



Handbook for Quality Assurance of University Education



Revised Edition January 2010

UNIVERSITETET I BERGEN

**Handbook for quality assurance
of university education**

Third edition, January 2010



UNIVERSITETET I BERGEN

Preface

The basis for quality in education at the University of Bergen is that education is based on research – that is, both teachers and supervisors are themselves active researchers.

High quality in education is dependent upon a learning environment that stresses updated knowledge in all disciplines and the will to quality in teaching. Evaluation and the interpretation of evaluation measures are important preconditions for quality development. At the University of Bergen, quality assurance of research and education is part of the ongoing academic debate conducted through seminars and other forms of critical examination and dialogue.

The Handbook for Quality Assurance of University Education is designed to provide guidelines for practical and systematic quality assurance. The subsidiary areas, processes and measures detailed in this handbook are the cornerstones of the quality assurance system, and the University Board has adopted this handbook in order to provide a basis for the university's systematic effort to maintain and further develop the quality of education. The handbook was first published in 2004. This is the third edition and the result of an internal audit of the university's quality assurance system carried out in autumn 2008.

The University of Bergen's system for quality assurance of education was approved by the Norwegian Agency for Quality in Education (NOKUT) on 29 March 2007.

Bergen, December 2009

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Sigmund Grønmo', with a horizontal line underneath the name.

Sigmund Grønmo

Rector

Contents

Preface	2
1. The quality assurance system	4
2. Recruitment, information and reception of new students	5
3. Study abroad	5
4. Continuing education	6
5. External assessment	6
6. Learning environment committee	6
7. Framework conditions	7
8. Student democracy	7
9. Evaluation of teaching and courses/study programmes	8
9.1 Course evaluation	8
9.2 Programme evaluation.	9
10. Annual revision of study programmes and information to students	10
11. Education reports	10
11.1 Faculty education reports	10
11.2 The university's education report	11
12. Establishing and discontinuing courses and study programmes	11
12.1 New study programmes	11
12.2 New courses.	14
12.3 Discontinuing a study programme	14
Appendix:	
Guidelines for programme auditors at the University of Bergen	16

Content

Division of Academic Affairs, UiB

Graphic design and layout

Communication and Media Center, UiB

Printed by

Bodoni



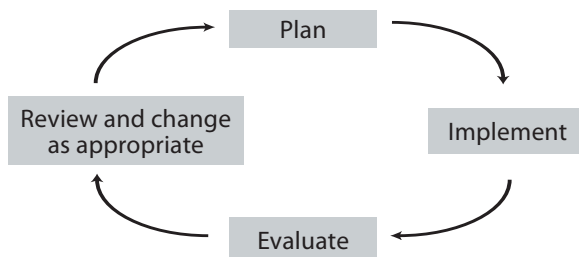
1. The quality assurance system

The university's quality assurance system was established to maintain and further develop the quality of study programmes in a manner that can be documented. The system is wide ranging and comprises all processes that affect the quality of the education that we offer. Maintenance and further development of the quality in education can be achieved through a quality assurance system that:

- Systematizes knowledge of activities and improves the circumstances that permit students and employees to better understand these activities and each others' views and perspectives
- Encourages work on learning issues
- Produces the information necessary to be able to propose and implement measures to improve the quality of education and study performance
- Clarifies the responsibilities of students and staff to ensure that efforts to improve the quality of education succeed
- Helps to ensure that sufficient resources are made available for study programmes and support systems

A well-functioning quality development system emphasises the responsibility each of us has for the institution's activities, and involves all groups in the university community in the educational process. It is therefore a precondition and goal that all significant information about planned and implemented evaluation measures be made freely available and communicated to the students and staff concerned.

Quality assurance takes place in accordance with a plan that ensures continuity and an overview. Schematically, it can be described as a recurring process consisting of four phases. During the planning phase, the educational objectives are defined and teaching planned. In the implementation phase, knowledge, skills and general competence are acquired, and evaluations are carried out to determine whether progress made and direction taken are in accordance with the objectives. On completion of a course or study programme, evaluations and results are reviewed with a view to improving the course or study programme and/or correcting the objectives.



