

# DEGREE PROGRAM QUALITY

AARHUS UNIVERSITY'S QUALITY ASSURANCE SYSTEM



AARHUS UNIVERSITY

# INTRODUCTION

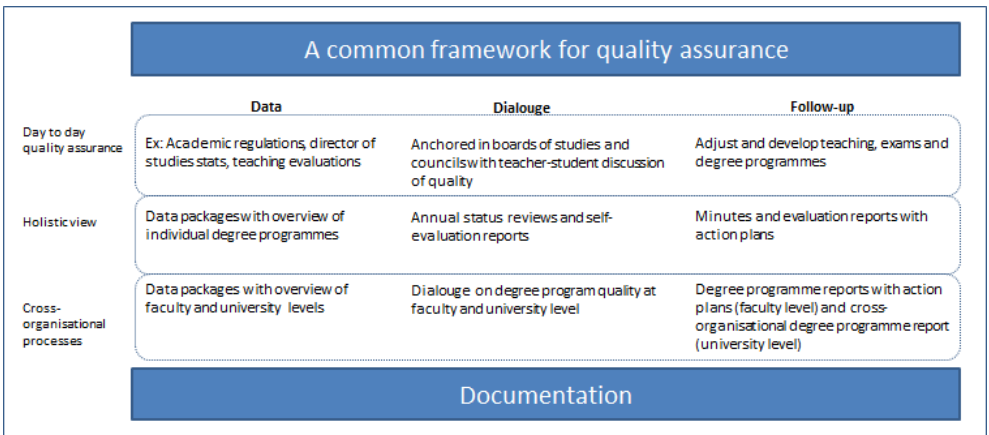
At Aarhus University, we work to assure the quality of our degree programmes continuously and at all levels. In the classroom, on the boards of studies, at the faculties and in the senior management team, maintaining and developing the quality and relevance of our degree programmes is in focus.

The quality assurance system describes the common framework, tools and processes that support and structure the work of quality assurance and make it possible to create coherence, docu-

mentation and recognisability across the university as a whole. At the same time, the quality assurance system describes the division of labour and responsibilities in relation to the work of quality assurance.

This leaflet describes the most important elements and relationships in the quality assurance system and helps you to understand how the quality assurance processes you are involved relate to the system as a whole.

## AU's QUALITY ASSURANCE PROCESSES



Quality assurance takes place on three mutually interdependent levels:

- 1) The day-to-day work of quality assurance in the contexts of lecturer-student interaction as well as in education and management-level forums
- 2) A holistic view of the individual degree programmes in the form of an annual status review report on quality assurance and degree programme evaluation

- 3) A cross-organisational process that links quality assurance at the degree programme level with faculty/university level and supports the strategic objectives.

The quality assurance system is based on the shared values and principles expressed in the quality assurance policy, and it promotes well-informed, dialogue-based, action-oriented quality processes.

## AU'S QUALITY ASSURANCE POLICY

AU's quality assurance policy encourages the quality, relevance and continued development of the university's degree programmes by providing a common set of core values for the quality assurance work performed at all of the university's campuses and faculties.

The common set of values for quality assurance is characterised by academic and professional excellence, academic freedom, independence, responsibility and cooperation.

Quality assurance is based on the encounter between students and teaching staff, with a focus on academic excellence, a good study environment, learning outcomes, involvement and motivation.

The quality assurance policy is subdivided into five sub-policies that address the entire student trajectory, from recruitment to employment.

The five sub-policies are:

1. Recruitment and commencement of studies
2. Structure and process
3. Development of education, teaching and learning environment
4. Study environment
5. The relation between the degree programmes and the labour market

# DATA, DIALOGUE AND FOLLOW-UP

The foundation for quality assurance at all levels is the interplay between data, dialogue and follow-up. The goal is to ensure that we act on the basis of sufficient information and are able to track the results of quality assurance work over time.

