

6.3 QUALITY ASSURANCE POLICY: EQUITY AND TRANSPARENCY

1. Purpose

This document is based on ADA University's general *Academic Quality Assurance Policy*. Its purpose is to define specific structures and procedures of academic quality assurance for the area *Equity and Transparency*.

2. Scope and Recommendations

This policy applies to the area *Equity and Transparency*. It provides guidance on the assessment and enhancement of the area's *Quality Standard* and *Quality Guidelines*, of its key documents and of actual outcomes.

This policy should be read in conjunction with ADA University's general *Academic Quality Assurance Policy*.

3. Definitions

The area *Equity and Transparency* contains major documents that provide the University's framework for inclusiveness and non-discrimination, the handling of personal data, and the effective and transparent information of internal and external stakeholders. These documents include procedures for the achievement of equity and diversity and the prevention of discrimination; requirements for the usage and protection of personal data; as well as regulations for the management and processing of such data.

Quality Indicators are clearly defined criteria that allow for the assessment of academic quality and quality assurance documents as well as of their outcomes. The results of these assessments serve to further enhance the quality of documents and outcomes.

4. Quality Indicators

4.1 Quality indicators must be based on international best practices and reflect the quality standards and requirements defined for *Equity and Transparency* in ADA University's *Academic Quality Assurance Standards and Guidelines*. They must cover all key documents and related outcomes as well as the area's *Quality Standard* and *Quality Guidelines*.

4.2 When reviewing key documents, their actual outcomes and the *Quality Standard* and *Quality Guidelines* contained in the area *Equity and Transparency*, the process of quality assurance must be based on the quality indicators defined in 4.3 to 4.10.

4.3 The *Quality Standard* and *Quality Guidelines* continue to reflect international best practices. They serve to provide an inclusive environment, and they ensure an effective and safe usage of personal data.

4.4 The University's *Equity, Diversity and Non-Discrimination Policy*, its *Personal Data Usage and Public Information Policy*, and its *Data Management and Reporting Regulations* continue to comply

with international best practices and with relevant legal regulations of the Republic of Azerbaijan. The *Personal Data Usage and Public Information Policy* continues to reflect essential requirements of the European *General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR)*.

- 4.5 The outcomes of the documents mentioned above in 4.4 contribute to the improvement of the University's performance and/or to the fulfillment of the institution's purposes of serving the needs of the community and of students.
- 4.6 Sufficient resources are allocated to the comprehensive implementation of the requirements and provisions outlined in the 3 documents mentioned above in 4.4. This includes financial resources, human resources, and technical resources.
- 4.7 Any data breaches, violations of data privacy, and/or cases of negative discrimination (including harassment) that may have occurred were addressed adequately and according to the requirements and procedures outlined in the *Personal Data Usage and Public Information Policy* and the *Equity, Diversity and Non-Discrimination Policy*. Appropriate measures were taken to prevent further such instances (as far as is possible).
- 4.8 The University's *Equity, Diversity and Non-Discrimination Policy* provides adequate and effective requirements and procedures for the promotion of inclusiveness and the prevention of negative discrimination. When assessing these procedures and requirements, the process of quality assurance will be guided by the following quality indicators:
 - a. The benefits of equity, diversity and an inclusive environment are adequately and sufficiently defined.
 - b. Requirements and procedures for the promotion of equity, diversity and inclusiveness and for the prevention of discrimination are sufficiently specified and effective, and they are comprehensively implemented. The University has a successful record of preventing discrimination and harassment, promoting diversity, and offering additional opportunities to those in need of special support. Its working environment is inclusive and family-friendly.
 - c. The requirements and procedures mentioned above are consistently applied to all (current, prospective or potential) members, partners and guests of the University and across all areas defined in the policy. These areas are both sufficiently specified and broad in scope to prevent discrimination against any individual or group of individuals.
 - d. All members of the University involved in any activity relevant to the promotion of inclusiveness and the prevention of discrimination keep detailed records of their decisions.
 - e. Trainings on equity, diversity and non-discrimination are regularly offered to the members of the University. These trainings are efficient and serve to create an inclusive environment and a culture of respect by creating an awareness of the values of equity, diversity and non-discrimination among the University's community. These values are also regularly and effectively communicated to the University's members, partners and guests.
 - f. The University regularly and systematically gathers anonymized information from its members, partners and guests on the state of equity, diversity and non-discrimination at the University by conducting surveys and through an online platform. Both the surveys and the online platform are efficient means for respondents to provide feedback on their personal experiences and on suggestions for improvements.
 - g. Procedures for the submission and resolution of discrimination-related complaints are adequate to address and resolve such complaints.
 - h. The University's Anti-Discrimination Officer is effective in the fulfillment of his/her duties.
- 4.9 The University's *Data Usage and Public Information Policy* provides adequate and effective requirements and procedures for the protection, usage and disclosure of personal data. When assessing these procedures and requirements, the process of quality assurance will be guided by the following quality indicators:

