



# Quality Assurance Procedures in University-Wide Management and Governance<sup>1</sup>

These guidelines were finalised by the Vice-Chancellor on 16-06-2020 and take effect on the same date

Registration number HS 2021/30

---

<sup>1</sup> This is a translation of the Swedish version (Riktlinjer för kvalitetsarbete inom högskoleövergripande ledning och styrning, registration number HS 2020/546). In the event of any discrepancy, the Swedish version of this document shall prevail.

## Table of Contents

|          |  |           |
|----------|--|-----------|
| <b>1</b> | <b>Introduction</b>  | <b>3</b>  |
| <b>2</b> | <b>Quality Assurance Procedures in University-Wide Management and Governance</b>             | <b>3</b>  |
| 2.1      | Conditions   | 4         |
| 2.1.1    | Conditions Set by State Authorities  | 4         |
| 2.1.2    | Conditions Set by the Board of Governors   | 4         |
| 2.1.3    | Conditions set by the Vice-Chancellor  | 5         |
| 2.2      | Improvement Cycles   | 6         |
| 2.3      | Activities for Quality Assurance and Quality Development                                     | 7         |
| 2.3.1    | Development Plan   | 7         |
| 2.3.2    | Annual Operational Planning  | 7         |
| 2.3.3    | Annual Budget Process  | 8         |
| 2.3.4    | The Vice-Chancellor’s Dialogue Meetings with Schools, Support Services and the Faculty Board | 8         |
| 2.3.5    | Annual Quality Report  | 10        |
| 2.3.6    | Development of Annual Report   | 10        |
| 2.3.7    | Collection of Students’ and Doctoral Students’ Views   | 10        |
| <b>3</b> | <b>Division of Responsibilities</b>  | <b>11</b> |
| <b>4</b> | <b>Communication</b>   | <b>11</b> |
| <b>5</b> | <b>Previous Quality Assurance Procedures in University-Wide Management and Governance</b>    | <b>11</b> |
| <b>6</b> | <b>Taking Effect</b>   | <b>12</b> |
|          | <b>Attachment 1: Schematics of the Vice-Chancellor’s Dialogue Meetings</b>                   | <b>13</b> |

# 1 Introduction

The University of Skövde (the University) is active in quality assurance procedures in education, research, support and management services, and university-wide management and governance processes. The procedures form part of the University's quality system, which applies to all operations. The quality system is outlined in "Quality Policy for the University of Skövde" (the quality policy).

In terms of structure, there are three levels to the quality system (figure 1). Level 1 is the collective system, which is outlined in the quality policy. On level 2, the quality system is implemented in different parts of the operations: education, research, support and management services and university-wide management and governance. Specific guidelines apply to quality assurance procedures in these areas. Activities to ensure and develop quality are performed in each area (level 3).

This document outlines quality assurance procedures in university-wide management and governance.

