Guidelines for Annual Follow-Up of Research Projects[1]

These guidelines were finalised by the Faculty Board on 05-02-2020
and take effect on the same date

Registration number HS 2021/127

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[1] This is a translation of the Swedish version (Riktlinjer för årlig uppföljning av forskningsprojekt, registration number HS 2020/103). In the event of any discrepancy, the Swedish version of this document shall prevail.

Table of Contents

1   Introduction

Quality assurance procedures in research cover all research that takes place at the University of Skövde (the University). They are performed within the framework of improvement cycles, which are outlined in the "Quality Policy for the University of Skövde". To ensure and develop the quality of the research, the University is working with a model of four clear, connected phases, namely planning, implementation, follow-up, and development. The improvement cycles always have operational development as their purpose.

The "Guidelines for Quality Assurance Procedures in Research" states two activities for research follow-up, namely annual follow-up of research projects, and follow-up of research environments. The follow-up of research environments takes place in a six-year cycle. This document outlines how annual follow-up of research projects takes place.

The "Guidelines for Quality Assurance Procedures in Research" states that the work includes activities that are based on four focus areas (figure).

The four focus areas for quality assurance procedures in research are:

- Quality assurance of research applications and ongoing projects
- Research building the research and education environment
- Recruitment of staff, career paths and competence development
- Issues of research ethics, and the responsibility of research for societal development.

This document, which deals with annual follow-up of research projects, is part of the focus area of quality assurance of research applications and ongoing projects. The purpose of annual, systematic follow-up, throughout the University, of research projects, is to contribute to the provision of comparable material for continued operational planning and development.

Figure: Four focus areas of quality assurance procedures in research at the University of Skövde

2 Annual Follow-Up of Research Projects at the University

Each school is responsible for the performance of the annual follow-up, and for its results being processed in the appropriate way. The follow-up shall contribute to research reaching higher quality, increased educational connection, and increased benefit from its results. Documentation from annual follow-up of research projects constitutes material for follow-up of the University's research environment in six-year cycles.

2.1 Purpose

The purpose of annual follow-up is to systematically support and be useful to the Project Manager and the development of the project. Annual, systematic follow-up with the same content across the University also contributes to providing comparable material for continued operational planning and development, especially within officeholders' own schools, but also between schools and across the University. This takes place through documentation that constitutes material for the research environments' follow-up in six-year cycles, for instance. Heads of School can also, for instance, use the material to formulate activities in the school's operational plan.

The annual follow-up summarises the project's situation. Follow-up can lead to activities in the project plan changing or being postponed, or new activities might be added with the purpose of developing and increasing the quality of the project. Any changes are made within the framework of the approved direct government funding for research. Annual follow-up constitutes material, especially for the Project Manager, in their work with:

- assessing whether or not the goals, as per the project description, have been met or have the potential to be met
- making/suggesting any changes to the implementation of the project during its course
- improving the implementation of future research projects (especially at the annual follow-up in connection with the conclusion of projects)

2.2 Process

Follow-up takes place once per year. The schools decide individually when follow-up is to be performed. All research projects with their own cost objects are followed up[2]. The relevant Head of Division decides whether certain projects are to be excluded from the follow-up due to having been initiated too recently. These projects will then be included in the next follow-up round.

The follow-up process is performed as follows:

1. The Project Manager fills out the "Annual Follow-Up Report of Research Projects" form, which the Faculty Board supplies, available on the staff portal.
2. The Project Manager ensures that they have access to the most recent financial quarterly follow-up created by the Finance Department.
3. The Project Manager gives the filled-out form and the financial quarterly report to the relevant Head of Division.

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[2] Research-related projects with their own cost objects which only includes purchase of equipment or staff recruitment, for instance, are not followed up.

4. The form and the quarterly report are followed up through conversations between the Project Manager and the relevant Director[3]. Each school decides the medium for these conversations; they can, for instance, take place in connection with the annual staff appraisal. Should the school wish, other officeholders may participate, such as the head of the research group, if the medium used is not the staff appraisal. If a person is Project Manager for several projects, they are all discussed at the same conversation.
5. The Head of Division is responsible for ensuring that all filled in forms are correctly registered in the University registry.

2.3 Follow-Up Content

The follow-up focusses on the project's scientific and financial goals according to the project plan. The follow-up shall highlight to what extent the project is progressing towards the set goals. The template is based around a number of questions leading to a brief, critical reflection on the project. Any changes from the follow-up of the previous year should also be commented on.

The following areas are included in the template filled out and given to the Head of Division by the Project Manager (the template is available on the staff portal):

- Achieved results and effects in relation to the project goals
- Project staffing
- Collaboration with external parties (in cases where this is relevant)
- Support operations and infrastructure at the University
- The project's contribution to the education and research environment at the University
- Final, general reflections on the course of the project

In connection with the conclusion of the project, the following points are added to the follow-up:

All Projects:

- societal benefit of the project
- plans after the end of the project
- publications

Projects that Involve External Parties

- the goal of the collaboration
- mutual knowledge transfer between the University and external parties

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[3] The school decides whether the Head of School, Deputy Head of School, Head of Division or Deputy Head of Division participates.

3 Division of Responsibilities

In annual follow-up of research projects, the responsibilities are divided as follows:

School Management shall

- initiate the follow-up process
- participate in follow-up conversations with the Project Manager and any further participants (such as the head of the research group)
- be responsible for the storage of the filled-out template
- ensure that the results of the follow-up are taken care of by the school and the Project Manager, and are included in the development of the research project, the school's internal quality assurance procedures, and operational planning

The Project Manager shall

- fill out the template for annual follow-up of research projects
- participate in the follow-up conversation
- work to further strengthen the project's quality based on what comes up at the follow-up

The Finance Office shall

- provide financial quarterly reports for individual projects

Communication of annual follow-up takes place primarily within the school. If necessary, follow-up can be communicated to external fund providers who are financing the relevant project.

4 Taking Effect

These guidelines take effect on 05-02-2020.