

MINISTRY OF EDUCATION
AND TRAINING
**GENERAL DEPARTMENT
OF EDUCATION TESTING
AND ACCREDITATION**

SOCIALIST REPUBLIC OF VIETNAM
Independence - Freedom - Happiness

No. 1074/KTKDCLGD-KDDH

*Re. General instructions for use of quality
assessment standards for all-level higher
education programs*

Hanoi, June 28, 2016

- To** - Universities, academies;
- Higher education institutions, colleges;
- Research institutes offering doctorate education programs;
- Education accreditation bodies,

In implementing Article 16 pertaining to quality assessment standards for higher education programs issued as an annex to the Circular No. 04/2016/TT-BGDDT dated March 14, 2016 of the Minister of Education and Training, the General Department of Education Testing and Accreditation would like to send you General Instructions for use of quality assessment standards for all-level higher education programs (enclosed herewith).

In the course of implementation of these Instructions, should there be any issue that arises or any recommendation, please contact the Division for Higher Education and Professional Post-Secondary Education Accreditation under the control of the General Department of Education Testing and Accreditation at No. 30, Ta Quang Buu street, Hanoi capital; tel: 04.39747108; email address: kiemdinh.dhtccn@moet.edu.vn for its study and timely action.

Best regards.

DIRECTOR

Mai Van Trinh

**GENERAL INSTRUCTIONS FOR USE OF QUALITY ASSESSMENT STANDARDS
FOR ALL-LEVEL HIGHER EDUCATION PROGRAMS ISSUED AS AN ANNEX TO
THE CIRCULAR NO. 04/2016/TT-BGDDT DATED MARCH 14, 2016 OF THE
MINISTER OF EDUCATION AND TRAINING**

*(Attached to the Official Dispatch No. 1074/KTKDCLGD-KDDH dated June 28, 2016 of the
General Department of Education Testing and Accreditation)*

I. Standard 1: Objectives and expected learning outcomes of the study program

Criterion	Objectives and expected learning outcomes of the study program
1.1	Objectives of the study program are clearly defined and aligned with a higher

	education institution's missions and visions as well as conform to higher education objectives provided in the Higher Education Law.
1.2	Expected learning outcomes of the study program are clearly determined and encompass all generic and subject-specific requirements that learners must satisfy upon completion of the study program.
1.3	Expected learning outcomes have the effect of reflecting requirements of all stakeholders, regularly reviewed, revised and made available to the public.

1. Explanatory notes

Outcome-based education (OBE) can be described as a way in which a curriculum is defined, organized, and directed based on all the things that learners would learn and demonstrate successfully when they complete the study programme. The focus of OBE is on the results of learning, where the knowledge, skills, and attitudes (including critical inquiry) that learners are expected to master, are clearly identified and expressed as expected learning outcomes.

Expected learning outcomes form the starting point in the design of an academic program and are formulated from the needs of stakeholders. They are concerned with the achievement of the learner rather than the intention of the teacher (often written as aims, goals or objectives of the program). Learning outcomes should be written in a way where learning is translated into observable and measurable results.

2. Diagnostic questions

- What is the purpose of the study program?
- What are the expected learning outcomes?
- How are the expected learning outcomes formulated?
- Do the expected learning outcomes reflect the vision and mission of the university, the faculty, and the department?
- Does the labor market set specific requirements for the graduates to meet?
- To what extent is the content of the program tuned to the needs of the labor market?
- Are there well-defined job profiles for graduates from the study program?
- How are the expected learning outcomes made known to staff and students?
- Are the expected learning outcomes measurable? If Yes, how?
- To what extent have the expected learning outcomes been achieved?
- Are the expected learning outcomes reviewed periodically?
- How are the expected learning outcomes translated into concrete requirements (i.e., the knowledge, skills, and attitude requirements) of the graduates?

3. Sources of evidence

- Program and course specifications.
- Course brochure, prospectus, bulletin.
- Skills matrix.

- Stakeholder input.
- University and faculty websites.
- Curriculum review minutes and documents.
- Accreditation and benchmarking reports.

II. Standard 2: Specifications of the study program

Criterion	Specifications of the study program
2.1	The specifications of the program are shown to be comprehensive and up-to-date.
2.2	The curriculum must give sufficient and updated information.
2.3	The program specifications and curriculum must be made easily accessible to the public and stakeholders.

1. Explanatory notes

The specifications of the study program are a set of documents that describes the study program. It usually includes the following items:

- A summary of the program aims and intended learning outcomes.
- An outline of the course structure.
- A matrix that shows how the program learning outcomes are achieved through the courses.
- A set of course specifications.

