QEC Policy Manual

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Chapter 1: Introduction

1.1. Introduction

Global dynamics are changing rapidly, and the constant changes pose challenges to every sector. Remaining competitive in the age of the knowledge economy requires continuous improvement and quality enhancement. To understand the global dynamics and requirements, the role of quality assurance and enhancement has become an integral part of higher education institutions (HEIs). The Higher Education Commission (HEC) of Pakistan established Quality Assurance Agency (QAA) in 2005 with a vision "To promote, enhance and assure the quality of higher education across HEIs in Pakistan". The role of QAA is the policymaking, monitoring of quality in higher education, developing guidelines, capacity building, and of external quality assurance. Under the directives of QAA-HEC, Quality Enhancement Cells (QECs) were established in the HEIs and Universities across Pakistan. The role of internal quality assurance and enhancement and compliance with the quality parameters of QAA was assigned to QEC.

Quality Enhancement Cell (QEC) of Pak-Austria Fachhochschule Institute of Applied Sciences and Technology (PAF-IAST) is established for quality assurance and enhancement. At PAF-IAST, quality means that adhere to our vision and mission of "Skilling Pakistan". Quality is to satisfy the needs of all stakeholders by achieving excellence of the highest standards and continuous improvement in academia. We are committed to producing skilled and knowledgeable graduates that can contribute to the socio-economic development of Pakistan and at the global level. We are accountable for the public expectations, and we ensure that the standards are met. The global landscape is continuously evolving and there is always an opportunity for continuous improvement. The quality assurance system responds to the diversity of higher education systems, institutions, programs, and students. Therefore, PAF-IAST is continuously reviewing the standards and increasing the benchmarks to ensure quality education at par with the national and international standards.

Quality is the responsibility of everyone. Therefore, quality assurance supports the development of quality culture at the individual as well as collective level. Quality is a cultural/psychological element of shared values, beliefs, expectations, and commitment toward quality. At the same time, it is a structural/managerial element with defined processes that enhance quality and aims at coordinating individual efforts. Quality culture at PAF-IAST is a shared responsibility where every individual is accountable and responsible for the quality of education and for contributing to the fulfillment of the vision and mission of PAF-IAST. QEC takes all the necessary steps to evaluate, measure, and maintain the quality of all academic and non-academic activities. PAF-IAST learns and evolves as we aim at a quality culture rather than a rigid set of procedures. This culture helps us in understanding our system and in the identification of the areas for improvement. The

evaluation mechanism adopted under quality assurance is utilized for the development and strengthening of PAF-IAST.

1.2. Vision

To strengthen the quality culture at PAF-IAST that assures and enhances the quality of higher education at par with national and international standards.

1.3. Mission

Our mission is to develop a viable and sustainable quality management system and culture to ensure that academic programs, teaching, research, and support services endure the standards of internal and external quality assurance and enhancement for continuous improvement.

1.4. Objectives of QEC

The objectives of QEC PAF-IAST are to:

1. Develop a quality culture at PAF-IAST where all stakeholders are involved in the quality assurance and enhancement process.
2. Uphold the public confidence in the quality and safeguarding standards of education at PAF-IAST.
3. Develop and implement internal quality parameters at par with national and international standards.
4. Review progress on both internal and external quality assurance.
5. Define explicit and clear standards as a point of reference for quality assurance and enhancement.
6. Ensure that PAF-IAST's quality assurance procedures are designed to fit in with the national and international quality practices.
7. Adhere to a System of Self-Assessment and review as prescribed by external quality assurance and regulatory bodies.
8. Provide opportunities and support to the faculty and staff in their capacity building.
9. Seek collaboration in various fields of common interest with local and international bodies.
10. Take all necessary measures for quality enhancement of all academic and non-academic activities at PAF-IAST.

1.5. Scope and Functions of QEC

The Quality Enhancement Cell at PAF-IAST plays a major role in building quality culture, quality assurance, and quality enhancement. The scope of QEC at PAF-IAST is to establish a quality management system and implement it. The following domains are under the scope of QEC:

- Development of quality culture and quality framework.
- Design and implementation of quality assurance mechanism and self-assessment tools.
- Continuous assessment and evaluation of academic programs and institutional performance.

- Ensure compliance with the statutory regulations and requirements of the regulatory bodies.
- Safeguarding the public confidence in the quality of education.
- Standardization of education and support services to ensure compliance with the quality standards.
- Participate and contribute to quality assurance activities at the national and international levels.
- Providing support to PAF-IAST in the capacity building of faculty and staff for continuous improvement and development.
- The devise mechanism for continuous quality improvement (CQI) and quality enhancement.
- Collection / provision of university statistics/data for university ranking by national/ international agencies.
- Promoting collaboration with national and international universities/organizations.
- Review and verification of research publications.
- Checking plagiarism and dealing with plagiarism cases.
- Review of academic affiliations and partnerships with other institutions.
- Coordination between accrediting departments and accreditation councils.
- Establish Student role in quality assurance activities.

1.6. ToRs of QEC

- Promoting public confidence that the standard of academic awards is safeguarded, and that quality is assured and enhanced
- Systematic internal review of academic standards and the quality of teaching and learning in each subject area
- Systematic review of academic affiliations and partnerships with other institutions to ensure effective management of standards and quality of programs
- Facilitating external review of programs and the institution
- Coordination and liaison with QAA-HEC for implementation of HEC's guidelines related to quality assurance
- Coordination between accrediting departments and accreditation councils for timely accreditation of programmes from respective councils
- Facilitating in establishment and functioning of QEC sub-offices at campuses, constituent units and affiliated institutions
- Supervision of sub-offices of QEC at campuses, constituent units and affiliated institutions
- Actively participating in meetings of all statutory bodies
- Capacity building of all internal stakeholders on QA-related activities

