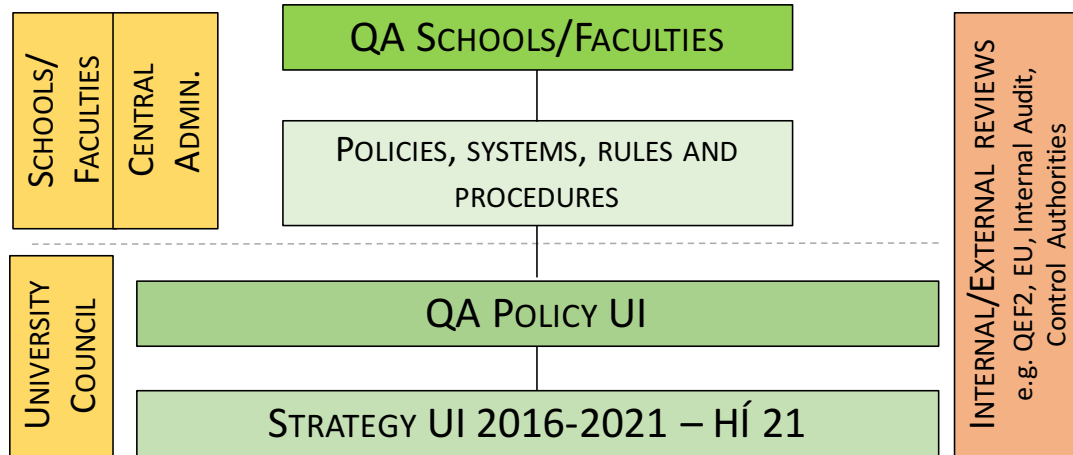


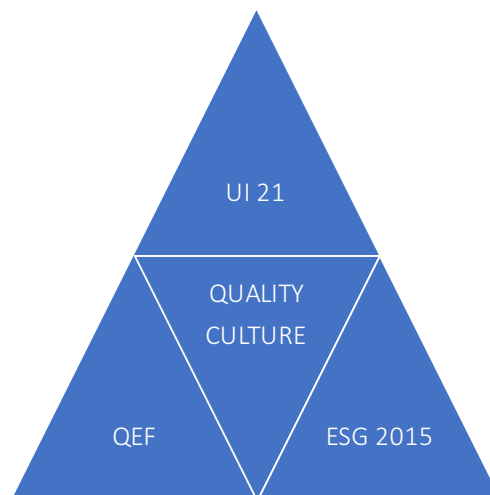
UNIVERSITY OF ICELAND QUALITY ASSURANCE SYSTEM

1 Introduction

The University of Iceland quality assurance system aims to meet the expectations and needs of students, staff, industry and the international scientific community.



The University of Iceland quality assurance system is intended: (i) to improve the quality of University operations and ensure that research and degrees meet international criteria and quality requirements, which is the basis of the trust the University has earned within Iceland and on the international stage, and (ii) promote a quality culture within the University. There are three components to this: The *Strategy of the University of Iceland 2016-2021 (HÍ 21)*, the *Icelandic Quality Enhancement Framework 2017-2023 – QEF2*) and *Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance in the European Higher Education Area – ESG 2015*).



The success of the University is based on the honouring of its values, which are academic freedom, equality and professionalism, but also on clear strategy, a systematic action plan, efficient information technology, evaluation of success founded on reliable data, and continuous reform. The term 'quality culture' means that tools and processes are in place to define, measure, evaluate, guarantee and enhance quality. Quality culture reflects a mentality whereby University staff and students work together towards continuous reform in order to achieve objectives that improve operations across the entire University. The University of Iceland quality assurance policy is intended as a guide for faculties, schools, staff and students to promote enhanced quality at the University.

2 Quality Assurance Policy

2.1 In general

- The University is a setting for the free pursuit of knowledge and scientific work, where scientific ethics are prioritised.
- The goal of the University is to educate people who are competent to tackle the challenges of contemporary society and develop a dynamic University community working systematically towards the preservation, gathering, creation and communication of knowledge.
- All staff and students are responsible for cultivating and supporting a quality culture based on the values of the University of Iceland, thereby promoting high quality learning, research and services to wider society provided on the basis of knowledge at the University.
- University staff all approach their work with continuous reform in mind in order to ensure an efficient, up-to-date and inspiring learning environment as well as a productive work environment.
- The University serves Icelandic society while also taking into account international trends and policies.
- The University seeks to hire the most capable individuals and encourages recruitment that fosters diversity among staff in the spirit of the University Equality Action Plan.

