

# ACADEMIC QUALITY ASSURANCE POLICY

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## 1. Purpose

ADA University is committed to providing an environment of academic excellence to its students, faculty and staff. This presupposes regular, systematic and standardized processes of quality assessment and enhancement that cover all matters related to education and research. The purpose of this policy is to establish such processes and to define general procedures for academic quality assurance at ADA University.

## 2. Scope and Recommendations

This policy applies to all areas relevant to education and research. It provides a general framework for the assessment and enhancement of the structures, processes and documents designated to achieve and improve quality and of their practical impact and outcomes and thus of the University's offerings and performance.

This policy is aligned with relevant international and national frameworks defining standards for academic quality, including the *Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance in the European Higher Education Area (ESG)* of 2015, and the national *Evaluation Criteria for Institutional Accreditation of Higher Education Institutions* (Ali təhsil müəssisəsinin institusional akkreditasiyası üzrə qiymətləndirmə meyarları).

This policy should be read in conjunction with the University's *Quality Assurance Governance*.

Procedures and requirements for monitoring and reviewing degree programs are outlined in the University's *Degree Program Monitoring and Review Policy*.

Members of ADA University involved in the systematic process of quality assessment and enhancement are expected to be thoroughly familiar with this policy and adhere to its procedures and requirements.

## 3. Definitions

*Quality* is defined as the achievement of excellence. It allows the University to fulfill its purposes as an institution of higher education and research.

*Quality Assurance* describes the regular and ongoing assessment (evaluation) and enhancement (improvement) of structures, processes and documents designated to achieve and improve quality as well as of their practical impact and outcomes. While *Quality Assessment* refers to the review of structures, processes and documents and of their impact and outcomes, the *Enhancement of Quality* covers the development and modification of such structures, processes and documents *as well as* their implementation and the corresponding achievement of the intended impact and outcomes.

A *Quality Review Cycle* is a systematic and comprehensive process of quality assessment and enhancement that is completed within a predefined timeframe and that is regularly repeated.

A *Quality Standard* is an established norm that outlines general criteria for excellence.

*Quality Requirements* are clearly specified criteria that must be met in order to achieve excellence.

#### **4. General Provisions**

- 4.1 Primary responsibility for the process of quality assurance at ADA University rests with the University's Quality Assurance Committee, with School-level Curriculum and Quality Assurance Committees, and with the Office of Quality Assurance and Accreditation. For details on the University's organizational structure of quality assurance, on the actors involved, and on their responsibilities, see the document *Quality Assurance Governance*.
- 4.2 Quality assurance at ADA University shall incorporate an external perspective as outlined in the *Quality Assurance Governance*.
- 4.3 Quality assurance at ADA University shall incorporate the perspective of students and ensure their active participation as outlined in the *Quality Assurance Governance*.
- 4.4 Amendments to this policy may be proposed by any member of the University's Quality Assurance Committee, by senior management members, by any (academic or administrative) unit, or by any decision-making body (such as the University Senate, Deans' Council or Committee of Faculty Affairs), or academic committee (such as a Curriculum and Quality Assurance Committee) of the University. Proposers are required to seek feedback from the Office of Quality Assurance and Accreditation before submitting their final proposal to the Quality Assurance Committee. Amendments need the approval of (1) the Quality Assurance Committee, (2) the Committee of Faculty Affairs, (3) the Deans' Council, and (4) the University Senate in order to become effective. If accepted by the Senate and approved by the Rector, the amended policy comes into effect at the date determined by the Senate.

#### **5. Quality Review Cycle and Quality Assurance Procedures**

- 5.1 Quality assurance at ADA University is based on a 5-year quality review cycle, with the current cycle covering the academic years 2024/25 to 2029/30.
- 5.2 During this period of 5 years, all relevant structures, processes and documents designated to achieve and improve quality in the areas covered by the University's *Academic Quality Assurance Standards and Guidelines* and by other relevant manuals, their practical impact and outcomes, and the University's offerings and performance in these areas shall be assessed at least once and as often as required and deemed necessary.
- 5.3 The process of quality assessment and enhancement shall include a regular review of the composition of the *Academic Quality Assurance Standards and Guidelines* and other relevant manuals.
- 5.4 The process of quality assessment and enhancement shall comprehensively incorporate the quality requirements outlined for the following areas and be based on an assessment plan developed by the University's Quality Assurance Committee.
- 5.5 It is strongly recommended that the University's offerings and performance in major areas of education and research are evaluated on at least an annual basis.
- 5.6 The assessment and potential enhancement of the University's structures and processes of quality assurance are regulated in chapter 8 of its *Quality Assurance Governance*.

#### **6. Internal and External Quality Assurance**

- 6.1 This area of the current policy provides requirements that need to be met by ADA University's framework for internal quality assurance as well as requirements for external quality assurance.

