

Evaluation of legal research in Norway

The Research Council of Norway will evaluate research conducted by institutions whose main areas of activity include law. The evaluation will look at the quality of the research, its relevance for education and contributions to society.

The main purpose of the evaluation is to assess the quality of legal research conducted in Norway. We will also shed light on the framework conditions for Norwegian legal research and its relevance for key areas of society. The evaluation will conclude with recommendations for the institutions, the Research Council and the ministries.

The Research Council is using the evaluation as a pilot for a new discipline evaluation model. The new evaluation method makes it possible to adapt the terms of reference and assessment criteria to the institutions' strategies and objectives. In spring 2020, the Research Council has planned the evaluation in cooperation with the institutions involved. The data collection will take place in autumn 2020 once the institutions have adopted their terms of reference for the evaluation. The results of the evaluation are scheduled to become available in summer 2021.

Background to the evaluation

According to the Research Council's statutes, one of the Council's main tasks is to evaluate research conducted in Norway. The most recent evaluation of legal research took place in 2009. The Research Council has invited all research institutions that engage in legal research to participate in the evaluation. A total of eight higher education institutions have agreed to participate in the evaluation:

- BI Norwegian Business School – Department of Law and Governance
- Inland Norway University of Applied Sciences – Department of Law, Philosophy and International Studies
- The University of Agder – School of Business and Law, the Department of Law
- The University of Bergen – Faculty of Law
- The University of Oslo – Faculty of Law
- The University of South-Eastern Norway – USN School of Business, the Department of Business, Marketing and Law
- The University of Tromsø – Faculty of Law

The institutions' involvement

In order to ensure that the evaluation is useful to the research institutions' strategic development, terms of reference will be developed for each individual institution. This means that the institutions will take part in planning and drawing up the terms of reference and in selecting relevant data and indicators for the evaluation.

The institutions will also be responsible for collecting the data that will be used to assess the locally defined assessment criteria.

Assessment committee

The Research Council has appointed an assessment committee that is tasked with assessing the collected data and making recommendations to the individual institutions and to national authorities such as the Research Council and the ministries. The committee's members were selected based on input from the units that will be evaluated.

The members have expertise in the main areas of law and different aspects of the organisation and management of research and educational institutions. The committee consists of seven members affiliated to institutions abroad engaged in legal research:

- Henrik Palmer Olsen, University of Copenhagen, Denmark (chair)

- Hanne Søndergaard Birkmose, University of Aarhus, Denmark
- Sten Bønsing, University of Aalborg, Denmark
- Malgosia Fitzmaurice, Queen Mary University of London, UK
- Anna-Sara Lind, University of Uppsala, Sweden
- Jens Scherpe, University of Cambridge, UK
- Karsten Åstrøm, University of Lund, Sweden

Secretariat

The Research Council has assigned the role of secretariat for the evaluation to [NIFU – the Nordic Institute for Studies in Innovation, Research and Education](#). The secretariat's duties include to coordinate the institutions' data collection and to process and analyse the collected material. Together with [the Norwegian Agency for Quality Assurance in Education \(NOKUT\)](#), the [Research Council](#) will analyse existing data available in national databases such as CRISTin, NIFU's register of research personnel, the Database for Statistics on Higher Education (DBH) and the Studiebarometeret student survey.

How the evaluation will be conducted

The Research Council has created an [evaluation protocol \(pdf\)](#) describing the roles, processes and division of responsibilities in the evaluation work. The protocol provides a template for drawing up terms of reference for each institution by specifying overarching evaluation dimensions and joint assessment criteria.

The goal of Phase 1 is **to specify terms of reference for the evaluation** for each institution. The institutions will use the protocol as their point of departure and adapt the terms of reference to their own strategies and the distinctive nature of legal science. This phase will last from December 2019 to August 2020.

In Phase 2, the institutions and the Research Council will **collect data** for the evaluation. The data will partly be retrieved from national databases, and partly collected at the local level. The Research Council will analyse the data that are to form the basis for evaluating joint compulsory assessment criteria, while the institutions will collect other data to be used in the assessment of their own strategies. The data collection will take place between September and December 2020.

In Phase 3, the assessment committee will **assess the data** that have been collected. The committee will draw up a report for each of the institutions that are evaluated, based on the terms of reference adopted by the individual institutions. In addition, the committee will provide an overall assessment of legal research in Norway. The assessment will take place from January 2021 until summer 2021.

Follow-up of the evaluation

Each institution will be responsible for following up the recommendations made in relation to that institution. The Research Council will use the assessments and recommendations from the evaluation in the development of funding instruments and in its advice to the ministries. It will also use the recommendations as a basis for discussing the need for national measures with the institutions.