

Framework for the quality assurance of courses and study programmes at SLU

Background

This framework provides an overall description of the quality assurance procedures for courses and study programmes at first-cycle, second-cycle and third-cycle level at SLU.

The quality assurance work is based on regulations, the university's strategic objectives as well as the expectations of students, teachers and the surrounding community that courses and programmes be of a high quality. The systematic quality work meets national and international requirements and supports the continuous development of the quality of courses and programmes. The quality work at SLU should be well known, visible and clear to students, teachers and other staff.

The framework as a whole, as well as its constituent parts, should be regularly reviewed and if necessary revised, to ensure that it is suited to its purpose.

Purpose and objectives

The systematic quality work at SLU aims to support a culture of shared definitions of good quality as a starting point in all work related to teaching and developing support and control systems. The quality work is based on SLU's core values¹.

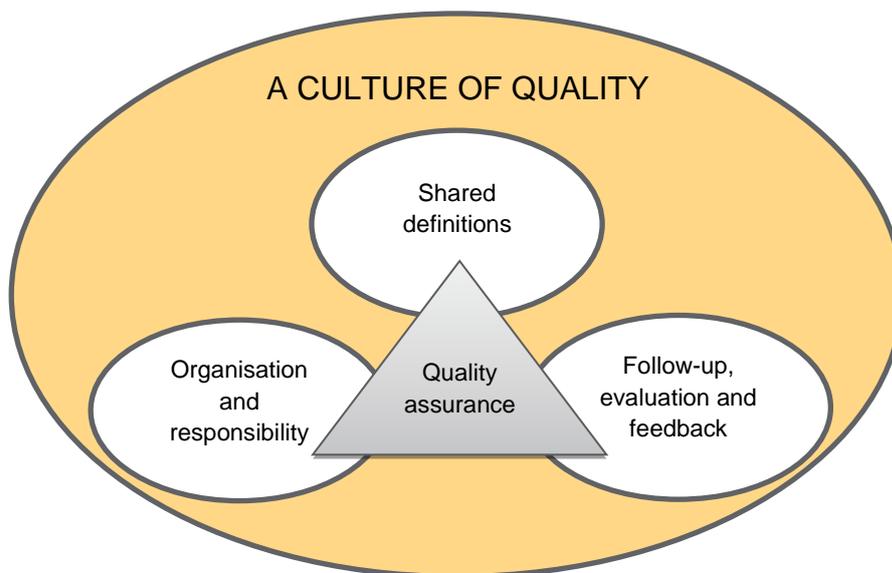
In addition to supporting a culture and a way of working, the systematic quality work covers follow-up and evaluation. The purpose of follow-up and evaluation is to assure as well as develop quality. The main objective is to secure a learning environment where programme content, learning options and infrastructure are fit for purpose, and to inspire faith in SLU to provide such an environment.

Different parts of the organisation are responsible for the quality of education at SLU. The main quality work, however, is the responsibility of the individual employees in their daily work: students, doctoral students and staff.

¹ There are four core values: scientific approach, creativity, openness and responsibility. In addition, there are six basic principles that make up the shared core values for all government officials: democracy, legality, objectivity, factuality and equal treatment, freedom of opinion, respect, efficiency and service. (SLU ua 2013.1.1.1-2727)

The quality work at SLU has three components that together create a culture of quality:

- Shared definitions of good quality.
- Organisation and responsibility for quality.
- Follow-up, evaluation and feedback to operations.



The systematic quality work is based on the content of *Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance in the European Higher Education Area (ESG)*². Together with the Higher Education Act (1992:1434), the Higher Education Ordinance (1993:100), the Ordinance for the Swedish University of Agricultural Sciences (1993:221) and the SLU strategy for 2017–2020³, the ESG provides a framework for quality work at first-cycle, second-cycle and third-cycle level.

Shared definitions of good quality

Shared definitions of what characterises good quality in education is a starting point both for conducting high-quality learning and teaching and for developing support and control systems.

SLU structures its quality work along six quality themes that support the different phases of the education process:

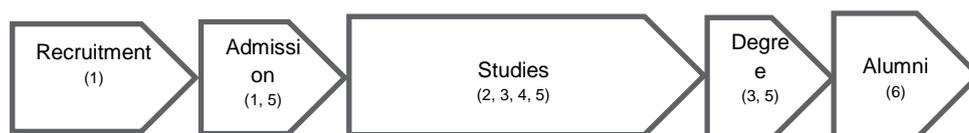
1. Recruitment, selection (doctoral studies), admission and introduction to studies

² Adopted at the ministerial conference in Jerevan, May 2015.

