



Quality Assurance Policy

POLICY INFORMATION

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Section: Quality Assurance and Enhancement Office
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1. POLICY STATEMENT

Through its Strategic Plan, Bethlehem University (BU or the University) has defined the direction that it should follow to serve and meet the changing needs of its target market and the society at large by providing quality higher education in Palestine. Key to achieving this strategy is the development of an effective and efficient Quality Assurance (QA) system underpinned by quality teaching, learning experiences, research and community engagement, curriculum development, student progression monitoring, and activities that promote student wellbeing; and quality governance and administrative systems that support the teaching, learning and research processes. In the effort to realize its vision, mission, values and goals which are emanating from the Catholic and Lasallian tradition, BU constantly monitors and systematically evaluates the implementation of all its mandated activities to ensure continuous quality improvement. The University is committed to striving for excellence in teaching, learning, research, community engagement, governance and administration ensuring that all its implemented processes and operations are in line with standard quality-assured best practices .

Therefore, each University functional unit (Office, Faculty, Department, Institute, Center, ...etc.), in concurrence with propositions of the Quality Assurance and Enhancement Office (QAEO), constantly reviews all its existing policies, procedures, office manuals, practices and regulations, and where such instruments are lacking, develops appropriate ones, so as to ensure that all these guidelines are in line with the functional unit's vision, mission, and overall objectives. Moreover, each functional unit shall constantly monitor and evaluate all its day-to-day activities through its Internal Quality Cell (IQC). The QAEO ensures that at all times each functional unit has in place well stipulated and widely understood criteria for judging performance standards in all core activities of that unit.

Quality assurance at the University operates in accordance with the following key principles stemming from international standards and BU vision:

- a. The use of agreed reference points to guide the development of policies, procedures and processes.
- b. A risk-based process to ensure a proportionate response, while maintaining rigorous, robust review mechanisms.



- c. Student, employer and other stakeholder engagement through consultation, representation and feedback mechanisms.
- d. Evidence-based consideration with decisions underpinned by analysis of data.
- e. Timely decision-making taken as close to the source as possible, ensuring a rapid turnaround for the benefit of the University community.
- f. External reviews to ensure decisions are consistent with sector best practice.
- g. Sharing of best practice to inform effective decision-making.
- h. A commitment to continual improvement of processes and programs leveraging the level of excellence of the University.

In light of the above, BU adopts a systematic approach to quality management. The Quality Management System (QMS) is based on (1) the University definition of quality and (2) the implementation of the University Quality Management Framework (QMF). Together, these guide University functional units in the development of internal quality objectives, standards, desired practices and quality management mechanisms.

Regular internal quality assurance checks, inspections, sampling, data gathering and surveys analysis will be conducted to ensure that the Quality Assurance Policy is implemented properly and that the right mechanisms are selected to assess the following areas:

- a. Quality of programs and courses.
- b. Quality program review process.
- c. Quality of academic and non-academic staff.
- d. Quality of teaching and learning experience.
- e. Quality of research.
- f. Quality in student assessment.
- g. Quality in support services.
- h. Quality of resources and facilities.

Furthermore, to ensure that high quality standards are maintained, external quality assurance reviews shall be conducted by any of the following bodies:

- a. External Examiners.
- b. External Professional bodies.
- c. External accreditation agencies (for professional programs that have recognized, credible professional accreditation agencies).

The University is also committed to periodically reviewing its quality policy, its quality management framework and the functioning of its quality management system to ensure their continued relevance and effectiveness.

Any member of faculty, staff or any student at BU may, without fear of prejudice, submit any idea or proposal for quality improvement to the Quality Assurance and Enhancement Office at the following email address: QAE@bethlehem.edu. All proposals shall be studied and any changes or improvements to be introduced are subject to the approval of the University management bodies.

2. DEFINITIONS

Quality: refers to quality in higher education as a multidimensional concept which can be defined as the level of excellence entailing the following elements:



- a. Exceptional - reaching high standards.
- b. Adherence to high standards- refers to the University's ability to consistently meet agreed service standards and/or apply best practice in its delivery of academic, professional, technical, resource or support services and in its communications with internal and external stakeholders.
- c. Fitness for purpose - refers to the University's ability to fulfil its stated objectives and mission at both institutional and program levels. It is concerned with assessing an institutional process or program against indicators and standards derived from its basic mission and stated objectives.
- d. Fitness of purpose - refers to the University's ability to define objectives that are relevant to its stakeholders' needs and pursuant to its mission in alignment to the national goals of higher education, as well as taking into account international developments in this regard.
- e. Transformative development - refers to the University's ability to contribute to the enhancement of the knowledge, skills and attitudes of its employees and students.
- f. Value for money - refers to the University's ability to demonstrate efficient and effective use of its human, estates, technological, information and financial resources.
- g. Benchmarking – comparing and learning from good practices in other similar institutions or specialized bodies.

