Vilnius University

VILNIUS UNIVERSITY QUALITY ASSURANCE POLICY



Vilnius University quality assurance policy

The Vilnius University Quality Assurance Policy sets out the University community's shared approach to quality and quality assurance and establishes the University's public commitment to continually fostering and enhancing quality. The Policy defines the concept of quality and its fundamental principles, the operating logic of the quality assurance model, and the respective responsibilities. It applies at all organisational levels of the University, across all areas of the University's activities, and to the management and administrative processes that support them.

The concept of quality

At Vilnius University, quality is understood as the alignment of the University's activities and their outcomes with its mission, academic values, established standards, and the expectations of the University community and society, thereby creating long-term value through studies, research, and impact on society. Quality is ensured through decisions grounded in evidence, experience, and expertise, responsibility for results, systematic assessment of activities, and continuous improvement.

Quality culture is an integral part of quality assurance across the University's activities. It is reflected in the attitudes, behaviour, and operating principles of the University community, which promote a focus on results, openness to feedback, the sharing of experience, and learning. It is shaped daily by the University community itself, through its own decisions, relationships, and practices.

A key prerequisite of quality culture is leadership, understood primarily as the process of engaging the University community in pursuing a shared direction. It is reflected in the ability to see and clearly communicate a shared direction, involve the community in decision-making, foster dialogue and cooperation, and create conditions for initiative and meaningful engagement.

Quality culture is underpinned by three related principles: trust, responsibility, and continuous improvement.

Trust allows for open dialogue, cooperation, and constructive feedback. At the University, we strive to create an environment in which people can speak openly about successes, challenges, and potential improvements, while respecting diverse views and experiences. Trust also means confidence in a person's expertise and ability to take responsibility. Decisions are therefore taken at the level at which the context of the activities is best understood, and the necessary expertise is available. This enables academic freedom, autonomy, and responsible action.

Quality is a shared responsibility of the entire University community. Every student, member of the teaching, research, or administrative staff, manager, alumnus or alumna, and external stakeholder contributes, through their knowledge, experience and decisions, to the University's activities and the value they create. Responsibility means not only a duty to honour agreements but also a commitment to safeguard the quality of activities, take responsibility for their own decisions and their results, identify potential improvements and act on them. In quality culture, responsibility is associated with a conscious commitment to contribute to a common goal rather than with control.

Continuous improvement means that the quality of the University's activities is not static – the University learns from its own activities and experiences, community insights, and the wider academic environment, shares experiences, pursues better ways of working, and responds meaningfully to a changing environment, while preserving what matters most for the mission and identity of the University.

This concept of quality and these principles form the basis of the quality assurance model, aimed at helping the University community agree on shared operating principles and a common direction, consistently pursue the University's mission and strategic objectives, and improve the quality and results of its activities.

Quality assurance model

The quality assurance model is an integral part of the University's activities and strategic management, creating conditions in which quality culture can develop, be sustained, and be strengthened. It contributes to the consistent implementation of the University's mission and strategic objectives at all organisational levels – in the key areas of research and innovation, studies, and societal engagement, as well as in the management and administrative processes that support them – and to the use of the results achieved for further improvement of activities.

The application of the model is based on the principle of proportionality, whereby quality assurance actions, criteria, and the scope of assessment are selected with due regard to the nature and scale of the activities and the associated risks. This approach avoids unnecessary procedures and ensures that quality assurance efforts focus on the aspects that are most important to the quality and results of the University's activities.

The Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance in the European Higher Education Area (ESG) provide the overarching reference framework for the model, while its operational logic is based on the PDCA (plan – do – check – act) cycle. The model is understood as a continuous process of planning, implementation, self-assessment, and improvement of activities involving the University community and other stakeholders, rather than as a collection of separate procedures or control measures.

