



Funded by
the European Union



Quality Assurance for Reform and Transformation of HEIs in Uzbekistan - QUARTZ

Call: ERASMUS-EDU-2023-CBHE-STRAND-1 / Project Number: 101127171

Introduction to Quality Assurance in European Context. Planning and Implementation of an Institutional Quality Assurance Strategy

Christina Armutlieva

Varna University of Management

QUARTZ Training (Work Package 3)

University of L'Aquila, 10 March 2025





Outline

- QUARTZ Quality Assurance Training: key objectives and learning outcomes
- Quality assurance in Uzbekistan: QUARTZ Training premise and starting point
- Defining quality: quality, standards, assurance, culture
- Understanding the Bologna process
- European Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance (ESG)
- Planning and Implementing a University QA Strategy: Standard 1.1. Policy for quality assurance
- Quality of teaching, research, third Mission/social impact and institutional management in university policies and strategies
- Architecture of university's governance and quality assurance system
- Monitoring system for policies, strategies, processes, and results.



QUARTZ Training: Objectives

- To equip participating academic and administrative staff with skills, knowledge, and mindset needed to implement and continuously improve a quality strategy.
- To enhance the quality assurance (QA) systems of Uzbek partner higher education institutions (HEIs) by developing procedures, tools, human resources, and ongoing professional development, drawing from EU best practices.
- To strengthen the connection between HEIs and the labour market in Uzbekistan by improving the perception of quality across four key university dimensions: teaching, research, third mission, and institutional framework.



QUARTZ Training : Learning Outcomes

Upon successful completion of the QUARTZ Training, participants will have:

- Enhanced understanding of the QA framework across EU higher education (HE) sectors, based on the Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance in the European Higher Education Area (ESG): **Day 1.**
- Strengthened knowledge of how universities define, endorse, and implement a comprehensive institutional QA policy as part of their strategic management: **Day 1.**



QUARTZ Training: Learning Outcomes

(2)

- Gained insights into the university resource management processes, with a focus on financial management, facility management, and the provision of equipment and technological support: **Day 2.**
- Enhanced knowledge and familiarity with best practices in QA for teaching, learning, and student engagement: **Day 3.**
- Developed understanding of the QA procedures applicable to scientific and applied research activities, as well social engagement; human resource management in academia: **Day 4.**



What QUARTZ Training Is:

- A **collaborative effort among peers**.
- A **dynamic, two-way learning process** between the trainees and the trainers that fosters reflection and engagement.
- A **joint exploration of key concepts and terms**, such as quality, quality guidelines, standards, assurance, and quality culture, providing clarity and perspective.
- An **opportunity to raise awareness** of the Bologna process and to promote its key features and instruments in Uzbekistan.



What QUARTZ Training Is:

- A **comprehensive review of the ESG** and their implementation across the EU HE sectors
- A **forum for exchanging best practices** in QA between EU and Uzbek HEIs
- An **opportunity to benchmark** best practices and conduct a **self-assessment** of each university's QA journey
- A **platform for showcasing staff training strategies and approaches** applicable when designing and facilitating future multiplication trainings at the Uzbek HEIs
- A valuable **networking experience**.



What QUARTZ Training Is NOT:

- A series of one-way informational sessions on QA in HE within the European context.
- An effort to address, cover, and exhaust all aspects of QA in HE.
- An attempt to share brand new knowledge and insights that have not yet been explored or published.
- A chance to provide magic silver bullet or one-size-fits all solutions to QA challenges faced by Uzbek partner HEIs.
- A one-stop-shop for giving instructions and guidelines to be applied directly, without contextual adaptation.



QA in Uzbekistan: Key Starting Points

- **Concept of Development of the Higher Education System of the Republic of Uzbekistan until 2030**
- **Modernising Higher Education Project (MHEP)** project funded by the World Bank in the period of 2017-2023 and implemented by Ministry of Higher and Specialised Secondary Education (MHSSE) in Uzbekistan
- Project Development Objective (PDO) 1: to strengthen the HE system's managerial capacity (Component 1)
- PDO 2: Improve the labor market relevance of HEIs (Component 2)
- PDO 3: Improve the learning environment of HEIs (Component 3).



