The Swedish Higher Education Authority (UKÄ) review of quality assurance processes in higher education institutions (HEIs)

Self-evaluation

Stockholm School of Economics
Reg.no: 802006-2074

Part 1 of the self-evaluation: the HEI's quality assurance system

The purpose of this introductory part of the self-evaluation is to enable for the HEI to, on an overarching level, describe the structure of the quality system and how it is expected to work.

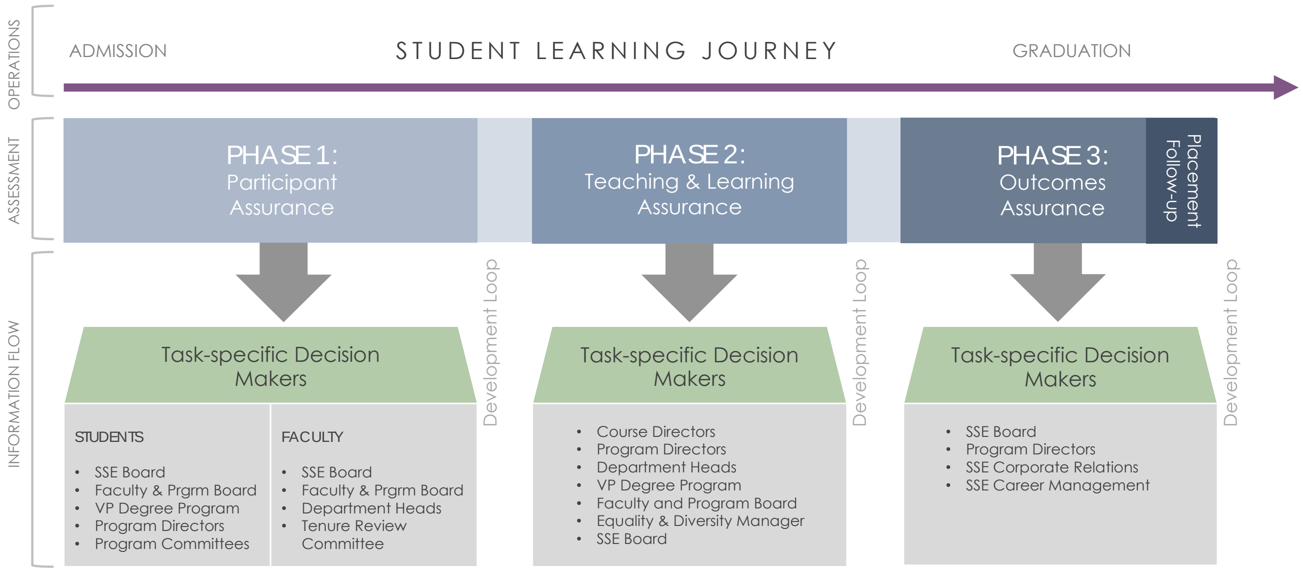
In this part the HEI describes its quality system in general terms. This part is limited to 3-5 pages in length, 12-point font size, and must include the following:

- A general description of the design of the quality system, including a process illustration of all levels in the system.
- Information regarding how long the current quality system has been in use, how it has evolved over time, and the principles upon which it is based.
- A description of the overall plan for quality assurance in education and which methods are used, for example peer review.

Overview

The Stockholm School of Economics (SSE) employs a quality-assurance system that follows logically from its size, its organizational structure, and its strategic mission. Methodologically, that system organizes quality work around students' learning journeys because in light of the School's strategic mission, students at all levels of higher education, the BSc, MSc, and PhD, are SSE's most important stakeholders. Defined in SSE's 1909 charter and regularly reinterpreted to maintain its relevance through changing times, that mission is to make Sweden more competitive through teaching in business, economics, and finance that is grounded in up-to-date scientific research. This puts student learning clearly in focus, and because student learning is longitudinal, the system used to guarantee its quality takes a longitudinal perspective. This section first describes that system holistically with support from Figure 1; then it outlines recent modifications to that system; finally it addresses the complementary interplay between SSE's internal quality work and quality work guided by systematic input from external quality-assurance bodies, including UKÄ, EQUIS/EFMD, the Financial Times, CEMS, PIM and PRME.

Figure 1. A longitudinal perspective on Quality Assurance



The process-model illustrated in Figure 1 identifies the three key stages of students' learning journeys. Phase 1 largely encompasses quality work that ensures the quality of program participants, first students and then faculty. The premise here is that high quality education follows from the interaction of students and faculty who are all talented, motivated, and academically accomplished. Phase 2 largely encompasses quality work concerned with ensuring the quality of programs per se and their constituent courses. The premise here is that high quality education is a) rigorous, i.e. closely linked to research results or perspectives, b) relevant to both the academic disciplines in question and the stakeholders that will keep Sweden competitive, i.e. graduates and the organizations that will employ them (or increasingly the organizations that entrepreneurial graduates will create), and c) executed with a high degree of professionalism and pedagogical expertise. Phase 3 largely encompasses quality work concerned with ensuring the strategic outcomes of these programs. The premise here is that high quality education is reflected in graduates finding meaningful work in fields related to their educations and gradually assuming leading roles in private sector and public sector organizations, i.e. contribute to increasing Sweden's international competitiveness, which sometimes entails their working abroad and often entails the retention of international graduates in the Swedish professional labor force.

These three phases define the objects of quality work within SSE's quality-assurance system, i.e. they define *what* SSE assesses. Across all three phases, those assessments rest upon various criteria that help to define *how* SSE assesses its operations. Many of these criteria are documented in a series of Key Performance Indicators (KPIs). Other criteria are documented in other policies, regulations, and guidelines listed in an appendix to this report; they are addressed in detail in Section 2 of this report. Finally, and importantly, the results of these assessments across the student-learning journey provide input for the feedback loops that drive SSE's continuous improvement, i.e. they define *how* SSE uses assessment results. The premise here is that early feedback delivered through densely clustered and complementary loops provides the most valuable guidance for ongoing improvement of courses, of programs, and naturally of the organization that delivers those courses and programs. Again, those feedback loops are described below in general terms and addressed in detail in Section 2.

Phase 1: Work with the quality of participants
A student-journey approach to quality control first monitors admission to SSE's degree programs. Admission to all programs is highly selective, governed by rigorous criteria defined in a series of regulations, one set for each program, and decided upon by admissions boards, one for each program level: BSc, MSc, PhD. The Vice President Degree Programs (VPDP), always a full professor who can, thereby, ensure academic rigor in these processes, chairs all admissions boards, which also include the relevant program directors and elected faculty representatives. Student representatives participate in the meetings but have no vote. Moreover, an external auditor reviews admission to BSc and MSc programs in order to ensure that SSE has observed the relevant regulations and criteria. Application and admission data is subject to analysis by the VPDP, Program Committees, and Program Directors, and it serves three operational purposes. As required, it serves as feedback on a) perceived program quality and for any putative program development, b) on program marketing and any changes deemed necessary by External Relations (the professional services unit that carries out SSE's marketing and communication), and c) on any brand or reputation concerns, where any changes are also the purview of External Relations. Strategically, admissions data constitutes five of the KPIs that are reported to the SSE board of directors, the body responsible for setting the School's strategy, at two of their quarterly meetings.

In addition to the admission processes themselves, SSE carries out three other types of quality work in connection to the admission/enrollment process. First, all programs carry out decline surveys in an effort to learn why qualified students turned down admissions offers. These results are studied by the VPDP and Program Directors to benchmark SSE against the other universities that offered students places, to better understand positive and negative factors in the students' decision-making processes, and ultimately to determine what actions, if any, will help SSE to enroll more of the best students from our pool of strong applicants. Second, there is also an entry survey conducted to learn more about the students who accepted their offers from SSE, their impressions of the recruitment/application experience, and, importantly, their reasons for choosing SSE over other schools they considered. Finally, incoming exchange students also make up part of the learning ecology in SSE programs. While SSE controls the quality of these students through the selection of exchange partners, an orientation survey has been in use since the fall term of 2018 to assess the onboarding process that welcomes these students and prepares them for learning at SSE. These results go to the VPDP and Student Mobility Team, which oversees the orientation processes and its continuous improvement.

Because high quality education follows from the interaction of suitable students and suitable teachers and because students meet faculty throughout their learning journeys, SSE has processes in place to ensure the quality of its faculty. Needs analyses (the matching of faculty expertise with program offerings), recruitment, and selection take place at department level, where the Head of Department formally makes hiring decision. The Faculty and Program Board (FPB) later makes decisions about the appointment and promotion of most academic personnel. In practice, what guides those decisions are *The Guidelines for Tenure at SSE*. (Appointments as and promotions to full professor are exceptions that require a recommendation by the Faculty and Program Board, in accordance with the *Guidelines for Appointment to Full Professor at SSE*.) Because SSE operates with a merit-based, tenured faculty, appointments to tenure-track position are influenced by assessments of which candidates will likely meet the criteria for tenure after a six-year period (including a three-year review). Those criteria encompass: strong pedagogical merits, documented in an SSE teaching portfolio and assessed via course evaluations and by department heads; strong research output assessed via bibliometric standards and three expert reviewers (one internal, two external); active participation in the academic community at SSE and beyond, which includes taking constructive role in departmental matters (including administration), contributing to business and society at large (including participation in the public intellectual debate), and attracting external research grants. Between tenure reviews and after earning tenure, quality work with faculty shifts to department heads, who conduct annual performance reviews. In addition, ten KPIs devoted to faculty performance are also included in reports to the Board of Directors for strategic considerations. Finally, because quality work with faculty extends beyond their recruitment and promotion, the faculty features prominently in the work comprising Phase 2 of the SSE quality system, work with the quality of teaching and learning, which includes an offering of world-class faculty-development activities.

Phase 2: Work with the quality of teaching and learning

SSE only offers degree programs, no autonomous courses, which makes programs the focal point of the second phase of SSE's learning-journey approach to quality assurance. Programs consist, in part, of courses, and they too are the object of quality work. In addition, and consistent with its student-learning perspective on quality, SSE does fail-safe monitoring of student progress designed to identify and support students who under-perform in various ways.

SSE's program portfolio is the purview of the Faculty & Program Board, which is SSE's highest academic decision-making body. It carries out regular reviews based upon quality reports from the VPDP at each of its meetings. It also receives input from other parts of the quality-assurance system, including regular input from external bodies. Operational responsibility for assessment and development rests largely with Program Directors in dialogue with Program Committees, which the VPDP chairs, and in BSc and MSc programs with support from Advisory Boards (one per program). Program Committees include student representatives and meet four times per year to review the input from the quality work described below and to discuss putative changes to program curricula. Advisory Boards meet with Program Directors and their administrative support twice annually.

That input comes from two kinds of quality work. First, all programs at SSE carry out a program-level evaluation annually. For SSE's quality work, this means that program-level feedback loops are shorter than they would be with only end-of-program evaluations. Second, each program BSc and MSc program works with focus groups, which consist of elected student representatives and representatives from the Student Association's Education Committee and meet four times per year. At the BSc level, the focus groups are program specific and meet with the program directors, who share this input with the VPDP and the other members of the BSc Program Committee. At the MSc level, program directors meet class representatives from their respective programs regularly to discuss program quality in addition to the formal focus-group meetings chaired by the VPDP, which gather input from across the five programs. In PhD programs, this work too is the purview of the PhD Program Committee, with a high level of student representation (seven places of eleven), each with a dedicated point on each agenda. The feedback from these two assessments provide the basis for ongoing quality review by the VPDP, Program Directors, Program Committees, and as necessary Advisory Boards and the Faculty & Program Board. SSE uses these inputs barometrically rather than normatively. That means that rather than having numerical targets for program quality and student satisfaction, SSE uses this information to establish a shared understanding of quality and satisfaction. That understanding contributes, in turn, to the ongoing SWOT analyses that identify Strengths, Weakness, Opportunities and Threats for each program and then, where necessary, guides corrective action by the appropriate Program Director and, in cases of major curricular changes, the Faculty & Program Board. Again, at a strategic level, student satisfaction and program-completion rates comprise three KPI data points provided to the Board of Directors.

Across all programs, there are three kinds of course-level quality work: mid-course evaluations, end-of-course evaluation, and grade-distribution review. First, all Course Directors are required to conduct a mid-course evaluation. Course Directors are free to select the format of the evaluation, but they must collect feedback in some form on potential concerns with the course, particularly issues that can be addressed during the ongoing course. Second, all courses are subject to centralized end-of-course evaluations. These use a set of standard questions, with an option for a course director to add additional questions of her own design. The evaluations also contain open questions. Third, SSE's Academic Controller reviews the grade distribution for all courses at the BSc and MSc levels as an active quality-assurance measure against grade inflation. In PhD programs, courses have smaller cohorts and simpler grading (either Pass-Fail in business administration or Pass-Fail-Pass with Distinction in economics and finance), so grade inflation is not a concern. Course Directors with a proportion of "Excellent" grades that exceed the published guidelines must submit a report to the VPDP, the Program Director, the Department Head and Academic Controller to explain why the deviation occurred and what steps will be taken to prevent it from happening again. The input from these three measures has many and various uses within the SSE's student-journey quality system. Mid-course evaluations provide feedback primarily for Course Directors, and it remains their purview to interpret that feedback and make any adjustments to a course on that basis. Results of final course evaluations are distributed to course directors, program directors, department heads and the VPDP, who use that feedback in various ways, for instance to inform performance reviews and tenure decision for faculty, to inform program-staffing decisions and guide program-development work by Program Directors. However, because the Faculty & Program Board is responsible for the program portfolio, the VPDP submits each semester a quality report to that body that incorporate elements of all these feedback loops. In addition, to inform its strategic planning, these results reach the SSE Board in two way: as KPI data and through biannual presentation from the VPDP.

As is appropriate for a student-learning driven quality system, SSE also monitors quality through student performance. In BSc and MSc programs, students who fail to meet credits-earned targets are contacted by a student counselor from SSE's Office of Academic Support and Records. In the BSc in Business & Economics, there is an additional performance threshold that ensures students have completed 90 of 120 obligatory credits before selecting specializations. In PhD programs, this monitoring is done via individual study plans submitted annually that function as contracts between a supervisor and a PhD student, governing what is expected of both parties during the upcoming academic year. At present, work is underway to digitalize a template for individual study plans in order to make that work even more systematic. While the feedback from this quality work aims primarily to identify students who need support, two KPIs on progress through programs are reported to the board.

Phase 3: Work with the quality of strategic outcomes

Given SSE's mission and close relationship to the Swedish business community, the quality of programs must be reflected beyond graduation in student careers and contributions to Swedish society. Two types of quality work measure this long-term strategic impact, a placement survey of recent graduates and the work SSE does to participate in various rankings of business schools and their programs conducted by ranking bodies, primarily the Financial Times (FT).

The placement survey is a five-year longitudinal study of each BSc and MSc cohort after graduation. It collects data on graduates' employment rates, where they work geographically and by industry. Because graduates' professional placement bears directly upon whether SSE is succeeding with its strategic mission, four KPI are reported to the Board. As of 2019, this quality work will extend to PhD programs as well.

SSE's work with Financial Times rankings is an extension of this placement follow-up activity. Among the data points collected for that work are graduates' satisfaction, graduates' salaries and graduates' professional development. The data itself functions as feedback to SSE's career development team, who support students as they prepare for the transition from student life to working life. The outcome of the rankings themselves play various roles throughout the School.

They affect SSE's national and international reputation, which in turn affects both student and faculty recruitment. They provide indicators of program quality for the specific programs that are ranked against international peers/competitors. Finally, because they also measure research output, faculty and management diversity, and depth of internationalization, they provide input for many aspects the SSE's operations and development work.

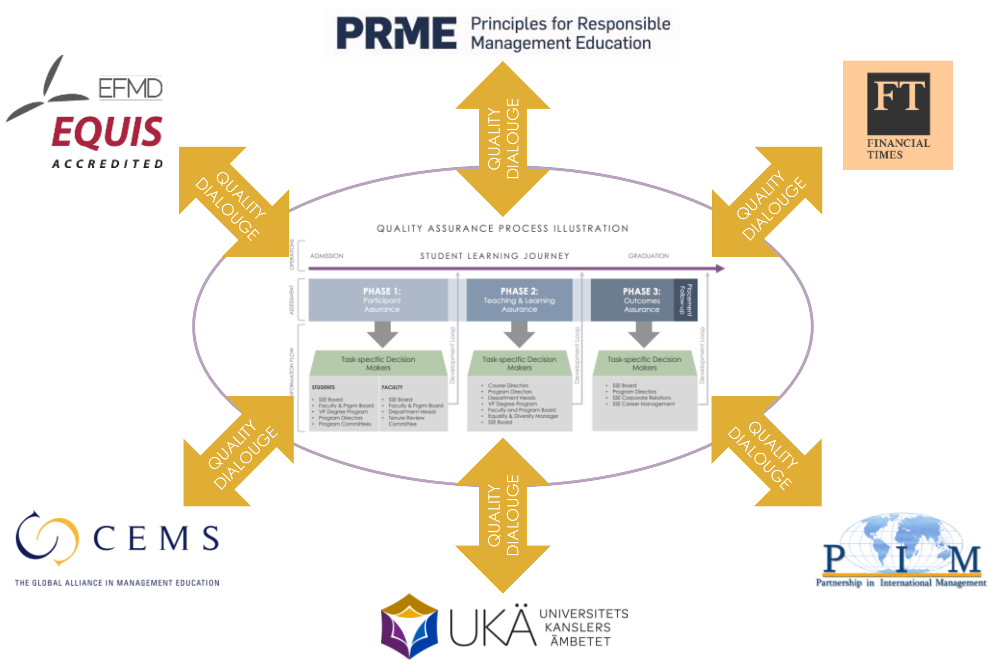
The recent history of SSE's quality-assurance system

A decision by the Faculty & Program Board in June of 2014 formalized the tenets of the system described above. Since then, quality assurance has evolved in a number of ways; major changes are mentioned here, and more are included below. First, the Faculty & Program Board conducted a review of the School's program portfolio, which led to substantial modifications. Second, the program governance structure has been simplified to place clearer responsibility for program quality with Program Directors, who report to the VPDP. This replaces a model where an associate dean for each level was responsible for quality and reported to the Dean for Degree Programs. In conjunction with this change came other changes. One is the introduction of a support system for Program Directors; that system includes the program committees and program advisory boards mentioned above, and it includes expanded responsibility for program marketing with External Relations. Among the elements of quality work mentioned above, both mid-course evaluation and focus groups are relatively recent additions.

This evolving quality work led to tangible operational improvements. At program level, the major review of the MSc portfolio identified the benefits of a more streamlined offering. As a result, one MSc program was discontinued in 2015, the MSc in General Management. In addition, the MSc in Business & Management was restructured to give it a strong entrepreneurial and innovative focus. At the BSc level, the program in Business and Economics has been restructured to incorporate a Global Challenges track, which supports students' understanding of the complex challenges facing future the decision makers. Finally, the BSc program in Retail Management moved from a campus in Norrtälje to the main campus in the fall of 2015.

SSE & external quality-assurance bodies

Figure 2. A dialogic perspective on Quality Assurance



As Figure 2 shows, SSE's student-journey approach to quality assurance is a robust, internally coherent system that covers all three phases of the School's central enterprise, sound academic learning for its students that lead them to high-impact roles in business and society. The assessment of each phase rests upon well-established criteria and provides feedback to decision makers and decision-making bodies. However, all such systems benefit from external inputs and comparisons with global and national peers. Therefore, SSE's internal system operates in a context of structured dialogues with a number of external bodies. These are UKÄ, EQUIS/EFMD, the Financial Times, CEMS, PIM and PRME. The nature of those dialogues, which include peer reviewing, and their specific contributions are described in detail in Section 2 of this report.

Part 2 of the self-evaluation: the assessment areas

In the second part of the self-evaluation the HEI describes and analyses its quality system and quality work, based on the six ”assessment areas”. The HEI shall analyse and demonstrate how the quality system and quality work satisfy the ”assessement criteria” related to each assessment area.

The HEI is expected to substantiate how the chosen methodology ensures quality in its education, and identify areas in further need of improvement. The HEI should also relate to any results in previous reviews and evaluations, both self-inititated and external, as well as the result of UKÄ’s HEI supervision.

In addition to the assessment criteria there may also be other components of the systematic quality work, specific for each HEI, that are relevant to describe and evaluate within an assessment area. It is not necessary to present the assessment criteria in any particular order.

Each assessment area is begins with a description of the area, followed by the assessment criteria that it includes. This is followed by a guiding text, to clarify how the HEI should demonstrate that the assessment criteria has been satisfied.

The self-evaluation should comprise at most 70 pages A4 in total, at 12 points font size.[1]

1. Assessment area: Governance and organisation

The HEI’s quality system is built, with structures, procedures and processes for ensuring high quality education. The quality system for courses and programmes relates to the HEI’s overarching goals and strategies.

The quality system includes all courses and programmes at all levels within the HEI and there is a clear division of responsibilities. The regulations, policies and procedures are well-documented and easily accessible for employees, students and other stakeholders. The quality system is designed in such a way that it encourages participation, engagement and responsibility among teachers and other staff as well as students.

The quality system is effective, functions smoothly and is used consistently throughout the entire organisation. The HEI has a well-functioning improvement cycle, which means the HEI works at the central level to systematically follow up, evaluate and improve its quality system and quality work. The information produced within the quality system provides the basis for the strategic governance of the HEI’s educational activities. With help of the quality system, the HEI identifies areas in need of improvement and develops its education activities. The HEI has systematic procedures and processes for ensuring that information is communicated to relevant stakeholders, both internal and external, and that this information is widely shared within the organisation.

Assessment criteria:

1.1 The HEI’s quality system is designed to ensure the quality of the programmes and is connected to the overarching goals and strategies which the HEI has established for its educational offerings.

1.2 The HEI has an established quality assurance policy, or equivalent, which is public and a part of its strategic governance.

