



Sveriges lantbruksuniversitet
Swedish University of Agricultural Sciences

GOVERNING DOCUMENT

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Annex to: SLU.ua.2024.1.1.1-3466, Vice-Chancellor's decision on policy for a cohesive quality system and systematic quality assurance at SLU

Policy for a cohesive quality system and systematic quality assurance at SLU

Introduction

The purpose of systematic quality assurance is to ensure that research, education, and environmental monitoring and assessment at SLU are of high quality and to identify areas for development through structured and systematic work, carried out in a coordinated manner at various levels of the organisation in accordance with established procedures.

This policy is an overarching governing document that sets out the principles for the systematic quality assurance process. It is intended to ensure that quality assurance and quality development in research, education, and environmental monitoring and assessment at SLU are based on common principles, that roles and responsibilities are clarified, and that the synergies between various activities are capitalised on.

Systematic quality assurance encompasses both the prerequisites and content of the activities. The quality system is designed to ensure that all of SLU's activities work appropriately and effectively to meet the requirements of the Higher Education Act and the Higher Education Ordinance, that national and European standards and guidelines are followed, and that the goals of SLU's strategy are achieved. The quality system does not regulate the activities themselves. Instead, it focuses on continuous improvement and quality assurance.

The operational aspects of the systematic quality assurance process depend on how responsibility is distributed and the nature of the activity. These are described in more detail in the following separate governing documents:

- Plan for systematic quality assurance of research and environmental assessment
- Plan for systematic quality assurance of third-cycle programmes
- Plan for systematic quality assurance of first- and second-cycle programmes

The quality system covers all research activities for which SLU is wholly or partly responsible, programmes leading to a degree in accordance with SLU's system of qualifications, other credit-bearing courses and programmes, and environmental monitoring and assessment. According to the vice-chancellor's delegation of authority, the vice-chancellor decides on the overall principles for the systematic quality assurance process, which are set out in this policy. The formal responsibility for systematic quality assurance within the various areas of activity is set out in the plans and is based on SLU's central delegation of authority and the faculties' delegations of authority. Systematic quality assurance is a joint responsibility, and the day-to-day responsibility is shared by everyone working at SLU, both staff and students.

Definitions within SLU's quality system and systematic quality assurance process

Education

Education refers to all programmes (at first-, second- and third-cycle levels) that lead to a degree in accordance with the system of qualifications, as well as other credit-bearing courses and programmes.

Research

Research refers to all research activities for which SLU is wholly or partly responsible.

Environmental assessment

Environmental assessment refers to all activities referred to as “environmental monitoring and assessment” in the Ordinance for SLU and for which SLU is wholly or partly responsible.

Collaboration

Collaboration refers to a means or process whereby SLU, together with partners outside academia, achieves goals that the partners cannot achieve on their own. Collaboration enriches SLU's activities and contributes to their impact on society. This definition reflects the reciprocity specified in the Higher Education Act, which is central to SLU's activities. Collaboration is an integral part of the core activities of research, education and environmental assessment.

Cohesive quality system

The term cohesive quality system refers to all governing documents, processes, procedures, tools, organisation and division of responsibilities that form the framework of the systematic quality assurance process, as well as the internal and external actors involved. The principles for systematic quality assurance are to be common to all parts of SLU, and the results must benefit the entire organisation.

Systematic quality assurance

SLU's systematic quality assurance process encompasses quality assurance, follow-up, feedback and development. Systematic quality assurance encompasses both the prerequisites and content of the activities. *Systematic* means that the quality assurance process is carried out following the same predetermined working method/process and content. The purpose of systematic quality assurance is to ensure that research, education and environmental assessment maintain high quality. This also includes identifying development needs and ensuring that the conditions are in place to conduct high-quality activities. This is done through structured and systematic work that is carried out in a coordinated manner at different levels of the organisation according to established procedures.

The concept of quality

SLU's quality assurance is based on statutory requirements, such as the Higher Education Act and Higher Education Ordinance, the Ordinance for SLU, and other relevant legislation. Furthermore, quality assurance is based on common frameworks for quality assurance and development, as well as national and European standards and guidelines. The quality assurance work must meet national and international requirements and support the goals set out in the university's strategy. Activities must be appropriate and effective in order to achieve set goals, meet requirements and satisfy the needs and expectations placed on our activities.

Principles for systematic quality assurance at SLU

Systematic quality assurance at SLU includes regular reviews, follow-ups, feedback and development of activities. The following main common processes and principles are included in systematic quality assurance:

Regular reviews of research, education and environmental assessment are carried out, and elements of external peer review are included in all three areas of activity. The regular review covers the assessment areas and assessment criteria set out in national and international requirements, guidelines and standards.

Continuous follow-ups are carried out through internal annual processes at several levels of SLU's activities, covering courses, programmes, departments and faculties. The continuous follow-up monitors how the results of regular reviews and previous years' continuous follow-ups are handled and taken into account in the development and management of activities at various management levels, in accordance with current delegation of authority arrangements.

Common standards and definitions of quality serve as the foundation of systematic quality assurance. SLU's quality system is based on the Association of Swedish Higher Education Institutions' (SUHF) common framework for quality assurance and development, the Swedish Higher Education Authority's (UKÄ) national standards and guidelines, and the guidelines and standards adopted within the European Higher Education Area (ESG). SLU's core values, as well as the expectations of our staff, students and the wider community regarding high-quality research, education and environmental assessment, are guiding factors in our quality assurance work.

Specific plans containing processes and procedures for how regular reviews and continuous follow-ups are to be carried out within research and environmental assessment, third-cycle education, and first- and second-cycle education are to be drawn up. These plans are formulated in a way that ensures compliance with SLU's policy for systematic quality assurance.

The quality assurance process includes systematic improvement efforts based on the results of continuous follow-up and regular review, following a process consisting of planning, implementation, follow-up, feedback and improvement.

The vice-chancellor's quality dialogues with the faculty management teams tie the various quality assurance processes together; they make it possible to discuss quality in education, third-cycle education, research and environmental assessment at the same time, and to capitalise on the links between the different activities.

Communication of SLU's cohesive quality system and systematic quality assurance is available in both Swedish and English on SLU's websites. The purpose of the quality system and its constituent processes must be known, transparent and clear within the organisation. The results of reviews and the continuous follow-up are to be documented and communicated to the activities.

Follow-up and development of the quality system

- The quality system is followed up annually through the vice-chancellor's quality dialogues and through quality dialogues organised by the Board of Education and the respective Council for PhD Education to ensure that it functions appropriately and promotes quality.
- The Division of Planning and Research Support, which coordinates the university's quality work, conducts follow-up of the quality system annually and draws up proposals for further development of processes and procedures as necessary.
- Student influence in the follow-up and development of the quality system is ensured through student representation on SLU's various boards and councils.