2. Recruitment, information and reception of new students

Students are recruited in accordance with a plan of action for recruitment. This plan is adjusted annually after consideration by the Education Committee and it is rooted in the university's strategic plan. Both students and staff are involved in the recruitment and reception of new students.

Information about the study programmes offered by the university is prepared and disseminated by the Division of Academic Affairs in collaboration with the departments and faculties. All written information that the university uses in the promotion of the study programmes must be approved by the relevant faculty. Information is adjusted annually based on experience and feedback. Expected learning outcomes are an integral part of information material concerning the study programmes.

Social and study-related services and activities for which the university is responsible during the first semester of study are assessed annually and improved on the basis of evaluations. Together with the faculties, the Division of Academic Affairs is responsible for ensuring that such evaluations are carried out and that changes are considered by the Education Committee, among others. The Division of Academic Affairs also submits to the Education Committee annual evaluations of recruitment measures, the reception of new students and international student exchanges.

3. Study abroad

All students are entitled to a period of study abroad as an integrated part of their study programmes if they so wish. The person with academic responsibility for the individual study programme will make provisions for and recommend a period of study at selected universities abroad. The academic content of such recommended periods of study abroad must be quality-assured, and students must be advised about and offered pre-approved courses that entitle them to exemption from one or more parts of their study programme at the University of Bergen. Students who participate in the Erasmus exchange programme must complete a 'learning agreement' form.

Together with the Division of Academic Affairs, those responsible for study programmes must also ensure that students receive adequate written and oral information about recommended studies abroad and security conditions at the place of study abroad before departure. Students preparing for a period of study abroad must register before departure, using a standard form prepared for the purpose, and must submit a report about their experience on their return to the University of Bergen.

4. Continuing education

Continuing education is an important supplement to the university's core tasks and is designed to further lifelong learning and the development of competence for the workplace and society at large. The various departments are responsible for the content and teaching of the courses, while the Division of Academic Affairs is responsible for the marketing, development and running of the programmes for continuing and extension education. Continuing education is based on the requirements set out in UiB's quality assurance system as well as on the norms and procedures established by the Norwegian Association for Distance Education – *Norsk forbund for fjernundervisning og fleksibel utdanning (NFF)*.

5. External assessment

The university uses two forms of external assessment as part of its systematic quality assurance of education offered. In addition to the individual departments using external examiners to assess their students' individual performance in exams or tests, the faculties also have a system involving the use of programme auditors.¹ Where examinations are held without the assistance of external examiners, the assessment system must be specially approved by the faculty, based on the programme auditor's evaluation of the assessment system. Pursuant to the regulations relating to degrees and programmes of study, an individual faculty can specify more detailed rules for their system of assessment, including minimum requirements for external assessment for the individual study programmes. It is up to each faculty to decide how many programme auditors they would like to use and which part or parts of each individual programme the programme auditors should primarily focus on. Further guidelines for external assessment have been adopted (see appendix). Programme auditors are required to submit an annual report on their work.

6. Learning environment committee

The University of Bergen's Learning Environment Committee (LMU) is appointed pursuant to the Act relating to Universities and University Colleges section 4-3 no 3. The LMU is an advisory body that is responsible for following up questions relating to the university's physical and social learning environment, cf. the committee's mandate. In accordance with the act, students and the institution have an equal number of representatives on the committee. Four students are appointed by the student organisations. The four remaining

¹ Programme auditors are external peers who have individual assignments relating to the evaluation of one or more study programmes.

members will be selected from the senior administrative staff. The office of committee chair alternates between students and the institution every second year. The committee has two permanent observers from the Council for Students with Disabilities and the Student Welfare Organisation in Bergen.

The LMU's most important task is to ensure that it has insight into and an overview of the students' learning environment at the institution in order to make an overall assessment of the situation. The LMU will also draw up and maintain an expedient reporting system for the learning environment. The LMU will be a consultative body in connection with the planning of large projects and be represented at the transfer inspection.

