EUROPEAN UNIVERSITY OF TIRANA

QUALITY ASSURANCE STRATEGY

2023 – 2028[1]

CONTENTS

INTRODUCTION

The European University of Tirana (UET) was licensed by the Decision of the Council of Ministers in September, 2006 (DCM No. 636, dated 20.09.2006) and operates in accordance with the legal framework that applies in higher education in the Republic of Albania. EUT offers study programs in all three study cycles, as well as professional study programs in; economic sciences, law, social and political sciences, humanities and applied arts, engineering sciences and information technology, medical sciences.

EUT activity is supported by its academic and administrative structures, their functioning and responsibilities are well defined in the internal regulatory acts. EUT devotes a particular importance to quality assurance, towards both internal assurance and external quality assurance processes. EUT sets up its quality assurance activity based on the Quality Assurance Strategy (hereinafter: QA Strategy).

1.1. Purpose and legal foundation

The Quality Assurance Strategy is a reference document for the internal quality assurance system and the University's relations with external quality assurance institutions and stakeholders.

The Quality Assurance Strategy describes the policy, structures and elements that guarantee quality at the European University of Tirana.

The Quality Assurance Strategy is based on Law 80/2015 "On Higher Education and Scientific Research in Higher Education Institutions in the Republic of Albania", its implementing by-laws, the Quality Code, standards and guidelines for quality assurance in European Higher Education Area (European Standard and Guidelines, ESG 2015), EUT Statute and Regulation.

1.2. Institution vision and mission

Institution Vision

EUT aims to provide education and research of comparable standards to the European education market, bringing together staff, students and alumni, faculties, departments and research units operating as part of the European Education Initiative. All EUT activity will be conducted in order to benefit the whole society, locally, nationally and beyond.

Mission

To provide students with a qualitative education by folding it into a valuable scientific research; to avail knowledge through teaching, creativity, scientific achievements and also through labour market partnerships.

POLICY FOR QUALITY ASSURANCE

The Quality Assurance Policy is the set of goals, principles and rules that UET adheres to for decision-making and planning of quality assurance activities in fulfillment of its vision and mission.

2.1. Strategic objectives

The Quality Assurance Strategy at the European University of Tirana, is aimed:

- ✓ To promote the culture of quality according to which each member of the University community sees quality assurance and improvement as an individual and holistic responsibility;
- ✓ To develop policies, procedures and processes that support an effective cycle of planning, implementation, monitoring, evaluation and improvement of the activity in accordance with the vision and mission of the Institution;
- ✓ To create a clear and real picture of the quality at the given time according to the approaches; *"quality as compliance with the mission, purpose"* which means quality as fulfillment of the mission of the institution and the purpose of a study program, of established objectives, of an expected result, and "*quality based on standards"*, which means quality as meeting state quality standards that allow a degree of comparison;
- ✓ To optimally adopt the application of quality assurance standards and best practices, especially those of the trends of the European Higher Education Area;
- ✓ To ensure the inclusiveness and contribution of interested parties through communication and publication of information and decisions.

2.2. Principles of quality management

Based on the principles of ISO 9001-2015, EUT has established a quality management framework focused on the effective development, implementation and monitoring of quality policies and procedures.

Principle 1. Student Centred approach. This principle means involving students through proactive student-staff relationships, active learning approaches, transparent and accountable mechanisms for their support. Students should feel that their voice is heard, that they contribute to the learning process and share their experiences with others, as well as feel themselves part of the institution. The implementation of this quality principle is essential and officiate the long-term success of the Institution.

Principle 2. Leadership. This principle implies that the orientation of EUT's activity according to a vision, mission and development objectives helps the quality assurance process and requires that the quality management system be built in accordance with them.

Principle 3. Inclusiveness of individuals. All members of the EUT community are required to be involved in quality assurance by respecting them, as in this way each one contributes to the fulfillment of quality, but also expresses individual and overall responsibility in this process.

Principle 4. Approach to the process. The interconnection of all EUT performing structures and functioning as a system within the Institution helps to optimize the processes and achieve stable and well-defined results.

