctoral student representatives and representatives of employer and professional organisations is the basis for the assessment group's joint assessment. The assessment group's opinion then forms the basis for UKÄ's decision.

The assessment group also plays an important role during pre- and postevaluation dialogue meetings, not least in conveying lessons in the form of good examples and development needs.

UKÄ appoints the assessment group's chairperson who, together with UKÄ, leads the evaluation.

Assessment of the programmes preconditions, design, implementation and results

The emphasis of a programme evaluation is the actual conditions and results of the programme, i.e., does it meet statutory requirements. The evaluation therefore focuses on whether the programme provides students with good opportunities to achieve the qualitative target in the System of Qualifications for the award of a degree. The evaluation shall also be conducted in a manner that contributes to the development of the programme.

An assessment is made of how the programme is designed, implemented and examined to ensure that students have every opportunity to achieve the qualitative target. An assessment is also made of whether it provides the preconditions to ensure goal attainment. Part of the assessment is highlighting both good examples and room for improvement in order to enhance the quality of the evaluated programme.

In terms of preconditions, an assessment is made of *staff resources* and *third-cycle programme environment*. In terms of design, implementation and results, an assessment is made of the qualitative targets selected for

the evaluation for the three outcomes *knowledge and understanding*, *competence and skills*, and *judgement and approach*.

Assessment criteria

A programme evaluation is based on assessment criteria in the areas *staff resources*, *third-cycle programme environment* and *target attainment*. Each assessment criterion is followed by evaluation questions to make it easier to describe, analyse and evaluate how the assessment criterion is fulfilled using concrete example. Evaluation questions provide the opportunity to begin from the institution's conditions and profiles, helping to make the assessment more relevant from a control and development perspective. The assessment group assesses each of the criteria, after which it makes a combined assessment of all assessment criteria to arrive at an overall grade. Since the evaluations have a focus on results, it is very important that the institution illustrates with concrete examples how the assessment criteria are met.

Assessment of staff resources

Assessment criterion

The number of supervisors and teachers and their combined expertise (scholarly/artistic and pedagogical) are sufficient and proportional to the volume, content and implementation of the programme.

Evaluation questions

- What scholarly/artistic and pedagogical expertise do the supervisors, assistant supervisors and teachers with whom doctoral students come into contact during the programme have?
- How does the higher education institution work to ensure the stability and availability of supervisor and teacher resources? What is done to ensure sufficient supervisor resources, e.g. in the event of retirement or if a doctoral student needs to change supervisors?
- How does the higher education institution work to ensure that supervisors and teachers can maintain and continuously develop both scholarly/artistic and pedagogical expertise, both individually and collectively?

The description and analysis of supervisor expertise and supervisor capacity shall be supplemented with a report in the form of a table that follows the template in the annex to the self-evaluation.

Assessment of third-cycle programme environment

Assessment criteria

The research/artistic research at the higher education institution has sufficient quality and scale for third-cycle education to be carried out at a high scholarly/artistic level.

The third-cycle programme environment generally provides good preconditions for education.

Relevant collaboration takes place with the wider community, both nationally and internationally.

Evaluation questions

- How does the higher education institution ensure that research/artistic research is of sufficient quality and scale for third-cycle education to be conducted at a high scholarly/artistic level?
- How does the higher education institution work to ensure that all doctoral students have access to a good third-cycle programme environment?
- What support structures are in place to help doctoral students achieve the relevant qualitative targets of the System of Qualifications?
- What opportunities for collaboration, both with national and international researchers and with the wider community, are offered to doctoral students?

In its self-evaluation, the higher education institution shall describe, analyse and evaluate the third-cycle programme environment based on the different components of the assessment criteria. This can be done, for example, by describing the research/artistic research, the size of the environment, interactions and partnerships of importance to the doctoral student. Another component may, for example, involve highlighting how doctoral students with different forms of employment, from another environment or studying remotely are handled. A further example may be to highlight various support structures for the doctoral student and how the doctoral student comes into contact with and expands the third-cycle programme environment via national and international networks.

Assessment of target attainment

The assessment criteria contain components of the qualitative targets that have been selected for evaluation under the forms of proficiency knowledge and understanding; competence and skills; judgment; and approach. Third-cycle programmes have a number of formulated qualitative targets in the System of Qualifications (Annex 2 to the Higher

Education Ordinance). The qualitative targets describe what a doctoral student needs to have achieved upon receiving a degree. To limit the scope of the evaluation, certain qualitative targets have been omitted, fully or in part. The main selection principle has been to exclude the targets, or parts of targets, that are usually assessed through the thesis or through the documented artistic research project and the public thesis defence. It is reasonable to assume that there are differences in the way the qualitative targets are taught and assessed, depending on both how the individual thesis project is designed and specific traditions of the subject in question.