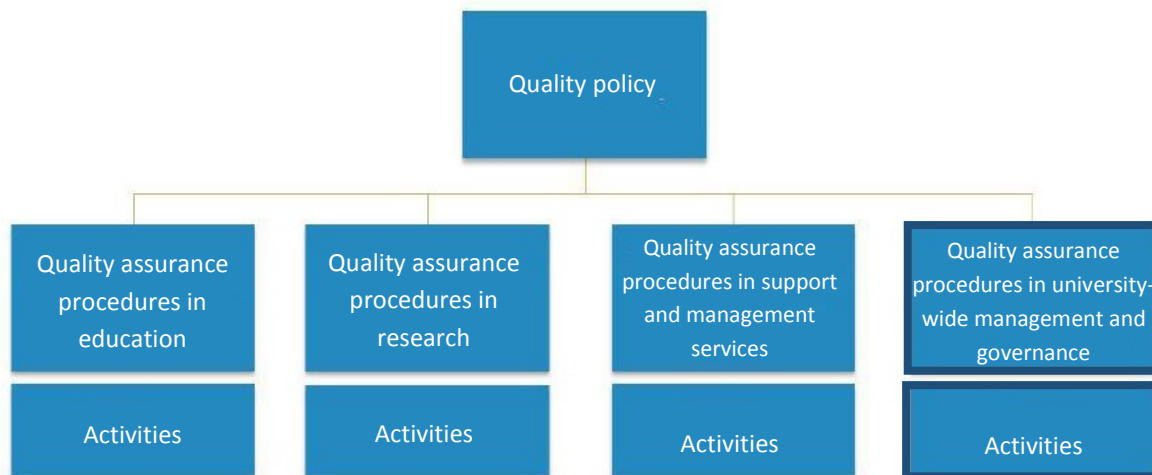


Figure 1: Structure of the quality assurance system at the University of Skövde

On a general level, the term quality is defined in the quality policy as all collective qualities of an object or happening that provide their ability to satisfy various parties' explicit requirements or expectations, to a high enough degree.

Quality assurance procedures in university-wide management and governance aim to satisfy the explicit requirements and expectations of both internal parties (such as the Board of Governors, students, and staff) and external parties (such as the government, supervising authorities and the surrounding society) of the University, to a high enough degree.

## 2 Quality Assurance Procedures in University-Wide Management and Governance

Quality assurance procedures in university-wide management and governance aim to ensure that the University meets requirements, and, to as high a degree as is possible, meets the expectations various parties have of it. These requirements and expectations are expressed in both short-term and long-term goals for the operations.

The University's operations shall – via university-wide management and governance – be given the conditions to achieve set goals, follow up on the extent to which the set goals are achieved, and develop to meet new and changed goals.

## **2.1 Conditions**

The conditions for university-wide management and governance are shaped by state authorities, the Board of Governors, and the Vice-Chancellor.

### **2.1.1 Conditions Set by State Authorities**

Basic statutes for the University's operations can be found in the Higher Education Act and the Higher Education Ordinance, and in a number of other regulations that regulate certain areas or issues. In addition, the University is to apply an extensive set of rules for state authorities.

Operative conditions for the running of the operations are given by the Swedish government and parliament through decisions that are directly connected to the University's operations. Examples of such decisions are the Budget Bill, decision concerning the state budget, annual public service agreements, and special commissions.

#### **The Budget Bill**

The Budget Bill constitutes an important planning instrument for the University's long-term operational planning. It proposes financial conditions that are to apply to the parts of education and research that are financed by direct government funding for the coming financial year, and a further two years. Parliament's decision concerning the state budget for the coming financial year determines the financial conditions.

#### **Public Service Agreements**

The government finalises two public service agreements every year, which set the conditions for the University's operations.

One of the public service agreements sets the conditions that apply to all universities and university colleges. It outlines various tasks that all higher education institutions are to perform. It also states certain expectations of the higher education institutions' courses and study programmes, for instance that it should correspond to student demand and the needs of the labour market. Compensation amounts for full-year students and full-year performances that are to apply to various areas of education are also stated in this public service agreement.

The second public service agreement sets the specific conditions that are to apply to operations at the University of Skövde. It states the financial conditions that are to apply to the University over the coming financial year, and any specific tasks for the University.

The University's development in relation to the public service agreements is monitored by the government in the manner stated in the public service agreements, normally through the annual report and in direct dialogue with authorities.

### **2.1.2 Conditions Set by the Board of Governors**

The Board of Governors at the University of Skövde clarifies long-term expectations for the operations through a set development plan with a six-year focus, as well as short-term

expectations through an annual overall budget. The Board of Governors also finalises the University's Rules of Procedure.

### **Development Plan**

A vision for the University, as well as strategies, and both quantitative indicators and qualitative goals for education, research and university-wide areas are formulated in a development plan for the University's operations. The development plan is finalised by the Board of Governors every six years<sup>2</sup>. During the six-year period, revisions of the current development plan may be finalised by the Board. Such revisions could, for instance, be motivated by changed conditions, or insights that goals are set too high or too low<sup>3</sup>. The University's development in relation to the development plan is followed up by the Board every year through the annual report.