1.3 The HEI has an appropriate and clearly defined allocation of responsibilities for the quality work.

1.4 The HEI has systematic processes that encourage participation, engagement and responsibility among teachers, other staff, students and doctoral students.

1.5 The HEI ensures that the results and conclusions generated by the quality system are systematically put to use in the strategic governance, quality work and development of the quality system.

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[1] Not including UKÄ’s texts for each section

1.6 The HEI ensures that the information generated by the quality system is published and communicated appropriately with the relevant stakeholders and spread throughout the organisation.

Guidelines for HEIs:
Show how the quality system satisfies the assessment criteria for the area, for example by describing which policies, or equivalent, procedures and processes contribute to it. The description is to show how the quality system supports the HEI's profile and implementation of the HEI's strategy, and how the system helps the HEI achieve the goals of its education mission. It should also show how the HEI's quality system helps identify areas for improvement.
If the HEI has several different quality assurance policies or equivalent for different parts of its education operation, all quality assurance policies are to be described when relevant. It is to be specified whether the HEI has a centralised or decentralised organisation for the quality work. A description and justification of the selected organisation is to be provided. Please provide examples of an issue which the HEI has worked with and which illustrates how the quality system functions overall.

Highlight other issues deemed important for the systematic improvement of the quality system at the HEI.

Provide evidence that the quality system is well-functioning and effective, and that it is systematically improved based on the information generated by it.

The HEI's statement:

Governance and organization

Educational programs exhibit high quality when they consistently meet the objectives they are designed to achieve. All ten degree programs at SSE share the overarching mission that the School was founded to accomplish: through research-based teaching, to prepare the next generation of leaders for the organizations that strengthen and create the Swedish economy and keeps Sweden competitive. There are, of course, program-level ILOs for each program, and they all contribute directly and indirectly to achieving this overarching mission.

As described in SSE's Strategic Statement 2019-2024 and elsewhere, the School has a strategy in place for continuing to execute its mission successfully even as the higher education landscape in business, economics and finance changes rapidly. That plan begins by acknowledging three strategic necessities that are required of any business school hoping to offer programs relevant to top students in SSE's educational market: Positioning, Internationalization, and Financing. These three necessities structure the Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) reported to the Board of Directors at their quarterly meetings and identified by the School's Executive Management Team as central criteria within SSE's quality-assurance system. Through these KPIs, the SSE Board uses the output of the quality-assurance system to ensure that program execution remains aligned with the School's strategy and strategic planning. The rest of this section explains how decision-makers at other levels throughout the School also use output from the quality-assurance system strategically and operationally, how the School's governance structures apply to that work, and how the results of quality work are communicated to the SSE community and beyond.

As described in Part 1 above and in the Summary of Quality-Assurance Policies at SSE, that system has two components. One is a series of quality dialogues carried out with strategically chosen external partners because they align with SSE's strategic necessities. For example, quality assessments in dialogue with UKÄ are essential for SSE to retain its status as a degree-granting HEI, which is a prerequisite for both executing it foundational mission and ensure *financing* from the Swedish state. Accreditation by EFMD/EQUIS is essential for all three strategic necessities, *positioning*, *internationalization*, and *financing.* In addition, EFMD/EQUIS accreditation is a prerequisite for ranking by the Financial Times. These rankings by the Financial Times contribute to *international positioning* and are essential in recruiting top international candidates to SSE's programs, and increasingly they also affect a business school's ability to attract the top faculty and international collaborators that combine to make SSE a site for dynamic research and successful learning. CEMS peer reviews follow from SSE's commitments to the CEMS alliance, i.e. the Global Alliance in Management Education, which enables SSE to offer the prestigious CEMS degree alongside SSE MSc degrees. This joint offering promotes both *positioning* and *internationalization*. Moreover, CEMS's organizational commitment to responsible leadership and global citizenship matches SSE's own vision of itself as a school for society, a vision reflected in the holistic education aims summarized in Part 1 as FREE. Participation in PRME directly concerns *sustainability*, one of SSE's strategic academic priorities (along with finance, retailing, and innovation), and because it is a United Nations-supported initiative, it also foregrounds *internationalization*.

These dialogues all drive continuous improvement throughout the School, and because each dialogue entails some form of self-reporting, they also require, and thus encourage, participation by many stakeholders throughout the organization, including students. Students, for instance, submit reports in parallel with the School's self-assessment report as part of UKÄ and EFMD/EQUIS accreditation processes. Through the Student Association, students also participate in the preparation of SSE's Sharing Information on Progress (SIP) reports to PRME. The three dialogue partners that apply a peer-reviewing methodology (UKÄ, EFMD/EQUIS, CEMS) all also meet with students as part of that process. Both self-reporting and peer reviewing involve stakeholders throughout SSE. The EFMD/EQUIS self-assessment report requires input from the School's Executive Management Team (especially Chapter 1, 8, and 9 on strategy and governance, on internationalization, and on ethics, sustainability and social responsibility). Similarly, the VPDP produces the input on Chapter 2, Programs. Two professional services units, the Program Office and Office of Academic Support and Records, provide the input on student-body composition in Chapter 3. With support from academic departments, the HR Department provides input on Chapter 4, Faculty. The Research Office provides input on that central activity in Chapter 5 while SSE's wholly-owned subsidiary reports on its executive education activities in Chapter 6. The Senior Executive Vice President, along with the service units she manages, provides input for Chapter 7, which describes the School's infrastructure and administration. Finally, the corporate relations in the External Relations unit provides input on SSE's deep relationships with the business community in Chapter 10. The peer-review team from EFMD/EQUIS then interviews the stakeholders responsible for this input, including students, doctoral candidates and alumni. While the self-assessment report for CEMS peer reviews is less extensive, those visiting teams also interview this wide range of stakeholders as part of their quality-assurance work.

Importantly, these quality dialogues are open activities at SSE. Not only do a wide range of students at all levels, faculty of all ranks, and staff from many functional areas participate in them, but the results are widely communicated and discussed throughout the School. The preparations for and outcomes of each dialogue feature prominently in the Presidents information sessions to staff and students. Self-evaluation reports are published on the internal web portal, and reports from peer-review teams are widely circulated. Rankings by the Financial Times are, by their nature published, and they are also the topic of SSE press releases and internal information sessions that help stakeholders contextualize and interpret these rankings and their implications. The ranking results are analyzed by SSE's Quality-Assurance Team, followed by annual workshops for the programs in questions to discuss the results and suggestions for improving the programs based on benchmarks against successful international schools participating in the rankings.

The other component of SSE's quality-assurance system is a robust, well-documented set of quality-assurance practices and processes that follow students' progression from recruitment, through instruction, and into placement after graduation. In terms of the nature of the quality work in each phase, the first is work with the quality of participants, both students and faculty. The second is work with teaching and learning, and of course the material and organizational resources needed to support them. The third is work with strategic outcomes (i.e. graduate placement and career development). There is a reiterative logic in this sequence in that successful quality work at Phase 1 creates conditions for success at Phase 2, and successful quality work at Phase 2 creates conditions for success at Phase 3. Finally, successful quality work at Phase 3 creates conditions for success at Phase 1 by maintaining SSE's reputation for success and thereby supporting the recruitment of highly qualified students and faculty.

The regulations authorizing these processes are well documented. In the cases of dialogues with external quality partners, it is of course the partners who define the initial terms and conditions for those dialogues. Phase 1 processes for student selection this rely upon the following: Admission to BSc Programs at the Stockholm School of Economics, Regulations ratified by the Faculty and Program Board on November 6, 2017. Admission Regulations for the Master of Science Programs at the Stockholm School of Economics (Approved by the Faculty and Program Board, November 14, 2011), Admission Regulations for the PhD Programs at the Stockholm School of Economics (Established by the Faculty and Program Board on December 16, 2013). This quality work with recruitment and admission continues with two follow-up surveys, one of students who accept their offers from SSE and one of students who decline. Processes for recruitment of faculty can vary in their details, but their essentials are governed by: Employment Regulations (President's decision no. 2 – 2015, President's decision no. 18 – 2016), Guidelines for Tenure at SSE, and the collective bargaining agreement between SSE and the Swedish Confederation of Professional Associations.

Phase 2 processes address the quality of teaching and learning and encompass program-level assessment, course-level assessment, and the assessment of student performance, which takes place, in part, to identify any students in need of academic or other kinds of support. The regulations authorizing these processes are also well documented. Program-level assessment begins with the program portfolio, and the Faculty & Program Board's responsibility for that is authorized by Organization and Rules of Procedure for SSE (revised and adopted by the Board of Directors, April 30, 2019). Likewise, Faculty & Program Board decisions authorize the execution of annual program evaluations, quarterly focus-group meetings on the BSc and MSc program levels. For PhD programs, similar quality work is carried out in the PhD Program Committee and is authorized by SSE Organization and Rules of Procedure. At course level, the current end-of-course evaluation format is authorized by a Faculty & Program Board decision of January 15, 2015. Mid-course evaluations are authorized by a Faculty & Program Board decisions of June 9, 2014. The process of reviewing grade distribution for all BSc and MSc courses rests upon the Grading system for students admitted Fall 2016 or later, (Approved by the Faculty & Program Board, April 2016). The student-performance checkpoints for BSc and MSc programs are authorized by the Student Handbooks for those respective program levels. The individual study plans for PhD students is required by the Ministry of Education (Högskoleförordning 1993:100) and institutionalized at SSE through the Student Handbook for PhD Programs.

Phase 3 processes address the quality of graduate placement and career development. Much of the data collected for SSE's placement report dovetails with the data-collection requirements for the Financial Times rankings. SSE added longitudinal element to this data collection in 2014. These processes, therefore, are grounded in quality dialogues and reflective practice as well as policy decisions at SSE. As SSE has produced placement reports for many years, those practices have become well established and subject to continuous improvement. For instance, successful data collection with BSc and MSc graduates is now being expanded to included placement-data collection on PhD graduates. Another object of quality assessment at this phase is the career-development support delivered to students by SSE's professional services unit devoted to Career Management. One dimension of this work takes place within two of SSE's ranked programs, the

MScs in Finance and International Business. Support for those students includes all the activities mentioned below and also extends to individual career coaching, which is evaluated through program-level evaluations, focus groups, and dialogues with class representatives for those two programs. Other activities include the provision of an extensive digital-support platform (SSE Careers Online), a mentorship program for up to 200 MSc students, and an array of workshops, clinics and opportunities to book a career-coaching session. Quality work with these activities include a quality dialogue with Universum, a commercial organization focused on employer branding. The basis of that dialogue is Universum's annual survey of some 57,000 students across the Nordics, and 2018's results named SSE first in overall student satisfaction, first in satisfaction with the career services provided, and first in focus on employability.

Within SSE's student-journey approach to quality assurance, there is also a clear allocation of responsibilities. Most generally, the SSE Board delegates authority to run the School to the President, who has ultimate authority over all operational matters once the strategic plan and budget are set by the SSE Board. The President delegates, in turn, overall responsibility for degree-program quality to the VPDP, who executes and acts in accordance with decisions taken by the Faculty & Program Board.

Operationally, beyond this general allocation, purpose-specific differences exist across the three phases of the student-journey model. In Phase 1, quality assessment extends from program marketing and recruitment activities, which are the responsibility of External Relations and the Program Office respectively. Next, it includes the administration of the regulations and policies identified above by the Program Office, which is followed by formal decisions on admission by Admission Boards, one at each program level, BSc, MSc and PhD. For BSc and MSc admissions, an external auditor reviews procedures and outcomes in order to ensure that SSE has observed the relevant regulations and criteria.

Admissions data is systematically reported to the VPDP, the Faculty & Program Board, each program-level committee, and each Program Director. This data also reaches the Board of Directors in aggregate form for long-term strategic consideration. Because SSE is both dependent upon and successful with the recruitment of excellent students, admissions data is also widely distributed internally through a range of internal communication channels. It is, however, the first group mentioned, the cluster around the VPDP and the Program Directors who assess this data for any potential impact on programs and for any putative changes in recruitment practices.

Additional follow-up quality work on recruitment and admissions consists of the Accept and Decline surveys mentioned above. These are carried out by the Program Office and subject to analysis by the VPDP. This information also guides organizational changes that help attract top-quality students. However, findings of the Decline Survey typically point to factors difficult to change, for instance, the cost of living in Stockholm, housing scarcity, and scholarship levels.

Phase 1 of SSE's student-journey approach also includes the rigorous selection of faculty. The allocation of responsibility for that work is also clear and explicit. It is described in Part 1 above as are the quality parameters that guide decision making, i.e. accomplished research, teaching and engagement with one's disciplinary community. Because SSE's tenure guidelines influence hiring decision, those quality parameters apply implicitly for new hires. The allocation of responsibility for faculty retention (tenure reviews) begin with the Tenure Review Committee, which assesses teaching and citizenship portfolios and receives and reviews the reports of internal and external experts who assess research output. Recommendations by the Tenure Review Committee go forward to the Faculty and Program Board for decisions.

In Phase 2, quality assessment begins with course-level evaluations; it extends to program-level assessment; and it culminates in on-going assessment of SSE's overall program portfolio. At each stage, there is a clear allocation of responsibilities. Mid-course evaluations provide information to Course Directors, who are at present solely responsible for initiating immediate improvements on that basis of that information. For end-of-course evaluations, the policy document, Processing and storing course evaluation results, defines how SSE works with information received from those evaluations and stipulates the allocation of responsibility for that work. Evaluations are administered by the Program Office. That office distributes results from course evaluations to respective Course Directors, Program Directors, Department Heads, and to the VPDP. Course Directors receive a report that consists of both quantitative information (scores for each Likert-scale question about the course) and qualitative information (written comments about the course). Course Directors are expected to share relevant information with course administrators and to use the findings to develop and improve the courses. Course Teachers (other than the Course Director) receive a report that consists of aggregated quantitative data on the course, their own individual scores and qualitative written comments regarding their own individual performance. This report helps Course Teachers recognize personal strengths and weakness and thereby support their professional development. Program Directors receive an aggregated quantitative report with quantitative scores for courses in their program and qualitative information related to core program courses. Informed by these reports and other quality-system inputs, Program Directors drive program-level improvement. Department Heads receive qualitative information as well as an aggregated quantitative report about the courses that are taught by the faculty of that department. These reports can have various uses but feature most prominently in determining teaching assignments and in the annual performance reviews of individual faculty members. The VPDP receives an aggregated quantitative report, which then features in quality reports to the Board of Directors and the Faculty & Program Board and in ongoing dialogue with Program Directors. Course evaluation results related to gender and diversity issues at SSE are shared with and analyzed by the SSE Equality and Diversity Manager for analysis and putative action. Basic quantitative course reports are also uploaded for students on the SSE Portal. In these reports, all results referring to individual teachers are aggregated.

A third course-level assessment concerns grade distribution and resisting grade inflation. SSE's Academic Controller carries out an analysis of grading outcomes after every teaching period, and if over 30% of the students who pass a course have the grade Excellent, the Course Director is required to write a report that explains a) how the course was assessed, i.e. examined, b) why the proportion of Excellent grades exceed 30%, and c) how the Course Director plans to redesign the course and its assessment to prevent the proportion of Excellent grades exceeding 30% in future. That report is sent to the Academic Controller, the Program Director, the VPDP, and the Department Head. The action plan must be approved by the Academic Controller.

Allocation of responsibilities regarding program-level assessments are also explicit. The Program Office administers annual program evaluations. The results of these evaluations are distributed widely: Program Directors and the VPDP get both quantitative and qualitative data from the evaluations. The quantitative data features in reports to both the Faculty & Program Board and the SSE Board of Directors. This data is an important part of ongoing improvement of program quality. The operation of program-level quality work with focus groups varies slightly across programs. At the BSc level, student input goes directly to Program Director(s) and comes from representatives of each cohort, i.e. first year, second year, third year. At the MSc level, it goes to the VPDP and comes from representatives of each program, i.e. Accounting Valuation and Financial Management, Business and Management, Economics, Finance, and International Business. MSc Program Directors also have an ongoing dialog with the class representatives from each cohort in their respective programs. In each case, while this input is discussed with Program Committees and the VPDP, it is the Program Directors that are responsible for the content, delivery and quality of their respective program within the framework provided by the Faculty & Program Board. Therefore, Program Directors are responsible for initiating program improvements. As mentioned above, in PhD programs, the forum for dialogue of this kind is the Program Committee, and at that level too responsibility for program quality lies with the Program Directors.

Ultimately, the Faculty & Program Board is responsible for SSE's programs and program portfolio. To support its work, this board receives quality reports from the VPDP each semester. Moreover, given the composition of this group, many members are intimately familiar with course-level quality work. The groups composition is: President, VPDP, Heads of (academic) Departments, two elected faculty representatives, two student representatives, and any person or persons called to participate in an advisory capacity, such as the HR Director.

Over time, SSE has developed its student-journey approach to quality assurance**,** complemented by systematic quality dialogues with highly regarded national and international partners, into a well-functioning, centralized system, which is further enhanced by systematic quality dialogues with highly regarded national and international partners. That centralized system a) collects information about the quality of its programs and the infrastructure needed to sustain high quality, b) circulates that information to both decision makers in the organization and to other stakeholders affected by it, for instance students, and c) uses that information to produce continuous improvements in both programs and the quality system itself. One example of continuous improvement with roots in a quality dialogue is the ongoing work with individual study plans for PhD students. In feedback from UKÄ as part of a quality dialogue over PhD programs in Economics and Finance, UKÄ's assessment highlighted the importance of aligning the information provided in those study plans with the progression goals identified in the PhD Student Handbook. Another is the identified need for more rigorous follow-up on the execution of mid-course evaluation by Course Directors after the 2018 EFMD/EQUIS reaccreditation process identified inconsistencies in that execution. Section 2.3 returns to the question of improving the execution of quality-assessment measure.

There are, of course, examples of improvements in programs and their delivery that follow from SSE's internal quality work. The two examples given below have their roots in the program-level focus groups where students effectively have an open forum for providing input on every aspect of their study situations. The first concerns program delivery directly. During academic 2015-16, students in BSc and MSc programs began to ask consistently for more digital course material to complement the face-to-face classroom interaction to which SSE is committed. While the VPDP, Program Directors, and the Head of SSE's Faculty Development were all sympathetic to these requests, all shared SSE's strong commitment to teacher autonomy and academic freedom (within the reasonable constrains determined by the Faculty & Program Board, Program Directors, and disciplinary praxis). Therefore, any initiative to systematically increase the amount of digital pedagogy in programs required bottom-up participation by the faculty. The solution adopted in order to make this improvement is a faculty-development initiative called Professional Development in Action. That initiative runs in one-year cycles, the first in calendar year 2017, and it continues. It offers interested and qualified faculty a one-course reduction in their teaching load for the year, which in most cases represents a quarter of the participant's teaching requirement. In lieu of that teaching, each participant develops a project that focus on one of her current courses and improves it by implementing digital material that is consistent with their conception of the course, its ILOs, and experience of student needs and expectations. Participants meet regularly throughout the year and work through a project-development model jointly designed by SSE's Director of Pedagogical Development and it Digital Learning Specialist, who also coach participants throughout the process. It culminates with a conference day, open to the entire SSE community, where all participants present their project outcomes and some demonstrate their new digital interventions.

This example illustrates a full cycle of learning-journey quality assurance. It began with the students' experience of program execution, where that experience was captured through program-level quality work, which delivered the relevant information to the relevant decision makers. In this case, several decision makers were involved because the tradeoff of teaching obligations for professional development time required the commitment of resources and the modification of teaching assignments by both departments and programs. The concrete improvement is that some 25 faculty members have completed (or are completing) Professional Development in Action and digital pedagogy now features regularly throughout the teaching-and-learning landscape at SSE.

A second example concerns the physical environment for students studying at SSE, specifically places to study. Since at least 2013, students have used various quality-assurance channels to express concerns that the number of places on and off campus for them to study, read, write, meet for group work, etc., was inadequate to the needs of the School's seven BSc and MSc programs (PhD students have individual work spaces in shared offices). Those channels included focus groups, program evaluations, and the regular dialogues between student representative and Program Directors, and regular working lunches SSE's management team holds with the Board of the Student Association to discuss matter of mutual concern. On a small urban campus, additional space present a problem not easily solved even when the quality-assurance system gathers the relevant information and delivers it to the appropriate decision makers. The solution in this case began with the formation of a Campus Development Project Team consisting of students, the SSE Facilities Manager, and the Senior Executive Vice President. This group studied the SSE facilities creatively and found the capacity to add some 100 additional study spaces in areas that had been largely unused earlier. It also modernized the spatial infrastructure by geometrically increasing the number of electrical outlets and charging stations, improving the air quality, and working to reduce background noise in public on-campus spaces.

This example, too, illustrates a full cycle of learning-journey quality assurance. It began with the students' experience of program execution, in this case execution broadly understood to include material conditions. Then that experience was captured and channeled through SSE's quality work, which again delivered the relevant information to the relevant decision makers. This example also shows how that system encourages broad participation in quality work because the role of students extended well beyond the assessment of program execution, but also included participation in the design and implementation of improvements.

This section closes with a brief reflection on areas or actions that will lead to the further improvement of SSE quality-assurance systems. First, while the regulations and policies that authorize and guide SSE's quality work are well documented, they may not be easily accessible for all employees and students. This is not to suggest that access is in any way restricted for members of the SSE community, but that storage and retrieval strategies are not always transparent or intuitive. Thus, one area identified for improvement within the system is improved accessibility surrounding the governance documents that lay the foundation for SSE's student-journey approach to quality assurance.

A second such area concerns the system's inherent appeal to stakeholders for active participation. As mentioned above, many aspects of the system do actively promote stakeholder participation, and some of the quality dialogues with CEMS or EQUIS served as illustrations. Course and program evaluations could also serve as examples. In each case, relevant stakeholders understand and participate in the quality work closest to their own operational responsibilities. While this follows naturally from the specialization inherent in a professionalized academy, it may suggest a balkanization or fragmentation of understanding and interest that works against broader participation in quality work. For instance, while faculty members are intimately familiar with quality work surrounding course evaluations, they may know little and wonder less about how SSE quality assures its exchange partners and their courses. Likewise, Program Coordinators are well aware of the dynamics of focus groups and program evaluations, but unconcerned about the nature of SSE's tenure guidelines. The key consideration here is that a broader understanding of the system would encourage broader involvement, and broader involvement would lead to even more improvement in the execution of programs and quality work.