It is interesting here to see how the structure of the programme ensures that the targets of the Higher Education Ordinance are achieved. This structure is in the form of courses, seminars, conferences, intended publication, participation in the projects of senior researchers, supervision time, allocation of credits between courses, thesis components and other elements. Another important factor is how the HEI works to ensure doctoral students have access to the courses they need, for example through their own courses, partnerships with other HEIs, and encouragement to take international courses.

Assessment of target attainment for the proficiency form ‘knowledge and understanding’

Assessment criterion

The programme facilitates through its design and implementation and ensures through assessment/examination that, upon receiving a degree, the doctoral student is able to demonstrate broad knowledge and understanding both within their third-cycle subject area and of the scientific methodology/artistic research methodology in the third-cycle subject area.

Evaluation questions

- What does broad knowledge and understanding mean within the framework of the programme in which the third-cycle subject is offered?
- Throughout the course of programme, what is done to ensure that doctoral students achieve the above target? For example, how is progression achieved during the programme, and what is the link between quantitative targets, intended learning outcomes, learning activities and assessment/examination?
- How does the HEI work to ensure that the individual study plan supports target attainment?

In this context, ‘broad’ should be interpreted as broad within the third-cycle subject. UKÄ’s evaluations of third-cycle programmes are based on the third-cycle subject area. At the same time, the Higher Education Ordinance mentions ‘research field’ instead of ‘third-cycle subject area’ when discussing targets for knowledge and understanding, including in the wording ‘broad knowledge and understanding in the research field’. As ‘research field’ is not clearly defined, UKÄ has chosen to interpret *breadth in the research field* to mean *breadth in the third-cycle subject area*.

In its self-evaluation, the higher education institution shall describe, analyse and evaluate target attainment.

Assessment of target attainment for the proficiency form 'competence and skills'

Assessment criteria

The programme facilitates through its design and implementation and ensures through assessment/examination that, upon receiving a degree, the doctoral student is able to demonstrate the ability to plan and use appropriate methods to conduct research and other qualified (artistic) tasks within predetermined time frames, and, in both national and international contexts, can present and discuss research and research results with authority, orally and in writing, in dialogue with the scientific community and society in general.

The doctoral student shall also demonstrate the ability to contribute to the development of society and support the learning of others, both in research and education and in other qualified professional contexts.

Evaluation questions

- Throughout the course of the programme, what is done to ensure that doctoral students achieve the above targets? For example, how is progression achieved during the programme, and what is the link between quantitative targets, intended learning outcomes, learning activities and assessment/examination?
- How does the HEI work to ensure that the individual study plan supports target attainment?

This form of proficiency can also be linked to abilities that are important both for a future research career and working life in general, such as communicating, planning, performing qualified tasks and adhering to set time frames. The proficiency also means that the doctoral student will be able to contribute to the development of society and support the learning of others, both in research and education and in other qualified professional contexts. How doctoral students are given the opportunity to take part in departmental duties or similar in the form of teaching and administrative or other work is of particular interest in this context.

In its self-evaluation, the higher education institution shall describe, analyse and evaluate target attainment.

Assessment of target attainment for the proficiency form 'judgement and approach'

Assessment criteria

The programme facilitates through its design and implementation and ensures through assessment/examination that, upon receiving a degree, the doctoral student is able to demonstrate intellectual independence (artistic integrity), and scholarly integrity/research integrity and the ability to make ethical assessments.

The doctoral student shall have gained greater insight into the possibilities and limitations of science/art, its role in society and people's responsibility for how it is used.

Evaluation questions

- Throughout the course of the programme, what is done to ensure that doctoral students achieve the above targets? For example, how is progression achieved during the programme, and what is the link between quantitative targets, intended learning outcomes, learning activities and assessment/examination?
- How does the HEI work to ensure that the individual study plan supports target attainment?

In its self-evaluation, the higher education institution shall describe, analyse and evaluate target attainment.

Basis for assessment

Assessment material consist of the HEI's self-evaluation with annexes, the general study plan for the third-cycle subject, randomly selected individual study plans and interviews with representatives of the reviewed programme and doctoral students. All assessment materials for the review is to be weighed together.

