

Central European University Budapest Hungary CEU OFFICIAL DOCUMENT P-1103-3 v 1211

Institutional Assessment and Quality Assurance (IAQA) Policy

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I. Background

CEU Mission and Strategic Plan commit the University to excellence and highest quality in its research, education and outreach activities. The CEU Institutional Assessment and Quality Assurance (IAQA) system ensures achieving such quality and supports the implementation of the Strategic Plan. It facilitates the alignment of CEU mission, goals and activities; strengthens the culture of long-term planning, strategic thinking, critical reflection and commitment to excellence.

This Policy defines the main principles, organization and mechanisms of Institutional Assessment and Quality Assurance at CEU. It is based on the Characteristics of Excellence in Higher Education defined by the CEU main accrediting agency - the Middle States Commission for Higher Education - European Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance in the European Higher Education Area, and the Hungarian Higher Education Act.

II. Principles

Institutional Assessment and Quality Assurance at CEU is based on the following principles:

Centrality of the University's mission and strategic goals as defined in its Strategic Plan and other strategic documents.

Involvement and ownership by faculty and staff. IAQA processes are designed and implemented with direct involvement of CEU faculty and staff in such a way that they support and benefit their regular activities;

Link to planning and continuous improvement. IAQA processes are part of the overall planning cycle and both support and are guided by the CEU Strategic Plan and other plans. Each planning and assessment cycle should result in improvement of existing processes, practices, and outcomes.

Differentiated, multi-level and systematic approach. Distinct IAQA processes take place in individual units, programs and at the institutional level. At the same time, the whole IAQA system at CEU is organized and managed in a coherent and systematic way so that processes at different units and levels inform and support each other.

III. Organization

The Institutional Assessment and Quality Assurance at CEU is led by **the President and Rector** and forms an integral part of the Strategic Planning process.

The **Provost** oversees quality assurance and assessment of teaching and research activities. S/he is advised and supported by the Senate Quality Assurance Committee. The Vice-President for Administration oversees quality assurance and assessment in non-academic units. The Vice-President for Administration and Provost oversee quality assurance in outreach efforts depending upon their nature (academic or non-academic). The Vice-President for Administration and Provost together approve the IAQA Handbook.

Senate Academic Quality Assurance Committee. The Senate Academic Quality Assurance Committee (SAQAC) is elected by the Senate with the responsibility to evaluate strategy reports of academic units (section IV.B.1), review the IAQA Handbook, introduce technical and propose substantive changes to this Policy, and provide advice to the Provost on other matters of quality assurance of academic activities. The Provost is the ex officio chair, and the Academic Secretary is an ex officio member of the committee. At least four additional CEU faculty members are elected to the committee. If there is need, an external member may be elected to the SAQAC.

The **Academic Secretary** - who is also the Academic Liaison Officer for the Middle States Commission on Higher Education - coordinates IAQA processes at CEU. S/he is responsible for drafting and periodically revising the IAQA Handbook and safe-keeping the IAQA documentation and data, particularly for the purposes of academic accreditation.

Heads of Departments and Schools are responsible for assessment and quality assurance within their units (see IV.B) as well as for providing required information for institutional-level assessment;

Heads of teaching programs are responsible for quality assurance and assessment of these programs (see section IV.C). They may designate quality assurance coordinators within the programs to coordinate program-level QA procedures and to liaise with the Academic Secretary.

Central Administration Units and Services (Students Services, Academic Cooperation and Research Support Office, External Relations Office, Human Resources Office, Budget and Finance Office, Information Technology Department etc.) collect and provide information to the Institutional Assessment processes such as the preparation of the Annual Report and the Strategic Plan. Heads of these Units and Services are also responsible for IAQA processes within their units.

Directors of Research Centers are responsible for quality assurance and assessment of activities within these centers (see IV.D) as well as for providing required information for institutional-level assessment;

IV. Processes

IAQA processes at CEU are included in the planning, assessment and review cycle. These cycles are specific for different levels and areas of CEU operation. This Policy provides an overview of the IAQA processes which are further detailed in the IAQA Handbook. The IAQA Handbook is drafted by the Academic Secretary and approved by the Provost and the Vice-President for Administration in consultation with the SAQAC.

A. Institutional level

IAQA processes at the institutional level are designed to support the preparation, implementation, monitoring and periodic revision of the CEU Strategic Plan, budget plans as well as other CEU-wide plans and include the following.

- Ongoing collection of information on key aspects of CEU operation.
- CEU-wide assessments such as the recruitment survey, the entry survey, and the alumni survey;
- Preparation of the CEU Annual Report;
- Preparation and analysis of data for MSCHE (self-study reports) and other accrediting or oversight bodies;
- Using results of these assessments for preparation and periodic review of the CEU Strategic Plan.

B. Academic Departments and Schools

The Assessment and Quality Assurance Processes at the level of Academic Departments and Schools include:

- Collection of key information related to the teaching, research and outreach activities at the
 Unit. Some of this information will be specified in the IAQA Handbook as required by the
 institutional assessment and planning processes (e.g. the preparation of the Annual Report or
 responding to the accreditation bodies). The Units themselves may define other key
 information to be collected and evaluated.
- Strategic and other reviews of the Unit's activities.

1. Strategic reviews

The quality of academic activities of Departments and Schools (further Units) is reviewed every five years or at shorter intervals if the Unit decides it is necessary. The timeline of such strategic reviews is defined by the President and Rector on the advice of the SAQAC. In case of extraordinary reviews (section IV.B.2) the timeline of regular strategic reviews should be adjusted.