³ Adopted by the SLU Board on 16 June 2016 (SLU ID ua 2015.1.1.1-409). Within the framework of the strategy, there are strategic guidance documents for education at first-cycle and second-cycle level, adopted by the Board of Education on 10 October 2016 (SLU ID ua 2016.1.1.1-3768).

2. Study and learning environment (undergraduate and Master's level), research and working environment (doctoral level)
3. Design, content and results of courses and programmes
4. Teaching and supervision
5. Education administration and support
6. Transfer to working life and career

The way each quality theme is linked to the education process is illustrated below (theme number in brackets):



In the section *Education quality at SLU*, you will find a definition of what characterises good quality in SLU courses and study programmes. For each theme, standards indicate the quality we aspire to. For the purpose of evaluations, one of the tools used will be indicators that describe how well SLU manages to achieve high quality.

Organisation and responsibility for quality

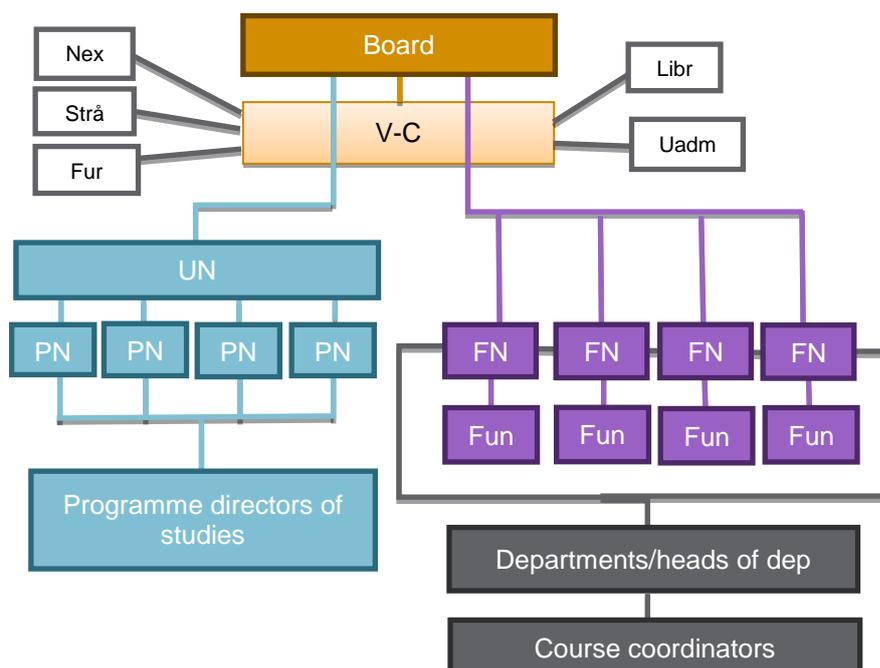
The whole university is jointly responsible for quality, and this responsibility is distributed within the organisation according to its decision-making levels and working procedures.

The SLU Board is responsible for the overall direction of operations at SLU. The vice-chancellor heads the university and reports to the SLU Board. The vice-chancellor has overall responsibility for managing operations.

The roles and responsibilities related to education at different levels are described in *Organisation and division of responsibility in relation to the university board of SLU and bodies that report directly to it* (SLU ID ua.Fe.2013.1.1.1-4911) and *Organisation and division of responsibility in relation to the vice-chancellor of SLU and members of staff who report directly to the vice-chancellor* (SLU ID ua 2015.1.1.1-845).

Guidelines for education can be found in *Comprehensive guidelines for education at first-cycle and second-cycle level at SLU* (SLU ID ua 2013.1.1.1-4639) and *Guidelines for doctoral education* (SLU ID ua 2015.1.1.1-2467). The most important rules and guidelines for students, doctoral students, teachers and administrators are also published on the web.

The responsibility for quality is summarised in the figure below.



Legend: V-C=vice-chancellor, UN= Board of Education, PN=programme board, FN: Faculty board, Fun: doctoral education committee, Nex: Board for the Appointment of Excellent Teachers, Strå: Student Welfare Council, Fur: Council of PhD Education Uadm: University administration, Libr: Library

Courses and programmes at first-cycle and second-cycle level

Overall responsibility for courses and programmes at first-cycle and second-cycle level rests with the Board of Education (UN). The UN reports directly to the SLU Board. The UN proposes new degree programmes to the board, as well as the closing of existing programmes. The UN handles strategic issues related to supporting, coordinating, promoting and developing all education at first-cycle and second-cycle level. It also assigns tasks to the programme boards (PN).