2.2 Teaching and learning

- Study programmes at the University are based on the University's core values and shall also be inspiring, challenging, well organised, tackle the challenges of contemporary society, and meet international quality standards.
- Teaching staff base teaching methods and the presentation of material on students' needs and encourage integrity, whereby the strictest standards for academic working practices are respected.
- Students receive an education that meets the requirements of Icelandic society and complies with international criteria and quality standards.
- Teaching staff and students are actively engaged in developing and reviewing study programmes in accordance with criteria and requirements at the University.
- The contents of study programmes reflect the latest knowledge from internationally recognised research. Study programmes systematically integrate research and teaching and seek to address the challenges currently facing society.
- Study programmes are developed, where applicable, in close collaboration with representatives of industry.

2.3 Research

- The University promotes the idea that research should be in line with the needs of society and the challenges currently facing us.
- Researchers apply scientifically recognised methods to their subject matter.
- The University supports public access to the outcomes of scientific research, including data and research findings, through the use of information technology. Research findings shall be published in recognised scientific outlets.
- The University supports the publication of research findings in appropriate outlets and the use of research findings to benefit society.
- The University encourages collaboration between academic staff, both within Iceland and internationally, as well as the formation of research teams focusing on clear, interdisciplinary topics. The University seeks to ensure that all academic staff are able to fulfil their potential in research and encourages staff to help one another.

2.4 Infrastructure

- The University has a clear policy for the development of infrastructure, which supports strategy for teaching and research and enables staff to conduct outstanding research.
- Infrastructure meets legal standards and requirements and is based on best working practices.

3 The Framework

3.1 Responsibility

Chapter IV of the Higher Education Institution Act no. 63/2006 explains how quality assurance for teaching and research shall be conducted, with more detailed provisions given in Regulation no. 321/2009. The Minister of Education, Science and Culture has assigned the Quality Board for Icelandic Higher Education the task of following up quality assurance work. The Quality Board has set forth the Icelandic Quality Enhancement Framework (QEF). This clearly stipulates that higher education institutions shall themselves be responsible for internal quality assurance and that students shall actively participate in this work. It points out that higher education is international and unrestricted by national borders. Therefore, all quality management work is expected to comply with the Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance in the European Higher Education Area (ESG 2015).

The Act on Public Higher Institutions no. 85/2008 stipulates that the rector and the University Council are responsible for and shall generally oversee all University operations; school deans are responsible for general quality management at their schools. The Regulation for the University of Iceland no. 569/2009 includes detailed provisions for how responsibility for and oversight of the quality of teaching and research shall be structured.

The University Council, upon receiving the recommendations of the Quality Committee, establishes a formal quality assurance system for the University, which shall provide for policy, implementation, responsibility, supervision and follow-up for internal quality reviews. The University shall publicly release information on internal reviews and their findings, and it shall do so in a standardised manner.

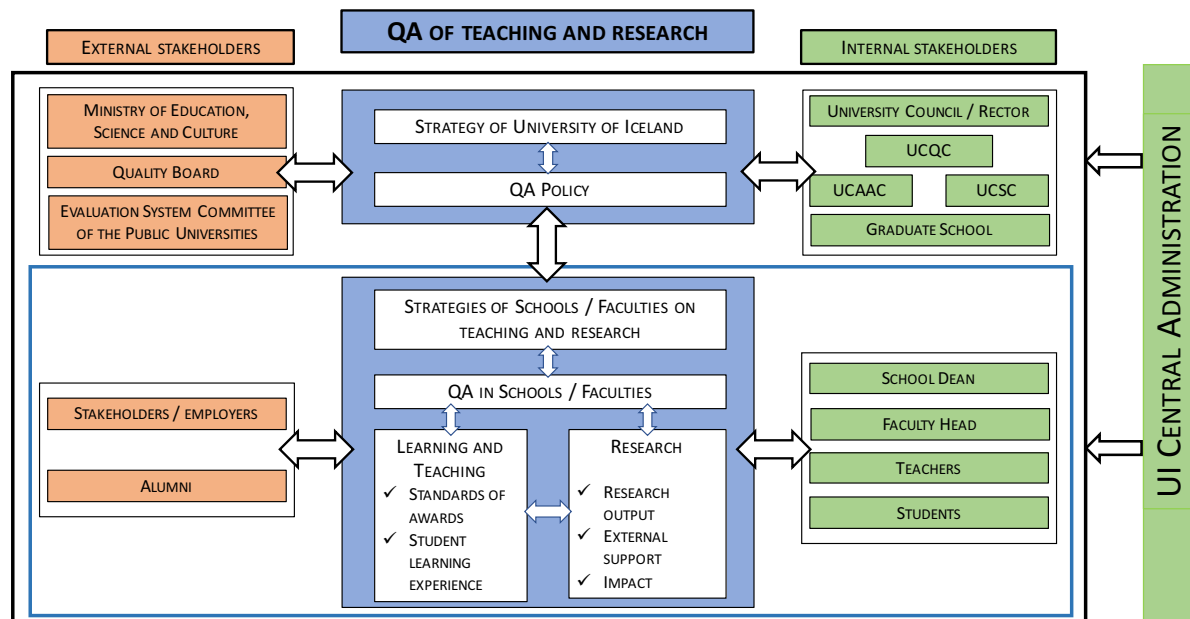
The rector is responsible for the implementation of the University's quality assurance system, whereas school deans, faculty heads, directors, and managing directors hold responsibility for the quality of operations within their respective operating units. Responsibility for study programmes, including quality assurance, rests with the relevant school dean, the school teaching committee, the faculty head and department head.

