Managing Quality Assurance at the University of Siena

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The University of Siena has established the University Quality Assurance Presidium (PQA), which promotes and supervises the *appropriate and uniform implementation of quality assurance (QA) procedures* throughout the University, based on the guidelines of the governing bodies.

The PQA was established by the Academic Senate at its meeting of 5 March 2013, pursuant to Article 29 of the University Teaching Regulations and in accordance with the provisions of the regulations and guidelines on QA.
PQA: Origins, Composition and Tasks

The PQA was established for the exercise of the functions envisaged by the current provisions on *Self-assessment - Periodic Evaluation - Accreditation (AVA)*

More specifically, the PQA is called upon to fulfil its role as the operational head of QA at the University through the following functions:
PQA: Origins, Composition and Tasks

Implementation of the quality policy (as defined by the University’s governing bodies)

Organisation and supervision of the University QA procedures (with specific reference to the survey of the opinions of students, the updating of the information contained in the SUA-CdS, the periodic review activities and the effectiveness of corrective and improvement actions, etc.)

Proposal of common tools for system actors (guidelines, formats, templates, data, etc.)

Support for the management of information and document flows relating to QA (with particular attention to those to and from the University’s Governing Bodies, Evaluation Unit, Joint Faculty-Student Committees, Departments/Schools and Courses of Study-CdS)
PQA: Origins, Composition and Tasks

... and, last but not least...

The promotion of the CULTURE OF QUALITY, ORGANISATION AND INFORMATION ACTIVITIES for staff and people variously involved in QA in teaching, research and public engagement
Monitoraggio indicatori e Schede annuali

Raccomandazioni e condizioni poste da ANVUR

Schede SUA-CdS, SUA-RD, Rapporti di riesame

Presidio di Qualità: coordina le attività di AQ

Relazioni Commissioni Paritetiche

Nucleo di Valutazione: valuta

Corsi di Studio

Dipartimenti
PQA: Origins, Composition and Tasks

The PQA consists of:

- 9 lecturers with the necessary experience in QA
- 2 representatives of the student community
- 1 administration executive for the teaching area identified by the Director General
- 1 administration executive for the research and third mission areas identified by the Director General
- the Head of the QA Office
PQA: Origins, Composition and Tasks

The lecturers are appointed by decree of the Rector after a selection procedure by a committee composed of the Rector or his/her delegate and two members of the Academic Senate; these members hold office for four years and may be reappointed once.

The representatives of the student community are appointed by decree of the Rector upon designation by the Student Council; they hold office for two years and may be renewed more than twice consecutively.

The selection of the member(s) of the Quality Presidium takes place, where possible, in compliance with the principle of gender equality.

The Presidium elects a Chairperson who sets the agenda and chairs the meetings.
The Architecture of the QA System: The Actors

The Governing Bodies (Rector - Academic Senate - Board of Directors)

In the field of QA, the governing bodies, in line with the regulations and guidelines in force:

- guarantee the activity of critical review of the policies, the QA set-up (tasks, functions and responsibilities), and the achievement of objectives and their continuous improvement

- conduct the analysis of the material information collected at the different levels by the structures responsible for QA procedures
The Independent Evaluation Unit

It is the body responsible to verify the adequacy and effectiveness of the University’s QA system and processes and to makes proposals in order to improve them.

- evaluation of the University’s QA policy
- evaluation of the adequacy and effectiveness of the University’s organisation for teaching and research and for the QA of such activities
- evaluation of the adequacy and effectiveness of the QA system of Courses of Study/Degree Programmes (“CdS”) and Departments (Internal Audits)
- evaluation of the implementation and monitoring of the QA of education and research at the different levels (University, Departments and any connecting structures);
- verification of the persistence of the quantitative and qualitative requirements for the initial and periodic accreditation
- formulation of guidelines and recommendations aimed at improving the quality of the University’s teaching and research activities
The PQA

It promotes the culture of quality in the University and the implementation of the quality policy as defined by its governing bodies by performing the following tasks:

