

# STAKEHOLDER COOPERATION

ANNUAL NOQA PROJECT 2011

HANDOUT FOR THE MADRID INQAAHE CONFERENCE. AUTHORS/NOQA PROJECT GROUP  
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**NOQA**   
Nordic Quality Assurance

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**Stakeholder cooperation – annual NOQA project 2011 (work in progress)**

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# Introduction

The Nordic Quality Assurance Network in Higher Education (NOQA) has chosen to focus on stakeholder cooperation in its annual joint project 2011. The main objective of the project is to create an understanding of different Nordic points of view and practices regarding stakeholder cooperation, in particular with respect to employers and other representatives of working life. By the end of the project we will hopefully have answered the questions below, made comparisons between the countries and drawn conclusions about convergence, non-convergence and examples of good practice within our different countries. We hope that sharing, discussing and comparing project findings with experienced participants at the conference in Malmö will broaden and increase our knowledge further.

The main questions of the project are:

- What is the definition of a stakeholder in our different QA-contexts?
- Who are our main stakeholders?
- How and when do we cooperate with stakeholders?
- What are the benefits of stakeholder cooperation for different actors?
- What competencies are needed from stakeholders taking part in evaluations of higher education?
- How and where do we find relevant individuals representing working life?

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# Denmark/the Danish Evaluation Institute (EVA)

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**Population** 5,4 million. Higher Education Institutions: around 40.

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EVA was established in 1999 by act of parliament. In 2007, an act of parliament introduced the systematic accreditation of all higher education programmes in Denmark as mandatory external quality assurance. The act states that all programmes must be accredited according to criteria that are based on quality and relevance. EVA conducts both initial accreditation (ex ante) and clustered accreditation (ex post) assessment.

## **1. What is the definition of a stakeholder EVAs QA-context?**

EVA has defined its key national and international stakeholders, which include the HEIs, the Ministry of Education, the Ministry of Culture, various quality assurance organizations and their networks such as ENQA, the EVA board and the EVA board of councils with various representatives from HEIs such as rectors' councils, student organizations and working life representatives.

## **2. Who are EVAs main stakeholders?**

- University Colleges
- Academies of professional higher education
- The Ministry of Education
- The Ministry of Culture
- Other Ministries w/ education programmes

## **3. How and when does EVA cooperate with stakeholders?**

All the time...

Systematically (with experts in expert panels) when we do accreditations...

## **4. What are the benefits of stakeholder cooperation for different actors?**

EVA can prepare our evaluations and processes to fit the colleges and academies.

The colleges and academies can prepare their evaluations and processes to fit a systematic overview e.g. accreditations.

## **5. What competencies are needed from stakeholders taking part in our evaluation of higher education?**

EVA's considers the following when we choose members to our expert panels for existing programmes:

**Special expert knowledge about and experience within:**

- Key disciplines of the education programme, including new knowledge from experimental and development work as well as relevant research fields
- International perspectives in the relevant discipline(s)

**Educational/pedagogical knowledge about and experience in:**

- Development, organisation and implementation of an education programme with internship
- Quality assurance of education programmes
- Teaching, including relevant pedagogical and didactic problems

**Knowledge about and experience in the education programme from a student perspective**

- Knowledge about conditions of study at the relevant level of education
- Experience from boards of studies, student counselling or student organisations.

**Knowledge about and experience from the employment area(s) the educational offer is directed towards:**

- Current and key trends in the relevant employment area(s).

**6. How and where does EVA find relevant individuals representing working life?**

Experts are chosen after a careful research procedure. Research is done from our databases, knowledge of the merits of earlier experts, contact to people who have knowledge of the field, encouraging institutions, professional societies and labour market organisations to nominate candidates, etc. EVA is fully in charge of all stages in this process.

# Finland/FINHEEC

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**Population** 5,4 million. Higher Education Institutions 44.

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FINHEEC is an independent expert body, which means independent responsibility for its operation. Further, 'independence' means that the evaluation findings, conclusions and recommendations are independent from the influence of third parties, such as the higher education institutions, ministries or other parties concerned. The central goal of stakeholder cooperation is to maintain close contacts with the higher education sector and other stakeholders and the ability to react to observations received from these sources.

## **1. What is the definition of a stakeholder in FINHEECs QA-contexts?**

FINHEEC has defined its key national and international stakeholders, which include the HEIs, the Ministry of Education and Culture, rectors' councils and student organisations as well as various evaluation organisations and their networks such as the ENQA.

