



**STUDENT HANDBOOK ON QUALITY B:27**  
North Karelia University of Applied Sciences

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North Karelia University of Applied Sciences Publications



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## QUALITY THROUGH COOPERATION - Little Improvements Every Day

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Quality is achieved through cooperation and we can all make an impact on its development. This quality handbook is meant especially for students of North Karelia University of Applied Sciences (NKUAS) and it has been compiled by staff and students together. The guide aims at giving an overview of the NKUAS quality management system and on students' role in quality assurance.

As NKUAS staff, our task is to ensure that you receive up-to-date and high-quality instruction, can study in functional learning environments and have an opportunity to develop yourself, the region and working life. As a student, you are responsible for your own studies and learning. By giving feedback and being involved you can influence the way our university of applied sciences (UAS) develops.

Your feedback has a significant meaning in the development of NKUAS. As a student your right is to see the results and interpretations of student feedback, as well as to participate in the discussions where decisions on necessary development measures are made.

In addition to feedback, we'd also like you to impact in other ways and to actively participate in all university functions and development activities. Students' interests are especially promoted by the student union POKA, which nominates student representatives to decision-making bodies and working groups.

Striving forward together

VESA SAARIKOSKI  
Rector



## NKUAS Supporting Its Students

North Karelia University is a multi-field university of applied sciences (UAS), the statutory tasks of which include education, research, development and innovation (RDI), and regional development. NKUAS is an independent public utility maintained by the City of Joensuu. Its directorate is Joensuu City Board. Internally NKUAS is led by the NKUAS board and the rector.

The NKUAS organisation consists of five centres responsible for education and RDI and of the Centre for Development and Services (KEPA). The five education and research centres are:

- The Centre for Natural Resources (BIO)
- The Centre for Business and Engineering (LITE)
- The Centre for Creative Industries (LUOVA)
- The Centre for Design and International Business (MUKA)
- The Centre for Social Services and Health Care (SOTE)

The Directors are responsible for the activities and quality of their respective centre together with the Education and Development Managers. In matters relating to your studies, you are first and foremost assisted by the student counsellors, the teacher and peer tutors of your own centre, as well as by the representatives of the student union POKA. You should always first contact the nearest person responsible for the matters and questions that concern you. If your problems are not resolved in your own centre, you can always turn, for example, to the NKUAS Rector.

The Centre for Development and Services (KEPA) is located on Tikkarinne campus. KEPA helps you especially by providing library and student services. User support relating to computing is given by HelpDesk service and



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NKUAS IT administration. Facility management personnel and caretakers give information on facilities, access control and security. The Study Counselling Psychologist and Coordinating Student Counsellor help you progress in your studies and resolve problems of your life. The City of Joensuu is responsible for student health care, which is partly provided on the NKUAS campuses.

NKUAS has an extensive network of partners and interest groups, which can be of help when you establish contacts to the organisations in your own field of study. The strategic partners of NKUAS include Savonia UAS (ISAT partnership), University of Eastern Finland (UEF), City of Joensuu, and the student union POKA. Key partners consist of a large body of regional companies and organisations. After your graduation, your role as an alumnus allows you to become part of the NKUAS network.

You can have more information on quality management from the NKUAS Quality Manual available on the NKUAS web pages. Additionally, further information can be found in the intranet, which is also partly available for students. Special student-focused information is available via the PAKKI student portal.



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## A Successful Start to Studies

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Student recruitment and admission are of great importance not only to every applicant and student, but also to the university as a whole. Student recruitment is a planned activity, which aims at delivering truthful and transparent information on different possibilities and helping the applicant choose the best option.

At NKUAS both staff and students take part in student recruitment. Recruitment measures include promotional events, marketing materials, print announcement and advertisements, and marketing in the Internet and social media. The emphasis of marketing is on the experiences of students and alumni and on the competences they have gained through studies. Students have an important role in promotional events, e.g. in school and institutional visits and at recruitment fairs. By participating in student recruitment, you can help applicants make right choices for themselves and at the same time improve your own marketing and interpersonal skills.