- Ensuring institutional alignment with the National Qualifications Framework of Pakistan at associate degree programme, bachelor, master's, and doctoral level
- Developing and enhancing quality assurance processes to affirm that the quality of provision and the standard of awards are being maintained
- Fostering curriculum, subject and faculty/staff development, together with research and other scholarly activities
- Developing and enhancing procedures for student partnership in quality assurance activities
- Ensuring that the institution's quality assurance procedures are aligned with national arrangements for maintaining and improving the quality of higher education
- Developing, managing and enhancing procedures for the following:
    - Approval of new programs
    - Annual monitoring and evaluation, including at program and faculty level, as well as of stakeholder evaluation
    - Departmental review
    - Student feedback
    - Employer and alumni feedback
    - Faculty feedback
    - Employer participation in relevant quality assurance activities
    - Program review and self-assessment
    - Institutional review and self-assessment
    - Regulatory frameworks for qualifications.
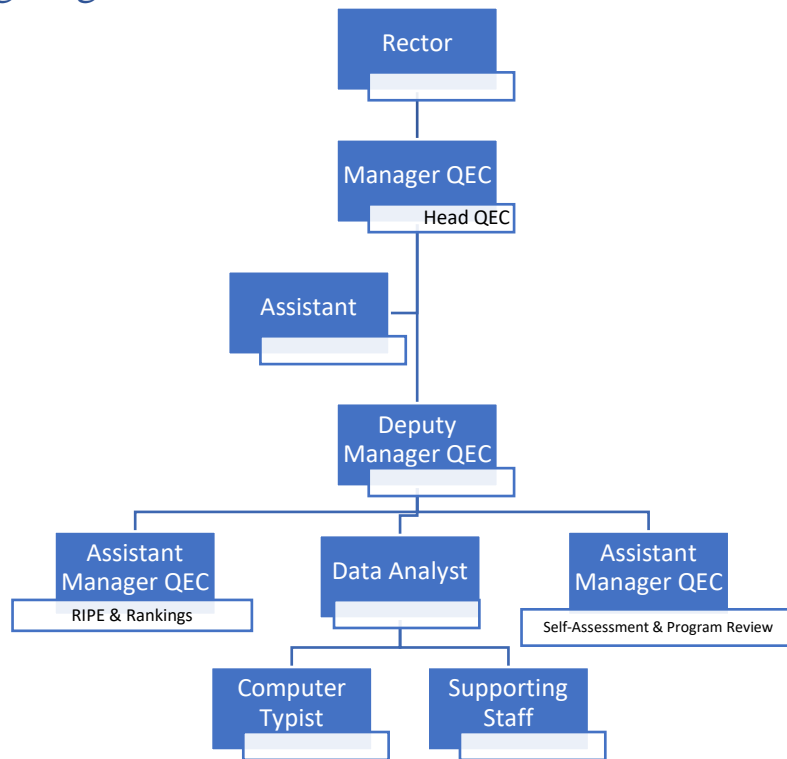
1.7. QEC Organogram

Figure 1: Quality Enhancement Cell Organogram

Chapter 2: Quality Management System

2.1. Quality Management System

Quality Management System (QMS) is the building block for coordinated activities to direct and control PAF-IAST with regard to quality. It comprises processes that are geared toward delivering quality education to a consistently high standard. Quality education depends on the skills with which the various stakeholder's voices are integrated, processed, and escalated into features of the institution and its related deliverables. PAF-IAST's structure, facilities, programs and contents, delivery modes, and instructional interaction at the student-teacher interface. To ensure quality, management in PAF-IAST has to be disciplined, time-based, up-front, create strategic capabilities, adaptive to change, ensure integration of efforts, establish a learning culture, align all efforts towards common goals, create a system for continuous monitoring and adjustment, provide sufficient resources for medium-term, and the top management play a leadership role. QMS at PAF-IAST consists of a corpus of integrated, aligned, complex elements that relate in some sophisticated way.

QEC at PAF-IAST adopted a comprehensive framework and QMS for quality assurance and enhancement. The following subsections describe the stages in QMS.

2.2. Quality Structure

Quality cannot be achieved without the involvement and support of every member of PAF-IAST. Therefore, the quality structure is designed at the institutional level, department level, and program level.

2.2.1. Quality Structure at Institutional Level

QEC is functioning as a section at an institutional level. To ensure a shared vision and quality culture, QEC is supported by the 'Quality Assurance and Implementation Committee (QAIC)'. This committee shall comprise the following members.

- Rector (convener)
- All Deans
- All Head of Sections
- Manager QEC (secretary)
- Student Council Representatives (2)
- Any other official on special invitation

2.2.1.1. Functions of QAIC

- QAIC shall meet four times a year to review the QEC's annual/semi-annual report and take necessary action.
- QAIC will review the findings of self-assessment, RIPE, and program review. After reviewing the reports, QAIC will devise action plans and implementation plans.

- QAIC will fix responsibilities and timeline for the action plans and implementation plans as per recommendations of the internal and external self-assessment, RIPE, and Program review panels.
- QAIC will review and approve the progress on the recommendations/areas for improvement mentioned in points 3-4.
- QAIC will review and approve the self-assessment criteria/survey tools and processes.
- QAIC will ensure appropriate measures are taken to comply with the procedures of QAA-HEC and other national/international accreditation bodies.
- QAIC will take the necessary steps for quality enhancement.
- QAIC upon recommendation of QEC, approves and recommends capacity-building programs on quality for the faculty and staff.
- QAIC will support QEC in collaborations at the national and international level or in matters related to quality assurance and enhancement.
- QAIC initiate and coordinate, all relevant external guidance and requirements related to quality assurance.

.2.1.3.   ToRs of QAIC

- To monitor all relevant external guidance and requirements related to quality assurance, initiating and coordinating action as appropriate.
- To develop and keep under review the university's Academic Policy and Quality Framework, that is, the systems, policies and guidance for assuring and enhancing the quality of students' learning experience and maintaining academic standards, and to consider and manage the outcomes of these processes.
- To have oversight of the university's approach to assuring the completeness, accuracy, reliability and fitness for purpose of information provided for applicants and students.
- To maintain operational oversight of academic and student-related policy and legislation, considering proposals for minor and operational legislative changes, consulting with legal services as appropriate.
- To consider proposals for the addition, withdrawal, suspension, and exceptional amendment of programs of study of the university. This will normally be undertaken by chair's action for regular reporting to a subsequent meeting of the committee.
- The discussions of the QAIC are rooted in the student life cycle
- A key output of the discussions of the QAIC are the identification of opportunities for enhancement across the institution

.2.2.   Quality Structure at Department Level

Every academic department shall have a departmental quality assurance committee (DQAC). This committee will have the following composition.

- Chairman/Head of the Department (convener)
- Coordinator(s)

- Department QEC coordinator (to be nominated by the department head and will work as a representative/liaison of QEC in their respective department)
- Nominee/representative of QEC
- Program Team (PT) convener(s)

.2.2.3.   *Functions of DQAC*

The departmental Quality Assurance Committee (DQAC) shall have the following functions.