It is the task of the programme boards to ensure that degree programmes and freestanding courses are of a high quality. For each programme, the programme board appoints a programme director of studies to be responsible for developing the academic progression and quality of the programme.

The faculty boards (FN) report to the SLU Board and are responsible for adjusting activities in such a way that courses and programmes of a high quality can be provided. By planning the recruitment of teachers, the faculty boards should provide the conditions needed for high quality teaching based on scientific or artistic skill as well as proven experience. The faculty boards appoint members of the different programme boards.

The heads of department are responsible for the department carrying out top-class teaching within the parameters of the resources allocated. The heads of department are also responsible for developing a good spirit and a creative environment for all employees and students at the department. This includes student welfare issues. The department coordinating a course appoints the teacher responsible for running the course.

Student welfare issues related to undergraduate and Master's studies are handled by the Student Welfare Council (Strå). The student welfare groups at the different campuses are also attached to Strå.

The Board for the Appointment of Excellent Teachers (Nex) is responsible for calls for applications for the title 'Excellent Teacher'. The board then assesses the applications before the vice-chancellor makes a decision.

Third-cycle courses and programmes

The vice-chancellor has delegated the overall responsibility for the quality of doctoral education to the faculty boards. All faculty boards in turn delegate some of the responsibility for execution and quality to a doctoral education committee. The tasks of the doctoral education committee are defined in the delegation of authority of the faculty in question.

The faculty boards report to the SLU Board and are responsible for adjusting activities in such a way that courses and programmes of a high quality can be provided. The faculty boards should, having obtained the vice-chancellor's view, decide the subjects in which third-cycle courses and programmes will be offered.

The heads of department are responsible for the department carrying out top-class teaching within the parameters of the resources allocated. The heads of department are also responsible for developing a good spirit and a creative environment for all employees and doctoral students at the department. This includes student welfare issues.

The chair of the respective doctoral education committee is also a member of the Council of PhD Education, proposed by the dean. The task of the Council of PhD Education is to handle strategic issues related to supporting, coordinating, promoting and developing all education at doctoral level. This involves, among other things, being responsible for SLU's offering of joint basic courses for doctoral programmes, within the framework established by the vice-chancellor, as well as for the training of supervisors.

Follow-up, evaluation and feedback

Follow-up and evaluation aim to assure the quality of courses and programmes, but also to bring experience back to operations in order to develop them. Follow-up consists of systematically collecting and compiling information describing what has happened, but without explaining changes or events. Evaluation is about

systematically evaluating this compiled information in order to analyse the effects and results of a certain action. Evaluation thus aims to explain why a change has taken place, and supports drawing conclusions about cause and effect.

Dialogues on quality

The results of the quality work at SLU is followed up through regular dialogues on quality. The purpose of these dialogues is to ensure that courses and programmes are of a high quality. They should also contribute to quality development.

The dialogues on quality take place between programme boards and the Board of Education (for undergraduate and Master's level) and between the faculty boards and the vice-chancellor (for doctoral level). The content of the dialogues is controlled by a pre-defined structure.

The dialogues result in a development plan, which in turn becomes the starting point for the next dialogue.

Assessment

Based on the dialogues on quality, and any external reviews, the Board of Education and the vice-chancellor assess whether the quality work is sufficient to ensure high quality. In cases where the quality work is deemed insufficient, the UN or the vice-chancellor will decide on necessary measures. The vice-chancellor and the UN report their assessments to the SLU Board once a year.

Documentation from the dialogues is published on the SLU web together with the assessments made by the UN, the vice-chancellor and the head of university administration.

External review

The UN and the vice-chancellor respectively can, if they find it necessary, initiate an external review of courses and programmes. Such an initiative may be taken if the dialogues show that the quality work is insufficient, and no real improvement can be seen in feedback dialogues.

SLU regularly takes part in the European accreditation schemes for regulated profession programmes.

The quality work may contain elements of external review for other programmes as well. In addition, the Swedish Higher Education Authority conducts external reviews of a selected number of programmes.

Follow-up of administration and library operations

Follow-up and development of the quality of education administration and library services are part of the regular planning and follow-up of operations.

QUALITY OF COURSES AND STUDY PROGRAMMES AT SLU

References:

ESG = Standards and guidelines for quality assurance in the European Area for Higher Education, adopted at the ministerial conference in Jerevan, May 2015.