The role of the Graduate School is to guarantee and enhance the quality of Master's and doctoral programmes at the University, as well as oversee and follow up established criteria and requirements for the quality of postgraduate programmes. The Evaluation System for Public Higher Education Institutions is part of the formal University of Iceland quality assurance system and is the responsibility of the Evaluation System Committee.

University Council standing committees and boards at the University coordinate quality assurance for teaching and research and produce policy and guidelines regarding quality management: the University Council Quality Committee, University Council Academic Affairs Committee, University Council Science Committee and the board of the Graduate School.

Students actively participate in quality assurance work at the University, including responding to regular surveys and being formally involved in the internal and external review of academic units and the University as a whole as part of the Quality Enhancement Framework (QEF). They also have the right to sit on all standing committees in any way related to quality assurance.

External stakeholders, both representatives of former students and representatives of industry and the public sphere, are involved with subject-level reviews and institution-wide reviews of the University. They should also have a role in the introduction and development of study programmes.



This image shows how the overall organisation of quality assurance for teaching and research is structured and how external and internal stakeholders influence policy making on quality assurance at the University as a whole and its implementation within schools. The stipulations of ESG 2015 and the Quality Board for Icelandic Higher Education are taken into account.

3.2 Implementation and follow-up

The Quality Enhancement Framework (QEF) stipulates the systematic review of the quality of Icelandic higher education institutions on a regular basis. The review involves internal reviews (self-reviews) within universities on the one hand, and on the other hand external reviews of the universities by the Quality Board. Quality reviews are based on the Quality Enhancement Handbook, but special guidelines for University of Iceland staff have been prepared regarding the subject-level reviews. The Quality Committee oversees implementation of the QEF within the University of Iceland, including organising internal reviews, managing implementation of the review and evaluating the results. All faculties at the University shall submit self-review reports every 5-7 years on the study programmes under their purview and the management of research, in accordance with a plan approved by the Quality Board. At the end of each year, school deans shall report in writing to the Quality Committee on the follow-up of the subject-level reviews of faculties at their school. The Quality Committee shall submit an annual report to the rector on the implementation and results of the faculty self-reviews and propose responses and reforms as warranted.

Institution-wide external reviews of University operations are the responsibility of the Quality Board, as outlined in detail in the [Quality Enhancement Handbook](#). The next review is due to take place in 2019-2020. Institution-wide review reports and follow-up reports from higher education institutions are published on the [Board's website](#).

3.3 Official information on internal reviews

The Regulation on quality assurance of university teaching and research, no. 321/2009 states that *universities shall regularly publish official information on the procedures of internal reviews, including plans for the acquisition of key information and other data, its analysis and processing. The findings of internal reviews shall be made publicly available along with explanations of how reviews are used to reform and improve university operations.*

Summaries of faculty subject-level review reports shall be published on the University website, including an overview of the main findings and planned responses, within three months of completion of the report.

4 Processes and tools

There are various systems, regulations, rules of procedure and working processes that ensure progress regarding implementation of the University of Iceland quality assurance policy.

The University of Iceland Quality Enhancement Handbook (in progress) describes the implementation of the quality assurance system at the University and is in large part based on the ESG 2015 requirements and criteria for internal quality review at universities. It includes references to the currently relevant systems, regulations, rules of procedure and working processes.

HÍ21 involves various reforms to quality assurance work at the University that could lead to new and/or revised rules of procedure and working processes during the period covered by the Strategy. All changes will be immediately included in the UI Quality Enhancement Handbook as work progresses.

Review

The University of Iceland quality assurance policy shall be reviewed following the approval of a new strategy for UI in 2021.

Discussed at the University Forum, 14 April 2018, and approved by the University Council 7 June 2018.