The program specifications serve the following purposes:

- As a source of information for potential and current students seeking to understand the program.
- As a source of information for employers, particularly on the knowledge and transferrable skills developed by the program.
- As a source of information for professional and regulatory bodies that accredit higher education programs, based on which the graduates can lead to professions or regulated occupations. Hence, program specifications should identify those aspects of the program that are designed to meet the requirements of the aforesaid bodies.
- As a source of information for institutional and teaching teams to promote discussion and reflection on new and existing programs, and to ensure that there is common understanding of the expected learning outcomes. The program specifications should help educational institutions to ensure that their programs are designed in an explicit manner and the graduates can both achieve and demonstrate their ability to achieve the expected learning outcomes. The program specifications can serve as a reference point for internal review and monitoring of its performance.
- As a source of information for academic reviewers/external examiners who need to understand the aims and intended outcomes of the program.
- As a basis for gaining feedback from students or recent graduates on the extent to which the expected learning outcomes of the program have been achieved.

The information in the program specifications include the below:

- Awarding body/institution.
- Teaching institution (if different).
- Details of accreditation by professional and statutory bodies.
- Name of the final award.
- Program title.
- Expected learning outcomes of the program.
- Admission criteria or requirements.
- Relevant benchmark reports, external and internal reference points that may be used to provide information on program learning outcomes.
- Program structure and requirements including levels, courses, credits, etc.
- The date of writing or revising the program specifications.

2. Diagnostic questions

- Are the expected learning outcomes translated into the program and its courses?
- What information is documented in the program and course specifications?
- Are the courses specifications standardized throughout the entire program?
- Are the program specifications published and made available to stakeholders?
- What is the process for reviewing the program and courses specifications?

3. Sources of evidence

- Program and course specifications.
- Course brochure, prospectus, bulletin.
- Skills matrix.
- Stakeholder input and feedback.
- University and faculty websites.
- Methods and plans for providing the program specifications to stakeholders.
- Curriculum review minutes and documents.
- Accreditation and benchmarking reports.

III. Standard 3: Curriculum structure and content

Criterion	Curriculum structure and content
3.1	The design of the program curriculum is shown to be constructively aligned with achieving the expected learning outcomes.
3.2	The contribution by each program course to achievement of the expected learning outcomes must be explicit.
3.3	The curriculum must have the logical structure and process, and must be updated and integrated.

1. Explanatory notes

The curriculum should be designed so that the teaching and learning methods, and student assessment, support the achievement of the expected learning outcomes. Biggs (2003) refers to this process as constructive alignment. Constructive refers to the concept that students construct meaning through relevant teaching and learning activities. “Alignment” refers to the situation when teaching and learning activities and student assessment are aligned to achieve the expected learning outcomes. ‘Constructive alignment’ in any course of study involves:

- Defining expected learning outcomes that are measurable.
- Selecting teaching and learning methods that are likely to ensure that the expected learning outcomes are achieved.
- Assessing how well the students have achieved the expected learning outcomes.

2. Diagnostic questions

- Does the content of the study program reflect the expected learning outcomes?
- How are the courses in the program structured so that there is coherence and a seamless relationship from the basic to the specialized courses that make the program developed into a complete unity?
- Is there a proper balance between the specific and the general courses?
- How is the content of the program up-to-date?
- What is the explanation for the program structure?
- Has the program changed structurally over the last five years? If so, why?
- Does the program promote diversity, student mobility and/or cross-border education?
- Is there a logical relationship among the basic and specialized courses, whether elective or required?
- What is the duration of the study program?
- What is the duration and sequence of each course? Is that sequence logical?
- What benchmarks are used in designing the program and its courses?
- How are the teaching and learning methods and student assessment selected to align with the expected learning outcomes?

3. Sources of evidence

- Program and course specifications.
- Course brochure, prospectus, bulletin.
- Program map.
- Skills matrix.
- Stakeholder input and feedback.
- University and faculty websites.
- Curriculum review minutes and documents.

- Accreditation and benchmarking reports.

IV. Standard 4: Teaching and learning approach

Criterion	Teaching and learning approach
4.1	Educational philosophies or objectives are clearly declared and widely communicated to stakeholders.
4.2	Teaching and learning activities are properly designed to achieve the expected learning outcomes.
4.3	Teaching and learning activities promote the student's learning and long-life learning abilities.