By law, the LMU must be informed about complaints received by the institution from students concerning the learning environment. The LMU can express an opinion on such matters to the University Board. The LMU must also be informed about any instructions and individual decisions issued by the Labour Inspection Authority in relation to the institution's learning environment. The LMU must also be sent a copy of any reports concerning accidents, near-accidents and non-conformities.

7. Framework conditions

The faculties and the central university administration are responsible for physical and non-physical support for educational activities. Important support systems include the services provided by the University Library, the Division of Academic Affairs, the Department of Estate and Facilities Management and the IT Department. These services are subject to a quality assurance system for which each individual department is responsible. Quality assurance of framework conditions can take place through self-evaluation and/or external evaluation. Quality assurance of framework conditions should include user surveys in which both students and academic staff participate. The Division of Academic Affairs is also responsible for ensuring that proposals from the Learning Environment Committee relating to the physical learning environment are considered as part of the quality assurance work.

8. Student democracy

Both the faculties and the central university administration are responsible for ensuring that the competence of the student representatives (through their work on academic committees, student committees and the Student Council) is used in the efforts to improve study quality at all levels of the organisation. The university can provide training for these student representatives.

9. Evaluation of teaching and courses/study programmes

The university carries out evaluations at two levels: on an ongoing basis with the emphasis on the system for and implementation of teaching of individual courses (course evaluation), and in the form of more comprehensive evaluations focusing on individual study programmes and the education offered in a programme perspective (study programme evaluation). In addition to participating in the teaching of courses, course coordinators are also responsible for evaluation of the courses. The chair of the programme board/committee is responsible for evaluation of the study programme.

The evaluation of courses and study programmes must be documented in written reports. Reports on courses must be considered by the programme board in question. The reports must be made available to students, employees and other interested parties.

9.1 Course evaluation

At least one third of the courses taught at any given time are to be evaluated. Each faculty decides which courses will be evaluated during any one academic year, while the course coordinator plans and carries out the evaluation in collaboration with the academic administration.

As a minimum, course evaluations must include the following:

- A student evaluation of the course, preferably in the form of a midway evaluation. The main results of student evaluations and their consequences, if any, must be communicated to the students as soon as the results are available.
- An evaluation of whether or not the progress made and course implementation are in accordance with the stated objectives, comments on the student evaluation and any other forms of evaluations, and proposed measures.
- A description of how previous evaluations have been followed up.

The faculties may decide to also include other matters and questions in the course evaluation, such as the function of the course in different study programmes. Major changes to a course curriculum should be followed up by an evaluation at the first opportunity. All courses must be evaluated at least once every three years.

Course coordinators must ensure that course evaluations are documented in reports. The department, academic group and/or the faculty produce an overall report on all the courses evaluated, normally at the end of each semester. These reports will focus on measures and actions to improve and further develop

the quality of education and show how the work of developing the quality of education has consequences for priorities and resource management. It is up to the faculties to set the deadlines for reporting.

9.2 Programme evaluation

A more comprehensive evaluation of the study programmes offered must be carried out at least every 5 years, while new study programmes should be evaluated sooner. It is up to the faculties to decide whether the evaluation should be linked to, for example, the dean's or the programme auditor's term of office, cf. guidelines (appendix).

In this context, education offered may be study programmes at Bachelor's or Master's level, completed elements of professional programmes or other education represented by courses or modules. It is up to the faculties to decide what study programmes to evaluate; the programme coordinator/programme board plans and carries out the evaluation in collaboration with the academic administration.

Programme evaluations should normally be in the form of self-evaluations. The programme board/faculty can also use external evaluation by a committee of peers or give the programme auditor the task of evaluating various aspects of a study programme. A peer or programme auditor evaluation can be used as a supplement to or substitute for self-evaluation.

