



Guidelines for following up reviews of HEIs' quality assurance processes



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Introduction

These guidelines apply to the follow-up of higher education institutions (HEI) that received the assessment *approved quality assurance processes with reservations* or *quality assurance processes under review*, in the regular reviews of HEI quality assurance processes which UKÄ conducts.

UKÄ's reviews focus on assessing whether the HEIs' quality assurance processes systematically and effectively help ensure and enhance the quality of courses and programmes at all educational levels. The review focuses on the continuous improvement of courses and programmes and on whether the information generated as a result of follow-up and evaluation leads to appropriate improvement measures.

An HEI assessed as *approved quality assurance processes with reservations* is to report the measures it has taken no later than two years after its review. For an HEI given the assessment *quality assurance processes under review*, the HEI and UKÄ come to agreement on an appropriate date for reporting what measures have been taken. UKÄ appoints an assessment panel to follow up the HEI's measures. The follow-up focuses on the assessment criteria assessed as not fulfilled and the assessment areas judged as not satisfactory. The follow-up review can include both supplemental supporting material and interviews.

If the follow-up review leads to a positive assessment from the assessment panel, the HEI's quality assurance processes can be approved in their entirety by UKÄ. If the HEI's quality assurance processes are not approved, no additional follow-ups will be conducted. An HEI that continues to be *under review* after the follow-up will go through additional programme evaluations.

Assessment areas and assessment criteria

In the reviews of HEIs' quality assurance processes, the assessment areas serve as the foundation for the overall assessment of the HEIs' quality assurance processes. An assessment area consists of one or more assessment criteria. The assessment criteria are a minimum level for what the HEI must report in the self-evaluation. In addition to the assessment criteria, there may also be other components of the systematic quality assurance work, specific for each HEI, that are relevant to describe and evaluate within an assessment area. For a description of the assessment areas, see *Guidelines for reviewing HEIs' quality assurance processes*.

Approved quality assurance processes with reservations

With the overall assessment *approved quality assurance processes with reservations*, the HEI's quality assurance processes are fairly well described, well argued for and well-functioning in practice. This assessment means that one or more assessment criteria are judged as not fulfilled and at least one assessment area is judged as not satisfactory.

Scope and timeframe for follow-up

Within two years, the HEI is to submit to UKÄ a report on measures taken. The report is to include the measures taken to address the deficiencies in all assessment criteria judged as not fulfilled, within the assessment areas judged as not satisfactory. An analysis of the noted deficiencies is to be included in the report.

UKÄ and the HEI will come to an agreement on an appropriate timeframe for the follow-up. The follow-up work is expected to take three to six months from the point that the HEI has submitted its report on measures taken. UKÄ provides a template for the report.

Notification of coming report on measures taken and follow-up

UKÄ begins the follow-up as soon as the HEI has submitted its report on measures taken. So that UKÄ will have time to plan the assessment panel's work, the HEI is to inform UKÄ that it plans to submit its report on measures taken no later than **three months** before its submission.

The assessment panel

UKÄ appoints an assessment panel to conduct the follow-up. If possible, the follow-up will be assigned to assessors who participated in the original review of the HEI. UKÄ appoints the assessment panel based on the assessment areas being followed up to ensure that the panel includes expertise relevant for the follow-up. As a quality assurance measure, the HEI may comment on the composition of the assessment panel so that it can point out any conflicts of interest.

The assessment panel is tasked with assessing whether the HEI's measures are reasonable and well-suited to address the deficiencies noted in the previous report.

Supplementary documentation and interviews

If the assessment panel feels the report on measures taken is insufficient or if any questions remain unanswered, it can ask the HEI to submit supplementary documentation. This could be in the form of responses to specific questions and additional documentation.

The assessment panel can also conduct interviews to follow up the measures. Interviews can involve the HEI's staff and board, students and doctoral students. Interviews will primarily be conducted remotely using digital tools.

Report and decision

The assessment panel's conclusions are summarised in a short report. The report will explain if the noted deficiencies are now corrected and if all the assessment areas are now judged as satisfactory.

Sharing of the assessment panel's report

The assessment panel's draft report will be sent to the HEI for comment before UKÄ makes its final decision. The purpose of this is to give the HEI the opportunity to comment on any factual mistakes in the report. The period for comment is three weeks.

The assessors read the HEI's response and make changes to the report when relevant. The HEI's written response will be attached to the report.

UKÄ's decision

The final report from the assessment panel forms the basis for UKÄ's decision. Supported by the assessment panel's report, UKÄ may decide that, after the measures taken, the HEI is to be assessed as *approved quality assurance processes*.