Principle 5. Enhancement. In today's era of prompt changes, success is tied to continuous improvement. Improvement is important for the Institution to maintain the achieved level of performance, to react to changes and to create new opportunities for development and a higher level of quality.

Principle 6. Decision-making based on evidence. According to this principle, facts, evidence and data analysis lead to a high degree of objectivity in decision-making, to make good decisions that produce desired results.

Principle 7. Relationship management. According to this principle, the stakeholders influence the performance of the Institution. Sustainable success is achieved when the Institution manages relationships with stakeholders to optimize their impact on its performance.

2.3. Internal quality assurance standards

EUT adheres to the Internal Quality Assurance Standards applicable in the European Higher Education Area (ESG), approved by the Ministerial Conference (May, 2015).

Standard 1. Policy for quality assurance.
Institution should have a policy for quality assurance that is made public and forms part of its strategic management. Internal stakeholders should develop and implement this policy through appropriate structures and processes, while involving external stakeholders.

Standard 2. Design and approval of programmes.
Institution should have processes for the design and approval of study programs it offers. The programs should be designed so that they meet the objectives set for them, including the intended learning outcomes. The qualification resulting from a program should be clearly specified and communicated, and refer to the correct level of the national qualifications framework for higher education and, consequently, to the Framework for Qualifications of the European Higher Education Area.

Standard 3. Student-centered learning, teaching and assessment.
Institution should ensure that the programs are delivered in a way that encourages students to take an active role in creating the learning process, and that the assessment of students reflects this approach.

Standard 4. Student admission, progression, recognition and certification.
Institution should consistently apply pre-defined and published regulations covering all phases of the student "life cycle", e.g. student admission, progression, recognition, and certification.

Standard 5. Teaching staff.

Institution should assure itself of the competence of its teachers. Institution should apply fair and transparent processes for the recruitment and development of the staff.

Standard 6. Learning resources and student support.

Institution should have appropriate funding for learning and teaching activities and ensure that adequate and readily accessible learning resources and student support are provided.

Standard 7. Information management.

Institution should ensure that it collects, analyze and use relevant information for the effective management of it programs and other activities.

Standard 8. Public information.

Institution should publish information about its activities, including programs, which is clear, accurate, objective, up-to date and readily accessible.

Standard 9. On-going monitoring and periodic review of programmes.

Institution should monitor and periodically review its programs to ensure that they achieve the objectives set for them and respond to the needs of students and society. These reviews should lead to continuous improvement of the program. Any action planned or taken as a result should be communicated to all those concerned.

Standard 10. Cyclical external quality assurance.

Institution should undergo external quality assurance in line with the national and European standards and guidelines (ESG) on a cyclical basis.

QUALITY ASSURANCE STRUCTURES

The European University of Tirana has defined the functional responsibilities of the structures and authorities responsible for internal quality assurance at all levels. They have the freedom and authority to identify problems, take initiatives through the drafting of action plans, give recommendations and propose solutions for quality issues.

The quality assurance structures operating at the University, have the following functions:

i) Provide opportunities for the issues, concerns and recommendations of all members of the university community, collaborators and external authorities to become known;

ii) To guarantee that all members of the university community are notified effectively, and on-time, of the decisions taken by the responsible bodies;

iii) Provide opportunities and space for all staff and students to actively participate in the quality assurance process.

The principles, goals and objectives of internal quality assurance are defined in a separate document.

External quality assurance is carried out in accordance with the legal provisions, through the processes of periodic reporting, external evaluation and accreditation.

3.1 Internal quality assurance system

Internal Quality Assurance is the guarantee of quality within Insitution academic, research, cultural, and social activities of academic staff and students, as well as administrative and financial activities of EUT. Through the University's internal structures, a system has been put in place that provides performance and answers questions on the accuracy and efficiency of quality assurance procedures.

The internal quality assurance system consists of governing bodies, authorities and structures at the institutional level and of the main units. The internal quality assurance system focuses on: quality control, accountability and enhancement.