The evaluation of study programmes should include:

- The study programme's profile and structure, the use of joint teaching and courses specially developed for the study programme and academic and social activities
- Whether the chosen methods of teaching and assessment are in accordance with the objectives of the study programme
- Practical implementation
- The number of applicants/places offered, programme completion, percentage of students that fail or drop out of the programme
- Grade distribution
- Available resources
- Comments on student evaluations
- Study programme information and documentation
- Availability of relevant literature
- The department head's evaluation and suggestions for improvements.

See otherwise the mandate for programme auditors and the requirements for the faculties' education reports.

It is up to each faculty to adopt further guidelines for the evaluation of its own study programmes. An implementation plan shall be in place and available online.

10. Annual revision of study programmes and information to students

The course coordinator/chair of the programme board must ensure that the course/study programme is reviewed annually with a view to improving and making corrections to the course/study programme and how it is presented. This is done in connection with the annual revision of programme and course descriptions. The revision must be completed by 1 December, the university's deadline for publishing current programme descriptions and finalising information about the courses/study programmes for the coming academic year.

Information about study programmes must be based on the adopted programme descriptions. All information about teaching and study programmes is web-based and available at www.uib.no. Timetables with information about the time and place of the various teaching activities and reading lists shall be openly available at www.uib.no, no later than 1 December/1 June. When a student registers for various educational activities, the student's registered activities should appear on his/her timetable. Together with the faculties, the Division of Academic Affairs is responsible for preparing timetables and assigning lecture rooms.

11. Education reports

11.1 Faculty education reports

All education programmes are based on research at the faculties. Each faculty shall prepare an annual report on the faculty's educational activities the preceding calendar year by 15 April (education report).

Each faculty's education report must:

- Be based on the departments' education reports and/or course and programme reports, as well as student statistics
- Provide an analysis of challenges and goal attainment in its quality assurance efforts, both at the department and faculty levels, and describe student participation
- Provide an assessment of its quality assurance efforts as a basis for resource management and defining priorities (human resources, infrastructure, framework conditions)
- Provide an assessment of the quality of the faculty's study programmes and an overview of the results and measures used in the quality assurance efforts

- Identify any needs that the faculty cannot meet alone.
- Report on what study programmes it wishes to establish or discontinue
- Propose a distribution of places offered in their study programmes for the next academic year.

Education reports shall conclude with an overall assessment of teaching and study programmes offered by the faculty and a proposal for further development based on the faculty's strategy for research and education.

11.2 The university's education report

The faculties' education reports play a very important role in quality assurance of the university as a whole. It is therefore important to involve both academic staff and students in the preparation and discussion of the contents of the education reports. The faculties' education reports form the basis for the annual education report for the university as a whole. This report is designed to provide a combined, overall evaluation of the quality of education offered by the university and an overview of quality assurance systems and measures. The Education Committee considers the university's education report before it is sent to the University Board. The education report is an important document in the long-term planning of the university's educational activities.

12. Establishing and discontinuing courses and study programmes

12.1 New study programmes

Study programmes that the faculty plans to establish must be connected to an academic community that can demonstrate an active research or artistic development environment within all or part of the study programme's academic field.

Study programmes are either organised within a single department, as a collaboration effort between two or more departments, or between two or more faculties.

An academic programme committee is appointed for every new planned study programme. In the initial phase, the programme committee's task is to define the study programme's objectives, scope (potential courses) and relevance to society, as well as opportunities for further studies. The department/faculty will thereafter assess the financial and resource-related aspects of the planned programme and how its establishment will affect the faculty's overall study portfolio. A representative programme board will be established and a decision taken on which department will have academic and administrative responsibility for the planned programme.

The full programme description for the new study programme will be developed by the programme board during the second phase of planning. During this phase, the learning outcomes for the entire programme are defined by describing what knowledge, skills and general competencies candidates are expected to have acquired upon completing the programme. It must be possible to measure or observe expected learning outcomes. The courses to be included in the programme shall also be defined, as well as their scope (the length of the courses). Teaching and assessment methods must underpin the expected learning outcomes. Moreover, the programme board must comply with the university's template for programme descriptions. The programme descriptions must comply with the requirements set out in the national framework for qualifications and the Norwegian Agency for Quality Assurance in Education's (NOKUT) quality requirements for study programmes.

