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Guideline for External Evaluation of Research

This document is an informal translation of the Swedish original, generated using an automatic translation service. In the event of any discrepancy between the translated document and the Swedish original, the original shall prevail.

1. Introduction

The quality and relevance of research are largely reviewed through the inherent processes of the scientific community and established forms of peer review. This takes place, for example, during publication, research funding applications, doctoral education examinations, as well as during recruitment and promotion of teachers.

To support the development and renewal of research subjects, external evaluation of research is also carried out within the university's quality system. The external evaluation provides an intra-disciplinary assessment of the quality, relevance, and developmental potential of the research through peer review. These external evaluations are conducted on a recurring basis in a nine-year cycle, but external evaluation can also be initiated on a needs basis - for example to follow-up questions from the Faculty Boards' evaluation of research subjects (*Guideline for Evaluation of Research Subjects*, LTU-2309-2024).

2. Periodic External Evaluation of Research

To strengthen the university's research, periodic evaluation is carried out with the support of external peer review. The purpose of the external evaluation is to identify strengths, weaknesses and opportunities for development, thus supporting the development and renewal of research and research subjects.

The periodic external evaluation is coordinated with the Faculty Boards' follow-up and evaluation of research subjects, which operates on a three-year cycle: the first year for evaluation and the subsequent two years for follow-ups. During each evaluation year, approximately one-third of the research subjects undergo external evaluation. The unit being evaluated may encompass either the activities within an individual research subject or a cluster of related research subjects.

To ensure a comprehensive perspective, typically two reviewers are appointed for each research subject. More than two reviewers may be considered if evaluating a cluster of subjects. The reviewers are expected to be well-versed in research and education within the relevant subject area to facilitate meaningful academic discussions. Conflicts of interest should be considered, but previous or ongoing research collaborations do not automatically constitute a conflict of interest.

The reviewers' task includes assessing strengths, weaknesses, and development opportunities based on written materials and interviews with representatives from the research subject(s). They are also expected to provide concrete recommendations and may be asked to focus on specific aspects of the subject's activities upon request from the research subject(s).

The reviewers' assessments are delivered in a report to the relevant department and Faculty Board for analysis and subsequent decisions regarding improvement measures, development plans, or other strategic decisions.

2.1 Materials and Process Description

The schedule for external evaluation of research subjects is planned by the Faculty Boards in dialogue with the departments. The planning includes deciding whether subjects should be evaluated as clusters or individually, and whether the reviewers' assignment should include any specific questions, and which roles should be interviewed. The department proposes reviewers and interview participants. The assignment description is finalized by a decision from the Dean no later than the end of February, allowing the external evaluation to begin in April.

Written materials for the external evaluation include:

