

26 May 2016

Governing Board

Reg. no. 340/1.1.1/2016

## **QUALITY ASSURANCE POLICY FOR SÖDERTÖRN UNIVERSITY**

The primary task of Södertörn University is to conduct education and research, which includes third stream activities in the surrounding community. Activities must be arranged so that high standards are achieved (Swedish Higher Education Act, Chapter 1 Sections 2-4). This quality assurance policy covers education and research, and the third stream activities that are integrated in these, as well as administrative support and infrastructure (including the library) at a university-wide level and in individual areas of activity.

### **Quality assurance**

Quality is a multi-dimensional concept. The experience of good quality is dependent on the person making the evaluation, the purpose of the evaluation and its context. Evaluations of quality should therefore cover varied perspectives. This quality assurance policy actualises three dimensions of the concept of quality:

- Academic quality, in the sense of a high standard of research and education (academic perspective)
- Quality from the perspective of the students and the surrounding community (stakeholder perspective)
- Effective and legally certain procedures (public administration perspective).

The concept of quality includes academic integrity and freedom, equality for all and vigilance against cheating and research misconduct.

### **Aims**

The overall aim for the university's quality assurance work is to build a culture of quality, in which teachers, other staff and students feel involved and responsible for developing activities. They should participate in the ongoing development of research and education to meet the requirements, expectations and wishes of principals, current and future students, and other external stakeholders. Quality assurance work must be characterised by an international perspective and contribute to fulfilling the university's mission statement and objectives. It must be integrated in activities at all levels and be proactive, transparent and have wide support.

### **Student influence and student participation**

The students' union's and students' participation in the university's quality assurance work is of great importance and is regulated in Chapter 1, Section 4 of the Higher Education Act. The students' union exercises student influence on education and participates in quality assurance work, primarily through student representation and participation decision-making and preparatory bodies. Individual students participate in quality assurance work through course evaluations and other instruments for participation.

## **Systematics**

The university's quality assurance work must be systematic. This means that there must be clear decision-making paths and allocations of responsibility through delegations of authority and rules of procedure, and that activities are continually developed and evaluated. One starting point for this is thus the university's official objectives. This work shall both assure quality (follow-ups) and promote quality (development) and the university must act both when quality shortcomings are discovered and by highlighting good examples.

## **National and local frameworks**

A basic prerequisite for work on quality assurance comprises the laws, rules and systems with which the university must comply: the Swedish Higher Education Act and Higher Education Ordinance, the Swedish Higher Education Authority's evaluation system and ESG 2015 (Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance in the European Higher Education Area), as well as other legislation and regulations that relate to the university in its role as a public authority. The university has also internal objectives, strategies, action plans, routines and delegations that build a framework for ongoing quality assurance work.

## **Allocation of resources for the university's quality assurance work in accordance with the applicable delegations of authority**

- The governing board decides on the policy for the university's quality assurance work
- The Vice-Chancellor decides on overarching governing documents for quality assurance work and, where necessary, on quality assurance positions of a temporary or permanent character. A quality assurance plan regulates the university's quality assurance work and is validated for a fixed period.
- The Faculty Board has overarching responsibility for the quality assurance of education and research and represents the Vice-Chancellor on strategy and quality assurance issues in these areas. It will continually develop, follow up and evaluate the quality of education and research, and decide on regulations and guidelines for these areas.
- The Head of School is responsible for quality assurance of the school's activities.
- The school's management boards annually establish an operating plan and annual report for the school and decide on syllabi.
- The programme and subject councils are responsible for the quality assurance of programmes and courses. The graduate school's steering group is responsible for the quality assurance of third-cycle degrees
- The Chief Administrative Officer provides a quality assurance system and is responsible for infrastructure and shared administration. The Chief Administrative Officer will work to promote efficient and coordinated administration within the university.
- The Library Director is responsible for quality assurance of the support provided by the library.

## **Primary processes in systematic quality assurance work**

The university has continual and ongoing processes that aim to guarantee and develop the quality of activities. In addition, there are action plans that concretise areas of quality assurance work and regular follow-ups and evaluations. Governing documents for all processes must be reviewed at regular intervals.

The following processes are the basis of systematic quality assurance work:

- Internal activity planning and allocation of resources
- Reviews of degree-awarding powers and the establishment of degree programmes
- Validation of course and programme syllabi
- Course and programme evaluations and university-wide evaluation and follow-up
- Processes for employment, promotion and competence development
- Systematic work environment management
- Periodic evaluation of the university's education, adapted to national and international requirements and including assessments by external experts
- Periodic evaluation of the university's research, adapted to national and international requirements and including assessments by external experts