Self-Assessment Manual

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Ministry of Education
University Grants Commission of Bangladesh
Higher Education Quality Enhancement Project (HEQEP)
Quality Assurance Unit (QAU)

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Self-Assessment Manual
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Abbreviations and Acronyms

CLO	Course Learning Outcomes
CV	Curriculum Vitae
EPRT	External Peer Review Team
GoB	Government of Bangladesh
HEI	Higher Education Institution
HEQEP	Higher Education Quality Enhancement Project
ILO	Intended Learning Outcome
IQAC	Institutional Quality Assurance Cell
KPI	Key Performance Indicator
MoE	Ministry of Education
NEP	National Education Policy
PSAC	Program Self-Assessment Committee
QA	Quality Assurance
QAC	Quality Assurance Committee
QAACB	Quality Assurance & Accreditation Council, Bangladesh
QAU	Quality Assurance Unit in the UGC
QF	Qualifications Framework
RPI	Research Performance Indicator
SA	Self-Assessment
SAC	Self-Assessment Committee
SAR	Self-Assessment Report
TPI	Teaching Performance Indicators
UGC	University Grants Commission
UIC	University Industry Collaboration
VC	Vice Chancellor
WB	World Bank

Glossary

Academic Program

Academic program refers any combination of courses for educational attainment, which fulfils the requirements of any degree or certificate etc. It may also be called Study Program.

Accreditation

The process by which a government or private agency evaluates the quality of a higher education institution as a whole or a specific study program in order to formally recognize it as having met certain pre-determined minimal criteria or standards.

Assessment

The process of systematic gathering, quantifying, and using of information in view of judging the instructional effectiveness and the curricular adequacy of a higher education institution as a whole or academic program. Assessment is necessary in order to validate a formal accreditation decision, but it does not necessarily lead to an accreditation outcome. It also means a technically designed process for evaluating student learning outcomes and for improving student learning and development as well as teaching effectiveness.

Audit

A fair and transparent assessment or evaluation of a faculty or department, system, process or service either internally or externally. The purpose of which is for improvement.

Best Practices

A method or an innovative process involving a range of safe and reasonable practices resulting in the improved performance of a higher education institution or an academic program, usually recognized as 'best" by other peer institutions. A best practice does not necessarily represent an absolute, ultimate example or pattern, its application assures the improved performance of a higher education institution or program; rather it identifies the best approach to a specific situation, as institutions and programs vary greatly in compositions and scope.

Benchmark

The benchmark is a standard, a reference point, or a criterion against which the quality of something can be measured, judged, and evaluated. It is a measure of best practice performance.

Benchmarking

Benchmarking is a standardized process of collecting and reporting critical operational data that enables comparison of inputs, processes or outputs between institutions (or parts of institutions) or within a single institution over time with a view of establishing good practices, diagnosing problems in performance, and identifying areas of strength. It is important for a university to compare its functioning with equivalent institutions in the country, the region and internationally.

Department

Department means an academic unit in a university that offers academic and research programs. It may also refer to a non-academic unit IT Center and Department of Student Affairs.

Documented Procedure

Procedures that are represented in a written form.

Faculty	An academic entity which includes departments, centers, institutes, academies and other such academic bodies, such as School of Pharmacy or Center for Business Management Studies. Faculty may also offer academic and research programs.
HEI	Higher Education Institution
Intended Learning Outcomes (ILO)	Statements of what students are expected to learn as a result of engaging in the learning process during studying a lecture/course/program. It reflects achievement attained by students.
National Qualifications Framework (NQF)	Generally, a NQF is designed to provide nationally recognized and homogeneous standards and qualifications, as well as recognition for all learning of knowledge and competencies and a basis for further review, articulation and development of existing and impending qualifications. Also, among other purposes, it should facilitate curricular change and allow for the improvement of access and social inclusion, as well as the integration of changing societal needs. A NQF is primarily developed by the National Quality Assurance and Accreditation Council through a medium-term process of policy development and public consultation.
Outcomes	Anticipated or achieved results of programs or the accomplishment of institutional objectives, as demonstrated by a wide range of indicators, such as, student knowledge, cognitive skills and attitudes. Outcomes are direct results of the instructional program, planned in terms of learner growth in all areas.
Key Performance Indicators	A range of parameters representing a measure of the extent to which a higher education institution or a study program or a staff member is performing in a certain quality dimension. They allow HEIs to benchmark their own performances or allow comparison among HEIs.
Procedure	Procedure is a sequential arrangement of actions or steps established and accepted as way of doing a particular task and to achieve set target with accuracy and efficiency in a logical manner. Procedures Include policies, regulations, processes, systems and rules that fall within the purview of a QA body such as student regulations, registration process and publication of results.
Program Offering Entity	Program Offering Entity means an academic unit in a university that offers academic and research programs. It may be a department, faculty, institute or discipline.
QA Culture	QA culture represents a set of shared and recognized values, attitude and behavioral pattern supporting quality education, which will be extended to the incoming members of the university or institution. QA culture guides the way of thinking and discharging responsibilities of members of the university or institution in all aspects of operations. The fundamental aspect of QA culture is strong commitment for continuous improvement with a holistic approach and harmony recognizing the contribution of all involved in the process.