### **Overall Budget**

The Board of Governors finalises an overall budget ahead of each financial year, in which financial conditions for the operations are clarified. The overall budget states which means the Schools receive for their education and research operations, as well as the performance they are expected to give to obtain these means. Financial conditions for Support Services, the Vice-Chancellor's Office and the Faculty Board are also clarified in the overall budget.

### **The University's Rules of Procedure**

The Board of Governors finalises the Rules of Procedure for the University. The Rules of Procedure shape the University's overall organisation, as well as the division of responsibilities between the Board and the Vice-Chancellor.

#### **2.1.3 Conditions set by the Vice-Chancellor**

##### **Standardised Processes**

The Vice-Chancellor assures conditions for the management and governance of the University's operations through standardised processes for operational planning, implementation, follow-up and development. Examples of such processes are timed processes for operational planning and budget, the Vice-Chancellor's decision meetings, as well as meetings with management officeholders in the operation via councils for university-wide issues. The councils are the Vice-Chancellor's Management Group, the Vice-Chancellor's Quality Council, and the Vice-Chancellor's Council for Line Management Issues (see also part 3).

##### **The Vice-Chancellor's Delegation of Authority**

Conditions for management and governance of the operations are also assured through the Vice-Chancellor's Delegation of Authority. The Delegation of Authority shapes an adequate organisation and clear division of responsibilities under the Vice-Chancellor.

---

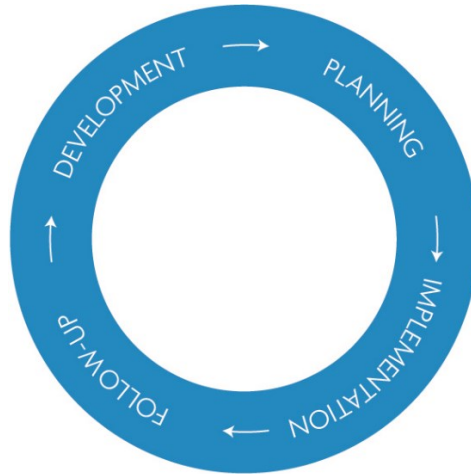
<sup>2</sup> The "Development Plan for the University of Skövde 2017 – 2022" (registration number HS 2015/1011) was finalised in December 2016.

<sup>3</sup> See for instance "Indicators for Education, Research and University-Wide Areas" [Indikatorer för utbildning, forskning och Högskoleövergripande områden] (registration number 2019/510).

## 2.2 Improvement Cycles

Quality assurance procedures in university-wide management and governance are performed in the shape of improvement cycles. The University works according to a model of four clear and connected phases, namely planning, implementation, follow-up and development (see figure 2).

### The Improvement Cycle of the Quality Assurance System at the University of Skövde – Use in University-Wide Management and Governance



The University's model of four clear and connected phases in the improvement cycle, namely planning, implementation, follow-up and development, is used in quality assurance procedures in university-wide management and governance processes. The different phases are outlined below:

- **Planning**

The University's six-year development plan forms the foundation of annual overall operational planning performed by the Schools, support and management services, and the Faculty Board (the units) in the shape of operational plans. The Vice-Chancellor will also annually finalise the range of courses and study programmes offered in the coming year. The operational plan, the overall budget, and the range of programmes offered are important parts of each unit's detailed planning.

An important starting point of the planning is what has come up in different follow-up procedures. Experiences and results from follow-up should be utilised as improvements and development of the operations or their conditions.

- **Implementation**

In this phase, planned operations are implemented at the Schools, in support and management services, and in the Faculty Board.

- **Follow-up**

Follow-up of the operation's development in relation to the budget, operational plans and the development plan, for instance, is performed continually in dialogue meetings with the management groups of the units, in meetings with the Vice-Chancellor's various councils, in the annual report, and in the Vice-Chancellor's quality report.

Follow-up of education and research, which is the university-wide responsibility of the Faculty Board, generates valuable material for the overall management and governance processes. In addition, much additional follow-up is done, such as of work and study environment issues, in staff and student investigations.

The results of the follow-up, as well as the reflections connected thereto, form starting values for the development phase and the upcoming planning phase.

