NOQA Annual Meeting 2014

Time: June 13, 2014

Venue: Nordic Sea Hotel, Vasaplan 4, Stockholm

Participants: Karabi Bergmann, Danish Accreditation Institution
               Kirstine Fabricius, Danish Accreditation Institution
               Anne Hallenberg, Danish Accreditation Institution
               David Metz, Danish Accreditation Institution
               Frederik Sigurd, Danish Evaluation Institute EVA
               Tue Vinther-Jørgensen, Danish Evaluation Institute EVA
               Helka Kekäläinen, FINEEC
               Sirpa Moitus, FINEEC
               Marja-Liisa Saarilammi, FINEEC
               Hannele Seppälä, FINEEC
               Gro Hanne Aas, NOKUT
               Øystein Lund, NOKUT
               Ole-Jacob Skodvin, NOKUT
               Luna Lee Solheim, NOKUT
               Johanna Köhlmark, UKÄ
               Karin Järplid Linde, UKÄ
               Anna-Karin Malla, UKÄ
               Viveka Persson, UKÄ
               Ulrika Thafvelin, UKÄ
               Einar Hreinsson, The Quality Board for Icelandic Higher Education Rannis

1. Welcome and introductions

Karin Järplid Linde, UKÄ, opened the meeting by welcoming all participants
representing each organization within the NOQA network. The agenda for the meeting
was reviewed.

2. Presentations by each agency

Each agency gave an update on news and developments in their country.

3. Joint Nordic projects 2013-2014 and proposal for follow up

3.1 Joint seminar of Nordic and Baltic QA agencies

In the annual meeting 2013 the task of arranging a NOQA seminar in Sweden in cooperation with the Baltic network of quality assurance agencies was given to Sweden with Hannele Seppälä, FINEEC, taking the lead. The planning team, nominated by the agencies, had met and agreed that the focus of the joint seminar would be on sharing experiences, and to have a wider participation both from the NOQA agencies but also to invite the Baltic network, as suggested in the annual meeting 2013.

Hannele Seppälä gave an overview of the history of NOQA, formed already in 1992 and later formalized as a network in 2003, and listed the joint projects that have been carried out since then. (Appendix 1) Although the systems of quality assurance and the higher education sector, as well as the roles and functions of the agencies vary in the Nordic and Baltic countries, the agencies share the challenges regarding development of methods, processes and daily work regarding
- How to apply the method of peer review
- How to develop the project leadership
- Which ways to develop the internal quality culture of the agency
- How to develop new processes and methods

Therefore the aim of the joint seminar this year was to share experiences and good practices of developing and assuring the quality of the agencies' work; and to provide concrete ideas on how to improve the daily work and internal quality assurance processes. In order for this to happen both at the level of officers (individual co-workers) and at an organizational level, it is important with a widened representation from the agencies. It is also important that the findings are published to enable further discussion in the agencies.

3.2 Staff exchange

Johanna Köhlmark, UKÄ, presented a proposal for how staff exchange could promote collaboration and sharing of knowledge and ideas for the advancement of our agencies through:
1) **Staff exchange for shorter periods**, which could be organised in two ways with senior staff participating in development projects and junior staff as a part of their training.
2) **Study visits** of a group from one agency visiting another agency to investigate specific areas of work.
3) **Thematic web-conferences/workshops** with rotating responsibility between agencies or holding conference when a topic of common interest is identified.

3.3 Discussion on the proposals of seminar on internal QA and staff exchange

Workshop seminars like this year was seen as a feasible way of collaboration. On the issue of having wider representation from the Baltic countries, this was seen as positive

and beneficial for the network and it was suggested to take place every second year for example.

Regarding staff exchange, the viewpoints expressed was along the line that this is an important tool for the agencies' internal quality work, but since the needs of the different agencies are varying it should be seen as a possibility rather than a specific project. Feasible activities could e.g. be having a staff member joining a specific evaluation project in another agency or taking part in the training session for experts in an evaluation project.
It was agreed to follow up on the development of the agencies' internal QA processes at the next NOQA annual meeting 2015. It could be in the form of a mini-self-assessment by each agency and the model of seminar workshops could be used for this purpose, and possibly also for reporting of the updates of news and developments from the agencies. It was further agreed that the agencies should report to the annual meeting 2015 on activities of staff exchange, if any has taken place.

All agencies will nominate one member to the planning team. The staff member nominated by UKÄ will take the lead and work together with the agency organising the annual meeting 2015.

4. European Approach for Quality Assurance of Joint Programmes
There was a discussion on the draft proposal for a European approach for quality assurance of joint programmes, which is proposed to be adopted at the Yerevan meeting in the spring of 2015. Since most agencies do not work with programme evaluations, the proposal does not have any practical consequences for those agencies.

5. NOQA webpage
Luna Lee Solheim, NOKUT, is updating the webpage whenever it is needed, and is welcoming updates.

It was noted that there is no link to NOQA on the INQAAHE webpage where the regional networks are listed, and it was suggested that the NOQA link be sent to INQAAHE.