Quality Culture: is an attitude supporting a set of shared values that guide how continuous improvements are made to everyday working practices, thus leveraging the levels of quality in the outputs; it is a collective responsibility for all employees of the University.

Quality Assurance (QA): is a developmental process of providing evidence needed to establish confidence among all concerned that the quality-related activities are being performed effectively and efficiently. It is an all-embracing term referring to an ongoing, continuous process of evaluating (assessing, monitoring, guaranteeing, maintaining, and improving) the quality of a higher education system, institutional processes, programs, and services.

Quality Control (QC): involves developing systems to ensure processes or services are designed and produced to meet or exceed stakeholders' requirements.

Quality Evaluation: is the systematic determination of merit, worth and significance of subjects of interest.

Quality Management: is a method of ensuring that all the activities necessary to design, develop, implement, monitor and evaluate a process or service are effective and efficient with respect to the system and its performance.

Quality Management System (QMS): is a system that outlines the policies and procedures necessary to control and improve the various processes that will ultimately lead to improved institutional performance.

Quality Enhancement: is an ongoing process of quality augmentation in the various institutional processes.

Internal Quality Cell (IQC): is a small group of employees in each University functional unit or doing similar type of work who voluntarily meets regularly once every two weeks for non-academic divisions and twice a semester for academic divisions, to identify, analyze and resolve work related problems. The objective is to improve quality, productivity and the total performance of their unit and also to enrich the quality of work life of employees.

Internal Moderation: is the process by which a unit regularly samples and evaluates its assessment practices and decisions, and acts on the findings to ensure consistency and fairness.



3. PURPOSE AND SUMMARY

The Quality Assurance Policy (QAP) of Bethlehem University establishes the University's general approach to Quality Assurance Management. This policy supports the achievement of BU's Vision, Mission, Values, Goals, and Strategic Plan. The QAP ensures the development and implementation of specific policies, procedures, guidelines, and practices for quality maintenance across the University. It sets out the methods by which the University assures its stakeholders of the high quality of its academic and non-academic outputs, as well as all aspects of its educational provision .

Therefore, the QAP specifically aims to provide a framework for an efficient and functional Quality Management System (QMS) with enforceable rules and procedures focusing on the:

- a. Establishment and development of a quality assurance culture in the academic, support and resource services.
- b. Promotion of quality assurance and improvement actions at institutional, campus and faculty levels.
- c. Empowerment of employees in the development, implementation and execution of quality assurance systems, processes, procedures and mechanisms.
- d. Monitoring and evaluating the quality assurance actions within the functional units of the University.
- e. Monitoring and evaluating of institutional quality assurance accountability required of the University on a statutory and national level.

4. APPLICATION / SCOPE

The Quality Assurance Policy (QAP) applies to all academic and non-academic staff employed at and/or contracted to Bethlehem University. This includes members of Executive and Senior Management, Administrative, Technical, Professional and Support staff.

The Policy applies equally to the University's academic operations (design and all modes of delivery of taught programs/ courses and research) and non-academic operations (design and delivery of administrative, financial, technical, professional and support services), as well as to its formal and public community engagement services.

5. STATEMENT OF ROLES & RESPONSIBILITIES

All BU employees at all levels have a professional obligation for ensuring quality implementation in their functional roles where they are accountable to their line supervisors.

All BU students have to embrace a culture of quality assurance in their academic activities and community engagements. The students participate in quality assurance by adhering to all University policies and regulations and they may express their quality related concerns through the Student Affairs Deanship and/or the Academic Senate and the Quality Assurance and Enhancement Office.

1. Quality Assurance Management Structure:

The structure of BU quality assurance management system is constructed upon groups at five University levels overseen by the Quality Assurance and Enhancement Office in the University:



A. Quality Assurance and Enhancement Office (QAEO):

The QAEO monitors and supports regularly the internal audits/reviews of all academic programs/ courses/modules and divisions such as faculties, departments, centers, units...etc.; also it monitors and continuously assesses the appropriateness and adequacy of resource and support services provided to students, employees and other University stakeholders, to have a holistic view of how they are performing, resourced and how they can be supported to perform to the best of their ability.

B. Institutional Academic Level:

There is an Academic Quality Assurance Committee (AQAC) in the University. The AQAC is a delegate Committee of the University Senate, chaired by the Academic Quality Assurance Coordinator who coordinates the academic quality assurance activities with the QAEO.