## DATA

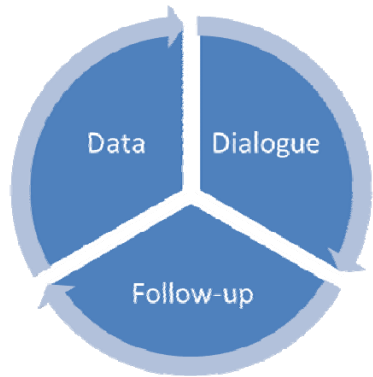
Quality assurance must be based on the best possible information about the degree programmes. This applies both to quantitative data such as exam statistics and qualitative data such as teaching evaluations and external examiners' reports.

## DIALOG

Quality assurance must take place through dialogue-based and development-oriented processes involving the relevant stakeholders. Dialogue enriches and clarifies the information provided by the data, and it is through dialogue that future initiatives and actions can be adapted and targeted to the individual degree programmes in the best possible way.

## FOLLOW-UP

Quality assurance must be documented in meeting minutes, action plans and objectives that can form the basis for follow-up .



## DAY-TO-DAY QUALITY ASSURANCE

Both formal and informal day-to-day quality assurance activities constitute the foundation for ensuring the high quality and relevance of all degree programmes at AU. In connection with day-to-day, ongoing discussions of the individual degree programmes, new ideas emerge, acute challenges are handled, and valuable experience from classrooms and exam rooms is integrated into quality assurance.

The quality assurance system comprises the formalised quality assurance activities that takes place in boards of studies, management-level forums and other relevant bodies related to education.

The academic year forms the basic framework for activities related to course descriptions, approval of curricula, follow-up on teaching evaluations, amendments to academic regulations, course planning, etc. that take place at degree programme level. At the cross-organisational level, examples of activities that contribute to structuring quality assurance include budgeting, reporting to government authorities and national surveys and requirements.

At the same time, the management information system provides support for day-to-day quality assurance activities through standardised annual schedules for data reports and analyses that enable boards, committees and management-level forums to organise quality assurance

activities on the basis of the latest data for a given area. This applies to exam statistics, degree programme completion times and similar data calculated each semester, in addition to drop-out rates, application/admission statistics and results of employment surveys, which are calculated annually.

The ongoing quality assurance activities taking place in boards, councils and committees is recorded in meeting minutes and translated into concrete initiatives to benefit degree programme quality. For example, this applies to academic regulations, teaching plans and course descriptions at degree programme level in addition to the allocation and prioritisation of resources, system support and other cross-organisational initiatives at department (Aarhus BSS, HE and ST)/school (Arts), faculty and university level.

Day-to-day quality assurance activities at all levels help ensure ongoing dialogue between lecturers, students and managers. This contributes to ensuring that quality assurance is performed on the fundamental conditions for offering degree programmes, as well as to ensuring that the individual elements of the degree programmes are considered in depth with a view to developing their quality.



## DATA PACKAGES AND INDICATOR MODELS

On 1 April each year, the previous year's data on the individual degree programmes is collected and systematised in a data package that is made available to the boards of studies and relevant managers. The data packages contain a large variety of key figures on each degree programme, and the university-wide AU indicators are calculated on the basis of selected key figures.

The indicators address aspects of all five sub-policies and cover the following topics:

- Drop-out rates
- Completion times
- Teaching
- Study environment
- Knowledge base

- Internationalisation








- Employment

Threshold values expressing whether the value of an indicator is green, yellow or red for the year in question are associated with each indicator.

Green indicates satisfactory quality, yellow indicates a need for attention and discussion of possible measures, and red is a critical value indicating that concrete measures must be taken to improve the conditions that can be monitored and changed.

The threshold values are established in part by the senior management team and in part at faculty or board of studies level.