Quality Assurance	A system that supports and guides performance according to the established criteria or standards.
Institutional Quality Assurance Cell (IQAC)	A cell set up by the university authority for establishing quality culture at the university through internal quality assurance.
Quality Assurance Committee (QAC)	The committee set up by the university authority for institutional oversight of the IQAC.
Qualification	Any higher education award, i.e., degree, diploma or other type of formal certification, issued by a competent authority attesting to the successful completion of a course program. It covers a wide variety of higher education awards at different levels and across countries, e.g., Bachelor's and Master's Degree, the Doctorate, Baccalaureate etc. A qualification is important in terms of what it signifies: competencies and range of knowledge and skills.
Qualifications Framework	A comprehensive policy framework defining all nationally recognized qualifications in higher education in terms of work load, level, quality, learning outcomes and profiles. It should be designed to be comprehensible through the use of specific descriptions for each qualification covering both its breadth (competencies associated with learning outcomes) and its depth (level). It is structured horizontally in order to cover all qualifications awarded in a system, and, vertically, by level. Its purpose is to facilitate: (i) curriculum development and design of study programs; (ii) student and graduate mobility; and (iii) recognition of periods of study and credentials.
Rubric	A set of scoring criteria used to determine the value of a student's performance on assigned tasks. The criteria are written so that students are able to learn what must be done to improve their performance in the future.
Self-Assessment	Self-Assessment is a systematic process of evaluating the various aspects of institution or academic programs whether quality standards are being met. For the purpose of further improvement SA collects information and evidences from the stakeholders, reviews those and identify the weaknesses and areas need further improvement to enhance quality of teaching learning and education.
Stakeholder	A person or a group of persons having interest or concern in the activities of the graduates produced by the university.
Standards	Statements regarding an expected level of requirements and conditions against which quality is assessed or that must be attained by higher education institutions and their programs in order for them to be accredited or certified. The term standard means both a fixed criteria against which an outcome can be matched, and a level of attainment.

Strategic Plan   A plan that puts in place the targeted achievements of objectives within a marked timeline. It is a road map which contains broadly defined goals and objectives that are represented in a sequence of steps for achieving the desired objective.

Study Program   A core modular component of higher education including all the activities, i.e., design, organization, management, as well as the process of teaching, learning and research, carried out in a certain field and leading to an academic qualification. Study programs are established by higher education institutions and may differ by level of academic qualification, e.g., Diploma, Bachelor, Master, Doctorate, Baccalaureate, etc., study mode, e.g., full-time, part-time, distance learning, etc., and field of knowledge specialization, in accordance with academic and professional division of labor. A study program is accomplished through; (i) a curriculum, including all disciplines leading to an academic qualification, distributed by year of study, their weight being expressed in type of study credits; (ii) syllabi or course programs, containing a description of the teaching and learning themes and practices associated with teaching, learning and evaluation; (iii) the organizational chart of students and teaching staff covering the period of implementation of study program; (iv) the system of academic quality assurance for all activities necessary for the completion of the study program.

Preface

Recently, higher education in Bangladesh has experienced a phenomenal growth at least in quantity, doubling in number of tertiary level students from 1.12 million to 2.61 million in last four years. But the quality of education and research could not match the horizontal increase. There is a popular saying that quantity without quality is a sure prescription for disaster, while quality without quantity can act like seeds and at least something to build on. So quality is very important in higher education. The present government headed by the Hon'ble Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina is committed to change the landscape of higher education through enhancement of quality of higher education and research in the country. Her dream has been transformed into reality by her capable education minister Mr. Nurul Islam Nahid through establishment of universities, formation of accreditation council, opening up of channels of cross border higher education and upgrading the University Grants Commission into Higher Education Commission. For achieving the target of quality education the GOB and the World Bank has generously funded the project which is known as Higher Education Quality Enhancement Project (HEQEP). The project is being meticulously implemented by the University Grants Commission, with help of the project officials and that of by the World Bank.

