Guidelines for the Programme Review Model

Approved by the Vice-Chancellor, 21 June 2022
Guidelines for the programme review model

Uppsala University conducts systematic quality assurance and quality enhancement of all its courses and programmes. Under Uppsala University’s Rules of Procedure (UFV 2017/95), each disciplinary domain/faculty board is responsible for the quality of its educational offerings, since they are best qualified to assess how to ensure and enhance quality in their respective fields. They are therefore responsible for the design, implementation and follow-up of reviews of programmes. The model has two components: annual follow-up of programmes, and programme reviews every sixth year.

The purpose of the programme reviews is to systematically contribute to ensuring and enhancing the quality of Uppsala University’s educational offerings and to promote education of the highest national and international quality.

All first-, second- and third-cycle (Bachelor’s, Master’s and PhD) programmes will be reviewed once every six years. The disciplinary domain or faculty board decides how to cluster programmes, main fields of study and freestanding courses into suitable units for review. As far as possible, these units should be analysed as a whole.

The review will proceed from the requirements stipulated in the Higher Education Act (1992:1434) and Higher Education Ordinance (1993:100) (System of Qualifications), taking into account the Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance in the European Higher Education Area (ESG), Uppsala University’s Mission, Goals and Strategies, and programme-specific policy documents. For an in-depth description of the objectives of Bachelor’s and Master’s education in Uppsala University’s policy and strategy documents, see the document Teaching and Learning at Uppsala University.

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1 ‘All programmes’ means all existing education at Bachelor’s level (courses, degree programmes, main fields of study, subsidiary fields of study), Master’s level (courses, degree programmes, main fields of study) and doctoral level (subjects, courses), access programmes, supplementary teacher training programmes and contract education.

If a specific programme is subject to the Swedish Higher Education Authority’s programme evaluations during the six-year cycle, a review within Uppsala University’s model does not have to be carried out, but the findings will be reported and followed up in accordance with these guidelines. If the Swedish Higher Education Authority’s evaluation results in a finding of ‘questionable quality’, Uppsala University’s internal procedures will be followed. Joint study programmes with other higher education institutions may be evaluated externally in accordance with the agreement between the higher education institutions and within the framework of national requirements, but the findings are to be reported and followed up in accordance with these guidelines.
Programme reviews will:
- be designed to generate the knowledge required to ensure and enhance the quality of the programme;
- include a comprehensive assessment of the quality of the programme – its strengths, weaknesses and areas for improvement;
- allow relevant teachers and students\(^2\) to participate in the planning, implementation and follow-up of the review;
- contain an external review conducted in accordance with recognised principles by at least two peers from one or more other higher education institutions, and by at least one colleague from another faculty/disciplinary domain at Uppsala University. In addition, at least one student from another higher education institution or another programme at Uppsala University should be included;
- include a self-evaluation and other relevant documents as a basis for the assessment;
- result in a concluding assessment panel’s report on the programme’s strengths and weaknesses/areas for improvement, together with recommendations;
- result in a brief evaluation report in which the programme coordinators describe the method and design of the review, summarise the most important conclusions based on the self-evaluation and the assessment panel’s report, and present planned measures/improvement actions.

Areas and aspects of the programme review
The review will cover all eleven aspects enumerated below and describe ongoing quality assurance and enhancement in each area. The weight given to each aspect may vary depending on development needs and relevance for the programme.

Goal attainment, teaching and assessment
- That the programme achieves the objectives of the Higher Education Act and Higher Education Ordinance (System of Qualifications) and programme-specific goals, i.e., that actual learning outcomes correspond to intended learning outcomes.
- That the content and teaching methods are founded on a research basis and proven experience.
- That the teaching focuses on student-centred learning.
- That the achievement of intended learning outcomes is assessed using appropriate and fair methods, and that progression is ensured.

\(^2\) The term ‘student’ refers to any person admitted to and undertaking Bachelor’s, Master’s or PhD studies.
Teaching expertise

• That staff involved in teaching and supervision possess adequate expertise in the subject matter, and in teaching and learning in higher education and/or subject didactics, and that there is sufficient teaching capacity.

Student participation and student perspective

• That students have influence on the planning, implementation and follow-up of the programme.
• That an accessible and appropriate study environment is provided for all students.

Working life and social relevance

• That the programme meets individuals’ and society’s needs for learning and professional knowledge and prepares students for future careers.

Inclusion, international outlook and sustainability

• That equal opportunities and a gender perspective are integrated in the programme.
• That internationalisation and international perspectives are promoted.
• That a sustainability perspective is promoted.

Disciplinary domain or faculty boards are responsible for:

– compiling and registering a brief evaluation report on the review and making it available internally at Uppsala University;
– ensuring that the brief evaluation report also contains the board’s conclusion, including whether special follow-up is needed;
– making the planned measures and the concluding assessment panel report publicly available;
– ensuring that measures and improvement actions are taken, and that measures taken and outstanding are documented and monitored at an appropriate level within the framework of annual follow-up;
– ensuring that necessary measures are followed up each year by the relevant disciplinary domain/faculty board, until they are completed or until the programme ceases to exist;
– annually compiling and analysing the results and conclusions of the year’s programme reviews, including any need for special follow-up, and reporting on this to the Vice-Chancellor within the framework of ordinary operational planning and follow-up;
– ensuring that students taking the programme concerned are informed about the review and the planned measures;
– ensuring that the results from completed programme reviews are presented by the relevant programme coordinator at the regularly recurring programme review conference;
deciding whether programme reviews in specific subject areas can be replaced by other external accreditation (such as EQUIS) where appropriate. However, the results are to be reported and followed up in accordance with these guidelines.

Key principles of the model

The model:

- is decentralised and based on continuous quality assurance and quality enhancement;
- is based on external peer review and collegial working forms;
- promotes quality and includes student participation;
- is stringent, i.e. able to identify and remedy deficiencies;
- is as simple and cost-effective as possible.

External review is a well-established form of academic quality assurance, which in this context ensures that the University’s programmes are subject to independent scrutiny and can be compared with equivalent programmes at other higher education institutions. Internal review by a colleague from another faculty/disciplinary domain helps to call into question matters that may be taken for granted in the subject area and enhances the exchange of knowledge and experiences across the University. The regularly recurring programme review conference provides an additional opportunity for constructive criticism from other colleagues and students at the University, and for the dissemination of good practice and lessons learned.

The system derives stringency from the requirement for external and internal reviews of all programmes, disciplinary domain/faculty boards’ conclusions and follow-ups of measures, and transparency regarding the results and planned measures. Results and measures are reported under the framework of the regular operational planning and follow-up process, in the Vice-Chancellor’s annual quality dialogues and at the programme review conference. A University-wide quality report is compiled annually based on the completed reviews, is presented to the Vice-Chancellor and serves as the basis of the Vice-Chancellor’s annual summing up to the University Board.

The model permits comparisons over time and between programmes, both nationally and internationally. This is key from both a quality assurance and a quality enhancement perspective.