- Conduct self-assessment as prescribed by QEC.
- Provide data/reports to the QEC required as part of internal/external quality assurance.
- Nominate Program Team (PT) members.
- Ensure timely completion of self-assessment reports (SARs).
- Arrange and facilitate Assessment Teams (ATs) visits.
- Conduct departmental level meetings on the reports of ATs and record minutes of the meeting.
- Devise an action plan and take necessary actions to implement the ATs recommendations.
- Provide evidence of the actions taken on ATs recommendations.
- Discuss the survey findings and take necessary action(s) at the department level.
- Develop and approve the department's strategic plan from the statutory bodies.
- Ensure alignment of the department's vision, mission, and objectives with PAF-IAST.
- Ensure alignment of program vision, mission, objectives, and learning outcomes with the department.
- Support and training of CLO, PLO mapping, and coverage of all outcomes.
- Auditing of course files.
- Reviewing the SAC and PAC recommendations.
- Review of the courses feedback by faculty and students for necessary action/revision.
- Provide support and data to QEC for rankings and collaborations.

.2.3.   Quality Structure at Program Level

Every program shall have two committees: Program Advisory Committee (PAC) and Student Advisory Committee (SAC).

Program Advisory Committees provide industry expertise and insight to help program areas develop, renew and promote PAF-IAST's programs according to labor market needs. The PAC ensures the program is current and relevant to industry, business, and society. Program advisers identify current and future industry trends and shifts in the skills and knowledge graduates need to meet employer requirements. Program Advisory Committee members are key liaisons between PAF-IAST and industry and between PAF-IAST and the community. The role of PAC in the success of PAF-IAST is very crucial as the institute is of applied science and technology, therefore, PACs role in developing close ties with business, industry, and the labor market is of great importance.

.2.3.3. Composition of PAC

- Chairperson (Elected by the committee during the first meeting for the period of two years from 1st July every year. Responsible for organizing and conducting the meeting with advice and counsel from a program representative)

- The total number of PAC members (Leaders in their fields who act as advisors for the programs) may vary between 7-15 where 70% of external members (Be representative of the field of study to ensure relevance in content, ongoing support, and community involvement) and 30% internal members.

Members will endeavor to attend all committee meetings to ensure the continuity of the group. Members who miss three consecutive meetings will be deemed to have resigned unless it is due to extenuating circumstances to be determined by the Dean and Advisory Committee Chair. The resignation will be acknowledged by the Chair at the third meeting

.2.1.3. Role and Functions of Program Advisory Committee

- Program advisory committees work closely with the academic teams to ensure student and graduate success.
- ensure curriculum quality, evaluate the effectiveness of programs and identify future trends.
- Identify and promote student recruiting processes.
- Provide information concerning the desired education and the experience necessary for job placement and career success.
- Arrange site visits or field trips for students, faculty, and counselors.
- Assist in surveys/research or projections of the local labor market needs.
- Assist in facilitating students in part-time or cooperative education work which may include clinical experiences, internships, apprenticeships, and other cooperative partnerships intended to enhance students' learning experiences.
- Provide information about job opportunities for graduates and identify possibilities for faculty professional development.
- Arrange guest speakers from business and industry to enhance student's educational experience.
- Assist in identifying state-of-the-art equipment, books, journals, magazines, etc. needed.
- Review and provide guidance for program instruction to include the necessary skills and technical and general information that is taught.
- Assess the equipment and facilities and make recommendations as needed.
- Be accessible to evaluation and accreditation groups.
- Review the feedback collected through the survey and devise an action plan.
- Review the progress of the programs in terms of goal attainment and action plan.
- Conduct periodic reviews and visits to ensure quality is met.
- Prepare students for the job market, job hunting, and preparation for job interviews.

.2.2. Student Advisory Committee

A Student Advisory Committee (SAC) is convened at each campus of the department/program to assist the DQAC and PAC to monitor quality assurance in learning and teaching. The functions of the Student Advisory Committee are to monitor and assess the delivery of current theory and practice as it relates to the educational outcomes of the courses. The SAC in each Program assesses the implementation of, and identifies the need for, academic policies and procedures. SAC monitors the entire learning environment of the campus, including the library, student recreational facilities, teaching resources, and learning materials. The Committee recommends the DQAC adaptations and modifications to the curriculum when necessary. It ensures the ethical and professional delivery of training in accordance with the PAF-IAST's Code of Practice.

Membership of the SAC in each program is comprised of academic counselors, student representatives, and representatives of the teaching staff.

.2.2.3. *Role and Function of Student Representative*

The role and function of a Student Representative is to liaise with the student body to accurately and objectively represent students' suggestions, ideas, information, and concerns to the Student Advisory Committee. Students may nominate any student currently enrolled. A student may self-nominate should they possess the interest and commitment to represent the student body. A Student Representative is invited onto the Student Advisory Committee based on the student's overall suitability, availability and the number of nominations received. The primary task of a Student Representative is to represent the views, opinions, and concerns of the student body, and to represent the outcomes of the program's SAC deliberations to the student body.

.2.2.4. *Composition of SAC*

This committee will have the following composition.

- Academic counselors/advisor
- Student representatives (may nominate/self-nominate/elective) from each Batch.
- Representatives of the teaching staff.

The Student Representatives have the responsibility to students to:

- Be available to listen to student views and concerns, and actively represent them in an objective and accurate manner
- Attend scheduled student advisory committee meetings throughout the academic year
- Provide accurate feedback to the student body on the proceedings of the Student Advisory Committee

SAC shall have a monthly meeting, and the minutes of the meeting shall be shared with HoD, Dean, Director Establishment, and QEC.
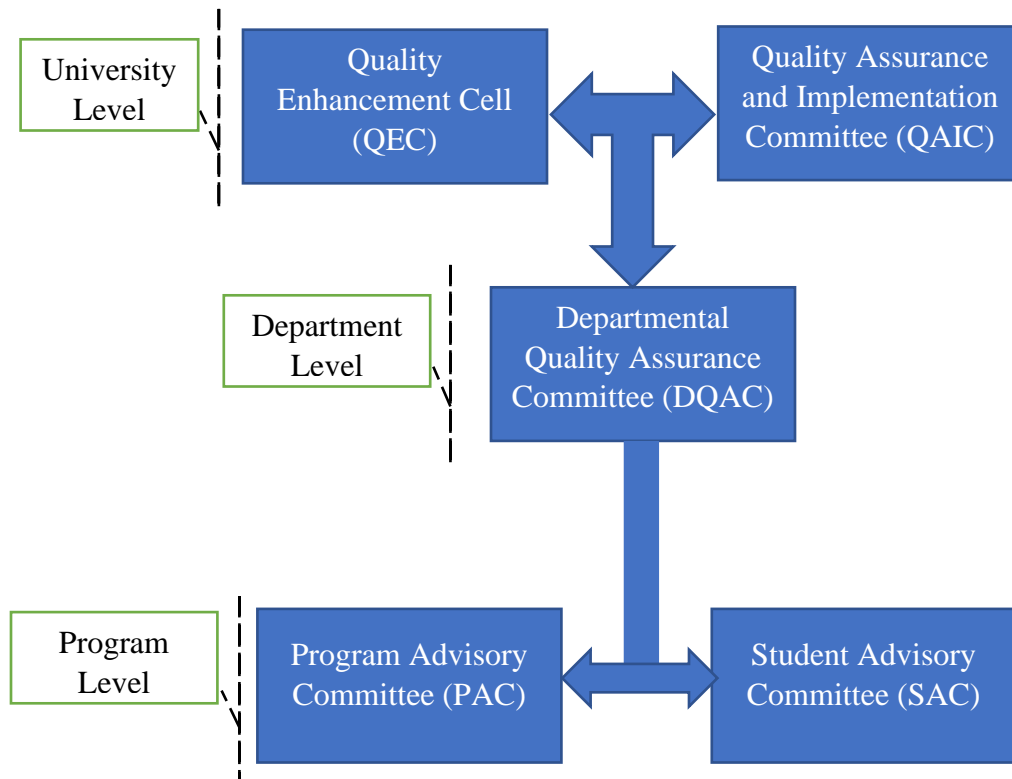
Chapter 3: Quality Review, Assurance, and Enhancement