Because the indicators are the same for all full-degree programmes, it is also possible to aggregate data from degree pro-

Indikator (nr):	Indikator (tekst)	Aktuelt nøgletal	Status
1a	Førsteårsfrafald BA (%)	15,9	
1b	Frufald efter normeret tid +1 år KA (%)	-	-
2	Studerendes optjente ECTS pr. semester (gns.)	28,0	
3	Planlagte timer pr. semester (gns.)	161	
4	Undervisningsevaluering	Lokal	Lokal
5a	Studiemiljø: faglig trivsel (%)	83%	
5b	Studiemiljø: imødekomende medstuderende (%)	95%	
6a	Forskningsdækning (VIP/DVIP-ratio)	Fuld VIP-dækning	
7	Full degree-studerendes relative progression	23,0	
8	Ledighed 4.-7. kvartal efter dimission	-	-

The Data-packages are currently only provided in danish. Your local administration might assist you with a terminology list or

partially translated data-package, but a full english version is not yet provided.

# DEGREE PROGRAMME QUALITY ASSURANCE PROCESSES

An *annual status review* of the quality of the degree programmes is carried out in order to ensure that systematic quality reviews are performed on all degree programmes in their entirety.

In addition, all degree programmes must undergo a *degree programme evaluation* every fifth year involving at least one external expert. The evaluation is per-

formed on the basis of a more long-term and societally oriented perspective on quality development.

All five sub-policies must be considered and all indicators must be reviewed at the meetings. Focussing on selected aspects of a degree programme of particular current relevance is also an option.

## ANNUAL STATUS REVIEW

### PREPARATION

The education management team discusses the data package with relevant stakeholders, including the board of studies, in order to elaborate on and analyse figures and tendencies in the data package as well as to identify particularly relevant issues to be discussed at the annual status review meeting.

### STATUS REVIEW MEETING

A dialogue takes place between the degree programme management team, the board of studies and the management that draws on the data package and supplementary material. The status of the degree programme in relation to the indicators is discussed, and concrete measures to ensure continued quality development are agreed on.

### FOLLOW-UP

After the dialogue meetings, an action plan is developed that indicates clearly *what* issues must be addressed, *how* this is to be done, *who* is responsible for the process, and *when* it is to be completed. For degree programmes that have three or more indicators with red threshold values, a follow-up meeting is held between the dean, the vice-dean, the department head (Aarhus BSS, HE and ST)/head of school (Arts) and the director of studies regarding the action plan and managerial support for the quality development measures to be implemented.

## DEGREE PROGRAMME EVALUATION

### PREPARATION

The director of studies involves relevant stakeholders in a discussion of the data package, the action plan from the previous year, and other relevant materials, and prepares a self-evaluation report for the participants in the meeting.

### THE EVALUATION MEETING

The self-evaluation report forms the foundation for the dialogue between an external expert, the local degree programme management team, representatives from the board of studies, the the department head (Aarhus BSS, HE and ST)/head of

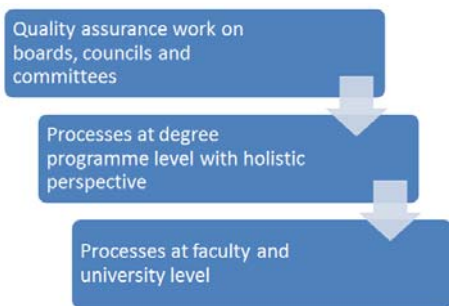
school (Arts) and the vice-dean for education. At the meeting, the degree programme's development perspectives are discussed, and decisions are taken on targets and concrete actions. The perspectives of employers and external examiners are included by providing the employer panel and the relevant external censor chairmanship with an opportunity to comment.

### FOLLOW-UP

After the degree programme evaluation, an action plan is developed that indicates clearly *what* issues must be addressed, *how* this is to be done, *who* is responsible for the process, and *when* it is to be completed.

## PROCESSES AT FACULTY AND UNIVERSITY LEVEL

In the autumn, the results of the processes at degree programme level are compiled by both faculty management teams and at university level.



At faculty level, the faculty management team compiles and submits a degree pro-

gramme report to the Education Committee on the background of dialogue and action plans from the status review and evaluation meetings, accompanied by an overview of the threshold values for all indicators in the data on the faculty's degree programmes.