The Dean of Research is a member of the AQAC, who develops and implements criteria for the quality assurance and evaluation of research development, research activities and research planning, and provides consultations /recommendations on academic quality issues.

C. Faculty Level:

Each Faculty has a Faculty Internal Quality Cell (FIQC). The FIQC consists of representatives from each Department in the Faculty and chaired by the Dean. The Dean represents his/her Faculty in the AQAC.

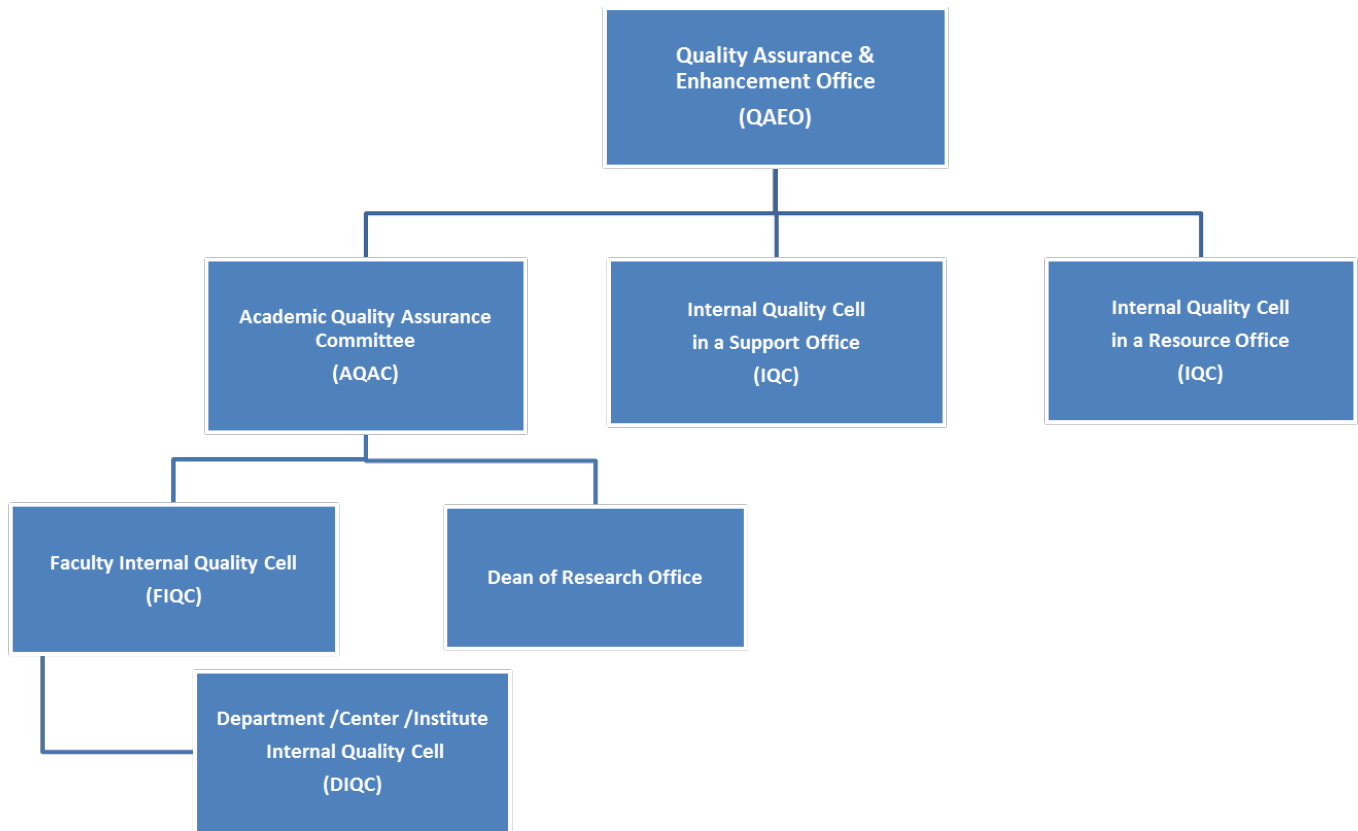
D. Department/Center/Institute Level:

There is a Departmental Internal Quality Cell (DIQC), chaired by the Department Chairperson which consists of maximum six faculty members who will be working with the rest of the department faculty members. The Chairperson represents his/her Department in the FIQC.

In case a technical/professional center or institute connected to an Academic department, the director of the center/institute will be heading his/her IQC and shall represent the center/institute in both the DIQC and the FIQC.