High-quality student selection requires that the application processes and admission criteria are clearly defined. NKUAS works together with other Finnish universities of applied sciences in the joint application system and admission. All stages of student selection are clearly delegated and instructed. This ensures the fair and impartial treatment of all applicants. If an applicant is dissatisfied with the selection, s/he can appeal for correction. The appeals are dealt with in the NKUAS board, in which student representatives take part.



## Students' Path Through NKUAS



*After the torment of waiting, I got the mail with the news on NKUAS entrance tests. Yah, I had received a place to study! I just had to mail my confirmation letter and pack my suitcase. But let me tell the whole story, from the first day all the way to the thesis...*

**FIRST DAY – INITIAL INFO:** *The first day was full of excitement. Luckily there were older students and helpful staff around. I received information on student benefits and studies in general.*

Your studies begin with a course called "Studies at an Institution of Higher Education". It gives you information on the NKUAS study environment, and helps you assess your own learning skills and prior learning. At the same time you have a chance to get to know the activities and operational methods of NKUAS. As a student, it is important for you to be aware of your own rights and obligations, as well as what the studies include. All this has been defined in the Polytechnic Act and Decree and the NKUAS degree regulations.

**CURRICULUM & ISP:** *First I got to know the curriculum and started drafting my ISP. The first year went by the book, since I didn't have any prior studies.*

**RPL:** *My new friend Anne had quite a different situation: her prior studies were accredited and experience and existing skills recognised. The student counsellor helped her to apply for RPL.*

*Reading books and doing nice assignments in groups is not yet enough. I need to make sure that I earn credits and that they are recorded in WinhaWille. To receive student aid, I have to gain a certain number of credits.*

The recognition and acknowledgement of prior learning (RPL) enables you to include your prior studies, work experience and competences to your degree. It is recommended that you discuss the procedures of RPL with your student counsellor.

In order to receive students' financial aid and to pass the study units of your ISP, you are entitled to know your study attainments and grades within a set timeframe.

The curriculum explains what kind of competences your degree requires, what the degree consists of and how you should grow professionally. Planning, implementation and continual development of education takes place in cooperation with students, working life partners and other stakeholders.

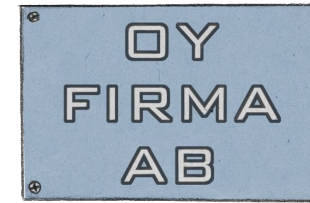
At the beginning of your studies you design an individual study plan (ISP) on the basis of the curriculum. The ISP is updated as the studies progress.



NKUAS offers both daytime and multi-modal studies. Both modes use information and communications technology ICT for e-learning. The majority of study materials are available in the NKUAS Moodle learning environment.

You can also use the NKUAS email system and other information sources that support your learning. Moreover, while studying, you have a chance to acquire software at a lower price.

***E-LEARNING:** The autumn brings along virtual studies. Moodle, Word and the Web will certainly become handy.*



***PRACTICAL TRAINING:** At the turn of the year I'll start looking for my first placement. Smaller assignments can also be put together and extended over a longer time span. The main thing is to have enough practice. It's great that our teachers seem to have good contacts to local companies.*



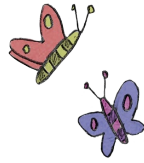
***COUNSELLING:** The best part is of course studying. In my studies I basically follow the ready-made schedules. If the next semester is less tiring, I'll take a few optional courses or maybe some courses at the Virtual Polytechnic, too. Luckily PAKKI includes loads of information. I might also ask my peer tutors and my teacher tutor for advice.*



You are entitled to student counselling throughout your studies. Counselling begins already before you enter NKUAS and continues all the way to the end of your studies in the form of career counselling. Counselling is given by student counsellors, teacher and peer tutors, the Study Counselling Psychologist and every teacher for their part.

Practical training is part of your UAS studies. It requires that you sign a training agreement, make a plan for the training period and report your placement after you have completed it. Supervision and guidance are available both from NKUAS and your training place. Training helps you to create contacts with working life and can give you a chance to find a topic for your thesis and even a workplace during or after your studies.





