



Quality Assurance Procedures in Support and Management Services¹

These guidelines were finalised by the Vice-Chancellor on 16-06-2020 and take effect on the same date

Registration number HS 2021/29

¹ This is a translation of the Swedish version (Riktlinjer för kvalitetsarbete inom verksamhets- och ledningsstöd, registration number HS 2020/545). In the event of any discrepancy, the Swedish version of this document shall prevail.

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1 Introduction

The University of Skövde (the University) is active in its quality assurance procedures in support and management services². The procedures form part of the University’s quality system, which applies to all operations. The quality system is outlined in “Quality Policy for the University of Skövde” (the quality policy).

In terms of structure, there are three levels to the quality system (figure 1). Level 1 is the collective system, which is outlined in the quality policy. On level 2, the quality system is implemented in different parts of the operations: education, research, support and management services and university-wide management and governance. Specific guidelines apply to quality assurance procedures in these areas. Activities to ensure and develop quality are performed in each area (level 3).

This document outlines quality assurance procedures in support and management services.

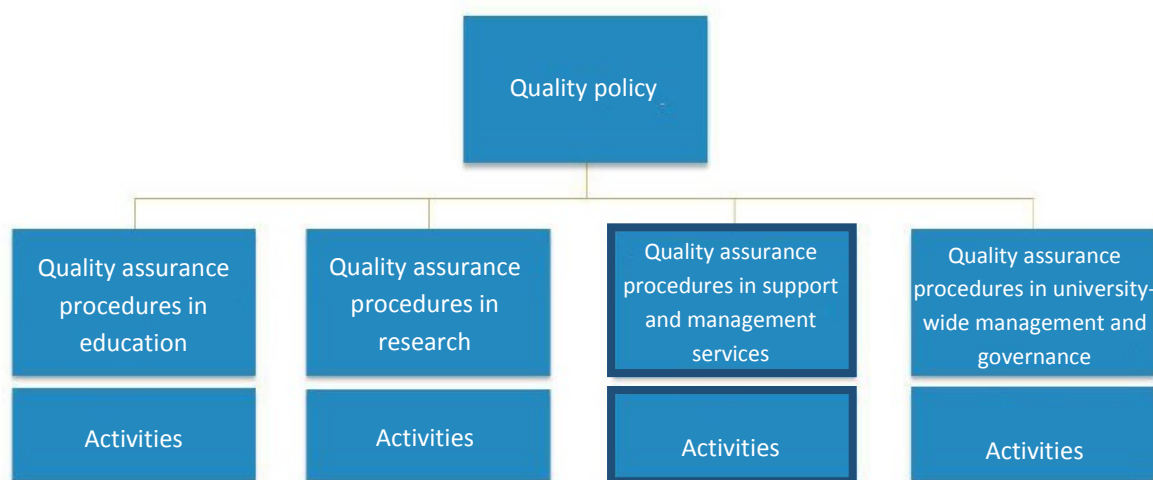


Figure 1: Structure of the quality assurance system at the University of Skövde

On a general level, the term quality is defined in the quality policy. Translated to the support and management services area, quality is defined as all collective qualities of support and management services that provide its ability to satisfy various parties’ explicit requirements or expectations, to a high enough degree. Both national and local goals for and requirements of support and management services are to be met, to a high enough degree.

The to a high enough degree part means that the degree of goals and requirements being met can vary, as not all parts of education can be prioritised at the same time. All parts of education should, however, be of high quality. Very high quality, or excellence, is something that is strived for, as is clear from the development plan for the University of Skövde “Our Vision: 2017 – 2022” [Utvecklingsplan för Högskolan i Skövde 2017-2022].

² Support and management services include, organisationally, the departments of the University’s Support Services, and the Vice-Chancellor’s Office.

2 Quality Assurance Procedures in Support and Management Services

2.1 Responsibilities and Tasks

According to the Rules of Procedure at the University of Skövde [Arbetsordning vid Högskolan i Skövde], work in support and management services aims to

- provide joint administrative service to the operations, and to be responsible for decisions in and management of overarching administrative issues (Support Services)
- provide support to the Vice-Chancellor (Vice-Chancellor's Office)

The tasks of support and management services are described in more detail in governing documents "Support Services' Internal Organisation" [Verksamhetsstödet's interna organisation] and "Responsibilities and Tasks of the Vice-Chancellor's Office" [Rektors kanslis ansvar och uppgifter]. According to the stated descriptions, work in support and management services is largely about creating good conditions for operations in education and research. This includes, using a wide definition, conditions concerning the University as an authority, employer, contract partner, and actor in society.