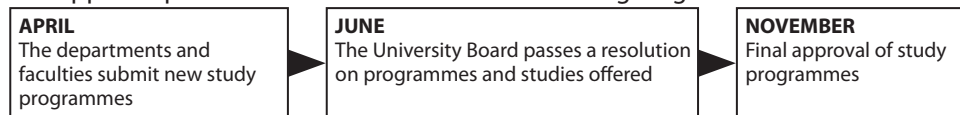
Notification of the establishment of new study programmes must be given in the faculties' education reports by 15 April the year before the programme is due to start. The results from the initial phase of the development work must be enclosed with the education reports. The proposed plans will be considered by the Education Committee, which will make an assessment based on UiB's overall study programme portfolio. Faculties proposing new study programmes must finalize the programme and course descriptions and be able to provide a plan for the financial aspects by 15 October. A complete programme description must be submitted to the faculty board and Education Committee before the study programme can be finally approved by the University Board.

Applications for approval of joint degree programmes and/or joint study programmes and for continuing education are not subject to the same deadlines.

Responsibility for and the dynamics of the process of approval of new study programmes are shown in the table below.

When	Task	Party responsible	Contributor	Approval
Oct-Mar	Evaluation of the study programme portfolio; decide which study programmes should be established/ discontinued.	Relevant academic staff and academic group Department(s)	Faculty	1. Department(s) 2. Faculty/faculties
Oct-Mar	Planning of any new study programmes, including a consideration of the relevance of the programme and financial consequences	Programme committee consisting of academic staff and, for example, students and external representatives.	Relevant academic staff Department Faculty	1. Department(s) 2. Faculty/faculties
15 Apr	Education reports: Faculties report which study programmes they wish to establish/discontinue and attach a draft(s) of the programme description(s)	Faculty/faculties	Programme committee Department	Faculty/faculties
Apr/May	Education Committee agenda item on the establishment/ discontinuation of study programme(s).	Division of Academic Affairs prepares the matter.	Programme committee Department Faculty	The Education Committee considers the faculties' proposals.
May/June	The University Board consider the education report	The University Director's Office prepares the matter.	Division of Academic Affairs	The University Board passes a resolution on programmes and studies offered
June-Oct	Develop a programme description, including any new courses, in accordance with the template. Estimate costs.	Programme Board	Department Students	1. Programme Board 2. Department 3. Faculty/faculties
15 Oct	Deadline for completing the programme descriptions and approving them at faculty level.	Programme Board	Department	Faculty
Oct/Nov	The Education Committee recommend final approval of the completed programme descriptions.	Division of Academic Affairs prepares the matter.		The Education Committee
Nov	University Board agenda item on education offered at the University of Bergen	The University Director's Office prepares the matter.	Division of Academic Affairs and Financial Services	Final decision by the University Board
1 Dec	Submission to the central admission service (Samordna opptak) of programmes to be offered	Division of Academic Affairs	Faculty/faculties	

The approval process is also illustrated in the following diagram.



12.2 New courses

Responsibility for and the dynamics of the process of approval of new courses are shown in the table below. The faculties have internal deadlines for this work.

Task	Responsibility	Contributors	Approval
Evaluation of the relevance of the course and its place in a study programme	Programme Board	Relevant academic staff and academic groups	1. Department 2. Faculty
Describe the objectives for the course and what the students must have learnt on completion of their studies (learning outcomes).	Programme Board/ department	Relevant academic staff	1. Programme Board 2. Department 3. Faculty/faculties
Identify and propose learning methods and forms of assessment.	Programme Board/ department	Course Coordinator, Department Programme Board	1. Programme Board 2. Department 3. (Faculty)
Communicate objectives and expected learning outcomes.	Department/faculty	Course Coordinator, Department Faculty/faculties	1. Programme Board 2. Department(s) 3. Faculty/faculties
Final approval of the course.	Programme Board/ department/faculty	Department	1. Programme Board 2. Department(s) 3. Faculty/faculties

12.3 Discontinuing a study programme

Discontinuation of a study programme is subject to the approval of the University Board, and the deadline for submitting applications is the same as for the establishment of new study programmes, i.e. 15 April. See chapter 9.2, study programme evaluation, regarding requirements for discontinuation of a study programme.