Follow-up towards national and local goals of the operation – which are mainly found in the Higher Education Act, the public service agreements, and the University’s Development Plan – is performed annually in the University’s Annual Report. The Annual Report forms the foundation for reporting back to the Board of Governors and the government.

- **Development**

In this phase, it is decided which measures are to be taken, based on the follow-up and reflection that has taken place. The measures, which are made visible in the respective unit’s operational plan, may mean developing or phasing out operations. Changes to conditions and modi operandi can also be necessary. A new development plan is created every six years, forming the framework of the operations for the next six years.

The development phase is followed by a new planning phase, see above.

Figure 2: The improvement cycle of the quality assurance system at the University of Skövde – applied to university-wide management and governance

## 2.3 Activities for Quality Assurance and Quality Development

Activities for quality assurance related to university-wide management and governance are those that, to a high degree, create a framework and provide conditions for operational work performed at Schools, in support and management services, and by the Faculty Board.

Activities for quality development are made visible in the development plan, and in the units’ operational plans.

### 2.3.1 Development Plan

The purpose of the development plan is to determine the long-term ambitions for the University’s operations. The development plan includes a vision and goals which provide the direction in six-year cycles. As is clear from part 2.1.2, the development plan is finalised by the Board of Governors.

### 2.3.2 Annual Operational Planning

The purpose of the annual operational planning is to break down the development plan’s university-wide and long-term goals to a unit level, and a more short-term perspective (one to three years). The operational plans have a three-year perspective, but are revised annually.

The operational plans state which prioritised activities the units are to perform to reach the goals, when the activities are to be performed, as well as the effects expected from the activities. The activities shall contribute to the development of education, research and university-wide areas. The operational plan can also state prioritised activities in other selected areas.

Operational planning is based on current, known conditions. The foundation is the units’ development in relation to the University’s development plan, as well as the financial conditions. Planning is also affected by the outcome of follow-up regularly performed by the University. Examples of such follow-up include the six-year follow-ups of education and research environments, and staff and student surveys. The outcome of these can lead to changes of the operations’ conditions, and planning of quality development activities. The Student Union Report [Studentkårsskrivelsen] annually given by the Student Union to the

University also constitutes an important base for operational planning. In addition, other factors, such as external commissions and events in the outside world, play a role.

### **2.3.3 Annual Budget Process**

The annual budget process is closely integrated with the operational planning process. The budget process constitutes an important tool for setting resources for and prioritising the activities of the operational plan, based on the financial conditions. The purpose is to optimise goal achievement for the University.

There is a transparent and clear structure for budget work on the unit level. The process begins early in the year, and is based on the conditions stated in the preceding year's Budget Bill. Regular discussions are held in the Vice-Chancellor's Management Group, and at dialogue meetings with Schools' and Support Services' management groups, and the Faculty Board's Deans (see part 2.3.4). Preliminary financial planning conditions are finalised in early spring, and the final financial planning conditions for the next year of education and research financed through direct government funding are finalised in early autumn. In this way, good conditions for, and participation in, each unit's responsibility for realising goals in the development plan through stated activities in their operational plan, are created.

Continuous follow-up of each unit's financial outcome and performed activities, as well as prognoses, planned and performed activities, special investments, and internal and external commissions, constitute important bases for financial planning conditions and the proposed overall budget for the next year, which the Vice-Chancellor hands to the Board of Governors at the end of the year.

The timeframe for the budget process is evident from the instructions for operational planning and budget finalised annually by the Vice-Chancellor.

### **2.3.4 The Vice-Chancellor's Dialogue Meetings with Schools, Support Services and the Faculty Board**

The purpose of the dialogue meetings is to follow up operations, exchange information, and check in on current issues with the respective units, via structured dialogues with the management groups of Schools and Support Services, as well as the Faculty Board's Deans<sup>4</sup>.

Over the course of the year, three dialogue meetings are held. At the meetings, there is follow-up of financial outcomes and prognoses, and of the unit's development in relation to the current operational plan and joint indicators for the University. The outcomes of various instances of follow-up – such as the six-year follow-up of education and research environments, and staff and student investigations – also constitute important bases for the dialogue meetings.

