



Qualis – Quality in Schools



A product produced by

Q-Steps 
KVALITETSSÄKRING

Assure the Quality of Your School

In Sweden there are over 6,000 schools; some are very good but many have deficiencies in the form of stressed co-workers, a poor working environment or weak leadership. In order to improve the school environment, functional, easy-to-use tools are needed. Our Qualis certification model is just such a tool. It provides the school administration and teachers with a clear picture of how far the school has come and which path it should choose for its continued work on quality development. Qualis certification offers school principals and co-workers a shared picture of the organization's strengths and weaknesses.

The Qualis model is unique because it is especially designed for the schools sector. It fulfils the need for user-friendly certification models in schools and is simple to use. It is aimed not only at all professional groups within schools, but also at students and parents. Special networks have also developed Qualis models for pre-schools, youth recreation centres and care of the elderly.



*Those of us who work within Qualis Quality Assurance are:
Sören Levén, Sophia Lindgren, Gunilla Malmqvist, Sara Levén and Leif Hallström*

The Qualis model was developed as part of a project in which schools and pre-schools from all over Sweden participated. It was started in 1997, funded by the National Agency for Education, and was intended to develop good methods for comprehensive quality evaluation in schools. The project provided Qualis with access to unique methods and valuable networks and earned them a good reputation at the National Agency for Education, the Association of Local Authorities and other organizations. Those schools and pre-schools that participated in the project have continued in the form of a learning

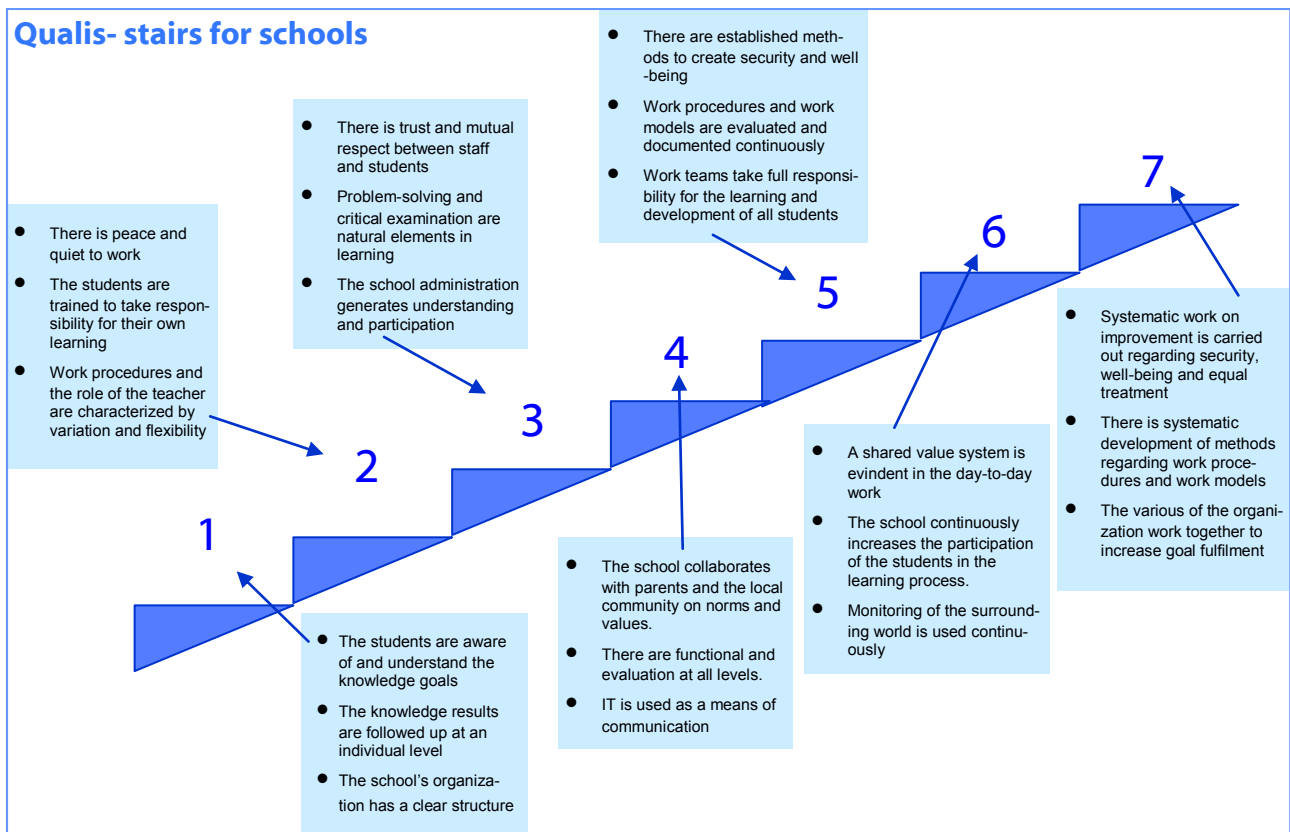
The Qualis Certification Model – How It Works