In the event of discontinuation of a study programme, the programme board/department must ensure that students who have already been admitted to the programme can complete it.

“From recruitment to alumni”

– a schematic overview of student-centred quality assurance work

Recruitment

Evaluation and revision of action plan for recruitment in UU
Student guidance

Admission

Admission limits – annually in UU and UST
Reporting and evaluation of admissions of Norwegian and foreign students – annually in UU
Revise admission limits
Student guidance

Reception of new students

Evaluation of reception – annually in UU
Student guidance

TEACHING

Study programmes

New study programmes/
discontinuation of programmes – annually in UU and UST
Programme and course descriptions
Student exchange programmes
Education plan
Implementation of teaching
Assessment
Evaluation and subject development
Revision of plans and systems
Guidance

Evaluation of/by

- Courses in study programmes
- Study programmes
- Programme auditor
- External examiner

Reporting and follow-up

- Education reports

Framework

The Act relating to Universities and University Colleges
Regulations relating to degrees, profession...
Requirements for Master's degrees
Regulations of 1 Feb. 2010 issued by the Ministry
Regulations of 25 Jan. 2006, NOKUT
Regulations of 10 April 2006 on the approval of education
The national qualifications framework of 20 March 2009
The Quality Handbook

The Learning Environment

LMU
Student barometer-survey
The career centre
SiB including Student Counselling Services
Critical Thinking Day (Fagkritisk dag)

Incentive and support measures

PEK
UPED-services
User support for students
Library
My Space

Results

Quality assurance of data relating to:

- Examinations
- Degrees awarded
- Degree diplomas – international, national and UiB requirements

Diploma Supplement

Continuing education Candidate surveys UiB Alumni

Abbreviations: UST: University Board
UU: Education committee
LMU: Learning environment committee
SiB: Student Welfare Organisation in Bergen
PEK: Programme for evaluation and quality development
UPED-services: UiB's pedagogical services

Appendix:

Guidelines for programme auditors at the University of Bergen

1. A programme auditor is an external peer who has special tasks relating to the evaluation of one or more study programmes. The faculty will appoint one or more programme auditors for its study programmes or parts of them. The term of office is normally four years.
2. The programme auditor shall evaluate the organisation and implementation of a study programme, or part of it. The programme auditor must be given relevant information and can request further documentation. Evaluations by programme auditors shall include views on the following in particular:
 - I. Curriculum, organisation of the study programme and teaching
 - II. The assessment system that is used in the study programme, cf. sections 3-9 of the Act relating to Universities and University Colleges. As a basis for his/her evaluation, the programme auditor shall be given an overview documenting the evaluation system and the assessment system for the individual courses in the study programme. The programme auditor shall particularly evaluate the assessment system when only internal examiners are used. Those responsible for the programme of study must decide whether the programme auditor needs to be given further information about the assessment procedures.
 - III. The extent to which the programme auditor has participated in discussions with the academic staff about quality development of the study programme.
 - IV. Any special factors relating to implementation of the study programme during the period.
 - V. The role and tasks of the programme auditor.
The faculty can issue more detailed rules about the programme auditor's tasks.
3. At least once during his/her term of office, the programme auditor should meet staff and students for discussions about quality development of the study programme.
4. The programme auditor shall produce an annual written report on the study programme based on the mandate defined by the faculty. The programme auditor is also free to submit comments regarding any matters relating to the teaching, structure and contents of the study programme.
5. The reports from the programme auditor is part of the background information for the education report that the relevant department will produce. The programme auditor's work can also be organised so that several successive annual reports together constitute an external programme evaluation. The annual report can be written in Norwegian, English or another appropriate language by agreement.
6. The remuneration of programme auditors will be according to an agreement with the faculty. The report must be submitted by 1 December.