1. Explanatory notes

In line with the overarching purpose of higher education in fostering holistic education, the study program should help students acquire the following skills:

- *The ability to discover knowledge for oneself:* Learners have research skills and the ability to analyze and synthesize the material that they gather. Learners understand various learning strategies and can choose the most appropriate strategy.
- *The ability to retain knowledge long term:* An approach to learning that emphasizes the construction of meaning rather than memorizing facts for retention.
- *The ability to perceive relations between old and new knowledge:* Quality learning is always trying to bring information from various resources together.
- *The ability to create new knowledge:* Quality learners discover what others have learnt. They connect that knowledge and their own experiences in order to develop new insights.
- *The ability to apply one's knowledge to solve problems.*
- *The ability to communicate one's knowledge to others:* Quality learners form and substantiate independent thought and action in a coherent and articulate manner.
- *An eagerness to know more:* Quality learners are life-long learners.

The conditions necessary for quality learning are:

- Quality learning occurs when learners are ready – in cognitive and emotional terms – to meet the demands of the learning task;
- Quality learning occurs when learners have a reason for learning.
- Quality learning occurs when learners explicitly relate previous knowledge to new knowledge.
- Quality learning occurs when learners are active participants in the learning process.
- Quality learning occurs when the learning environment offers good support.

Noting that there is no single teaching and learning method that is relevant to all educational institutions. Careful thought must be given to the teaching and learning approach behind the curriculum.

2. Diagnostic questions

- Is there an explicit educational philosophy shared by all the teaching staff and students?

- Is diversity of the learning environment promoted, including student and teacher exchanges?
- Is the teaching provided by other departments satisfactory?
- Are the teaching and learning methods in use aligned with the expected learning outcomes?
- How is technology used in the teaching and learning activities?
- How is the teaching and learning approach evaluated? Do the chosen methods fit into the learning outcomes of the courses? Is there sufficient variety in the methods?
- Are there any circumstances that prevent the desired teaching and learning methods from being used (e.g., number of students, infrastructure, teaching skills, etc.)?

If the research activities play the core role in a university, the following elements should be taken into consideration:

- When do students come into contact with research for the first time?
- How is the relationship between education and research expressed in the program?
- How are research findings applied in the program?

If the practical and/or community-oriented training is part of educational activities of an educational institution, the following elements should be considered:

- Is practical training a compulsory or optional part of the program?
- How many credits are allocated to these activities?
- Is the level of the practical training and/or community service satisfactory?
- What benefits do communities gain from the service provided by the program?
- What benefits do employers and students gain from the practical training?
- Are there any bottlenecks in the practical training? If so, what are the causes?
- How are students coached to do well in their practical training?
- How is the assessment for practical training done?

3. Sources of evidence

- Evidence of educational philosophy and objectives.
- Evidence of learning activities such as projects, practical training, assignments, field trips at industrial parks, etc.
- Student feedback.
- Online learning portal.
- Program and courses specifications.
- Internship reports.
- Community involvement.
- Memorandum of understanding.

V. Standard 5: Student assessment

Criterion	Student assessment
5.1	Student assessment is shown to be constructively aligned to achieving the expected learning outcomes.
5.2	Regulations on assessment of students (e.g., time length, methodologies, criteria, weight factors, feedback-giving mechanism and related content) are shown to be explicit and communicated to students.
5.3	Assessment methods are shown to ensure diversity, validity, reliability and fairness.
5.4	Timely feedback on assessment results is given to help students improve their learning.
5.5	Students gain easy access to the procedures for appeal against assessment results.

1. Explanatory notes

Student assessment is one of the most important elements in higher education. The outcome has a profound effect on student career. It is, therefore, important that assessment be carried out professionally at all times and integrate the updated knowledge into the testing and examination processes. Assessment also provides valuable information for universities about the efficiency of teaching and learner support. A student assessment process is expected to:

- Be designed to measure the achievement of the expected learning outcomes.
- Be fit for assessment purposes: Have clear and published grading and marking criteria for entry/placement, mid-term/final tests.
- Be undertaken by people who understand the role of assessment in the students' progression towards achieving the knowledge and skills associated with their intended qualification; where possible, not relying on the evaluation of just one examiner.
- Take account of all the possible consequences of examination regulations.
- Have clear regulations covering student absence, illness, and other mitigating circumstances.
- Ensure that assessment is conducted securely in accordance with the university's stated procedures.
- Be subjected to administrative verification in ensuring the effectiveness of the procedures.
- Inform students about: The assessment being used for their program, what examinations or other assessment methods they will be subjected to; what will be expected of them, and the criteria that will be applied to assess their performance.

