



Guidelines on systematic quality enhancement activities in education

This steering document was decided by the president (V-2023-0867). The steering document is effective from January 1, 2024. This document is a translation. In case of a discrepancy between the Swedish original and the English version of the decision, the Swedish version will prevail.

The steering document governs systematic quality enhancement activities for KTH education at all levels. The document describes the areas included in these quality enhancement activities as well as an overview of how they should be carried out and at what frequency. The guidelines are supplemented by predefined templates and each school's procedures. The parties responsible for the review and questions about the policy document are the Management Office within University Administration and the Faculty Council.

1 Governing framework

The Higher Education Act (1992:1434) states in Chap. 1(4) that universities' and university colleges' activities should be tailored to ensure a high level of quality is achieved in educational programmes and research. Available resources should be used effectively to maintain a high level of operational quality. It also states that quality enhancement activities are a joint matter for staff and students of higher education institutions.

In its instructions (2012:810), the Swedish Higher Education Authority (UKÄ) is given responsibility for the quality assurance of universities' and university colleges' activities. This takes place through reviewing the quality enhancement activities of higher education institutions; evaluations of first-, second- and third-cycle programmes, thematic evaluations and appraisals of matters regarding degree-awarding powers.

UKÄ has, when designing the national quality assurance system, based it on the European Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance within the Higher Education Area in Europe (ESG). The ESG consist of a set of standards and guidelines for internal and external quality assurance in higher education and operate as a reference framework. KTH must follow the standards and guidelines set out within this framework.

The following is stated in standard 1.9 of the ESG

Standard 1.9: Institutions should monitor and periodically review their programmes to ensure that they achieve the objectives set for them and respond to the needs of students and society. These reviews should lead to continuous improvement of the programmes. Any actions planned or taken as a result should be communicated to all those concerned.

2 Bases for KTH's systematic quality enhancement activities

KTH applies a coherent system for the quality assurance and quality enhancement of all its educational offerings. The systematic quality enhancement activities should be an integral part of KTH's activities and support the improvement of its programmes and courses.

Overall responsibility for maintaining high operational quality and for quality enhancement activities is governed by KTH's *procedural regulations* and *delegation of authority*. The *guidelines on the organisation of programmes* (V-2023-0823) govern the rules applicable to quality and quality enhancement activities for education at all levels.

The systematic quality enhancement work in education should support continuous improvement at KTH and also be used to evaluate the quality of KTH's education. The quality enhancement activities should help KTH's staff to identify strengths and weaknesses, define areas for improvement and follow up on the actions taken and improvement activities. Students and doctoral students should also be involved in this work. If quality deficiencies are discovered, the quality system should include procedures for dealing with and addressing them. Feedback on the outcome of follow-ups, reviews and remedial work should be provided to the students and staff concerned. Through this approach, the systematic quality enhancement activities should promote a culture of quality and strategic work at every level within KTH.

The areas for follow-up and review that form the quality system are regularly reviewed, at least every four years, to ensure that the areas included are the most relevant for operational improvement.

3 Scope and contents

KTH's systematic quality enhancement activities for education at all levels include:

- Annual follow-ups
- Programme monitoring's carried out every other year
- External peer reviews of programmes carried out at least once every six-year period
- Targeted evaluations of a specific area or group of programmes that may be carried out and may include external reviews
- Dialogues on the outcome of follow-ups and evaluations carried out at school and KTH level. At KTH level, discussions about overall quality issues are included in operational dialogues held by KTH's management as part of the operational planning process

3.1 Annual follow-ups

3.1.1 Courses that are part of qualifying programmes, first-cycle and second-cycle programmes and for lifelong learning

KTH's *guidelines on course evaluations and course analyses* (V-2019-0419) govern the way in which students and doctoral students should be given the opportunity to express their views during a course and how feedback for students should be compiled and made available when a course has ended

After the end of each course, students should be given the chance to express their views in a course evaluation. The guidelines also state that the outcome of the course evaluation, and the course director's plan for changes to the course, should be compiled in a course analysis, which should be published. See the *guidelines on course evaluations and course analyses* (V-2019-0419).

One or more quality deficiencies may be noted for a course when a course evaluation or a course analysis is conducted. Quality deficiencies may also be identified by course directors, examiners, directors of studies, students, heads of department or programme directors in course evaluation board meetings or during other follow-ups. Low or abnormal changes in the student completion rate and low or abnormal changes in the number of number of applicants may also be signs of one or more quality failings.