Each member of the EUT community must acomplish their responsibilities related to internal evaluation and quality assurance at the University level, main unit and department level. Responsibilities and rights of the individuals assessed in quality assurance processes:

- Each member of the staff must define the goals and objectives of his activity at the Institution at the beginning of each academic year;
- Each staff member must be informed with the summary of his/her assessment;
- Each staff member must have the opportunity to discuss and appeal his/her assessment report before it is archived as a final evaluation document.

Governing bodies, authorities and structures at institutional level

1. Academic Senate

2. Administration Board

3. Internal Quality Assurance Commission

4. Rectorate

5. Office of Standards and Quality: Curriculum Development Office

6. Students' Council

Governing bodies, authorities and structures at faculty level

1. Deans' Office

2. Head of Department

3. Head of Section: Study programm Coordinator

4. Internal evaluation *ad hoc* groups

3.2 Accreditation and external quality assurance

The external quality assurance structures are:
- Governmental authorities:
  - o Ministry of Education and Sport (MoES)
  - o Quality Assurance Agency in Higher Education (ASCAL/QAAHE), and,
  - o Accreditation Board (AB)
- quality assurance agency in European area, members of the European Network of Quality Assurance Agencies (ENQA);
- independent auditing authorities;
- other forms of involvement of external peer reviewrs in quality assurance in higher education.

Accreditation
Accreditation is the process by which a governmental, non-governmental or private body assesses the quality of an institution of higher education or a study program in order to formally recognize the fulfillment of a certain degree of quality standards. The governmental authority responsible for the evaluation process in the framework of accreditation in our country is the Quality Assurance Agency in Higher Education, while non-governmental/private authorities are other national/international agencies, members of the European Network of Quality Assurance Agencies (ENQA). The authority responsible for recognition and approval of accreditation in our country, based on Law 80/2015, is the Accreditation Board.
The evaluation procedures and methodology for *ad hoc* groups of Internal Evaluation in the framework of accreditation (IEG) is defined in the guidelines of the relevant agencies; for example *"Manual for procedures and deadlines for evaluation in the framework of the accreditation of higher education institutions and study programs" (www.ascal.al)*. In any case, at the end of the internal evaluation process in the framework of accreditation, the self-evaluation documents (SED) is processed according to the instructions of the relevant agencies, in electronic format (CD) and/or hard copy:
- Internal Evaluation Report (IER);
- Supporting evidences.
The evaluation procedures and methodology for the external assessment within the accreditation is defined in the guidelines of the relevant agencies; for example *"Manual for procedures and deadlines for evaluation in the framework of the accreditation of higher education institutions and study programs" (www.ascal.al)*. In any case, at the end of the external evaluation process in the framework of

accreditation, the university is provided with the External Evaluation Report (EER) drafted by external peer review team selected by the relevant agency (External Evaluation Group, EEG).
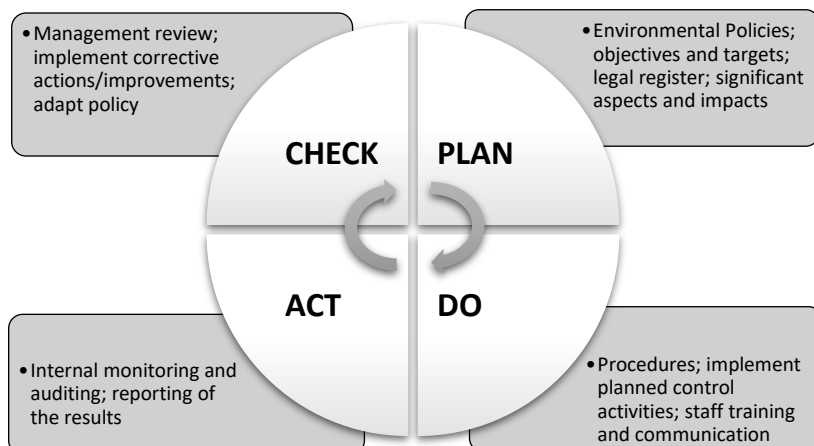
External quality assurance