In order to enhance and ensure quality in higher education, educational institutions are required to be more responsive to the changing needs of the stakeholders. In that case it is very important for the educational institutions to know how well they are doing and how can they do even better to meet the needs of the stakeholders. The self-assessment exercise is an effective approach to gain a clear understanding of current situation by an informative SWOT analysis. Thus, self-assessment becomes one of the core activities of credible quality assurance system. Establishment of Institutional Quality Assurance Cell (IQAC) in each of the universities has been already in place. The IQACs at the universities would create an enabling framework to conduct meaningful self-assessment of academic programs offered by the universities in Bangladesh.

This Self-Assessment Manual offers a set of criteria, standards and the process in detail to conduct the self-assessment at program level. This manual also includes a few useful SA survey tools and guidelines. These tools and guidelines would help to conduct the self-assessment of programs. I, believe, the IQACs of the universities will take necessary actions immediately for self-assessment of academic programs, which would help to judge the overall effectiveness of academic programs and educational processes and provide direction for further improvement. This will benefit the university teachers, students and other stakeholders such as the employers and the society at large. It is expected that sincere cooperation from the university authorities and academics to utilize the opportunity will be forthcoming.

I thank the GoB and World Bank for this initiative to publish this manual for self-assessment and quality assurance in higher education.

(Prof. Dr. A. K. Azad Chowdhury)
Chairman (State Minister)
University Grants Commission of Bangladesh.

Preface to the Second Edition

The number of higher education institutions in Bangladesh has remarkably increased during the last one decade. At present the number of public and private universities in Bangladesh is 38 and 95 respectively. About 3.2 million students are studying now in these universities and approximately 0.7 million graduates come out each year. However, the scope for the employment of all these graduates in Bangladesh is meagre; many of them would have to fight for employment in the global and international job market. In order to get a job in and outside Bangladesh, the graduates must have to prepare themselves in the context of national as well as global requirements, otherwise their opportunities for jobs would be minimum. The quality of the graduates has to be of international standard in terms of their (i) knowledge, attitudes and skills, (ii) updated course curricula to meet the global requirements, (iii) creative and analytical assessment procedures and (iv) outcome based teaching strategies.

In order to improve the quality of education at the tertiary level, the government of Bangladesh has taken several steps. The Higher Education Quality Enhancement Project (HEQEP) is one of such initiative. The University Grants Commission of Bangladesh (UGC) is the implementing agency of the project. The project is jointly financed by the World Bank and Government of Bangladesh, contributing 88 percent and 12 percent of the total cost respectively. Under HEQEP, a Quality Assurance Unit (QAU) has been established at UGC in order to expedite the process of establishing quality culture at the universities. Towards targeting the establishment of quality culture at the universities, the Institutional Quality Assurance Cells (IQACs) have been established in 61 universities (29 public and 32 private). The QAU provides guidance to the IQACs, and oversee their activities including Self-Assessment (SA) of degree programs during the project period. For accreditation of the institutions as well as degree programs in tertiary education in Bangladesh, the establishment of an Accreditation Council Bangladesh (ACB) Act is in the process; the ACB has already been approved in the ministerial meeting and it expected that it would be approved soon the parliament.

Self-Assessment (SA) is a systematic process of evaluating the various aspects of institution or academic programs including the major QA areas in respect of national qualifications framework and criteria whether quality standards are being met. In the SA activities, apart from the basic profiles and inventory of the program offering entity, data need to be collected from various stakeholders (such as students, academic staff, non-academic staff, alumni, and employers); for collecting valid data standard survey tools (questionnaires) are required. In the first edition of the SA manual there were some ambiguous and confusing statements. In the present edition of the SA manual such deficiencies have been corrected; moreover, the manual has been thoroughly revised to meet the requirements of SA activities.

The initiative taken by the government of Bangladesh and World Bank in publishing the second edition of theSelf-Assessment Manual is gratefully acknowledged.

I wish the effective and wide utilization of the manual.