The processes and activities that are used to follow up and systematically develop the conditions are based on improvement cycles. As conditions and improvement cycles are focus areas in the University's quality systems (see the quality policy), work in support and management services is naturally integrated into the quality system.

2.2 Conditions

Work with creating good conditions for the University's operations concerns a large number of areas. All offices in support and management services work in this area.

The work takes place in close collaboration with the Vice-Chancellor, the Faculty board, School management, teachers/researchers, and, if relevant, students and doctoral students. The work also frequently takes place in collaboration with various offices in Support Services and/or the Vice-Chancellor's Office. Support and management services sometimes hold the main responsibility for conditions, taking a leading role in the work. In other cases, support and management services participate to a lesser degree, in which case they take a supporting role.

Conditions for University-Wide Operations, Education and Research

Below is stated important conditions for university-wide operations, education, and research, in which support and management services have a clear role (leading or supporting, see above). The list is based on what is stated in the quality policy, the guidelines for quality assurance procedures in education, research, and university-wide management and governance processes, the Swedish Higher Education Authority's guidance for the inspection of higher education institutions' quality assurance procedures³, and the European framework for higher education quality assurance⁴.

³ "Guidance for Inspection of Quality Assurance Procedures", Swedish Higher Education Authority, registration number 411-83-18 and "Guidance for Inspection of Higher Education Institutions' Quality Assurance Procedures Concerning Research", Swedish Higher Education Authority 2019:13

⁴ "Standards, Guidelines for Quality Assurance in the European Higher Education Area" (ESG), Swedish Higher Education Authority 2015

Conditions for University-Wide Operations

- conditions concerning the goals and requirements set for the University as an authority, employer, contract partner and actor in society
- strategic, administrative and legal support to the Faculty board, Vice-Chancellor and Board of Governors
- adequate organisation and clear division of responsibilities
- internal policy documents
- financial resources
- collection of relevant information for efficient management of the operations
- well-working collaboration with the surrounding society
- information about the University's operations that is clear, correct, objective, updated and sufficient

Conditions for Education

- recruitment of staff with competence that corresponds to the needs of education and research operations
- an encouraging environment that gives teaching staff the opportunity to develop both their pedagogical competence and their subject competence, as well as conditions to perform their work efficiently
- infrastructure that is appropriate for the students' and doctoral students' learning, and that is used in an efficient way, such as library resources, teaching premises, and information technology resources
- student support and learning support that are appropriate for the students' and doctoral students' learning, and that are used in an efficient way
- routines and processes that give the students good conditions to complete their education within the planned programme length
- predefined and published rules that cover the students' whole programme length, i.e. admission, progression, credit transfer, and the awarding of degree certificates

Conditions for Research

- good conditions for the development and renewal of research and research environments, and for research freedom
- long-term competence supply, good conditions for competence development, and well-working career support for researchers
- support operations and infrastructure for research

Conditions for Support and Management Services Themselves

There is a need within support and management services to create good conditions – for work with conditions in university-wide operations, education, and research. This means, for instance, that support and management services need an adequate organisation and appropriate processes, and that staff members in the different support and management service units need to have the competence required for their tasks. Support Services are an expert organisation that provides support of a high or very high quality to the collective operations of the University.

2.3 Improvement Cycles

Support and management services' work with creating good conditions for the University's operations has to be continuously followed up and developed. The activities for follow-up and development that take place do so within the framework of improvement cycles. The University works according to a model of four clear, connected phrases, namely planning, implementation, follow-up and development (see figure 2). The improvement cycles always have operational development as their purpose.

