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Annex to: Vice-chancellor's decision on systematic quality assurance of research and environmental monitoring and assessment, SLU ID: SLU.ua 2022.1.1.1-2208

## Instructions for systematic quality assurance of research and environmental monitoring and assessment at SLU

### 1. Introduction

This document contains instructions on how systematic quality assurance of research and research and environmental monitoring (EMA) should be conducted at SLU. These instructions constitute an application of Framework for quality assurance and quality development in SLU's research and EMA as decided upon by the vice-chancellor (SLU.ua.2022.1.1.1-2209).

### 2. General description of the quality assurance process

The key elements of quality assurance are situation analyses and quality dialogues at all levels within SLU – department, faculty and university-wide. The situation analyses are carried out in four-year cycles (see Figure 1). These are complemented by an external assessment (the Quality and Impact evaluation, Q&I or “KoN”) on every other occasion (i.e. every eight years).

Systematic quality assurance is based on the five quality areas that describe the conditions for high quality in research and EMA (see Framework for quality assurance and quality development in SLU's research and EMA.). Situation analyses and quality dialogues aim to identify development needs in relation to the various quality areas. This process results in development measures to be implemented at various organisational levels. The primary emphasis in the intermediate years of the four-year cycle is on following up on development measures. The quality assurance process is documented in the form of quality reports.

The systematic nature of the cyclical process follows the pattern:

- **Analyse** – the current situation of the operations in relation to a standard (i.e. an internal benchmark) for each quality area. Benchmarking is also carried out in relation to the wider world in connection with the Q&I.
- **Identify** – actions for improvement/development
- **Implement** – measures decided upon
- **Follow up** – implementation of measures and results on an annual basis.

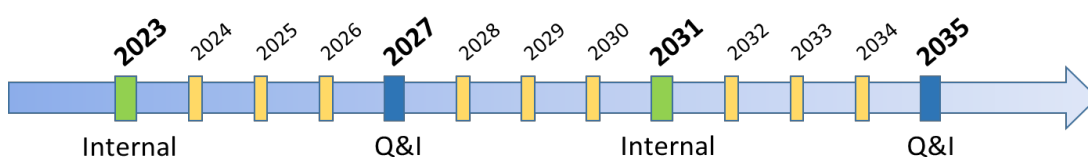


Figure 1. The timeline shows the four-year cycle for the quality assurance process. Green boxes labelled “Internal” refer to the years in which a situation analysis is carried out. Blue boxes labelled “Q&I” refer to the years in which the quality assurance process includes external assessment. The yellow lines indicate the intermediate years when the emphasis is on follow-up.

### 3. Implementation

The various elements of the systematic quality assurance work are described below, broken down into department, faculty and vice-chancellor level. The description is limited to the first five years. See Table 1 for an overview.

#### Department

##### *Situation analysis*

*To be carried out in the latter part of 2022 and 2026, i.e. before years 1 and 5*

The four-year cycle begins with the department conducting a situation analysis covering the five quality areas defined in Framework for quality assurance and quality development in SLU’s research and EMA.

The situation analysis involves the department reflecting on whether existing processes, procedures, assignment of responsibilities, operational support, etc., are functioning in a way that meets the standards for each quality area. If the department considers that standards are not being met, it must describe shortcomings/obstacles and what development measures the department plans in order to overcome these. The department may also identify issues and challenges that it wishes to raise for dialogue with the faculty management.

The department is free to adapt its approach to its specific conditions and established procedures. In order for the situation analysis to contribute effectively to the quality work,

the staff needs to be involved. A dialogue tool will be provided on the staff website to support the situation analysis.

For the occasions when an external peer review is conducted (i.e. every eight years, starting in 2027), the department must supplement the situation analysis with a self-assessment of the quality and impact of its operations in relation to the wider world. Supplementary instructions will be provided for these occasions.

### *Quality report*

*To be prepared for 2023 and 2027 respectively. To be updated annually.*

The results of the situation analysis are presented in a quality report. This report forms a basis for the quality dialogue between the department management and faculty management (see below). The quality report provides a brief summary of the situation analysis and a description of measures that the department is planning to implement based on needs identified in the situation analysis. Issues and challenges to be raised for dialogue with the faculty management are also described.