6. Next annual meeting
Next annual meeting will be held on June 11–12, 2015 in Iceland.

Enclosures:
History of the joint NOQA projects, Presentation by Hannele Seppälä
Proposal for staff exchange, Presentation by Johanna Köhlmark

Joint seminar of Nordic and Baltic QA agencies

June 12–13, 2014

Stockholm

History of the joint NOQA projects

Focus	Project(s)	Year
External QA of the HEIs	Quality Audit in the Nordic Countries	2006
	Sytematic Quality Work in Nordic Higher Education Institutions	2004
	Quality Assurance in the Nordic Higher Education – accreditation-like practices	2001
Learning outcomes in external QA approaches	Learning outcomes in external quality assurance approaches	2013
	Learning outcomes: Common framework – different approaches to evaluating learning outcomes in the Nordic countries	2007
Evaluation procedures and mutual recognition	Site visits as an evaluation method	2011
	A Method for Mutual Recognition of Quality Assurance Agencies	2002
Student and stakeholder involvement	Stakeholder cooperation within the Nordic agencies for quality assurance in higher education – similarities, differences and examples of good practice	2012
	Student involvement in Nordic Quality Assessment of Higher Education	2003
European level guidelines	European Standards and Guidelines in a Nordic Perspective	2005

Background and inspiration

The systems of external QA in HE and also the roles and functions of the QA agencies vary in the Nordic and Baltic countries.

However, QA agencies share many challenges regarding the development of methods, processes and daily work:

- How to apply the method of peer review
- How to develop the project leadership
- Which are the ways to develop the internal quality culture of the agency
- How to develop new processes and methods

Outcome and follow up

The aim of the workshops was
- to share experiences and good practices of developing and assuring the quality of the agencies
- to provide concrete ideas on how to improve the daily work and internal QA processes.

Both at the level of officers/ indivuals and organization

The main results of the seminar will be published in the report.

In order to keep on joint discussion and sharing the good practices, we would suggest to have in the agenda of the next annual NOQA meeting a follow up discussion on the development of the agencies' internal QA processes

(e.g., reflections based on the results of this seminar)

Datum
2014-06-09

Avdelning
Utvärderingsavdelningen

Handläggare
Per Westman

Johanna Köhlmark

UNIVERSITETS-KANSLERSÄMBETET

Proposal for staff exchange

Background

The main objective of NOQA is to create a joint understanding of different Nordic viewpoints on issues related to higher education quality assurance. At the annual meeting in Helsinki in June 2013 future cooperation between our Agencies was debated. NOQA has been an important arena for different types of cooperation between the QA-agencies in the northern countries. NOQA is currently entering a new phase and it is a mutual goal to deepen the collaboration and strengthen the dissemination within our organisations. One proposal discussed at the meeting was to establish a forum for staff exchange. The aim was defined as to establish a forum to exchange experiences.

The NOQA seminar, where issues of mutual interest will be discussed, could be a good starting point to take this cooperation further.

Purpose/statement

We propose that the main objective for staff exchange is to promote collaboration through staff exchanges, and sharing of knowledge and ideas for the advancement of our agencies.

Through staff exchange participants can acquire knowledge, practical skills and expertise, and bring back new ideas and perspectives to their home organisations. The hosting agency can benefit by welcoming an extra staff member who can bring new perspectives.

Furthermore, staff exchange activities could also include networking activities, organisation of workshops and conferences to facilitate sharing of knowledge, new skills acquisition and career development for staff members.

Proposal for cooperation

Below three suggestions for staff exchange are presented..

1) **Staff exchange** for shorter periods in order to share ideas and best practice, and to contribute to competence development. One possibility is to divide the staff exchange programme in two groups. One for senior staff, which could for example include participation in development projects, and one for junior staff, where staff exchange could serve as a part of their training.
2) **Study visits,** where a group from one agency visits another agency and view their work. The study visits could be designed to investigate specific areas of work or projects in depth, but could also entail the organisation as a whole.
3) **Thematic web-conferences/workshops.** Web-conferences could provide a cost-efficient and practical way for staff to exchange ideas and knowledge. There are two possible ways to organise the web-conferences; rotating the responsibility for organising a conference or initiating a conference when a topic of common interest is identified (such as evaluation methodologies of the agencies, site visits etc)

Organisation
We propose that a team consisting of members from at least two agencies will be formed to plan and implement staff exchange projects.

Discussion
We would like to discuss the following issues:

Utility and relevance – a key issue is the interest and commitment of the NOQA members. A staff exchange programme requires careful planning and collaboration from the participants, and should be beneficial to all parties.
- Is staff exchange a feasible proposal?
- How can it be organized in order to ensure that individuals and organisations can benefit?
- Are there any special areas/projects where staff exchange would be an interesting option? Of the suggestions above, is any of particular interest to develop further?

Feasibility and efficiency - in order for staff exchange to take place, the scope for staff exchange has to be realistic when it comes to means to finance staff exchange, number of participants, the period of exchange, administrative resources of the hosting agency etc.
- What is a reasonable level for this type of initiative?
- How can it be organized in an effective way?