

# Evaluation of research in the humanities in Norway 2015

## Terms of reference

The Research Council of Norway has been charged by the Ministry of Education and Research with the responsibility for performing subject-specific evaluations. The Division for Science has decided to evaluate research activities in the humanities in Norwegian universities, university colleges and relevant research institutes.

## The objective of the evaluation

The objective of the evaluation is to review the overall state-of-the-art of research in the humanities in Norway, focusing primarily on the situation in universities, university colleges and other relevant research institutions. The evaluation will also take into consideration the interplay of research and teaching at the higher education institutions and the societal impact of the research performed. The conclusions of the evaluation will provide greater knowledge about the present state of humanities research, and form the basis for recommendations on the future development of research within the various fields of the humanities in Norway.

For the institutions evaluated, the evaluation is expected to provide insight, advice and recommendations that can be used to enhance their own research standards. For the Research Council, the evaluation will help to expand the knowledge base used to develop funding instruments and provide input on research policy to the Norwegian Government.

*The evaluation is expected to:*

- Review the scientific quality of the research in an international context;
- Provide a critical review of the strengths and weaknesses of the fields of research within the humanities nationally, at the institutional level and for a number of designated research groups;
- Identify the research groups that have achieved a high international level in their research, or that have the potential to achieve such a level;
- Investigate the extent of interdisciplinary research at the institutions and in the research groups;
- Review the role of the Research Council in funding research activities in the humanities;
- Investigate the connection between research and teaching activities;
- Discuss the organisation of research activities and the role of the humanities in the strategic plans of the evaluated institutions;
- Assess the extent to which previous evaluations have been used by the institutions in their strategic planning;
- Identify areas of research that need to be strengthened in order to ensure that Norway possesses necessary competence in areas of national importance in the future;
- Discuss the societal impact of humanities research in Norway in general and in particular its potential to address targeted societal challenges as defined in the Norwegian Government's Long-term plan for research and higher education and the EU framework programme Horizon 2020.

## Organisation and methods

The evaluation will be carried out by an international evaluation committee consisting of eight panels. Each panel will carry out the evaluation in its field of expertise.

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| Panel 1 | Aesthetic Studies  |
| Panel 2 | Nordic Languages and Linguistics                             |
| Panel 3 | Nordic and Comparative Literature                            |
| Panel 4 | Modern and Classical Languages, Literatures and Area Studies |
| Panel 5 | Archaeology, History and Cultural Studies                    |
| Panel 6 | Philosophy and Studies in Science and Technology             |
| Panel 7 | Religion and Theology  |
| Panel 8 | Media Studies  |

The panels will base their evaluations on self-assessments provided by the research institutions and a bibliometric analysis, as well as on interviews and presentations given in meetings with the involved faculties/departments or independent research institutes. The self-assessments from the institutions will include factual information about the organisation, its resources and strategic plans, national and international research collaboration as well as teaching and dissemination activities.

For a selected number of *research groups* the institutions will also provide CVs and publication lists for the group's members, a description of the scientific objectives and organisation of the group as well as a digital copy in full text of one scientific article or book chapter for each group member affiliated with a Norwegian research organisation. These scientific publications will be assessed by specially appointed individual experts that will provide input to the panel's evaluation of the research groups. Each research group also has the option of submitting a case study of the societal impact of research performed by the group.

The Research Council will provide data on its funding of humanities research and supplementary information on the societal impact of the humanities in Norway.

The panels are requested to present their findings in written reports. Preliminary reports will be sent to the institutions included in the evaluation in order to check the accuracy of the factual information. The evaluation committee's final reports will be submitted to the Board of the Division for Science for final approval.

The principal evaluation committee will consist of the chairs of each panel.

## Tasks of the evaluation panels

The panels are requested to:

- Evaluate research activities with respect to scientific quality, national and international collaboration. The evaluation is to focus on research published in peer-reviewed publications.
- Evaluate the relevance and impact of the evaluated research activities.
- Evaluate how research activities are organised and managed.
- Submit a report with specific recommendations for the future development of research within the subject fields encompassed by the panel, including means of improvement when required.

### **Aspects to be addressed in the panel reports:**

The following mandatory aspects must be addressed. The panels are free to include other questions/aspects they consider valuable to the evaluation.

#### **1. National level**

- Strengths and weaknesses of Norwegian humanities research in an international context;
- Research cooperation nationally and internationally;
- General resource situation regarding funding and infrastructure;
- Training, recruitment, gender balance and mobility;
- Cooperation with other sectors of society (e.g. private and public sector), and the societal impact and function of the fields of research in society.

#### **2. Institutional level**

- Organisation, research leadership and strategy, including follow up of recommendations given in previous evaluations;
- Resource situation, such as funding, staffing, infrastructure and the balance between resources and research activities;
- Facilitation of scientific quality, e.g. publication strategies, focus areas of research, national and international research collaboration;
- Training, mobility and career path, e.g. policies for recruitment, mobility, career paths as well as gender and age balance in academic positions;
- Research collaboration, such as facilitation of collaboration and networking activities at the national and international level, including interdisciplinary and multidisciplinary research activities;
- The interplay between research and teaching activities.

#### **3. Research groups**

- Organisation, general description of members, and when applicable, use of research infrastructure;
- Research activities, scientific quality and production;
- Training, mobility and career path of junior researchers;
- Research collaboration and networking activities at the national and international level, including interdisciplinary and multidisciplinary research activities;
- Impact of research on society, value added to professional practice, and recognition by industry or the public sector.

The quality of the research groups should be assessed according to the five following categories:

**Excellent**

*Research at the international research front: undertaking original research of international interest, publishing in internationally leading journals<sup>1</sup>. High productivity.*

**Very good**

*Research with a high degree of originality, but that nonetheless falls short of the highest standards of excellence. A publication profile with a high degree of publications in internationally leading journals. High productivity and very relevant to international research within its sub-field.*

**Good**

*Research of good international standard, with publications in internationally and nationally recognised journals. Research of relevance both to national and international research development.*

**Fair**

*Research that does not quite attain good international standard, international publication profile is modest. Mainly national publications. Limited contribution to research.*

**Weak**

*Research of insufficient quality and weak publication profile: few international publications. No original research and little research of relevance to national problems.*

## **Tasks of the principal evaluation committee**

The committee is requested to compile a summary report based on the findings, assessments and recommendations of the panels. This report should offer an overall assessment of the state of the research evaluated. The report should also offer a set of overall recommendations concerning the future development of this research.

The committee is requested to:

- Summarise the overall scientific quality and relevance of the research in the humanities. Identify which research areas have a particularly strong scientific position in Norway and in a national and international context, and which are particularly weak.
- Summarise general assessments related to structural issues.
- Summarise how the research institutions have followed up previous evaluations.
- Any other important aspects of research in the humanities that ought to be given special consideration at the national or international level

The committee's conclusions should lead to a set of recommendations for the future development of research in the humanities in Norway, directed towards the research institutions, the Research Council and the Ministry of Education and Research.

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<sup>1</sup> For publications on national subjects, journals based in Norway or in the Nordic countries may be considered to be among the internationally leading journals provided that they have an international distribution. Book publications by international publishers may also be taken into consideration in the assessment of research groups.