QUALITY ASSURANCE MODEL

An integral part of the University's activities and strategic management

Arqus EUROPEAN UNIVERSITY ALLIANCE

- International partnership
- Good practice
- Joint initiatives and approaches to quality
- Innovation

EXTERNAL FACTORS

- global trends in research, technology and innovation
- transformation of society, the economy and the labour market
- demographic and geopolitical changes
- international academic competition and cooperation
- stakeholder needs and expectations
- national and European public policy priorities

AREAS OF ACTIVITY AND PROCESSES

- RESEARCH AND INNOVATION
- STUDIES
- SOCIETAL ENGAGEMENT
- MANAGEMENT AND ADMINISTRATIVE PROCESSES

PLANNING

- Mission and strategic objectives
- Priorities and goals
- Activity and resource planning
- Quality criteria and responsibilities

IMPLEMENTATION

- Implementation of planned activities
- Implementation of measures and decisions
- Ensuring resources and conditions
- Progress monitoring

P D A C

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IMPROVEMENT

- Identification of improvement priorities
- Planning decisions and actions
- Improvement of practices and processes
- Implementation of changes and assessment of their impact

SELF-ASSESSMENT

- Assessment of activities and outcomes
- Analysis of data and evidence
- Comparison of outcomes against goals and criteria
- Identification of strengths and areas for improvement

RELIABLE, RELEVANT, AND CRITICALLY ASSESSED EVIDENCE

- Internal and external data
- Research outcomes, assessment and audit findings
- Insights from the University community and other stakeholders
- Expert recommendations and institutional experience

ESG

Quality Assurance Reference Framework for the European Higher Education Area

UN SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT GOALS

Reference Framework for Impact Assessment

OUTCOMES, VALUE, AND IMPACT

OUTCOMES
What have we achieved?

VALUE CREATED
What value do we create for the University community, society and the State?

IMPACT
What changes as an outcome, and why does it matter?

Planning

Planning helps ensure that the University's mission and strategic objectives are translated into operational priorities, actions, intended outcomes, quality criteria, and responsibilities at all organisational levels and across all areas, as well as in the processes that support them.

Planning takes into account the University's previous experience, the results of the self-assessment and improvement stages, and reliable, relevant, and critically assessed evidence. Planning identifies the resources required for the activities and, taking into account their nature and scale, selects appropriate quality criteria and assessment tools.

At this stage, the mission and strategic objectives are reflected in the University Strategic Plan and translated into the action plans of academic and non-academic units, with further detail provided at lower organisational levels where necessary. This ensures coherent implementation of the mission and strategic objectives, alignment of activities and clarity of responsibilities.

The main planning instruments are the University Strategic Plan, the action plans of academic and non-academic units, and the individual work-planning system.

Implementation

Planned activities are implemented with responsibility for their quality and intended outcomes. The University provides the conditions necessary for implementing the planned activities, ensures the necessary expertise and resources, and promotes collaboration and community engagement.

Activities are carried out in accordance with the University's strategic documents and other legal acts, including the Regulations on Research Activities, the Study Quality Guide, and the Code of Academic Ethics, as well as the applicable quality criteria.

Quality assurance across all areas of the University's activities and the processes supporting them is an integral part of day-to-day activities. To achieve the intended outcomes, the implementation and progress of activities are monitored, while challenges and opportunities for improvement are addressed as the activities are carried out.

Self-assessment

The University periodically assesses its performance, the outcomes achieved, the value created, and the impact generated against the established goals, intended outcomes, and quality criteria. The analysis considers the extent to which the intended results have been achieved, the factors that determined the results, and the circumstances that influenced them. Trends, strengths, risks, areas for improvement, and emerging needs are identified. Where necessary, an assessment is made of whether the quality criteria applied adequately reflect the objectives and context.

Self-assessment is based on reliable, relevant, and critically assessed evidence, and its findings provide a basis for setting improvement priorities and making decisions on the way forward.

Improvement

The insights gained and the areas for improvement identified through self-assessment are translated into informed decisions and specific changes to activities. Based on the findings of the self-assessment, improvement actions are identified and the resources needed to implement them are determined.