2. **Assessment area: Preconditions**

Through its quality work, the HEI ensures that the preconditions exist for the courses' and programmes' implementation and student learning, and follows up that it takes relevant measures and develops these preconditions.

The HEI ensures that there are good opportunities for teaching staff to further improve both pedagogically and scholarly/artistically within their subject areas. Furthermore, the HEI ensures that teaching staff have scholarly/artistic, pedagogical and professionally oriented expertise, corresponding with the needs of the educational operation. Using information produced by the quality system, the HEI identifies needs for recruitment and continuing professional development of staff. The HEI also takes measures for developing the skills of the staff.

The HEI ensures an appropriate environment that includes infrastructure (e.g. lecture halls, informational technology, equipment and facilities for laboratories and workshops), student support (e.g. student health and study and career guidance) and educational resources (e.g. language laboratories and supervisor resources in placement programmes). Using information produced by the quality system, the HEI identifies improvement needs to support students in achieving their expected academic outcomes.

The HEI systematically collects information about students' study situations and uses the information to continuously improve the work environment. Through procedures and processes, the HEI ensures that each student is provided good conditions for completing the studies within the planned period of study.

Using this information, the HEI identifies improvement needs, takes necessary steps and continually improves the conditions of the courses and programmes. The HEI has systematic procedures and processes for ensuring that planned measures or implemented measures are appropriately communicated to relevant stakeholders, both internal and external.

Assessment criteria:

2.1 The HEI ensures that the skills among the teaching staff correspond with the needs of the educational operation.

2.2 The HEI ensures that it provides a supportive environment that gives teaching staff the opportunity to improve both their pedagogical skills and their subject expertise as well as the conditions required to effectively carry out their work.

2.3 The HEI ensures that infrastructure, student support and teaching resources are appropriate for the students' learning and that these are used effectively.

2.4 The HEI ensures, through procedures and processes, that each student is provided good conditions for completing the studies within the planned period of study.

Guidelines for HEIs:

Show how the HEI through its quality work satisfies the assessment criteria within the area, for example by describing procedures and processes that contribute to it. Include goals and strategies that have been established for the assessment area and the assessment criteria. Include how the HEI ensures that its goals are achieved, how it is determined whether the goals have been achieved and what measures the HEI takes if the goals have not been achieved. Show how the HEI addresses and handles any deviations pertaining to student completion, for example. Also show how the HEI identifies areas for improvement through its quality work and takes relevant measures.
If there is a difference in how the quality work is carried out between different parts of the HEI or between different types of courses and programmes, these differences are to be described. If needed, refer to the policies, procedures and processes described in conjunction with the *Governance and organisation* assessment area.

Highlight other aspects deemed important for the HEI's systematic quality work within the assessment area.

Provide evidence that the quality work is well-functioning, effective, and systematically improved based on the information generated in the quality system within this assessment area.

The HEI's statement:

Preconditions

SSE exists to provide research-based teaching to prepare cohorts of very accomplished students for important roles in business and society. One necessary condition for executing that teaching is an equally accomplished faculty of teacher-researchers. The processes for recruiting and selecting those students and that faculty are described in 2.1. Equally important, however, are the conditions under which these two groups work together to create the learning required to ensure success for each student and thereby for the School as a whole. Size is one fundamental aspect of these conditions, and all of SSE's degree programs are relatively small, totaling less than 2,000 students at any given time. They are taught by a core faculty of some 120, almost all of whom hold PhDs (92%) and actively conduct research. This means an attractive student-faculty ratio of 14.5:1 where close contact between students and faculty is the norm.

This section describes in more detail the processes by which SSE ensures that this intimate constellation of students and faculty have suitable conditions for working together to prepare another generation of leaders for their roles in both a Swedish and a global economy. Those processes cluster around four quality concerns: a) matching the faculty to the needs of the program offering, b) maintaining an environment where SSE faculty thrive in their roles as teachers and as researchers, c) maintaining an infrastructure and an environment where students acquire knowledge and skills appropriate for their chosen specializations and also develop both as critical thinkers and as people, and d) maintaining an environment where each student is certain to receive the support she needs to complete her degree program and launch her career. In executing a) through d) above, SSE combines advantageous structural starting points with quality-assurance processes to maintain and improve the conditions that have enabled the School to succeeded with its educational mission for 110 years.

<u>Ensuring a match between faculty composition to the needs of SSE's programs</u>
The degree programs authorized by the SSE's Faculty & Program Board define the aims, structure, processes, and content of student learning. Therefore, they define SSE's demand for faculty expertise and provide the terms of reference for assessing the match between the School's educational offering and its faculty. This match is relatively easy to maintain because of a key structural characteristic, disciplinary coherence. SSE's programs are designed to reflect the fundamental disciplinary structure of a business school. In the same vein, its departments define the supply of faculty that SSE has available for staffing those programs, and they reflect that same disciplinary structure. The School's seven departments are: Accounting; Economics; Finance; Management & Organization; Marketing & Strategy; Entrepreneurship, Innovation & Technology; and Law, Languages & Data Analytics. They represent disciplinary competence that maps very well onto SSE's portfolio of degree programs in Business & Economics, Retail Management, Accounting, Valuation & Financial Management Business & Management, Economics, Finance, International Business, and Business Administration. As mentioned in 2.1 above, most hiring decisions are delegated to the departments (from the Faculty & Program Board via the Department Head), and each department has a strategic faculty-recruitment plan for identifying and meeting long-term and medium-term needs for specialized competence.

It may be noteworthy here to point out that just as departments adapt to align their faculty structure to the evolving needs of programs, SSE adapts its departmental structure to align with the School's evolving strategic priorities. After defining FRIS (Finance, Retailing, Innovation, and Sustainability) as priority areas and redesigning the MSc in Business and Management to give it a focus on innovation and entrepreneurship, SSE reconfigured its departmental structure to create a Department of Entrepreneurship, Innovation and Technology. Most of its members joined the new department from the Department of Management and Organization or the Department of Marketing and Strategy.

SSE ensures that its departments' faculty supply matches its programs' faculty demand with one powerful quality-assurance mechanism, an annual course budget with attendant coordination meetings. SSE's Academic Controller coordinates work with the course budget. It begins by determining what teaching resources each program needs (in both volume and areas of expertise) in order to run successfully. In most cases, there is strong year-on-year continuity, with modifications made simply to account for improvements introduced by Program Directors or for unexpected fluctuation in cohort size. With this definition of demand in place, Program Directors meet with Department Heads in order to ensure that the departments each have the faculty in place to meet the next year's teaching needs. While this matching process generally operates smoothly, when it does not, these meetings have two outcomes that are important for program quality. First, they ensure that there are adequate lead times for departments to complement their core faculty with temporary part-time instructors. These instructors are typically staff at one of the research institutes affiliated with SSE, but not employed by the School (this group accounts for the majority). Alternatively, they are outside experts who offer occasional courses in a field too narrow to warrant a permanent position (for example courses in Business Spanish, where SSE offers one course for some 20 students each semester) or practitioners from outside academia. The second outcome is that this process circulates information about programs' evolving teaching needs into the departments, where Department Heads use that information to make hiring and staffing decisions and develop strategic faculty-recruitment plans.

There are, then, structures in place that generally align the faculty's composition with the needs of SSE's programs. There are also processes in place to ensure that this alignment functions properly. In the event that it does not, those processes ensure the communication of any misalignment to Department Heads, who are positioned to make the necessary short-term adjustments by recruiting temporary instructors and to make the long-term adjustments through strategic faculty recruitment.

Ensuring a supportive environment for SSE's faculty

Similarly, there are structures in place that create an environment where SSE faculty can and do succeed in their dual role as teacher and researcher. Also in place are processes to ensure that these structures are working properly for each individual faculty member and mechanisms to provide corrective support in the event that they do not. As with the matching of teaching needs and faculty capacity, SSE's structural starting point is advantageous. Faculty workloads take as their point of departure an acknowledgement of the dual role for teacher-researchers. The duties of assistant professors typically require 40% teaching, 50% research, and 10% citizenship, a cover term for the work of participating in the academic life of a department or the School. In many cases, additional research funding, either external or internal, is available to help new hires acclimate and make progress toward meeting their research targets for tenure. As faculty careers progress, SSE faculty successfully compete for research funding to add even more research time to their workload distribution. However, SSE's Faculty Handbook stipulates that regardless of external funding, all faculty must allocate 20% of their workload to teaching.

Alongside this balanced workload, SSE's size and its focused program curricula provide a second structural advantage that supports faculty members. Because programs rely closely upon the subject specializations of SSE's academic departments, most teachers can develop a set of courses within their area of specialization. This carries two advantages: they can easily integrate current research perspectives and research findings into their teaching; and they can avoid having to teach in courses on the periphery of their expertise and thus avoid the additional preparation that such teaching assignments entail. While course development and ongoing improvement are the responsibility of all SSE teachers, this development and improvement typically takes place within a given faculty member's chosen specialization.

SSE faculty, then, enjoy a balanced workload and specialized teaching assignments that support them in continuing to develop both their subject expertise (through research and the conference/symposia activity that accompanies it) and their pedagogical expertise (by working longer term with courses generally closer to their chosen specializations). Complementary to these structural conditions is a set of quality-assurance processes, i.e. assessments and follow-up mechanisms, that SSE has developed to ensure that its student body always meet teachers who are continuously improving and abreast of new developments within their fields and within higher education pedagogy.

The first of these assessments is SSE's centralized end-of-course evaluation for each course where a faculty member teaches. The function of those evaluations is described in 2.1; most relevant here is that the results inform both individual faculty members and their Department Heads. These two stakeholders are best positioned to use evaluation results to discuss whether the faculty member is thriving in the environment that SSE provides. Particularly relevant are questions that address a teacher's pedagogical skills by asking whether "the instructor effectively advanced and facilitated my learning," whether "the instructor generated interest in the course content," and whether "the course material (literature, lecture notes, videos, cases, etc.) effectively contributed to my learning". The last of these is also indirectly indicative of the faculty member's subject expertise. At this point, any faculty member who is dissatisfied with the results of their course evaluations can turn to SSE's faculty-development program for support, and a description of that program appears below.

A second element of quality work relevant here is the annual performance review held between each faculty member and her Department Head. The results of course evaluations provide some input for these reviews as do oral or written progress reports on research and citizenship. Department Heads are free to organize these reviews as they like, but SSE has a clear policy regarding their importance: "performance review discussions should take place with every member of the staff at least once each year" (from the HR document Performance Review Discussion). The School is equally clear about the role of these reviews in the quality assurance of the environment provided for its faculty: "The aim of the discussion is to deal with the staff member's goals, tasks, working situation and opportunities for development. After these performance review discussions, each member of the staff should also be aware of the overall objectives of the Stockholm School of Economics, the objectives laid down for their department or section and understand their own contribution to their attainment" (from the HR document, Performance Review Discussion).

Again, in the event that an outcome of these discussions suggests that a faculty member is not thriving in the environment SSE provides, Department Heads help identify pathways to appropriate support. When challenges have their roots in the working environment or research-related concerns, Department Heads provide support on a case-by-case basis. When challenges have their roots in teaching performance, the faculty-development program again can provide support of various kinds, and these are discussed at length in 2.3 below.

The third element for ensuring and improving the quality of faculty working conditions is the School's tenure review process. The system is described in Part 1 and 2.1 as working with three dimensions: disciplinary excellence, as evidenced through research and research-related activities; teaching excellence, as evidenced through teaching portfolios and course evaluations; and academic citizenship, as evidenced through citizenship portfolios. Feedback from these assessments go to, among others, the faculty member in question and her Department Head. At this point, however, a faculty member's success at SSE is seen as the shared responsibility of the School and the department, on one hand, and the faculty member herself, on the other. Nevertheless, in the period leading to tenure reviews, faculty members receive regular guidance on how best to reach the targets defined for each of the three assessment parameters. While departments provide support regarding the first and third parameters, SSE operates a strong faculty-development program that help teachers improve their pedagogical skills and helps improve the overall pedagogical climate within departments and programs.

As indicated, any of these three quality-assurance processes can lead a faculty member to seek support through SSE's pedagogical development unit. Given the School's size, this unit is small, but it works in five ways.

First and foremost, it arranges courses, workshops, and other personal-development initiatives. It also supports the work of Program Directors as they develop new and improve established programs. It supports the Faculty & Program Board and Tenure Review Board in developing explicit and transparent ways of working with teaching portfolios. It manages the central coordination of SSE's international collaborations around pedagogy and faculty development. Finally, it supports SSE's executive management in developing incentives that further encourages faculty members in the continuous development of their pedagogical skills. Because Parts 1 and 2.1 of this report address SSE's tenure criteria and their application and Part 2 Section 3 addresses program development, this section addresses primarily the initiatives aimed at developing the knowledge, skills and perspectives of individual faculty members. It also mentions briefly, the unit's work with international collaborations and SSE pedagogical incentive system, two activities that make SSE an attractive, as well as a supportive, workplace for faculty.

SSE offers the faculty a portfolio of courses, some offered annually and others somewhat less often. Taken together and complemented by topical workshops and guest lectures, it meets the SSE faculty's needs for pedagogical support, but naturally, each course is assessed for quality and potential improvements as is the portfolio as a whole. The core offering includes the following:

- Developing Teaching Excellence is a basic course aimed at new teachers and doctoral students with no or limited teaching experience.
- English in the Classroom is a course that is aimed at teachers who work with multilingual student groups or who teach in their second or third language. It has a much broader focus than just language; instead, the course aims to increase understanding of the impact on the learning process when teachers and learners are crossing languages boundaries. This course helps individual teachers improve their insights into how their own teaching is affected, both consciously and sometimes unconsciously, when the medium of instruction changes.
- Essential Classroom Communication: focus Economics and Finance & Essential Classroom Communication: focus Business Administration are two courses that give an introduction to communication in the classroom and are primarily aimed at doctoral students who are preparing for their first experience of seminar teaching at SSE.
- The Inclusive Classroom is a course aimed at teachers who want to make their classrooms more inclusive. As diversity among SSE's student population increases, teaching in an inclusive way becomes all the more important. This course is led by two teachers, one an expert in diversity & equality and one who brings an educational perspective.
- Pedagogical Development in Action (PDA) is a course that supports teachers in the use of digital tools in their courses.
- Supervising PhD Students is a course that supports current or prospective supervisors of PhD students.

- Teaching Executives is a course for experienced teachers who want to participate in SSE's commitment to life-long learning by teaching courses for working practitioners.
- The International Teachers Program (ITP) is a broad international faculty development program run by a consortium of international business schools. SSE normally sends two teachers to ITP every year.
- The Global Colloquium on Participant-Centered Learning (GloColl) is a program at Harvard Business School (HBS) where SSE normally sends 1-2 participants each year. It focuses on case-teaching methods.

In addition to these courses, SSE offers individual coaching to members of the faculty in order to help them develop their individual pedagogical vision and skills. As a complement to its standing faculty-development offering, SSE organizes various types of workshops and lunch seminars on a range of topical subjects relevant to teaching and learning.

Given the strategic prominence of internationalization at SSE, international collaborations are central to the School's pedagogical development. Two examples of this were mentioned above, the international faculty development programs GloColl at HBS and the ITP. The former draws on HBS's extensive experience with case teaching and combines that with a platform for international networking and experience sharing. In the latter, SSE sends faculty members as participants, and the School also plays a more central role as a member of the organizing consortium, consisting of some ten schools from different parts of the world. In that capacity, SSE has hosted the program, provided instructors for the program, and currently SSE's Head of Pedagogical Development chairs the organization. The ITP consortium promotes alumni activities that help to maintain the international relationships forged over this yearlong program and thereby encourage an ongoing exchange of experiences on pedagogical development in business-school contexts.

Beyond these program-based activities, SSE regularly invites international guests in higher education pedagogy to provide inspiration from various context on various subjects. Faculty members at SSE are furthermore encouraged to make their own work with pedagogical development available internationally either through publication or presentations at international conferences.

Finally, the pedagogical development unit contributes to a supportive environment for SSE faculty through its work with incentives. SSE has recently taken a number of steps to strengthen the incentives for faculty members to prioritize the continued improvement of their pedagogical skills. In addition to the long-standing work of the Students Association to recognize a Teacher of the Year, SSE has launched three initiatives. The first is a series of educational lunches held quarterly for a dozen teachers invited on the basis of their outstanding results on the central end-of-course evaluations. A second initiative is to recognize one or two people each year who distinguished themselves by adding significantly to the learning in the programs where they teach. The bases for the award are nominations from Program Directors and an assessment by the VPDP. The third initiative is a pedagogical prize, which is awarded in conjunction with the Annual Meeting of SSE Corporate Partner. The prize goes to a person who has achieved excellent results in her teaching over a long time. The winner is selected by a jury that includes external experts on higher education pedagogy.

<u>Ensuring that SSE's infrastructure and environment support student learning</u>

The creation and maintenance of an infrastructure and environment for successful higher education is a complex process. Therefore, it is a focal point for many of the processes that constitute SSE's student-journey approach to quality assurance, including the School's quality dialogues with its external partners, UKÄ, EFMD/EQUIS, and CEMS. Dialogues with PRME assure that this environment and infrastructure are also consistently becoming more sustainable.

This section describes briefly the elements of that infrastructure deemed most relevant to SSE's students' academic success, which is a prerequisite for their professional success, i.e. the Schools' raison d'être. It then summarizes the finding of recent quality dialogues regarding these elements of SSE's operations. Finally, it closes with a review of how the School's internal quality work ensures the continued efficacy of its infrastructure even as the learning needs of students and the students themselves change.

SSE has adequate and purpose-built premises on property owned by the SSE Association and situated in a two-block cluster in central Stockholm. The main building, Sveavägen 65, has an area of 13 500 square meters fully accessible to people with disabilities. In total, the campus is about 19 000 square meters. SSE also rents premises nearby for some of its departments and research centers. SSE students have 24-hour access to study places scattered throughout the campus, and they also have access to a nearby facility belonging to Stockholm University, Studentpalatset, which offers study places and group rooms. The Student Association's premises, in the basement of the main SSE building, are available for students during the day. The SSE Library is an information resource for SSE students, researchers and staff. It is open to the entire SSE Family and to the public (with some limitations on access and service). In addition, the SSE Library contributes to the learning environment for SSE students, with study places in a tranquil setting that is open 57 hours per week.

The School invests in IT to contribute to efficient work flows in its educational mission. Campus Sveavägen is integrated in one net, SSE Net, with high speed internet access and Wi-Fi coverage with a high capacity to meet the demand from students' increasing volumes of smartphones, iPads, streaming video, etc. The Wi-Fi solution is integrated with Eduroam, which means that SSE user accounts can provide internet connection not only on the School's campus, but also on university campuses across Europe and other locations. The School has an Office 365 agreement with Microsoft that covers tools and services for document management, collaboration areas, and team and project communication. In order to align educational needs with IT delivery, SSE developed an IT governance process. This is a system-management model based on pm3, a well-established maintenance management model.

Several quality-based accreditations have addressed this infrastructure very recently. Employing combinations of self-assessment and peer-reviewing methodologies, UKÄ, EFMD/EQUIS, and CEMS have all found the quality of this infrastructure satisfactory, findings that are consistent with the professional success of SSE graduates over the past decade. The quality dialogues in question include one completed by UKÄ in 2018 on the quality of SSE's PhD programs in economics and finance. In the assessment area of infrastructure and environment (*miljö, resurser och område* in the Swedish report), SSE was judged to be comparable to leading international programs in the field. Another completed by EFMD/EQUIS in late 2018 found that "SSE has adequate physical facilities and provides a good learning environment for its students" (EQUIS Peer Review Report, p. 15). An earlier EQUIS accreditation in 2013 reached a similar conclusion. In the language of the CEMS peer-review process, SSE's infrastructure represents "standard practice," which is to say not yet "best practice", but certainly not a "problem". Beyond endorsing the environment itself, these reports show that SSE's dialogue over the quality of its learning infrastructure and environment are functioning properly.

Within the three phases of SSE's student-journey model, Phase 2 contains the assessment and feedback processes that monitor and improve the infrastructure and environment. There the same channels that address course and program quality from a student perspective also address the School's learning infrastructure and environment. These channels include course evaluations, where replies to open questions can convey feedback on infrastructure and environment. Program evaluations, however, are very well suited to this function because they include specific about

SSE's facilities, its library, and its IT infrastructure and support (in BSc and MSc programs). The PhD program survey specifically addresses the research environment. Designed for open dialogue, BSc and MSc focus groups are also well suited to this quality-assurance function, and again the PhD Committee serves a similar function at the doctoral level. Moreover, the less strictly structured dialogues between student representatives and the School feature prominently here because the scope of those dialogues is broad and thus suitable for addressing the wide-ranging and inter-connected concerns that constitute a learning environment. These include the ongoing dialogue between students and Program Directors and Program Coordinators and especially the regularly scheduled meeting between the leaders of the Student Association and SSE's President and Senior Executive Vice President. Moreover, those student leaders (the Chair of the Association and the Chair of its Education Committee) sit on the Faculty & Program Board, SSE's highest academic decision-making body, which naturally serves as a forum for discussions about learning and the material conditions that enable or support it.

<u>Ensuring that every SSE student has the support to succeed academically</u>
A functioning and well-maintained infrastructure is a necessary condition for successful learning, but for some students it is not a sufficient condition. Therefore, SSE provides and quality assures support services as well. Some of these are directed toward the student body as a whole, and others are directed toward individual students who need them. In some respects, the provision of this support for students resembles the provision of support for faculty. There are well-established structural conditions in place that have supported SSE students since 1909 and again the School complements these structural advantages with several type of services and quality-assurance work.

