

The Conception of Assuring Quality

At Akaki Tsereteli State University

Assuring the quality of education, research and administration represents everyday activity of the university and at the same time, responsibility of every person working at the university. The work of University Quality Assurance Service is based on the development of internal quality assurance process considering peculiarities of each faculty and maintaining their autonomy that implies independence in an accordant form.

Akaki Tsereteli State University aims at ensuring the best quality teaching, research and service which is oriented on meeting the expectations of all stakeholders, it takes into consideration the international practice of quality management of educational institutions (IQM handbook: “Internal Quality Management in Competence-based Higher Education”), relies on normative and regulatory requirements of Georgia, and on the standards of quality assurance and guideline principles (ESC) of European Higher Education Area.

In order to achieve a higher quality, the university relies on procedural approaches of quality management. By means of active participation of the staff and of all stakeholders, it constantly improves and develops processes and procedures, periodically reviews efficiency of the quality structure and assures sustainable development of the quality culture.

Quality Assurance Service of Akaki Tsereteli State University sets the following goals:

- Ensure effective implementation of university mission and strategic goals;
- Ensure the desirable level of quality within university activities considering university’s internal standards and criteria;
- Ensure accordance of university’s activities with Georgian legislation, authorization and accreditation regulations and other normative documents and standards in the domain of education, so that to achieve continuity of institutional authorization and accreditation of educational programmes;
- Recognize the outcomes of university activities at the regional and national level and raising recognition at the international level;
- Support internationalizing of all processes and establishing mutually beneficial relationships with all stakeholders.

For the sake of self-development and continuous perfection, Akaki Tsereteli State University strives to utilize institutional autonomy and academic freedom, so that to ensure implementation of the system of university quality assurance at the appropriate level and its continuous development. For these purposes, ATSU Quality Assurance Service operates utilizing the tools of internal and external evaluation and makes an active use of cyclic process, which implies four main interrelated elements: plan, do, check, act (PDCA cycle).

Akaki Tsereteli State University Quality Assurance Service consists of diverse policies, procedures and instructions/rules/guidelines, according to which the university carries out its activities.

Policy is the unity of general goals, principles and norms of activities for ensuring quality in academic, scientific and managerial domains;

Procedure is a set of essential activities for achieving the goals defined by the policy, responsible units for these activities, a document describing logical chain of timeframes for implementing these activities and their management;

Instruction/rule/guideline is a managing type of document, which describes guidelines that should be maintained while carrying out certain activities.

The System of Quality Assurance is based on

Three Main Policies:

1. Educational Programmes Quality Enhancement Policy –EP-QA;
2. Research Enhancement Policy –RE-QA;
3. Management Efficiency Enhancement Policy –ME-QA;

1. Quality Enhancement Policy for Educational Programmes (EP-QA)

Quality Enhancement Policy for Educational Programmes aims to foster designing and enhancing educational programmes (academic and professional), which are of higher academic standards and result-oriented. Carrying out a high quality educational process and providing student services is a way of forming students into experts with adequate knowledge for the modern requirements, skills and major competences that will foster their further employment and adaption in the rapidly changing world.

Educational Programmes Quality Enhancement Policy is focused on satisfying the interests of the university community by means of educational activity, considering key outer factors, and ensuring complete correspondence of educational programmes with external requirements. It is oriented towards integrating and internationalizing processes of learning- teaching and research.

Quality Enhancement Policy for Educational Programmes –EP-QA

is implemented by means of three procedures:

- EP-QA 1.1. Procedure for initiating, planning and approving an educational programme;
- EP-QA 1.2. Procedure for evaluating an educational programme;
- EP-QA 1.3. Procedure for developing the acting educational programmes.

Procedure for initiating, planning and approving an educational programme (EP-QA 1.1) defines ways for initiating a new academic and professional programme, its design and approval, as well as defining the main requirements and responsible bodies for implementing the procedure.

Procedure for evaluating an educational programme (EP-QA 1.2) describes essential activities, as well as indicators and criteria for evaluating acting academic and professional educational programmes. The evaluation received by using the procedure is used for further renewal and enhancement of acting programmes, also to ensure their correspondence with constantly changing environment.