Improvement encompasses strengthening effective practices, addressing identified problems, improving processes, developing competencies, introducing innovations, disseminating good practice, and strengthening quality culture. Improvement actions focus on seizing opportunities and improving the results and impact of the University's activities.

Once the improvement actions have been implemented, the results achieved and their impact are evaluated. Where the intended results have not been achieved, or the improvement actions have not produced the expected impact, the reasons for this are analysed, with a review, where necessary, of the selected decisions, goals, or criteria applied, and additional or alternative improvement actions are planned.

Information on the results achieved, the causes identified and the impact of the actions is used in further planning and decision-making. In this way, the improvement stage leads into a new planning stage, and the PDCA cycle becomes a continuous process of learning and improvement.

Monitoring the external environment

The University continuously monitors and analyses the external environment and its developments, assessing emerging risks and opportunities. This information helps the University make decisions about its activities and their improvement, respond to changes in a timely manner, seize emerging opportunities, and ensure that its activities remain relevant, while preserving its mission and strategic direction.

Evidence-based decision-making

Management and the improvement of activities are based on reliable, relevant, and critically assessed evidence, including external and internal data, research findings, expert recommendations, institutional experience and expertise, findings from assessments and audits, as well as insights from the University community and other stakeholders. Evidence helps the University systematically assess its activities, identify strengths and areas for improvement, and make informed decisions focused on fulfilling its mission and strategic objectives, and improving the quality of its activities.

Learning and sharing experience

The University learns from its own activities and experience, as well as from other higher education institutions and the wider academic environment. Openness to external experience and to international cooperation enhances learning. Membership of the Arqus Alliance provides opportunities to exchange experience, participate in joint quality assurance initiatives, learn about approaches adopted by other institutions, and apply relevant practices to the improvement of the University's activities.

Results, value, and impact

The University aims not only to achieve the intended outcomes of its activities or to ensure compliance with established requirements but also to understand the value created and the impact they generate. The University therefore carries out self-assessments of what it aimed at, implemented, and achieved, as well as the value created and the changes its activities brought about. The vision of the future of the state 'Lithuania 2050' and the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals are taken into account when assessing the value created and the impact made by the University's activities.

Governance of the quality assurance model

The quality assurance model is periodically assessed and improved, taking account of the results of the University's activities, self-assessment findings, feedback from the community and other stakeholders, recommendations from external reviews, good practice, and a changing environment.

The Rector, Pro-Rectors, and the Chancellor of the University are responsible for the effectiveness of the quality assurance model and its integration into the strategic management of the University. They determine the main directions for the development of the model, ensure its alignment with strategic planning and the management of activities, and create conditions for its consistent implementation and improvement.

The implementation of the quality assurance model is coordinated by the Strategic Management Division. The Division provides methodological support, contributes to the development of quality assurance competencies, coordinates self-assessment and improvement processes, and promotes the sharing of experience and good practice. The Strategic Management Division also monitors the application of the model, collects and consolidates information on its effectiveness, and submits proposals for its improvement.

Responsibility for the quality of the University's activities is based on the principles of cooperation and trust. The responsibilities of the different governing bodies and community members are interlinked and mutually complementary. Effective quality assurance depends on dialogue, sharing of knowledge and experience, feedback, and joint engagement in the planning, implementation, self-assessment, and improvement of activities.

Responsibility for quality

Within their respective remits, the governing bodies of the University (the Council, the Senate, and the Rector) oversee the quality of the University's activities, determine its directions and priorities, and create the conditions for assuring and improving the quality of its activities.

The Rector, Pro-Rectors, the Chancellor, and heads of units of the University oversee quality assurance and improvement, bring the community together around a shared direction, promote responsibility for the results of activities, and create the conditions for quality culture to flourish.

The academic and non-academic units of the University and other persons or bodies carrying out activities are responsible for the quality and results of those activities and for their self-assessment and improvement.

Members of the University community and other stakeholders contribute to quality assurance by providing feedback, sharing experience and insights, and participating in self-assessment and improvement of activities.



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