The quality report also contains a brief description of how the situation analysis was conducted at the department. A quality report template will be provided on the staff website.

In subsequent years, the quality report is updated annually with brief information on the progress of the implementation of actions at the department.

### *Quality dialogue between department and faculty management*

*To be carried out in 2023 and 2027, i.e. years 1 and 5*

The quality dialogue is carried out in conjunction with the annual operational dialogue. The aim is to have an open and forward-looking discussion on quality issues and development needs, based on the situation analysis. The quality dialogue includes a review of the development measures that the department is planning to implement. On occasions when the Q&I has been conducted (i.e. year 5), the results of the external assessment are also discussed.

### *Quality dialogue between department and faculty management*

*To be carried out in 2024, 2025 and 2026*

In the intermediate years, the emphasis of the quality dialogues is on following up on development measures decided upon, any need for adjustments to these, and any new measures.

## **Faculty**

### *Situation analysis*

*To be carried out in 2023 and 2027, i.e. years 1 and 5*

An analysis and synthesis of the current situation at the faculty as a whole is performed based on the departments' quality reports, the quality dialogues and other relevant

evaluations and documentation. One important part of the analysis is to identify recurring themes or challenges in the departments' quality reports, as well as development needs.

When an external peer review (Q&I) has been conducted (i.e. year 5), the faculty should also perform a comprehensive analysis of the quality and impact of its operations in relation to the wider world (specific instructions will be provided for this).

#### *Quality report*

To be prepared in 2023 and 2027 respectively. To be updated annually.

In 2023 and 2027, the faculty compiles a quality report which will include a summary of the situation analysis and a description of the development actions that it is planning to implement based on needs identified in the situation analysis. Furthermore, the faculty should also describe development needs that it wishes to raise for discussion at a university-wide level.

The quality report will constitute documentation and data for the quality dialogue with the vice-chancellor. A quality report template will be provided on the staff website.

In the intermediate years, the quality report is updated with brief information on the progress of the implementation of actions at the faculty.

#### *Quality dialogue between faculty management and the vice-chancellor*

To be carried out in 2023 and 2027, i.e. years 1 and 5

The quality dialogue is carried out in connection with the annual operational dialogues. The aim is to use the quality report as a basis for a forward-looking discussion on quality issues and development needs. The faculty provides information about the development measures it is planning to implement based on the situation analysis and the quality dialogues with the departments. Challenges at a university-wide level are also included in the discussion. The deans may also jointly raise proposals for action in the Vice-Chancellor's Management Group.

#### *Quality dialogue between faculty management and the vice-chancellor*

To be carried out in 2024, 2025 and 2026

In the intermediate years, the emphasis of the quality dialogues is on following up on measures, any need for adjustments to these, and any new measures.

### **Vice-Chancellor**

#### *Quality dialogues and situation analysis*

To be carried out in 2023 and 2027

A quality dialogue is conducted with each faculty management team on the basis of the quality report in question (see above). An analysis and synthesis of the current situation for the university as a whole is performed based on the quality dialogues, discussions in the Vice-Chancellor's Management Group, and any relevant evaluations or surveys. One

important part of the analysis is to identify recurring themes, or common denominators, in the faculties' quality reports, as well as the need for university-wide actions.

### *Quality report*

To be prepared in 2023 and 2027. To be updated annually.

The conclusions of the situation analysis are summarised in the quality report. The report also describes development actions planned at a university-wide level. In the intermediate years, the quality report is updated with brief information on the status for the implementation of actions.

### *Annual quality dialogue on activity support*

Based on quality reports and quality dialogues, the vice-chancellor conducts a dialogue with the university director and the chief librarian on the role of operational support and the need for new or amended processes.

### *Annual reporting to the university board*

The vice-chancellor presents information about the year's quality assurance process at the board's regular June meeting, and the results of the action work are discussed. If necessary, an in-depth discussion on quality assurance is raised at the board's strategy meeting in June.

Table 1. The overview shows how work is planned for the 2022 to 2027 period.