The structural advantages follow from SSE's size, which lends itself to close cooperative contact between students and many of the actors who influence their learning. First and most generally, students have close contact with the faculty teaching their courses. The 14.5:1 student-faculty ration makes this kind of contact possible, and central end-of-course evaluations ask specifically whether "It was easy for me to get in touch with (teacher by name) whenever I needed to." There are, nevertheless, differences across courses, programs, and degree levels, where smaller programs enjoy additional structural advantages. Chief among these is that in those programs, the program-management team, i.e. Program Director and Program Coordination, have a strong familiarity with the 60 or so students in their programs and their evolving study situation. In these programs, no students can struggle academically and go unnoticed or remain invisible. MSc students also have access to a mentor who is familiar with learning at SSE, either an alum or a corporate partner employee. While mentors work primarily with career questions, they provide another point of contact for any student who might be struggling. Currently, SSE's BSc in Retail Management provide the best practice for monitoring and supporting student learning beyond the classroom setting. Thanks to a generous donation from the Axel and Margaret Ax:son Johnson Foundation for Public Benefit, that program provides each student with a tutor, as part of organized, structured learning activities, who follows students' learning journeys from close range.

By way of contrast, this benchmark of success also helps to identify challenges. In the BSc in Business and Economics, with cohorts of up to 300, there is no funding in place today for tutors. And even the redesign of the Program Director role for that program, with two people now in that role, has not created the degree of close contact that characterizes SSE's other programs. However, the School has made and is making changes to expand the opportunity for monitoring students' progress in its largest program. One such change is the creation of the Global Challenges track, which not only introduced new topics related to sustainability concerns, but also introduced a course structure where students work in supervised sub-cohorts of 60 in order to enable some of the close contact students experience in other programs. Moreover, in the program-development work now underway on revising the BSc in Business & Economics, priority elements include tutoring and greater insight into student learning processes.

Alongside these dialogues and this familiarity with individual students' learning, which follow from SSE's size and staffing, there are formal processes in place to support every student's learning and quality-assurance work that ensures that those are working and always improving. Because the creation of a supportive environment for students begins with information, one such process revolves around providing students with the information they need. All students have access to the relevant information regarding the start of their studies through the School's website. Printed material is also sent to newly admitted students; it includes the Student Compass, a guide for international students, statistics from the placement survey on the most recent cohort of graduates and a guide about the Student Association. These brochures provide practical information, set expectations for academic content and approach, and offer advice about moving to Sweden from another country. Many students contact the School prior to the start of the academic year, and the Program Office provides them with informal guidance and assistance of various kinds. SSE meets a number of international students at pre-departure meetings in the students' country of origin. An introduction week is held prior to the start of classes to help students acclimatize to a new educational level, the SSE teaching style, and Scandinavian culture. The content of the introduction week varies across levels. For BSc students, it includes a briefing on the first-year subjects and tutorials on group dynamics and stress management. It also includes induction activities led by second-year students, who then serve as contact points for groups of new students. MSc students receive an introduction to the programs, lectures about cross-culture communication and practical information about living in Sweden. Both levels also receive a more social orientation through the Student Association. For PhD students, introduction activities include both a general introduction and separate introduction activities that are specific to each program and department. For the PhD Programs in Economics and in Finance, introduction activities include a diagnostic test in econometrics followed by an advanced mathematics course for the students who might need it. Social activities during the PhD introduction week are provided by PhD student representatives.

Parts 1 and 2.1 identify the various checkpoints applied to student progress in various programs and how they help to identify students who may need support. At all levels, SSE is committed to giving students the tools, counseling, and services that they need in order to complete their studies. This includes academic counseling that complements the support from instructors and Program Directors. The Office of Academic Support and Records arranges that counseling, and students generally meet one of their two study counselors. The typical format is one-on-one meetings, either pre-booked or drop in.

SSE outsources more specialized support functions to a Student Health Unit operated by Stockholm University. Their facilities are located two blocks from SSE's main building, and SSE students have full access to these facilities. SSE has a quiet room that can be used for temporary rest in cases, for example, of headache or nausea. The room can also be used for prayer or meditation in solitude. The room is located in the main building on Sveavägen.

There is also a range of services and policies that support students with special needs. Students who have a documented disability have a right to extra assistance. In compliance with Swedish law, SSE employs a coordinator for these student services. SSE's Guidelines for Support to Students with Disabilities define exactly what each service entails and how it is delivered. These services are: a) note taking assistance; b) a support student arranged by the Special Needs Coordinator; c) an academic mentor; d) modified examinations; e) course literature in adapted media; f) reading-aloud software. In addition to the quality assurance applied to all student support, the services supporting students with special needs are closes assessed by SSE's Equality and Diversity Manager. Follow up of that assessment takes place through a standing item reserved for this manager's reports on the agenda of Faculty & Program Board.

Quality assurance for student-support services include the Phase 2 assessments and follow up described elsewhere: dialogues with SSE management, course and program evaluations, focus groups, and feedback to the PhD Committee. Information from these quality assessments go to the managers of the professional services units that provide the support. For work with information to students, this is the Program Office Manager. For the other support activities described above, it is the Manager of the Office of Academic Support and Records. In both cases, these managers discuss the interaction of student support and student learning with the VPDP and go on to execute all and any necessary improvements.

In summary, the conditions exist at SSE for the successful execution of its educational programs and thus its educational mission. Those conditions ensure that faculty capacity matches program demand, that that faculty works and does research in a supportive environment, that the infrastructure and environment are appropriate to the School's programs and conducive to student learning, and that each student receives the support she needs in order to complete a degree program successfully. Moreover, the quality-assurance processes are in place to see that these conditions continue to support student learning and over time improve.

3. **Assessment area: Design, implementation and outcomes**

The HEI ensures high quality throughout its educational offerings through its quality work. The HEI follows up, takes measures and develops its courses and programmes. The HEI conducts regular follow ups and evaluations of its programmes and courses to ensure they are relevant and connected to relevant research. The HEI systematically follows up how well the actual study outcomes correspond with the expected study outcomes. Staff, students and external stakeholders participate in an appropriate way in the evaluation and improvement of the programmes and courses.

The HEI has a well-functioning improvement cycle, which means it works at the course and programme level to systematically follow up, evaluate and improve its education. The HEI systematically collects information about the courses and programmes. Using information that is produced within the quality system, the HEI identifies needs for improvement and improves the courses and programmes. The HEI implements measures and continuously improves the education. The HEI has systematic procedures and processes for ensuring that planned measures or implemented measures are appropriately communicated to relevant stakeholders, both internal and external.

Assessment criteria:

3.1 The HEI has a clear allocation of responsibility and appropriate procedures and processes for the design, development, establishment and closure of programmes.

3.2 The HEI ensures that its courses and programmes are designed and implemented in such a way that encourages students to take an active role in the learning processes, which is also reflected in examinations.

3.3 The HEI ensures a close connection exists between research and education in its operations.

3.4 The HEI ensures that its programmes are designed and implemented with a clear connection between national and local goals, teaching activities and examinations.

3.5 Based on regular follow-ups and periodic assessments, the HEI implements the required measures to improve and develop the courses and programmes.

3.6 The HEI ensures that the assessment results are published and the planned or implemented measures to improve and develop the courses and programmes are communicated in an appropriate way with the relevant stakeholders.

For independent higher education providers, the following also applies:[2]
3.7 The HEI has and applies good procedures for admitting students, credit transfers and for awarding degrees. The HEI also has an established procedure for student appeals of decisions.

Guidelines for HEIs:

Show how the HEI through its quality work satisfies the assessment area, for example by describing procedures and processes that contribute to it. The description is to show how the HEI works continuously to systematically quality-assure and improve its education. It should also include goals and strategies that have been established for the assessment area and the assessment criteria. This can include how the HEI ensures that its goals are achieved, how it is decided whether the goals have been achieved and what measures the HEI takes if the goals have not been achieved. Also show how the HEI identifies areas for improvement through its quality work.

If there is a difference in how the quality work is carried out between different parts of the HEI or between different types of courses and programmes, these differences are to be described. If needed, refer to the policies, procedures and processes described in conjunction with the *Governance and organisation* assessment area.

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[2] These assessment criteria are only for independent higher education providers since these providers are not covered by UKÄ's HEI supervision.

Highlight other aspects deemed important for the HEI's systematic quality work within the assessment area.

Provide evidence that the quality work is well-functioning and effective, and that it systematically ensures high-quality education based on the information generated in the quality system.

The HEI's statement:

Design, implementation, and outcomes

SSE has a clearly defined mission written into its charter, and that mission is well understood among the School's stakeholders, not least among those actors within the community who helped bring the School into being and who continue to support its development. If SSE ever failed to produce graduates capable of stepping directly into meaningful roles in organizations and in society, that failure would be public, spectacular, and existential. Therefore, all of SSE's quality work, and the execution of educational programs that this work supports, exists to ensure the successful accomplishment of the School's mission. This section illustrates that strategic focus by discussing first SSE's approach to portfolio management, then the School's effective improvement cycle, and finally, its processes for communicating the improvements that emerge from this cycle. Moreover, because SSE is an independent higher education provider, this section closes with a description of the policies and procedures that govern student admissions, credit transfers, the awarding of degrees, and student appeals.

Program portfolio management at SSE
SSE's student-journey approach to quality assurance includes all the elements necessary to maintain an internationally competitive portfolio of programs, two of which enjoy very strong positions in the Financial Times rankings of masters programs. As Parts 1 and 2.1 make clear, students' progress through degree programs provide the structure for three phases of quality work. Likewise, programs are the primary focal points in SSE's quality dialogues with CEMS and FT, and they are a substantial part of the dialogues with UKÄ and EFMD/EQUIS. This approach to quality assurance includes clear allocation of responsibilities regarding the launch and closure of programs and the continuous improvement of all ongoing programs. For the design of new programs or re-design of existing ones, the program-development process draws upon a body of best practices that the School has refined as it evolved from essentially a one-program national institution at the end of the previous century to a multi-program international institution during the opening decades of this one.

As 2.1 makes clear, the Board of Directors sets the School's budget and long-term strategy, and then SSE's governance structure posits responsibility for the portfolio and its quality with SSE's Faculty & Program Board, the School's highest academic decision-making body. It is supported in its work across all programs by the VPDP. Strong operational responsibility for each program devolves to Program Directors, who are supported in their work by a Program Committee (one for each degree level) and a Program Advisory Board, whose members provide advice from the business community on, among other things, that community's expectations for graduates.

In managing the program portfolio, the Faculty & Program Board draws upon information from each element in SSE's quality-assurance system. Participant quality is a prerequisite if program outcomes are to match program goals, so this body receives input on student applications, admissions, and academic progress. It also receives information on faculty recruitment and of course on progression through the SSE's tenure track as it makes formal tenure decisions (with recommendations from the Tenure Review Committee). Through regular quality reports from the VPDP, the Faculty & Program Board receives the output of all quality assessments regarding courses and programs. Because SSE's educational programs are successful only if they launch meaningful careers for their graduates, the Faculty & Program Board also weighs Phase 3 data on graduate placement into its ongoing assessment of the portfolio. Likewise, the Faculty and Program Board receives the feedback from all quality dialogues with external quality partners, dialogues that have often influenced decisions about the composition of SSE's portfolio, as illustrated below. Moreover, because two students (the President of the Association and the President of the Education Committee) sit on the 13-member board, there is an effective channel for complementing information from the quality system with additional student perspectives.

The Faculty & Program Board does not work in a vacuum with the information produced by the quality system. Instead, what guides that work are the strategic priorities inherent in SSE's overarching mission and its current understanding of strategic necessities. That work is also guided by a program logic that has evolved at SSE during its transition from a single-program provider to a multi-program provider. While SSE did offer PhD programs alongside its *Civilekonom* program throughout the second half of the 1900s, there was not a prominent program logic at either level of the offering. The PhD programs operated with an apprenticeship logic, with very close working relationships between candidates and supervisors, a logic that was wholly appropriate for the size of the programs and disciplinary cultures of that era. The *Civilekonom* program operated largely with a logic of accumulation, whereby students' learning experience was a course-upon-course, year-upon-year experience, with the only didactic progressions being from basic to advanced and from general to specialized.

The program logic that developed at SSE encompasses both strategic and operational considerations, which range from curricular development through to classroom-delivery and assessment formats. At the most strategic level, SSE's mission requires that the School prepares graduates with a broad set of competencies, and therefore it requires a broad set of programs. Those programs must capture that breadth distinctly by meeting the needs of specific types of students and specific prospective employers, and they must do that in ways that these students and employers can easily understand. In other words, they must fit internationally recognizable market segments. SSE's program logic also sets recruitment targets, which initially applied to MSc and PhD programs but will eventually apply to all programs when both BSc programs are fully internationalized. These targets aim for cohorts that are 50% international and 50% Swedish in order to reflect the School's positioning as an international business school with a commitment to its strong Swedish roots. That positioning attracts international students knowledgeable about SSE and Swedish firms and interested in working with Swedish students in an international setting. Of that 50% international enrollment, SSE targets 33% from fee-paying countries outside the EU/EEA or Switzerland. (In support of that target, SSE offers a number of scholarships for students required to pay tuition fees. The School awards these scholarships on a competitive basis after a selection committee weights the following criteria: personal motivation, academic excellence, relevant extracurricular activities, program cohort diversity and fair distribution of scholarships across the programs.) Finally, the rankings that shape SSE's quality dialogue with the Financial Times are also a strategic consideration, and the Faculty & Program Board weighs the strategic value of ranking two programs in its work with the portfolio. At present SSE's MSc in International Business ranks 12 globally and its MSc in Finance ranks 18 globally.

Curriculum development is a central aspect of work with the program portfolio, and several key features characterize SSE's work with curricula once the Faculty & Program Board decides to add or modify a program. One is that this board delegates developmental work to a working group chaired by the relevant Program Director or prospective Program Director. She gathers expertise from each department (in cases of multi-disciplinary programs like the BSc Business & Economics) or across a department (in single-discipline programs like the MSc in Accounting, Valuation & Financial Management). SSE's Director of Pedagogical Development lends her expertise, as do one or two student representatives. There are three tasks essential to such a group's success. Two have evolved over time as best practices at SSE, and the third is relatively new. One established practice is benchmarking of similar programs offered by SSE's international peers/competitors. The other established practice is consultation with prospective employers. Program-specific advisory boards provide one avenue for these consultations, and SSE's rich network of corporate partners provides another. In particular cases, other external stakeholders may also be relevant, for instance the Swedish Accounting Standards Board in the development of the MSc in Accounting, Valuation & Financial Management. The new task follows from the 2018 adoption of a set of educational aims applicable to all the School's programs. Expressed through the acronym FREE, those aims combine aspects of traditional academic learning with a high ambition for the personal development of SSE graduates, who, ideally, will be **F**act and science-minded, **R**eflective and self-aware, **E**mpathetic and culturally literate, and **E**ntrepreneurial and socially responsible.

All three of these tasks help to define program content. Benchmarking does this by ensuring that SSE's programs fit into internationally recognizable market segments, where there is generally a broad international consensus over appropriate content and outcomes. Consultations with future graduates' potential employers help to define what competence graduates will require, i.e. what knowledge, skill, and perspectives a program must impart. FREE insists upon elements of critical thinking and personal development that may well surpass what is typical for business schools' programs. In practical terms, all this work helps define program goals, typically expressed as ILOs.

Together with disciplinary considerations, these three tasks essentially define a program's content, whether it is the creation of a new program or the substantial revision of an existing one. Content, however, is only one dimension of curriculum development at SSE. In working with the program portfolio, the Faculty & Program Board, and any working group to which it delegates operational planning work, must also ensure that a program's learning processes incorporate the features that constitute a meaningful learning journey through one of SSE's degree programs. These features are: a) close collaboration with a community of practitioners that includes the private, public, and not-for-profit sectors; b) a relationship between teaching and research whereby the former is based upon the latter in terms of either research perspectives, current research findings, or both; c) teaching and assessment formats that require active learning by students; and d) the constructive alignment of course-level and program-level goals with both instructional activity and assessment.

The final phase of operational curriculum development is also executed by the working groups mentioned above, and this work too is overseen and ultimately approved by the Faculty & Program Board. It consists of selecting courses, distinguishing obligatory and elective courses (where appropriate), and defining their didactic progression. Initially, this work is wholly program specific and shaped by the market/disciplinary consensus over what constitutes, for instance, an MScs degree in economics or a specialization in such a program. Later, work is guided by the learning-journey metaphor and a prospective learner's ideal progression through the program in question.

The discussion above describes the procedures SSE's Faculty & Program Board employs as it works with the expansion side of program-portfolio management. Its work with contraction relies upon the same strategic considerations, but the removal of programs requires no delegation of operational curriculum development. However, in contractions of the portfolio involving program merger, the processes described above apply.

SSE closes programs when information from the quality-assurance system indicates that a program fails to fulfill the strategic and practical demands, spelled out above, that SSE has for its programs. 2014 saw the most recent program contraction at SSE, and that case is illustrative. At that time, SSE's portfolio included three MSc programs in management: an MSc in International Business

(MIB); an MSc in Business and Management with a specialization option in Management (MBM); and an MSc in General Management (GM). Each had their strengths, and there were differences among the programs. The newest of these, MIB, was added to the portfolio in 2013 to compete in the Financial Times rankings of masters programs in management and to improve the integration of the CEMS joint degree in international management. It succeeded with both aims, and it continues to do so. GM targeted students whose undergraduate education covered areas other than business and economics and gave its graduates tools for adapting their skills and knowledge in, for instance, engineering, medicine, law, or journalism, to careers in business. In that respect it functioned like a pre-experience or low-experience MBA. The Management specialization of the MBM extended the goals and methods of the undergraduate specialization in management into a more advanced level.

However, this part of the portfolio did not show how it could distinctly meet the needs of specific students and employers, and information produced by the quality system made this clear. In the case of GM, even though offers went out to between 50 and 60 well-qualified applicants every year (2009-2014), the number of fully qualified applicants gradually declined from a peak of 155 to a low of 79. Even more telling was that a growing proportion of well-qualified applicants were declining their offers. Always high with between a quarter and a third of all offers declined, the 2014 figure reached 50%. In the case of MBM, application and enrollment data were marginally stronger, but information from Phases 3 quality assurance, i.e. data on graduates' placement and career development, was troubling. While SSE's initial placement data showed that graduates were finding jobs, data on salaries and career development compiled for quality dialogues with the Financial Times showed that these graduates were neither earning nor advancing as SSE graduates could reasonably expect. Therefore, the Faculty & Program Board acted to modify the portfolio. It closed the GM program and delegated to a working group the operational task of reconfiguring MBM as a program focused on innovation, change, and business creation and development.

Program closings, however, are relatively rare events. Much more common is the ongoing work of strategically improving programs and thus improving the portfolio. This, too, is the responsibility of the Faculty & Program Board, a responsibility it meets by drawing on information from SSE's quality-assurance system. A recent example of strategic improvement concerns the BSc in Retail Management.

Strategically and operationally, this program is very successful. Phase 1 quality work shows a strong appeal for prospective students with 38 applicants for each of 60 places in 2016 and 25 per place in 2017 and 28 per place in 2018. Phase 2 quality work leads to continuous improvement in course delivery and has done since the program's inception in 2008. Likewise, Phase 3 quality work indicates that the program provides graduates with skills and knowledge that make them attractive employers in the retail sector. This is unsurprising in that BSc in Retail Management was designed to meet an expressed business need: an undergraduate education to prepare future managers for the retail sector, and one of its core features is a unique collaboration with industry. Moreover, the program provides best-practice examples at SSE of research integration, active learning, and the constructive alignment of goals, instruction, and assessment.

However, in quality dialogues with EFMD/EQUIS, SSE received important feedback regarding its international positioning. In brief, an international business school ought to open each level of its program offering to international students. In practice, in Sweden, this means adopting English as the medium of instruction and academic lingua franca. Therefore, after reflection and deliberation, the Faculty & Program Board decided to open BSc in Retail Management to international students and adopt English as the teaching language from the fall of 2018. This coincided with the gradual introduction of operational improvements discussed in conjunction with the improvement cycle below. Subsequently, the Faculty & Program Board decided also to open the BSc in Business &

Economics to international students and thereby to internationalize SSE's entire program offering. In this case, that internationalization coincides with other strategic revisions, and a working group is currently working through the program-development process described above to bring about substantial improvements in this program.

In summary, acting on information provided by the quality-assurance system, the Faculty and Program Board manages SSE's program portfolio effectively. It does this through strategic expansion, contraction, and modification of the program offering and with support from other actors, especially the VPDP and Program Directors. For more operational improvements in individual programs, this board delegates significant responsibility to Program Directors, who work with the VPDP, a Program Committee, and an Advisory Board. For operational improvements to program's constituent courses, the Faculty & Program Board delegates significant responsibility to Course Directors and their Department Heads. Operational improvements of these kinds are the focus of the following section.

<u>The improvement cycle at SSE</u>

This section explains the principles driving SSE's improvement cycle and then provides a set of illustrations that show different parts of its quality-assurance system (explained in Part 1) ensuring that all of SSE's programs and courses maintain a high level of quality and continuously improve. The point of departure for this quality work is that SSE's courses and programs do maintain and improve quality by designing and executing the elements of a successful learning journey, those elements being a) collaboration with practitioners; b) integration of research into teaching; c) teaching and assessment that requires active learning; d) the explicit alignment of goals, instruction, and assessment. There is ample feedback from the quality system to maintain this guiding assumption.