## 6.2 Quality Standards:

- a. Quality assurance at ADA University serves its mission and vision. The University has a comprehensive quality assurance policy that aligns with its strategic plan and goals. This policy provides clear guidance to the assessment and enhancement of the University's offerings and performance. An effective system of quality assurance governance is in place that involves all relevant stakeholders.
- b. ADA University regularly undergoes external quality assurance at the institutional and program level. This involves accreditation by the national Təhsildə Keyfiyyət Təminatı Agentliyi (The Agency for Quality Assurance in Education) and international accrediting agencies.

## 6.3 Internal Quality Assurance:

- a. The document *Academic Quality and ADA University's Mission and Vision* firmly anchors academic quality in the University's mission and vision. The University's concepts of *quality* and *quality assurance* are adequate to promote academic excellence. Quality assurance works towards the realization of the University's mission and vision and the achievement of such excellence.
- b. The principles outlined in the University's *Statement of Academic Principles* adequately reflect its mission, vision and core values. They particularly serve to foster a non-discriminatory environment of academic excellence, integrity and freedom, and they are comprehensively implemented throughout the University and its Schools and administrative units.
- c. The University's *Academic Quality Assurance Policy* covers all areas relevant to education and research. It makes appropriate and effective provisions for the assessment and enhancement of the structures, processes and documents designated to achieve and improve quality, of their impact and outcomes, and thus of the University's offerings and performance. It is aligned with the University's strategic plan and goals and with relevant international and national frameworks defining standards for academic quality.
- d. The University's *Quality Assurance Governance* outlines an effective system of quality assurance that involves relevant stakeholders, including members of senior management, faculty, students and external actors. The responsibilities of key actors are sufficiently defined.
- e. The *Academic Quality Assurance Policy* and *Quality Assurance Governance* are comprehensively implemented. This applies in particular to the ongoing application of the quality requirements outlined in this policy and to the wide and active involvement of relevant stakeholders in quality assurance at the institutional, School and program level. The 2 documents are regularly reviewed by the University's Quality Assurance Committee, and they are published on the University's website.
- f. The University's *Document Development and Modification Regulations* and the *Document Format and Control Regulations* outline appropriate procedures and requirements for the development, modification, implementation and publication of documents designated to achieve and improve quality as well as for their format and control. The 2 documents are comprehensively implemented throughout the University.
- g. The *Academic Quality Assurance Standards and Guidelines* and other relevant manuals (such as the *Faculty Handbook*) are adequate in scope. They cover all relevant areas and include all documents required to provide a comprehensive framework for quality assurance and for quality in education and research.

## 6.4 External Quality Assurance:

- a. The University participates in national institutional (re-)accreditation based on the 5-year accreditation cycle required for institutions of higher education by the Ministry of Science and Education of the Republic of Azerbaijan. It completes each cycle with the highest possible score. The recommendations for improvement received from the Təhsildə Keyfiyyət Təminatı Agentliyi (TKTA) are reflected in an improvement plan that is continuously and systematically implemented. They feed into the University's activities and the ongoing process of internal quality assurance. The University annually reports to TKTA on the progress made in terms of improvements and the implementation of recommendations. This progress

- is taken into consideration when preparing for the following process of institutional (re-)accreditation.
- b. The University systematically works towards fulfilling the standards and requirements defined by the Quality Assurance Agency for Higher Education (QAA) for its *International Quality Review (IQR)*.
  - c. The University's degree programs participate in cyclical national (re-)accreditation if required by the Ministry of Science and Education. Where appropriate, they work towards accreditation by a renowned international accrediting agency.
- 6.5 The University regularly informs its employees and students of its quality assurance system and the results of the ongoing processes of internal and external quality assurance. It gathers feedback from these actors to test their understanding of quality assurance structures, processes and outcomes.

## 7. Academic Program

- 7.1 The area *Academic Program* comprises all matters related to ADA University's educational offerings. It covers the development, assessment, improvement and approval of degree programs, curricula and courses; the University's *Foundation Program* and its English language program; core competencies and learning outcomes; credit and degree regulations; as well as regulations ensuring the integrity of the University's degrees.
- 7.2 Quality Standards:
- a. ADA University has formal processes for the development and approval of degree programs. Its programs meet their objectives and allow students to achieve intended learning outcomes and acquire the University's core competencies. Learning outcomes, objectives and competencies as well as qualifications resulting from a program are clearly specified and communicated. Qualifications are adequate to the level of a program.
  - b. ADA University's degree programs are regularly monitored and periodically reviewed to ensure that they are of appropriate quality, achieve their objectives, and meet the needs of students and the society. Program monitoring and review lead to the continuous improvement of programs. Changes made to a program as a result of program monitoring and review are communicated to all those concerned.
- 7.3 Design and Approval of Programs:
- a. The University's *Degree Program Development and Modification Policy* provides adequate and systematic procedures and requirements for the development, modification and approval of programs. It involves all relevant stakeholders (including faculty, students, external actors, as well as advisory and decision-making bodies) and clearly specifies essential national and international points of reference against which programs need to be mapped. The policy's procedures and requirements are comprehensively implemented whenever a program is developed, modified or approved.
  - b. When developing or modifying a program and/or courses, the University's *Curriculum and Course Development Policy* and its *Core Competence and Learning Outcome Specification Policy* are comprehensively implemented. Both policies delineate appropriate and systematic approaches to the development and modification of curricula and courses and to the specification of competencies, learning outcomes, assessment criteria and grade descriptions at the program and/or course level.
  - c. The competencies outlined in the University's *Statement of Core Competencies* align with its mission, vision and strategic goals. They clearly address the needs of students, society, and the labor market, and they are up to date and serve the personal, academic and professional development of students. Core competencies are comprehensively covered by all degree programs.