- Instruction for administration and staff
- Self-assessment
- Written report
- External examination (every 3rd year)
- Work on improvement

Qualis is owned and run by Q-Steps Kvalitetssäkring AB. Q-Steps can, by means of its certification model, provide Sweden's schools and pre-schools with a unique method of quality assuring their organizations. The Qualis certification model is simple to use because it focuses on the core questions. This makes it possible to assess the quality of the school over a period of time and to compare different schools with one another.

The Qualis Staircase (see below) is the basis for the work of certification. The staircase, which has seven steps, is a description of what a quality school looks like and how it may be developed. The Qualis Staircase can also be found at www.q-steps.se.

On the lower steps the foundations for a good school are laid: well-functioning daily routines, clear leadership, a vision, goals and evaluation. On the higher steps the following are developed: the school's ability to enable the participation of children and parents, positive development for every child, a good school environment and good communications, as well as the systematic development and improvement of the school.



Quality criteria

90 quality criteria are also connected to the various steps in the staircase. These are divided into eleven areas or Qualis factors.

Main Process

- Security and well-being
- Students responsibility for their own learning
- Work procedures and the role of the teacher
- Knowledge and skills
- Participation

Sub-processes

- Organization
- Management and leadership
- Communication
- Competence
- Utilization of resources
- Image

The items in the left-hand column are part of the Main Process, in other words the core activity or “primary task”. The right-hand column describes the Sub-processes, in other words those parts of the organization that are a precondition for high quality in the “primary task”.

In order to examine and evaluate an organization, criteria are necessary. Within Qualis there are criteria that are linked to the seven steps in the Qualis Staircase. The criteria are clear and concrete, formulated in the language of the organization itself. The criteria build on each other in accordance with the seven step model. They work both in self-assessment and external examination. As an example below, you can see the seven steps within the area Security and Well-being.

When the school, with the aid of the criteria, has been placed on the “right” level in the staircase for each of the eleven areas, the school receives a clear picture of where its strong and weak sides lie as well as which areas for improvement exist.

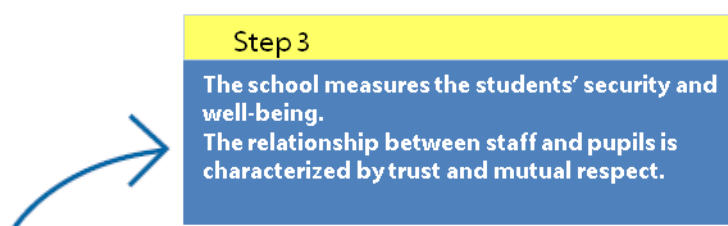
Evaluation methods

In the Qualis certification model both qualitative and quantitative methods of evaluation are used. During the work of certification the schools themselves make an assessment of their position on the stairs. This self-assessment is then compared with the assessment of the Qualis examiners.

One tool that is used in the certification work is Proof, a web-based questionnaire system for which Qualis has specially designed questionnaires aimed at staff, pupils and parents. All schools that are examined by Qualis use these questionnaires.

In the evaluation work, quantitative figures such as grades and test results are also used. During an external examination Qualis examiners visit the school for two days during which they observe the work of the school and talk to various focus groups. The examiners compile a quality report, suggest areas for improvement and place the school on the Qualis Staircase. If the school lands on step three or higher, it is certified and given a diploma and a Qualis plaque as proof of the schools' good quality.

The Qualis certification model is based on the school undergoing an external examination/certification every third year. During the other two years the school just carries out a self-assessment with the aid of the Qualis criteria and writes its own quality report. The Qualis model can in this case serve as the school's compulsory quality report.



A.	Step 1	Step 2	Step 3	Step 4	Step 5	Step 6	Step 7
Security and well-being	The school follows up presence/absence. Activities begin at the agreed time. The school has routines for receiving new students	The school carries out promotional and preventative work regarding equal treatment. There is peace and quiet to work. Adults react to breaches of the rules	The school measures the students' security and well-being. The relationship between staff and pupils is characterized by trust and mutual respect.	The school cooperates with parents, authorities and the local community on norms and values.	There are established methods for promoting security, well-being and safety and managing conflicts	The school has a shared value system which is evident in the day-to-day work	The school carries out systematic work on improvement regarding security, well-being, safety and equal treatment

Self assessment

Prior to the external examination the school carries out a self-assessment. This is done by the school estimating the step they think that the school should be placed on in the seven step scale, for each of the 11 quality areas. This self-assessment is made by each work team and the school principals.