(Signature)

(Professor Abdul Mannan)
Chairman
University Grants Commission of Bangladesh

Introduction

Bangladesh is a developing country and its economy is in transition from agriculture to industry, manufacturing and service sectors. Bangladesh intends to avail the opportunities offered by globalization to build a knowledge society. Improving the quality of its tertiary education is vitally necessary to spur the country to a higher growth trajectory for attaining the middle income status by 2020**.** The tertiary education in Bangladesh, currently, has been facing many deeply rooted and intertwined challenges. These include, inadequate enabling environment for improving the quality of education and research, weak governance and accountability, poor planning and monitoring capacities, and insufficient funding. All these drawbacks can only be mitigated by developing a quality culture and ensuring good practices in higher education institutions (HEIs).

The government of Bangladesh (**GoB**) recognizes that the country is at risk of being marginalized in a highly competitive global economy because its tertiary education systems are not adequately prepared to capitalize on the creation and application of knowledge. It also realizes that the state has the responsibility to put in place an enabling framework that would encourage tertiary education institutions to be more innovative and responsive to the demanding needs for rapid economic growth, and to empower the graduates with right skills for successfully competing in the global knowledge economy.

In Bangladesh, University Grants Commission (UGC) acts as the intermediary between the Government and the universities for regulating the affairs of all the universities. But currently, there is no recognized quality assurance (QA) mechanism for public and private universities in Bangladesh. The deficiency was recognized in the UGC's *Strategic Plan forHigher Education 2006-2026*, and in GoB's National Education Policy (NEP) 2010. The Strategic Plan, *inter alia*, recommended the establishment of an independent Accreditation Council for both public and private universities in Bangladesh. Following the recommendations made in the *Strategic Plan* the Ministry of Education prepared and launched in mid-2009 the Higher Education Quality Enhancement Project (HEQEP) with the financial support of the World Bank.

The experience and lessons learned from the 25 Self-Assessment subprojects implemented in 15 universities under HEQEP generated heightened awareness among the faculty members and management regarding the need for initiating QA in higher education. It also prepared the ground and readiness on the part of the institutions to follow up the recommendations made in SA reports and expand the SA exercise to include all HEIs in phases. Against this backdrop the Ministry of Education, the UGC and the HEIs feel that it is high time to establish Institutional Quality Assurance Cell (IQAC) in every public and private university to develop a mechanism for the systematic review of study programs, to ensure quality teaching-learning, research, knowledge generation and support services standards at an acceptable level.

Based on the above developments, a Quality Assurance Unit (QAU) within the organizational structure of University Grants Commission (UGC) of Bangladesh was created under HEQEP to establish the QA mechanism in Bangladesh's HEIs. As a first step in this endeavor the HEQEP would also support the establishment of Institutional Quality Assurance Cells (IQACs) in universities and the QAU would provide guidance and technical assistance to the IQACs in order to make them functional. The QAU will function as a temporary council until the formation of the national Accreditation Council, Bangladesh (ACB).

This Self-Assessment Manual explains the concept, objectives, significance and process of conducting self-assessment of study programs for further academic improvement. This self-assessment manual includes useful guidelines and the templates required for conducting the surveys for data collection which are inalienable part of the self-assessment process, SA report preparation and external peer review. These QA tools have been developed in accordance with the international practices and standards and are quite flexible to accommodate the requirements of the universities and academic programs in Bangladesh context. This Manual will be open to modifications and revisions periodically based on the feedback obtained from the practitioners from time to time and to accommodate the changed circumstances in coming years. It will also be open for further improvement by the experience of international good practices on QA.

The QAU would like to record its sincere gratitude to Professor A K Azad Chowdhury, formaer Chairman, UGC for his pioneering role in establishing the quality assurance mechanism in Bangladesh and for the support provided to the QAU in making it functional within a short time. The present UGC Chairman, Professor Abdul Mannan has provided valuable guidance to improve this manual. We are grateful to him. We also gratefully acknowledge the support provided to UGC and QAU by the World Bank for institutionalizing the QA mechanism and for the drafting of various QA guidelines, operations manual including this one. We sincerely thank the Project Director of HEQEP and its concerned officials who provided the logistics and facilities to QAU for setting up its office and working environment. Lastly, we gratefully acknowledge the contribution of the Ministry of Education (MoE), especially the Hon'ble Minister and secretary for their overall guidance and leadership for enhancing the quality and relevance of higher education in Bangladesh, particularly the Ministry's patronage of HEQEP that made it possible for the QAU to start the onerous journey for establishing quality assurance mechanism in the country's higher education institutions.

We sincerely hope that with the establishment of QA mechanism in Bangladesh of which the self-assessment of study programs is the first step would lift the higher education institutions to a new level and prepare the ground for enhancing the quality of higher education to the international standard. With this vision we invite the faculty and university management to engage themselves actively in this great endeavor.

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