2. Diagnostic questions

- Is entry assessment carried out on new students?
- Is graduation assessment carried out on graduating students?
- To what extent do the assessments and examinations cover the content of the courses and the program? To what extent do the assessments and examinations cover the objectives of the courses and the program as a whole?
- Is the examination or assessment based on explicit criteria?
- Are a variety of assessment methods used? What are they?

- Are the pass/fail criteria clear?
- Are the assessment/examination regulations clear? Are they communicated to students? If yes, in which way are they communicated to students?
- Are there safeguards in place to ensure objectivity?
- Are the students satisfied with the testing/examination/assessment procedures? Are there any appeals filed by students?
- Do clear rules exist for re-assessment? Are students satisfied with these?

A special form of student assessment is the final project (e.g., dissertation, thesis, project). This requires students to demonstrate their knowledge and skills and their ability to manipulate the knowledge in a new situation.

- Do clear regulations exist for the final project?
- What criteria have been formulated to assess the final project?
- What does the preparation for producing the final project involve (in terms of content, methods and skills)?
- Is the level of the final project satisfactory?
- Do any bottlenecks exist for producing the final projects? If so, why?
- How are students coached to do well in their final projects?

3. Sources of evidence

- Sample of in-course assessment, project work, dissertation, thesis, final examination, etc.
- Assessment criteria chart.
- Marking scale.
- Moderation process.
- Appeal procedure.
- Program and course specifications.
- Testing, examination and assessment regulations.
- Students' feedback on methods and processes for student assessment and appeal procedure.

VI. Standard 6: Academic and research staff

Criterion	Academic and research staff
6.1	Planning of academic and research staff (including succession, promotion, appointment, termination and retirement) is carried out to meet needs of education, scientific research and community service activities.
6.2	Staff-to-student ratio and workload of academic and research staff are measured and monitored as a basis to improve the quality of education, scientific research and community service activities.
6.3	Academic and research staff recruitment and selection criteria (including moral standards and academic qualifications) for the purpose of appointment and re-

	deployment are defined and publicly communicated.
6.4	Competences of academic and research staff are determined and evaluated.
6.5	Needs for professional training and development of academic and research staff are identified, and appropriate activities are implemented to fulfill the identified needs.
6.6	Management of performance of academic and research staff (including reward and recognition) is implemented to create a driving force and provide assistance towards training and scientific research and community service activities.
6.7	Types and quantity of research activities of academic and research staff are established, monitored, and benchmarked for improvement of education quality.

1. Explanatory notes

The academic and research staff (hereinafter commonly referred to as academic staff) is the single most important learning resource available to most students. It is crucial that those who teach have full knowledge and understanding of the subject that they are teaching, have the necessary skills and experience to communicate their knowledge and understanding effectively to students in a range of teaching contexts. Teaching staff can access feedback on their own performance.

The education quality of a university depends on only on the quality of its programs but also on the quality of its academic staff. The quality of academic staff encompasses: Teaching qualification, expertise, experience, skills and professional ethics. Academic staff covers full-time and part-time professors, tenured lecturers and visiting teaching staff. Besides the quality of the academic staff, the university has to also determine the quantity of the academic staff required to meet the demands and needs of its students and its own. Oftentimes full-time equivalent (FTE) and staff-to-student ratio are used to determine the needed number of academic staff.

Full-time equivalent (FTE)

In calculating the FTE of an academic staff, universities should define what constitutes full-time and part-time student loads and faculty teaching loads.

There are different ways of calculating FTE and universities should state the method, parameters and principles used. One of the methods is based on the investment of time. For example, if 1.0 FTE is equal to 40 hours per week (full-time employment), then the FTE of an academic staff member with a teaching load of 8 hours per week would be 0.2 (i.e., 8/40). The method based on investment of time can also be used for calculating FTE for students. For example, if 1.0 FTE student has to attend 20 hours of lesson a week, then the FTE of a part-time student with 10 hours of lesson a week would be 0.5 (i.e., 10/20).

Another method to calculate FTE is based on teaching load. For example, if the official full-time teaching load of a tenured lecturer is 4 courses per semester, then each course accounts for 0.25 FTE. If an academic staff member is assigned 2 courses per semester, then the FTE will be 0.5 (i.e., 2 x 0.25 FTE). Similarly, student study load can be used to calculate the FTE of students. For example, if 1.0 FTE student has to take 24 credits load per semester, then the FTE of a student with 18 credits load per semester would be 0.75 (i.e., 18/24).