- d. The University's *Foundation Program* and its *English for Academic and Professional Purposes (EAPP) Program* are systematically structured. The subjects covered by the *Foundation Program* serve to prepare undergraduate students for the further study of their degree programs, and the *Foundation Program* is well integrated into these programs. The design of the *EAPP Program* takes into account relevant frameworks for English language teaching and learning. The program has a successful record of training undergraduate students and preparing them for the study of their degree programs. The University's *Foundation Program Regulations* and its *English for Academic and Professional Purposes Regulations* thus delineate requirements that adequately meet the needs of students.
- e. The University's *Curriculum Structure and Regulations*, *Undergraduate Degree Regulations*, and *Graduate Degree Regulations* detail clear, comprehensive and adequate requirements for the structure of the University's programs and for the successful completion of a degree. All 3 documents are comprehensively implemented throughout all the University's programs. As a result, all programs are coherently structured and designed to allow for an integrated learning experience.
- f. The credit system outlined in the University's *Credit Regulations* is based on the European Credit Transfer and Accumulation System (ECTS) and translatable into the credit system used in the U.S. system of higher education. The *Credit Regulations* outline clear, detailed and appropriate requirements for the awarding of credits, allowing students to fully benefit from international collaborations and exchange opportunities while ensuring a high level of the University's degrees. The University's *Degree Audit and Certification Regulations* provide clear and adequate requirements for the regular, comprehensive and rigorous evaluation of student progress. Together with the *Credit Regulations*, they are designed to ensure the integrity of the University's degrees. Both documents are comprehensively implemented throughout the University and its programs, and there is conclusive evidence that credits and degrees are awarded only to students who fully and at least satisfactorily meet the requirements set by the University.
- g. All newly developed or modified programs went through the formal advisory and approval processes outlined in the University's *Degree Program Development and Modification Policy*. These advisory and approval processes included all relevant actors and decision-making bodies mentioned in the policy.
- h. All programs at ADA University are approved by the Ministry of Science and Education and the Cabinet of Ministers of the Republic of Azerbaijan if needed and are accredited by the national Təhsildə Keyfiyyət Təminatı Agentliyi (The Agency for Quality Assurance in Education) if required.
- i. All programs and their relevant components and requirements are made available to students, faculty and other stakeholders via the University's website, program descriptions and course syllabi, and/or the *Academic Catalogue* as appropriate.
- j. All programs at ADA University have clear program objectives that align with the University's core competencies as well as (both at the program and course level) explicit learning outcomes that match these competencies and the program's objectives. Qualifications resulting from a program refer to the appropriate level of the *Qualifications Framework for the European Higher Education Area (QF-EHEA)* revised in 2018, and the *National Qualifications Framework for Lifelong Learning of the Republic of Azerbaijan (Azərbaycan Respublikasının Ömürboyu Təhsil üzrə Milli Kvalifikasiya Çərçivəsi)*.
- k. All programs reflect the four purposes of education defined by the Council of Europe in *Education at the Council of Europe*. They correspond to the frameworks defining standards for the academic quality of programs, namely the *Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance in the European Higher Education Area (ESG)* of 2015, and the national *Evaluation Criteria for Institutional Accreditation of Higher Education Institutions (Ali təhsil müəssisəsinin institusional akkreditasiyası üzrə qiymətləndirmə meyarları)* as defined in criterion 3 "Teaching and Learning" ("Təlim və Tədris").

- l. All programs clearly specify the credits awarded for the completion of a program and its individual courses.
- m. All programs are designed based on an integrated and coherent course structure that allows for a gradual learning experience and smooth student progression.
- n. All programs include well-integrated placement opportunities (where appropriate) during which students can gain relevant professional experience in an area related to their studies.
- o. All courses at the University are based on a well-aligned structure, which particularly integrates learning outcomes, teaching and learning, and assessment. Course learning outcomes are aligned with program learning outcomes for all courses and programs.
- p. All programs and courses offered in the online or blended format have program objectives and/or intended learning outcomes that are attainable in the respective format.
- q. Programs at ADA University meet their objectives. Students are able to acquire relevant learning outcomes, competencies and qualifications. Student performance and program effectiveness meet the standards set by the University.
- r. All programs (and their individual components) are of continuing relevance by serving the needs of students, society, and the labor market. They particularly provide students with essential competencies relevant to their personal development and future professional careers.