Peer reviewers in SSE's 2018 EQUIS re-accreditation identified the School's corporate connections as best practice, which speaks to the collaboration with practitioners in the School's programs and courses (Appendix 1, EQUIS Quality Profile, p. 2). Likewise, the 2018 CEMS peer review drew a similar conclusion and identified one of SSE's strengths as the "strong presence of corporate partners in the school" (Appendix II). These outcomes of quality dialogues affirm the presence of practitioners that enhances the quality and relevance of SSE's courses and programs, and they endorse SSE's vision to emerge as a global benchmark for industry collaboration. Nevertheless, SSE's annual program evaluation of BSc and MSc programs asks students to assess the value of collaboration by responding to the following statement on a ten-point scale ranging from "I agree strongly" to "I disagree strongly": "SSE aims to be recognized as a global benchmark for industry and society collaboration. The integration of practice in the program has been done in a way that has contributed to my learning." 2018 results are consistent with the feedback from SSE's dialogues with external quality partners. The mean score across programs was 7.5, with a range from 6 in the MSc program in Economics to 8.7 in MSc program in International Business, which indicates that valuable collaboration with practitioners is the norm at SSE.

The same EQUIS peer reviewers identified as best practice both SSE's research output and the positioning of research within the School. While this does not automatically assure the integration of research into teaching, it speaks to the organizational capability for such integration, especially in an organization where 92% of the faculty hold doctoral degrees and nearly all of them are active researchers. Nevertheless, annual program evaluations assess the integration of research into teaching, and their results affirm that students experience their programs as being richly informed by current research and see their course instructors as practicing researchers. The two assessment statements on research are:

1) "SSE's mission is to offer research-based education. The integration of research into the program has been done in a way that has contributed to my learning."

2) “The faculty in the program has demonstrated a high level of research skills.”
Again, 2018 results are consistent with the feedback from SSE’s dialogues with external quality partners. The mean score across programs for 1) was 7.7, with a range from 7.1 in the BSc program in Business & Economics to 8.5 in the MSc program in Economics; for 2) it was 8.2, with a range from 7.6 in the BSc program in Business & Economics to 8.6 in the MSc program in Accounting and Financial Management. In PhD programs, the mean score for 1) was 6.9, with a range from 5.2 in Business Administration to 8.6 in in Finance; 2) was 8,3, with a range from 6.7 in Business Administration to 9.2 in Economics. Taken together, these evaluations again confirm the judgment of an SSE quality partner that characterize that research integration as the norm at SSE.

At SSE, active learning takes many forms, often project or problem driven, often in groups, and often in collaboration with the practitioners mentioned above. While only the last of these is an object of direct formal quality assessment, all of these pathways to active learning permeate SSE’s pedagogical culture to the extent that the School’s assessment policy places a ceiling on the proportion of group assessment for any given course, a 50% ceiling. In addition, the School assesses the efficacy of its active-learning culture indirectly. It does this by charting the transition of SSE’s students into active, often project intensive professional roles, and by following their progress in these roles. Thus, Phase 3 assessment of graduate placement provides indirect feedback showing that successful active learning is the norm in the School’s courses and programs.

Constructive alignment has emerged in this century as the cornerstone of successful design in higher education. At program, and especially course, level, it calls for teachers to define their goals (intended learning outcomes or ILOs) explicitly, use those ILOs to guide instruction, regardless of the format that instruction may take, and finally to ensure that only learning that follows from those goals constitute grounds for assessment, again regardless of the form an assessment takes. Among the primary advantages of aligned design and delivery are clarity of intention and fairness of assessment. Explicit alignment of this kind has helped guide design and delivery at SSE since its adoption of Bologna-model degree structures in 2007. Program development includes the definition of ILOs, as pointed out above. Within programs, all courses do so as well and publish intended outcomes in their course description. When Program Committees make decisions on the approval of new courses, well defined, achievable, and measurable ILOs are among their criteria. Parallel to this structural implementation, annual program evaluations assess whether students experience their courses as being aligned. The relevant assessment statement is:

> “Overall the different assessment methods used during the program have been clear and fair.”

Again, 2018 results are affirmative, which is not to say that individual courses or programs cannot continue to clarify their aims and align them more precisely or more explicitly with instruction and assessment. The mean score across programs was 7.1, with a range from 6.1 in the BSc in Business & Economics to 7.6 in the MSc in Accounting, Valuation & Financial Management, which indicates that constructive alignment is the norm at SSE.

The improvement cycle exists at SSE to raise both the floor and the ceiling for quality in the School’s education work. Examples show that this process begins with information working its way through the quality system, information that indicates that one or more stakeholders is not satisfied with the quality of a program or a course or, more commonly, a Course Director, Program Director or other stakeholder has identified opportunities for improving upon a successful course or program.

One example comes from an obligatory course in the MSc in Economics. Despite the Course Director’s efforts to improve it, perception of course quality was low and falling, with overall-satisfaction scores on end-of-course evaluations of 3.1 (of 7 possible) in academic 2014-15, 2.6 in 2015-16, and 2.2 in 2016-17. The relevant Department Head and Program Director conferred and made a staffing change. The new Course Director implemented several improvements. In her own words: "I changed the structure of the course materials and the approach substantially although the goals of the course remained similar". The course-evaluation figure for 2017-18 was 5.8, for 2018-19 was 5.9. Information from course evaluations led first to managerial action and then to pedagogical action, which led to a substantial and sustainable improvement in course quality. As it happened, this particular improvement resonated throughout the quality system when the Course Director received one of the pedagogical achievement awards described as an incentive within SSE's faculty-development work in 2.2 above.

An obligatory course in the BSc in Business & Economics provides another example of raising the quality floor in response to the results on regular, central course evaluations. In these obligatory courses, SSE faces the challenge of large cohorts, typically up to 300. After exemplary efforts by the Course Director, overall satisfaction improved from 2.85 in 2014 to 5.1 in 2015, so quality improved markedly. However, what is most telling in this example is range of actors involved. The first poor evaluation results naturally led to a discussion between the relevant Department Head and the Course Director. The second results convinced the Department Head of the need for a broader intervention in order to improve quality. At that stage, the Director of Pedagogical Development joined the dialogue and began an individual coaching program with the Course Director. That program framed quality improvement as a change-management project, with its attendant method of diagnosis (why didn't the course work?)--goal formulation (what should the course achieve?)--assessment (how will success be recognized?). With this faculty support, the Course Director worked to design and implement the changes necessary to improve quality substantially, even dramatically.

As explained throughout this report, course evaluations are just one element in a three-phase assessment system complemented by quality dialogues with external partners, and in the following example, the impetus driving the improvement cycle was a body of information developed through several assessment forms and feedback loops. These included focus group input, program evaluations, and extensive dialogue between student representatives and their Program Director. All courses in the BSc in Retail Management are obligatory, and this example concerns a two-course sequence in the same subject that was adapted and expanded into a three-course sequence designed to meet the specific needs of this program. Generally speaking, those original courses were well designed and well executed. Their content, learning processes, and assessments were much like those of similar courses in the BSc Business and Economics, where they are successful, and very much like courses in this discipline at most international business schools. That similarity, in fact, proved to be what drove the need for improvement. As this a program developed and delivered in close cooperation with partners from the retail sector, its courses and other activities aim to teach students to understand business and businesses through a retail lens. This approach to disciplinary content and the program's deep involvement with industry also contributes to a recognizable learning culture. This culture in turn creates reasonable student expectations for consistency in this approach to content and learning, and those expectations create, in turn, a resistance to a more or less traditional sequence of courses with more general examples and cases drawn from a range of industries and sectors. With a high level of student involvement, the Program Director, disciplinary Department Head, and the three Course Directors (some new and some carry-overs) redesigned the courses. These were both more closely linked one to another (thus creating an obviously coherent disciplinary cluster) and more closely matched to the needs and expectations of retail-management students. Implementation was timed to match the program's switch to English-medium instruction in the fall of 2018, and the first of these courses delivered received 5.6 for overall satisfaction. Moreover, students who had not passed the more generic course on this topic, generally succeeded in passing the retail-adapted version.

While the examples above highlight the corrective dimension of improvement, most work with the improvement cycle at SSE improves on success, i.e. it raises the ceiling. The three examples that follow illustrate this kind of improvement.

The first is a program-wide improvement in the BSc in Retail Management that introduces a new teaching-and-learning format, tutoring. The Antonia Ax:son Johnson Tutorial Program provides students with a highly personalized learning experience. It helps them to develop their general intellectual capacity, thereby complementing the academic and practical content of the program's other elements. The program also includes seminars to support academic skills historically associated with the liberal arts tradition, for example rhetoric and academic writing. With their tutor, an SSE faculty member who interacts with students on courses and their work in the practitioner-driven Applied Retail Track, students discuss their experiences in those learning contexts and reflect on their own development. This improvement has its roots in the School's broad-based dialogue with the Ax:son Johnson organization, which is a corporate partner, is represented in the advisory board linked to the program, and is a Retail Club sponsor (Retail Clubs are the operational units in the Applied Retail Track). This dialogue led to a generous donation of 50M SEK to implement the program. Prior to implementation in the Fall of 2018, a working group including the Program Director, several students, and SSE's Director of Pedagogical Development, executed a version of the SSE curriculum-development model (described above) including stakeholder consultation and benchmarking visits to universities experienced in tutor-led instruction and the liberal arts. The program was launched successfully, and it promises to inspire similar initiatives throughout the School.

A second example is also a program-level improvement, here in the BSc Business & Economics. Global Challenges is a 16-credit track with four components. Identified as a track because its runs through the program's first two years, Global Challenges has four components, Knowing, Doing, Being, and Expressing. Together they aim to create an understanding of contemporary global challenges and, especially, of how tomorrow's leaders might successfully address them. This improvement also began in dialogue with an external stakeholder, in this case the Global Challenges Foundation, an organization committed to helping today's and tomorrow's leaders address those challenges. Here, too, a development team executed the consultation and benchmarking that characterizes SSE's larger-scale innovations. The track was introduced in 2016. That introduction, however, was not without its own challenges, largely concerning workload distribution, course administration, and appropriate expectations for learning in a pioneering field. This is unsurprising for a complex and ambitious innovation. Importantly, what followed illustrates how many aspects of SSE's quality work interact to drive improvement relatively seamlessly. Course Directors and academic departments clarified administrative routines, and students collaborated with the Course Directors to address the challenges more directly related to learning. That collaboration is described in the student contribution to SSE's 2019 SIP (Sharing Information on Progress) report to PRME (Principles for Responsible Management Education):

> "[Global Challenges] is an excellent example of how course directors have emphasised their will to involve student feedback in their course development processes. Since the start of the course several focus groups have taken place beyond the regular ones included in the school's quality assurance system of courses. Student feedback on how to improve the content of the course and make it even more of a valuable tool for developing skills in responsible leadership and sustainability has been very acknowledged and led to several changes, both in terms of course structure and course content".

A third and final example here addresses the improvement of an obligatory course in both SSE's MSc in International Business and the joint CEMS degree in international management. Most recently, the Course Director has added a new element of assessment, a four-minute film where students report on a project and develop communication skills relevant for the generation they will lead after graduating from SSE. She has also split the cohort in order to work with smaller groups without affecting their number of contact hours. These tweaks, if you will, contribute to a long-term ambition to make this course a case study in co-creation, where, to quote from the course description:

> "One of the many hot management topics is *co-creation* – and that is exactly what we will practice in this course. Instead of in advance saying that we will cover certain topics, will we instead explore, together and with the help of others, a number of relevant topics in global management - and co-create the course, to make it more relevant!"

Nevertheless, these are modest, incremental improvements, in contrast to the other ceiling-raising improvements described above. Therein lies their importance. These improvements have their roots almost solely in the Course Director's commitment to continuous improvement. They draw on her engagement with management research and her own pedagogical experience and expertise. Of course, she conducted an ongoing dialogue with students and follows feedback on quality assurance. Moreover, the relevant program is acknowledged at SSE for its valuable dialogues among the Program Director and all the faculty teaching in her program. But ultimately, these adjustments reflect SSE's culture of teaching and learning. Within that culture, reflective practice, and expectations of progress are always raising the ceiling.

Communicating improvement at SSE

SSE works to ensure that all of its work with quality assurance is transparent and that the outcomes of that work are available for the entire SSE community and for appropriate external stakeholders. This encompasses the outcomes of quality assessments of all kinds and the implementation of improvements that result from those assessments and their attendant follow-up work.

The most extensive quality assessment early in students' learning journey, i.e. phase one of the system, concerns admissions. Information about the composition of student intake is generally a point of pride, and the School publishes details of their collective accomplishments, such as average GPAs or scores from aptitude test. These appear on the SSE portal and feature in the President's information sessions with staff and with students. While this generally a point of pride, SSE acknowledges that despite an increasingly diverse student body, there remains a gender imbalance in some programs and first-generation academics (i.e. students whose parents do not have an academic degree) are badly under-represented. Therefore, this quality-assurance data is distributed through the same channel both to spur further improvements and to introduce new initiatives, such as the alternative admission track described at the end of this section. Innovations like alternative admissions are also communicated through all of the public marketing channels used to attract applicants to SSE's programs. Likewise, the recruitment of new faculty and promotions are generally widely publicized within the School. As in the case of student admissions, the demographics of the School's senior faculty reflect a serious gender imbalance. While this problem is partially a national one, partially an international one, and partially one particularly persistent in SSE's subject areas, the School acknowledges a need for improvement here too, and transparency about the problem is part of the School's approach to solving it.

The direct quality assessment of teaching and learning, phase two of the student-journey system, includes two types of course evaluation for each course, one annual program evaluation for each program, two focus-group meetings per semester for the BSc in Business & Economics, for the BSc in Retail Management, and for the MSc level. PhD programs execute the focus-group function through the Program Committee, which meets four times a year, and each program has regular conversations with students. The information flow from each assessment is described in Parts 1 and 2.1. Mid-course evaluations vary in format, and Course Directors use them formatively and no results are published. For end-of-course evaluations, quantitative course reports are also uploaded for students on the SSE Portal. In these reports, all results referring to individual teachers are aggregated. Program-evaluation results are communicated to the VPDP and Program Directors by quality-assessment specialists in the Program Office. Focus groups produce only qualitative results that are used barometrically by the actors within the information flows describe in Parts 1 and 2.1. The same applies to the on-going dialogues between Program Directors and student representatives. Key findings from these assessments are, however, included in the VPDP's semi-annual quality reports to the Faculty & Program Board.

Phase-three results concern graduate placement, and those results are widely circulated and published in an annual placement report. It covers BSc and MSc graduates and in 2019 expands to cover PhD graduates. As a complement to that assessment and its follow up, SSE also collects data on graduate placement and career development for its quality dialogue with FT. That raw data is not published, but its aggregation through the Financial Times ranking process is circulated widely throughout the School and of course published in the Financial Times.

For SSE's quality dialogues with other external partners, the circulation of outcomes varies. Although the outcome of assessments executed by UKÄ are not published, those results are also circulated widely throughout the School. While they are not published, EFMD/EQUIS accreditations are a matter of public record although self-assessment and peer-review reports are not. Those reports are published, however, on the SSE portal, and the entire dialogue features prominently in the President's information sessions. CEMS is an alliance of international business schools, and the outcome of those dialogues is regarded as proprietary. Within SSE, details of those outcomes circulate within the CEMS team and the School's Executive Management Team, but the general outcome also circulates widely.

Similarly, there is variation in the communication around improvements implemented because of quality work. Generally, higher order improvements are communicated extensively. For instance, changes in the program portfolio and improvements involving external stakeholders like the Global Challenges initiative and the Antonia Ax:son Johnson Tutorial Program are subjects of press releases and extensive internal communication. Innovations at the individual course level are, however, communicated unevenly. SSE has guidelines in place that require Course Directors to communicate at the start of each course any changes initiated since the previous iteration of the course. This applies emphatically to changes that follow from student input into quality assessment, most typically course evaluations. SSE's course web also includes a function for Course Directors to summarize all such changes and list them alongside course descriptions. However, Course Directors' performance in these areas is subpar at present. Focus groups, Student Association representatives, and other feedback channels all indicate that many Course Directors fail to communicate these changes, a failure that has negative consequences for the quality-assurance system as a whole. Therefore, from academic 2019-20, SSE will institute new follow-up mechanisms to ensure compliance with these guidelines.

<u>Procedures at SSE for admission, credit transfer, awarding of degrees, and student appeals</u>

As an independent higher education provider, SSE is obliged to describe its procedures for admitting students, granting credit transfers, awarding degrees, and handling student appeals. This section does so in order to show that those procedures are sound, transparent, and reliable.

Relevant policy and regulatory documents covering these processes are the programs' Admissions Regulations and Student Handbooks, the Disciplinary Regulations (latest amendments ratified by the Board on 4 October 2012) and Degree regulations (amendments ratified by the Board of Directors on September 13, 2016), which have detailed rules and regulations for all aspects of the admission procedure, the degrees awarded and their requirements, and appeal processes. The degrees awarded by SSE, a Swedish independent higher education provider, are equal to and confer upon their holders the same academic rights and privileges as degrees awarded by other recognized Swedish HEIs. This was confirmed by UKÄ in its letter addressed to SSE dated May 9, 2017, giving SSE the right to grant degrees for the first, second and third cycle.

Admission procedures

As mentioned earlier, the Faculty & Program Board governs educational content and quality, which includes admission rules for programs. In all programs, high quality applicants mean that SSE has maintained its high admission standards and continues to work towards greater diversity with the introduction of an additional admissions channel to BSc programs, complementing grades with interviews and a test – Thinking Skills Assessment – that is expected to broaden the social base of the SSE student body. The BSc programs have 15 to 25 applicants per place, and only the top percentile of national secondary school students have the grades needed for admission. The School's MSc programs are highly competitive internationally.

Admissions to all programs are decided by admissions boards, one for each program level. The VPDP chairs all admissions boards, which also include the Program Directors and elected faculty representatives. Student representatives and program administration managers participate in the meetings but have no vote. Admission processes and policies are adapted to each program level and focus on attracting the very best applicants from a diverse range of backgrounds.

The Program Office, a professional services unit, manages the administration of recruitment and admissions processes. At the BSc and MSc levels, these processes conclude with an external audit to ensure that admissions processes adhere to the relevant regulations. The current auditor is Judge Johan Hirschfeldt (retired).

The three program levels will be discussed in turn, starting with the BSc programs.

Admission to BSc programs proceeds via four channels. SSE delegate the administration of two such channels, including the largest, which accounts for at least 75% of intake, to the Swedish Council for Higher Education (SCHE). The first and largest channel assesses applicants on the basis of secondary school GPA, and historically near perfect GPAs have been required for admission to the BSc Program in Business and Economics; therefore, only some 5-10% of applicants receive offers. The second channel, also administered through (SCHE), assesses applicants on their national aptitude test scores (Högskoleprovet), and it accounts for at least 5% of offers. A third channel assesses applicants on special merits, and accounts for another 5% (minium) of offers. Finally, alternative admission accounts for another 10% of offers. These last two tracks are described in more detail below. For the Retail Management program, a minimum 75% are admitted on secondary school GPA, and the minimum quotas for the other channels mirror those for Business & Economics.

To further broaden recruitment to the programs, SSE has developed two admission channels that it administers itself. One of these is special merit admissions, and it has been operating successfully for many years. The aim of this channel is to recognize intellectual diversity and variable manifestation of the talent and discipline that are predictors of success. Students admitted through the special merits channel have excelled in a field such as art, music, sports, entrepreneurship or technology while in secondary school. These students have expressed their talent and aptitude through exceptional aaccomplishment in parallel with strong academic results. The other was introduced in 2017 with the aim of further diversifying the SSE student body. Admission through this channel involves an increasingly restrictive three-step application process: 1. submission of the application; 2. an analytical test; and 3. a personal interview. Successful applicants in both admission channels must fulfill all the prerequisite requirements defined in the admissions regulation and have a GPA from secondary school of at least 17.00 (of 20).

On the MSc level, SSE competes internationally for top students. With over 1 800 applications to the MSc programs for approximately 300 positions, the programs are highly competitive. The evaluation and admission process for MSc programs can be summarized as follows: Applications are submitted centrally via the SSE application platform (Full Fabric) and are screened by the MSc Program Manager. The screening verifies test results (GMAT/GRE/TOEFL/IELTS) and authenticates transcripts and other documents. As a next step, personnel from the Program Office evaluate all the qualified applications using criteria developed in collaboration with the Program Directors. The criteria reflect general admissions requirements and program-specific qualifications. Program Directors then present ranked lists of applicants to the Board of Admissions for MSc Programs. This body makes all formal admission decisions. The Chair has the deciding vote. The board's decision reflects an overall assessment of the ranked applications. Along with program-specific considerations, they weigh GMAT (or GRE) scores, English language skills, letter of motivation, course content and proof of academic excellence in an applicant's undergraduate degree. In this way, SSE ensures that it admits only very accomplished students to its MSc programs. The average GMAT score of students admitted over the past five years is 691 (85^{th} percentile) while the average GRE quantitative score over the same span was 163 (78^{th} percentile).

Because of its close interaction with SSE's contribution to the joint CEMS Masters in International Management, the MSc in International Business includes an assessment center. Each year, SSE receives some 200 applications that fulfill the admissions criteria. Using the program's admission criteria, SSE invites the top 110 applicants to an assessment center in Stockholm or via Skype for applicants outside of Europe. At the assessment center, each applicant makes a case presentation and goes through an interview. Assessors include HR specialist from SSE and CEMS corporate partners along with program alumni and occasionally SSE faculty and senior professional services staff. They assess students' motivation, maturity, integrity, employability, communication skills and international orientation, which are key factors at this stage of the admission's process. After the assessment center, the Program Director makes a recommendation to MSc Admissions Board, which makes formal admission decisions.

At the PhD level, all programs are highly competitive and only about 3% of applicants are offered a position each year. Of over 600 applications received for the 2018 intake. SSE accepts 20-25 students every year across all programs and and departments. In addition, SSE enrolls a number of practitioners into its PhD programs every year, in which case their companies sponsor the students. These practitioners maintain a strong link with their sponsoring company, and they must meet the same requirements as other doctoral students for both admission and graduation.