## **2. Who are FINHEECs main stakeholders?**

Higher education institutions and ENQA. In peer reviews representatives from the institutions, students, organisations and people from working life are exploited.

## **3. How and when does FINHEEC cooperate with stakeholders?**

FINHEEC cooperates practically daily with some of our main stakeholders. National quality assurance agencies should maintain active contacts with the most important stakeholders.

## **4. What are the benefits of stakeholder cooperation for different actors?**

For operations by FINHEEC the stakeholder cooperation is absolutely essential. The aim is to be the trendsetter for national stakeholders in quality assurance and international development of the field. Thus, the aims of stakeholder cooperation are concentrated on the consolidation of the social significance of higher education evaluation activities

## **5. What competencies are needed from stakeholders taking part in FINHEECs evaluation of higher education?**

Relevant educational background is important as well as experience on quality, evaluation and vision of higher education.



**6. How and where do FINHEEC find relevant individuals representing working life?**

We do not know but it seems to be mainly a question of using experience and different networks.

# Iceland

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**Population** 318.000. **Universities** 7.

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Until January 2011, the Office of evaluation and analysis, within the Ministry of education, science and culture, was responsible for carrying out the evaluation of higher education institutions in Iceland. All institutional and program evaluations are conducted by independent Icelandic and international experts. In January this year, an international quality council took over this task. The council will be assisted by an advisory group of stakeholders, mainly from the universities.

## **1. What is the definition of a stakeholder in the Icelandic QA-context?**

There is no formal definition of “stakeholders” in the University act or other laws or regulations on higher education in Iceland.

## **2. Who are the main stakeholders?**

In the context of quality assurance of HEIs:

HEIs – including staff and students, working life and educational authorities (representing tax payers) are seen as the major stakeholders.

## **3. How and when does the Ministry/the expert board cooperate with stakeholders?**

Stakeholders are represented in all evaluation panels. Students and academics in all panels and working life representative in most cases. In addition, working life representatives are invited to participate in the preparation of new rules or regulations on an *ad hoc* basis.

## **4. What are the benefits of stakeholder cooperation for different actors?**

For all, a sense of responsibility, sharing of expertise, trust and openness.

## **5. What competencies are needed from stakeholders taking part in evaluation of higher education in Iceland?**

Considerable and relevant work experience in respective working fields, high esteem within the field and university education, usually no less than a master degree.

**6. How and where does the Ministry/the board find relevant individuals representing working life?**

In some cases, relevant working life associations are asked to nominate representatives but usually individuals are hand-picked by the Office of evaluation and analysis following informal inquiries.

# Norway/NOKUT

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**Population:** 4,7million. Higher Education Institutions: 70.

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NOKUT, Norwegian Agency for Quality Assurance in Education, is officially recognised and regulated by the same law as the higher education institutions. The law regulates institutional categories and their belonging self-accrediting powers. This law also states the basics for quality assurance of higher education in Norway.

## **The Norwegian model for quality assurance is mixed:**

1. Initial accreditation of studies where the institution does not possess self-accrediting powers. This concerns private institutions studies in all three cycles and state university colleges for studies in second and third cycle. For initial accreditation of studies in first and second cycle, the expert panel only consist of 2-3 academics. For initial accreditation of studies in third cycle one of the panel members, 3-5 in total, will be a student. The remaining are academics.
2. Initial accreditation of institutions. Accredited institutions will have their self-accrediting powers according to their category. An accredited university has the broadest powers. When accrediting institutions the expert panel, 4-5 in total, consist of academics, one student and one representative from working life/society in general.
3. Audit, evaluation of the institutions' internal quality assurance, is mandatory for all institutions providing higher education in Norway. Audit is performed at least every sixth year. The expert panel consists of academics and a student member. Audit is an indirectly way of supervising existing activities.
4. Direct supervision of higher education is a new model to secure a targeted, effective and developmentally oriented control mechanism for quality in higher education. This is directly oriented towards the on-going studies. This is a stepwise procedure where involving expert panels will not happen until the quality failure seems to be critical. The members of the expert panel will be academics and one student all relevant for the subject field in question.

## **1. What is the definition of a stakeholder in the Norwegian QA-context?**

As stakeholders NOKUT understands groups in society which have an interest in the results of evaluation activities in HE. Stakeholders given a special priority are groups that benefits directly from high quality in education.