Component 1: Objectives

- To strengthen the capacity of the MHSSE to manage the sector through the establishment of a Higher Education Management Information System (HEMIS).
- To support the State Testing Center (STC)/ State Inspection for Supervision of Quality in Education (SISQE) to develop and implement a system of external QA through qualified peer reviewers.
- To support HEIs to strengthen their systems of internal QA through established Quality Enhancement Cells (QECs).



Component 1: Outputs

- A modern management information system is fully operational.
- HEIs and relevant ministries actively use HEMIS to align and coordinate policies.
- HEIs are better equipped to implement government priorities effectively.
- HEIs make data-driven decisions based on newly collected and analysed information.
- QA mechanisms in Uzbekistan align with international standards.
- Universities QECs enhance self-assessment processes and overall QA within HEIs.
- SISQE serves as a reliable external QA agency for the HE system.



Defining Quality

- Lee Harvey (2024) [Extended Editorial: Defining quality thirty years on: quality, standards, assurance, culture and epistemology](#), Quality in Higher Education, 30:2, 145-184, DOI: 10.1080/13538322.2024.2355026
- Concepts and definitions of quality in higher education
- Quality assurance
- Quality culture.



Quality = Excellence?

- Quality perceived as something exceptional, associated with distinctiveness, exclusivity, elitism.
- Quality interpreted as setting and surpassing "high standards" be it entry standards, academic achievement, research output, service standards or organisational standards.
- Quality as a set of required (minimum) standards hence quality checks are based on attainable criteria.

Quality = Consistency or Perfection?

- Sets specifications that it aims to meet.
- Refers to conformation to the stated or expected specification.
- A shift from outcome standards measurement to process standards.
- Ensures that the process is consistent, efficient and user-friendly (in academic settings this refers to grading of students, supporting research applications, providing backup services or flawless information systems).



Quality = Fitness for Purpose?

- Refer to the extent to which a product or service fits a stated purpose.
- A functional and inclusive definition, as every product or service has the potential to fit its purpose.
- The purpose may be customer-defined to meet requirements or institution-defined to reflect institutional mission (in case of HEIs).
- Quality defined as the HEI fulfilling its own stated objectives or mission.
- A concept that stresses the need to meet or conform to generally accepted standards such as those defined by an accreditation or QA body.



Quality = Value for Money?

- Quality as return on investment or expenditure.
- The notion of accountability.
- Quality of provision, processes or outcomes against the monetary cost (both overt and hidden) of making the provision, undertaking the process or achieving the outcomes.
- Getting the desired outcome at lowest cost or obtaining the maximum benefit from the goods and services acquired, within the resources available.



Quality as Transformation

- Involves a **"qualitative change"** from one state to another.
- Refers to the **enhancement and empowerment** of students or the development of new knowledge.
- Refers to the **development and change** that occur to a student through the learning process.
- Can also apply to **changes within an institution** so that it is better able to provide transformative learning or research.
- Quality as a process of change that **adds value** to students through their learning experience.



Transformative Quality in Education: Enhancing the Consumer

- Effects changes in the participants and adds value hence is the increase in learning (knowledge, skills and abilities) that can be attributed to the educational experience. Added value is usually "measured" by comparing before and after assessments of students.
- Enhancement may also refer to the service provided to the learner.
- Enhancement as one of the purposes of QA processes, along with accountability and compliance.



Transformative Quality in Education: Empowering the Consumer

- Gives power to participants to influence their own transformation.
- Is linked to the philosophy of transformative learning.
- Empowering learners through student feedback evaluation, providing more choice, guaranteeing minimum service standards to students, and developing students' critical reflective ability.
- Entails critical, reflective thinking.
- Encourages students to challenge preconceptions, their own and those of their peers and teachers.



Quality Assurance

- The collections of policies, procedures, systems, and practices internal or external to the organization, designed to achieve, maintain, and enhance quality (Harvey, 2004–24).
- QA in HE: a term covering all forms of review or investigation of quality (both external and internal)
- QA approaches: accreditation, audit, assessment, and standards checking.
- QA purposes: accountability, control, compliance, and improvement.
- Quality $\neq$ QA.