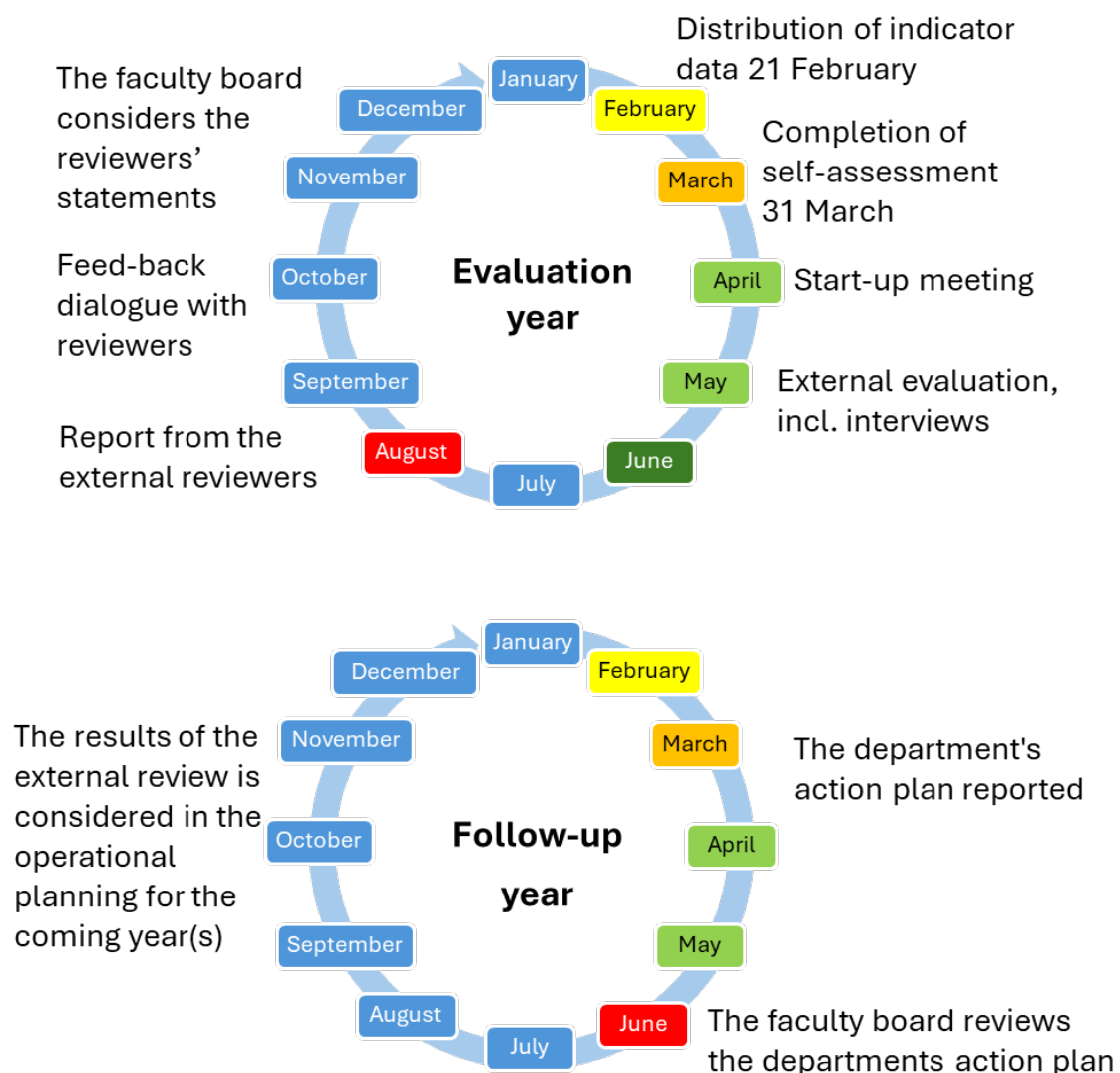
- Indicator data and self-assessment as part of the Faculty Board's follow-up
- A description of research activities within the subject(s)
- The established subject description for the research subject(s)
- A publication list for the subject(s) covering the past five years
- Additional materials as needed, depending on specific questions (e.g., external research funding applications).

Complete materials must be compiled no later than the end of March.

The external evaluation is conducted between April and August. Interviews are planned by the department in dialogue with the reviewers. Sufficient time should be allocated for the interviews to facilitate productive academic discussions. The reviewers' assessments and recommendations are delivered in a written report to the responsible administrator by the end of August.

The reports are forwarded to relevant Head of Department and Head(s) of Subject, as well as to the Faculty Board's Research Strategy Committee. In the autumn, a feedback dialogue is held with the reviewers, where the Head of Department, the Head(s) of Subject, and the Faculty Board leadership can discuss the assessments. The Faculty Board reviews the reviewers' findings during the autumn and provides recommendations to the department based on the external evaluation and previous follow-ups. The department is then responsible for acting on the results of the evaluation and the Faculty Board's decisions, with follow-up reporting the following spring.

The annual cycle of external evaluation is illustrated in the figure below.



2.2 Areas of Responsibility

The Faculty Boards are responsible for the overall planning of the external evaluation of research. The departments are responsible for implementation. The Faculty Boards, in collaboration with the departments, are responsible for utilizing the findings from the evaluation.

The Faculty Board is responsible for:

- determining, by a Dean's decision, which research subjects/clusters of research subjects that are scheduled for evaluation,
- defining the evaluation assignment through a Dean's decision (e.g., questions, materials, and who should be interviewed),
- appointing external reviewers and determining their compensation through a Dean's decision,
- leading start-up meetings and feedback dialogues with reviewers,
- reviewing the reviewers' reports and making recommendations,
- where appropriate, propose to the Vice-Chancellor to take the necessary decisions.