Table 6.1 below is used to specify the number of academic staff and their FTEs in the last 5 academic years for the program.

Table 6.1. The number of academic staff (specify reference date and method of calculation used for FTE of academic staff)

Category	Male	Female	Total		Percentage of academic staff with PhD
			Headcount	FTEs	
Professors					
Associate/Assistant Professors					
Full-time Lecturers					
Part-time Lecturers					
Visiting Professors/Lecturers					
Total					

Staff-to-student ratio

This indicator shows the ratio between 1 FTE of a lecturer and the number of FTEs of students. It aims to help determine whether student communication, exchange and support time is as expected or not. Table 6.2. shows the calculation of the staff-to-student ratio in the past five years.

**Table 6.2. Staff-to-student ratio
(specify the method for calculation of student's FTEs)**

Academic year	Total FTEs of lecturers	Total FTEs of students	Staff-to-student ratio

Research activities

Research is an important output from the academic staff. The types of research output, e.g., publications, consulting work, projects, grants, etc. carried out by the academic staff should meet the requirements of the stakeholders. Table 6.3 below is used to provide data on the types and number of research publications in the last five academic years.

Table 6.3. Types and number of research publications

Academic year	Types of publication				Total	Number of publications per academic staff
	In-house/institutional	National	Regional	International		

2. Diagnostic questions

Academic staff:

- Are academic staff members competent and qualified to meet their job requirements?
- Are the competencies and expertise of the academic staff adequate for delivering the program?
- What are the challenges that the university meet or encounter with regards to human resource, such as age distribution, difficulties in filling vacancies or in attracting qualified academic staff? How does the university handle these challenges?
- How many Master's and PhD degree holders are there among the academic staff?
- What policy is pursued with regard to the employment of academic staff, both in teaching and research?
- Does the university have the incentive policy to involve professors in mentoring and/or training the junior or new academic staff?
- Is a policy in place with regard to involvement of the academic staff in seminars, supervision of final papers, practical training or internship?
- Are academic staff members satisfied with the teaching load?
- Is the staff-to-student ratio satisfactory?
- What is the accountability of the academic staff in terms of roles, responsibilities, academic freedom and professional ethics?
- What types of research activities are carried out by the academic staff? Are these activities aligned to the vision and mission of the university and faculty?
- What is the level of research grants and how is it utilized?
- How many researches are published? Are these researches published in domestic, regional or international journals?

Staff management:

- How is manpower planning for the academic staff carried out?
- Does the department have a clearly formulated staff management structure?
- Are recruitment and promotion criteria of the academic staff established?
- Is there a performance management system?
- What is the succession plan for key appointment holders?
- What are the career development plans for the academic staff?
- Are academic staff members satisfied with the HR policy?
- What is the future development of the HR policy for the academic staff?
- How are the academic staff members prepared for the teaching and research task?
- Is the teaching delivered by the academic staff supervised and assessed?

Training and development:

- Who is responsible for the academic staff training and development activities?

- What are the training and development processes and plans? How are the training needs identified?
- Do the training and development plans reflect the university and faculty mission and objectives?
- Is there a system to develop strategic and technical competencies of the academic staff in the faculty?
- What are the training hours and number of training places for the academic staff per year?
- What percentage of payroll or budget is allocated for training the academic staff?

3. Sources of evidence

- Manpower plan.
- Distribution in terms of age, gender, expertise, etc.
- Career and succession plans.
- Recruitment criteria.
- Staff qualifications.
- Training needs analysis.
- Training and developmental plan and budget.
- Peer review and appraisal system.
- Student feedback.
- Award and recognition schemes.
- Staff workload.
- Organization chart of the faculty/department.
- HR policies.
- Staff handbook.
- Job description.
- Employment contract.
- Research and publication data.
- Technology transfer data.
- National and/or professional licence/certificate.

VII. Standard 7: Support staff

Criterion	Support staff
7. 1	Support staff planning (those who are working at libraries, laboratories, information technology systems and other supporting services) are implemented to meet the education, scientific research and community service needs.
7. 2	Employment, selection, appointment and transfer criteria are defined and made

	available to the public.
7.3	Staff competencies are determined and assessed.
7.4	Professional training and development needs of support staff are identified and necessary activities must be implemented to meet these needs.
7.5	Management of performance of support staff (including reward and recognition) is implemented to create a driving force and provide assistance towards education and scientific research and community service activities.