If a course is found to have one or more quality failings, an action plan should be produced and adopted. The head of department is responsible for ensuring that the following processes are completed:

- The course director and examiner identify whether a course has quality failings in accordance with the above in order to develop an action plan for the course.
- The head of department at the course providing department is responsible for ensuring that the planned actions are taken.
- The people concerned by the actions are brought on board with the action plan, regardless of the school they belong to.
- The functions involved in the action implementation process should have the powers required to take the relevant actions.

For courses that are part of programmes, the programme director must assess whether the actions are sufficient. The director of first- and second-cycle education must check that planned actions have been taken or remain outstanding. The Faculty Board is responsible for ensuring that all action plans of the school are followed up once a year.

3.1.2 Third-cycle programmes

Equivalent rules to those described in 3.1.1 apply to annual follow-ups of courses that are part of third-cycle programmes. The action implementation process for courses with noted quality failings covers third-cycle courses that are a mandatory part of one or more doctoral programmes. It also covers recurring elective courses included in the doctoral programme's course offering.

If a course is found to have one or more quality deficiency, an action plan should be produced and adopted. The head of department is responsible for ensuring that the following processes are completed:

- The course director and examiner identify whether a course has quality deficiencies in accordance with 3.1.1. above, in order to develop an action plan for the course.
- The head of department at the course providing department is responsible for ensuring that the planned actions are taken.
- The people concerned by the actions are brought on board with the action plan, regardless of the school they belong to.
- The functions involved in the action implementation process should have the powers required to take the relevant actions.

The programme director must assess whether the actions are sufficient. The director of third-cycle education must check that planned actions have been taken or remain outstanding. The Faculty Board is responsible for ensuring that all action plans of the school are followed up once a year.

The following areas are also included in annual follow-ups of third-cycle programmes:

- **Supervision**
The head of department is responsible for ensuring that the supervision of doctoral students at the department is monitored, and that an action plan is produced when failings are noted. The programme director is responsible for checking, in consultation with the head of department, that supervision issues within the programme are dealt with and addressed. The functions involved in the action implementation process should have the powers required to take the relevant actions.
- **Study environment**
The head of department is responsible for ensuring that the doctoral students' study environment at the department is monitored, and that an action plan is produced when deficiencies are noted. The programme director is responsible for checking, in consultation with the head of department, that study environment issues within the programme are dealt with and addressed. The study environment includes workload, access to study and career guidance, special pedagogical support and appropriate infrastructure. Similarly, the compliance of KTH's statement of values, and its meeting of the Discrimination Act's requirements for active measures to combat discrimination and promote equal rights and opportunities, must be included in follow-ups. The functions involved in the action implementation process should have the powers required to take the relevant actions.
- **Goal attainment and progression**
When individual study plans undergo annual follow-ups, the director of third-cycle education is responsible for investigating whether doctoral students are engaged in activities that are suited to the meeting of qualification objectives for third-cycle programmes, and that results are achieved within a reasonable time. Any failings identified are dealt with by the programme director for the doctoral programme, together with the principal supervisor and the head of department at the department where the doctoral student is enrolled. The programme director checks, in consultation with the principal supervisor, that progression seminars (e.g. 30/50/80 seminars) have been held in accordance with each doctoral student's plan. The head of department is responsible for ensuring that an action plan is produced if issues are noted with goal attainment or progression. The functions involved in the action implementation process should have the powers required to take the relevant actions. The director of third-cycle education must be informed about the action implementation process and check that the planned actions have been taken or remain outstanding.

The Faculty Board must be kept informed about follow-ups and related actions.

3.1.3 Annual follow-up templates

The Management Office provides templates that must be used for annual follow-ups.

3.2 Programme monitoring every other year

3.2.1 Qualifying programmes and first- and second-cycle programmes

First- and second-cycle programmes and qualifying programmes are followed up every other year. The follow-ups are aimed at enhancing KTH's programmes in accordance with KTH's vision and overall objectives for programmes as well as ensuring that KTH students when given the degree meet national and local qualification objectives. Follow-ups of first- and second-cycle programmes and qualifying programmes cover academic years. The areas below relate to qualifying programmes, and all first- and second-cycle programmes, unless otherwise stated.