UNESCO Definition of Quality in HE

Quality in higher education is a multi-dimensional, multi- level, and dynamic concept that relates to the contextual settings of an educational model, to the institutional mission and objectives, as well as to specific standards within a given system, institution, programme, or discipline. (Vlăsceanu et al., 2004, p. 46)



Quality Culture

- A set of taken-for-granted practices that encapsulate the ideology of the group or organisation (Harvey, 2004).
- An organisational culture that contributes to the development of effective and efficient care for quality (Berings et al., 2011).
- In the higher education context, the concept of a quality culture involves shared values, beliefs, expectations, and commitments towards quality, combined with structural and managerial elements (EUA, 2006).
- Facilitates and encourages reflexivity and praxis: self-reflection, developing improvement initiatives, and implementing them (Harvey, 2007a).



Quality Culture in Academia

- Academic ownership of quality
- Recognition by academics and administrators of the need for quality monitoring
- Stakeholder behaviour rather than bureaucratic systems
- Students at the center
- Partnership and co-operation
- Sharing of experiences and team working
- Inspirational rather than dictatorial
- Welcoming external critical evaluation
- Leadership at all levels in the university
- ...



The Bologna Process

- An **intergovernmental HE reform** process launched in 1999
- 29 countries signed the **Bologna Declaration in 1999**
- Currently involves **49 countries**
- A **collective effort** of public authorities, universities, teachers, and students, together with stakeholder associations, employers, QA agencies, international organisations, and institutions.



Bologna Process Key Features

- Introduces **the three-cycle higher education system** consisting of bachelor's, master's and doctoral studies.
- Ensures the **mutual recognition of qualifications and learning periods abroad** completed at other universities.
- Implements a **system of QA**, to strengthen the quality and relevance of learning and teaching.



Bologna Process Aims and Goals

- To ensure **coherence, comparability, compatibility, and transparency** between HE systems within the European Higher Education Area (EHEA).
- To facilitate **student and staff mobility**.
- To build the **necessary trust** for successful learning mobility, cross-border academic cooperation, and the mutual recognition.
- To enhance the **quality and relevance** of learning and teaching.
- To provide a **forum for dialogue** with neighbouring countries regarding higher education reforms.
- To offer space for **soft diplomacy**.



Bologna Process Key Instruments

- European and National Qualifications (Reference) Frameworks
- European Credit Transfer and Accumulation System (ECTS)
- Diploma Supplement
- Lisbon Recognition Convention
- **European Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance (ESG)**



Bologna Process: Recent Developments

- UN 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)
- Erasmus+ priorities: i) Inclusion and diversity; ii) Environment and fight against climate change; iii) Addressing digital transformation through development of digital readiness, resilience, and capacity; iv) Common values, civic engagement, and participation
- European Universities Initiative
- Promoting lifelong learning through micro-credentials
- Stimulating work-based/ experiential learning (alignment with workplace and society).



ESG: A Historical Snapshot

- **Bologna Declaration 1999:** External QA as one of six objectives towards an EHEA.
- **Berlin Communiqué 2003:** Defining QA, heading towards ESG.
- **Bergen Communiqué 2005:** First ESG adopted.
- **Bucharest Communiqué 2012:** Decision to revise ESG to improve their clarity, applicability, and usefulness, including their scope.
- **Yerevan Communiqué 2015:** Adoption of the revised ESG.



ESG: A Historical Snapshot (2)

- **Paris Communiqué 2018:** Defining three key commitments crucial to reinforcing and supporting quality and cooperation inside the EHEA: i) three-cycle system compatible and first and second cycle degrees scaled by ECTS; ii) compliance with the Lisbon Recognition Convention; **iii) QA in compliance with the ESG within EHEA.**
- **Tirana Communiqué 2024:** underlining the three key commitments; a decision to propose a revised version of the ESG by 2026 to be adopted at the 2027 Ministerial Conference.



Potential New Topics in the 2027 ESG

- Inclusion of new topics, such as i.e. fundamental values, social dimension of HE and HEIs
- Integrating guidelines into standards
- How to deal with Transnational Education (TNE)?
- The topic of digitalisation
- QA of micro-credentials
- evolution rather than revolution.