The different dialogue meetings are outlined below, and in a schematic image in appendix 1.

#### **First Dialogue Meeting**

At the first dialogue meeting (early spring), there is follow-up of the unit's financial development and development in relation to the operational plan of the previous year. Initial discussions concerning future revisions of the operational plan and the budget of the next

---

<sup>4</sup> The Deans have two roles in relation to the dialogue meetings. They are to both contribute with their observations concerning the development of the Schools, and to participate in the dialogue meetings concerning the Faculty Board.



year are also a recurring point at this dialogue meeting. In addition, the units are given the opportunity to present and discuss their own strategic concerns.

Ahead of the meeting with School management teams, the Faculty Board's observations concerning the Schools' development, be it positive development or identified needs for development, are collected through a dialogue meeting with the Deans.

Once dialogue meetings with all units have been held, university-wide issues are taken back to the Vice-Chancellor's Management Group. Then, the respective School's preliminary financial planning conditions for education financed by direct government funding for the coming financial year, are finalised.

### **Second Dialogue Meeting**

At the second dialogue meeting (early summer), there is follow-up of, and a prognosis for, the unit's financial development, and development in relation to the operational plan of the current year. The discussion forms the foundation for an initial dialogue concerning the education mission for the respective Schools in the coming year, which may change the preliminary financial planning conditions for that year. At this meeting, particular importance is placed on different kinds of future issues, but also on the results of internal and external follow-up of education and research. The discussion provides more in-depth material for work with the operational plan and budget. The second dialogue meeting is not held with the Deans of the Faculty Board.

Once dialogue meetings with all units have been held, university-wide issues are taken back to the Vice-Chancellor's Management Group. Then, the respective unit's preliminary financial planning conditions for the coming financial year may be revised.

### **Third Dialogue Meeting**

At the third dialogue meeting (early autumn), in-depth follow-up, and a prognosis for the unit's financial development, are performed. An in-depth dialogue concerning the unit's prioritised activities in the operational plan for the coming period also takes place. Particular importance is placed on the need for any strategic investments that need to be financed using the specific means which the Vice-Chancellor has at their disposal for university-wide investments of various kinds, rather than using the unit's operating budget.

Once dialogue meetings with all units have been held, university-wide issues are taken back to the Vice-Chancellor's Management Group.

### **The Results of the Dialogue Meetings**

The results of the follow-up performed at the dialogue meetings (including what has come up in follow-up of education and research, see above) are fed back to the processes for operational planning ahead of the next year.

The dialogues also constitute, alongside the government's Budget Bill, an important foundation for the development of final financial planning conditions and the proposed overall budget for the University, which the Vice-Chancellor puts to the Board of Governors at the end of the year (see part 2.2.3).

The timeframes of the dialogue meetings are clear from the instructions for operational planning and budget which are finalised annually by the Vice-Chancellor.

### **2.3.5 Annual Quality Report**

The purpose of the annual quality report is to summarise, on an overarching level, quality assurance procedures and their results. The quality report, which is handed to the Board of Governors by the Vice-Chancellor once per year, is finalised by the Board.

The report describes the quality assurance procedures that have been performed over the year. In addition, a summarising analysis and reflections related to quality assurance procedures in general, and to the University's quality system, are made.

### **2.3.6 Development of Annual Report**

The purpose of the annual report is to perform annual follow-up towards national and local goals for the operation. The national goals are mainly found in the Higher Education Act and the public service agreements, while the local goals are stated in the University's development plan. The annual report also includes financial follow-up towards the overall budget. In addition, the annual report constitutes an important base for identifying activities in coming operational plans. The annual report is finalised by the Board of Governors.

### **2.3.7 Collection of Students' and Doctoral Students' Views**

The purpose of the activity is to ensure students' and doctoral students' right to exercise influence on operational issues related to education. Views are collected in various ways, mainly through contact with the Student Union.