The following areas are included:

- **Review of action plans from annual course follow-ups**
The programme director reviews action plans from the annual follow-ups carried out during the most recent and current academic years. The aim is to check that planned actions have been implemented and the issues no longer remain.
- **Follow-up of indicators**
The programme director analyses selected indicators, for example, recruitment to the programme, student completion rate and collaboration with the surrounding community.
- **The programme's strategic development**
The programme director analyses the programme's development based on KTH's vision and overall objectives, collaboration with the surrounding community and selected principles for the future programme. The principles monitored as part of the programme monitoring are those considered to be the most relevant at programme level and important for the programmes' quality.
- **Goal attainment and progression (does not apply to qualifying programmes)**
For every programme there must be a matrix of objectives that shows the courses in which the national and local objectives are assessed. In the programme monitoring, the programme director checks that the matrix is up to date.
- **Programme relevance (does not apply to qualifying programmes)**
Programme relevance is evaluated during the years when programme monitoring is supplemented by external peer reviews. See below.
- **Student support, learning resources and infrastructure**
The programme director checks that there are systematic processes to ensure that student support, learning resources and infrastructure are fit for purpose for students' learning.
- **Integration of gender equality, diversity and equal conditions and sustainable development**
The programme director checks that KTH's objectives for the integration of gender equality, diversity and equal conditions, and KTH's sustainability objectives, are assessed. The matrix of objectives is used to clarify this in a transparent way.

The programme director documents the programme monitoring in a programme analysis with the related development plan. The development plan must include the activities identified with the aim of further improving the specific programme. The programme director is responsible for ensuring that programme monitoring are carried out in accordance with these guidelines, the template provided by the Management Office and each school's procedures and processes to ensure acceptance, and the peer development, of the analyses. Students should be given the opportunity to take part in programme monitoring.

The director of first- and second-cycle education holds a dialogue with each programme director before the development plan for each programme is adopted. The director of first- and second-cycle education produces a common development plan for the school's programmes. Activities that are most suited to joint implementation by the school should be included in the school's development plan. The school-wide development plan is discussed by the Faculty Board before it is adopted and is also a basis for the school's operational plan.

The programme director is responsible for ensuring that the activities included in the specific programme's development plan are carried out. The Director of first- and second-cycle education is responsible for ensuring that the activities included in the school-wide development plan are carried out.

Based on programme analyses and the school-wide development plan, the director of first- and second-cycle education is responsible for presenting an overview of the quality situation within the school's programmes in a school-specific report, and for highlighting issues considered to apply to all KTH schools. The school-specific report is discussed by the Faculty Board before it is finally adopted and submitted to the faculty council. The school-specific report is a basis for the president's operational dialogues. See 3.4.2.

The director of first- and second-cycle education coordinates measures to ensure that programme analyses and the school-specific report are available in line with the agreed timeframe.

Evaluation with external peer review

Programmes must undergo an evaluation with an external peer review, involving one or more external experts, at least every six years. The aim is to obtain a basis for the continued enhancement of programmes. The evaluation with peer review is part of the programme monitoring for the year in question. Reports from programme monitoring should be used *first and foremost* as a basis for the evaluation. Students should be given the chance to be represented in peer reviews. The Faculty Board at the school decides when and how this will be achieved.

3.2.2 Third-cycle programmes

Third-cycle programmes are followed up every other year. The follow-ups are aimed at improving KTH's third-cycle programmes in accordance with KTH's vision and overall objectives for programmes as well as ensuring that KTH students meet national and local qualification objectives at the time of assessment.

The following areas are included:

- Review of action plans from annual course follow-ups
The programme director reviews action plans from the annual follow-ups carried out during the most recent and current academic years. The aim is to check that planned actions have been implemented and the issues no longer remain.
- Study environment
The programme director reviews action plans from the annual follow-up carried out during the most recent and current academic years. The aim is to check that planned actions have been completed and the issues no longer remain. In addition, the programme director monitors the study environment based on doctoral students' views, obtained through a questionnaire.
- Supervision
The programme director reviews action plans from the annual follow-up carried out during the

most recent and current academic years. The aim is to check that planned actions have been completed and the issues no longer remain. In addition, the programme director follows up on supervision based on the programme's results from the doctoral student questionnaire. The programme director also carries out a quantitative follow-up of supervisor resources.

- **Goal attainment and progression**
The director of third-cycle education analyses annual follow-ups of goal attainment and progression, with the aim of identifying improvement needs unrelated to individuals. The director of third-cycle education also checks that there are functioning processes and procedures for the development, follow-up and revision of individual study plans.
- **Follow-up of indicators**
The programme director analyses selected indicators, for example, programme recruitment, doctoral students' activities and collaboration with the surrounding community.
- **The programme's strategic improvement**
The programme director analyses the programme's improvement based on KTH's vision and overall objectives, collaboration with the surrounding community and chosen principles for the future programme. The principles monitored as part of the programme monitoring are those considered to be the most relevant for third-cycle programmes and important for the programmes' quality.
- **Thesis quality and relevance**
The third-cycle programme director is responsible for ensuring that thesis quality and relevance are analysed at the school. For an assessment of quality and relevance compared with international standards, the director of third-cycle education should draw on information from grading committee meetings.
- **Integration of gender equality, diversity and equal conditions and sustainable development**
The programme director checks that KTH's objectives for the integration of gender equality, diversity and equal conditions, and KTH's sustainability objectives, are assessed.