The quality structure functions to review, assure, and enhance quality. These are the fundamental areas to establish a quality culture in PAF-IAST.

3.1. Quality Review

Quality review is a developmental process that is carried out in academic, administrative, and support units of PAF-IAST. This stage is very important for quality assurance and enhancement. During the review stage, the progress of each unit of PAF-IAST is reviewed over a specified time period and an overall review of PAF-IAST during the selected time period is reviewed. The quality review is considered valuable for several reasons including the following:

- It presents detailed information about the area and the collective perception of staff and students of its role in the PAF-IAST.
- It presents a succinct and comprehensive statement of the area's view of its strategic objectives and for a PAF-IAST, of its teaching, learning and research, and other significant activities.
- It provides a reflective and self-critical analysis of the activities of the PAF-IAST.
- It shows the quality systems and processes which are already in place in the PAF-IAST and permit an assessment of their effectiveness.
- It helps the departments and programs to identify and analyze their strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats and allows it to suggest appropriate remedies where necessary.
- It identifies those weaknesses, if any, in academic, organizational, and other matters which are under the control of the department and which can be remedied by action.
- It identifies shortfalls in resources and provides an externally validated case for increased resource allocation.
- It provides a framework within which the Area can continue to work in the future towards quality improvement.

The quality review comprises the review of the following parameters/areas:

- Review of the curriculum, teaching, and learning process.
- Review of the programs' PLOs
- Conduct self-evaluation report
- Conduct meetings with faculty, employers, students, and other key stakeholders.
- Conduct surveys
- Audit and review of programs (portfolio, curriculum, schedule, qualifications, etc.)

All internal stakeholders are part of the quality review. The responsibility is shared by all those mentioned in the PAF-IAST quality structure (including QAIC, DQAC, PAC, SAC, faculty members, department chair, and other committees at the departmental level).

The quality review process at PAF-IAST includes four key stages.

    I.   Self-Assessment
   II.   Peer Review
  III.   Improvement Planning and Follow-up
  IV.   Report Publication

3.1.1. Self-Assessment

Self-Assessment (SA) is a systematic process of evaluating the various aspects of the institution or academic programs and whether quality standards are being met. For further improvement, SA collects information and evidence from the stakeholders, reviews those, and identifies the weaknesses and areas that need further improvement to enhance the quality of teaching learning and education. Self-Assessment does not mean that evidence of quality education is not available. It provides direction to continuous improvement through gradual internalization of the standards and good practices. Self-Assessment examines the state of practices and quality using a well-structured survey framework. Self- Assessment serves as a preparation for external peer review and validation for approval and accreditation.

Self-Assessment explores the key issues of:

    a) What does the university do to provide education?
    b) Whether the university does the right things to provide education.
    c) Whether the university is doing the right things in the right way?
    d) Has the university clearly defined goals to achieve?
    e) Whether the process guiding the university is adequate to achieve the goals?

Self-assessment is the preliminary stage of quality review and has a significant role in quality assurance. Quality assurance in higher education is a global practice now. With the changes in the higher education landscape and emerging needs of the stakeholders, there is an urgency to look into the effectiveness of the academic programs. Higher education must be more closely aligned to the needs of the community, and the needs of the graduates to explore their potential in terms of employability and lifelong learning. Universities should focus on preparing graduates with a positive mindset, skills, and competence, which would help them to find a good fit into the social system. In order to drive the QA system in the right direction the following questions are very critical. Understanding the current state of quality of education the institution is providing, Identifying the areas and issues that need to be addressed and improved to enhance and maintain quality in education, and integrating the concerns of major stakeholders into the educational system to provide a better experience.

A self-assessment exercise is an effective approach to gaining a clear understanding of the current situation through an informative SWOT analysis. The self-assessment exercise helps to judge the overall effectiveness of the academic program and educational processes. It provides an opportunity to attain a deeper understanding of the areas that may need improvement. Thus, self-

assessment becomes one of the core activities of the quality assurance process. It has gained increasing importance to address the critical issues for a credible quality assurance system.

The quality of education can be measured by the employability of the graduates and their capacity to launch startup businesses and become successful entrepreneurs. The quality of education can also be judged by the extent of its contribution to organizations and national development as well as to local and global communities. In an ever-changing environmental setting, the definition of quality education and requirements for quality education are also changing continuously. With the changes in the definition of quality education, there is an urgency to look into the effectiveness of the existing academic programs and the appropriateness of institutional capacity to maintain quality in education. Self-assessment uses observable performances as the basis or evidence for judgment that underpins a program or institution to become responsive (Loacker, 2004).

Self-assessment becomes a very important exercise for academic institutions for continuous improvement and quality assurance in education. It refers to a comprehensive and systematic process of collecting and analyzing information from major stakeholders on the QA areas and related aspects of the educational institution. The SA process allows the organization to identify the strengths and areas in which improvements are required for quality education. It also provides information to participants, allowing them to evaluate and understand the overall quality of academic programs. Self-assessment provides direction and guidelines to prepare a comprehensive improvement plan addressing the issues critical to quality assurance. The understanding and practice of self-assessment promote the developmental process. It is never exhaustive in its ability to grow. It enables the participants of the program and/or institution to observe the situation precisely and to identify the deficiencies between expectations and actual performances.

The objectives of self-assessment are to:

- Improve the quality of education addressing the needs of the major stakeholders and national relevance.
- Maintain and continuously enhance academic standards
- Enhance students' learning
- Verify that the existing programs meet their objectives and institutional goals
- Provide feedback for quality assurance of academic programs
- Prepare the academic program for review by discipline councils
- Create a basis for external assessment and validation.
- Provide guidelines or direction to the program offering entity or to the PAF-IAST for strategic planning.