Applications to PhD programs are submitted centrally via the SSE application platform, where candidates also submit contact information for two or three referees. Applications are screened by an admission team selected specifically for each program composed of two or three SSE faculty members. At the same time, the program manager for PhD Programs validates test results (GMAT/GRE/TOEFL/IELTS) and authenticates the documents submitted. Selection of the candidates is based on an overall assessment of the application, including test scores, previous university degrees, writing skills, statement of purpose and submitted reference forms. Skype interviews are sometimes used as extra assessment tool. As a next step, each admission team presents a ranked list of candidates to the PhD Admission Board. Once the list of accepted applicants is determined, each department can make offers to the candidates on the list until a department's admission quota is filled. The final list of accepted candidates is approved once again by the PhD Admission Board before the candidates can enroll in the respective program. Through this process, SSE identifies promising researchers and ensures that only the most qualified and motivated candidates are enrolled into the PhD Programs. The process also weighs gender and diversity balance at the departmental level.

In summary, the quality of students is one of SSE's principal assets, and their recruitment and retention features prominently throughout the School's student-journey model for quality assurance. The application processes are highly selective, and the students recruited match the School's academic expectations well. As mentioned above, SSE works continuously with diversifying the student body, including an expansion of the nationalities represented. SSE also emphasizes language skills in its admission processes. At the BSc level, admission requirements include secondary school qualifications in English and a second foreign language. For the BSc in Retail Management, all MSc and PhD programs, advanced English language skills are required for all students. The MSc in International Business requires alongside English two additional languages upon graduation.

Credit transfer

SSE has a restrictive policy on credit transfer. Transfer is limited to exchange programs, double degrees and similar collaboration, strategic partnerships and transfers between SSE programs. Therefore, SSE does not transfer credits earned by freemover, i.e. a) students who studied at another HEIs hoping to complete their degree at SSE, b) students hoping to take a course/module at SSE without registering in a degree program, c) SSE students who have completed a course/module at an HEI with no valid bilateral exchange agreement with SSE.

All exchange students from SSE receive information about SSE's credit transfer policy prior to their departure. This policy requires that an SSE faculty member approve each students' courses prior to their departure for the partner universities. For MSc programs, that task falls to the Program Directors, and for BSc programs, it falls to a designate faculty member in each of SSE's five specialization subjects namely: marketing, accounting, finance, economics and management. Across programs, it falls to the Director for the Center of Modern Languages.

Credit transfer at the PhD level is most common within SSE's strategic partnerships with Stockholm University (for Economics and Finance) and with Uppsala University (for Business Administration). Courses covered by those programs (both mandatory and electives) are pre-approved for credit transfer by the Program Directors. For any other courses taken outside of SSE, each student's supervisor determines whether and how many credits qualify for transfer.
At the MSc level, SSE has either a double degree or international fellows program with five HEIs. There is program-specific variation in credit-transfer approval. Common to all, however, is a high level of organizational trust that follows from the inter-organizational agreement. Complementary to that trust are SSE's approval and processing regulations, summarized below.

Wallenberg International Fellows Program: This process resembles that of an MSc level exchange with Georgetown University. Students complete a study plan based upon the courses available. This receives preliminary approval from the relevant Program Director. When students return, their Program Directors approve the completed course of studies, and the Program Office registers the credits.

K-A Bonnier International Fellows Program: This process begins with a pre-approved list of courses at the National University of Singapore (NUS) that corresponds to mandatory courses in SSE's MSc in Business and Management. It continues with students choosing electives freely from courses offered by the Management Program at NUS. Communicating those choices, students file a study plan for their second semester at NUS. When students return, their Program Directors approve the completed course of studies, and the Program Office registers the credits.

Double degree with Sciences Po: This credit-transfer process also begins with a list of pre-approved courses. During their year at Sciences Po, students can complement this list in dialogue with the Program Office and, if necessary, the relevant Program Director at SSE. In light of the courses they selected at Sciences Po, students receive guidelines on what courses they need to take at SSE in year two of their program. When students return, their Program Directors approve the completed course of studies, and the Program Office registers the credits.

Double degrees with the University of St. Gallen and Bocconi University: These programs are administered by the Department of Economics and the Department of Finance respectively. There Program Directors approve credit transfer, and when students return, their Program Directors approve the completed course of studies, and the Program Office registers the credits.

Any transfer of course credits and grades internally between SSE programs at the same level requires the approval of both Program Directors concerned. An SSE course (and its grade) can only be counted towards one SSE degree, and only towards a degree at the level the student was registered in when the courses were taken (with the exception of parallel MSc-PhD enrollment). Because SSE participates in the Stockholm School of Entrepreneurship (SSES) consortium (along with the Royal Institute of Technology, the Karolinska Institute, Stockholm University, and the University of Arts, Crafts, and Design), students who complete an SSES course while enrolled in another consortium HEI, can transfer those credits if they subsequently enroll in a degree program at SSE. However, restrictive conditions apply, and in practice, credit transfer of this kind is rare.

Awarding degrees
As an independent higher education provider, SSE are awarded degree-granting powers by the government. SSE is, however, unique in the Swedish higher education landscape. The School has a bilateral agreement with the government giving the School the right to confer bachelor, master and doctoral degrees. SSE is thus free to set its own standards, to select and admit its students and to design its own programs. The agreement specifies a minimum number of students, 1 600, and an annual government contribution. Degree structures in SSE aligns with the Bologna Accords as of July 2007 as regulated by the Higher Education Act. The general degree programs now available are a 180 ECTS BSc degree, a 120 ECTS MSc degree, and a 240 ECTS PhD degree. In addition, SSE subjects itself to all UKÄ's requests for evaluation and supervision.

BSc students have a maximum of five years to complete their degree. The average time to graduation is three years and three months. MSc students have a maximum of three years to complete their degree and average time to completion at that level is two years. One out of five BSc students starting in 2007-2012 have been deregistered without a degree. Among MSc students starting in 2009-2014, one out of ten have been deregistered without a degree.
SSE has a double degree strategy at the MSc level and have, as of 2019, a number of existing double degrees (listed above) with leading international HEIs.

Appeal processes
Relevant policy and regulatory documents covering reasons/grounds for student appeals are the programs' Admissions Regulations, Student Handbooks, the Disciplinary Regulations and Degree Regulations, which have detailed rules and regulations for all aspects of the appeal process.

The Student Handbook is a compilation of information, regulations and guidelines that are particularly relevant to students at SSE. The overall purpose is to clarify what regulations apply and to help students complete their studies. These academic regulations govern the relationship between SSE and its students. The regulations stipulate and specify the rights and responsibilities of a student. One of the basic responsibilities is to stay informed about regulations and guidelines that are in effect while enrolled at SSE.

Every student signs a formal agreement, the STUDENT PLEDGE during the registration process. It has wording that a student must observe while at SSE. This document defined the relationship between SSE and the student during her time at SSE. However, this document does not have any wording regarding the causes for appeal nor for the appeal process itself.

According to the SSE regulations, the following decisions are subject to appeal:

- Decisions concerning admission
- Grades received
- Disciplinary measures taken against a student
- Deregistration decisions
- Exceptions to set study time limits and preconditions/prerequisites for further studies, exchange semester eligibility

Admission
If an applicant is dissatisfied after being denied admission, she can appeal of any decision regarding admission (all levels) to the President of SSE.

Grades
SSE applies a restrictive policy on the appeal of grades. Permissible appeals apply only to cases in which an obvious error has been made in the assessment of student work. SSE's Student Handbooks instruct students to address requests for reassessments of course grades to the examiner responsible, and it stipulates that such cases will only be addressed when an obviously erroneous assessment has been made. *Obvious*, here, means that an error can be identified without more detailed analysis. Examples of obvious errors include but are not limited to transcription errors, examiners overlooking part of an answer or deliverable, and miscalculation of scores from an exam's or deliverable's subsections. Accordingly represents no obligation for the examiner to perform a new unbiased assessment of an answer or other performance. In such cases the correction of grades can work to the benefit or the detriment of the student in question.
The Student Handbook instructs students making such requests to explain in detail their purported causes for reconsideration. This request must be submitted in writing (by letter or e-mail) to the examiner responsible as soon as possible, but no more than two weeks after the announcement of the grade. If a student collects her assessed examination paper or other deliverable, she forfeits the right to request reassessment of the grade.

Disciplinary Measures
The SSE Disciplinary Regulations govern discipline and disciplinary measures that may be taken against students who violate these regulations SSE. The term "student" refers to anyone enrolled in one of SSE's first, second or third-cycle programs. According to Paragraph 4, disciplinary matters are to be dealt with by the SSE President. The student may appeal in writing to the Disciplinary Committee against the President's decision to suspend or expel. Appeals are to be lodged with the President within three weeks of the student being informed of the decision. The student must be informed of this right when the decision is communicated. Disciplinary measures may be taken no later than two years after the misdemeanour has been committed.

A student at the BSc and MSc levels can appeal a decision to suspend or expel. The SSE President makes disciplinary decisions, and a student may appeal a decision to suspend or expel to SSE's Disciplinary Committee. This committee reviews the fact of the case and decides to uphold or overturn the President's decision.

Deregistration

At SSE, there are four reasons for deregistering students enrolled in BSc and MSc degree programs. When students:

- have finalized their studies with, and applied for, a degree
- have requested deregistration without a degree
- have not met the study pace requirements
- have not met their degree requirements within the maximum period of study

Deregistration is carried out by the Office of Academic Support & Records in accordance with the regulations stipulated in the Student Handbook. A deregistered student may appeal the decision to the SSE President. These appeals are adjudicated in consultation with the Director of Academic Support & Records, and the President can either uphold or overturn the decision to deregister.

At the PhD level, the Student Handbook has detailed information regarding causes for deregistration in section 3.13.1. Deregistration can occur for only two reasons: a student requests it (with or without a degree) or the student's Department Head deregisters a student for failure to progress in accordance with her individual study plan. Such decisions are extremely rare because supervisors monitor students' progress, and there is regular communication between students and supervisors. Early indications of falling behind an individual study plan are subject to discussion, action plans, and in rare cases written warnings. SSE has one case currently under appeal to UKÄ (Reg. No. 31-00144-19), with SSE having filed its opinion on April 24, 2019. If the deregistration was involuntary, a PhD student may appeal the Department Head's decision in writing to the VPDP. The decision of the VPDP is final and cannot be appealed.

4. **Assessment area: Gender equality**

The HEI ensures through its quality work that gender equality is factored into the content, design and implementation of courses and programmes. Gender equality means that women and men have the same rights, obligations and opportunities. This involves both even gender distribution and highlighting attitudes, norms, values and ideals that impact the conditions facing women and men.[3]

The HEI systematically includes gender equality as part of its quality system and quality work. Using information that is produced within the quality system, the HEI identifies improvement needs and development needs. The HEI takes action and systematically improves the courses and programmes based on a gender equality perspective. The HEI has systematic procedures and processes for ensuring that planned measures or implemented measures are appropriately communicated to relevant stakeholders, both internal and external.

Assessment criterion:

4.1 The HEI uses procedures and processes to ensure that gender equality is systematically incorporated into the content, design and implementation of the programmes.

Guidelines for HEIs:

Show through its quality work how the HEI satisfies the assessment criterion within the area, for example by describing procedures and processes that contribute to it. The description is to show how the HEI works continuously to systematically incorporate gender equality into its courses and programmes. It should also include examples of goals and strategies that have been established in relation to the assessment area and assessment criterion. The description is to include how the HEI follows up that its goals are achieved, how it is decided whether the goals have been achieved and what measures the HEI takes if the goals have not been achieved. Also show how the HEI identifies areas for improvement through its quality work.

If there is a difference in how the quality work is carried out between different parts of the HEI or between different types of courses and programmes, these differences are to be described. If needed, refer to the policies, procedures and processes described in conjunction with the *Governance and organisation* assessment area.

Highlight other aspects deemed important for the HEI's systematic quality work within the assessment area.

Show evidence that quality work is going well and is effective, and that it systematically ensures equality in the programmes, based on information generated within the quality system.

The HEI's statement:

Gender Equality

Like many HEIs, and particularly many business schools, SSE has faced and continues to face challenges in achieving gender balance throughout its educational operations. Therefore, a gender perspective permeates the School's quality-assurance system in order to continually improve any imbalances and thereby address questions of both fairness and quality. This section identifies the elements of quality work focused specifically on gender equality, first, through all three phases of the student learning journey and, then, in SSE's quality dialogues with external partners. It describes each phase of quality work and each dialogue in turn by addressing first assessment of operations, then the information flow that follows from those assessments, some of the improvements implemented on the basis of that information, and finally how those improvements are communicated and themselves evaluated.

[3] See the Swedish Gender Equality Agency's website: www.jamstalldhetsmyndigheten.se

Gender equality and program participants at SSE

Phase 1 of SSE's quality assurance-work ensures the quality of all program participants, both students and faculty. From a gender perspective, this begins by monitoring the numbers of women and men applying to, receiving offers from, and enrolling in SSE's programs. This monitoring finds a persistent gender imbalance in most programs. Only the MSc in International Business generally has balanced intakes. In one, men are under-represented, the BSc in Retail Management, and in the others, women are. In PhD programs, however, each cohort is very small, and there are outlier admissions years when women are over-represented in some programs (Business Administration in 2017 & 2018, Finance in 2016). Therefore, a program population comprising the four latest admission cohorts would show women to be under-represented in Economics and Finance, with 28 and 35 percent respectively, and show good gender balance in Business Administration, with 53% women and 47% men.

The SSE's Program Office carries out the monitoring and reports results to key actors throughout the quality system for analysis and action to redress these imbalances. These actors include the Board of Directors, for whom it is a KPI of strategic importance because if Sweden is to remain competitive in the global economy, it requires talented and well-trained women leading organizations across society. Another actor is the VPDP, who reports in turn to the Faculty & Program Board, SSE's highest academic decision maker and the body responsible for SSE's admission regulations. The various Program Directors and Program Committees receive the data relevant to their programs and levels in order to consider whether the programs themselves (structure, content, faculty composition) contribute to or can redress the gender imbalances in applications, admissions, and enrollment. Finally, a key actor in this context is SSE's Equality and Diversity Manager, whose specific remit is to develop strategies to counter imbalances and monitor the implementation of initiatives to correct them. She reports on progress and other aspects of equality work at each Faculty & Program Board meeting.

As mentioned in Part 1 and 2.1, admissions data goes to SSE's External Relations unit, which includes a team responsible for program marketing. This team works continuously to improve the way the School is portrayed in the media and through various marketing channels. This includes featuring female role models in the School's own communication. One initiative was #handels24, a 24-hour competition for young women carried out in part on their social media accounts. The aim of the initiative was to challenge the stereotypical image some young women seem to have about SSE. The competition winners received paid summer internships with Swedbank and Diplomat Communications (a Stockholm PR firm), thereby addressing young women, and their social networks, who show interest in the kinds of careers that can follow from an SSE degree. Although this initiative was exciting and generated positive media attention, the School discontinued it after two years because the participants it attracted were young women already aware of and interested in the kinds of education SSE offers. Therefore, it failed to improve significantly the gender imbalance in applications and admissions.

SSE does work, however, explicitly with the projection of positive female role models, often in collaboration with the Student Association. One long-running element of that work is an annual Female Economist of the Year award, which provides its winner with an attractive internship at the sponsoring organization (e.g. Volvo, Spotify, Citibank, Boston Consulting) and executive-level mentoring. Other projects include SSE Sisters, a mentorship program where SSE students support other young women while they are in secondary school, and open inspiration evenings for young women considering their higher-education choices.

SSE's student ambassadors program is another successful intervention that aims to improve gender diversity within the student body. It works with face-to-face marketing of the School's BSc and MSc programs as student ambassadors participate in the School's recruiting events such as open house, information sessions, fairs, and, specifically for the BSc programs, visits to secondary schools in areas traditionally under-represented at SSE. In particular, ambassadors can offer a students' point of view to prospective students and share their experience of studying at SSE. In some cases, they even help prospective students in their decision-making process as they choose their next step in higher education. As both men and women participate, ambassadors can work to redress male under-representation in the BSc Retail Management program as well as female under-representation in other programs.

Historically, BSc ambassadors have worked domestically and MSc ambassadors both in Sweden and abroad, but that is now changing. Since 2018, the BSc in Retail Management has been open to international applicants, and the School markets the program accordingly. In 2020, the BSc in Business & Economics will follow suit, and the international marketing of SSE's largest program is in the planning stages. Important in the context of gender equality is the observation that one factor in deciding to internationalize the Business & Economics program was the opportunity it represents for improving upon the imbalance described above. Data from the Decline Surveys mentioned in 2.1 indicates that woman are more interested than men in pursuing an undergraduate degree internationally, and SSE is hoping to channel that interest into more applications from, offers to, and enrollments of talented young women.

Initiatives linked directly to admissions policy include the two BSc-level admissions reforms described in detail in 2.3 above, the special merits admission track and the alternative admissions tracks. These have shown mildly positive results since the inception of the alternative admissions track in 2017. In that two-year period, 34 students have enrolled through special merits, 17 of each gender. Alternative admissions reflected a familiar imbalance in its first year, with only ten women among the 28 enrolled, but in its second year, 2018, it too enrolled 14 of each gender. Further actions under consideration for addressing gender imbalance through admissions policy include emulating SSE's one gender-balanced program, the MSc in International Business, which uses an assessment center to broaden the range of abilities weighed in admission decisions, a broadening that seems to support gender balance without reducing the quality of SSE's highest ranked program, number 12 globally in the Financial Times' ranking of masters in management.

Phase-one quality work with program participants also monitors the gender composition of SSE's faculty. This is monitored by SSE's Human Resources unit, specifically the Equality and Diversity Manager. In her most recent report to the Faculty & Program Board, 2018 year-end data showed women to be under-represented at every level of the faculty, with the greatest disparity at the full-professor level. This data also goes to the Board of Directors in the reporting on strategic KPIs because faculty composition is a strategic consideration for the School. As members of the Faculty & Program Board, Department Heads already have this data, which they use in developing strategic recruitment plans, in entry-level recruitment and hiring, and in supporting assistant professors through the tenure-track process.

<u>Gender equality and the quality of instruction at SSE</u>
Phase two of SSE's quality-assurance work focuses intensely upon the quality of courses and programs. As made clear in Parts 1, 2.1, and 2.3, this phase of quality work is rich in assessments that foreground the learners' perspective through intensive student participation. The relevant assessments are: mid-course evaluations designed by Course Directors for gathering information about the on-going courses and making modifications on that basis; centralized end-of-course evaluation; annual program evaluations; quarterly focus-group meetings organized by program at the BSc level and at the degree level for MSc programs. For the PhD programs, this type of assessment takes place through the Program Committee, with nine student members and four meetings annually. In addition, all SSE Program Directors carry on regular dialogues with student representatives. Finally, the Equality & Diversity Manager again plays a role here as she is always

available to receive, investigate and help adjudicate any complaints about gender-based inequities, for example sexual harassment or bullying. Other phase-two quality work is less relevant to gender equality, specifically the work of monitoring student progress and grade distribution (i.e. the ceiling on Excellent grades).

All of these assessments reflect students' perception and experience of gender equality in their courses, programs, and study environment. One assessment brings that perception and experience to the forefront with a specific question on gender equality. The centralized end-of-course evaluation is the assessment form that each student meets most often throughout a program, and it specifically asks students to respond to the following statement on a seven-point scale ranging from Agree strongly to Disagree strongly:

> "In this course, everyone was treated equally and the aspects of equality and diversity were taken into account by the teacher in, for example, the selection of course materials and guest speakers as well as during lectures and classroom discussions".

In each of the three completed teaching periods of academic 2018-19, the average score for this question was 6.6, a result that is both strong and consistent. Through open-ended questions or open dialogue, the other phase-two assessments allow ample scope for students to address any concerns they may have about gender equality in their courses, their programs, or in their study environment more generally. Program evaluations, for example, ask:

> "Was there anything in particular during the program that really contributed positively to your program experience? If so, what was it and what made it stand out?"

and

> "Was there anything in particular during the program that really contributed negatively to your program experience? If so, what was it and what made it stand out?"

It is in response to questions like these that students can address either positive or negative experience with gender equality and balance in the School, including whether or not the gender imbalances mentioned above among students and faculty affect their learning or even their general wellbeing within a program.

However, gender-equality concerns rarely feature in the program evaluations' open questions or even in phase two's open dialogues. They do feature, though, in open questions in the end-of-course evaluations, possibly trigged by the specific question cited above. To contextualize and better understand those comments, the Equality & Diversity Manager commissioned an analysis covering two years of evaluations and reported to the Faculty & Program Board. From a gender perspective, the key findings of that report were: a) that the high scores reported above are representative; b) that some half of all responses expressed positive or neutral perceptions of the course and these distributed fairly evenly among men and women (50 & 48 percent respectively); c) that nearly a quarter of responses express a critical perception of the question itself, i.e. challenged the validity of asking about diversity and equality, and here men's responses dominated (20 percent versus 2 percent of women's responses); d) that another 13 percent of responses found the question irrelevant, all responses from men; e) finally, the report identifies in the responses of female students, without quantification, a perception that women are under-represented among their instructors and in course literature and this state of affairs should be corrected.

The improvements that follow from phase-two quality work generally occur at the level of individual courses initiated by individual Course Directors. It is there that courses can increase participation by women, for example, as authors of course literature, as guest lecturers, or even as active learners when instructors consistently apply inclusive teaching practices. More centrally, SSE has added to its portfolio of faculty-development courses one that speaks directly to gender equality. That course is The Inclusive Classroom. Launched in 2017, it runs through an academic year in order to help faculty make their teaching more inclusive both in the classroom and in interactions with individual students or groups of students. The course works with the design and execution of teaching that encourages participants regardless of their gender, and it works with a notion of inclusivity that extends to recognizing and meeting legal obligations to prevent and address sexual discrimination. As for communicating these improvements, Course Directors have responsibility for communicating changes made at the start of each new course. Information about The Inclusive Classroom circulates throughout the School. Invitations to participate appear annually on the SSE Portal. The Director of Pedagogical Development and the Equality and Diversity Manager both contact Department Heads and encourage them to send participants. Importantly, each iteration of the course concludes with an open workshop, which has drawn between 20-30 interested students, staff, and faculty both in 2018 and in 2019.