If the reported measures are considered insufficient for all the assessment areas to now be judged as satisfactory, the assessment *approved quality assurance processes with reservations* continues to apply. Additional follow-ups of the HEI's quality assurance processes will not be conducted.

Publication of decisions

The decision and the assessment panel's report will be made public on UKÄ's website.

Dialogue after the follow-up

After a decision is made on the follow-up, UKÄ will offer an opportunity for a dialogue as a way of helping with improvements in the HEI's quality assurance processes. This dialogue will hopefully lead to feedback where specific questions can be addressed.

Quality assurance processes under review

With the overall assessment *quality assurance processes under review*, there are several significant deficiencies in the HEI's quality assurance processes regarding how they are described and argued for and how well they function in practice. The deficiencies are extensive and the assessment panel's opinion is that the assessment areas that are not satisfactory as a whole are to be reviewed again.

Scope and timeframe for follow-up

The HEI and UKÄ will decide together on an appropriate timeframe for submission of the report on taken measures to UKÄ. The report is to include the measures taken to address the deficiencies in the assessment areas judged as not satisfactory. In the follow-up, these assessment areas will be reviewed again in full. It can therefore be relevant for the HEI to reflect on all the assessment criteria within a specific assessment area, including those that have been assessed as fulfilled. An analysis of the noted deficiencies is to be included in the report.

The follow-up work is expected to take three to six months from the point that the HEI has submitted its report on measures taken. UKÄ provides a template for the report.

Notification of coming report on measures taken and follow-up

UKÄ begins the follow-up as soon as the HEI has submitted its report on measures taken. So that UKÄ will have time to plan the assessment panel's work, the HEI is to inform UKÄ that it plans to submit its report on measures taken no later than **three months** before its submission.

The assessment panel

UKÄ appoints an assessment panel to conduct the follow-up. If possible, the follow-up will be assigned to assessors who participated in the original review of the HEI. UKÄ appoints the assessment panel based on the assessment areas being followed up to ensure that the panel includes expertise relevant for the follow-up. As a quality assurance measure, the HEI may comment on the composition of the assessment panel so that it can point out any conflicts of interest.

The assessment panel is tasked with judging whether the HEI's measures are reasonable and well-suited to address the deficiencies noted in the previous report.

Supplementary documentation and interviews

If the assessment panel feels the report on measures taken is insufficient or if any questions remain unanswered, it can ask the HEI to submit supplementary documentation. This could be in the form of responses to specific questions and additional documentation.

The assessment panel can also request interviews be conducted to follow up the measures. Interviews can involve the HEI's staff and board, students and doctoral students. Interviews will primarily be conducted remotely using digital tools.

Report and decision

The assessment panel's conclusions are summarised in a short report. The report explains if the noted deficiencies are now corrected and if all the assessment areas are now judged as satisfactory.

Sharing of the assessment panel's report

The assessment panel's draft report will be sent to the HEI for comment before UKÄ makes its final decision. The purpose of this is to give the HEI the opportunity to comment on any factual mistakes in the report. The period for comment is three weeks.

The assessors read the HEI's response and make changes to the report when relevant. The HEI's written response will be attached to the report.

UKÄ's decision

The final report from the assessment panel forms the basis for UKÄ's decision. Supported by the assessment panel's report, UKÄ may decide that, after the measures taken, the HEI's quality assurance processes are approved, approved with reservations or that they continue to be under review.

In the event of *approved quality assurance processes*

If the reported measures are judged sufficient for all assessment areas to now be considered satisfactory, the HEI's quality assurance processes will be approved in full.

In the event of *approved quality assurance processes with reservations*

If the reported measures demonstrate improvements in the HEI's quality assurance processes, but not sufficient enough for all assessment areas to be considered satisfactory, the HEI can be given the assessment *approved quality assurance processes with reservations*. Additional follow-ups of the HEI's quality assurance processes will not be conducted.

In the event of *quality assurance processes under review*

If the reported measures are not judged as sufficient, the HEI's quality assurance processes can continue to be considered as *under review*. Additional follow-ups of the HEI's quality assurance processes will not be conducted. The HEI will, however, become the subject of an increased number of programme evaluations.

Publication of decisions

The decision and the assessment panel's report will be made public on UKÄ's website.

Dialogue after the follow-up

After a decision is made on the follow-up, UKÄ will offer an opportunity for a dialogue as a way of helping with improvements in the HEI's quality assurance processes. This dialogue will hopefully lead to feedback where specific questions can be addressed.