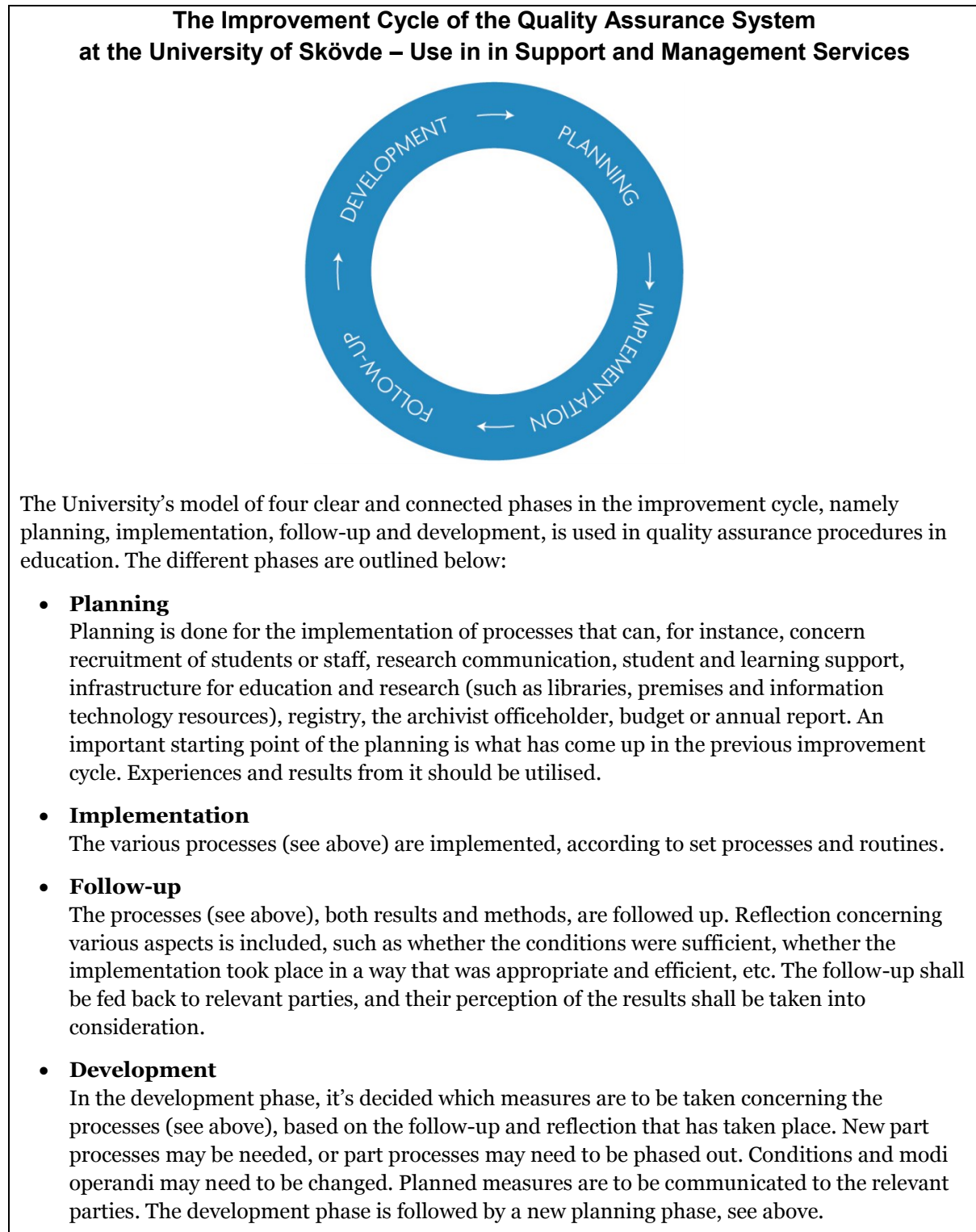


Figure 2: The improvement cycle of the quality assurance system at the University of Skövde – use in support and management services

Work within the improvement cycles often takes place in collaboration with the Vice-Chancellor, the Faculty board, School management, teachers/researchers (including officeholders with specific academic tasks), and students and doctoral students.

Improvement Cycles in Day-to-Day Work

Improvement cycles are also used in day-to-day work, i.e. in the work that forms part- or subprocesses of more overarching processes. Making improvement cycles visible on different levels, and in different units and offices, stimulates a culture of quality in the University's operations.

2.4 Activities for Quality Assurance and Quality Development

Support and management services participate in a number of activities that aim to assure and develop the quality of the University's operations. The activities are sometimes part of work with creating good conditions for operations (see part 2.2). Other times, the activities' aim is mainly follow-up of operations, within the framework of improvement cycles (see part 2.3).

The main responsibility for the activity can lie either with support and management services or the Vice-Chancellor's Office, the Faculty board, School management, teachers or researchers. If the former is the case, support and management services have a clear responsibility of their own for the activities, pursuant to the University's organisation documents. In these cases, support services have a leading role. These activities often influence education and research operations, directly or indirectly. Other activities are led by the Vice-Chancellor, the Faculty board, School management, teachers or researchers – in which case, support and management services take a supporting role. Support and management services' participation in activities shall, if relevant, take place in collaboration with students and doctoral students.

