UPPSALA
UNIVERSITET

Quality and Renewal 2024(Q&R24)

Project terms of reference

Approved by the Vice-Chancellor 2022-12-20

Contents

1. Background and purpose

In 2007, Uppsala University became the first university in Sweden to undertake, on its own initiative, a University-wide research evaluation with external review. This evaluation, Quality and Renewal 2007 (Q&R07), was followed four years later by Quality and Renewal 2011 (Q&R11). These two research evaluations were organised along broadly similar lines and focused on research results. Quality and Renewal 2017 (Q&R17) concentrated more on factors driving quality, preconditions and processes promoting good research.

On 30 March 2021, the Vice-Chancellor instructed a working group to conduct a preparatory study for a new research evaluation, Quality and Renewal 2024 (Q&R24).[1] The preparatory study was delivered to the Vice-Chancellor in January 2022 (UFV 2021/524). The proposals presented in the preparatory study derive from discussions in the working group, experiences and perspectives gathered from within the University, monitoring and analysis of developments in the university sector, Association of Swedish Higher Education Institutions frameworks and the external requirements to which Swedish higher education institutions are subject. The Quality and Renewal 2024 (Q&R24) evaluation has been designed against the backdrop of the working group's proposals.

In Q&R24 two University-wide themes will be evaluated, alongside evaluations of research and research environments conducted by disciplinary domains/faculties.

The research evaluation will be guided by the document *Uppsala University: Mission, Goals and Strategies* and work as point of departure for Q&R24. (UFV 2018/641). The evaluation will be forward-looking and quality-promoting with reference to the University's overall goal of conducting education and research of the highest quality and relevance. The indicators identified for follow-up of the University's goals (UFV 2020/937) will be used as a basis for self-evaluation and the work of the assessment panels.

The capacity to produce quality research is influenced by decisions and processes at all levels of the University, and by the ability of actors at these different levels to collaborate. Q&R24 will include a range of levels and parts of the organisation in the evaluation, for example, the University Management Team, the disciplinary domains, faculties, departments, research centres and some support units. Previous evaluations have primarily focused on the department level, although the follow-up of Q&R17 included the university level. Another difference compared with previous rounds is that the evaluation of research and research environments will be conducted by the disciplinary domains themselves (as is the case in the University's programme reviews). In addition there will be a University-wide thematic evaluation of two areas: research infrastructure and interdisciplinary and multidisciplinary research. A further innovation is that the results from Q&R24 will be shared at a conference for the whole University.

2. Goals

2.1 Intended outcomes

The goal of Q&R24 is to strengthen Uppsala University's ability to conduct research of the highest quality and relevance. Moving the frontline of research forward also enhances the potential to make a difference in society through external engagement and collaboration. Insight into our own strengths and weaknesses is a tool for promoting quality. Q&R24 is intended to deliver knowledge about these strengths and weaknesses, and about the opportunities and challenges facing the University, so as to be able to act with reference to them.

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[1] Q&R24 preparatory study: working group proposals (UFV 2021/524).

2.2 Overall project objectives

Q&R24 is expected to contribute to increased knowledge about research conditions, opportunities and challenges and to deliver recommendations from external assessors as a basis for quality enhancement at all levels of the University.

3. Implementation

While Q&R24 is a cohesive research evaluation at Uppsala University, it will be carried out in two parts: (1) *a University-wide evaluation* encompassing the University Management, some support operations, the disciplinary domains/faculties, and (2) *evaluations of research and research environments conducted by disciplinary domains/faculties*. This two-pronged approach will broaden and deepen our knowledge of the University's situation and potential and its research activities. This knowledge can later inform various strategic initiatives.

3.1 Implementation of University-wide Themes

The University-wide evaluation comprises two themes with an assessment panel for each theme. The evaluation will shed light on strengths, weaknesses, needs and development areas, relating to:

- *Research infrastructure (Panel 1)*
  The evaluation will examine the work of the University Management and the disciplinary domains/faculties on research infrastructures over their entire life cycle, i.e. from initiation to discontinuation. Rather than evaluating the research infrastructures as such, the evaluation will focus on the University's approach to research infrastructure as an enabling condition for good research. Some examples of research infrastructures are databases, archives, libraries, field stations, laboratories, biobanks, conditions for open science, advanced technical equipment and technical assistance. How does the University work on research infrastructures at present? How can we make better use of the research infrastructures we already have? How is information about existing infrastructures communicated to increase their use? How do we at the University collaborate with others regarding research infrastructures? Does our work on research infrastructures meet the needs of research at present and expected needs in the future? What sort of support is available for the establishment of new research infrastructures?