The Department is responsible for:

- completing the self-assessment included in the Faculty Board's subject evaluation [Head of Subject],
- preparing a complementary description of research activities [Head of Subject],
- providing any additional supporting materials based on specific questions (e.g., external funding applications) [Head of Subject],
- proposing external reviewers, considering conflicts of interest [Head of Subject],
- suggesting specific questions for review, if any [Head of Subject]
- planning and conducting interviews with external reviewers within the agreed timeline, including arranging site visits if necessary [division of responsibilities allocated internally within each department]
- participating in feedback dialogues with reviewers [Head of Department and Head of Subject],
- analyzing the reviewers' reports, and based on the Faculty Board's recommendations, propose an action plan or other measures for quality development [Head of Department and Head of Subject].

Professional Services is responsible for:

- assisting the department in preparing certain materials [e.g., indicator data and subject descriptions - Educational and Research Planning; publication lists - University Library]
- forwarding materials to reviewers [Educational and Research Planning]
planning start-up meetings and feedback dialogues [Educational and Research Planning]
- manage reviewer remuneration [Educational and Research Planning].

Remuneration of reviewers depends on the scope of the assignment and is decided by the Dean for each evaluation.

3. External evaluation on an ad hoc basis

The university's internal evaluation of research subjects¹ och and third-cycle studies², encompassing all research subjects and conducted on a three-year cycle, may identify the need for an external evaluation beyond the recurring nine-year cycle. These internal evaluations then provide a foundation for defining the purpose of specific evaluation assignments. External evaluations may also be used for in-depth analyses of third-cycle studies.

External evaluations may also be initiated:

- in connection with proposals to reconsider or discontinue a research subject, and
- to evaluate the university's strategic research initiatives.

External evaluation on a case-by-case basis normally includes (1) review of the compiled documentation, (2) interview with representatives from the organisation, and (3) compilation of the results of the review and any recommendations in a report to the relevant department and faculty board.

Materials for external evaluation of research normally includes indicator data, self-assessment and final report from the university's internal evaluation of research subjects, as well as supplementary documentation depending on the focus of the review (applications for external funding, publications, stakeholder feedback, etc.) If the evaluation focuses on third-cycle studies, parts or the entirety of the Swedish Higher Education Authority's (UKÄ) evaluation model for third-cycle studies may be used.

3.1 Areas of Responsibility

Decisions to conduct an ad hoc external evaluation and its focus are made by the Faculty Board. The detailed assignment description is defined through a Dean's decision. External reviewers are appointed based on proposals from the relevant department and are confirmed

¹ Guideline for evaluation of research subjects, LTU-2309-2024.

² Guidelines for the evaluation and development of third-cycle studies, LTU-2714-2023.

by the Dean. In cases where doctoral students are included as reviewers, they are selected by the doctoral student council.

The Faculty Board is responsible for:

- defining the evaluation assignment through a Dean's decision (e.g., purpose, questions, and specific materials to review),
- appointing external reviewers, determining the timeline, and approving the remuneration of the reviewers through a Dean's decision,
- leading start-up meetings and feedback dialogues with reviewers,
- making recommendations, or other decisions, based on the external evaluation report and discussions with the relevant department,
- informing the Vice-Chancellor about the process and, when appropriate, propose to the Vice-Chancellor to take the necessary decisions.

The Department is responsible for:

- preparing the necessary materials (e.g., descriptions of research activities, funding applications) [Head of Subject]
- Proposing external reviewers; depending on the specific purpose, some reviewers may be internal. However, the majority must be external, meaning they are not employed by Luleå University of Technology [Head of Subject]
- planning and conducting interviews with external reviewers within the agreed timeline, including arranging site visits if necessary [division of responsibilities allocated internally within the department]
- analyzing the reviewers' reports and proposing an action plan or other measures for quality development based on the Faculty Board's recommendations [Head of Department and Head of Subject].

Professional Services is responsible for:

- assisting the department in preparing certain materials [e.g., indicator data and subject descriptions - Educational and Research Planning; publication lists - University Library]
- forwarding materials to reviewers [Educational and Research Planning]
- planning start-up meetings and feedback dialogues [Educational and Research Planning]
- manage reviewer remuneration [Educational and Research Planning].

Remuneration of reviewers depends on the scope of the assignment and is decided by the Dean for each evaluation.