- organises and monitors the continuous updating of information on the requirements for the establishment and activation of CdS
- organises and monitors the QA procedures for teaching, research and third mission activities
- regulates the periodic Cds review activities on an annual basis
- supports and monitors the quality of the Departments’ research and third mission activities on an annual basis
- checks the functionality of reporting from and to the University’s governing bodies, the Evaluation Unit and the Student-Faculty Joint Teaching Committees
- evaluates the effectiveness of improvement measures and their actual outcomes
The Departments (Head of Departments – QA Contact Persons)

Departments have full responsibility for both teaching and research and third mission activities. Hence, the accreditation of Universities requires:

- the QA of the CdS (for which the Departments are primarily responsible, drawing up and approving their curricula and didactic regulations, and arranging for the coverage of educational activities)

- the QA of the Departments’ research and third mission activities
The Architecture of the QA System: The Actors

The **Head (or Director) of the Department**

- is the legal representative of the department
- handles its relations with the governing bodies of the University
- exercises the functions of coordination and supervision over all its activities

Each Department is required to designate a **Contact Person for the Quality of Teaching**, a **Contact Person for the Quality of Research** and a **Contact Person for the Quality of the Third Mission**

- act as an interface and link between the central and peripheral AQ systems
- assist and represent the Head of the Department on QA issues
- support the Department in carrying out and organising QA activities
- monitor the implementation of QA policies, and verify the effective implementation of planned improvement measures
The Architecture of the QA System: The Actors

Student-Faculty Joint Teaching Committees

The Student-Faculty Joint Teaching Committees (CPDS) are constituted at the level of each Department (or connecting structure) and represent a permanent observatory on the department’s teaching activities.

The CPDS:

• monitors the range and quality of teaching, as well as the student service activities by the Department’s professors and researchers
• identifies indicators for the evaluation of results
• formulates opinions on the activation and abolition of CdS
• analyses data and information on the range and quality of teaching and draws up an annual report which it submits to the Evaluation Unit
• makes proposals to the Evaluation Unit for improving the quality and effectiveness of teaching facilities
• carries out dissemination activities of the University’s quality policies towards students
• monitors indicators that measure the degree of achievement of teaching objectives
The Architecture of the QA System: The Actors

CdS, Teaching Committees and AQ Management Groups

Courses of study (CdS) are at the core of the educational mission of higher education institutions.

They are designed through the conception of one or more “outbound profiles”, defined through the identification of their scientific, cultural and/or professional characteristics and, coherently, of the training paths leading to the acquisition of the specific knowledge and skills associated with them.

The design of the CdS must involve the most appropriate internal and external stakeholders, according to the characteristics and objectives of each specific degree program.
The Teaching Committees (CpD) are joint bodies of teachers and students, responsible for the University’s degree courses, with responsibilities in the planning, management, review and improvement of the CdS.

The CdS QA Management Groups comprise the Chair of the Teaching Committee and a representation of the CdS lecturers and students, and are responsible for compiling:

- the SUA-CdS
- the Annual Monitoring Form (SMA)
- the CdS Cyclic Review Report
The Architecture of the QA System: The Tools

The SUA-CdS

The Single Annual Form for Study Courses (SUA-CdS) is the tool through **which each Degree Course expresses the objectives it aims to achieve**

The SUA-CdS provides all the information to students, families and stakeholders, useful to:

• clarify the training objectives
• describe the training plan and the learning environment
• illustrate the training outcomes
• explain the organisational structure and responsibilities in terms of QA
• indicate the results of the review activities carried out annually

The SUA-CdS is **one of the reference tools in the CdS self-assessment and evaluation process**
The Architecture of the QA System: The Tools

The SMA-CdS

The CdS Annual Monitoring Form (SMA), which has replaced the Annual Review Report (RAR), must be completed annually (by the month of December) and consists of a concise critical commentary on the quantitative indicators made available by ANVUR.

In addition to an initial section with summary contextual information (taken from the SUA-CdS and ANS - National Student Registry), useful for reading and interpreting the data, the indicators are divided into 6 sections:

• Teaching Indicators
• Internationalisation Indicators
• Additional Indicators for the Evaluation of Teaching
• Study Path and Career Regularity Indicators
• Satisfaction and Employability
• Consistency and Qualification of the Teaching Staff
The Architecture of the QA System: The Tools

CdS Cyclic Review Report

The CdS Cyclic Review Report (RRC) is the tool through which the set objectives are critically analysed, and the performance and results achieved are assessed.

