



POLICY ON QUALITY PROMOTION

Policy Owner	DVC Academic
Division/Unit/Department	Division for Teaching Excellence
Date of Initial Approval	28 February 2024
Approved by	Senate
Approval Dates of Revisions/Amendments ¹	This Policy <i>replaces</i> the Quality Promotion Policy (2019).
Next Review Date	2029
Platform to be published on	Intranet, UJ website

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¹ Amendment approval must be by the same structure that approved the initial Policy.

DEFINITIONS

Definitions for the following concepts which align to the CHE's *Quality Assurance Framework* (QAF), 2021 are listed below.

Accountability	The University is accountable when its goals and objectives align with national, society and stakeholder needs (fitness of purpose), and there is effective institutional planning, funding and resource allocation to achieve its strategic goals (fitness for purpose).
Benchmarking	Benchmarking is used as appropriate to compare UJ's work to good practice with the purpose of improving UJ standards of practice and performance.
Evaluation	Evaluation aligns to UJ's strategic goals. It identifies gaps between plans and goals and the achievement of these. Evaluation takes place against UJ's internal standards and requirements and the QAFs HEPS and criteria.
Higher Education Practice Standards (HEPS)	Statements of standards or codes for functional or areas of practice in higher education. The HEPS pertain to aspects of the University's work in which quality must be assured and maintained. The HEPS will apply to areas including learning and teaching, assessment, research, community engagement, student achievement and support, and governance.
External Quality Assurance (EQA)	The QAF defines this as "the means by which an external quality agency ensures that institutions have Internal Quality Assurance (IQA) systems in place to manage the quality of their activities and educational provision. It also ensures that the qualifications and programmes that they offer have been peer-reviewed to ensure that the provisioning meets the quality standards and criteria of the CHE" (CHE 2021: 19).
Internal Quality Assurance (IQA)	The QAF defines this as "the integrated institutional system, policies and process used by an institution to manage the quality of its core and associated functions of learning and teaching, research and community engagement, determined by the outcomes of that institution (CHE 2021: 20).
Quality	The continuous and iterative identification and addressing of gaps; the enhancement of strengths to ensure a continuous and integrated cycle of planning action, monitoring, review and improvement with a view to effecting improvements.
Quality Assurance	"Quality assurance in higher education in South Africa involves evaluating and providing evidence of the extent to which institutions have put in place the measures needed to achieve i) the goals and purposes they have identified for themselves and ii) programmes that are able to deliver a set of learning experiences which will support students in attaining the qualifications to which they lead" (CHE 2021: 21).
Quality system	A quality system comprises three interdependent elements, namely policies, structures, and management; and has two purposes to enhance quality and ensure accountability.
Reflexivity	A cyclical process of reflecting on, and acting to, ensure the sustained improvement of all aspects of quality in the University's core functions over time.

1. PREAMBLE

The University of Johannesburg's (UJ) commitment to quality is in line with its mission to inspire its community to transform and serve humanity through innovation and the collaborative pursuit of knowledge, as set out in its mission statement. Quality across all aspects of the core areas – learning and teaching, research, and community engagement - and a commitment to activities which are legitimate, credible and sustainable is required. Quality arrangements at UJ are aligned to the relevant national policies and quality frameworks, as well as to UJ's own vision, mission and purpose.

The Council on Higher Education (CHE) is the quality council for higher education and is responsible for all aspects of external quality assurance (EQA). EQA includes the *promotion* of quality assurance in higher education, *auditing* the IQA mechanisms of institutions, and *accrediting* programmes.

In 2021, the CHE published an EQA model designed to simplify processes and create a context in which greater institutional responsibility for the introduction of new programmes of learning could be effected. A *Quality Assurance Framework for HE in South Africa* ("the QAF") QAF foregrounds quality and quality assurance to advance national imperatives including transformation, the need to respond to the Fourth Industrial Revolution, environmental sustainability and epistemologies of knowledge in the service of society (CHE 2021, p. 13). The QAF adopts a "developmental approach to building and supporting internal quality assurance in institutions" balanced with the "need for accountability" against higher education standards (CHE 2021, p. 24).

The University maintains and enhances the quality of its academic activities through its internal quality assurance system (IQAS). The IQAS includes, but is not limited to, governance structures, policies, procedures, and processes which assure the University and its communities, including the regulatory and quality bodies of the quality of its core functions. Quality activities are enacted in the context of the need to transform curricula, staff and students in alignment with national priorities and in keeping with the University's strategy. The *UJ Policy on Quality Promotion* thus aligns with the purpose of the QAF, to:

put in place a QA system that strengthens and enhances the quality of higher education provisioning ... This focus entails connecting the quality of the academic project ... to the broader social purpose of building a sustainable and equitable social order in South Africa while simultaneously ensuring global relevance (CHE 2021, p. 28).