The University is involved in and performs other activities related to external quality assurance, as follows:

- Periodic annual evaluation of the University's activity
  at the end of the process, the University reports to the Ministry of Education and Sport, becoming the object of external control and evaluation by this governmental body,
  the evaluation is carried out according to the procedures and methodology defined in the MoES instructions;
- Periodic assessment of the University's activity
  at the end of the process, it is reported, based on evidence, to the Ministry of Education and Sports, becoming the object of external control and evaluation by this governmental body,
  the evaluation is carried out according to the procedures and methodology defined in the MoES instructions, official correspondence and prior requests made known;
- The University organizes forums/discussions at Faculty level within the framework of improving the quality of study programs;
- The University invites external experts for consultations, involvement in decision-making and/or monitoring structures within the framework of quality assurance.

SCOPE AND ASSESSMENT APPROACH TO QUALITY ASSURANCE

The quality assurance approach at the European University of Tirana is based on Deming's improvement cycle, known as the Plan-Do-Check-Act (PDCA) cycle, a systematic approach that leads to maintaining and improving quality according to the scheme:

Internal evaluation areas to quality assurance are:

- Study programs and teaching
- Students and their academic progress
- University personnel and its performance
- Scientific research
- Services and students' support
- Institution management

Evaluation of study programs, scientific research and student services is carried out in the standard-based approach.

Assessment of student achievements is based on learning outcomes.

Personnel evaluation is carried out on the basis of performance standards and indicators.

The evaluation of the Institution is carried out according to the mission-based approach and the standards-based approach.

MONITORING, ASSESSMENT AND IMPROVEMENT ACTIVITIES

In order to ensure quality, the following activities are carried out at the European University of Tirana:

Monitoring activities

- Systematic monitoring of compliance with the legal and regulatory framework, curriculum criteria, student admission criteria, student evaluation criteria, staff admission and performance criteria, institution management criteria, financial and didactic resources criteria;
- Systematic monitoring of the performance indicators of the academic staff;
- Systematic monitoring of student progress indicators;
- Systematic monitoring of infrastructure indicators.

Evaluating/Assessment activities

- Assessment of learning outcomes;
- Evaluation of benefits from cooperation agreements;
- Evaluation of course programs (syllabi);
- Evaluation of the quality of student life at EUT through *focus group*.

Improving/Enhancing activities

- Planning and continuous actions of addressing the findings from the monitoring, assessment and accreditation processes (follow-up process).

USE OF ASSESSMENT OUTCOMES AND RECORDS

The outcomes and data collected from the monitoring and evaluation processes carried out at the European University of Tirana in the framework of quality assurance are used for:

- Strategic planning of EUT;
- Preparation of internal evaluation reports and accreditation;
- Improving the quality of study programs, teaching, research, services and management;
- Annual planning of EUT activities;
- Improvement of personnel performance.

Reports and other forms of documents related to the outcomes of the monitoring and evaluation processes are archived in hard copy and/or electronic form. Therefore, standardized naming, coding and archiving is recommended for all documentation related to quality assurance.

PUBLICATION OF QUALITY ASSURANCE REPORTS

The European University of Tirana and the structures responsible for quality assurance are required to communicate and publish monitoring, assessment and accreditation outcomes, in accordance with the forms approved by the Rectorate and the Academic Senate.
UET guarantees that published information related to quality assurance is fit for purpose, accessible, reliable and conveyed in a language understandable to all stakeholders and interested individuals. This process is monitored by IQAC at Institutional level and the information is regularly updated.

DRAFTING AND AMENDMENT OF THE QUALITY ASSURANCE STRATEGY

The Quality Assurance Strategy document is drafted by the Office of Standards and Quality in cooperation with Internal Quality Assurance Commission (IQAU) and approved by the EUT Academic Senate. The drafting and amendment of the QA Strategy is an inclusiveness, open and transparent process.