1. Explanatory notes

The quality of an academic program depends very much on the interaction between the academic staff and students. However, the academic staff cannot perform their roles well without good quality services provided by the support staff. These are the persons who work at libraries, laboratories, computer facilities and other student service providers.

Table 7.1 below is used to specify the number of support staff members in the last five academic years for the program.

Table 7.1. Number of support staff members (specify data cut-off date)

Support staff	Highest educational attainment				Total
	High school	Bachelor	Master	Doctoral	
Library staff					
Laboratory staff					
IT staff					
Administrative staff					
Student support staff (enumerate the services)					
Total					

2. Diagnostic questions

Support staff:

- Are the support staff members competent and qualified to meet their job requirements?
- Are the competencies and expertise of the support staff adequate?
- What difficulties are there in attracting qualified support staff?
- What policy is pursued with regard to the employment of support staff?
- Are support staff members satisfied with their roles?

Staff management:

- How is manpower planning of the support staff carried out?
- Are recruitment and promotion criteria for the support staff established?
- Is there a performance management system?
- What are the career development plans for the support staff?

Training and development:

- Who is responsible for the support staff training and development activities?
- Does the university adopt the particular policy for performance management of support staff?
- What are the staff training and development processes and plans? How does the university identify the training needs?
- Does the university formulate the system for development of professional expertise and competencies of support staff?
- What are the duration and location for the annual staff training?
- What percentage of budget is allocated for training the support staff?

3. Sources of evidence

- Manpower plan.
- Professional and skill development plans.
- Recruitment criteria.
- Staff qualifications.
- Training needs analysis.
- Staff training and developmental plan and budget.
- Performance assessment system.
- Student feedback.
- Award and recognition plans.
- Staff organization chart.
- HR policies.
- Staff handbook.
- Job description.
- Employment contract.

VIII. Standard 8: Students and student support activities

Criterion	Students and student support activities
8.1	Student selection and admission policy is clearly defined, made available to the public and up-to-date.
8.2	Student selection and admission criteria and methods are clearly determined and assessed.
8.3	An appropriate monitoring system is in place to monitor students' progress, academic performance and workload.
8.4	Learning advisory and consulting, extra-curriculum, competition activities and supporting services are accessible to students to improve their learning and employability.

8.5	The university creates the psychological, social setting and outdoor landscape to facilitate students' learning and research activities and give them comfort.
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1. Explanatory notes

The quality of output depends very much on the quality of input. This means that the intake quality of students is important.

Student intake:

- Give a summary of the intake of first-year students using Table 8.1.
- Give a summary of the total number of students enrolled in the program using Table 8.2.

Table 8.1. Statistics of the intake of first-year students (in the last five years)

Academic year	Applicants		
	Number of applicants	Number of applicants offered	Number of applicants admitted

Table 8.2. Statistics of the number of students enrolled in the program (in the last five years)

Academic year	Students					Total
	First year	Second year	Third year	Fourth year	Following year	

2. Diagnostic questions

Student quality:

- How are student selection and admission activities monitored and analyzed?
- How are students selected?
- What policy is pursued with regard to the intake of students? Does it aim to increase the intake or to stabilize it? Why?
- What measures are taken to influence the quality and the size of the intake? What effect do these measures have?
- How does the program take into account the intake quality of students participating in the program?

Student study load and performance:

- Does the department have a credit-point system? How are the credit points calculated?
- Is the study load divided equally across and within each academic year?
- Can an average student complete the program in the planned duration?
- What are the indicators used to monitor student progress and performance?

Student support activities:

- Does the department have a monitoring system for recording study progress and following graduates (for example, surveys to be conducted)?
- How is the data of the monitoring system used?
- What role do the academic staff play in informing and coaching students and integrating them into the program?
- How are students informed about their study plan?
- Is special attention paid to coaching first-year students and underperforming students? If so, how does it work?
- Is specific support given to provide study skills for students with problems?
- Is separate attention paid to coaching of advanced students?
- Is assistance given in completing the final year project? Where can students who get stuck with their practical training or final project get help?
- How are students advised on problems concerning course options, change of options, interruption or termination of study?
- How is information on career prospects provided to students?
- Are the reasons examined regarding students who take longer than expected to complete the program?
- Are students satisfied with the support services provided?