2. PURPOSE

The purpose of this policy is to:

- 2.1. Imbue the thinking and practices of all staff (academic, professional, and support) and students with an approach to quality assurance which enables the achievement of the University's strategic and academic goals.
- 2.2. Encourage the development of reflexivity and self-correction as part of a cyclical process of reflection and action thus ensuring the sustained improvement of quality.
- 2.3. Form the basis of a coherent and integrated IQAS in terms of which the quality of the core functions of the University are assured.
- 2.4. Provide broad guidelines for enhancing the quality of the University's core functions.

3. SCOPE

The *Policy on Quality Promotion* establishes the framework within which continuous improvement of all academic programmes takes place. For this reason, all learning programmes, research and community engagement activities fall within the scope of this policy. Additional guidelines and policies for specific areas are provided as needed.

4. QUALITY PROMOTION PRINCIPLES

The University commits itself to the following principles to guide continuous and integrated quality promotion across the different programmes, academic departments, faculties and support and service divisions:

4.1. Accountability

UJ is responsible and accountable for setting strategic goals that address international, national and regional priorities and needs, and accepts its accountability to the broader national and regional community. Institutional accountability includes planning, funding and resource allocation (i.e. fitness for purpose) to achieve its strategic goals.

4.2. Continuous improvement of the University's functions

Quality promotion is an ongoing process aimed at the continuous improvement of the University's core functions. Support for quality promotion takes place at institutional, faculty, school, department and individual levels. Continuous improvement enhances early risk identification and mitigation.

4.3. Quality is an iterative process

Quality assurance is a continuous cycle of monitoring and review in which feedback is infused into the system to effect improvements at all levels of decision-making. The UJ IQAS provides for the empowerment of staff in the monitoring, review, and promotion of quality in all areas.

4.4. Quality is embedded in the University's work

Quality promotion of the core functions – learning and teaching, academic programmes, research and community engagement – is cognizant of their interdependence. Quality promotion structures (such as faculties, departments and support divisions) are part of the quality continuum, and quality activities are ideally neither only top-down nor bottom-up. An embedded approach to quality means that all domains in the University are encouraged to develop opportunities for critical reflection at all levels. Students and staff alike are empowered to enact their quality responsibilities across all areas of the University's work.

4.5. Quality promotion as an individual responsibility

Although ultimate responsibility for quality vests with the Vice-Chancellor, it is equally the responsibility of every UJ employee and student. For this reason, quality assurance processes and procedures must be maintained across the university by all staff and students so that quality promotion, continuous improvement, and the delivery of quality programmes of learning, research, and community engagement activities is achieved.

4.6. The alignment of quality promotion, planning and resourcing

Quality promotion across UJ must align to the strategic plan, as well as to faculty and division policies and plans. Quality promotion functions and activities at UJ are appropriately resourced and capacitated.

4.7. Collegiality and trust

UJ's quality depends on the employment of professional and competent staff. Quality enhancement is best achieved through quality assurance with the intention continuously to enhance. Fundamental to good quality assurance is trust – in staff members, processes and procedures – and collegiality. All staff are encouraged to express their reasoned views on quality in their own and others' domains, including on matters of mutual importance. Frank, open exchanges between all levels of staff, as well as among academic, academic development, support and service divisions, are encouraged.

5. UJ INTERNAL QUALITY ASSURANCE SYSTEM (IQAS)

5.1. Quality policies

A network of UJ policies, plans, frameworks and strategies that focus on the core functions provides direction with respect to the high standards, quality and effectiveness of all activities across the University.

This Policy provides guidance and direction on quality promotion matters. All faculty- and division-specific quality promotion policies and plans should align to this and other relevant University policies.

5.2. Institutional Quality structures

- 5.2.1. The UJ Council and the Vice-Chancellor hold ultimate accountability for the quality of the core functions of the University. The UJ Council ensures good management and the implementation of the UJ strategic plan.
- 5.2.2. Senate assists Council in complying with public accountability related to the academic responsibilities of the University.
- 5.2.3. The Deputy Vice Chancellor: Academic reports to the Management Executive Committee (MEC) on all strategic and institutional planning and quality-related matters.
- 5.2.4. The different Senate committees, including the Senate Teaching and Learning Committee (STLC), are responsible for quality promotion in accordance with their charters.
- 5.2.5. The STLC supports Senate in the implementation of the UJ Policy on Quality Promotion for the core functions in faculties and the support thereof.
- 5.2.6. The Executive Leadership Group, i.e. members of the MEC, Deans and Executive Directors, are responsible for quality management in their respective faculties and divisions.
- 5.2.7. The Centre for Academic Planning and Quality Promotion facilitates and supports the implementation of the UJ Policy on Quality Promotion for all programmes of learning offered by the University.
- 5.2.8. Other relevant structures, such as the University Research Committee, the University's ethics committees, and the UJ Transformation Committee are responsible for quality in their denoted areas.