*THESIS: Rampe, who lives next door, has already started writing his thesis. It's interesting to follow his work and start thinking about my own thesis – I don't want to leave it to the last minute. Rampe didn't have any problems to get started – his teacher had a folder full of suggestions, but I think he had been given a topic already while he was doing his practical training. It seems to take quite a while to write and zoom in, but luckily help is available. I must admit that I have got lots of peer support so far.*

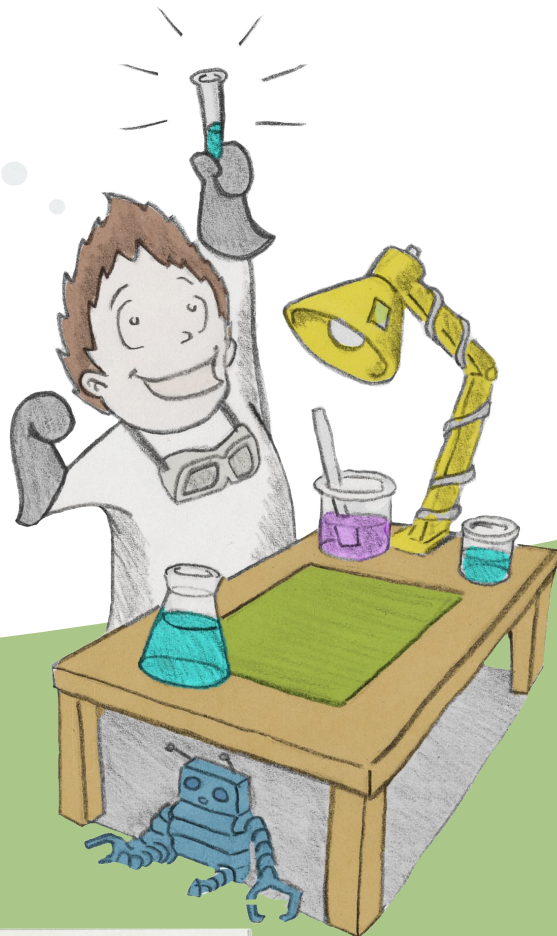
Thesis is part of every UAS degree. The thesis process is managed in cooperation with the student, commissioning party, and the supervising teacher. The thesis requirements are set by the Polytechnic Decree. Thesis instructions can be found in the PAKKI student portal.

Internationalisation is also included in your studies. NKUAS offers studies in foreign languages and part of your degree can be taken in European partner universities. You can also become familiar with international activities and multiculturalism by working as an international peer tutor. More information is available from your international coordinator. You may receive scholarships and funding for your studies abroad.

*INT: Although I'm a guy from nowhere, I've become quite international already. At NKUAS you can meet many foreign faces. Apart from the usual schoolwork, you can focus on something that I consider even more essential, i.e. creating multicultural networks and international relationships.*



*RDI: All sorts of projects are nice. They have helped me to create connections to companies and development projects. They may also help me to find a job. The RDI projects at NKUAS are a great way to learn and develop.*



*POKA: And then there was POKA. It's kind of a student club and actually a statutory association as well. POKA has connections to the NKUAS management and the surrounding society. Actually I felt quite honoured to become a member.*

Different NKUAS services support your progress towards your degree. The student union POKA sees to your interests and organises various leisure activities. The City of Joensuu offers many sports and cultural events and services. Moreover, different congregations and associations provide support services and opportunities for your spare time.

RDI, i.e. research, development and innovation, and your studies can be combined in various collaborative projects. The RDI initiatives derive from the needs of companies and working life as well as from the NKUAS focus areas. As a student you can take part in RDI through project assignments, training or thesis. Furthermore, you can participate in the RDI projects of other centres than your own and thus, gain experience in multi-field cooperation.