#### 7.4 Monitoring and Review of Programs:

- a. The University's *Degree Program Monitoring and Review Policy* outlines systematic and comprehensive procedures and requirements for program monitoring and review. These procedures and requirements provide appropriate and effective guidance for the improvement of programs and their components. They reflect the standards and guidelines specified by the ESG, and they involve relevant stakeholders, including faculty, students, external actors, as well as advisory and decision-making bodies. The policy is comprehensively implemented throughout all the University's programs.
- b. The University's *Self-Study Report Template* adequately specifies the requirements outlined in the *Degree Program Monitoring and Review Policy*. The template provides clear and comprehensive guidance to program reviewers that is easy to follow.
- c. All the University's programs (and their individual components) are continuously monitored and periodically reviewed. Relevant stakeholders are involved as outlined in the policy mentioned above.
- d. The results from program monitoring and review are systematically and comprehensively used for the improvement of programs.
- e. Improvements leading to the modification of program specifications are approved according to the procedures outlined in chapter 5 of the University's *Degree Program Development and Modification Policy*.
- f. Revised program specifications are made available to (current and prospective) students, faculty and other stakeholders via the University's website, updated program descriptions and course syllabi, and/or the *Academic Catalogue* as appropriate.
- g. Relevant program monitoring and review activities, their outcomes, improvement plans and major steps undertaken to further improve a program, as well as implemented program improvements are sufficiently documented for each program.

7.5 There is substantial evidence that the University's mechanisms for the development, assessment, improvement and approval of programs are effective.

7.6 Each School regularly gathers feedback from students and faculty on the quality of its programs and courses and on their involvement in the development, assessment, improvement and approval of programs. It is recommended that Schools use various means to gain student and faculty input, including at least one annual meeting with students. Schools act upon this feedback and make suggestions to the Quality Assurance Committee for improvements in terms of student and faculty involvement (if applicable).



## 8. Teaching, Learning and Assessment

- 8.1 The area *Teaching, Learning and Assessment* provides the University's educational framework. It offers guidance to teaching and learning in the face-to-face, blended and online modes as well as rules and procedures for the assessment of learning.
- 8.2 Quality Standard: Education at ADA University is student-centered and incorporates innovative practices. Courses are delivered in a manner that encourages students to play an active role in the learning process. Teaching, learning and assessment are aligned. They are based on clearly stated learning outcomes and allow students to develop and achieve these learning outcomes as well as program objectives and the University's core competencies.
- 8.3 The principles defined in the University's *Statement on Teaching and Learning* reflect best practices in teaching and learning. They are appropriately implemented throughout all programs and courses.
- 8.4 The University's *Student Assessment Regulations* provide a well-structured, comprehensive and transparent framework for the evaluation of student performance. Their provisions adequately address the University's needs and are designed to protect the integrity of the examination process. They are appropriately implemented throughout all programs and courses, and assessment in courses is consistent with the rules and procedures outlined in this document.
- 8.5 The University's *Online Education and Assessment Regulations* provide well-structured, comprehensive and intelligible guidance to students and teachers. They are well integrated with the University's *Statement on Teaching and Learning* and its *Student Assessment Regulations*. They reflect best practices in online education and assessment, and they are comprehensively implemented in all remote examinations and in all courses delivered in the online or blended format.
- 8.6 The University's *Student Academic Grievance Policy and Procedures* outline easy-to-follow guidance for the submission of student complaints and appeals, and they provide appropriate procedures for dealing with such complaints and appeals. All complaints and appeals received by the University are investigated and (if required) resolved in a fair and timely manner.
- 8.7 Teaching, learning and assessment are regularly evaluated throughout all the University's programs. Evaluations are based on and correspond to the requirements outlined in this chapter, in the documents mentioned above and in the *Faculty Handbook*, and they include feedback gathered from students and faculty. The evaluation of teaching, learning and assessment in courses offered in the online or blended format involves one of the University's *Blackboard* DTLS Accredited Facilitators. The teaching, learning and assessment methods used in courses are effective.
- 8.8 The results of student learning and assessment are regularly evaluated throughout all the University's programs. Evaluations are based on the requirements outlined in the *Data Management and Reporting Regulations*, and the outcomes of these evaluations reflect the standards set by the University.
- 8.9 Any shortcomings identified in the teaching, learning and assessment process are adequately addressed by Schools and programs.
- 8.10 Teaching, learning and assessment across the University are student-centered. They provide students with opportunities to engage actively and to their full potential in the learning process while being appropriately guided by the teacher. A variety of assessment methods are used, and examinations are conducted in an inclusive and equitable manner.
- 8.11 Teaching, learning and assessment are based on explicitly stated learning outcomes that are adequate to the level of students and to the teaching and learning mode. Learning outcomes, teaching and learning activities, and assessment methods are aligned in courses. They match program objectives and program learning outcomes.
- 8.12 Teaching, learning and assessment involve innovative practices across the University and its programs and courses. Teachers are generally familiar with existing and relevant teaching, learning and assessment methods.