Below are some examples of activities that are performed systematically, in which support and management services have a clear role (leading or supporting, see above):

Examples of Activities Concerning University-Wide Operations

- annual process for operational planning and budget
- follow-up of competence supply plans and the work with staff recruitment
- staff investigations and staff appraisals (responsibility for appropriate and standardised processes for the activities)
- systematic work with information security and environment management, according to established national standards
- follow-up of the work with equal terms, including equality integration and accessibility
- collation of annual report in which follow-up of a large number of areas within the University's operations (including periodic follow-up throughout the year of relevant tasks) takes place
- preparatory work ahead of the Swedish Higher Education Authority's inspection

Examples of Activities Concerning Education

- six-year follow-up of first- and second-cycle subjects and related study programmes, and of third-cycle subjects
- annual follow-up of study programmes
- programme and course evaluation, questionnaires for international students, the Student Barometer and the Mirror for Doctoral Students
- follow-up of the Student Union Report
- follow-up of student support operations
- follow-up of work with recruiting students and student introduction
- alumni questionnaires
- in-depth follow-up of international collaboration agreements

Examples of Activities Concerning Research

- six-year follow-up of research environments
- annual follow-up of research projects

Activities in which Support and Management Services are the Subjects of Follow-Up by an External Party or the Faculty Board

In the examples of activities stated above, support and management services participate mainly as the 'implementer' or 'support for implementer' of follow-up. Follow-up can concern operations in education and research, or operations within their own, often university-wide, areas of responsibility.

In addition, work in support and management services is continuously followed up by external parties, mainly authorities like the Swedish National Audit Office. Furthermore, follow-up of certain parts of support and management services' work takes place within the framework of the Swedish Higher Education Authority's various inspections. Local follow-up takes place within the framework of the Faculty board's six-year follow-up of education and research environment respectively (see above). The Swedish Higher Education Authority's and the Faculty board's follow-up are mainly concerned with infrastructure for education and research.

3 Division of Responsibilities

The Board of Governors and the Vice-Chancellor have an overall responsibility for the University's quality system, including quality assurance procedures in support and management services. The Vice-Chancellor is supported by a special Quality Council, which acts in an advisory capacity in issues concerning quality assurance procedures. Work in the Quality Council is connected to support and management services via the Head of University Administration (University Director) and the Pro Vice-Chancellor.

The University Director has an overarching responsibility for Support Services' quality assurance procedures. The Director of Planning, who leads the Vice-Chancellor's Office, has the corresponding responsibility for quality assurance procedures in the Vice-Chancellor's Office. Thereunder, each Office Director in support and management services is responsible for quality assurance procedures within the office's area of responsibility.

As per the above, the division of responsibilities for quality assurance procedures in support and management services follows the structure and content stated in Rules of Procedure at

the University of Skövde [Arbetsordning vid Högskolan i Skövde], the Vice-Chancellor's Delegation of Authority [Rektors delegationsordning], and supplementary organisation and delegation documents.

Responsibility for an area always includes responsibility for quality assurance work in that area. The principle is also that responsibility for the quality assurance procedures in an area also includes responsibility for follow-up of the quality assurance procedures that are performed. Responsibility for follow-up of the whole quality system – which includes quality assurance procedures in support and management services – lies with the Board of Governors and the Vice-Chancellor.

There are specific policy documents for the activities stated in part 2.4 that outline the implementation of the activities and the responsibilities that apply.

4 Communication

Quality assurance procedures in support and management services are to be characterised by clarity and transparency. The results of the quality assurance procedures, mainly results from operational follow-up, should therefore be communicated and made available to relevant parties in and outside of the organisation in an appropriate way. How communication is to take place is stated in the specific policy documents outlining the activities for quality assurance and quality development in the operations (see part 2.4).

5 Previous Quality Assurance Procedures in Support and Management Services

The University of Skövde has had processes for quality assurance and quality development, which have included quality assurance procedures in support and management services, for a long time. Much of the work and many of the activities outlined above have been systematically implemented and documented for a number of years. In cases where the work and the activities have been added in more recent years, a base can often be found in what has happened within the framework of earlier *modi operandi*.

What's new in this context is the collation of certain guidelines for quality assurance procedures in support and management services. As is made clear initially, these guidelines – alongside the guidelines for quality assurance procedures in education, research and university-wide management and governance processes – clarify the structure of the University's collective system for quality assurance procedures.

6 Taking Effect

These guidelines take effect on 16-06-2020 and replace Guidelines for Quality Assurance Procedures in Support and Management Services [Riktlinjer för kvalitetsarbete inom verksamhets- och ledningsstöd] (registration number HS 2019/989).