- **Dialogue Meetings with the Student Union**

Representatives of the Student Union regularly meet management officeholders on various levels of the University's organisation for informal consultation on various issues. For instance, the Vice-Chancellor and Pro Vice-Chancellor meet the Chair and Vice Chair of the Student Union at monthly lunch meetings. Outlines of the different dialogue meetings can be found in the policy document "Instructions Concerning Queries and Complaints from Students".

- **Follow-Up of the Student Union Report**

The Student Union in Skövde compiles a Student Union Report every year, in which views of the University's educational operations are expressed. The views concern both first-, second- and third-cycle education. Follow-up of the Student Union Report takes place in different ways, mainly through measures within the framework of the units' operational planning (see above, part 2.3.2).

- **The Student Barometer and the Mirror for Doctoral Students**

The Student Barometer and the Mirror for Doctoral Students are parts of the systematic work with the working environment, related to students and doctoral students. Through questionnaires, views in a number of areas related to the study environment are collected. Examples of such areas are student influence, support, service and information, and physical environment (Student Barometer), as well as working hours and working situation (Mirror of Doctoral Students).

In addition to the aforementioned activities, views are collected from students and doctoral students in a number of ways, mainly through student and doctoral student representatives'

participation in various committees, councils and other bodies, as well as assorted questionnaires.

### **3 Division of Responsibilities**

Responsibility for activities concerning university-wide management and governance lies with the Vice-Chancellor<sup>5</sup>. There are three advisory groups connected to the Vice-Chancellor, namely:

- The Vice-Chancellor's Management Group – for strategic discussions that contribute to providing a holistic view, including both colleague perspectives and line and student perspectives
- The Vice-Chancellor's Quality Council – which gives the Vice-Chancellor advice in issues concerning the University's joint quality assurance procedures
- The Vice-Chancellor's Council for Line Management Issues – for advice in issues that mainly concern the line management perspective

The councils are described in more detail in specific descriptions of assignment.

According to the Rules of Procedure, the Faculty Board has the overarching responsibility for quality assurance procedures in education and research at the University. Close collaboration takes place, therefore, between the Vice-Chancellor and the Faculty Board in the parts of university-wide management and governance that concern quality assurance of education and research. Such collaboration takes place within the framework of the formal organisational structure (see above), as well as in other ways, such as on the Vice-Chancellor's councils (see above) and at dialogue meetings (see part 2.3.4).

### **4 Communication**

The University's quality assurance procedures are to be characterised by clarity and transparency. The results of the quality assurance procedures should therefore be communicated and made available to relevant parties in and outside of the organisation in an appropriate way.

### **5 Previous Quality Assurance Procedures in University-Wide Management and Governance**

The University of Skövde has worked with an overarching, long-term development plan and periodic operational plans for the respective units for many years. The development plan and operational plans have been seen – and are seen – as tools for managing and governing the operations.

The first joint development plan for the University was finalised in December 2011, and applied to the years 2012 – 2016<sup>6</sup>. Follow-up of the University's development in relation to the current development plan has been performed within the framework of the annual report

---

<sup>5</sup> As is clear from above, the development plan, annual report and annual quality report are finalised by the Board of Governors.

<sup>6</sup> Registration number HS 2011/343

since 2012. Finalised operational plans, including explicit quality goals, have been used as tools for management and governance at the University since 2010<sup>7</sup>.

## **6 Taking Effect**

These guidelines take effect on 16-06-2020 and replace “Guidelines for Quality Assurance Procedures in University-Wide Management and Governance Processes” [Riktlinjer för kvalitetsarbete inom högskoleövergripande ledning och styrning] (registration number HS 2019/986).

---

<sup>7</sup> Process for budget and operational plans at the University of Skövde, Board decision 11-12-2009 (registration number HS 2009/491-111)

## Attachment 1: Schematics of the Vice-Chancellor's Dialogue Meetings

The schematic picture below describes the Vice-Chancellor's dialogue meetings and the relationship to the units (Schools, Support and Management Services and the Faculty Board). The dialogue meetings fulfil an important function for following up the units' development in relation to the development plan and budget, as well as the development of operational plans and proposals for the overall budget.