- 8.13 All courses delivered at the University employ innovative technology where appropriate. This applies to courses offered in the blended or online mode in particular.
- 8.14 Assessment tasks are conducted in a manner that prevents violations of the principle of academic integrity (as far as is possible). Any violations of this principle that may have occurred are adequately investigated and sanctioned according to the University's *Honor Code*.
- 8.15 All Schools and programs have effective structures and processes for the evaluation of student performance and for dealing with student complaints related to the evaluation of their performance in assessment tasks.
- 8.16 Students are provided with clear information on their courses. This includes information on the learning opportunities and support available to them.
- 8.17 Students and teachers are equipped with the knowledge and skills required to use *Blackboard Learn* and other digital tools employed for teaching, learning and assessment. The University's *Blackboard Administrator* and the Office of IT and Information Services have a successful record of providing technical support to students and teachers and of resolving technical issues related to *Blackboard Learn* and other digital tools.

## 9. Research

- 9.1 The area *Research* provides a quality framework for conducting and promoting research at ADA University.
- 9.2 Quality Standard: ADA University provides an environment in which excellence and good practice in research are encouraged. Research at the University is innovative and serves both to advance knowledge within relevant academic disciplines and to enhance teaching and learning. It is based on the free pursuit of knowledge and guided by high ethical standards.
- 9.3 The principles defined in ADA University's *Statement on Research* outline essential and relevant requirements for good practice in academic research, and they are reflected in the research activities conducted at the University.
- 9.4 The University's *Faculty Research and Development Fund and Regulations* provide a substantial program that is appropriate, well designed, and sufficiently endowed with financial resources to support the research activities and professional development of its faculty.
- 9.5 The University's *Research Reward Program and Regulations* provide a substantial reward mechanism that is appropriate, well designed, and sufficiently endowed with financial resources to fulfill its purpose of rewarding publications of high quality.
- 9.6 The University's *Faculty Research and Development Fund and Regulations* and its *Research Reward Program and Regulations* are comprehensively implemented. Its *Faculty Research and Development Fund* and its *Research Reward Program* are regularly applied for by faculty. Their financial resources are utilized to the extent and for the purposes envisaged, and they serve as effective mechanisms to foster high quality research at the University.
- 9.7 In addition to its funding and reward programs, the University supports the research activities of its faculty by (for instance) offering trainings, advice on legal and ethical matters, and guidance on publication opportunities and procedures. There is conclusive evidence that these mechanisms are effective and serve to further develop the research capabilities of the University's faculty and improve the amount and quality of their research output.
- 9.8 Faculty members from all Schools and programs are regularly engaged in research. They are allocated sufficient time to do so.
- 9.9 The amount of the University's research output is substantial and adequate to the number of its faculty.
- 9.10 The University's research output is of high quality. It is predominantly published with recognized publishers and/or indexed academic journals, and it contributes both to the advancement of knowledge and to the promotion of the University's reputation.
- 9.11 Research and scholarly activities inform teaching practice at the University.



- 9.12 No mechanism provided by the University that serves to encourage and support faculty in doing research restricts their free pursuit of knowledge.
- 9.13 No faculty member of the University violates the principle of academic integrity. All potential violations of this principle are investigated and (if verified) adequately sanctioned.

## 10. Students and Student Support

10.1 The area *Students and Student Support* provides a quality framework for the recruitment, admission, enrollment, progression, retention, recognition and certification of students, as well for the University's student support services and its learning resources.

10.2 Quality Standards:

- a. ADA University has formal processes and requirements for each stage of a student's career, ranging from recruitment and admission to certification. These processes and requirements are consistently implemented. They are effective and support the University in the achievement of its objectives.
- b. ADA University provides a wide range of support services and learning resources to its students. These services and resources are available to all students and effectively support their personal, academic and professional development.