ESG: The Way Forward

- Strengthening the enhancement dimension of QA.
- Responding to societal and economic developments (e.g. the social dimension of HE, fundamental values, green, and digital skills).
- Reducing costs and workload for HEIs.
- Ensuring QA coverage of the entire educational portfolio and provision of HEIs, incl. micro-credentials.
- Enhancing transparency in reports and decision-making.
- Implementing a "once-only-principle": no programme or course should undergo external QA more than once.



ESG: The Way Forward (2)

- Promoting peer learning and benchmarking between EHEA member states and agencies.
- Strengthening quality culture and reinforcing robust internal QA.
- Limiting external accreditation, focusing primarily on initial programme accreditation
- Shifting to external QA predominantly at the institutional level
- Fully enabling the use of the European approach and reducing implementation barriers
- [The Future of ESG \(Quality Assurance Fit for the Future project \(QA-FIT\)\)](#)



Introduction to the 2015 ESG

- Represent a set of standards and guidelines for internal and external QA in HE.
- Focus on QA related to learning and teaching in HE, including the learning environment and relevant links to research and innovation as well as society at large.
- Apply to all HEIs in the EHEA regardless of the mode of study or place of delivery.
- Have a two-fold role of QA (accountability and enhancement) to create trust among HE stakeholders.



ESG Purposes

- To **set a common framework** for QA systems for learning and teaching at European, national, and institutional level.
- To **enable the assurance and improvement of quality** of HE in the EHEA.
- To **support mutual trust**, thus facilitating recognition and mobility within and across national borders.
- To **provide information on QA** in the EHEA.



ESG Principles

- **HEIs have primary responsibility** for the quality of their provision and its assurance.
- QA **responds to the diversity** of HE systems, HEIs, programmes and students.
- QA supports the development of a **quality culture**.
- QA takes into account the **needs and expectations** of students, all other stakeholders and society.



ESG Structure

- Part 1: Standards and guidance for internal quality assurance
- Part 2: Standards and guidance for external quality assurance
- Part 3: Standards and guidance for quality assurance agencies



ESG: Standards

The **standards** set out agreed and accepted practice for QA in HE in the EHEA and should, therefore, be taken account of and adhered to by those concerned, in all types of higher education provision.



ESG: Guidelines

The guidelines explain **why** the standard is important and describe **how** standards might be implemented. They set out **good practice** in the relevant area for consideration by the actors involved in QA. Implementation will vary **depending on different contexts**.



Planning and Implementing a University QA

Strategy: **ESG Standard 1.1. Policy for QA**

Institutions should have a **policy for QA** that is made **public** and forms **part of their strategic management**. **Internal stakeholders** should develop and implement this policy through appropriate **structures and processes**, while involving **external stakeholders**.



Policy for QA: Guidelines

- Policies and processes are the main pillars of a coherent **institutional QA system**
- QA policies reflect the **relationship between research and learning and teaching** and take account of both the national **context** in which the HEI operates, the institutional context and its **strategic approach**.



Policy for QA: Guidelines (2)

QA policies support and ensure:

- the organisation and implementation of the institutional QA system.
- that all internal stakeholders take on their responsibilities in QA.
- academic integrity and freedom and is vigilant against academic fraud.
- guarding against intolerance of any kind or discrimination against the students or staff.
- involvement of external stakeholders in quality assurance.



Quality of Teaching, Research, Third Mission/Social Impact and Institutional Management in University Policies and Strategies

Policy for QA: 1.1 Criterion

The HEI has a **well-documented** and **publicly accessible** QA policy with official status and accountability, integrated in the institution's **strategic management** to serve the public interest.



Policy for QA: 1.1 Criterion

- The HEI and its fundamental units are responsible for **fostering a quality culture**.
- **Appropriate internal structures** are established to develop and implement the QA policy, ensuring the participation of students and stakeholders.
- The HEI's organisational and functional **structure aligns** with the national HE legislation.
- In alignment with its mission, vision, goals, and objectives, the HEI **upholds a high professional level** in the i) learning and teaching activities, ii) research, innovation, and knowledge transfer activities, iii) social engagement and commitment initiatives.