As pointed out in 2.3 above, SSE's Faculty & Program Board draws upon information from throughout the quality-assurance system in its ongoing appraisal of the School's program portfolio. One revision of the portfolio came in the 2016 modification of the BSc Business & Economics program. That change introduced the Global Challenges track, a two-year progression that works extensively with the United Nations' Sustainable Development Goals, one of which is gender equality. Consequently, at least one student project within Global Challenges actively addressed this goal. Project Effect gathered data locally and raised awareness around the pointed question of whether executive-search practices, as currently constituted, encourage or inhibit progress toward greater gender equality. This project can and should serve as a catalyst for fairer and more sustainable HR practices.

Gender equality and strategic outcomes at SSE

Phase three of SSE's quality system focuses upon strategic outcomes, i.e. the careers graduates embark upon after graduating from an SSE program. Several elements of that work bear directly upon gender equality. Complementing that system is the annual compilation of the SSE Employer Image Barometer. Another is the initial placement and career-development data mention in conjunction with phase three throughout this report. A third is SSE's quality dialogue with the Financial Times, which is addressed at the end of this section along with the other quality dialogues. This section also charts the improvements that have followed from this quality work and the extent to which these improvements are communicated throughout the organization.

The SSE Image Barometer is a survey-based study that has monitored students' career aspirations and expectations for 29 years. It has two practical aims. The first is to provide a basis for employers marketing to and recruiting SSE graduates and thereby make those processes effective and efficient for both students and employers. The second is to facilitate benchmarking among employers by identifying those organizations that have succeeded in making themselves attractive to students.

Since 2017, the Image Barometer has collected and analyzed gender-specific data, and therefore it is possible to analyze the attractiveness of employers by student gender. Among the findings of the most recent Barometer is that women are more, sometimes much more, interested in employers within retailing, services, consumer goods, and public institutions such as the United Nations. Men, instead, express an interest, sometimes a much stronger interest, in finance and management consulting. Moreover, female students express more diversity in their preferences, in part by choosing a larger number of preferred employers while many male students identify few preferred employers. In addition, the Image Barometer also contributes to long-term gender equality by guiding the work of firms or industries seeking to redress their own gender imbalances. It does this by identifying employer attributes that are more important for women than for men. While some popular attributes appeal to both genders, for instance opportunities for personal development and an exciting professional role, other show a gender gap. These include, in decreasing order of importance: a positive work environment; good work-life balance; a strong commitment to gender equality and diversity; and a strong commitment to CSR and sustainability.

SSE also collects extensive data on graduate placement and advancement. This includes data on the sectors in which graduates work, and it dovetails with the data on preferences analyzed in the Image Barometer. It also includes data on entry-level salaries and salary progression. SSE also tracks other dimensions of career advancement, for example the progression from entry-level or trainee position, through junior and middle management, and into specialist roles, partnerships, and senior management.

The improvements in gender equality that follow from this statistical quality work are many and many sided. First, gender-specific data on career outcomes provides guidance for gender-specific career-support activities, i.e. SSE's coaching and mentorship activities described in 2.3. Second, this data supports SSE in its dialogues with corporate partners. The collaborative wheel, an instrument used to systematize SSE's work with its corporate partners, identifies as a key point of collaboration, the recruitment of SSE graduates to fill strategic needs for specialized competence in partner firms. This recruitment benefits both partners and SSE graduates, and gender-specific data on what other graduates have done and how well they have succeeded can make that process more efficient. Again, this is particularly relevant in industries or firms where one gender is under-represented.

The outcomes of some phase-three quality work with gender are communicated widely. This includes publication and internal distribution of the Image Barometer, which in 2018 extends to 107 pages of data and analysis. The data SSE collects on graduate placement appears in simplified and aggregated form in the annual Employment Report, published in separate booklets for BSc and MSc graduates. From 2019, another booklet will present the Employment Report for PhD graduates.

Gender equality and external quality dialogues at SSE

In various ways and through various formats, SSE's dialogues with its quality partners foreground questions of gender equality. This section addresses the partners most relevant to quality work, with the exception of UKÄ because as this assessment area self-evidently shows, gender equality features prominently in that dialogue. Moreover, gender equality has not been identified as a cause for concern in earlier accreditations.

The Financial Times

The core of SSE's dialogue with the Financial Times is the regular rankings that publication carries out on programs and on business schools as institutions. Those rankings help to drive improvements in gender equality because in compiling them, the Financial Times also collects information from schools on their current faculty, newly enrolled students and the latest graduating class. School criteria include the diversity of staff, board members and students by gender and nationality. For gender criteria, schools with a 50:50 composition score highest. As discussed in 2.1 these rankings contribute to SSE's strategically necessary work with positioning, especially international positioning. Therefore, they encourage the School to continue working to improve its gender imbalances, however recalcitrant they sometime seem to be.

EFMD/EQUIS

Aside from its regular engagements with UKÄ, SSE's most extensive and intensive quality dialogue is with EFMD/EQUIS. The School is a founding member of EFMD (1971) and has carried out rigorous accreditation processes every three or every five years since 1999, along with obligatory interim reports between peer-reviews. In this process, gender equality features prominently. The

2018 Process Manual for Accreditation of International Business Schools calls for up-to-date gender-balance statistics on faculty: “A table setting out for the current year the key statistics for the faculty (gender distribution, age distribution, nationality mix, number of PhDs)” (p. 36), and for students: “A table showing the profile of each student cohort within the School’s degree programmes (previous study, age, gender, percentage of international students)” (p. 41). In providing and discussing these statistics and SSE’s efforts to improve gender equality, the School’s self-assessment report from 2018 addresses gender equality on 16 occasions.

PRME
This dialogue foregrounds sustainable and responsible practices within SSE’s own operations. Many of PRME’s priorities and activities include a gender perspective. Perhaps most centrally, one of PRME’s six guiding principles relies in turn upon the United Nation’s Global Compact, which calls for the elimination of discrimination in respect to employment and occupation, explicitly including discrimination on the basis of sex. Those priorities guide SSE’s work within this dialogue. Formally, that work takes the form of a regular progress report, Sharing Information on Progress. Informally, and most importantly, PRME’s priorities, including those related to gender equality, guide SSE’s ongoing implementation of more sustainable and responsible practices.

CEMS
Like PRME, CEMS is an explicitly values-driven organization. SSE has been a member since 1991 of this alliance of 31 business schools, which collaborate to award a joint degree rich in international perspectives and committed to responsible global leadership. Alongside the 31 academic members, there are six social partners, organizations such as Transparency International, Fairtrade, and Care International, and 65 corporate partners including two with Swedish roots and ties to the School, EF and H&M. Obviously, the CEMS commitment to responsible global leadership embraces gender equality. This dialogue unfolds at many organizational levels, including SSE’s participation in an alliance-wide Faculty Group on Gender and Diversity Management, which works to prepare students to take leadership roles in gender-diversity issues in organizations and to intensify shared research on gender and diversity. However, the 2018 peer-review exercise drew no attention to gender-related concerns. One probable explanation is that SSE’s CEMS cohort consists largely of students from the gender-balanced MSc in International Business, and the students granted admission to the SSE CEMS group from other MSc programs also reflect a good gender balance, perhaps because their selection process is holistic and includes an assessment center. This may suggest that despite its struggles for more balanced recruitment of students and faculty, SSE benchmarks well against its global peers.

5. **Assessment area: Student and doctoral student perspective**

The HEI's systematic quality work ensures that students' opportunities and conditions for exercising influence over their studies and study situation. The HEI engages and motivates the students to take an active role in the work to improve the programmes. The student and doctoral student perspective is systematically factored in as part of the HEI's quality system and quality work. Using information that is produced within the quality system, the HEI systematically identifies needs for improvement and development of students' conditions for exercising influence over their studies and study situation. The HEI takes action and continuously improves the student and doctoral student perspective. The HEI has systematic procedures and processes and for ensuring that planned measures or implemented measures are appropriately communicated to relevant stakeholders, both internal and external.

Assessment criterion:

5.1 The HEI's procedures and processes systematically promote the ability and conditions of students to exercise influence over their studies and their study situation.

Guidelines for HEIs:

Show through its quality work how the HEI satisfies the assessment criterion within the area, for example by describing procedures and processes that contribute to it. The description is to show how the HEI works continuously to systematically quality-assure the student and doctoral student perspective and ensure good conditions for students to exercise influence over their studies. It should also include examples of goals and strategies that have been established in relation to the assessment area and assessment criterion. The description is to include how the HEI follows up that its goals are achieved, how it is decided whether the goals have been achieved and what measures the HEI takes if the goals have not been achieved. Also show how the HEI identifies areas for improvement through its quality work.

If there is a difference in how the quality work is conducted between different parts of the HEI or between different types of programmes, these differences are to be described. If needed, refer to the policies, procedures and processes described in conjunction with the *Governance and organisation* assessment area.

Highlight other aspects deemed important for the HEI's systematic quality work within the assessment area.

Provide evidence that the quality work is well-functioning and effective, and that it systematically ensures a well-developed student and doctoral student perspective based on the information generated in the quality system.

The HEI's statement:

Student and doctoral student perspective

At SSE, students at all levels have nearly unparalleled conditions for influencing their studies and study situations. These conditions begin with governance, where students have formal and meaningful roles in all consultative and decision-making bodies. Complementary to those roles, there is a strongly collaborative culture that is epitomized by the regular working lunches SSE's management team shares with the Student Association Board. Manifestations of this governance structure and this collaborative culture are evident through all three phases of SSE's student-journey approach to quality assurance. Similarly, they are formalized in many of the School's quality dialogues with external partners. This section describes briefly the role governance plays in ensuring student influence. It also indicates how structure and culture interact to promote student involvement in the decisions shaping SSE's educational programs and then to identify and correct any circumstances that restrict that involvement. Finally, it describes the critical role played by SSE's quality dialogues in ensuring that the structural and cultural channels for student influence function properly, especially those dialogues with UKÄ, EFMD/EQUIS, PRME, and CEMS.

Governance and student involvement at SSE

SSE's Organization and Rules of Procedure (revised and adopted by the Board of Directors, April 30, 2019) provides students with active and meaningful representation in the following bodies:

- The SSE Board of Directors, with one representative, the Student Association President
- Faculty & Program Board, with two representatives, the Student Association President and President of the Education Committee, two roles filled by students elected by the student body to take a break from active studies and work full-time, with compensation, on improving the quality of life and learning for students
- Program Committees, with two representatives in the BSc committees and the MSc Committee, and seven representatives in the PhD Committee
- Admission Boards, with one non-voting representative at BSc and MSc level and two at PhD level
- Disciplinary Committee, with one representative, the Student Association President; it addresses appeals of disciplinary decisions made by the SSE President
- Ethics Committee, with two representatives, the Student Association President and the President of the Business Committee; it exercises advisory oversight of SSE's corporate relationships
- Student Health Council, where half the members are students; it promotes better health among students at SSE through cooperation between SSE and the Student Association
- SSE Business Lab Board, with one student representative; it sets strategy and oversees operations for SSE's new-business incubator that supports entrepreneurship among SSE students and alumni
- Crisis Management Team, with one student representative, the Student Association President; it meets exclusively in conjunction with ongoing crises
- Equality and Diversity Forum, with one student representative; it addresses current questions concerned with equality and diversity
- Bachelor Program Development Committee, with one student representative, the President of the Education Committee; it is an ad hoc working group of the kind described in 2.3 developing the curriculum for the revised BSc in Business & Economics

The first four of these bodies feature prominently in SSE's quality-assurance processes, which gives students input and influence throughout those processes. This is evident in each section of this report.

Through the regular reporting of KPIs, the SSE Board receives information developed through assessment in each of the three phases of the student journey: 1) data on admissions and faculty composition from Phase 1; 2) data from course evaluations and program evaluations and information on students' completion rates, student exchange, and program development from Phase 2; 3) data on graduate placement from Phase 3. The Board of Directors uses this information to establish a strategic plan for the School, set the budget, and carry out its legally defined oversight responsibilities for the School's activities. The President of the Student

Association is a full and active member. To support her in that role, the Student Association's past-President serves as a deputy member (*suppleant*) to facilitate continuity and organizational knowledge transfer.

The Faculty & Program Board is involved in all three phases of student-journey quality work. It receives assessment information about the quality of program participants, both student and faculty, and makes decisions on improvements via, for example, admission policies and faculty promotions. It receives regular quality reports to support its decision-making role in portfolio management and other aspects of educational quality. While this body receives no formal information from Phase 3 on graduate placement, SSE's mission is such that the educational programs should, in fact must, prepare students for meaningful professional roles. The two student representatives are fully active participants. Like the SSE President and Equality & Diversity Manager, students have a standing item on the agenda, when they report on news and concerns. Moreover, representatives of all the stakeholders present (students, faculty, management) describe the discussions, the collegial exchange of information, opinions, and arguments, as this body's most important function. Formal votes is unnecessary, and the general approach to decision making is to find common ground.

Program Committees feature most prominently in Phase 2 quality work, which focuses upon teaching and learning. These committees constitute an advisory board for Program Directors, where the focus of the work is programs' competitiveness, content, and quality, all within the framework established by the Faculty & Program Board. What this means for student influence is that a regular forum exists for dialogue and that student representatives are fully informed and equipped with a School-wide perspective for their on-going dialogues with their program's Program Director.

Admission Boards exist for each degree level and students are represented there in a spirit of transparency. Arguably, it is through cultural (rather than formal) channels that students can exercise the greatest influence over the composition of future SSE cohorts. Through those channels, current students can address potential students and include word-of-mouth marketing and, especially, programs like the Student Ambassadors (recruitment), SSE Sisters (mentoring), and the Student Association's Pimp your Grades (tutoring).

In summary, students themselves seem to feel that the formal channels for their influence work effectively. In a Student Report to EFMD (part of SSE's quality dialogue around EQUIS reaccreditation in 2018), the authors characterized student influence on continuing improvements positively:

> "For the most part student feedback seems to be effective. Some MSc-students highlight that substantial changes to the programs and their content seems to be made each year following student feedback. In recent years SSE also seems to have taken much of the feedback concerning the BSc programs to heart and has made several substantial changes to both the BSc Business & Economics program and the BSc Retail Management program" (Student Report, June 2018, p. 6).

They continue:

> "Exchange students express that they are impressed by the structured feedback process that is carried out as a smooth interplay between SSE and the students. The Education Committee of the Student Association is responsible for setting up

> and maintaining a system where there are class ambassadors in all classes, a system that is considered to be credible and effective" (p. 9).

<u>Collaborative culture and student influence at SSE</u>
There is evidence of strong student influence throughout their learning journey even in areas not directly or formally linked to SSE's quality assurance. The Student Association features prominently in these activities. It is not, however, the sole expression of informal student influence; the SSE CEMS club is another, and PhD students exercise influence at the departmental level.

The collaborative culture facilitates student influence on newly enrolled students through annual orientation activities. The School arranges an elaborate on-boarding process for new students; it covers three days for MSc and PhD students and a full week for BSc students. Parallel to these activities, students arrange an equally elaborate social introduction, which seems to function well in creating cohort cohesion. PhD students arrange their social introduction by department and the Student Association arranges it for the other levels.

After admission and throughout their programs, students have extensive access to faculty and management. Again, the Student Association can function as a channel for student-faculty interaction, and it is extraordinarily active, probably unparalleled in Sweden. Yet many factors contribute to an atmosphere rich in student-faculty interaction. One of these is SSE's attractive faculty to student ratio, mentioned above in 2.2. Another is expectation; the faculty expects regular contact with students and vice versa. Finally, the standard end-of-course evaluation does ask about faculty accessibility. Students respond to the following:

> "It was easy for me to get in touch with **teacher name** whenever I needed to."

On a seven point scale, scores are typically very favorable. For the three teaching periods completed in academic 2018-19 the average results were 6.4, 6.2, and 6.3. Perhaps unsurprisingly, PhD students are particularly happy about contact with faculty, with scores of 7.0, 6.6, and 6.7.

Beyond access to faculty, every course has two class ambassadors who voice student perspectives on the course. Even though these ambassadors have no formal standing in SSE's quality-assurance system, the School works closely with them. They collect feedback from classmates, which they share with Program Directors and the VPDP in ways that vary across degree levels.

Finally, as this report underscores repeatedly, the successful placement of SSE's graduates shapes the School's foundational mission and from there radiates out into nearly every aspect of educational program planning and delivery, not least into quality assurance. Students, too, are highly involved in activities related to their future careers even though few formal channels exist for them to influence SSE's work with employment statistics or even its career-development work. Central here is the Student Association's Business Committee, which organizes company visits at lunchtime several times a week throughout the academic year and organizes an extensive career fair, SSE Recruitment Days. First organized in 1983, the fair is popular with students and participating companies. It represents the largest single placement activity at the School, and its preparation and execution involves over 150 students. Initially a one-day fair, SSE Recruitment Days have grown into a full week program with three days of preparation filled with lectures, workshops, and other activities leading up to the two days with exhibitions.

In carrying out these activities, the Business Committee interacts extensively with SSE's Corporate Relations team, and those interactions reflect the interplay of formal governance and collaborative culture described above. Formally, there is a contract between the School and the Committee that provides for priority treatment in Committee activities for SSE's most important corporate partners. Most significantly, though, there is an ongoing dialogue to ensure that the School as a whole, including its students and alumni, enjoy a distinct and positive relationship with the business community. That dialogue includes scheduled meetings every other week and mutual logistical or other support as required.

Almost by definition, PhD students generally have chosen career paths that differ from those of SSE's BSc and MSc students. Department's generally support students in their preparation of a job talk, the research presentation candidates make when visiting other universities for employment interviews. Beyond that, the program in Business Administration offers an entire cluster of coursework dedicated to professional preparation and covering topics such as publishing, academic writing, conference participation, and teaching in higher education. These courses are electives, which gives students opportunities to influence their own curricula. Similarly, SSE's generous travel-scholarship policy affords PhD students an opportunity to shape their education by traveling to another university for coursework, fieldwork, or a different research environment.

Quality dialogues and the assurance of student involvement at SSE

Both the governance structures and the open, collaborative culture described above facilitate a high degree of student involvement in decisions relevant to their education. Both evolved because SSE's success depends upon the success of its graduates. However, neither of those phenomena, structure or culture, necessarily ensures student involvement nor provides the systematic information flows and feedback loops that improve operations. Therefore, SSE relies upon its network of dialogues with external quality partners to help carry out this assurance function. In practice, this takes various forms.

SSE's dialogue with PRME relies upon self-reporting (Sharing Information on Progress reports) with an emphasis on improvements made in bringing SSE's operation into alignment with PRME's six principles for more responsible business education. Work toward further implementing these principles calls for student involvement, and several can be construed as addressing that involvement directly, particularly those regarding purpose, values, and methods. In 2.3 and just above, there are references to student contributions to one such report that demonstrates how student influence features in this dialogue. Those examples affirmed student influence at SSE, but in matters of quality control, areas for improvement, too, can and should surface.

SSE's dialogue with UKÄ combines self-reporting and on-site interviews, and both formats allow for ample input from students, including input on their scope for affecting change in their study situation. Parallel to this self-assessment, SSE students are preparing a report of their own. By design, such a report should describe the avenues by which students exercise influence at the School and any shortcomings in what those avenues provide. During follow-up visits, SSE students will again have opportunities to participate actively in this mission-critical quality-assurance dialogue.

As pointed out above, the dialogue between SSE and EFMD/EQUIS is extensive and important for SSE's on-going quality improvement and its international positioning. Like UKÄ, it employs a peer-review methodology that combines self-assessment and on-site follow up. Again, students participate in both stages and use those fora to report perceived successes and shortcomings in their ability to influence SSE's educational policies and practices. In the quotations cited above from the most recent EQUIS Student Report, students affirm the influence and involvement they enjoy.

However, successful quality assurance includes negative feedback as well, and students provided that through their participation in the SSE-EFMD/EQUIS dialogue. In that same report, feedback addressed two concerns raised earlier in this report (in 2.3) and one new concern. The first familiar point:

> "addresses the formative mid-course evaluations, and because this is so valuable, students would like to make sure that all faculty follow this already established recommendation" (p. 6).

The second familiar point follows an acknowledgement of quality improvements and then returns to faculty shortcomings in communicating those improvements:

> "students would like the course directors to do a better job of highlighting changes from previous years at the outset of their course" (p. 6).

The new concern unearthed in this context was a comment implying that SSE had been resistant to change before embarking on recent of improvements:
"prior to these changes there was a perception among some students that the BSc programs were static and that the same feedback was repeated for several years before changes were made (p. 6).
Valuable as each of these points are, both the positive and the negative, their primary function here is to illustrate how SSE's dialogue with EFMD/EQUIS serves as a quality-assurance mechanism with regard to student involvement and influence.

SSE also maintains an ongoing dialogue on quality with the CEMS alliance over SSE's delivery of the joint CEMS Master in International Management. On the whole, that dialogue takes many forms including a peer-review process, additional course evaluations, regular cross-alliance meetings of faculty, senior management, professional services staff, and a student board, which is the principal locus of student influence. Most relevant here, however, is once again the function that this quality dialogue carries out in assuring that SSE students have influence in the decisions affecting their educations. In their reports and follow-up interviews for the two latest CEMS peer reviews, students had little to say regarding influence, an indicator that the structural and cultural measures taken by SSE and the alliance were working adequately. However, other aspects of this dialogue provide an example of an effective improvement cycle. One obligatory program element is a Business Communication Skills Seminar (BCSS), and for all obligatory elements, CEMS sets student satisfaction targets. If any elements fails to meet those targets in two consecutive years, the faculty member responsible must, first, submit an action plan for approval by the Program Sub-Committee of the CEMS Academic Board and, then, execute that plan once it is approved. At SSE that happened with the BCSS in 2014 and 2015. Those improvements were implemented and communicated, but more germane here is the process by which SSE students could make use of the School's ongoing dialogue with an external quality partner to exercise influence.