10.3 Student Recruitment and Admission:

- a. The *Student Recruitment and Admission Regulations* provide clear and effective guidelines for the promotion of the University's programs and its student recruitment activities. It outlines comprehensive, appropriate and fair admission requirements and procedures for the selection and admission of students, covering all possible admission routes for the University's undergraduate and graduate degree programs and for both Azerbaijani and international applicants. The document also provides clear information on different models of financial support to accommodate for the needs of students from diverse backgrounds.
- b. The document mentioned above is implemented consistently, and there is clear evidence that the University selects and admits students in a transparent and non-discriminatory manner and solely based on their potential to succeed in the program for which they are applying.
- c. The University's staff members responsible for the recruitment, selection and admission of students are adequately qualified for their roles. They have a clear understanding of their responsibilities and of the recruitment process and the selection and admission requirements, and they consistently follow these requirements.
- d. There is documented evidence that applicants were provided with the assistance they needed during the application process.
- e. There is clear evidence that the entry qualifications of all applicants are verified before a decision on their admission or rejection is being made.
- f. There are appropriate mechanisms in place for applicants to appeal their rejection. There is clear evidence that all appeals were treated in a fair and transparent manner.
- g. All information related to the University's degree programs and admission requirements is publicly available.
- h. The University's promotional and recruitment activities are effective without being misleading. There are clear indications that they support the University in attracting talented students who are successful (and even excel) in their studies.
- i. The University has a track record of admitting students who perform highly in their studies and successfully complete their degree programs.

10.4 Student Enrollment and Course Registration:

- a. The University's *Student Enrollment Status Regulations* provide clear rules for a student's enrollment status at ADA University, covering degree and non-degree as well as full-time and part-time requirements. They sufficiently specify the conditions under which students may take an overload.

- b. The requirements outlined in the document mentioned above are appropriate and provide a framework that successfully guides students towards the completion of their studies and degree programs.
- c. The University's current *Academic Catalogue* outlines clear and transparent procedures for the course registration of students. They are easy to follow, and there is documented evidence that students receive the support they need when registering for, adding, dropping, or withdrawing from courses.

#### 10.5 Student Progression and Retention:

- a. The University's *Degree Audit and Certification Regulations* and its *Student Retention Policy* outline systematic, comprehensive and effective procedures and requirements for monitoring and assessing student progress and for providing support to students during their studies and on their way to graduation. They provide appropriate mechanisms for the induction of students to the University, and they include learning opportunities that foster the students' academic, personal and professional development.
- b. The two documents mentioned above outline mechanisms that allow students to monitor their own academic performance and progress towards degree completion. Students are furthermore provided with systematic and effective opportunities to regularly request feedback and support from qualified staff members of the University.
- c. The two documents mentioned above are systematically implemented throughout the University and its programs.
- d. The University systematically gathers and analyzes data and information on the performance and progression of its students (for details, see its *Data Management and Reporting Regulations*). It regularly and adequately acts upon this data and information.
- e. The University's student support staff are adequately qualified for their roles, and they have a successful record of supporting students in their progress towards degree completion.
- f. The University has a successful record of retaining students, and both the retention and the graduation rate achieve or exceed the targets set by the University. These targets are challenging but achievable.

#### 10.6 Student Recognition and Certification:

- a. The University's *Credit Regulations* and its current *Credit Transfer Manual* provide coherent, transparent and fair procedures and requirements for the recognition of credits and qualifications awarded by other institutions of higher education prior to or (as part of an exchange program) during enrollment at ADA University. The *Credit Regulations* and the *Student Recruitment and Admission Regulations* make adequate allowance for the recognition of non-formal and informal prior learning experiences where appropriate. For the awarding of in-residence credits, see chapter 7.3.f above.
- b. The University's procedures, requirements and practices for the recognition of credits and qualifications are aligned with the *Convention on the Recognition of Qualifications concerning Higher Education in the European Region* of 1997. They correspond to the standards set by the University for its degree programs while adequately reflecting the level and scope of the respective credits and qualifications (and of non-formal or informal prior learning experiences).
- c. The University's procedures and requirements for the recognition of credits, qualifications and prior learning experiences are published on its website and are thus publicly available. They are systematically implemented.
- d. Decisions on the recognition of credits, qualifications and prior learning experiences are made (and communicated to students) in a timely manner. There are appropriate mechanisms in place for students to appeal a decision. There is clear evidence that all appeals were treated in a fair and transparent manner.
- e. Requirements for the certification of students are clearly outlined in the University's *Degree Audit and Certification Regulations*.

- f. All students of the University who successfully completed all the requirements of their respective degree program are informed of the completion of the program. They receive a degree certificate (diploma) issued by the Ministry of Science and Education of the Republic of Azerbaijan. They also receive a transcript of records from the University that details all attended courses and grades received.