- *Interdisciplinarity and multidisciplinarity (Panel 2)*
  The University's breadth is often described as an asset that is not fully exploited. To develop interdisciplinarity and multidisciplinarity at the University, the conditions for this need to be assessed and analysed. What can the University Management and the disciplinary domains/faculties do to facilitate interdisciplinary and multidisciplinary research? What are the obstacles and unexploited opportunities at university level, and between disciplinary domains and faculties? How can the University stimulate interdisciplinary and multidisciplinary research and where should the University concentrate its efforts in the future? Could we adopt a different approach than at present? What can we do to strengthen the link between interdisciplinary and multidisciplinary research and education?

Consider how *systematic* the above factors are. Include the promotion of gender equality in relation to each theme.

3.2 Evaluations of research and research environments conducted by disciplinary domains/faculties

The evaluation of research and research environments will be conducted by the disciplinary domain/faculty concerned. Strategic research areas and research centres are already evaluated in various contexts. Where other evaluations, whether external or internal, have already examined issues raised in Q&R24, the focus should be on any areas that have not been explored.

Although the focus is on research environments, the disciplinary domains/faculties may also examine their own role and their own work on creating good conditions for the research environments. The evaluation is to include the following aspects and subordinate points.

1. *Development and renewal of research and research environments*

a. The most notable strengths, weaknesses and development areas regarding research quality.

b. The most notable strengths, weaknesses and development areas in work on:
- maintaining and enhancing research quality,
- creating conditions for the development and renewal of research and research environments,
- promoting good research practice, preventing research misconduct and dealing with infringements,
- creating good conditions for the freedom of research, and
- creating good conditions for interdisciplinary and multidisciplinary research, and for both basic and applied research.

2. *Engagement and collaboration with society*

The most notable strengths, weaknesses and development areas in work on:
- developing the quality and relevance of research through engagement and collaboration with society,
- the dissemination and utilisation of information about both research in general and own research results, and
- following up engagement and collaboration with society and contributing to the utilisation of research.

3. *Recruitment, career opportunities and career support*

The most notable strengths, weaknesses and development areas in work on:
- creating fair and transparent processes for recruitment and promotion to support the development and renewal of research,
- enabling continuing professional development and career support at all stages of the career, irrespective of employment contract, and
- ensuring access to leading expertise, e.g. through recruitments or participation in projects.

4. *Connection between research and education*

The most notable strengths, weaknesses and development areas in work on:
- creating close connections between research and education.

Focus primarily on how *systematic* the above factors are. Integrated into the above, consider how gender equality is promoted in the conditions for and conduct of research.

These four aspects cover both the Association of Swedish Higher Education Institutions framework and the requirements implicit in the Swedish Higher Education Authority's upcoming institutional review, as well as the University's own goals.

The following University-wide frameworks apply to the research evaluations conducted by the disciplinary domains/faculties.

The evaluations must:
- be designed to generate the knowledge required to develop and ensure the *quality of research and research environments*;
- include external assessment in accordance with generally accepted peer review principles;
- involve researchers and undergraduate/doctoral students in the planning, implementation and follow-up of the evaluation;
- incorporate *background material* in the form of governance documents, bibliometrics, indicators (including from work on the University's *Mission, Goals and Strategies*) and basic data on the research environments;
- contain a *self-evaluation* that includes (1) reflection on the strengths, weaknesses and development opportunities of the research and research environments, with regard to the four aspects and subordinate points, and (2) an action plan with proposed measures to address identified weaknesses and development areas; and
- result in an *assessors' report* on identified strengths, weaknesses and development areas, along with recommendations.

Both these research evaluations and the evaluation of University-wide themes should be implemented with a reasonable level of ambition, in as simple and cost-effective a form as possible.