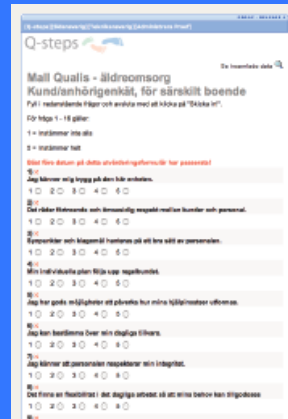
The examination is concluded when the external examiners make a point-based assessment of the quality of the organization for each quality area and the results are entered into a point matrix. When a certain point total is achieved, the school is "Qualis Certified".

An examination report is sent to the school within three weeks of the examination. In this report the work of the unit is analysed for each of the quality areas, where every point-based assessment is motivated. The report concludes with a summary of the school's strengths and areas for improvement. The point matrix is enclosed.

QUALIS AS A BASIS FOR MANAGING THE ORGANIZATION

The Qualis report provides a clear picture of the school's strengths and areas for improvement. These can form a basis for the organization's work on improvement. It is very simple for the school to begin work on improvement directly with the report as a starting point. It is also possible to make comparisons with other schools that have been examined by Qualis. All the examination reports are available to members of the Qualis Network.

The measurements and key ratios in the certifications are digitalised and stored in a database that is accessible via the Internet to units that participate in Qualis. Not only can you verify the quality of the different schools; you can also check for changes. You know what new investments or cuts actually entail and you can measure the outcome both in terms of processes and results. Schools that use Qualis can, with the aid of the database, compare themselves with other schools that participate in Qualis.

A screenshot of a web-based questionnaire interface. The title is "Mail Qualis - äldreomsorg Kundanhöringenkät, för särskilt boende". Below the title, there are several survey questions in Swedish, each followed by a set of radio buttons for selecting an answer. The questions cover topics like staff competence, safety, and service quality. The interface is clean and professional, with a blue header and a white background for the questions.

Proof is a web-based questionnaire tool that quickly and easily helps you to administer surveys, questionnaires, application forms etc.

Some examples of areas of use are attitude surveys, course questionnaires, staff surveys, client surveys, course applications, notifications of interest and tests of knowledge.

Qualis focuses on what is important

Fryxellska School in Västerås is a school with classes from school years 4 to 9. At Fryx, as the school is known colloquially, they work actively on management by quality and the school has twice been Qualis Certified.

"We chose certification because we wanted to see how far we had come in our work on quality," says the school's CEO and principal, Anneli Hallström. "Qualis focuses on what is important which makes the actual certification process manageable. There are other certification models for schools but there is no model that is so easy to use and which provides such a clear and comprehensive picture of the organization. Qualis Certification focuses on areas for improvement but also reveals the areas where the school has come farthest in its work on quality.

"It was self-evident to us that we should be examined for a second time. Since the first certification we have worked actively on the areas for improvement that emerged. Thanks to this work we can now see that we have come quite far in our areas for improvement and the number of strong areas has increased. Very motivational!

"I recommend other schools to become Qualis certified, not least because Qualis is such a readily understood and useful tool for school leaders. And it is such a satisfying feeling when you realise that you have actually done a great deal already to raise the quality of the school. Qualis inspires us to go further!"

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Anneli Hallström, CEO and Principal
Fryxellska School in Västerås



Who Are Behind Q-Steps?

Q-Steps Kvalitetssäkring AB offers municipal and independent units, in schools, pre-schools, youth recreation centres and care of the elderly, resource-efficient tools for quality development. Q-Steps' certification model measures quality within the organization and provides leaders and co-workers with a shared picture of the strengths and weaknesses in the organization.

Behind Q-Steps lie some of the most experienced consultants in Sweden in the field of management and organisational development in schools, such as *Sören Levén*, CEO of Q-Steps Kvalitetssäkring AB. Sören is one the initiators of Qualis and has worked as a educational consultant for many years. *Mats Bohman*, who works in the Municipality of Nacka, has contributed and is currently working on the development of the Qualis concept and the training of Qualis inspectors. *Leif Hallström*, former school principal and local government head in Enköping, works actively to develop the Qualis model for schools and pre-schools. He is also in charge of Qualis quality assurance within care of the elderly.