E. Support/Resource Office Level:

Each Support and Resource Office has an Internal Quality Cell (IQC) consists of three to maximum six office staff members, covering all the operations executed by that Office and working with the rest of the office staff members on quality-related activities. The IQC is led by a senior staff member/supervisor who coordinates the quality assurance activities with the QAEO.



Quality Assurance Coordination Line Chart

2. Responsibilities:

A. The Director of Quality Assurance and Enhancement is responsible for:

1. Promoting a quality culture across the University;
2. Overseeing and facilitating the quality assurance activities, processes and mechanisms in University functional units, and assisted by the Academic Quality Assurance Coordinator in regard to the academic side;
3. Implementing the Quality Assurance Management System (QAMS) throughout the University functional units;
4. Promoting personal and unit responsibility for quality among employees;
5. Ensuring that University policies, procedures, practices and sound work mechanisms are effective and in place;
6. Managing the development and implementation of the University's QA policies and procedures in association with the University's senior management team;
7. Monitoring the outcome and evaluating the efficacy of policies, procedures and systems put in place to support quality management;



8. Identifying imminent or longer-term threats to the assurance of quality and standards and leading discussion about how to address them;
 9. Monitoring changes to the national regulatory framework for QAE, and more general developments in the Higher Education sector, advising senior faculty and staff and proposing action to be taken by the University in response;
 10. Promoting and facilitating the formation of internal quality cells (IQC) within University functional units to undertake the task of identification, implementation and promotion of best practices as a quality improvement and enhancement measures;
 11. Ensuring the effective on-going preparation for external reviews and inspections; receiving copies of all external examiner reports, analyzing and chasing up issues arising and commending good practices;
 12. Ensuring the implementation of approved improvement actions by University functional units.
- B. Academic Quality Assurance Committee (AQAC) emanating from the Academic Senate and headed by the Academic Quality Assurance Coordinator appointed by the Academic Office is responsible for:
1. Overseeing quality and standards of the University's taught programs and courses;
 2. Developing and enhancing policies and procedures in the areas of academic quality and enhancement and for advising Senate on all aspects of such policies and procedures both within the University and between the University and its partners;
 3. Monitoring performance on actions in the FIQC and DIQC;
 4. Sharing knowledge, expertise, ideas and information with FIQC and/or DIQC;
 5. Instilling a culture of continuous quality improvement throughout the academic units;
 6. Developing reliable and consistent quality mechanisms and assessment criteria to stimulate and improve academic performance of the University;
 7. Developing and applying quality benchmarks/parameters for the various academic activities in the University;
 8. Disseminating information on the various academic quality parameters of higher education;
 9. Maintaining a complete and organized record for the academic quality –related activities in all areas of its operations.
- C. Internal Quality Cell (IQC) is responsible for:
1. Working closely with all colleagues in its respective functional unit to ensure quality through the planning, implementation, evaluation and improvement of all processes, operations, practices and outputs executed within its area of work;
 2. Soliciting feedback consistently and systematically from its stakeholders (i.e. students, academics, alumni, employers, suppliers, community) in all areas of its operations and in concurrence with QAEO and in cooperation with the Institutional Research Unit (IRU), through questionnaires and other research and information gathering instruments, and use the outcome of this feedback to continuously improve quality (for the academic side, this task rests with the AQAC);
 3. Establishing and applying effective procedures for regular critical self- evaluation and for preparing for external evaluation in its functional unit, according to a specific cycle. This



- is done in concurrence with the prescripts and policies for which QAEO is a custodian (for the academic side, this task rests with the AQAC);
4. Ensuring appropriate records of meetings are maintained;
 5. Maintaining a complete and organized filing system for the quality –related activities in all areas of its operations.
- D. Chairpersons of academic departments report on the outcomes of their departments’ quality-related activities and evaluations twice a semester to the FQAC.
- E. Deans of Faculties are responsible and accountable for monitoring quality and quality assurance within their areas of jurisdiction and report on the outcomes of their faculties’ quality-related activities and evaluations twice a semester to the AQAC.
- F. An annual summarized report covering all academic quality-related evaluations and/or reviews to be submitted to the University Senate by AQAC, with a copy to the QAEO.
- G. Leaders of non-academic IQC are responsible and accountable for monitoring quality and quality assurance within their areas of jurisdiction and report on the outcomes of their units’ quality-related activities and evaluations on a monthly basis to the QAEO.
- H. Overall responsibility for quality assurance rests with the Executive Vice President, who will report on the status of quality assurance to the Executive Council and the International Board of Regents.

6. PROCEDURES

The Quality Management Framework (QMF):

The University shall embrace the provisions of Total Quality Management (TQM) in the implementation of this Policy. This entails a holistic approach that views continuous improvement in all aspects of the University operations underpinned by progressive changes in attitudes, practices, structures and systems. This, therefore, calls for commitment and diligence by every employee to maintain high standards of work in every aspect of the University operations.