Theses or documented artistic research projects will not be used as assessment material for the evaluation of third-cycle programmes. UKÄ has concluded that existing external reviews of these are already sufficient, since they have a dissertation and external examination committee members, as stated in the Higher Education Ordinance Chapter 6, sections 33–34.

The higher education institution's self-evaluation

Self-evaluation is a tool that provides the higher education institution with an opportunity to make visible, increase knowledge about and develop the quality of the programme. We therefore encourage higher education institutions to use the self-evaluation process as an opportunity to develop their organisation and involve staff working in and around the programme and students enrolled in the programme.

A self-evaluation begins with the higher education institution briefly describing the background of the programme and anything specific that it feels the assessors should be aware of if they are to obtain a greater understanding.

In its self-evaluation, the higher education institution describes, analyses and evaluates its own programme based on the evaluation questions. The aim is to provide concrete examples to give the clearest, fairest possible picture of how the programme ensures that students have good opportunities to achieve the qualitative target, and how teaching expertise contributes to this. The higher education institution also describes the programme's strengths and weaknesses, and how these are dealt with.

As an appendix to the self-evaluation, the higher education institution also submits a report (template provided) on the staff who teach, examine and supervise the students in the programme. The higher education institution may also refer to existing documents in its self-evaluation – i.e., documents not prepared specifically for the evaluation – to support its conclusions. For example, course and programme syllabuses, study guides, goal matrices and agreements. It is important that the self-evaluation contains clear references to where in such documents the cited evidence can be found. The documents to be

included are decided in dialogue with the higher education institutions at the joint dialogue meeting.

Background description

The self-evaluation begins with a short background description aimed at positioning the programme in a larger context. The background description is to include background factors important for the assessment panel to be aware of and that cannot be directly related to the assessment criteria.

In the background description, the HEI should report on how long the programme has existed and describe its organisation and structure. It is also important to include a description of the third-cycle subject area's content and delimitation with regard to breadth and depth, whether there are different foci within the area, and the relationship of the third-cycle subject area to current research at the HEI. Other information that is important for assessors to understand is how doctoral students are recruited to the programme and the composition of the supervisor group and doctoral student group (gender, age, focus and linguistic capabilities relevant to the programme). The share of international doctoral students should also be included in the description, as well as whether any doctoral students are located in other cities. What opportunities and challenges have been identified with these and, if so, how have they been handled?

HEIs with a field that includes a third-cycle programme with a subject to be evaluated are to describe the field it has degree-awarding powers and how the third-cycle subject relates to this field.

Annexes to the self-evaluation

To facilitate a fair evaluation, it is important that the HEI's presentation in the self-evaluation is complete and can be understood without any additional information. Annexes to the self-evaluation consist of tables with information about the number of doctoral students, supervisors and other researchers as well as publication lists (see Annex 1 Instructions for annexes to the self-evaluation in these guidelines).

General study plans

Pursuant to section 25 of the Higher Education Ordinance, a HEI authorised to issue degrees at third-cycle level is to decide which subjects are offered in the third-cycle programme (SFS 2010:1064) according to section 26 of the Higher Education Ordinance, there is to be a general study plan for each subject that is a part of the programme. The general study plan must specify the main content of the programme, requirements for specific entry requirements and other necessary regulations (pursuant to Section 27).

Individual study plans

A random selection of individual study plans will be reviewed for each programme. The individual study plans are to be archived for all doctoral students. Under the Higher Education Ordinance, these are to be ‘reviewed regularly’ and ‘amended by the HEI to the extent required’ (Chapter 6, section 29).

According to the Higher Education Ordinance, the study plan is to include the HEI’s and doctoral student’s commitments:

1. An individual study plan shall be drawn up for each doctoral student.
2. The plan shall contain the undertakings made by the HEI.
3. The plan shall contain the doctoral student’s undertakings regarding the HEI.
4. The plan shall contain a timetable for the doctoral student’s study programme.
5. The plan shall be adopted after consultation with the doctoral student and his or her supervisors. The individual study plan shall be reviewed regularly and amended by the higher education institution to the extent required after consultation with the doctoral student and his or her supervisors.

Individual study plans, and procedures for their review, should therefore be able to provide information about quality assurance and how programmes ensure progress and the doctoral students’ achievement of qualitative targets. Individual study plans may also be used for in-depth reviews of the how programmes ensure that the doctoral student achieves the targets, as well as ensuring access to the breadth and depth of the third-cycle programme and education environment. If study plans are managed in a structured and systematic way, they can provide a picture of how the programme ensures that individual doctoral students achieve different targets, for example, through descriptions of courses taken, conferences that the doctoral student has been involved in and other activities. They can also supplement information about the degree of access the doctoral student has to his or her research environment’s breadth and depth, for example by describing participation in seminar activities, supervision and so on.