The self-assessment at PAF-IAST is the process used to assess the academic programs as well as institutional performance. Self-assessment is based on the principles of improvement, participation, reflection, coverage, facts-driven, sensitization, acceptance, endorsement, and continuity.

3.1.2. Program Self-Assessment

Program self-assessment is one of the major activities under program review. Academic activities are the core activities of any HEI. Therefore, the most important aspects of quality education are teaching, curriculum, learning opportunities, and research. These activities are conducted at the program level and measuring the quality of those activities is the primary aspect of quality. Self-assessment of the program is very critical for improving its quality of teaching learning and research. It is also a requirement for program accreditation. A program review is a cyclical process for evaluating and continuously enhancing the quality and effectiveness of the programs under assessment.

At the program self-assessment level, a systematic approach is adopted to collect, review, and use of information about the programs offered at PAF-IAST. It involves the thorough examination of all aspects and components of the program in respect of stakeholders" opinion. It is a process of identifying the strengths and weaknesses of the program in terms of the capacity for effective teaching-learning, student performance assessment, program management, ability to provide students support services, and adequate physical facilities.

Program Self-Assessment Procedure

QEC is responsible for planning, coordinating, and following up on the self-assessment (SA) activities. The Program self-assessment is a continuous cycle of assessment. Each academic program shall undergo a self-assessment (SA) every two years (assessment cycle). The assessment cycle is timebound and the timeline allocated for each step is mentioned in the flowchart. The steps of the procedure for SA are as follows:

I. The QEC initiates the SA one semester prior to the end of the assessment cycle through the Rector Office in which the program is offered. However, if the program is undergoing the SA for the first time, the department will be given one academic year for preparation.

II. QAIC meeting will be convened to discuss the SA cycle and approve the programs undergoing the self-assessment process.

III. The deans of the respective faculties shall call the meeting of department heads/chairpersons. The agenda of the meeting shall be the constitution of DQAC and the nomination of the Program Team (PT).

IV. PTs shall be nominated for each program under review. Ideally, the PTs shall comprise of three members (one senior faculty member as convener and two other faculty members of the same department/program). The PTs will be formed and function for one year. During this one-year period, the PTs will conduct the self-assessment and facilitate the external peer review and prepare the improvement plan for further academic development. In addition, the DQAC will oversee the QA-related activities within the program offering entity and will make sure that all the QA activities undertaken by the QEC and applicable to the entity are being implemented properly. The DQAC in cooperation with QEC will work to develop the QA culture within the entity.

V. Upon the notification of PTs, QEC will conduct training/workshop of PTs on the SA process and provide all necessary resources required for program SA and drafting self-assessment report (SAR).

VI. QEC, DQAC, and PTs will conduct surveys. PTs will perform the data entry and analysis of their respective programs.

VII. Compiling and Drafting SAR as per the format by the nominated PTs.

VIII. Submitting the SAR to DQAC for review and approval.

IX. Submitting SAR to Dean for approval and onward submission to QEC.

X. QEC will review the SAR to ensure that it is prepared according to the required format.

XI. In case of any deficiency in SAR, QEC will return the SAR to PTs for necessary revision and resubmission.

XII. QEC will initiate the next stage of peer review. The Rector forms a program assessment team (AT) in consultation with the QEC and DQAC recommendations.

XIII. One subject expert (senior and external member) shall be nominated as convener and the PT convener of each program shall be nominated as a member of ATs.

XIV. The QEC plans and schedules the AT visit period in coordination with the department that is offering the program. ATs on the scheduled day shall review the SARs and draft findings/reports of each program reviewed. The report shall comply in light of the standard format and scorecard.

XV. The AT conducts the assessment, submits a report and presents its findings in an exit meeting that shall be attended by the QEC, Dean and PT and faculty members.

XVI. QEC will file the report and also share it with DQAC for necessary action at the departmental level.

XVII. The QEC shall submit an executive summary on the AT findings to the Vice Chancellor / Rector.

XVIII. The Department shall prepare and submit an implementation plan to QEC based on the AT findings. The plan must include AT findings and the corrective actions to be taken, assignment of responsibility and a time frame for such actions.

XIX. The QEC shall follow up on the implementation plan to ensure departments are adhering to the implementation plan. The academic department shall inform the QEC each time a corrective action is implemented. QEC shall review the implementation plan once a semester to assess the progress of implementation.

XX. During the next cycle, the department shall provide evidence of action taken on each recommendation as per AT's report.

3.1.3. Ph.D., MS/M.Phil. & Equivalent Program Review

As decided by the Commission in the 9th meeting held on 26 November 2005. The quality of master's and Ph.D. (level 7 & 8 programs) are peer-reviewed keeping in view the minimum criteria of HEC to enhance their quality to make them internationally compatible.

Reviewing the quality and standards of level 7 & 8 programs is very important. Due to the mushroom growth of DAIs and the increase in the demand for higher education, every DAI has started offering level 7-8 qualification programs. However, the quality of these programs is of major concern. HEC has established a set of standards to review the quality of all Ph.D., MS/M.Phil. and equivalent programs.

Program Review will be conducted every year as part of Self-Assessment. The Proformas for program review are adopted from QAA-HEC.

Program Review Procedure

I. QEC Initiates Program Review with the formal approval of the Rector.

II. DQAC of every department where level 7 & 8 programs are offered will be notified by QEC regarding initiation of MS/MPhil/Equivalent and PhD Program Review.

III. DQAC/Chairman/HoD will nominate a focal person for their respective department.

IV. QEC will organize a seminar/workshop for the department's focal persons. The agenda of the seminar/workshop will be capacity building, sharing the procedure of program review, providing information on the proformas, and providing last year's recommendation and gathering the data for the visit.

V. Focal person will collect all relevant information, fill in the proformas and submit the same to DQAC. Focal person will have to complete the required process within 10 working days.

VI. DQAC will review the information and submit the verified information to QEC within 5 working days.

VII. QEC will compile the documentation and request the Rector for the approval of External Reviewers for Program Review.

VIII. With the permission of the Rector, arrange Program Review by inviting External Examiner outside the University. Ideally, one or two external examiners and three internal members are nominated by Rector as the 'Program Review Team'.

IX. On the day of the Program Review visit, all activities will be conducted as per the QAA-HEC standards and schedule.

X. The initial report of the program review will be prepared by the review team and shared with QEC. The draft will be shared with the Rector and the suggestions/recommendations of the program review will be shared with QAIC.

XI. QAIC will devise an action plan as per suggestions/recommendations of the program review report. The action plan shall consist of specific actions, timeline, responsible body, and follow-up mechanism to ensure compliance with the recommendations.