HL = Higher Education Act, SFS 1992:1432

HF = Higher Education Ordinance, SFS 1993:100

FSLU = Ordinance for the Swedish University of Agricultural Sciences, SFS 1993:221

FL = Administrative Procedure Act, SFS 1986:223

I. Education at first-cycle and second-cycle level

1. Recruitment, admission and introduction to studies

References: ESG 1.4, ESG 1.8, HL Chap 1, Section 5.

Standard:

SLU provides prospective students with the prerequisites for making a well-informed choice of programme. SLU has a wide-reaching and active recruitment process. The students admitted have the prior knowledge required. New students are given a suitable introduction to their programme, campus and to SLU.

2. Study and learning environment

References: ESG 1.6, ESG 1.7, HL Chap 1 Section 4, HL Chap 1 Section 4a, HL Chap 1 Section 5.

Standard:

SLU gives students the opportunity to take an active part in the development of courses and programmes. The physical and social study environment enables students to benefit from the teaching. The study environment is welcoming from an international perspective.

3. Design, content and results of courses and programmes

References: ESG 1.2, ESG 1.3, ESG 1.4, ESG 1.5, ESG 1.6, ESG 1.9, HL Chap 1 Section 3, HL Chap 1 Section 5, HL Chap 1 Section 8, HL Chap 1 Section 9, FSLU Annex 2: System of Qualifications.

Standard:

Programmes and courses at SLU have good links to research and society. SLU's concept of mission is clearly integrated in all courses and programmes. Each programme is designed in such a way that the students are able to reach the qualitative targets. The sustainable development perspective is integrated in all courses and programmes, as are mainstreaming and an international perspective.

4. Teaching and supervision

References: ESG 1.3, ESG 1.5.

Standard:

Courses and programmes at SLU provide centered learning. They are designed in a manner that allows for efficient learning and links to research. Conditions are provided for teachers to develop their scientific, artistic and pedagogical competence.

5. Education administration and support

References: ESG 1.2, ESG 1.3, ESG 1.4, ESG 1.6, ESG 1.7, FL Section 4, FL Section 7.

Standard:

Educational and student administration at SLU is competent, efficient and transparent. SLU provides prospective students with the prerequisites for making well-informed choices concerning their studies and career.

6. Transfer to working life and career

References: HL Chap 1 Section 2, HF Chap 1 Section 11.

Standard:

Courses and programmes at SLU equip students with the skills needed for a successful career.

II. Third-cycle courses and programmes

1. Recruitment, selection, admission and introduction to studies

References: ESG 1.4, ESG 1.8.

Standard:

SLU provides prospective doctoral students with the prerequisites for making a well-informed choice of programme. SLU has a wide-reaching and active recruitment process. SLU admits those students who have the best chances of successfully achieving the qualitative targets within the set timeframe. New doctoral students are given a suitable introduction.

2. Research and working environment

References: ESG 1.6, ESG 1.7, HL Chap 1 Section 4, HL Chap 1 Section 4a, HL Chap 1 Section 5.

Standard:

SLU gives doctoral students the opportunity to take an active part in the development of courses and programmes. The social environment provides the conditions needed for doctoral students to successfully achieve the qualitative targets. The study environment is welcoming from an international perspective. Doctoral students at SLU are trained and examined in a research environment of international standard regarding the quality and integrity of research.

3. Design, content and results of courses and programmes

References: ESG 1.2, ESG 1.3, ESG 1.4, ESG 1.5, ESG 1.6, ESG 1.9, HL Chap 1 Section 3, HL Chap 1 Section 5, HL Chap 1 Section 9a, FSLU Annex 2: System of Qualifications.

Standard:

The doctoral education at SLU mirrors global society's need for research competence. Third-cycle subject areas at SLU are clearly linked to the university's concept of mission. Doctoral-level education is designed in such a way that the students are able to reach the qualitative targets within the set timeframe. An international perspective is integrated in all doctoral programmes.

4. Teaching and supervision

References: ESG 1.3, ESG 1.5.

Standard:

Doctoral courses and programmes at SLU provide centered learning. They are designed in a manner that allows for efficient learning. Supervision is adapted to each doctoral student's specific needs.

5. Education administration and support

References: ESG 1.2, ESG 1.3, ESG 1.4, ESG 1.6, ESG 1.7, FL Section 4, FL Section 7.

Standard:

Educational and student administration at SLU is competent, efficient and transparent. SLU provides its doctoral students with the prerequisites for making well-informed choices concerning their studies and career. Educational administrative services provide clear and efficient support in the case of conflict between a doctoral student and their supervisor.

6. Transfer to working life and career

References: HL Chap 1 Section 2, HF Chap 1 Section 11.

Standard:

Doctoral students trained at SLU are equipped with the skills needed for a successful career.