Assessment basis

The basis for the follow-up primarily consists of the HEI's report on measures taken. If necessary, the assessment panel can request additional supporting documentation. The assessment panel can also conduct interviews with relevant individuals if the panel feels the material is insufficient for making an assessment.

Annexes to the report on measures taken

The report on measures taken should be able to be read as a stand-alone document and should not refer to links with information. References to sources on which the analysis and report on measures taken are based are to be specified in the report on measures taken, and all sources are to be made available to the assessment panel upon request. If the measures include new or revised documents related to the HEI's quality assurance processes, such as rules of procedures, delegations of authority, quality policies or other strategy documents, these are to be uploaded as annexes to the report on measures taken. Decision dates are to be included in the attached documents.

Deadline for submitting the report on measures taken in UKÄ Direkt

The report on measures taken and any other documents should be uploaded and registered on UKÄ Direkt, which is the HEIs' portal for UKÄ's online case management system. Each HEI has an administrator for UKÄ Direkt that distributes login information to the HEI's other users and can answer questions about UKÄ Direkt. For more information, see the user manual available at UKÄ Direkt.

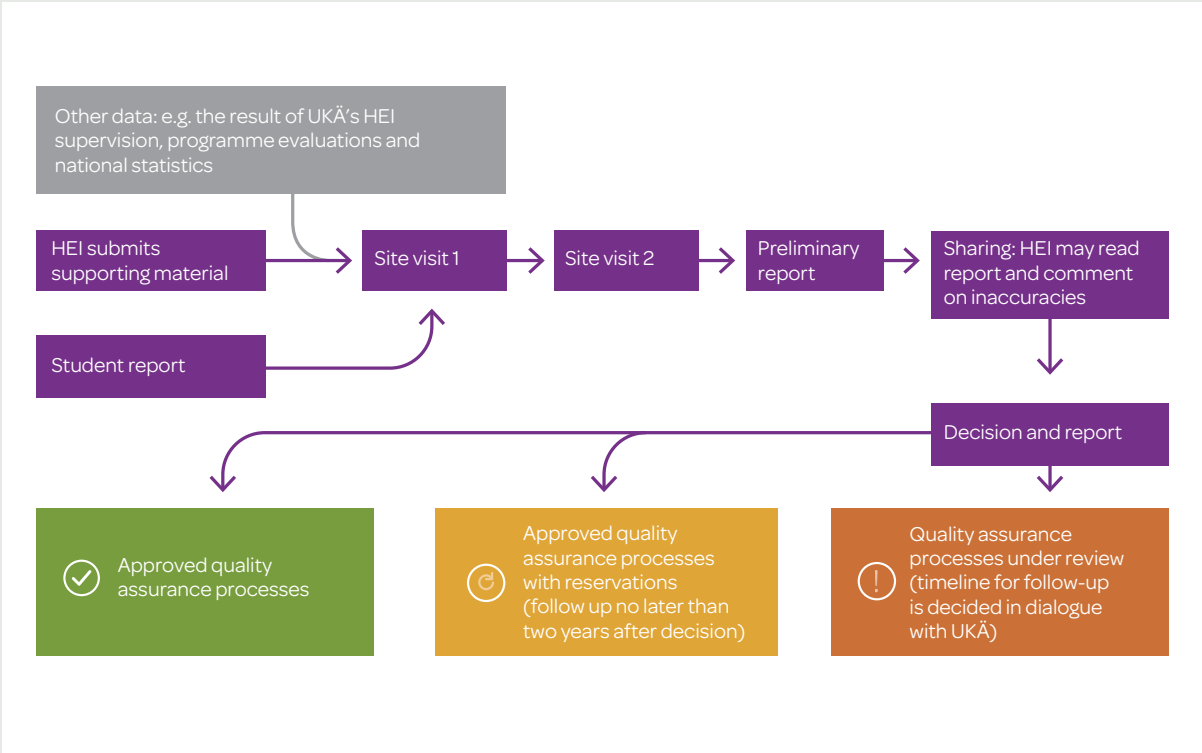
For approved quality assurance processes with reservations, UKÄ's decision states the date by which the HEI is to submit its report on measures taken. *For quality assurance processes under review*, the HEI and UKÄ decide the submission date together.

Template for report on measures taken

Reports on measures taken are written using the template provided by UKÄ and available on UKÄ's website.

The template consists of the six assessment areas covered by the review of the HEIs' quality assurance processes. The report should be around 1–2 pages per assessment criteria. See additional instructions in *Template for reports on measures taken when following up reviews of HEI quality assurance processes*.

Process for institutional reviews of HEI 's quality assurance processes



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