*GRADUATION: The thesis took a surprisingly long time, but finally it's all over. I've even got a couple of scholarships; I wouldn't have imagined that at the outset.*

*I've also had lots of fun memories and will surely miss many things. At the end, I'll have a chance to give some feedback again and recall the past years. You, too, whenever possible, do give feedback. It's always worth the while. You might even initiate some major changes.*

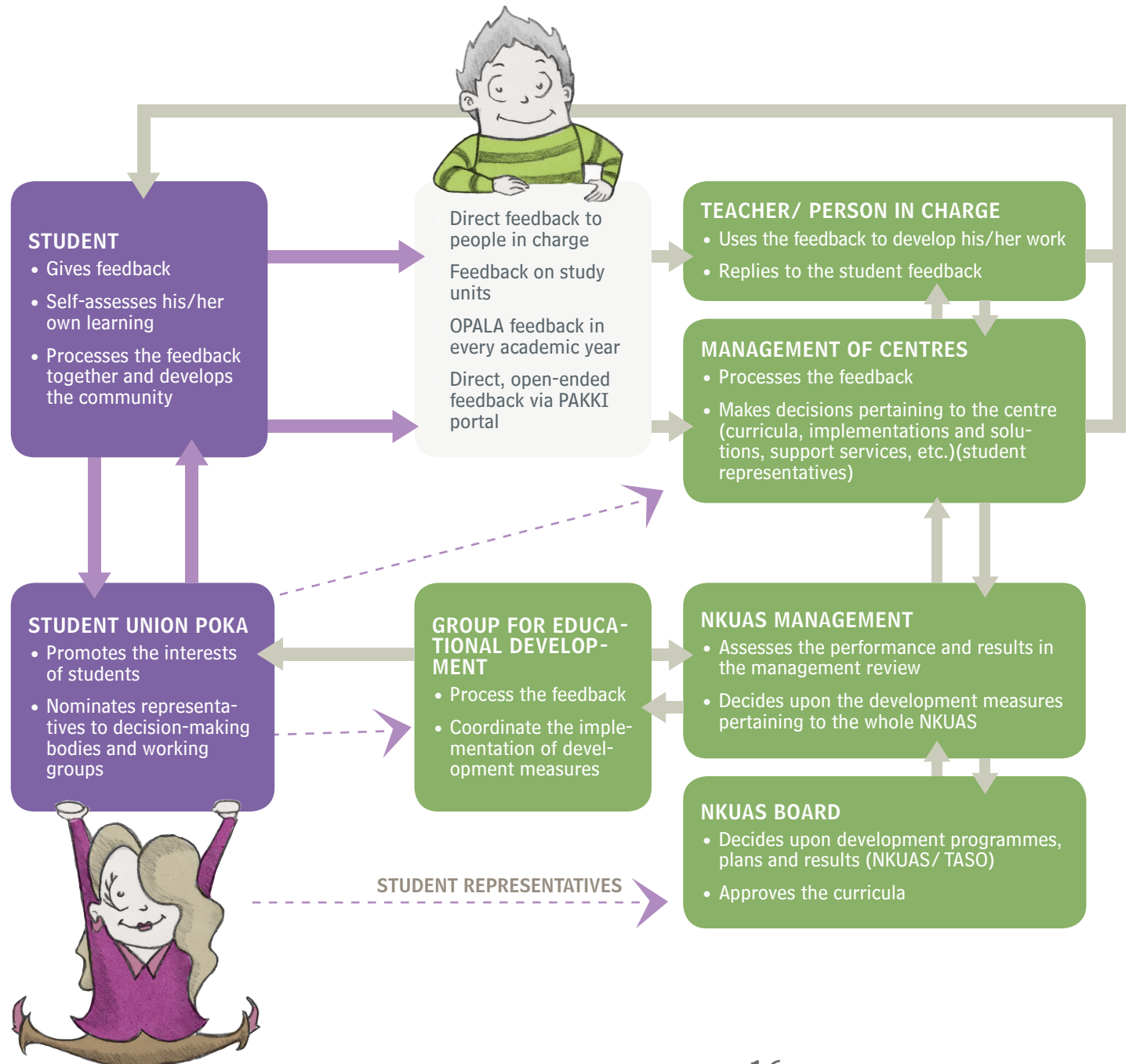
## Impacting Through Feedback

As a student you are responsible for your own learning and completing your study assignments, giving and receiving constructive feedback and taking part in the development of the NKUAS learning community.