Each disciplinary domain/faculty is to decide on evaluation units, the organisation of external review, supplementary data, assessment scale (if any) and allocation of funding. Possible arrangements for external review could include assessment panels or benchmarking. Even in the case of benchmarking, the evaluation is to incorporate self-evaluation and an assessors' report, from a site visit.

The disciplinary domains and faculties will exchange experiences at the research evaluation conference that will be held when the assessors' reports have been received (see timetable). At this conference, the results from the entire evaluation at the University, in other words, both the University-wide themes and the evaluations conducted by the disciplinary domains/faculties, will be presented to the Vice-Chancellor.

3.3 Background material

Both parts of Q&R24, i.e. the evaluation of University-wide themes and the evaluations conducted by the disciplinary domains/faculties, will build on self-evaluation, governance documents, indicators (including from the University's *Mission, Goals and Strategies*) and basic data.

In addition, to gather evidence for the self-evaluation and the assessors' review of the University-wide themes, questionnaires will be addressed to the academic staff regarding strengths, weaknesses and opportunities for development in the University's work on research infrastructure and on interdisciplinarity and multidisciplinarity.

The evaluations of research and research environments conducted by the disciplinary domains/faculties must also take bibliometrics into account. As a form of University-wide support, bibliometrics and basic data are offered at department level (and if possible for centres/strategic

research areas). Bibliometrical data is communicated in the annual bibliometrics report that is published in December each year covering the University's academic departments.

In addition to self-evaluations in research environments, the University Management Team, disciplinary domains/faculties and perhaps some support operations will conduct self-evaluations.

For optimal quality, the various types of background material should be rooted in the relevant parts of the organisation. The project team will commence its work by specifying the contents required in the basic facts and the questionnaire, so that work on producing these can begin. A mapping should be made of performance based on indicators identified in the work on *Mission, Goals and Strategies*. The basic facts about the research environments could for example include the number of members of staff in various employment categories, number of doctoral students, gender breakdown and financial data.

4. Project organization

Quality and Renewal 2024 (Q&R24) is sponsored by the Vice-Chancellor.

4.1 Evaluation of University-wide themes

Steering committee
- Vice-Chancellor
- University Director
- Vice-Rector of the Disciplinary Domain of Humanities and Social Sciences
- Vice-Rector of the Disciplinary Domain of Science and Technology
- Vice-Rector of the Disciplinary Domain of Medicine and Pharmacy
- Two student representatives, appointed by the students' unions

Project team
- Project Manager: Deputy Vice-Chancellor
- Assistant Project Managers:
  o Deputy Vice-Rector of the Disciplinary Domain of Humanities and Social Sciences
  o Deputy Vice-Rector of the Disciplinary Domain of Science and Technology
  o Deputy Vice-Rector of the Disciplinary Domain of Medicine and Pharmacy

  The assistant project managers assist the project manager, involve relevant individuals from their domain in the design of the evaluation and possess knowledge of how their own disciplinary domain is going about the evaluations conducted by the disciplinary domains/faculties. They therefore bridge the two parts of Q&R24.

- Two student representatives, appointed by the students' unions jointly

- Secretariat:

  o Coordinator and secretary from the University Administration, based at the Unit for Quality and Evaluation

- The project team will also include the following experts:
  o One official from each faculty office
  o Two officials from the Division for Quality Enhancement
  o Two officials from the Planning Division

- o One official from the Communications Division

In addition, internal and external experts in the thematic areas will be co-opted if necessary.

Reference group
- Advisory Board for Research

4.2 Evaluations of research and research environments conducted by disciplinary domains/faculties

Evaluations of research and research environments will be organised, directed and implemented internally by each disciplinary domain/faculty.

4.3 Support in carrying out Q&R24

Support for the practical implementation of the evaluation of *University-wide* themes will be provided by the University Administration. The practical implementation of the evaluations conducted by *disciplinary domains/faculties* will be handled within the disciplinary domains and faculties. Methodological support from the University Administration will be available for both the evaluation of the University-wide themes and the evaluation of research and research environments conducted by the disciplinary domains/faculties.