The degree programme reports consist in part of a review of the faculty's actual position in relation to the five sub-policies and in part a prioritisation of the faculty's most important quality assurance initiatives for the coming year as expressed in concrete action plans.



In addition, the reports also contains feedback for the Education Committee regarding the extent to which the degree programme quality assurance processes and their individual elements have functioned as intended.

At university level, the Education Committee performs an overall evaluation of degree programme committee quality and the quality assessment system on the background of the degree programme reports. This evaluation is included in the committee's strategic prioritisation of cross-organisational activities in the area of education, as well as providing input to a cross-organisational degree programme report to the senior management team at the end of the year.

The senior management team discusses the cross-organisational degree programme report in relation to the overall development in the area of education and in the context of AU's other activities.

After this, the pro-rector presents the cross-organisational degree programme report and the senior management team's reflections to the board, which draws on both in connection with future strategic prioritisation and decision-making.

The synthesis of reports and other material at faculty and university level is intended to ensure visibility, coherence with strategic initiatives and a foundation for prioritisation of resources. Overlapping teams provide support for this:

- The directors of studies are the link between the status review/evaluation meetings and the boards of studies.
- The department heads (Aarhus BSS, HE and ST)/heads of school (Arts) are the link between the status review/evaluation meetings and the management team at the department (Aarhus BSS, HE and ST)/school (Arts).
- The vice-dean for education is the link between the area of education at faculty level and the Education Committee.
- The deans are the link between the faculty management teams and the senior management team.
- The pro-rector has overall responsibility for the process and is the link between the Education Committee, the senior management team and the board.

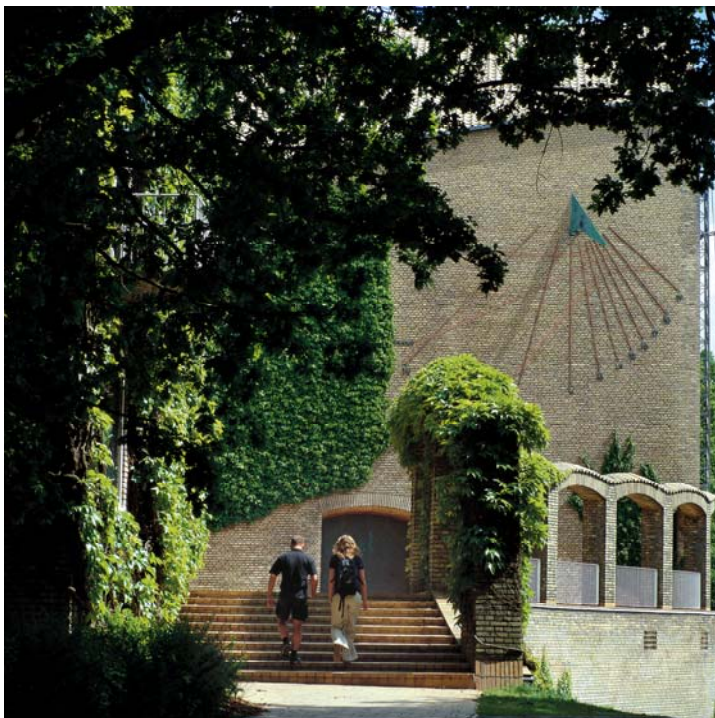
## CENTRAL QUESTIONS

In connection with the institutional accreditation process, AU must document that degree programme quality assurance take place continually and systematically, and that management is directly involved.

Documentation takes place in the form of a self-evaluation report followed by panel visits at which management, staff and student representatives engage in dialogue about the quality assurance system.

Here are some examples of questions the panel might ask. Consider how you might answer:

- What is your responsibility in relation to ensuring the quality of the degree programmes?
- How can you determine the quality of degree programmes and teaching?
- What do you do if you experience problems with quality?



For further information about quality assurance at Aarhus University, please see:  
[www.kvalitet.au.dk](http://www.kvalitet.au.dk)