The purpose of a strategic review is to evaluate the performance of the unit in relation to its mission and to identify strategic directions for the Unit. A strategic review should start with discussing the unit's performance in the framework of the mission and the strategic plan of the University. A strategic review should evaluate the curriculum, the quality of teaching, the recruitment and the placement of graduates of the educational programs delivered by the Unit. This review is more general and strategic than annual reviews of individual teaching programs described in section IV.C. The strategic review should also cover research and outreach activities of the Unit as well as the quality of its administration.

In preparing for a strategic review, Units should set up an ad hoc Strategic Review Committee consisting of the Head of the Unit as Chair of the Committee, the Head of the Doctoral Program (if applicable), one representative of the junior academic staff members, and any other faculty member the Head of the Unit would like to invite. Faculty members from other Units may be invited to participate in the strategic review committee, especially in case the Unit is involved in inter-departmental academic programs. Participation of external reviewers (from both within and outside CEU) in strategic review committees is strongly encouraged. Where applicable and when useful to the Unit, a practitioner of the discipline being taught may be appointed as a reviewer.

The strategic review committee should have a meeting with all faculty members and administrative staff of the unit as well as with the Unit's advisory board, and discuss issues pertaining to the subject of the review. The strategic review committee should also meet the student representatives, and receive their written comments. Finally, the strategic review committee should analyze relevant information collected within the Unit and institutionally including the records of annual reviews of the teaching programs (section IV.C) and the reports of the previous strategic or extraordinary reviews.

The strategic review committee should prepare a report based on the outcomes of the meetings and analysis of information. A report by the external reviewers, where applicable, is to be incorporated in the Strategic Review Report in a distinct section. The Review Committee may wish to reflect on the external reviewers' report in the main body of the Strategic Review Report. The report should contain the evaluation of the Unit's academic activities and outline strategic directions for the development of the Unit. It may suggest changes to degree programs and other activities deemed necessary for the fulfillment of the stated mission of the Unit. The Head of Unit should send the report to the Provost, who will bring it to the Senate Academic Quality Assurance Committee and to the Rector. The reports should be available for the faculty and staff of the Unit.

The Senate Academic Quality Assurance Committee should report annually to the Senate on the results of strategy reviews and make recommendations concerning the development of academic programs at the University for Senate discussion. The SAQAC also provides written feedback to the respective academic units.

Further details and guidance on strategic reviews of Departments and Schools should be provided in the IAQA Handbook.

2. Extraordinary reviews

The President and Rector and the Provost may require extraordinary reviews in cases when a significant change concerning the Unit is contemplated as well as during the preparation for accreditation, initiation of joint programs with other institutions, as a result of other issues identified by the Rector and brought to the attention of the Senate, or upon request of the Board of Trustees. Extraordinary reviews may be internal or external. In case of internal extraordinary reviews, the regular strategy review procedure (section IV.B.1) should be followed.

The Rector may require an external extraordinary review of the Unit. As a rule, the Unit is reviewed by three outside evaluators, two of whom should preferably be from an institution other than CEU, appointed by the President in consultation with the SAQAC and the Unit.

External extraordinary reviews may evaluate teaching, research, administration and outreach activities of the Unit, the performance of the Unit Head and its academic staff members, and the progress and quality of its students (or researchers). The Terms of Reference for the Review Team are developed by

the President in consultation with the Provost, the SAQAC and the Unit. Evaluators may require any documentation they deem necessary in order to meet their Terms of Reference. They may hold interviews with individual academic staff members and students. The external review report should be communicated to the Unit, which should prepare a written response. Both the review report and the Unit's response should be communicated to the Senate, where decisions on possible changes in procedure and activity may be passed.

C. Teaching programs

Each CEU teaching program (degree and non-degree) should incorporate appropriate planning, assessment and review elements compatible with this Policy, other CEU policies and the requirements of accrediting bodies.

Each degree-granting CEU program should have:

- Program Specifications prepared in accordance with CEU requirements defining the goals, the learning outcomes and other key aspects of the program as well as syllabi of individual courses;
- a process for continuous assessment of the quality of the program, especially in terms of achieving the Program's learning outcomes;
- an annual review process; the review should reflect on the quality and outcomes of the program
 and may lead to adjusting the Program Specifications, the planned number of students or other
 aspects of the Program;

The Program Specifications and the documented process and outcomes of program review should be available to the Provost and the Academic Secretary.

In order to support excellence in teaching, CEU encourages external reviews of degree-granting teaching programs. External reviewers (from both within and outside of CEU) can be invited to participate in annual program reviews at the discretion of Heads of Programs and Departments. External reviews of teaching programs can also be initiated by the Provost or the President.

The IAQA Handbook should provide guidance on the suggested content and format of Program Specifications, assessment and review processes.

D. Research centers

Each Research Center should have an annual plan of action and provide annual reports of their research and other activities (preferably in an electronic form available on the Center's Website). The activities of Research Centers are reviewed based on these reports and personal meetings with the Directors of the Centers by the Provost's Office every second year (see also P-1012-3, Policy on Research Centers at CEU). The results of these reviews are used in the budget and other planning processes.

E. Non-academic units

Non-academic units prepare their Work Plans and annual reports and submit these to the Vice-President for Administration for approval. The Vice-President for Administration shares those materials that are relevant to CEU-wide IAQA processes with the Academic Secretary. The IAQA Handbook should provide guidance on preparing Work Plans.

Signed by CEU President and Rector John Shattuck.

The original document is filed at the Office of the Academic Secretary.

Terms and Abbreviations

OAS Office of Academic Secretary

IAQA Institutional Assessment and Quality Assurance

IAQA Handbook Document describing in detail IAQA processes at CEU

SAQAC Senate Academic Quality Assurance Committee

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Related documents	Strategic Plan, IAQA Handbook, Policy on Research Centers	
For final documents		
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