Procedure for developing the acting educational programmes (EP-QA 1.3) defines essential activities for enhancing the acting academic and professional educational programmes, ways for their implementation and responsible bodies, actions for taking amendments in the programme and approving these amendments.

2. Policy for Research Enhancement (RE-QA)

Akaki Tsereteli State University is the biggest and rapidly developing regional university in Georgia which is distinguished with diverse academic programmes. The current stage of university development is characterized by orientation on the quality indicators of teaching and putting quality assurance mechanisms in action to reach one of its main goals - “training and retraining of new scientific personnel, creating conditions for scientific research, their assurance and development” (Law of Georgia on Higher Education, article 3. Goals of Higher Education).

ATSU, as a regional university plays an important role and it has specific approaches to maintain multi-profile programmes and improve relative scientific potential.

The existing quality of scientific research defines relation between teaching and scientific research, participation in the international scientific area and enhancing opportunities for young generations.

ATSU research development policy is based on the phases of planning, implementing, evaluating and developing scientific-research activities.

According to faculty research profile, the university defines priority research directions, relying on which the university will be competitive at national and international level and will be able to interest/attract international partners and collaborate with them.

The university is oriented to implement innovative, fundamental and applied researches which are based on the “Quadruple Helix Model”, where synergy is achieved by participating for main parts: 1.University; 2. Industry and Business; 3. State Governance and Public sector; 4. Civil Society.

Evaluating scientific-research work is intended for evaluating the following forms of scientific-research activities in ATSU: the work performed by the academic staff in accordance with their academic-scientific workload; research funded by external scientific funds; scientific research financed by the internal scientific fund; MA and PhD researches; students’ scientific activities.

On the basis of evaluating the quality of scientific-research activities, long-term plans for scientific research quality enhancement are made, which, in the end, will improve the quality of teaching, foster internationalizing researches, integrating scientific researches and their results with teaching process, and professional development of the staff.

3. Policy for Enhancing Efficiency of Management–ME-QA

The management system of the university is a multi-component structure, which is oriented on the demands of different stakeholders the effective work of which fosters conducting quality teaching and scientific processes, ensures the university’s governing and financial stability and sustainable development.

According to the policy for improving the efficiency of management, the university governing body relies on procedural approaches based on PDCA cycle – plan, do, check, act.

Efficient management of university ensures quality learning-teaching and research, which implies:

- Strategic and operational planning and development for implementing the university’s mission;
- Efficient planning and managing of human and material resources to be engaged in teaching and research process;
- Developing exact and effective procedures to carry out learning-teaching, research and student services of the university, their constant evaluation and improvement.

Procedures for improving efficiency of management are carried out periodically and representatives of all structures of the university and student body are engaged in it.

Policy for Enhancing Efficiency of Management - ME-QA
is carried out by means of two procedures:
ME-QA 3.1. Procedure for self-assessment and accountability;
ME-QA 3.2. Procedure for evaluating efficiency of management.

By means of the **procedure for self-assessment and accountability (MR-QA 3.1)**, the university ensures developing the system of self-assessment and accountability to raise the quality of education; it is used for constant enhancement of the efficiency of learning-teaching, research and management. Therefore, procedure for self-assessment and accountability is a universal tool in order to implement the three policies of ATSU quality assurance service.

The university considers the report on self-assessment of educational programmes as a tool for developing learning/teaching and research quality. It should depict the programme’s

“Quality is not an action, it is a habit.”

Aristotle

correspondence with the standards of education quality assurance. In order to engage in the processes actively and enhance their content, reports on self-assessment must rely on strategic planning methodology (SWOT analysis and/or others).

In order to check the level of university learning/teaching and research activities, availability of services and organizational development, annual reports are used.

Self-assessment and accountability are performed within certain periods and representatives from all structural units of the university and student body are engaged in it. During working on this process, reliable and valid information must be collected.

The aim of the **procedure for evaluating efficiency of management (ME-QA 3.2)** is to ensure periodical evaluation of learning/teaching, research and management processes for the sake of constant development and raising efficiency; simultaneously, it aims at searching for the information in a timely manner and giving recommendations for further development of the system.