Individual study plans included in an evaluation are randomly selected using a model where a maximum of 16 individual study plans per programme are included. If there are more than 16 individual study plans, 16 individual study plans are randomly chosen. If no individual study plans are available, the evaluation will be based on other documentation.

Course syllabi

If the HEI feels that syllabi are necessary to strengthen the content of the self-evaluation, they can be submitted. Syllabi are only used as supplementary information which the assessment panel can access if it needs to verify or understand anything in greater detail.

Interviews

Interviews are carried out with representatives of the reviewed programme and with doctoral students enrolled in the programme. The purpose of the HEI interview is to supplement the overview the assessors have obtained from the self-evaluation, general and individual study plans and other documentation. The assessors are also given an opportunity to confirm that existing information has been properly interpreted. The interview is also an opportunity for the HEI to meet the assessors and submit any supplementary verbal information that clarifies the self-evaluation. The HEI determines who will participate in the interview.

The purpose of the doctoral student interview is to supplement other documentation with the experiences of doctoral students about how well the programme creates sufficient conditions for the students to be able to achieve the qualitative targets. Furthermore, the doctoral student interviews may bring to light areas that the assessors need to pay particular attention to when assessing the quality of the programme.

Doctoral students to be interviewed should preferably be appointed by a doctoral student organisation that either belongs to a doctoral student union or has union status at the HEI. If the doctoral student union is unable to recruit doctoral students, UKÄ, in consultation with the HEI's quality officer or other designated person, will ensure that doctoral students are recruited for the interviews.

Interviews with both representatives of the HEI and doctoral students are carried out in the form of web meetings. The interviews may vary in length depending on how many questions the assessment panel wishes to ask.

Opinion and decision

The assessment group will issue an opinion concerning its evaluation of the programme. The assessment is based on all of the documentation submitted: the self-evaluation, including appendices, degree projects and equivalent documents, and interviews. In the opinion, the assessors will provide feedback to the higher education institution concerning the good examples and room for improvement identified in the assessment, both in relation to the assessment criteria and the programme in general. The assessment group's preliminary opinion will be sent to the higher education institution for distribution. This is intended to provide the higher education institution with the opportunity to point out any factual errors in the opinion. The higher education institution's response will be included as an appendix to the opinion. The final opinion will then be the basis for UKÄ's decision.

Every programme evaluation results in a decision by UKÄ, which will assess the programme on a two-point grading scale:

- High quality
- Under review

If the overall assessment is that the programme is of questionable quality, the programme will be placed under review. The decision will include a report on the deficiencies identified by the assessment group that the higher education institution is required to rectify within one year.

Appeals

Higher education institutions can request a review of UKÄ's decision. A special expert group, appointed by UKÄ, prepares the review cases. The purpose of the expert group's review is to investigate whether there have been deficiencies in the previous review process. The expert group does not assess issues of substance, but only the previous review or evaluation process at UKÄ⁴.

Complaints

UKÄ strives for openness and dialogue in its quality assurance activities. If, in spite of this, there should be dissatisfaction with the review process, institutions have the opportunity to register a complaint. Complaints may concern the process of UKÄ's reviews or those who carried out the review. Complaints are made by the institution concerned via the vice-chancellor.

⁴ *Guidelines for re-examining decisions concerning the quality assurance of higher education*

