

Evaluation of research in biology, medicine and health in Norway 2010 - 2011

Mandate for the evaluation

The Research Council of Norway (RCN) is given the task by the Ministry of Education and Research to perform subject-specific evaluations. The Division for Science has decided to evaluate research activities in biology, medicine and health and psychology in Norwegian universities, university hospitals, relevant research institutes and relevant university colleges.

Evaluations have previously been performed within these subjects/fields, in biology in 2000 and medicine and health in 2003.

1. The objective of the evaluation

The main focus of the evaluation should be the scientific quality of Norwegian research within biology, medicine and health and psychology in Norwegian universities, university hospitals, relevant research institutes and relevant university colleges.

The evaluation will reinforce the role of the RCN as advisor to the Norwegian Government and relevant ministries. The evaluation will give knowledge, advice and recommendations on biological, medical and health related research and give the institutions as well as the RCN and relevant ministries a better basis for determining future priorities within and between fields of research.

Specifically, the evaluation will:

- provide a critical review of the strengths and weaknesses of the above fields, both nationally and at the level of individual research groups and academic departments. The scientific quality of the research will be reviewed in an international context.
- assess to what degree the previous evaluations have been used by the institutions in their strategic planning
- discuss to what degree the research units perform research in accordance with the strategy of their institution
- identify the research units which have achieved a high international level in their research, or have the potential to reach such a level
- identify areas of research that need to be strengthened in order to ensure that Norway in the future possesses necessary competence in areas of national importance. A key aspect is to enable the RCN to assess the situation regarding recruitment within the scientific fields
- discuss to what extent the research meets the demand for interdisciplinary research and future societal challenges

2. Organization and methods

International evaluation panels will be appointed for the following fields:

- Botany-, zoology- and ecology- related disciplines
- Physiology related disciplines including corresponding translational research
- Molecular biology, including corresponding translational research
- Clinical research, including corresponding translational research (two panels)
- Public health and health-related research
- Psychology and Psychiatry

Self-assessments including information about the organization and resources, as well as future plans, will be provided by the research units. In addition the panels will be provided with bibliometric analysis. Representatives from the involved units will be invited to meet the panels for presentations and discussions.

Each of the evaluation panels will write a report with evaluations of the different research units as well as specific recommendations. These reports will be sent to the research units for factual control. In order to provide general recommendations at a national level for research within these fields, Joint Committees will be established comprising members from each of the different evaluation panels/research areas.

Specific criteria for inclusion and exclusion – see attachment.

3. Tasks of the evaluation panels

The panels are requested to

- Evaluate research activities with respect to scientific quality, national and international collaboration. Scientific quality should be the main focus
- Evaluate how the research is organized and managed.
- Submit a report with specific recommendations for the future development of research within biology/medicine/health/psychology in Norway, including means of improvement when required.

Aspects to be assessed in the panel reports:

3.1 National level

- Strengths and weaknesses
- Research cooperation nationally and internationally
- Recruitment and mobility
- General resource situation regarding funding and infrastructure
- Cooperation with other sectors of society (e.g. industry)

3.2 Institutional level

To be defined as the institution as such, or as a university department, or a research institute.

Depending on the size of the institution level 3.2. and level 3.3. may be merged. In case of two levels, level 3.2 focus on organisation and strategy, level 3.3. on research quality and production.

- Organisation, research leadership and strategy
 - Including follow up of recommendations given in previous evaluation/s
- Resource situation
 - Funding, staffing, infrastructure and the balance between resources and research activities
- Scientific quality
 - Including the description of a publication strategy
- Training, mobility and career path
 - Recruitment and policies for recruitment
 - Policy for mobility and career path
 - Policy for gender and age balance in academic positions
- Research collaboration
 - Collaboration and networking activities at national and international level including interdisciplinary and multidisciplinary research activities, as well as translational research (from basic to applied research or vice-versa)

3.3 Research units

- Organisation, research leadership and strategy
 - Including resource situation (staff and funding) and research infrastructure
- Research activities
 - Scientific quality and production
- Training, mobility and career path
 - Recruitment and policies for recruitment
 - Policy for mobility and career path
 - Gender and age balance in academic positions
- Research collaboration
 - Collaboration and networking activities at national and international level including interdisciplinary and multidisciplinary research activities, as well as translational research (from basic to applied research or vice-versa)

4. Time schedule

Panel meetings will take place in Oslo March-June 2011
Deadline for submitting draft panel reports August 2011
Deadline for submitting final reports October 2011
Deadline for joint reports November 2011

5. Miscellaneous

Other important aspects of Norwegian biological, medical and health related research that ought to be given consideration.

Attachment

Delimitation and organisation

The panels are asked to base their evaluation on self-assessments from the research units, factual information, bibliometric analysis and hearing meetings.

Starting point for the present evaluation will be the research performed at the institutions in question. The university departments and several institutes in the institute sector are too large to be evaluated as one single research unit. In order to give an overview of the research the evaluation will be carried out as follows:

Departments at the universities and university colleges and institutes in the institute sector (named institution)

1. The institution – level 1 – describes its organisation and research strategy in a written document as well as factual information including funding, number of permanent and preliminary positions etc.
2. The level below the institutions (section, group, program etc.) is the unit that will be evaluated and which prepare the self-assessment for the research – level 2.

In some institutions the level 2 units might be placed in different panels. If so the institute structure and strategy will present their activities to all relevant panels. Large evaluation units within level 2 belonging to different panels may split in different evaluation units or will be evaluated in a panel covering the main content of their research.

The units to be evaluated at level 2 need to be units already established. However it is important that the evaluation units to be evaluated have a certain minimum size. If the research performed within two or more evaluation units belong together thematically, it may be an advantage to prepare a joint self-assessment making it clear that the self-assessment describes the research in two or more groups. Level 2 units with minor scientific activities and production, are to be described on level 1, the general description of the institute.

Research at the university hospitals

The research performed in the university hospitals is often part in integrated research units between the university and the hospital. It will normally neither be practical, nor natural to separate the self-assessment from these units. It is preferable that these integrated units give a joint self-assessment and a joint oral presentation at the hearing meetings. The universities are asked to take the main responsibility for the self-assessment when the research unit is led by a researcher who has his/her main position at the university. The same is asked from the university hospital when the research unit is led by a researcher who has his/her main position at the hospital.