XII. Evidence of completion of the action plan shall be shared with QEC for further processing and drafting of the compliance report.

3.1.4. Review of Institutional Performance and Evaluation (RIPE)

The RIPE process is crucial for every HEI to review their performance and progress critically. RIPE provides institutions with performance indicators that will permit you to understand HEI's standings as per international standards. RIPE is conducted both as a tool for self-assessment internally and is a major requirement of QAA-HED. To improve the performance of HEIs, HEC has started with the primary step of outlining the Performance Evaluation Standards for the HEIs to be used for the purpose.

RIPE comprises of two sets of information.

a) Answer to the questions (along with proof/evidence) as per standards defined by QAA-HEC,

b) Compilation and provision of university-wide data (University Portfolio Report).

QEC at PAF-IAST will follow the guidelines of RIPE as described by QAA-HEC in the RIPE manual.

Besides preparation of the RIPE evidence and UPR, the RIPE visit shall be conducted. Self-RIPE or QAA-HEC shall conduct the RIPE visit.

RIPE Process
The RIPE visit is spread over three days. RIPE Process comprises of the following activities.

1. In the case of self-RIPE, the panel will be recommended by QEC to the Rector for approval. The panel comprises of two RIPE experts (QEC heads from other HEIs) and three internal members to be nominated by the Rector.
2. In case of RIPE conducted by QAA, the panel will be notified by QAA and the schedule of the visit shall be shared by the QAA.
3. The panel will meet the Rector followed by a brief presentation by the QEC regarding PAF-IAST.
4. The panel will work in the designated room to review each standard along with the evidence.
5. The panel will meet the chairmen/HoDs.
6. The RIPE Panel will meet with the Assistant Professors/lecturers (to be nominated by the departments), at least two faculty members from each department.
7. RIPE review panel will meet with students of each department (ideally one/two students from each department and each program).
8. The panel will meet with the Director Establishment, Director Finance, Director P&D, Controller of Examination, Head QEC.
9. The panel will visit the classrooms, laboratories, library, and other facilities.
10. The RIPE panel will discuss the overall visit and meet the Rector (exit meeting).
11. After the completion of the visit, the RIPE panel will draft the report and share with QEC.
12. QEC will share the report with QAIC in a meeting to discuss the recommendations. During the meeting, action plan will be devised for each of the RIPE review panel recommendations. Tasks will be assigned to the responsible body and timeline will be set to complete each item of the action plan. The responsible body shall submit the progress report along with the proof of action.

RIPE Standards
Various performance evaluation standards outlining major areas to be focused on by the HEIs for evaluation of their effectiveness and future development are given below:

Standard 1: Vision, mission, goals and strategic planning

Standard 2: Governance, leadership and organisation

Standard 3: Institutional resources and planning

Standard 4:   Audit and finance

Standard 5:   Affiliated colleges/institutions

Standard 6:   Internationalisation of higher education and global engagement

Standard 7:   Faculty recruitment, development and support services

Standard 8:   Academic programs and curricula

Standard 9:   Admission, progression, assessment, and certification

Standard 10:   Student support services

Standard 11:   Impactful teaching and learning and community engagement.

Standard 12:   Research, innovation, entrepreneurship and industrial linkage

Standard 13:   Fairness and integrity

Standard 14:   Public information and transparency

Standard 15:   Institutional effectiveness, quality assurance and enhancement

Standard 16:   CQI and cyclical external quality assurance

These standards are subject to revision by QAA-HEC. PAF-IAST will adopt the standards as per the requirements of QAA.

SARs, Program Review, and RIPE comprise of self-assessment procedures and peer review processes. After completion of the first two stages of self-assessment, the Improvement Planning and Follow-up will be initiated which will be the responsibility of PAF-IAST's Quality Structure. At the end of each cycle, a report of every activity will be shared with the QAA-HEC and will be made available on the website.

3.2. Quality Assurance

Quality in education is a dynamic entity and therefore various factors that determine the quality of higher education must be set in equilibrium at a level that matches international expectations and standards. These factors include inter-alia, leadership, quality of faculty, quality of students, curriculum, infrastructure facilities, research and learning environment, governance, strategic planning, and assessment procedures.

The Quality Enhancement Cells (QECs) working in the universities as a focal point for all quality assurance policies and practices will play their role not only in introducing, defining, and developing these concepts but also to practice through tools of quality assurance.

PAF-IAST is keen to develop a strategic vision to address the relevant issues with strong support to push the equilibrium up and to make it match the international standards of quality in education learning. The PAF-IAST has adopted a multi-dimensional approach focused on the issue of quality, with particular emphasis on

i.   The improvement of quality of faculty
ii.   Infrastructural improvement
iii.   Improvement of research and learning environment
iv.   Improvement of curricula
v.   Addressing governance issues
vi.   Assessment issues
vii.   Accreditation of new academic programs

The concepts frequently used in developing the process and procedures of quality assurance are discussed to facilitate the perceptions on a common path of understanding. These concepts of quality assurance are discussed below.

3.2.1. Academic Standards

The academic standards largely discussed in this Manual for practitioners of Quality Assurance in higher education, professionals of QECs and QAA, are given below. These standards can be improved with the passage of time and as per international standards.

3.2.1.1.   Intended Learning Outcomes (ILO)

The Intended Learning Outcomes (ILOs) are the knowledge, understanding, and skills that the institution intends for its programs that are integrated into the mission statement and developed to reflect the use of external reference standards at the appropriate level. The ILOs need to be satisfied while reporting through self-assessment for external assessment of Quality Assurance.

3.2.1.2.   Curricula

The curricula for the program facilitate the realization of the known intended learning outcomes. The quality of curricula plays important role in defining the quality of teaching and learning outcomes. Thus, QECs are responsible to integrate the quality procedures in developing and improving the quality of curricula with consistency to respond to new developments in research and teaching.

3.2.1.3.   Student Assessment

Student Assessment is comprised of a set of processes, including examinations and other activities conducted by the institution to measure the achievement of the intended learning outcomes of a course/ program. Student Assessments also provide the means by which students are ranked according to their achievements. It needs to be confirmed that students are well informed on the criteria by which they are assessed and given appropriate structured feedback that supports their continuous learning. Student feedback is helpful in revising/improving the current standards to a certain level of improvement.

3.2.1.4.   Student Achievement

The quality assurance system of universities and higher education institutions should be in place effectively to assure that levels of students' achievements are maintained with due consideration to the use of external reference points, moderation, and evaluation of achievement.