Follow-up

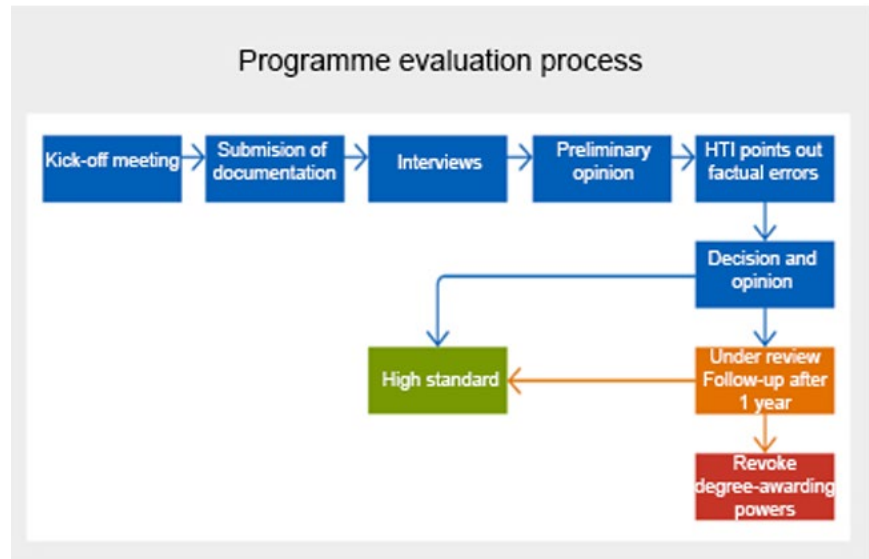
A higher education institution that has had its programme placed under review has one year to remedy deficiencies and submit a report of the measures taken, whereupon UKÄ will appoint an assessment group to review the report. If the assessment group feels that the information contained in the report is insufficient for the purpose of making a judgement, it may request supplementary documentation and an interview. Once the assessment group is happy that it has a sufficient information, it will assess the measures taken and submit an opinion to UKÄ. Based on the assessment group's opinion, UKÄ will decide whether the programme is now of a high standard or if the higher education institution's degree-awarding powers are to be revoked. UKÄ is mandated to reach such a decision concerning higher education institutions of which the Swedish state is the accountable authority, with the exception of the Swedish University of Agricultural Sciences and Swedish Defence University. In the case of independent higher education providers and the Swedish University of Agricultural Sciences and Swedish Defence University, UKÄ will forward the assessment group's opinion and a statement of its own position to the Government for a decision.

Based on the assessment group's opinion, UKÄ will decide whether the programme is now of a high standard or if the higher education institution's degree-awarding powers are to be revoked. UKÄ is mandated to reach such a decision concerning higher education institutions of which the Swedish state is the accountable authority, with the exception of the Swedish University of Agricultural Sciences and Swedish Defence University. In the case of independent higher education providers and the Swedish University of Agricultural Sciences and Swedish Defence University, UKÄ will forward the assessment group's opinion and a statement of its own position to the Government for a decision.

If degree-awarding powers are revoked for a higher education institution of which the Swedish state is the accountable authority, the institution may still award degrees to students who were admitted to the programme before the decision was made⁵.

The diagram below describes the implementation of a programme evaluation:

⁵ Chapter 1 Section 14 Higher Education Act



Dialogue: Exchange of experience and further development



In this section we look at the occasions on which all involved in a programme evaluation have the opportunity to exchange experiences and reflect on how the programme can be further developed.

Exchange of experience and focus areas

Every programme evaluation includes opportunities for representatives of higher education institutions, students and employer and professional organisations involved in the evaluation to exchange experiences. In a programme evaluation involving many higher education institutions, the purpose of which is to obtain a national overview of programmes, UKÄ may invite all involved to attend a workshop on one focus area before the evaluation takes place. It is important to underline that discussions

of a focus area during a workshop are not part of the basis on which programmes are assessed.

At the first dialogue meeting, there is a discussion of whether there are any specific areas of the programme in which several higher education institutions face common challenges and that therefore merit special attention. For example, structural challenges shared by all institutions, such as available placements or adequate competence among teachers. There may also be general areas that offer development opportunities, such as student-centred learning, distance education, internationalisation or gender equality.

Together with the assessment group and in dialogue with the higher education institutions, UKÄ may even take the initiative to arrange a similar workshop after the evaluation. This may be appropriate if the results of the evaluation show that higher education institutions face certain common challenges. UKÄ kan tillsammans med bedömargruppen och i dialog med lärosätena, även ta initiativ till en liknande workshop efter utvärderingen. Detta kan bli aktuellt om utvärderingens resultat visar att lärosätena har vissa gemensamma utmaningar.

The purpose of both workshops is to reveal common challenges, to obtain an overview of the work of higher education institutions in the area in question and to facilitate the discussion of experiences and potential solutions that may further the development of the programme. UKÄ compiles and presents the points of view and proposals that emerge at workshops to provide a national overview of the programme and to benefit development.

Exchange of experience and further development

All programme evaluations involve a final opportunity for dialogue between those involved in the evaluation, so they can meet to share lessons learned, development needs and good examples that have emerged during the process. This dialogue meeting also provides an opportunity to ask questions of the assessment group and UKÄ. UKÄ may also perform an in-depth analysis of the results of the evaluation, in order to increase national knowledge about a programme and promote its development. The form that dialogue takes may change from one evaluation to another.