The RRC is considered as one of the “key documents” examined by the Commissions of Evaluation Experts (CEV), and it must mainly highlight the permanent validity of the founding assumptions of the CdS and of the management system used to achieve them.

The RRC must therefore consider:

• the need to make any changes to the training objectives and the methodologies that the CdS intends to use to achieve them

• the quality of the service provided to students

• the sustainability of the CdS
Student Representatives

The University of Siena recognises students as an essential component of academic life.

The participation of student representatives is envisaged in all QA Management Groups and, on an equal footing, in the Teaching Committees and the Student-Faculty Joint Teaching Committees.

The main tasks are to report observations, criticisms and proposals for improvement regarding the educational contents of CdS and to ensure that transparency and information sharing are guaranteed.
The Architecture of the QA System: The Tools

The AQ System and the role of students

Concerning the quality of the CdS, students can contribute at several levels:

- **Demand sensing**
  
  Master degree students can help identify the demand for adequate bachelor training

- **Designing**
  
  The representatives approve the CdS in the Department Council and in the Teaching Committees

  Students of the CdS can contribute to measuring the teaching load

- **Education delivery**
  
  Contribution in the tutoring phase (Tutoring-Students)

- **Monitoring and Review**
  
  Participation in the CPDS, in QA Management Groups and Teaching Committees

- **Periodic accreditation visit by ANVUR**
  
  Student Experts within the Commission of Evaluation Experts (CEV), Classroom meetings with the CEV, Meetings with the CPDS and the QA Management Group

- **Overall quality of the University’s educational offerings**
  
  Survey of students’ opinions to capture valuable feedbacks
QA Procedures

- Teaching QA procedures
- Research QA procedures
- Third mission (public engagement) QA procedures
The Teaching QA Plan is articulated at the **University level** with general objectives and at the **CdS level** with specific objectives.

The objectives identified in the Plan and in the Document, and the actions implemented to achieve the objectives, **are monitored annually** (review).

The cycle **closes** at the end of the three-year period with a three-year review that will be the starting point for the drafting of the new three-year strategic plan.

The University’s Teaching QA Plan begins with the approval by the governing bodies of the University’s three-year “Strategic Plan” and its declination in the “Policies and Planning” document.

During the review, the objectives of the plan and document and the actions defined therein **may be updated and reshaped on the basis of the outcomes of the monitoring activities**.
The Cds Teaching QA Plan is more complex and consists of various aspects:

- Annual and Cyclical Review Reports
- SUA-CdS
- Student-Faculty Joint Teaching Committees
  - Annual Report
- Monitoring of corrective actions
- Syllabus
- Consultation of stakeholders
- Survey of students’ opinions
Monitoring and Review Activities

Monitoring and review are part of the self-assessment process aimed at verifying the achievement of objectives and the effectiveness of the actions put in place to achieve them.

▶ University level

The quantitative University’s indicators calculated and provided by ANVUR and the objectives and actions identified in the University Teaching QA Plan are monitored. During the review, the objectives of the plan and the actions defined therein may be updated and reshaped on the basis of the monitoring results.

▶ CdS level

The monitoring and review verifies the adequacy of the learning objectives that the CdS has set, the correspondence between the objectives and the results, the effectiveness of the way in which the institution is managed and includes the search for the causes of any unsatisfactory results. The main purpose of the monitoring and review is to adopt specific corrective actions for the improvement of the CdS and/or its management system.
Monitoring and Review Activities (and Tools)

The PQA

- draws up a report about the monitoring of the University's indicators, suggesting possible initiatives with respect to any critical issues identified
- draws up guidelines for the drafting of the SMA-Cds
- has developed an editable template for the Cds Cyclic Review Report
SUA-CdS

- divided into two parts
  - QUALITY SECTION: is the main tool of the AVA system
  - ADMINISTRATION SECTION: where all the course activation data are automatically incorporated

The PQA

- has developed Guidelines for the drafting of the SUA-CdS - Quality section
- annually monitors the drafting of the SUA-CdS, comparing the content of the quality section with the Guidelines
The CPDS draws up an annual report, broken down by CdS, which considers the entire range of educational offerings, with particular reference to the results of the student opinion survey, indicating any problems specific to individual CdS.

