



REKTORSBREV

2017-06-21

Dear Colleagues,

The SLU University Board has given me the assignment to evaluate the quality and impact of SLU's research. As many of you may have already heard, this evaluation (Kvalitet och Nytt 2018: KoN2018) will be conducted by external reviewers that will meet at SLU Ultuna campus in late spring of 2018.

The ultimate goal of the evaluation is to increase the quality of our research and thereby our impact on society. So a natural question arises: how can a seemingly time-consuming and resource-demanding evaluation contribute to higher quality? Perhaps you already work strategically, in which case KoN2018 will not lead to that much extra work. For those that can improve their strategies the actual evaluation process grants opportunity to reflect upon strategies and goals. My vision is that the discussions initiated by the evaluation process may stimulate the creative ideas that are the essence of excellent research and high impact. This is true on all levels; from the fundament of the university - the individual researchers in their research groups, to department and faculty and university leadership.

The main benefit of the evaluation is the strategic process itself; there is no pot of money to be distributed according to the outcomes. The results will, however, be the basis for strategic decisions on all levels of the university. Units of Assessment that are contained within one faculty will have the added value of allowing for the results to be useful for sequential strategic decision on the department and faculty levels. The departments with researchers from two faculties (FGIs fakultetsgemensamma institutioner) will have the opportunity to describe their collaborative endeavors in the questions that are posed in the self-assessments.

The previous KoN in 2009 was structured to assess research quality on the level of research groups called Units of Assessment (UoA) while SLU's sectoral mandate (impact) was evaluated on the level of the entire university. This time, focus is on the research group, which will be assessed on its research quality as well as on the impact that its research has on society. Since collaboration has potential to lead to synergistic effects on research quality and output, the UoAs will also have the opportunity to describe their present and future collaborative capacity.

The core of the evaluation will be in form of self-assessments for each UoA. Quantitative data for bibliometrics and sources and sums of research funding will be provided by SLU centrally to each UoA as a basis for the self-assessments.

The KoN2018 process in short:

SLU areas of science (ämnesområden) are assigned to panels (just now being determined by faculty and SLU leadership). Each panel will have a number of reviewers, some with scientific expertise, and others with expertise in societal impact. Each panel will be comprised of UoAs that are relevant to that particular area of science.

The Heads of Department, in collaboration with the Faculty Deans, will assign university staff to UoAs - Units of Assessment with deadline in September 2017. As I see it, successful cross-disciplinary science often has several strong basic-science research groups that work well together. A lesson learned from the previous evaluation was that panel reviewers failed to see the strengths and potential of small UoAs, for this reason perhaps smaller units can be best evaluated in larger groups.

Suggestions for expert reviewers will come from department and faculty leadership. The expert reviewers in each panel will come to SLU to meet the UoA during the last week of May 2018. In early September 2018 a report of the panel's assessment is made available to SLU department, faculty and university leadership.

This letter makes an early introduction of the evaluation KoN2018 process, many of the details are yet to be decided. To facilitate that information is continually made available, we have established a website where decisions and detailed information on all aspects of the evaluation will be posted (www.slu.se/KoN2018). Communication throughout the process can be made through contact with the faculties (the Deans and Research Advisors comprise the reference group for KoN2018) as well as through writing to KoN@slu.se – all questions will be answered promptly and posted on the website. I will write and post letters periodically throughout the process.

Sincerely,

Peter Högberg

Vice Chancellor