3. Sources of evidence

- Student selection process and criteria.
- Trend of student intake.
- Credit system.
- Student workload.
- Student performance report.
- Participation in academic and non-academic activities, extracurricular activities, competition, etc.
- Mechanisms to report and feedback on student progress.
- Provision of student support services at university- and faculty-level.
- Coaching, mentoring and counseling schemes.
- Student feedback and course evaluation.

IX. Standard 9: Facilities and infrastructure

Criterion	Facilities and infrastructure
9.1	Office, learning and functional blocks are in place and furnished with equipment suitable for educational and research activities.

9.2	Libraries and study resources are relevant and up to date to assist in educational and research activities.
9.3	Laboratories, practice rooms and equipment are fit and up to date for educational and research needs.
9.4	The information technology system (including online learning facilities) are fit and up to date for educational and research needs.
9.5	Environmental, health and safety standards are determined and implemented by taking into consideration handicapped students' special needs.

1. Explanatory notes

The provision of facilities and infrastructure should be in line with the objectives of the program. Facilities are also connected to the teaching and learning approach. For example, if the approach is to teach in small working groups, then flexible classroom arrangements should be made available. Learning resources such as computers, e-learning portals, library resources, etc., should be adequately provided to meet the needs of students and staff.

2. Diagnostic questions

- Are there sufficient lecture-halls, seminar rooms, laboratories, reading rooms and computer rooms? Do these facilities meet the needs of students and staff?
- Is the library sufficiently equipped for education and research?
- Is the library accessible and within easy reach (location, opening hours)?
- Are there sufficient laboratory facilities? Are there sufficient support staff?
- Do the laboratories meet the relevant requirements of stakeholders?
- Are sufficient teaching aids and tools available to staff and students?
- What hardware and software are made available to meet the needs of education and research?
- To what extent do the facilities and infrastructure promote or obstruct the delivery of the program?
- Is the total budget for teaching aids and tools sufficient?
- How are the facilities and infrastructure maintained?

2. Sources of evidence

- List of facilities, equipment, computer hardware and software, etc.
- Logbook recording use of equipment, utilization rate, downtime/uptime, operating hours.
- Maintenance plan.
- New facilities and upgrading plans.
- Safety, health and environmental policies.
- Emergency response plan.
- Student and staff feedback.
- Budget for facilities and infrastructure.

X. Standard 10: Quality improvements

Criterion	Quality improvements
10.1	Feedback and needs of stakeholders are used as a basis for designing and developing curriculum.
10.2	Curriculum design and development activities are established, assessed and improved.
10.3	Learning and teaching process and student assessment are reviewed and assessed on a regular basis in order to ensure compatibility and conformity with the expected learning outcomes.
10.4	Research findings are utilized to improve learning and teaching quality.
10.5	Quality of supporting services and utilities (e.g., those available at libraries, laboratories, information technology systems and other necessary services) is assessed and improved.
10.6	The stakeholder feedback mechanism is logical, assessed and improved.

1. Explanatory notes

The improvement of higher education quality is closely connected with the following elements:

- Knowledge, skills, attitudes and competencies of students.
- Study environment and opportunities.
- Quality of the university or the education program.

The quality improvement is the act of carrying out initiatives according to plans to meet the quality assurance and improvement objectives. This is an unceasing effort in improving and utilizing best practices.

Trust of students and other stakeholders in universities is built up and maintained through quality assurance and improvement activities. These activities help ensure that the program is designed well, regularly monitored, periodically reviewed and thus it becomes up-to-date and appropriate.

Program quality assurance and improvement embrace the following criteria:

- Identification of the expected learning outcomes.
- Program design and development process.
- Teaching, learning and student assessment approaches.
- Resources, facilities, infrastructures and other supporting services.
- Utilization of research findings.
- Stakeholder feedback collection mechanism.

2. Diagnostic questions

Program design and evaluation:

- Who is responsible for designing the program?
- How are the academic staff and students involved in the program design?

- What are the roles of the stakeholders in the design and review of the program?
- How does program innovation come about? Who takes the initiative? On the basis of what signals?
- Who is responsible for implementing the program?
- When designing the program, is benchmarking with other institutions done?
- In which international networks does the program participate?
- With which institutions abroad do student exchanges take place?
- Is the program recognized abroad?
- Is a structured quality assurance procedure in place?
- Who are involved in the internal and external quality assurance activities?
- Is there a program design committee? What is its role?
- Is there an examination committee? What is its role?
- How are the program and its courses evaluated?
- Is the evaluation done systematically?
- How are research findings existing in the last five years applied to teaching and learning activities?
- How are students involved in evaluating the program and its courses?
- How and to whom are the evaluation results made known?
- What actions are taken to improve the curriculum and its design process?