The CPDS report, based on elements of independent analysis (and not only on the CdS review reports), has to reach the Evaluation Unity, the PQA and the CdS, which receive it and take action to elaborate proposals for improvement.

The PQA has also developed an editable template.
Monitoring of corrective actions

CdS carry out an annual monitoring of the corrective actions implemented as a result of the reports and suggestions contained in the Student-Faculty Joint Teaching Committees Annual Report.

The PQA has developed an editable template.
Syllabus

The AVA system requires a Syllabus to be drawn up for each teaching activity within the Cds

This is a detailed document in which the lecturer defines the objectives and content of the course, specifying in detail the topics and teaching materials and describing the methods for assessing student learning.

It may also contain other indications considered useful to facilitate students’ attendance and individual study activities, encouraging conscious and active learning.

The PQA has drawn up specific guidelines for the drafting of the Syllabus.
Consultation of Stakeholders

For the purposes of QA, it is important for the University and the CdS to carry out initial and periodic consultations with stakeholders in order to survey their needs and the development potential of the CdS, especially when graduates’ employment outcomes are unsatisfactory.

The PQA has developed **specific guidelines and questionnaire formats**.
Survey of Students’ Opinion

Students’ opinion on teaching is essential information for QA and it is one of the central aspects in the AVA system.

The survey of students’ opinion is organised and monitored by the PQA (according to ANVUR guidelines).

The University captures the anonymous opinions of the student community through an online questionnaire that can also be filled out in the classroom using smartphones, tablets and notebooks.

Detailed instructions for completing the questionnaires can be found in the Student Handbook.
Survey of Students’ Opinion

The results of the survey are published (unless the concerned lecturer has explicitly denied his/her consent to publication)

Lecturers can access the results on-line

The PQA and the Evaluation Unit promote the analysis of the results of the students’ opinion survey

From the year 2019/2020, as an action to increase student participation and improve the reporting process of the survey results, the PQA and the Evaluation Unit have proposed to all Departments to provide a day for the discussion of the survey results
This document lists the activities carried out by the PQA in a given year for the setting up and performance of the annual review procedure of CdS, which along with the collection of students' opinions and the CPDS reports effectively constitutes the Annual Review of the Teaching QA Plan for that given year.

The document outlines the organisation of the entire annual review process conducted by the PQA and a summary of the results.

It illustrates the activities related to:

- the self-assessment of the CdS through the drawing up of the SMA
- the monitoring of the corrective actions implemented by the CdS following the evaluation expressed in the CPDS annual reports
- the analysis of the drafting process of the CPDS annual reports
- the collection of students' opinions and the return of the results of the survey
The Research QA Plan follows a three-year cycle.

For both the University and the Departments, the cycle begins with the approval by the governing bodies of the three-year “Strategic Plan” and its declination at the departmental level.

The objectives identified in the plan and the actions implemented to achieve the objectives are monitored annually (review).

During the review, the objectives of the plan and the actions defined therein may be updated and reshaped on the basis of the results of monitoring activities.

The cycle closes at the end of three years, with a three-year review that will be the starting point for the drafting of the new three-year strategic plan.
For Inter-university and Inter-departmental Research Centres and Joint Laboratories with External Parties, the cycle begins with the approval by the Departmental Councils and Governing Bodies of the research projects proposed for the creation of these research structures.

The objectives identified and the actions implemented to achieve the objectives are monitored annually (review).

During the review, the objectives of the plan and the actions defined therein may be updated and reshaped on the basis of the outcomes of their monitoring.

The cycle closes at the end of three years with a three-year review, which will be the starting point for any rene
Monitoring and Review Activities

The Review of the Research QA Plan consists of:

- Annual and Cyclical Review of the University’s Research QA Plan
- Annual and Cyclical Review of the Departmental Research QA Plan
- Annual and Cyclical Review of the Research Centres Research QA Plan
- Annual and Cyclical Review of Joint Laboratories Research QA Plan
Monitoring and Review Activities

The PQA has developed the following editable templates:

- Year-end Review of Research QA Plan (University/Departments)
- Request for the establishment/renewal of Research Centres and Joint Laboratories (including a QA plan)
- Year-end Review of Research Centres and Joint Laboratories Research QA Plan
- End-of-Three Year Review of Research Centres and Joint Laboratories Research QA Plan
The PQA Report on the Annual Review of the Research QA Plan

Also on this respect, the PQA analyses, illustrates and discusses the results of the Annual Review of the Research QA Plan.
The Third Mission QA Plan follows a three-year cycle.

