

Policy: **QUALITY ASSURANCE POLICY**

Policy Title	QUALITY ASSURANCE POLICY
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Responsible Office	QA Office
Responsible Executive(s)	All units

QA POLICY

Introduction

Quality Assurance Policy contains the statements of intentions and the principles of QA by which the quality will be achieved. Procedural guidance can give more detailed information about the ways in which the policy is implemented and provides a useful reference point for the practical aspects of carrying out the quality procedures.

PRINCIPLES OF QUALITY ASSURANCE

Quality policy and procedures is a framework within which the university develops and monitors the effectiveness of its quality assurance system.

The policy principles include:

- Establishing an active relationship between teaching and research;
- University's strategy for quality and standards;
- Ensuring the organisation of the quality assurance system;
- Providing the responsibilities of departments, Colleges and other organisational units and individuals for the assurance of quality;
- Ensuring the involvement of students in quality assurance;
- Ensuring a system in which the policy is implemented, monitored and reviewed.

QUALITY STANDARDS

STANDARDS OF EDUCATIONAL PROGRAMMES AND AWARDS

The University has a significant commitment at all levels of the University to ensure that the educational programmes have clear and explicit outcomes; and has standards of its programmes and awards.

The staff is ready, willing, and able to provide teaching and learners a support that will help our students achieve these outcomes.

The University staff and faculty aspire to improve and enhance the education we offer our students.

Standards of approval, monitoring and periodic review of programmes and awards are established.

The University has formal mechanisms for the approval, periodic review and monitoring of its programmes and awards.

The confidence of students and other stakeholders is established and maintained through effective quality assurance activities which ensure that programmes are well-designed, regularly monitored and periodically reviewed, thereby securing their continuing relevance and currency.

The quality assurance of programmes and awards includes the following:

- development and publication of learning outcomes.
- curriculum and programme design and content.
- different modes of delivery (e.g., full time, part-time, distance learning, e-learning).
- appropriate learning resources.
- programme approval procedures by an external body.
- monitoring of the progress and achievements of students.
- regular periodic reviews of programmes (including external panel members);
- regular feedback from employers, labour market representatives and other relevant organisations.
- participation of students in quality assurance activities.

STANDARDS OF INTERNAL AND EXTERNAL QUALITY, AND QUALITY CULTURE

AUM has a QA policy and associated procedures for the assurance and development of its internal and external quality. The university also commits itself explicitly to the development of a quality culture which recognises the importance of quality, and quality assurance, in its activity.

To achieve this, the university develops and implements a strategy for the continuous enhancement of quality.

STANDARDS OF INVOLVEMENT OF STUDENTS IN QUALITY AND ASSESSMENT OF STUDENTS

The quality assurance system of the University also includes a role for students in its strategies for quality, involve students into quality assurance processes, and other stakeholders as well.

Students are assessed using published criteria, regulations and procedures which are applied consistently.

The assessment of students is one of the most important elements of education. The outcomes of assessment have a profound effect on students' future careers. It is therefore, important that assessment is carried out professionally at all times and that it considers the extensive knowledge which exists about testing and examination processes. Assessment also provides valuable information about the effectiveness of teaching and learners' support.

Student assessment procedures are developed to:

- to measure the achievement of the intended learning outcomes and other programme objectives.
- appropriate for their purpose, whether diagnostic, formative or summative.
- have clear and published criteria for marking.
- be undertaken by highly teaching staff who understands the role of assessment in the progression of students towards the achievement of the knowledge and skills associated with their intended qualification.
- not rely on the judgements of single examiners.
- take account of all the possible consequences of examination regulations.
- have clear regulations covering student absence, illness and other mitigating circumstances.
- ensure that assessments are conducted securely in accordance with the institution's stated procedures.
- subject to administrative verification checks to ensure the accuracy of the procedures.

The University ensures that students are clearly informed about the assessment strategy being used for their programme, what examinations or other assessment methods they will be subject to, what will be expected of them, and the criteria that will be applied to the assessment of their performance.

STANDARDS OF QUALITY ASSURANCE OF TEACHING STAFF

There is full, timely and tangible recognition of the contribution by the staff who demonstrate particular excellence, expertise and dedication. The University creates a system to evaluate that staff involved with the teaching of students are qualified and competent to do so. This system is available to external reviews, and is commented upon in annual reviews and reports.

The University ensures that those who teach have a full knowledge and understanding of the

subject they are teaching, have the necessary skills and experience to transmit their knowledge and understanding effectively to students in a range of teaching contexts, and can access feedback on their own performance.

The University ensures that the staff recruitment and appointment procedures include that all new staff have at least the minimum necessary level of competence. Teaching staff is given opportunities to develop and extend their teaching capacity and is encouraged to value their skills. The University provides teachers with opportunities to improve their skills to an acceptable level and have a system to remove them from their teaching duties if they continue to be demonstrably ineffective.