In summary, SSE students have excellent conditions for influencing their educations, and they make good use of those conditions. The School's governance model provides an enduring framework for this. That framework functions amid a collaborative culture that flourishes for a number of reasons. These reasons include the School's size and its enviable student-faculty ratio. They also include a highly accomplished and ambitious student body, the majority of whom participate in an extraordinarily active student association. Finally, SSE's dialogues on quality with external partners ensure that the structural and cultural avenues function properly. In the event they do not, feedback leads to improvement and communication about that improvement.

6. **Assessment area: Working life and collaboration**

Through its systematic quality work, the HEI ensures that the courses and programmes develop students' preparedness to face changes in working life. The HEI has well-functioning collaborations with the labour market and with the surrounding society that help improve the courses and programmes. Working life and collaboration are systematically factored in as part of the HEI's quality system and quality work. Using information produced within the quality system, the HEI identifies needs for development of working life and collaboration elements in its education. The HEI implements measures and improves the programmes to ensure they are useful, and continuously develops students' preparedness to face the labour market. The HEI has systematic procedures and processes for ensuring that planned measures or implemented measures are appropriately communicated to relevant stakeholders, both internal and external.

Assessment criterion:

6.1 The HEI has procedures and processes in place to ensure the courses and programmes develop students' preparedness to face changes in working life.

Guidelines for HEIs:

Show how the HEI through its quality work satisfies the assessment criterion within the area, for example by describing procedures and processes that contribute to it. The description is to show how the HEI works continuously to systematically factor working life and collaboration into its courses and programmes. It should also include examples of goals and strategies that have been established in relation to the assessment area and assessment criterion. The description is to include how the HEI follows up that its goals are achieved, how it is determined whether the goals have been achieved and what measures the HEI takes if the goals have not been achieved. Also show how the HEI identifies areas for improvement through its quality work.

Describe how the HEI works in collaboration with the labour market and the surrounding society. The description can also include how information and relevant statistics for how the courses and programmes prepare students for working life is collected and used.

If there is a difference in how the quality work is conducted between different parts of the HEI or between different types of courses and programmes, these differences are to be described. If needed, refer to the policies, procedures and processes described in conjunction with the assessment area *Governance and organisation*.

Highlight other aspects deemed important for the HEI's systematic quality work within the assessment area.

Provide evidence that the quality work is well-functioning and effective, that it systematically ensures a well-developed collaboration in the planning and implementation of the courses and programmes, and that these sufficiently prepare students for the working life, based on information generated in the quality system.

The HEI's statement:

Working life and collaboration

SSE was founded to prepare students for working life, for personally meaningful and socially significant roles in the organizations that make and keep Sweden competitive. Pedagogically and organizationally, this mission poses a question to SSE's faculty and its leadership: how do we best prepare students for those roles? Naturally, the nature of those roles change dynamically, much more so today than when the School first embarked on this mission 110 years ago. This section presents the 21st century answer to that question. It describes the rich array of elements in and around its educational programs designed to help students marshal their disciplinary learning and prepare for their meaningful and significant professional lives. These elements operate at many levels, and many of them rely upon the extraordinary collaboration SSE has enjoyed with a wide community of stakeholders (public and private sector organizations, local and national government, and the not-for-profit sector) ever since that community launched the School in 1909.

As with most successful education, professional preparation begins with clear aims, and today those aims are expressed as making our students FREE, i.e. **F**act and science-minded, **R**eflective and self-aware, **E**mpathetic and culturally literate, **E**ntrepreneurial and responsible. Introduced relatively recently (2018), these aims are percolating into all the School's programs and courses. A FREE graduate, however, could specialize in any discipline, and SSE's professional preparation calls for rigor and relevance to the fields generally associated with business, economics, and finance. One guarantor of this relevance is the input SSE receives from it Program Advisory Boards. Another guarantor is the LIVE learning modules and activities that the School's programs incorporate into nearly every level, some very extensively. In addition to the professional preparation taking place in programs and courses, SSE provides students with an extensive offering of extra-curricular career-development activities such as career coaching, mentoring, and skills seminars. Most of this professional preparation relies on SSE's extensive corporate collaboration, although this is something of a misnomer as that collaboration also extend into organizations in the public and not-for-profit sectors. Naturally, all of the operational work to prepare student for their working lives requires the quality-assurance of assessment, distribution of results, continuous improvement and the communication of those improvements, and this section addresses that work in connection to each activity.

<u>Educational aims and professional preparation at SSE</u>
SSE's current educational aims are the result of a School-wide reflection on the role of higher education in the future. Several developments gave rise to a need for reflection. For instance, some very reputable universities are now providing massive open online courses, and commercial organizations like EdX, FutureLearn, Coursera, and the Khan Academy have opened completely new avenues of learning. More broadly, it is now impossible to isolate higher education from planetary conditions, many of which are changing rapidly and in some cases clearly for the worse: climate change, growing inequalities, and mass migration to name just a few. At the same time, through developments in machine learning and artificial intelligence, the nature of knowledge is changing, as is access to it. Against this background, a discussion evolve over how best to formulate SSE's educational aims to make them as relevant as possible to the dynamic context sketched above. That discussion involved the Board of Directors and SSE's International Advisory Council (a group of senior academics from around the world selected from key geographic areas, partner schools, research fields, and other specific areas of expertise, its role is to provide strategic advice from an international perspective to the SSE Board of Directors and Executive Management Team). Naturally, the discussion involved the Faculty & Program Board and reached into informational arenas to involve all the faculty and staff.

The result was FREE, and these aims take as their point of departure the needs of decision makers because decision making is a common denominator across the varied professional futures SSE graduates will face. With that starting point, FREE adapts a point from the Swedish philosopher Ingemar Hedenius, that tomorrow's successful decision maker will be "free . . . in relation to the unknown" and therefore able to approach the world with curiosity and confidence. The FREE aims anticipate a future where SSE graduates may well be outperformed cognitively by artificial intelligence, robots or machines, but as humans, their core competence is to be human. FREE is SSE's way to help students maximize the value of this competence and thereby prepare professionally by preparing personally.

Ideally, the student-learning journey at SSE will lead to FREEdom. And many components of the School's programs explicitly embrace these aims and help students develop these attributes. These include the Global Challenges track in the BSc in Business & Economics and the tutorial program in the BSc in Retail Management. However, work is still underway with the Director of Pedagogical Development and the various Program Directors to determine the best ways to integrate FREE into their program and harmonize those aims with other program-level ILOs. A next step is for those Program Directors to work with Course Directors to determine the best ways to integrate FREE into their courses and harmonize those aims with other course-level ILOs.

Program Advisory Boards and professional preparation at SSE
To ensure that programs remain relevant to the needs of a professional life, every program and Program Director work with an advisory board composed of individuals active in the domains where graduates of a given program are expected to work. Board members are drawn from a range of organizations, for example: Spotify, Sandvik, Deloitte, Investor, the Norrsken Foundation, Vinnova, the Stockholm Resiliency Center, the University of Victoria, the Swedish Trade Federation, the Government Offices of Sweden (Regeringskansliet), the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, and the Third Swedish National Pension Fund AP3. Board members' role in these organizations also vary, including for example, CEO, COO, CFO, Director, Vice President, State Secretary, and General Counsel.

Live Learning and working-life preparation at SSE
Section 2.3 discussed active learning at SSE, and SSE's distinctive Live pedagogy is an example of that teaching-and-learning strategy. It builds upon Live cases, which are presented in courses and programs by the practitioner or practitioners involved in the problems a case addresses. For students this requires problem-driven, action learning. It also involves them in knowledge pull, going to the organization involved (and to other sources) for the data and other information necessary to develop a solution. Consistent with the needs of a diverse program portfolio, Live cases take different forms and extend for longer or shorter periods.

Among the longer Live Learning activities is the MSc in International Business/CEMS business project, which extends over an entire semester. These are consultancy-like projects in which international student teams solve a real business problem, typically for a corporate or social partner deeply concerned with finding a solution. Coached by SSE faculty and by a sponsor in the host organization, student must take responsibility for project planning, execution, and delivery, just as in working life. In 2016, SSE capture the coveted CEMS Best Business Project, an award determined by the results of student evaluations.

Another extended example running nearly a whole semester is the Live Project in Management in the third year of the BSc in Business & Economics. In this Live Learning exercise, an organization assigns a relevant business challenge it is facing related to their business processes and operations. A team five or six third year students acts as consultants, analyses the challenge, proposes solutions to it, and designs an implementation plan that addresses the key issues related to managing change within the organization. Any type of business process is eligible, from manufacturing to customer service, from product development to marketing, from logistics to HRM. In disciplinary terms, students develop their understanding of two key aspects of business administration: how to design, run and improve operations and processes (through, for example lean thinking, quality management, agile, process re-engineering) and how to plan and implement organizational change (by addressing human, political and contextual issues). In terms of professional preparation, the Live Learning project gives students the opportunity to put their theory-based knowledge into action in a real context, and thereby develop their management skills.

The most extensive Live Learning activity at SSE takes place within the BSc in Retail Management. This is the Applied Retail Track, and it has four components all involving interaction with partner organization in the retail sector. These are company visits, theme lectures, a career module, and a company project.

The company visits include workshops and extend across all three years of the program, four per year. In those workshops, company representatives present a contemporary challenge to students, who then work in small groups to develop solutions. After working in groups, students present their solutions to the company representatives, who review the idea and provide feedback. Afterward, the students have 24 hours to refine their suggestions and produce a written report for the company. The workshops take place at the company site.

The theme lectures are not technically active learning, but they certainly bring students into contact with contemporary retail practice and its challenges. Over the course of a year, all ten firms sponsoring retail clubs deliver a theme lecture. At these lectures, students learn about current issues and challenges and obtain insights that can help them identify and evaluate different career paths and the challenges associated with each.

During year two, the career module helps students focus even more intently on their career paths by participating in a module on career planning and career training. The first part of this module takes place in the fall semester and involves working with specialists who help students to identify their unique strengths, weaknesses, and preferences. In the spring semester, students also participate in a module on career training (2-3 hours) in collaboration with the company hosting their retail club.

During the fall in year three, students complete a consultancy project where they independently conduct an empirical study to answer a question formulated by their retail-club company. Projects are conducted in groups of three to four students. In these projects, practical implications are emphasized more heavily than would typically be the case in BSc theses. Students finish this project by providing a written report and verbal presentation of their findings to first and second year students in each retail club as well as company representatives.

Other Live Learning formats are as short as a week or less and follow the now-familiar pattern. They start with a company presentation that frames a problem. Student groups interpret the case/problem, gather information, select appropriate models and theories, and propose a solution. The exercise ends with students presenting solutions to executives from the organization. Formats of this kind are used in various program and the organizations involved have also varied richly over the years.

Common to all of the Live Learning described above, beyond their deep engagement with professional life and professional preparation, is that they all are frame organizationally as courses or course components. They all benefit, therefore, from all aspects of SSE's Phase 2 quality-assurance work, described most extensively in 2.3.

<u>Extra-curricular activities and professional preparation at SSE</u>

Alongside the course and program elements that bring students into contact with on-going professional practice, and thus prepare them for it, SSE has a career-management team within its External Relations unit (which also includes SSE's corporate relations team). This team manages a number of on-line resources for student, resources that support their preparation for entering professional life. In addition to those static resources, the career-management team provides three key services tied directly to professional preparation: coaching, mentoring, and skills seminars.

In 2015, a structured coaching program was introduced at SSE and piloted only to MSc programs ranked by the Financial Times, the MSc in International Business and the MSc in Finance. Subsequently, SSE took a decision to expand this coaching across all program levels. This extension is planned for 2019, accompanied by some changes in the coaching program. These changes have two broad aims: first to improve its quality, to support SSE's educational aims, FREE (especially the R - Reflective and Self-aware; E - Empathetic and Culturally Literate components); second, to address feedback from corporate partners on perceived gaps in the skill sets of SSE graduates, feedback received during systematic dialogues between the School and its corporate partners. In other word, this expansion and these changes are designed to help students prepare for professional lives on the basis of information coming from practitioners currently active in similar professions.

At present, SSE's career-development mentoring is open to all first-year MSc students. It is extremely popular, especially among international students, who get an invaluable introduction to Swedish business culture, a boost to their networking, and greater preparedness for entering the workforce in Sweden if they chose to launch their careers here. The program recruits mentors from two sources, SSE alumni and employees at SSE corporate partners.

Skill seminars at SSE focus on the development of personal and professional skills and aim to ensure that the graduates have practical tools necessary to meet the professional challenges awaiting them. Among the seminars systematically delivered to SSE students, topics include self-leadership (both in English and in Swedish), design thinking, presentation skills, and negotiation skills. These seminars are voluntary and open to students in all SSE programs. There are also programs that require mandatory skills development, the MSc in International Business and the CEMS program at SSE.

As this career-development activity is an extra-curricular offering, it has not been subject to SSE's systematic quality-assurance work historically. However, given its obvious importance for students' professional preparation, this is now changing. The career-development team is implementing its first follow-up survey with students who received career coaching through the MSc in Finance, the larger of SSE's two ranked programs. More systematic quality-assurance will follow as SSE determines the best method for applying a quality-assurance system developed for academic programs to an offering administered and delivered by professional services staff.

<u>Phase 3 quality assurance and professional preparation at SSE</u>
As this report has emphasized throughout, SSE judges the success of its educational programs largely through one key outcome, placing graduates in personally rewarding and socially significant professional roles that improve Sweden's competitiveness. All of the aims, organizational decisions and operations described in this section exist in order to help SSE achieve this outcome. Therefore, the work of assessing and improving that outcome, also described and discussed throughout this report, contributes to assessing and improving the activities described above.
To summarize briefly, there are three types of quality work that assess this outcome, a placement survey of recent graduates, the data collection SSE does to participate in various rankings of business schools and their programs conducted by ranking bodies, primarily the Financial Times, and SSE's quality dialogue with EFMD/EQUIS, a quality partner that . The first is wholly Phase 3 quality work; the second also conflates work in Phase 3 with the School's quality dialogue with the Financial Times; and the third is, of course, wholly a dialogue. Key features of this work include:
a) extensive data collection that includes, but is not limited to: salary level; graduate satisfaction; time to initial employment; graduates professional development; proportion of graduates taking their first job in Sweden (and abroad); and industries where graduates are employed.
b) some of this data features in the KPIs reported to the Board of Directors; this includes data on salary, time to employment, place of employment
c) all of this data, and outcomes from dialogues with the Financial Times, cycles back to operations within the student journey in order to drive improvement and raise the School's organizational ambitions for its programs
d) the EFMD/EQUIS peer-review process and interim reports

Regarding a) through c) above, the outcome of some recent data collection appears below as reported to SSE's Board of Directors. Figue 3 illustrates the recent data on time to and country of employment for alumni working in Sweden.

Figure 3

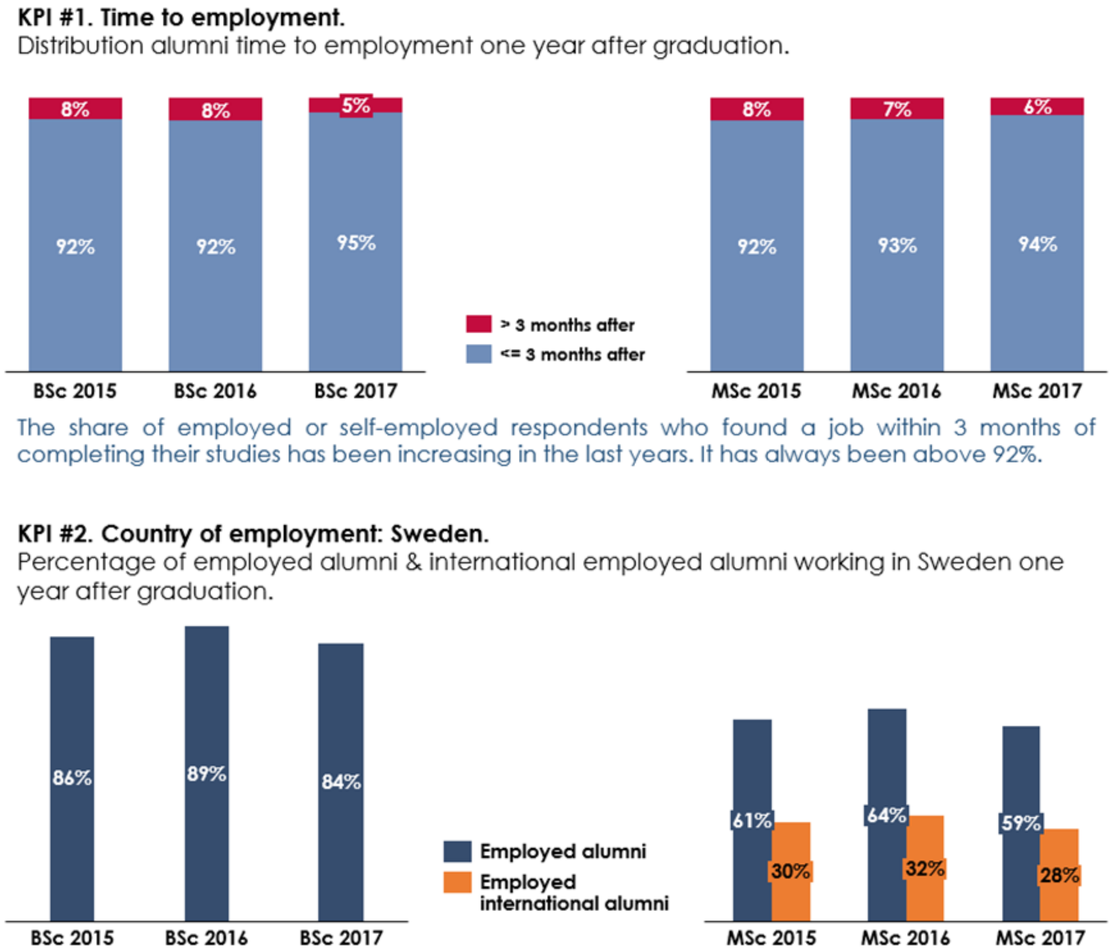
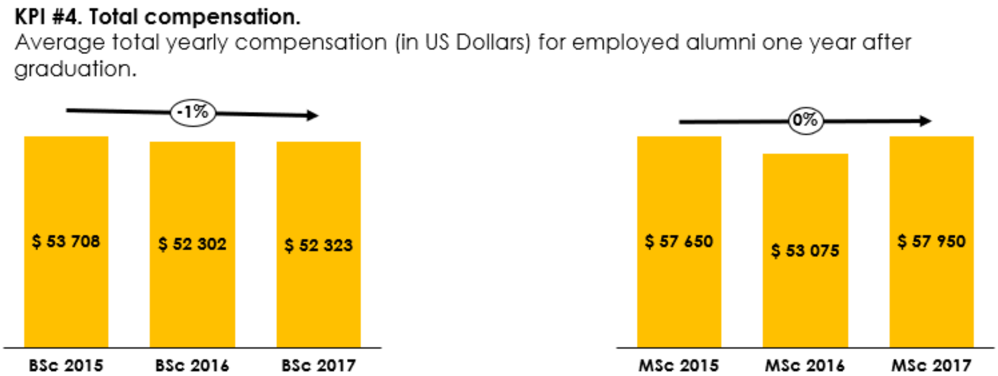


Figure 4 illustrates data collected on salaries.

Figure 4



Based on the results of this systematic data collection, SSE publishes Employment reports for BSc and MSc graduates. This will extend to for PhD graduates after 2019. Those reports and some other data are communicated to all SSE stakeholders, including the SSE board, the SSE Executive Management Team, Program directors, Career Management, Corporate Relations, and prospective students. Findings reflected in the Employment Reports help Program Directors and the career management team to review and possibly improve the content of their programs or offering.

Regarding d) above, section 2.3 cited the 2018 EQUIS peer reviewers' characterization of SSE work with partner organizations as best practice. Those same reviewers commend SSE's work with students' professional preparation:

> "SSE students have excellent opportunities for personal and professional development through engagement in the governance of the School and through access to corporate and SASSE activities. SSE graduates are highly marketable and are attractive to employers. The SSE Career Management Office supports students in job placement and has used 'career tracking' data on its BSc and MSc graduates to better inform its guidance and support" (2018 EQUIS Accreditation Board, Peer Review Report, p. 12).

<u>Corporation relations and professional preparation at SSE</u>

SSE's strong and intimate partnerships with national and international organizations are essential to all of the preparatory activities described in this section. Some formal, others informal, those partnership help the School fill its advisory boards with the expertise and experience that keeps educational programs relevant. They make possible the presence of scores of executives and organizations in Live Learning activities throughout the School, activities that concretize the relevance designed into SSE's programs. As pointed out above, they also help shape the kinds of coaching and mentoring that will help graduates select and succeed in the positions they aspire to. Moreover, the strength and importance of these relationships were also acknowledged in the external quality dialogues cited in 2.3 above.

There are systems and established practices in place to monitor and improve these relationships. While an extensive discussion may fall outside the scope of this report, those practices and systems include the three-sided dialogue, described in 2.5, among corporate partners, the School's corporate relationship team, and the Student Association's Business Committee. They also include systematic collaboration development driven by SSE's collaborative wheel. That tool identifies five spokes for deep and dynamic collaboration:

1) an initial focus on partners' key strategic challenges, which are identified in dialogue
2) relevant research help to address those strategic challenges
3) Live Learning, where students learn from and help address those challenges
4) executive education to support the people in the partner organization
5) the recruitment of SSE graduates as the key talents who also might help address these challenges.

While 3) and 5) are most relevant here, all five spokes of this wheel contribute to the relationships that contribute powerfully to SSE's students entering their working lives with very strong professional preparation.

In conclusion, SSE has a well-developed quality-assurance system for preparing its students for working life especially one that is changing rapidly. That system covers aims (FREE), organization structure (Program Advisory Boards), program content (Live Learning), extra-curricular career services, all supported by SSE's close and long-standing relationships with organizations throughout society.