10.7 Student Support and Learning Resources:

- a. The University's *Student Support and Service Policy* systematically outlines the student support services and learning resources required to assist students in their personal, academic and professional development while considering and addressing the needs of different students (including national and international, full-time, part-time, and employed students, as well as those with disabilities). It provides clearly structured and comprehensive procedures and requirements for the regular review and further development of these services and resources, and it explicitly allocates these responsibilities to relevant actors and stakeholders of the University.
- b. The document mentioned above is comprehensively implemented, and there is clear evidence that the University's student support services and learning resources are adequate, sufficient and effective. They include a structured system of academic and career support, ample opportunities to participate in exchange programs and to gain practical professional experience, as well as sufficient (physical and digital) library resources, up-to-date IT services, and appropriate study facilities. These support services and learning resources allow students to develop their personal, academic and professional potential and provide opportunities for flexible and self-guided learning, and they are sufficiently endowed with financial resources to fulfill their purposes.
- c. The University provides students with clear and comprehensive information on available support services and learning resources.
- d. The services and resources mentioned above are reliable and easily accessible to all students.
- e. Relevant units of the University (such as ADA Library, the Office of Admissions and Student Records, its Student Academic Support Services, the Office of Global Outreach and Partners, and its Career Services and Alumni Affairs) have a sufficient number of qualified advisors and counsellors and a successful record of providing assistance and advice to students.
- f. The University has effective mechanisms for the evaluation of its student support staff, using criteria that include, as a minimum, professional qualifications, evaluation interviews and self-assessment, advisory notes and correspondence (where applicable), and student feedback. It provides professional support and training to its student support staff, and there is clear evidence that these trainings are effective and improve the qualifications of participating staff members.

10.8 There are effective mechanisms in place to gather input from students, staff, faculty and external stakeholders on the University's student support services and learning resources, and on its approach to student recruitment, admission, progression and retention. These include at least one annual meeting with student representatives and a special survey for international students to determine their needs and improve the University's attractiveness to this student group. The University uses the insights gained for further improvements, where appropriate.

## 11. Faculty and Staff

11.1 The area *Faculty and Staff* provides a framework for the recruitment, evaluation, and ongoing professional development of faculty and supporting staff members.

11.2 Quality Standard: ADA University has a sufficient number of adequately qualified faculty and supporting staff members for all its programs. The recruitment of faculty and supporting staff is

based on fair and transparent procedures, and there are effective mechanisms for the regular evaluation and continuous professional development of both faculty and staff members.

#### 11.3 Recruitment of Teachers and Supporting Staff:

- a. The University's strategic plan includes clear goals and mechanisms for the recruitment of a sufficient number of adequately qualified teachers.
- b. The goals referred to above are achieved, and the University has a sufficient number of adequately qualified teachers for all its programs (including international faculty members where possible).
- c. The University has clear, transparent and fair procedures for the recruitment, selection and (re-)appointment of faculty and supporting staff.
- d. The procedures mentioned above are systematically implemented, and there is clear evidence that they significantly support the University in acquiring well-qualified teachers and supporting staff.
- e. There is clear evidence that the University provides employment conditions that are competitive and attractive to well-qualified teachers and supporting staff. This includes, for instance, compensation packages, facilities and workplaces, as well as professional support and development opportunities.
- f. The University has clear, transparent and fair procedures for the promotion of faculty and supporting staff. These procedures are systematically implemented throughout the University.
- g. The University has a track record of retaining well-qualified teachers.
- h. There are effective mechanisms in place to gather input from faculty and students on the number and qualifications of teachers for each of the University's programs. The insights gained feed into the University's recruitment plans and procedures (where appropriate), and they inform the professional development of teachers.

#### 11.4 Faculty and Staff Evaluation:

- a. The University's *Faculty Handbook* provides clear, systematic and effective procedures and requirements for the performance evaluation of teachers. They involve key stakeholders, establish reasonable evaluation intervals, and are based on a combination of meaningful criteria that include, as a minimum, teacher portfolios, teaching observations and peer evaluations, and student performance and feedback.
- b. The University has similar mechanisms for the evaluation of Academic Advisors, using criteria that include, as a minimum, professional qualifications, evaluation interviews and self-assessment, advisory notes and correspondence, and student feedback.
- c. The procedures and requirements referred to above are regularly and comprehensively implemented throughout all the University's Schools and programs.
- d. The results of performance evaluations feed into the continuous improvement of teachers and Academic Advisors.
- e. All teachers at the University are adequately qualified for their roles. They are trained in modern pedagogical methods and regularly employ them in their teaching. This includes the appropriate and innovative use of learning technology. Teachers have a suitable record of supporting and advising students.
- f. Academic Advisors are adequately qualified for their roles, and they have a successful record of providing assistance and advice to the students under their tutelage.
- g. The University has clear procedures for the development of projections for faculty members in terms of their teaching load, research activities, and further functions to be fulfilled in service to the University. The corresponding performance of faculty is systematically assessed at the end of each academic year (for details, see the University's *Data Management and Reporting Regulations*), and the results of these assessments feed into the overall evaluation of teachers.