Policy for QA: 1.1 Criterion (2)

- The HEI establishes and implements a policy that strengthen **the link between research and teaching** within the national and institutional context.
- The HEI upholds **academic freedom** and fosters an environment of **zero tolerance for discrimination and academic fraud**. It has a **Code of Ethics and Academic Integrity** and **a dedicated committee** responsible for its enforcement. The institution maintains documented procedures to prevent and address fraud during examinations and plagiarism, with stats on their implementation.



Policy for QA: 1.1 Criterion Evidence

- HEI's Strategic Development Plan.
- Internal **legislation** and documentation where the QA policy is developed and embedded.
- Official **website** of the institution.
- **Regulations, procedures, decisions**, and other documents related to internal QA of the educational process.
- **Annual reports** assessing the quality of research and innovation activities as well as social engagement and commitment initiatives.



Policy for QA: 1.1 Criterion Evidence (2)

- An approved **Code of Ethics and Academic Integrity**, including the establishment of a dedicated Committee.
- Approved composition and Rules of Procedure of the Committee, along with annual reports on its activities.
- Annual **plans and progress reports**, published on the HEI website.
- Regulations and activities of the administrative structure responsible for implementing research results and managing intellectual property.
- Established procedures, methods, and tools for **validating the authenticity of the diplomas and dissertation works**.



Quality of Teaching, Research, Third Mission/Social Impact and Institutional Management in VUM Policies and Strategies

- VUM QA Policies are integrated into **VUM's Strategic Management System**.
- VUM QA Policies built on **three core pillars**: i) education and training, ii) research and innovation, and iii) internationalisation
- VUM QA Policies are underpinned by the principle of **shared leadership**
- **Annual Quality Objectives** are established and adopted at VUM for each calendar year
- Annual Quality Objectives are reported through **VUM Rector's Annual Report**
- General Assembly of **VUM's Senior Academic Forum** approves the Rector's Annual Report, votes on the following calendar year's quality objectives, and reviews the report of the Quality Assessment and Evaluation Committee.



VUM Strategic Management System

- VUM Strategic Development Plan: quality is embedded in VUM's **mission, vision, and values**, with quality assurance underpinning various of VUM's Strategic Goals
- Research and Development Strategy
- Human Resources Management Strategy
- Internationalisation Strategy
- Strategy for Development of Continuing and Vocational Training
- Marketing Strategy
- Strategy for E-learning Development and Digitalisation
- Internal Rules and Regulations.



Internal QA Legislation and Documentation at VUM

- QA System for Education and Training
- QA System for Research and Project Management
- QA for Human Resource Management
- QA System for Stakeholder Management
- QA System for Lifelong Learning
- Financial Management and Control System
- Annual reports
- URL: <https://vum.bg/bg/upravlenie-na-kachestvoto/>



Ethics and Academic Integrity at VUM

- Code of Ethics for VUM Academic and Administrative Staff and Students
- Rule and Regulations of the Ethics and Academic Integrity Committee
- Regulations for Prevention, Detection, and Sanctioning of Unethical Student Practices
- Regulations on Conducting Research and Development
- Regulations on Intellectual Property
- Code of Ethics for Stakeholder Management
- Code of Ethics for Lifelong Learning.



Architecture of the University's Governance and Quality Assurance System Monitoring System for Policies, Strategies, Processes and Results

Policy for QA: 1.2 Criterion

The HEI maintains **an internal QA** for education and teaching staff that incorporates **student feedback**.



Policy for QA: 1.2 Criterion

- **Effectiveness of the HEI's internal system** for assessing and maintaining education quality.
- **Ongoing monitoring and review of** regulations, teaching staff evaluations, QA and quality assessment system development, and the operation of educational programmes.
- The HEI has **effective procedures** for internal quality audits and a dedicated committee for QA coordination and oversight.
- Ratio of planned internal audit activities in HEI structural units to the those conducted over the last five years by the by the **Committee for Quality Assurance and Evaluation (COAE)**.