You can give feedback in different ways:

- in annual development discussions (i.e. student appraisals) you can give feedback directly to your teacher tutor,
- any person in charge of a specific area or activity can be given immediate feedback,
- after completing a study unit, you can comment on the positive experiences and initiate development measures to the teacher in charge of the course,
- every year in January-February as well as at the end of your studies you can assess the NKUAS performance and your own learning in the OPALA feedback and
- the PAKKI portal offers you an opportunity to give direct, open-ended feedback at any time

The starting point in giving feedback and developing NKUAS activities is the principle of subsidiarity, which means that matters ought to be handled by the closest or least centralized competent authority. Teachers in charge of study units or other responsible persons



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## Combining Studies and Working Life

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take care and develop their own areas of responsibility. In the centres, the Director and Education and Development Managers assume responsibility for curricula and their implementation. The Group for Educational Development coordinates the development measures pertaining to the whole NKUAS, the implementation of which is the responsibility of the Director of Planning and Quality and Development Manager in Education.

The accumulated feedback will be put together in March every year. Afterwards the results of the sum-up are analysed and discussed together with the ones who had given the feedback, and decisions regarding the further development measures are made. All feedback is interpreted in the management reviews in April.

The development measures pertaining to education are based on the Development Programme for Education and they are recorded in the PKAMK/TASO Performance Agreement between the Ministry of Education and Culture and NKUAS. The implementation of development measures is coordinated within the whole NKUAS by the Group for Educational Development and in the centres by management and education teams. Regarding the studies leading to Master's degrees (YAMK), the body responsible for development measures is the YAMK steering group.

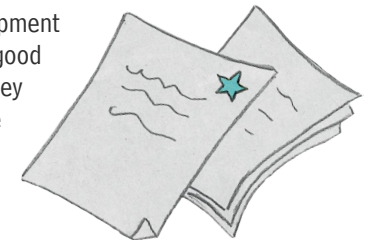
As a student you are an important agent and co-developer of the NKUAS community. By giving feedback and by participating in the feedback processes and in the community development, you also support the NKUAS quality management. The student union POKA promotes the interests of NKUAS students and nominates representatives to the decision-making bodies and working groups. You can take part in the decision making of the NKUAS board, NKUAS Board of Examiners and Student Financial Aid Board. Student representatives are also needed in the Group for Educational Development, the Group for Adult Education, RDI Group, in various teams within centres and in temporary working groups.

Graduation entails that you have met the competence requirements of the curriculum, completed all the studies and fulfilled all other obligations regarding to your degree programme. As a student you yourself must officially apply for graduation. The degree is awarded by a collegial body of the degree programme, which meets once a month except in July. Added to your degree certificate you will receive an appendix called Diploma Supplement. The aim of the supplement is to improve the international recognition and transparency of your degree.

When doing your practical training you will gain valuable work experience and improve your skills to apply theoretical knowledge into the practice of your future profession. During the training placement you can also build personal relationships and contacts to the employers, other interest groups and development organisations of your professional field and region. Furthermore, practical training is important for your future employment and career opportunities and for your professional networks.

You yourself need to be active in order to find an interesting and suitable place for practical training. Moreover, the contacts of your teachers and your centre can be of help. In order to find a job after graduation, it is important that you have theoretical knowledge (your studies), as well as work experience and connections which you have gained during your training placement. Additionally, a thesis which you have completed for a company or other workplace can open doors to employment. Again, your own initiative and activity is essential for recruitment.

NKUAS is actively involved in research, development and innovation. RDI and projects offer you a good possibility to develop your future workplace. They can give you a realistic view on the working life requirements and practice, and a chance to work with experts in different fields. You





can make your own ideas and initiatives to go further - even turning them into a future career. The NKUAS staff responsible for innovations and the RDI personnel of your own centre can provide links to RDI and projects.

Alumni are former students of higher education to whom specific alumni activities are targeted. The aim of alumni activities is to maintain the connections between the university and its former students as well as to help graduates to retain their contacts with peers and to establish new relationships.