## **2. Who are NOKUTs main stakeholders?**

NOKUT regards the key national stakeholders to be:

- the individual higher education institutions, and also represented by the Association of Norwegian Higher Education and Network for Private institutions
- the students, represented mainly by the Norwegian National Union of Students
- the working life, represented by civil servants at large branch/employer associations and trade unions

## **3. How and when do NOKUT cooperate with stakeholders?**

NOKUT cooperates with stakeholders at different levels and for different purposes. The NOKUT Board, appointed by the Ministry, has eight members of whom all except one are representatives for the different stakeholders. There will be regular meetings between NOKUT and the organisations for higher education institutions. NOKUT is actively engaged in meeting institutions upon invitation. The use of stakeholders as experts in accreditation activities is mentioned in the points 1-4 above. When visiting the institutions in accreditation procedures, the expert panels will interview representatives from relevant society groups.

## **4. What are the benefits for different actors of cooperation between NOKUT and the working life?**

NOKUT considers cooperation between the HEIs and the working life to be the most important to secure that the output of the HE sector is in line with the needs and requirements of the working life. The benefits for the different actors of cooperation between NOKUT and the working life are transparency and the building of trust between the actors involved.

NOKUT has a constant focus on efficiency and effectiveness. Involving stakeholders, means that their share in expert panels will increase and thereby also increasing the size of an expert panel, this has to be reflected in the aims and ambitions of external quality assurance and the money and time set for that purpose.

## **5. What competencies are needed from representatives from working life taking part in NOKUTs assessments of studies and institutions?**

Some years of work within the relevant working field, general interest and engagement in issues related to higher education, special insights, for example as a member of an institutional board.

**6. How and where do NOKUT find relevant individuals representing working life?**

NOKUT will look for experts and at the same time let relevant associations nominate people whom they find suitable for being in the expert groups.

# Sweden/SNAHE

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**Population:** 9,4 million. Higher Education Institutions: 52.

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SNAHE, the Swedish National Agency for Higher Education, operates on the assignment of the Swedish Government which dictates the general features (forms and contents) of the national QA-system. A brand new system for re-accreditation of subjects and programs is launched during the spring of 2011. The peer review model is central in this system. Representatives/stakeholders from working life as well as representatives from the student groups and teachers/researchers are included in the peer/expert groups. One goal for SNAHEs stakeholder cooperation is to reveal and discuss how high and low quality in assessed subjects and programs is interpreted in relation to the national intended learning outcomes. A second goal is to get each expert group to agree on an evaluation-specific and transparent definition of high and low quality. This specific definition will be communicated to representatives from the assessed programs in the beginning of the evaluation process. The definition will also stand as a base for the judgments made by each individual peer/expert during the assessment process.

## **1. What is the definition of a stakeholder in the Swedish QA-context?**

As stakeholders SNAHE understands groups in society – foremost in Sweden – which have or ought to have an interest in the results and forms of evaluation and QA in HE. Stakeholders are thus groups that benefit from functioning QA of education in general and in specialised fields.

## **2. Who are SNAHEs main stakeholders?**

- the higher education institutions, represented by the Association of Swedish Higher Education as well as teachers/researchers from evaluated areas in the peer/experts groups
- the students, represented by the Swedish National Union of Students as well as active students within the assessed programs as peers/experts within the peer/expert groups
- working life, represented by civil servants at large branch/employer associations and trade unions as well as people working within vocational field related to the assessed programs
- the Swedish government and ministry of education

### **3. How and when do SNAHE cooperate with stakeholders?**

SNAHE cooperates with stakeholders on a daily basis at different levels and for different purposes. For example consultation meetings with working life representatives take place in the beginning of every re-accreditation project and experts nominated from HEIs, student organizations and relevant associations in working life are engaged as experts/peers in all assessments.

### **4. What are the benefits for different actors of cooperation between SNAHE and the working life?**

Cooperation between SNAHE and the working life is considered since it secures that the output of the HE sector is line with the needs and requirements of the working life which in turn is perceived by the government as a way towards desired increased student employability. Employers get students with the right training and skills, the individual students will easier find jobs after their exams and the HEIs will easier recruit new students if they can show high transition rates from student exams to relevant vocational positions of alumni.

### **5. What competencies are needed from representatives from working life taking part in SNAHEs assessments of subjects and programs?**

Some years of work within a relevant vocational field, general interest and engagement in issues related to higher education, special insights, for example as supervisors/mentors for students in the evaluated programs. Panel experts from working life also need a high grade of integrity and cooperative skills to get along with the other experts/peers.

### **6. How and where does SNAHE find relevant individuals representing working life?**

SNAHE lets relevant associations nominate people whom they find suitable for being in the expert groups. It is a challenge to find active working life representatives with possibilities – in regard to the amount of time – to fully engage as an expert.