The programme director documents the programme monitoring in a programme analysis with the related development plan. The development plan must include the activities identified with the aim of further improving the programme. The programme director is responsible for ensuring that programme monitoring are carried out in accordance with these guidelines, the template provided by the Management Office and each school's procedures. Doctoral students should be given the opportunity to take part in programme monitoring.

The director of third-cycle education holds a discussion with each programme director before the development plan for each programme is adopted. The director of third-cycle education produces a common development plan for the school's programmes. Activities that are most suited to joint implementation by the school should be included in the school's development plan. The school-wide development plan is discussed by the Faculty Board before it is adopted and is also a basis for the school's operational plan.

The programme director is responsible for ensuring that the activities included in the specific programme's development plan are carried out. The director of third-cycle education is responsible for ensuring that the activities included in the school-wide development plan are carried out.

Based on programme analyses and the school-wide development plan, the director of third-cycle education is responsible for presenting an overview of the quality situation within the school's programmes in a school-specific report, and for highlighting issues considered to apply to all KTH schools. The school-specific report is discussed by the Faculty Board before it is finally

adopted and submitted to the Faculty Council. The school-specific report is a basis for the president's operational dialogues. See 3.4.2.

The director of third-cycle education coordinates measures to ensure that programme analyses and school-specific report are available in line with the agreed timeframe.

Evaluation with external peer review

Programmes must undergo an evaluation with an external peer review, involving one or more external experts, at least every six years. The aim is to obtain a basis for the continued enhancement of programmes. The evaluation with peer review is part of the programme monitoring for the year in question. Reports from programme monitoring should be used *first and foremost* as a basis for the evaluation. Doctoral students should be given the chance to be represented in peer reviews. The Faculty Board at the school decides when and how this will be achieved.

3.2.3 Programme monitoring templates

The Management Office provides templates that must be used for programme monitoring.

3.3 Targeted evaluations

Targeted evaluations are KTH-wide and may cover a certain area, a group of programmes or an educational level. Targeted evaluations supplement annual follow-ups and programme monitoring's and should be used on a limited basis. Proposals for themes for a targeted evaluation may be made by a specific function or group within KTH. The Faculty Council decides whether a targeted evaluation should be carried out.

A targeted evaluation is initiated if a need has been identified, for example, if an area has been identified as strategically important and there is a need for deeper knowledge about the area before decisions are made about further development. A targeted evaluation may also be initiated if a need arises to know more about an area, or if a KTH-wide quality failing is identified through the annual and programme monitoring's carried out as part of KTH's quality system.

The methods and processes used in targeted evaluations are tailored to the question(s) that will be answered by the evaluation. A targeted evaluation may include external reviewers where necessary. When a decision is made to carry out a targeted evaluation, the method to be used and whether to include external reviewers should also be determined.

Targeted evaluations are coordinated by the Management Office within University Administration.

3.4 Dialogues and exchanges of experience regarding quality enhancement activities

3.4.1 Dialogues at school level

The outcome of annual and programme monitoring is discussed by the school's Faculty Board. The head of school is responsible for ensuring that such dialogues are held. Issues to be dealt with school-wide in the school's operational plan are identified and issues that need to be addressed further after the dialogue are documented. Dialogues are held in accordance with each school's procedures. Students and doctoral students should be given the chance to be represented in the dialogues.

3.4.2 President's operational dialogues

The discussions about overall quality issues are included in the president's operational dialogues as part of the operational planning process. The bases for discussions relating to quality issues are the school-specific reports produced by each school. See sections 3.2.1 and 3.2.2. Issues that need to be further addressed after the dialogues, including the functions responsible, are documented.

3.4.3 University-wide exchanges of experience

University-wide exchanges of experience and lessons learnt are part of the systematic quality enhancement activities at KTH. A gathering of all staff and students is arranged twice a year at KTH. Groups of staff and students pursuing particular issues relating to the improvement of educational programmes at KTH are also invited. The Faculty Council is responsible for ensuring that gatherings are held and the outcome of the last round of programme monitoring is included in the agenda.