As an alumnus, you can share your experiences and attainments with new students and also receive stimuli for your own professional development. You can also strengthen your expertise by attending further studies or taking part in development projects. Former students can cooperate with NKUAS e.g. by delivering guest lectures, providing training placements, or giving ideas or topics for students' assignments or theses, and by joining RDI projects. Alumni have an important role in building the NKUAS partnership network.



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## Key Concepts of Quality

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### **CUSTOMER**

The one who receives, co-develops, uses, orders or pays for a product or service and to whom the product or service brings added value. The key customers of NKUAS include students, working life organisations in the region and financiers.

### **CUSTOMER SATISFACTION**

Customer satisfaction is one of the most important indicators of service quality. Satisfaction derives from the experience when the service and its objectives are planned together with the client, when the plan is adhered to, when measures are clearly explained, and when consistent actions are taken and the client respected.

### **AUDITING**

Auditing is independent external activity, which aims at verifying to what extent the auditee (the audited organisation, unit or activity) fulfils the set quality criteria. The quality management systems of Finnish institution of higher education have to be submitted to a regular external audit, which aims at investigating whether the system is effective, suitable and compliant with the objectives.

### **SELF-EVALUATION**

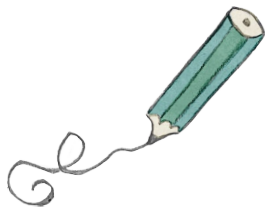
In self-evaluation the institution (auditee) critically assesses its own performance and results.

### **THE WHEEL OF CONTINUOUS IMPROVEMENT**

It is a classical model of problem-solving and a cycle of continuous learning, also known as the Deming cycle or the Wheel of Continuous Improvement. The model is based on a repeating cycle of planning, doing, checking and acting or developing (PDCA). It aims at recognising improvement needs and at their continual development

### **MANAGEMENT REVIEW**

Management review is a regular assessment procedure, where the NKUAS management analyses and assesses the performance and results of the previous years in terms of the set objectives.



### **QUALITY**

From the perspective of NKUAS, quality means purposeful activities in order to meet the objectives of the strategy. From the student and customer perspective, quality implies that education and services provided by the NKUAS are compliant with the quality promises, and the expectations and needs of service users.

### **QUALITY MANUAL**

The NKUAS Quality Manual is a document describing the quality management system and measures of quality assurance.

### **QUALITY ASSURANCE**

At NKUAS, quality assurance means those procedures which guarantee and develop the quality of education and other activities of the institution.

### **QUALITY MANAGEMENT SYSTEM (QMS)**

The QMS is an entity including the organisation, sharing of responsibilities, procedures, processes and resources of quality management. The NKUAS quality management system is based on the wheel of continuous development.

### **FEEDBACK**

Feedback refers to the information that is given to students on their learning, to teachers on their teaching and to other responsible persons or the whole UAS on their performance.

### **RESPONSE TO FEEDBACK**

The person or unit who has received feedback replies to it by a response, i.e. by explaining his/her own interpretation of the feedback and telling about the development measures it entails.

### **NKUAS/TASO PERFORMANCE AGREEMENT**

It is a regular and systematic planning process resulting in the NKUAS performance agreement. The agreement defines the performance and development objectives of the whole NKUAS and its centres.

### **PROCESS**

A series of interrelated and repeated actions, which turn inputs into output (services or products). Process descriptions are verbal and often also graphical accounts of actions meant to systematise, outline, instruct and illustrate operations.

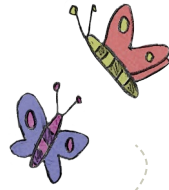
## Key Persons in Charge of Quality Assurance

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## QUALITY THROUGH COOPERATION - Little Improvements Every Day

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Quality can be achieved by working together and it is the outcome of every individual of the learning community. This guidebook is meant especially for the students of North Karelia University of Applied Sciences (NKUAS) and it has been compiled by students and staff together. The purpose of this guidebook is to give an overview of the NKUAS quality management system and students' role on quality assurance.

Every student is responsible for his/her learning. The role of the NKUAS staff is to provide guiding and counselling and to create such conditions and environments that promote learning. Student feedback and their active participation play an important part in the development of our NKUAS organisation and community.

[www.pkamk.fi/eng/](http://www.pkamk.fi/eng/)