- a. The purposes and benefits of collecting and using data and of the disclosure of information to relevant parties are adequately and sufficiently defined. All data that may be disclosed to internal and external parties, as well as the parties to which it may be disclosed, is/are sufficiently specified. The disclosure to information to these parties complies with relevant legal and ethical requirements.
 - b. All relevant legal and ethical issues related to the collection and usage of personal data are defined and comprehensively addressed in the document.
 - c. Requirements and procedures for the usage and protection of personal data are sufficiently specified and comprehensively implemented. Permission to access the University's *Academic Performance and Quality Assurance Database* and/or its physical archive is only granted to those members of the University that require such permission to fulfill their duties. All personal data gathered and used by the University is appropriately classified according to different levels of confidentiality.
 - d. The University actively and continuously acquires the informed consent of data subjects to the collection and usage of their personal data. Its *Personal Data Consent Form* details all the necessary information outlined in the *Data Usage and Public Information Policy* and adequately fulfills the purpose of acquiring such consent. Maximum periods of storage for each dataset are clearly defined and implemented by the University.
 - e. Trainings on the appropriate use and protection of personal data are regularly offered to the members of the University. These trainings are efficient and serve both to create awareness among the University's community and to further qualify all Data Operators and Data Users at the University.
 - f. Procedures for the resolution of data breaches and/or the unauthorized use of data as well as for the submission and resolution of data-related complaints are adequate to address and resolve such issues.
 - g. The University's Data Protection Officer is effective in the fulfillment of his/her duties.
 - h. The University's website and its Academic Catalogue provide current and comprehensive information on the University as an institution of higher education to the general public, students, and other interested groups.
- 4.10 The University's *Data Management and Reporting Regulations* delineate efficient and effective provisions for the collection, storage and usage of data. Their rules and proceedings are comprehensively implemented by those administrative and academic units mentioned in the document. All (quantitative and qualitative) data is submitted in a timely manner; it is complete, valid and available on the University's *Academic Performance and Quality Assurance Database*. The data and scope of data specified in the document is adequate and required for the purposes of quality assurance, decision-making and reporting. All reports mentioned in the document are prepared in a timely manner; they are comprehensive, current, comprehensible and meaningful, and they contribute substantially to the assessment and enhancement of the University's performance.

5. Quality Assurance Procedures

- 5.1 The process of quality assurance in the area *Equity and Transparency* is based on the quality indicators defined above and on the quality review cycle and the procedures delineated in ADA University's general *Academic Quality Assurance Policy*.
- 5.2 The process of quality assurance must pay particular attention to the effectiveness of (1) the University's procedures to foster inclusion and prevent negative discrimination and harassment, (2) the University's procedures to safeguard data and prevent any misuse of personal data, and (3)

the University's data collection and reporting proceedings. In case of shortcomings, the Quality Assurance Committee will initiate and supervise improvements as appropriate and with the objective of enhancing the area's documents and, more particularly, of strengthening inclusion, data security, and data management and reporting at ADA University.

- 5.3 The Quality Assurance Committee will annually hear reports by (and hold discussions with) the Anti-Discrimination Officer and the Data Protection Officer on the state of inclusion, (non-)discrimination and data protection at the University. In conjunction with the respective Officer, it will act upon potential deficits and initiate and supervise appropriate improvements. More particularly, the Committee, in conjunction with the Anti-Discrimination Officer, will regularly consider the feedback and suggestions on equity, diversity and non-discrimination referred to above in 4.8.f. If appropriate and feasible, they will take appropriate steps for the implementation of such feedback and suggestions.
- 5.4 The Quality Assurance Committee will regularly hear reports by (and hold discussions with) the Director of Quality Assurance and Accreditation on the quality and timeliness of the data submitted to the Office of Quality Assurance and Accreditation and to the University's *Academic Performance and Quality Assurance Database*. The Committee will furthermore, and at the end of each academic year, assess the structure and meaningfulness of all data reports prepared by the Office. In conjunction with the Director, the Committee will act upon potential deficits and initiate and supervise appropriate improvements.
- 5.5 The Quality Assurance Committee will ensure that all data reports are used systematically and efficiently by relevant committees, units and/or members of the University for the purpose of improving the University's performance in all the areas covered by the *Academic Quality Assurance Standards and Guidelines*.