The objectives identified in the plan and the actions implemented to achieve them are monitored annually (review).

The cycle closes at the end of three years, with a three-year review that will be the starting point for the drafting of the new three-year strategic plan.

For the University and the Departments, the cycle begins with the approval by the Governing Bodies of the three-year “Strategic Plan” and its declination at the departmental level.

During the review, the objectives of the plan and the actions defined therein may be updated and reshaped on the basis of the results of monitoring activities.
Third Mission (Public Engagement) QA Procedures

For Inter-university and Inter-departmental Research Centres and Joint Laboratories with External Parties, the cycle begins with the approval by the Departmental Councils and Governing Bodies of the research projects proposed for the creation of these research structures.

The objectives identified and the actions implemented to achieve the objectives are monitored annually (review).

During the review, the objectives of the plan and the actions defined therein may be updated and reshaped on the basis of the outcomes of their monitoring.

The cycle closes at the end of three years with a three-year review that will be the starting point for any renewal.
Monitoring and Review Activities

The Review of the Third Mission QA Plan consists of:

- Annual and Cyclical Review of the University’s Third Mission QA Plan
- Annual and Cyclical Review of the Departments Third Mission QA Plan
- Annual and Cyclical Review of the Research Centres Third Mission QA Plan
- Annual and Cyclical Review of the Joint Laboratories Third Mission QA Plan
Monitoring and Review Activities

The PQA has developed the following editable templates:

- Year-end Review of Third Mission QA Plan (University/Departments)
- Request for the establishment/renewal of Research Centres and Joint Laboratories (including a QA plan)
- Year-end Review of Research Centres and Joint Laboratories Third Mission QA Plan
- End-of-Three Year Plan Review of Research Centres and Joint Laboratories Third Mission QA Plan
The PQA Report on the Annual Review of the Third Mission QA Plan

Also on this respect, the PQA analyses, illustrates and discusses the results of the Annual Review of the Third Mission QA Plan.
The University of Siena QA System requires the PQA to submit an annual report to the Governing Bodies at the end of the organisation, review and monitoring of QA activities in order to summarise overall information and proposals, formulated in the light of the whole set of QA processes.

Hence, the document (also) lists all the activities carried out by the PQA in that given year.
Annual Report on PQA Activities (2021)

- Drafting of the PQA Regulation
- Reworking and monitoring of the University’s QA web pages
- Monitoring and updating of Departments’ web pages
- Quality design of newly established CdS for the academic year 2021/2022 (format preparation)
- 2021 CPDS Annual reports: a) updating of the drafting template; b) transmission to the Academic Senate
- Annual monitoring of the CdS implementation of the corrective actions proposed by the CPDS: a) updating of the format sent to the Chairs of the CdS Teaching Committee; b) analysis of the documents received; c) transmission to the coordinators of the CPDS
Annual Report on PQA Activities (2021)

- SMA-CdS: a) update of the guidelines; b) verification of documents received and possible request for revision to Departments
- Report to the Governing Bodies on the annual teaching activities review process for the year 2021
- SUA-CdS - Quality Section for the academic year 2021/2022: a) update of the guidelines; b) informative reporting to the Chairs of the Teaching Committees and the competent offices; c) monitoring of compilation
- Students’ opinion survey: a) report to the Evaluation Unit on teaching evaluation activities a.y. 2019/2020; b) revision of the academic year 2021/2022
- Update of Syllabus guidelines
Annual Report on PQA Activities (2021)

- End-of-year review of the Departments’ research and third mission QA plans, year 2020: a) preparation of templates; b) analysis of documents received; c) transmission of comments to Departments; d) report to Governing Bodies

- Year- and cycle-end review of Departments’ research and third mission QA plans, year 2021: a) preparation of templates; b) analysis of documents received; c) transmission of comments to Departments

- Definition of QA procedures for Research Centres and Joint Laboratories