Annex 1. Instructions for self-evaluation annexes

Table 1 a

Use Table 1a to report all enrolled and registered doctoral students during spring semester 2018. Do not list doctoral students who were admitted more than 15 years ago. State here all doctoral students who do not have study leave included in their studies. The purpose of the tables is to give the assessors a picture of the doctoral students in the specific third-cycle programme today. The first column contains the doctoral student's name. UKÄ also wants to know to which third-cycle subject the doctoral student is enrolled. The columns relating to the year of birth, gender and year of admission are intended to give the assessors information about the composition of the doctoral student group. The different forms of funding are shown in the table footer. Also specify the extent if the student has more than one type of funding. If you have revised the general study plan (GSP), mark which doctoral students have not gone over to the currently applicable GSP.

Table 1 b

In Table 1b, provide data on doctoral students who have obtained their doctoral or licentiate degree in the last five years. The purpose of the table is to give the assessors a picture of the student completion rate in the specific third-cycle programme as well as dissertation subject. In the column 'Year degree was obtained', write whether this pertains to a licentiate or doctoral degree, i.e. 2022 (lic.), 2024 (doc.). An individual may therefore appear in the table twice. A doctoral student listed in Table 1a may also be included in Table 1b with their licentiate degree..

Table 2

Use Table 2 to present active senior supervisors and active supervisors who are not senior supervisors (deputy supervisors). The purpose of the table is to give the assessors a picture of the third-cycle programme environment, the composition of the supervisor group and its continuity and stability. In the 'position' column, also indicate whether the supervisors have any other qualifications you want to highlight, for example 'senior lecturer (associate professor)'. Information about gender, date of birth, third-cycle education and research subjects gives assessors a picture of the composition of the supervisor team, and information about the scope of their employment informs about

continuity and stability in the programme. In the column Scope of position at the HEI (per cent), for supervisors employed at another HEI write '0% – active at another HEI'. The column 'research field' refers to which subject the person's position or employment is within.

Table 3

Use Table 3 to list other researchers, including post-doctoral researchers, associated with the third-cycle programme. The purpose of the table is to give the assessors additional information about the third-cycle programme environment if the HEI considers this necessary to provide more information. Please specify clearly how the expertise of these researchers benefits the doctoral students. Explain how these researchers are a part of the third-cycle programme environment. In the 'position' column, also indicate whether the person has any other qualifications you want to highlight, for example 'senior lecturer (associate professor)'. The column 'research field' refers to which subject the person's employment is within.

Publications/accepted works*

Publication lists and lists of accepted works may for example verify the quality and scope of the research/artistic research, the research activity in the environment, and the opportunities of supervisors and teachers to conduct research/artistic research. They may also demonstrate the breadth and depth of the third-cycle programme environment and of collaborations with the community.

Publications/accepted works* doctoral students

List a maximum of 10 publications and/or accepted works for the doctoral students named in Table 1a. In cases in which doctoral students have been inactive for two years or more, the publications of these doctoral students do not need to be included in the list. Conference presentations can be included, as well as popular science publications.

Publications/accepted works* supervisors

List a maximum of 10 publications and/or accepted works for the supervisors named in Table 2. Mark peer-reviewed publications with an asterisk (*). Conference presentations can be included, as well as popular science publications.

Publications/accepted works* other researchers

List a maximum of 10 publications and/or accepted works for the researchers named in Table 3. Mark peer-reviewed publications with an asterisk (*). Conference presentations can be included, as well as popular science publications.

Course syllabi

Syllabi may be attached as an annex to the self-evaluation in cases in which the HEI finds them relevant for the evaluation.

* For accepted works, see SwePub's definition of artistic output with two subcategories: artistic works and curated/produced exhibition.

Artistic work: All types of artistic works, including recordings and live performances. This includes fiction, musical compositions, visual art, design/architecture, handicrafts, artists' books, film, video, TV, radio, performance, theatre, music, dance and circus.

Curated/produced exhibition: This includes curated/produced exhibitions and events, for example thematically organised music festivals, in which the originator is associated with the HEI.

Universitetskanslersämbetet (UKÄ) ska bidra till att stärka den svenska högskolan och Sverige som kunskapssamhälle. Vi granskar kvaliteten på högskoleutbildningarna, vi analyserar och följer upp utvecklingen inom högskolan och vi bevakar studenternas rättssäkerhet.

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