<i>Year</i>	<i>Period</i>	<i>Item</i>
	Autumn 2022	<i>Analyse</i> – Departments conduct a <b>situation analysis</b> and compile a <b>quality report</b> . Support in the form of a dialogue tool and a report template will be available from early autumn 2022. The timing of the work will be determined by each department based on the faculty's schedule.
	Autumn 2022/ Spring 2023 *	Departments submit a <b>quality report based on the situation analysis</b> . *Deadline for submission will be determined by the faculty in question.
<b>Year 1</b>	Spring 2023	<i>Identify</i> – <b>Quality reports</b> are discussed in <b>quality dialogues</b> between departments and faculty managements.
	Spring 2023	Faculties conduct a <b>situation analysis</b> (based on the departments' quality reports and quality dialogues held between departments and faculty management) and compile a <b>quality report</b> .
	Spring 2023	Students and doctoral students are given the opportunity to comment on the faculties' <b>quality reports</b> .
	Spring 2023	<b>Quality reports</b> are discussed in <b>quality dialogues</b> between faculty management teams and the vice-chancellor in conjunction with annual operational follow-up ("fakultetsdialoger").
	Autumn 2023	Operational planning at all levels includes measures identified and prioritised by means of situation analyses and dialogues.
	June 2023	The vice-chancellor will provide information about the year's quality assurance process at the Board's meeting, and the results of the action work will be discussed.

<i>Year</i>	<i>Period</i>	<i>Item</i>
<b>Year 2</b>	2024	<i>Follow-up</i> – Implementation, any need for adjustments and results of measures are discussed during the annual <b>quality dialogues</b> . Departments and faculties <b>update their quality reports</b> as a basis for the dialogues. Any adjustments or new measures are included in the annual operational planning.
<b>Year 3</b>	2025	<i>Follow up</i> – same as above.
<b>Year 4</b>	2026	<i>Follow up</i> – same as above.  <i>Analyse</i> – Departments conduct a <b>situation analysis</b> and compile a <b>quality report</b> , this time complemented by <b>data for external assessment</b> of research and EMA (Q&I).
<b>Year 5</b>	2027	<i>Identify</i> – <b>quality reports</b> and <b>external expert assessments</b> are discussed in <b>quality dialogues</b> between departments and faculty managements, and between faculty managements and the vice-chancellor.  Operational planning at all levels includes measures identified and prioritised by means of situation analyses and dialogues.

#### 4. Influence of students and doctoral students

Through SLUSS and SLUSS-DN, students and doctoral students are given the opportunity to comment on the faculties' quality reports and contribute any other views.

Representatives of SLUSS and SLUSS-DN are also invited to participate in the annual quality dialogues between faculty management teams and the vice-chancellor. Doctoral students also participate in situation analyses in their capacity as employees at the departments.

#### 5. Documentation

The department's work on the situation analysis, including conclusions and proposals for action resulting from the work, is documented in a quality report.

*Responsible:* Head of department

The faculty's comprehensive analysis, conclusions from the annual quality dialogues with the departments and proposals for action are documented in the faculty's quality report.

*Responsible:* Dean with the support of the faculty office

Quality dialogues that the vice-chancellor conducts with the faculty management teams are documented in a quality report, which also includes an overall analysis of the year's quality assurance process.

*Responsible:* Vice-chancellor with the support of the planning division

Views and suggestions concerning operational support emerging from quality dialogues between faculty management teams and the vice-chancellor are documented in a separate

quality report.

*Responsible: Chief operating officer with the support of the planning division*

All quality reports are collected and registered.

*Responsible: Planning division*

## 6. Feedback

Feedback to all levels of the organisation on development measures decided upon and their implementation and results is a key element of the quality assurance process. When work on situation analyses, quality reports and quality dialogues has been completed, results and experiences should be shared and form a basis for continued dialogue at departmental meetings, meetings of heads of department at faculties, meetings of heads of department with the vice-chancellor, and the Vice-Chancellor's Management Group, for example. Furthermore, quality reports from a faculty-wide and a university-wide level will be available on the staff website. The aim is to ensure that everyone can take note of what different parts of the organisation have come up with for future rounds of the systematic quality assurance process.

*Responsible: Heads of department, deans and the vice-chancellor respectively*