Collaborative Partners:

SIQ Institute for Quality Development Q-Steps Kvalitetssäkring AB collaborates with SIQ SIQ Institute for Quality Development. The collaboration consists of joint information enterprises on quality in schools and pre-schools. Q-Steps Kvalitetssäkring and SIQ arrange the annual conference on quality HOW! – Successful Pre-schools and Schools. SIQ are responsible for the Swedish Quality Award and collaborate with the National Agency for Education on the Better School Award. www.siq.se

Svennerståls & Partners Q-Steps Kvalitetssäkring AB is included in Svennerståls & Partners, which is a network of consultants with a focus on organisational development, leadership development and quality development. Svennerståls & Partners offer consultant services and support for companies, organizations and the public sector. www.svennerstal.com

CadCoordinator AB CadCoordinator supplies Q-Steps in Sweden AB with survey tools, IT support and programming. www.cadcoordinator.se

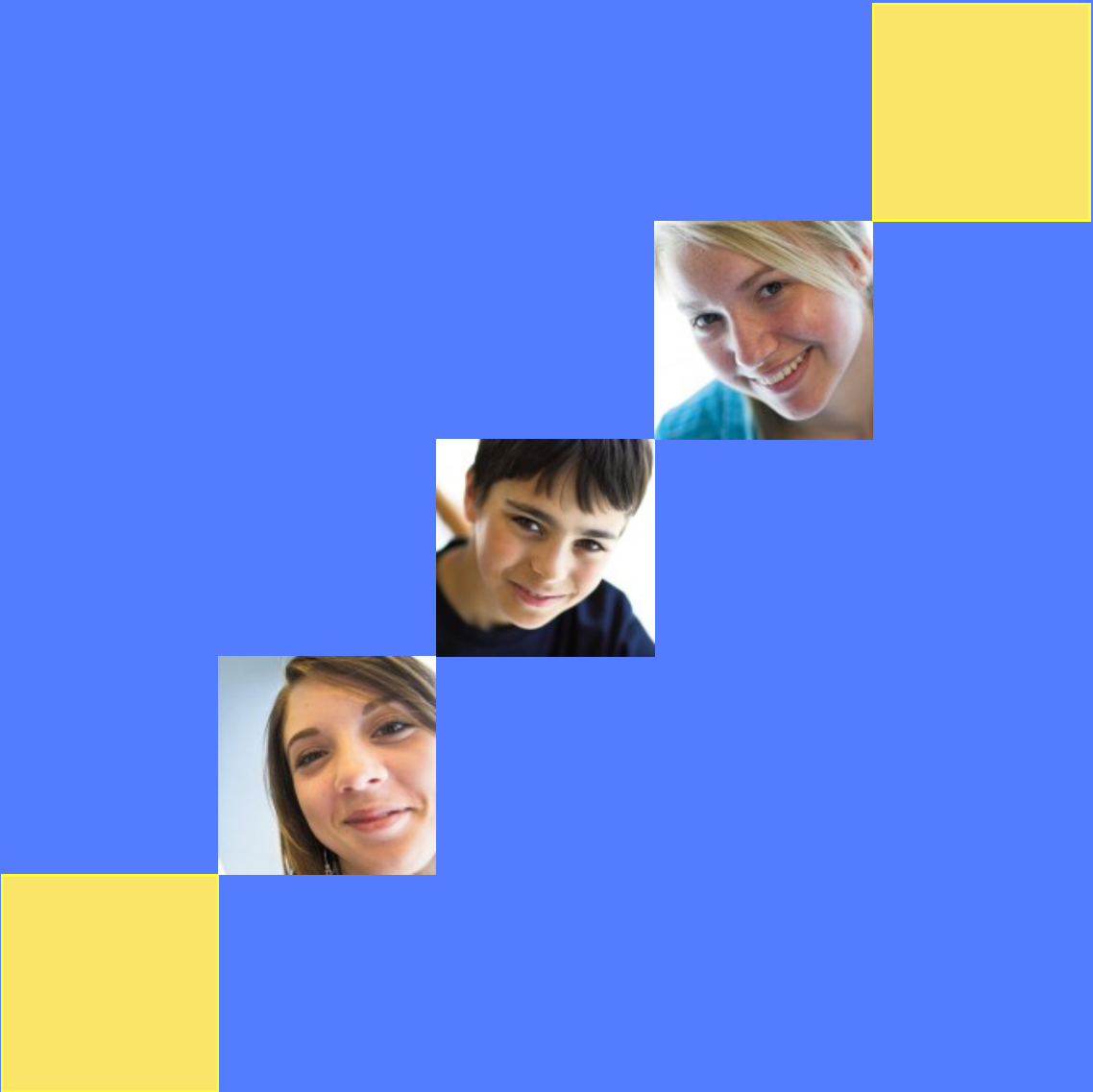
The Qualis model is owned by Q-Steps Kvalitetssäkring AB. For further information about Qualis Kvalitetssäkring AB in schools, please visit www.q-steps.se.

DO YOU WISH TO QUALITY ASSURE YOUR SCHOOL?

Please contact Sören Levén, tel. 070-575 94 78

or send an email to info@q-steps.se





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