3.2.2. Quality of Learning Opportunities

The clarity of concepts on Academic Standards needs to be followed by developing a common understanding on quality of learning outcomes which is one of the key objectives of whole process of integrating quality assurance. The quality of learning opportunities at an institution or university may be evaluated against following reflective indicators that need to be satisfied to meet the global standards:

3.2.2.1. *Teaching and Learning*

There are effective teaching and learning systems, informed by a shared, strategic view of learning and the selection of appropriate teaching methods; and due attention is paid to the facilitation of independent learning.

3.2.2.2. *Student Support*

Academic and general support to facilitate students in dealing with possible academic problems ensures that they can make progress satisfactorily through their program and are informed about their progress.

3.2.2.3. *Learning Resources*

It is to be ensured that:

- The facilities at institutions for learning are appropriate, adequate, and used effectively.
- The institution's staff of all kinds namely; academic, support, technical and administrative is adequate and meets the requirements of academic standards and strategies for learning and teaching.
- The staff of the institution is competent to effectively teach, facilitate learning, and maintain a scholarly approach to teaching and to discipline.

3.2.3. Research and Other Scholarly Activities

As per the mandate, the Quality Enhancement Cells will be responsible for assure that the system to organize research and other scholarly activities related to the teaching and supervision of doctoral students is relevant to the mission of the respective institution. A few of the research and other scholarly activities of the universities and other higher education institutions are enlisted below as potential areas that need to be focused on by Quality Enhancement Cells:

- Effectiveness of plans and the scale of activity
- Distinguishing features
- How do the activities relate to the other academic activities in the institution?

3.2.4. Community Participation

The concept of integrated community participation in the whole process of learning and teaching is a relatively new concept but important to achieve the desired level of quality assurance. Therefore, more efforts are needed by the QECs to introduce the concept where it does not exist previously and to make it more effective where it exists in an underlying way and is difficult to be practiced. The system of quality assurance ensures that a higher education institution, informed by its mission, makes a significant contribution to the community it belongs, to the society it serves

and to the wider environment. The level of success in community participation can be assessed through QA system in place in the following areas:

- The contribution it makes
- The range of activities, relevance to the institution's mission and plan
- Examples of effective practice

The standards of quality assurance and control can be achieved with.

- Top management support and commitment
- Creation of roles and responsibilities
- Development of policies and procedures
- Development of processes
- Capacity building
- Supporting tools
- Data collection, analysis, and management

Quality assurance is the responsibility of top management, faculty members, quality assurance committees, departments, and sections of PAF-IAST. Quality assurance takes into account the needs and expectations of students, all other stakeholders, and society. The process of quality assurance supports the development of a quality culture at PAF-IAST.

3.3. Quality Management and Enhancement

The main purposes of quality assurance is quality enhancement. Policy experts caution that enhancement-centered approaches to quality assurance at the system level are more likely to succeed in mature higher education systems where quality assurance processes have a long history of development and practice. Moving from an accountability-focused approach to a more enhancement-centered system takes time and system's maturity. The focus of quality enhancement is on the following areas.

3.3.1. Governance and Leadership

Governance, management, and quality assurance systems should be sufficient to manage existing academic activities and respond to development and change.

3.3.2. Academic Leadership

The academic leadership in the institution provides a strong and sustainable basis for academic activities to grow in an environment conducive to learning.

3.3.3. Self-Evaluation

Self–Evaluation, internal reporting and improvement plans should be open, transparent, focused and supportive of continuing improvement. The procedural details are provided in this manual which ensures internal and external quality review and assurance.

3.3.4. Management of Stakeholders' Feedback

The institutions have mechanisms for receiving, processing and responding to the reviews and feedback coming from a range of stakeholders. The feedback management system of PAF-IAST

ensures that effective and timely action is taken to promote strengths, address any weaknesses identified and demonstrate responsibility and accountability.

Chapter 4: Assessment Plan and Quality Aspects

The assessment of all academic and support activities is a major part of quality review and assurance. Assessment of every activity at PAF-IAST contributes towards the quality parameters, thus, resulting in quality enhancement. PAF-IAST adheres internal quality assurance (IQA) system, external quality assurance (EQA) system, accreditation,

4. Internal and External Quality Assurance

IQA involves a system of self-assessment as elaborated in this document. EQA involves adherence to the requirements of the accreditation council, Quality Assurance Agency (QAA), Quality Assurance Division (QAD), Policies and criteria, and meeting the international standards of quality.

4.1. Internal Quality Assurance System for Self-Assessment

UNESCO (2013) affirm that internal quality assurance (IQA) refers to each institution's or program's policies and mechanisms for ensuring that it is fulfilling its own purposes, as well as the standards that apply to higher education in general, or to the profession or discipline in particular.

The internal QA process largely takes place within the academic program/ department itself. Generally, this process collects continued information in a systematic way about the quality being achieved. The primary focus of IQA is to conduct self-analysis (assessment), quality plans, monitoring, and evaluation. These sets of activities are focused on the programs offered by PAF-IAST, the people (students, faculty, staff, community, and other stakeholders), and the place (institution). IQA is a self-assessment mechanism where the monitoring and evaluation of the programs (all the processes, procedures, and activities within an institution), people (internal and external stakeholders in quality assurance activities), and places (space and facilities of an educational institution) is managed by QEC with the help of all stakeholders. The core purpose of IQA is to understand our standing (the strengths and weaknesses), and for the identification of areas for improvement. The Self-Assessment reports (SARs) are the cornerstone of the whole IQA system and need to be prepared under the guidance provided by QECs and the Manual of Self-Assessment published by HEC as the first documented effort to implement the quality assurance processes in higher education institutions.

The Self-Assessment report to be validated by peers is the backbone of the whole exercise of Quality Assurance and Enhancement in academics. Thus, a standard Self-Assessment report should motivate the internal QA by identifying its weaknesses and strengths, in practicing to be prepared for external assessment, and informing the external evaluators about the internal QA System. A self-assessment report should provide comprehensive information regarding objectives, structure, and content of the academic programs, learning and teaching environment and curriculum organization etc. SAR report format and standards are explained in section 3.1.1 Self-Assessment is an effective tool for academic Quality Assurance and provides feedback to administration to initiate action plans for improvement.

To strengthen the IQA process, the yearly progress report (YPR) as per the guidelines of QAA-HEC has been adapted and the IQA has been designed accordingly. Furthermore, the IQA framework of PAF-IAST comprises of additional measures to ensure the quality at highest level.

Strategic Plan

The strategic plan of PAF-IAST is a roadmap for the entire institution. Five years plan is prepared and implemented as a guiding tool for PAF-IAST. The academic departments and centers will prepare their own strategic plan which should be aligned with the strategic plan of PAF-IAST.

DQAC has a major role in monitor the progress and submission of their annual report to QEC for presentation at QAIC.