5.3. Faculty quality structures

Faculties develop and establish formal quality structures taking their context, size, and discipline considerations into consideration.

- 5.3.1. Such structures may be formal committees or portfolios on the Faculty Board and / or faculty teaching and learning committees.
- 5.3.2. The Deans manage the quality promotion of the following core functions through these structures:

- i teaching, learning and assessment;
- ii all academic programmes, including whole qualifications, modules, and short learning programmes;
- iii research; and iv community engagement.

5.4. Divisional quality structures

Academic development, support and service divisions develop division-specific quality structures, as needed and relevant. Executive / Senior Directors and other management staff manage quality promotion through these structures in respect of the domain's work.

6. ELEMENTS OF THE UJ QUALITY ASSURANCE SYSTEM

The following elements are integral to the University's IQAS:

6.1 Quality criteria

These derive from nationally approved criteria (for example, the CHE / HEQC); the UJ strategic plan, which directs the work of faculties and divisions; and additional criteria from nationally mandated professional and/or statutory bodies.

6.2. Evidence

- 6.2.1. Quality practices are evidence-based and, where relevant, data-informed.
- 6.2.2. Quality promotion activities are documented, communicated and reported on through the appropriate structures / channels.
- 6.2.3. Evidence is applied, collected and stored, as far as possible, in electronic formats.

6.3. Continuous quality improvement cycle

- 6.3.1. Continuous quality improvement is required at all levels and in all domains in the University.
- 6.3.2. Continuous and systematic monitoring of the implementation of institutional, faculty and division-specific policies and plans should be undertaken by the relevant structures.
- 6.3.3. Regular evaluation of identified units of analysis in line with the QAF is undertaken (for example, module, programme, department, school, faculty, domain).
- 6.3.4. Evaluation and assessment reports, improvement plans and progress reports should be submitted to the relevant faculty or other structures as indicated in the relevant policies and / or procedures, and as determined by the relevant governance structures.

6.4. Self-evaluation and peer reviews.

The following formal reviews should be undertaken:

6.4.1 Self-evaluation

- i) Systematic monitoring as a part of self-evaluation is undertaken in the form of a continuous process by individuals, groups and at institutional level.
- ii) Peer reviews / reviewers complement self-evaluation processes, validate the observations in made self-evaluation report/s and / or improvement plans, and provide input for the purposes of continuous improvement in line with good practice across the sector.
- iii) Criteria for the appointment of peer-reviewers / panels for reviews align to the sector and CHE standards. Peer reviewers are qualified at least one level higher than the level of the qualification under review, in the discipline or a cognate discipline. Industry peers are appropriate to the review and as reflected in their position (for example, in the workplace, community, etc.).
- iv) Members of peer-review panels must be approved by the faculty / division quality structure.

- v) Quality reviews / review reports undertaken by the CHE or relevant professional and/or statutory bodies are incorporated into the UJ IQA system. Only recognised professional bodies may be allowed to review any aspect of the University's core functions.
- vi) Faculties must inform the Senior Director in the Division for Teaching Excellence (DTE), and the Director, Centre for Academic Planning and Quality Promotion (CAPQP), as well as other relevant faculty and/or division structures of a pending accreditation / review / visit.
- vii) Review reports and subsequent improvement plans / progress reports must be submitted as follows:
 - All statutory professional body reports, improvement plans and progress reports are submitted to the STLC, Faculty and/or division quality structures.
 - All internal programme review reports are submitted to faculty and/or division quality structures.

6.4.2 Thematic reviews

Thematic reviews are internal reviews designed to enhance quality and / or identify areas in need of improvement. These reviews are targeted (for example, undergraduate assessment; moderation; or a particular domain or department) and are useful in identifying risk or catalysing development. These reviews are undertaken as needed, and the decision to commission a thematic review may be taken by a member of the Management Executive Committee, Senate or Council, and in faculties and divisions by the Deans and Executive Directors.

6.4.3 Faculty Reviews

Faculty reviews are undertaken as benchmarking exercises which assure the national and international stature of the individual faculty with reference to the sustained excellence of their academic programmes, research, community engagement and leadership in accordance with the UJ strategic plan.

7. REVIEW

This policy shall be reviewed every five years.

Approval History Table	
Name of Approval Body (Committee)	Date that the policy/review was approved
Senate	28 February 2024