STANDARDS OF QA OF LEARNING RESOURCES AND STUDENT SUPPORT

The University ensures that the resources available for the support of student learning are adequate and appropriate for each programme offered. In addition to the Faculty, students

have a range of resources to assist their learning. These vary from physical resources such as an academic library or computing facilities to human support in the form of tutors, counsellors, and other advisers. Learning resources are accessible to students, designed with their needs and responsive to feedback from students who use the services provided.

The University routinely monitors, reviews and improves the effectiveness of the support services available to students on a regular basis.

STANDARDS OF INFORMATION SYSTEMS

The University collects, analyses and uses relevant information for the effective management of their programmes of study and other activities.

The quality-related information systems cover:

- student progression and success rates;
- employability of graduates;
- students' satisfaction with their programmes;
- effectiveness of teachers;
- profile of the student population;
- learning resources available and their costs;

- the institution's own key performance indicators.

PUBLIC INFORMATION

The strategy, policy and procedures have a formal status and are available on AUM's open resources.

The University regularly publishes up to date, impartial and objective information, both quantitative and qualitative, about the programmes and awards it offers.

In fulfilment of the public role, the University has a responsibility to provide information about the following:

- study programmes
- learning outcomes
- qualifications they award
- teaching, learning and assessment procedures used
- learning opportunities available to students
- views and employment destinations of past students
- profile of the current student population.

This information is accurate, impartial, objective and readily accessible.

QUALITY POLICY HIERARCHY

EU

Standards, Laws, rules, regulations

MFHEA

National Laws, rules, regulations

Board of Trustees

Bylaws, actions, resolutions, policies

President

Leadership, statements, initiatives, reports

University Policies and Standards

Govern the entire university and all units

Unit rules and operating procedures

support and implementation of policies, procedures

MANAGEMENT OF QA POLICY AND STANDARDS

CHARGE

University-level quality policy and standards govern quality conduct across the university community. The Policy Committee is the university body that is delegated authority to promulgate policy and make recommendations to the University Council regarding amendments to Policies.

PROCESS

The QA policy program works with responsible executives to develop amendments to university policies or university standards. Policies can be amended by adoption, revision, or retirement of a university policy or university standard. The University Policy & Standards ensures these amendments are vetted through all the stakeholders as needed, prior to approving.

The Policy Committee may endorse sending proposed amendments to the Chair of the University Council for approval, recommend revisions or additional actions, or recommend rejecting amendments. The Committee may request additional information, discussion, analysis, and/or input from subject-matter experts, or any other actions prior to making a final recommendation on an amendment. The Committee endorses amendments either in person or in writing. All members, or a designee, must be present to endorse or oppose forwarding recommendations to the President. Recommendations are forwarded when an amendment is favoured by 3 of the 5 members. Endorsed amendments are issued for a 3-week public notification period. The Committee's recommendations are presented to the University Council for approval of changes through the discussion and agreement.

QA POLICY OF THE BOARD OF TRUSTEES

American University of Malta is governed by its Board of Trustees. The Board's conduct is governed by bylaws and supplemented by policies and processes. The Board can take actions and adopt resolutions that establish and carry out the University's mission. Because the Board is the final institutional authority, these bylaws and Board policies have precedence over university policies, university standards, unit rules, or procedures. The Board's focus is one of oversight and policy determination.

UNIVERSITY POLICIES

A university policy is a statement that applies broadly across the university, governing the AUM community of students, faculty, staff, partners and contractors. University policies are intended to be concise and understandable, contain a minimum amount of detail, and generally, do not require frequent change. A university policy accomplishes one or more of the following:

- Promotes the university's mission, values, and relationships with key stakeholders.
- Contains governing principles or rules that create administrative structures, describe desired outcomes, delegate authority, assign responsibility, mandate, or constrain action, and provide minimal procedures for implementation.
- Promotes compliance with laws, regulations, or other externally imposed requirements.
- Mitigates institutional risk or promotes operational efficiency.
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UNIVERSITY STANDARDS

University standards are like policies, but also govern individuals outside the university community and are enforceable through the judicial system. All individuals or entities entering university real property, using university resources, or participating in university programs are subject to university standards. All university standards must include an appeals process. Units of the university are not permitted to develop university standards outside the process overseen by the Executive Policy and Standards Committee.

UNIT-LEVEL RULES

Unit rules address needs at the unit level or control issues that affect a subset of the university. Colleges, departments, and other units of the university may develop specific implementation mechanisms for operations, administration, or programs within that unit. Unit rules are developed and approved by the unit and describe a unit's approach to implementing relevant university policies or university standards. Unit rules are applicable only to their home units, or to functions over which that unit has authority, but may involve

the implementation of processes that effect the entire university and university community. Unit rules may be more restrictive than university policies and standards but must remain consistent with them and with relevant statutes and regulations.

PROCEDURES

Procedures are descriptions of the tasks required to support and carry out university policies, university standards, or rules. Procedures articulate the process for accomplishing tasks or controls and are intended to ensure activities are accomplished completely and consistently. Procedures have a narrower focus than university policies or rules. They are often changed to improve the processes and are typically more detailed than university policies, university standards, or rules. Procedures often state who will accomplish a task, how it is performed, and when it must be done.