University-Wide Framework Alignment

Alignment of PAF-IAST's strategic plan, vision, mission, goals and objectives at the department level and program level is necessary and an integral part of IQA. To make sure that the vision is shared and the strategic aspects of PAF-IAST are aligned with each and every unit of institute, an assessment and monitoring roadmap has been developed.

- Each department shall have a strategic plan,
- Each department shall have aligned its vision, mission, goals, and objectives with the PAF-IAST.
- Each department shall have ILOs aligned with the ILOs of PAF-IAST.
- Each department shall have identified KPIs and assessment mechanisms,
- The programs offered by every department shall have PEOs, PLOs, and CLOs and they shall be aligned with the department.
- The department must specify next how these outcomes and objectives will be assessed through direct and indirect measures.
- Each department should analyze the collected assessment data and produce SARs regularly.
- The action plan should be devised and followed to ensure that the recommended actions are taken on time.
- Each department should ensure that SAC, PAC, and DQAC are established and actively performing their respective roles in their respective departments.

Assessment and Review of PEOs, PLOs, and CLOs

PAF-IAST is a newly established institution, thus, does not have any graduated students. However, as a part of IQA, the assessment of PEOs is very important. The process of assessment exists with a defined roadmap.

- Run employer surveys and alumni surveys to assess PEOs
- Run alumni surveys to assess PLOs and initiate improvement actions.
- Assessment of CLOs.
- Teaching, learning, and assessing students to measure PLOs achievement.
- Share the findings of employer survey and alumni survey with SAC and PAC for their feedback and improvement actions.

To review the PLOs, the following framework shall be followed.

- Run student course evaluation survey,
- Assessment of CLOs,
- Review course portfolios to ensure alignment of teaching, learning, and assessment activities with CLOs,
- Teaching, learning, and assessing students to measure CLOs achievement,
- Improvement action in teaching, learning, assessment tools, and curriculum.

Program Assessment Process

Program assessment shall be conducted on annual basis. To support the assessment, surveys will be conducted. These surveys will be conducted by students, faculty, employers, graduating (exit) students, and alumni as per approved formats. The information collected from these surveys will be utilized for assessments at the program level, department level, and institutional level. The survey instruments comprise of the following.

- Course evaluation (to be filled by students and faculty)
- Program evaluation (graduating students, alumni, employer)
- Faculty evaluation (students)
- Faculty profile evaluation (Faculty resume)
- Supervision survey (to be filled by supervisee at the end of completion of research thesis/project)
- Matrix relating to program outcomes and objectives,
- Matrix relating to the alignment of vision, mission, and objectives.
- Course folders,
- Program specifications form,
- Course specification form.

Knowledge Management Tools for IQA

PAF-IAST has embedded knowledge management system that comprises of program information repository, assessment and assistant tools, and monitoring dashboard. The information repository comprises of strategic information and alignment.

a) PAF-IAST vision, mission, goals, objectives, and PAF-IAST's intended learning outcomes,

b) School/faculty/center vision and mission,

c) department vision, mission, goals, objectives, ILOs,

d) program vision, mission, goals, objectives, PEOs, PLOs, curriculum, KPIs,

e) Course specification, assessment, CLOs.

As an assessment assistant tool, two types of assessment will be conducted: direct (through KPIs) and indirect via surveys. Monitoring and reporting tools will be used based on CMS.

Capacity Building

To promote a quality culture, QEC will initiate a wide range of capacity-building programs as per need. National Qualification Framework (NQF), self-assessment, program review, curriculum design and revision, preparation of PEOs, PLOs, CLOs, etc, institutional audit, research ethics, and plagiarism policy, and others are part of capacity-building programs by QEC.

Plagiarism Policy

Plagiarism policy will be adapted as per the HEC guidelines, and code of ethics, and in accordance with the global standard.

Research Verification

To ensure the quality of research conducted and published by the students and faculty members of PAF-IAST, QEC will be responsible for the verification and certification of research work.

Integrity and Upholding of PAF-IAST values

QEC as a part of IQA will take all necessary steps to ensure the integrity and upholding the values of PAF-IAST.

Public Information

QEC has developed its own web page where the activities are published regularly. The dissemination of information, impartial and objective information, both quantitative and qualitative information is published. Access to such information on the official website and social media is ensured.

4.2.   External Quality Assurance System (EQAS)

External quality assurance (EQA) is an equally important aspect of the quality management system at PAF-IAST. Compliance with the benchmarking, audit standards, assessment, and review mechanisms of, QAA, QAD, HEC, and other agencies is part of EQA. External quality assurance (EQA) refers to the actions of an external body, possibly a QA agency which assesses the operation of the institution or its programs, to determine whether it is meeting the agreed standards. The aim is to achieve accountability and enhance institutions' performance. EQA is necessary to prove to the public that the goals set by the institution will be achieved. Adherence with the EQAS standards promotes public confidence in PAF-IAST, therefore, we are committed to meeting the parameters defined for transparency and accountability by external agencies. EQA allows opportunities for continuous improvement and helps us understand our strengths and weakness.

4.3.   Accreditation

A specific element in the Quality assurance system is accreditation. Accreditation is the coping stone of the QA system. PAF-IAST wants to make sure that all academic programs meet the requirements of their respective councils and are in line with the standards set by the councils.

4.4.   ISO Standards and Certification

ISO standards and certifications are also an important aspect of EQA and equally important for HEIs. PAF-IAST will work with zeal and commitment to the robust and globally recognized approach that is focused on continually improving the processes at par with international standards.

Initially, the focus will be on attaining ISO 9001:2015 certification for the recognition of the quality management system at PAF-IAST.

4.5. Quality Agencies Membership

Memberships of national and international agencies/organizations help improve the standards and an important aspect of continuous quality improvement. Thus, the QEC of PAF-IAST will gain membership of such agencies and organizations for learning, contribution, and quality enhancement. Some of the available agencies for quality in higher education are listed below.

- The International Network for Quality Assurance Agencies in Higher Education (INQAAHE)
- the Asia-Pacific Quality Network (APQN)
- The Council for Higher Education Accreditation (CHEA)
- Association of Quality Assurance Agencies of the Islamic World (AQAAIW)
- The Eurasian Centre for Accreditation and Quality Assurance in Higher Education and Health Care (ECAQA)
- CHEA International Quality Group (CIQG)
- Pakistan Network of Quality Assurance in Higher Education (PNQAHE)

4.6. The Future Dimensions of Quality Assurance

PAF-IAST is committed towards achieving highest standards of quality in higher education. To be more responsive towards the quality and standardization, QEC is working to develop and promote quality culture at PAF-IAST and contribution in the quality enhancement at national and international level. We are committed to achieve world quality label (WQL) by partnering with the international agencies.