The University has in place a range of systems and procedures that combine to provide a Quality Management Framework (QMF). The QMF is based on the concept of the Deming Quality Cycle, which comprises four stages: Plan, Do, Check and Act (PDCA).

The University functional units are committed to:

- i. **Planning:** designing institutional process or operation components and establishing targets/ objectives;
- ii. **Doing:** implementing the plan, monitoring and measuring its performance ;
- iii. **Checking:** assessing the measurements and reporting the results to superiors; and
- iv. **Acting:** deciding on changes needed to improve the process, operation or output.

The University approach to quality assurance operates under the following scheme of management:

A. Planning and Implementation Processes:

1. Strategic & Operational Planning:

- i. BU’s vision and mission establish its overarching aims for the long- and medium-term, while its strategic planning process produces a five-year Strategic Plan which establishes key strategic themes, goals and objectives. These are



implemented through programs set out in University functional units as operational plans.

- ii. All operational plans should include measurable targets related to one or more of the seven elements listed in the University's definition of quality as stated in article (2) of this policy.
2. Development, Documentation and Implementation of Policies and Procedures:
 - i. In addition to the strategic planning process, the University provides detailed guidance on planning and implementation in relation to the quality of specific aspects of its human, physical, technological, information and financial resources; internal academic and administrative operations; and communications through approved and documented policies and procedures. Such policies and procedures must be easily accessible for reference by employees and other stakeholders, as relevant.
 - ii. All policies and procedures must be based on the following:
 - a. consultation with all relevant stakeholders;
 - b. consideration of any applicable statutory or accreditation requirements;
 - c. reference to best practice at higher education institutions or other relevant entities;
 - d. reference to the University's definition of quality as stated in article (2) of this policy; and
 - e. adherence to the University's "Formulation, Review and Approval of Policies" policy no. ADM.08.02.
 - iii. The University is committed to providing adequate resources and support to enable implementation of its approved policies and procedures.

B. Evaluation and Improvement Processes:

1. The University has instituted processes to facilitate evaluation and enhancement of the quality of its academic and non-academic operations and outputs. These include processes for continuous monitoring and periodic review of: the operations of a specific University functional unit, or a specific operational process which may span multiple University functional units. Evaluation processes must emphasize the value of soliciting and taking account of the views of external stakeholders.
2. Recommendations emanating from internal and /or external quality reviews shall be transformed into Self- Improvement Plans (SIPs) for implementation by the University functional units under review as far as possible in order to re-initiate the PDCA quality cycle, and subsequent periodic reporting/ follow-up on the implementation of SIPs shall be monitored and evaluated by the Quality Assurance Office.

C. Internal and External Quality Assurance Reviews:

The University's approach to evaluation and review underscores both self-reflection and external reference. Review processes may include a stage during which a University functional unit prepares a self-assessment of its performance in relation to its quality objectives (previously established, either during its planning processes or by University policy). Reviews of the quality of outputs and operations of a specific unit, or the implementation and outcomes of a specific process, will be undertaken or coordinated by the Quality Assurance Office.



D. Institutional Evaluation:

Self-evaluation is regarded by the University as a cornerstone of quality improvement and the primary mechanism for quality assurance. Formal quality evaluation at the University is not a one-off procedure but forms part of a cyclical process on the various levels of academic, resource and support activities. Since quality assurance, quality evaluation and quality promotion are interlinked, the terms quality assurance and quality enhancement are used by the University in an embracing sense.

The University will undertake internal periodic quantitative and/or qualitative assessments of the quality of its processes, operations and outputs through quality assurance checks, inspections, research studies including data gathering and surveys analysis involving students, employees and other stakeholders as deemed necessary.

E. Capacity-Building:

The University will provide support for the implementation of corrective actions and improvement initiatives arising out of its evaluation exercises and the results of the employees appraisals. Based on this, an annual employees development plan will be developed , and this support will include in- house as well as external training or consultancy to develop and enhance the competencies of employees where appropriate.

7. COMPLIANCE

The Executive Vice President is entrusted with this policy, and in coordination with the Director of Quality Assurance & Enhancement, is responsible for implementing this policy and reporting in writing to the HR Office of any breach to the policy by any BU user, stating the breach details, action to be taken and recommending any disciplinary measures as per BU policies in this regard.

8. RELATED INFORMATION

1. Quality Assurance & Institutional Effectiveness Manual. (under preparation)
2. Academic Quality Assurance Manual. (under preparation)