5. Context and limitations

Work on Q&R24 must bear in mind the *Joint framework for HEIs' research quality assurance and enhancement systems* (Association of Swedish Higher Education Institutions) and the Swedish Higher Education Authority's institutional reviews of quality assurance regarding research.

Those involved in Q&R24 must strive to maintain a good balance between resources used and benefit.

6. Risks

One risk of Q&R24 is that the project will become too comprehensive, requiring more resources than warranted by the benefits to the University of the results. Alertness is required throughout the process, together with an awareness that the project must not be allowed to grow too large.

A further risk is inadequate communications around Q&R24, resulting in insufficient involvement of the organisation. This could also lead to the results of the evaluation having limited relevance and usefulness for continued quality enhancement.

7. Financing

7.1 Financing via special project funding

The project will be financed via special project funding and will be charged to account 962203001 University-wide strategic funding FO. The estimated cost of Q&R24 is approximately SEK

11,350,000[2]. The research evaluations conducted by the disciplinary domains/faculties involve larger costs and more work for the disciplinary domains and faculties than previous research evaluations initiated by the University. The budget will therefore be divided between the University-wide level and the three disciplinary domains. The part of the budget allocated to the disciplinary domains will be divided equally between them.

Funding for evaluation of University-wide themes: SEK 1,200,000

Contribution to costs in the disciplinary domains: SEK 3,150,000/domain

Other costs for University Administration: SEK 200,000 (communications etc.)

Practical and administrative support: SEK 500,000

Total approx. SEK 11,350,000

8. Timetable

Q&R24 will involve activities conducted at various levels of the organisation.

8.1 Evaluation of University-wide themes

A more precise timetable will be drawn up by the project manager and project secretary/coordinator.

In addition to regular consultation with the steering committee and the Advisory Board for Research, the project team is instructed to find means of further communication and information about the evaluation, both during the project and when it has been completed. The project team is to draw up a communications plan to ensure adequate dissemination of information and involvement.

2022

Dec 2022   Vice-Chancellor adopts terms of reference
Disciplinary domains and University Administration requested to propose project team members

2023

Jan 2023   Disciplinary domains and University Administration requested to propose project team members

March 2023   Project team is set up (discussion initiated on timetable, evaluation units, assessors and inputs)

Autumn 2023   Work on self-evaluation begins

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[2] In addition to this there is the working time invested by the project team, at the disciplinary domains/faculties and at departments

<u>**2024**</u>

Spring 2024 – Autumn 2024 Self-evaluation and assessor visits for *Theme 1: Research infrastructure* and
Theme 2: Interdisciplinarity and multidisciplinarity

<u>**2025**</u>

Spring 2025   Overall compilation of results for entire Q&R24, i.e. University-wide themes and evaluations conducted by disciplinary domains/faculties

April 2025   Research evaluation conference at which results are reported to Vice-Chancellor

8.2 Evaluations of research and research environments conducted by disciplinary domains/faculties

The evaluations of research and research environments conducted by disciplinary domains/faculties will be planned and implemented at disciplinary domain/faculty level. Implementation is due to take place in the spring and autumn semesters 2024.

<u>**2023**</u>

Autumn 2023 Disciplinary domains present timetables for planned implementation to Vice-Chancellor

<u>**2024**</u>

Spring 2024 – Autumn 24   Disciplinary domains carry out research evaluation

April 2025   Disciplinary domains/faculties report to the Vice-Chancellor on the completed research evaluations in connection with the research evaluation conference. (These results are included in the overall compilation of results for Q&R24 in its entirety, together with the University-wide themes)

9. Delivery and follow-up

The results of the evaluation in the form of assessors' reports and the overall compilation of results will be delivered to the Vice-Chancellor in connection with the planned research evaluation conference. This applies to both the evaluation of the University-wide themes and the evaluation of research and research environments conducted within each disciplinary domain/faculty.

Follow-up of the evaluation will be integrated into the regular annual follow-up of operations. At University-wide level this means that Q&R24 will be included in the Vice-Chancellor's quality dialogues with the disciplinary domains, the Vice-Chancellor's summing up of the evaluation year and the Vice-Chancellor's report to the University Board.

10. Appendicies

Q&R preparatory study: working group proposals (Reg. no UFV 2021/524) (In Swedish)