#### 11.5 Faculty and Staff Development and Support:

- a. The University has mechanisms that effectively encourage faculty to be innovative in their teaching (including using new technologies when appropriate) and to be actively engaged in research.
- b. There is clear evidence that teachers use innovative teaching methods and technology and that their teaching is informed by research and the latest developments in their fields.
- c. The University has a well-structured program that supports the continuous professional development of its teachers and Academic Advisors. For the University's *Faculty Research and Development Fund and Regulations* that is part of this program, see chapter 9 above.
- d. This professional development program is actively promoted, systematically implemented, and open to all the University's teachers and Academic Advisors. It covers current and relevant topics, is sufficient in breadth, and has a successful record of improving the pedagogical capabilities of teachers and the professional qualifications of Academic Advisors.
- e. All teachers and Academic Advisors participate in the professional development program at reasonable intervals.
- f. In addition to the training program mentioned above, the University offers an effective induction program for newly hired teachers. It furthermore provides specific professional support and training to part-time faculty. These mechanisms are effective, and both newly hired and part-time teachers are sufficiently qualified for their roles at ADA University.
- g. The University regularly gathers input from faculty and Academic Advisors to identify their training and support needs. It uses the information received to further improve its training and support offerings.

## 12. Equity and Transparency

12.1 The area *Equity and Transparency* provides a framework for inclusiveness and non-discrimination, the handling of personal data, and the effective and transparent information of internal and external stakeholders. This includes 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.

#### 12.2 Quality Standards:

- a. ADA University provides a welcoming, supportive and integrative environment in which no one is discriminated against and in which everyone is able to develop and contribute to their full potential.
- b. The University has effective mechanisms for the collection, storage, processing and safeguarding of personal data. It uses this data and other information to enhance its performance and the quality of its offerings. The University regularly provides accurate, meaningful and easily accessible information to relevant stakeholders, including the general public.

#### 12.3 Equity, Diversity and Non-Discrimination:

- a. The University's *Equity, Diversity and Non-Discrimination Policy* complies with international best practices and with relevant legal regulations of the Republic of Azerbaijan. It provides adequate and effective mechanisms for the promotion of inclusiveness and the prevention of discrimination and harassment.
- b. The policy mentioned above is comprehensively implemented.
- c. The University has a successful record of preventing discrimination and harassment, of promoting diversity, and of offering additional opportunities to those in need of special support. Its working environment is inclusive and family-friendly.
- d. All known cases of discrimination and harassment that may have occurred are adequately addressed and resolved at the University. Appropriate measures were taken to prevent further such instances (as far as is possible).



- e. The University regularly and systematically gathers anonymized information on the state of equity, diversity and non-discrimination at the University and acts upon this information.
- f. The University's Anti-Discrimination Officer is effective in the fulfillment of his/her responsibilities. These include annual reporting to the Quality Assurance Committee.

#### 12.4 Personal Data Usage and Public Information:

- a. The University's *Personal Data Usage and Public Information Policy* complies with relevant legal regulations of the Republic of Azerbaijan and reflects essential requirements of the European *General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR)*. It provides adequate and effective mechanisms for the protection, usage and disclosure of personal data.
- b. The policy mentioned above is comprehensively implemented.
- c. The University has a successful record of preventing data breaches and violations of data privacy.
- d. All known data breaches or violations of data privacy that may have occurred at the University and all known data-related complaints are adequately addressed and resolved. Appropriate measures were taken to prevent further such instances (as far as is possible).
- e. The University provides accurate, meaningful, comprehensive and easily accessible data and information on its offerings, activities and performance to current and prospective students, the general public, and other interested groups via its website, social media channels, *Academic Catalogue*, and printed materials
- f. The disclosure of data and information to internal and external parties complies with relevant legal and ethical requirements.
- g. The University regularly and systematically gathers feedback from students, faculty and staff on the usefulness and accessibility of information provided by the University as outlined above, and it acts upon this feedback.
- h. The University's Data Protection Officer is effective in the fulfillment of his/her responsibilities. These include an annual report to the Quality Assurance Committee, which shall provide information on the state of data protection, usage and disclosure at the University. The University acts upon this information and upon potential deficits.

#### 12.5 Data Management and Reporting:

- a. The University's *Data Management and Reporting Regulations* comply with international best practices and with relevant legal regulations of the Republic of Azerbaijan. The document delineates effective and efficient provisions for the collection, storage and usage of data.
- b. The document mentioned above is comprehensively implemented.
- c. The University has a successful record of collecting and analyzing data and information used for the purposes of decision-making in general and of assessing and enhancing its offerings and performance in particular. The data and information are available in a timely manner and are adequate, complete, valid and current.
- d. The reports used for the purposes of decision-making and quality assurance are comprehensive, current, intelligible and meaningful.
- e. The University has a successful record of using data, information and reports systematically and effectively to make decisions and to evaluate and improve the University's offerings and performance.
- f. The University acts upon any shortcomings in terms of the data, information and reports required for the purposes mentioned above.