Stakeholder feedback collection mechanism:

Surveys, questionnaires, tracer study, group discussion and dialogues, etc., are commonly used as a method for acquiring feedback and opinions from stakeholders.

- What method does the department use to collect feedback and comments from academic staff, students and graduates and employers?
- Are feedback collected from stakeholders in a formal and systematic manner?
- How is the quality of support activities and facilities evaluated?
- How are feedback analyzed and used to improve the program quality?

3. Sources of evidence

- Processes and meeting minutes related to program design, review and approval activities.
- Stakeholder input.
- Educational examination and student assessment quality assurance.
- External assessment.
- Onshore and offshore benchmarking.
- Program and course feedback.

- Feedback utilization for program innovation.
- Sample questionnaires used for collecting feedback.
- Reports on results of surveys, group discussion, dialogues, tracer study, etc.

XI. Standard 11: Output and outcomes

Criterion	Output and outcomes
11.1	Dropout or graduation rate is established, monitored and benchmarked for improvement of quality.
11.2	Average time to graduate is established, monitored and benchmarked for improvement.
11.3	Post-graduation employment rate is established, monitored and benchmarked for improvement.
11.4	Types and quantity of research activities carried out by students are established, monitored and benchmarked for improvement.
11.5	Satisfaction level of stakeholders is established, monitored and benchmarked for improvement.

1. Explanatory notes

In assessing the quality assurance of an academic program, universities must evaluate not only the quality of the education process, but also the output and graduate quality. In order to evaluate the quality of graduates, universities should monitor the extent to which the expected learning outcomes have been achieved, pass rate, dropout rate, average time to graduate and employment rate. Research is another important output from the education process. The types of research activities carried out by students must meet the requirements of the stakeholders.

In addition to analyzing input, process and output, universities should also analyze the level of satisfaction of stakeholders; establish a system to collect and measure stakeholder satisfaction. The information collected should be analyzed and benchmarked for improvement of the education program, quality assurance activities and quality assurance systems.

Pass rate and dropout rate:

Table 11.1 shows information on pass rate and dropout rate in the last five courses.

Table 11.1. Pass rate and dropout rate (in the last five courses)

Academic year	Cohort size	% completed first degree in			% dropout during			
		3 years	4 years	> 4 year	First year	Second year	Third year	> fourth year

2. Diagnostic questions

Pass rate and dropout rate:

- Does the university have an efficient system to monitor the pass rates and dropout rates of students?

- What does the department think of the pass rates? If not satisfactory, what measures are taken to improve the pass rates?
- What is the dropout rate? Are there explanations for the dropout rate?
- Does the department know what the dropout students will do?

Average time to graduate:

- What does the department think of the average time to graduate?
- What measures have been taken to promote the graduation rate and shorten the average time to graduate?
- What effects do these measures have?

Quality of graduates:

- Are stakeholders satisfied with the quality of graduates?
- Do graduates achieve the expected learning outcomes?
- Do the graduates get jobs easily? What are the career prospects of the graduates over the last five years?

Employability of graduates:

- What percentage of graduates find a job within six months of graduation over the past five years? What percentage of graduates find a job within one year of graduation?
- What percentage of graduates are still unemployed one year after graduation?

Research:

- What types of research activities are carried out by students? Are these activities aligned to the expected learning outcomes, vision and mission of the university and faculty?

Stakeholder satisfaction:

Academic staff:

- What mechanisms are available for academic staff to express their satisfaction or dissatisfaction about the program, resources, facilities, processes, policies, etc.?
- What indicators are used to measure and monitor the satisfaction level of staff?
- What initiatives are carried out to raise the satisfaction level of staff? Are they effective?

Students:

- Does the department know what students think out the courses, program, teaching, examinations, etc.?
- How does the department cope with the feedback and complaints from students?

Graduates:

- What is the opinion and feedback of the graduates about the competencies that they have acquired after the program graduation?
- How is feedback from the alumni used to improve the program?

Labor market:

- Are employers satisfied with the quality of graduates?
- Are there any specific complaints about the graduates?
- Are specific strengths of the graduates appreciated by the employers?

3. Sources of evidence

- Process and indicators for measuring stakeholder satisfaction.
- Stakeholder satisfaction trend.
- Graduates, alumni and employers surveys.
- Press reports related to program output.
- Employer survey.
- Employment statistics.
- Employer feedback.

GENERAL DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION TESTING AND ACCREDITATION

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