Policy for QA: 1.2 Criterion Evidence

- **Composition** of the CQAE.
- Annual **plans** and **reports** on activities carried out by CQAE.
- **Reports on the results of internal audits** regarding the annual quality assessment of educational activities
- Minutes from **training sessions and seminars** on the functioning of the HEI's QA system
- Minutes from **meetings of the HEI's governing bodies and faculties** where QA issues were discussed, and decisions were made.
- Well-documented results from the **follow-up control** on the implementation of decisions.



VUM Architecture of Governance and QA System

Quality Assurance and Evaluation Committee

- Governed by its Rules of Procedure, outlining its role in auditing and ensuring the quality teaching and research at VUM.
- Composed of a Chairman and 3 members.
- Publishes annual on VUM website.
- Responsible for assessing and analysing student feedback on the quality of VUM's teaching and research activities and operations.



VUM Architecture of Governance and QA System (2)

Ethics and Academic Integrity Committee

- Operates in accordance with the Ethics and Academic Integrity Committee's Rule and Regulations.
- Composed of a Chairman, 3 faculty members, and a student; none of the members belong to the Senior Academic Forum.
- Ensures compliance with VUM's Internal Rules and Regulations and the Code of Ethics for VUM Academic and Administrative Staff and Students.
- Exercises oversight and control functions.
- Monitors the legality of VUM's governing bodies' elections and the legitimacy of VUM budget expenditures.

VUM Architecture of Governance and QA System (3)

Operational Coordination and Control Committee

- A subsidiary body operating under the Assembly of Founders and Donors, responsible for ensuring effective financial management and control systems at VUM.
- Conducts internal quality control audits across key areas outside education and research, such as VUM internationalisation activities, project management, marketing, and administrative functions.



Monitoring System for Policies, Strategies, Processes, and Results



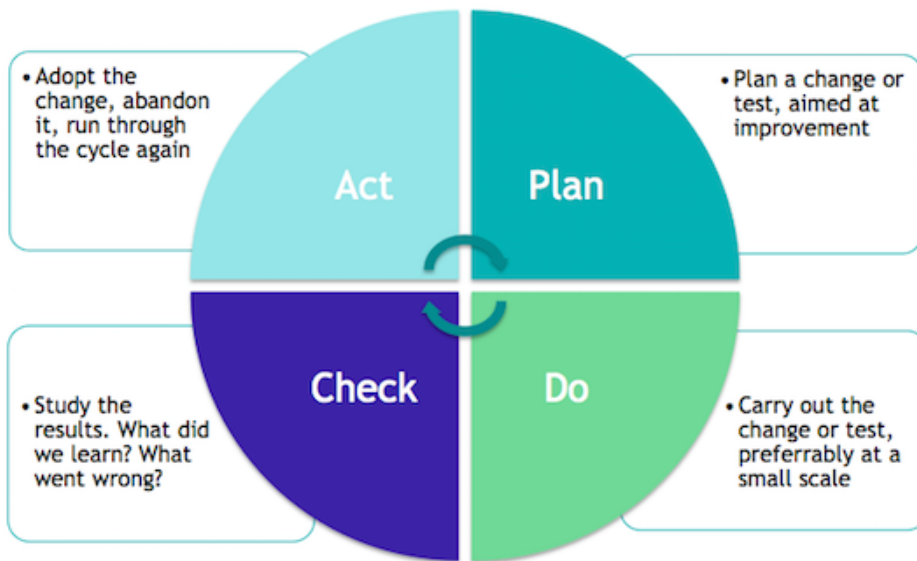


VUM Monitoring System for Policies, Strategies, Processes, and Results

- **Internal annual audits and reports** are conducted by VUM **Quality Assurance and Evaluation Committee** and published on VUM website.
- **Internal audits and reports** are also carried out by **VUM Programme Committees**, led by the respective Programme Directors
- **External** evaluations by **Cardiff Metropolitan University** include i) **audits of VUM curriculum documentation** for the upcoming academic year and ii) **quality audits** of previous academic years, conducted by the external examiner for each VUM study programme delivered under the VUM – Cardiff Metropolitan University Collaborative Provision Agreement.

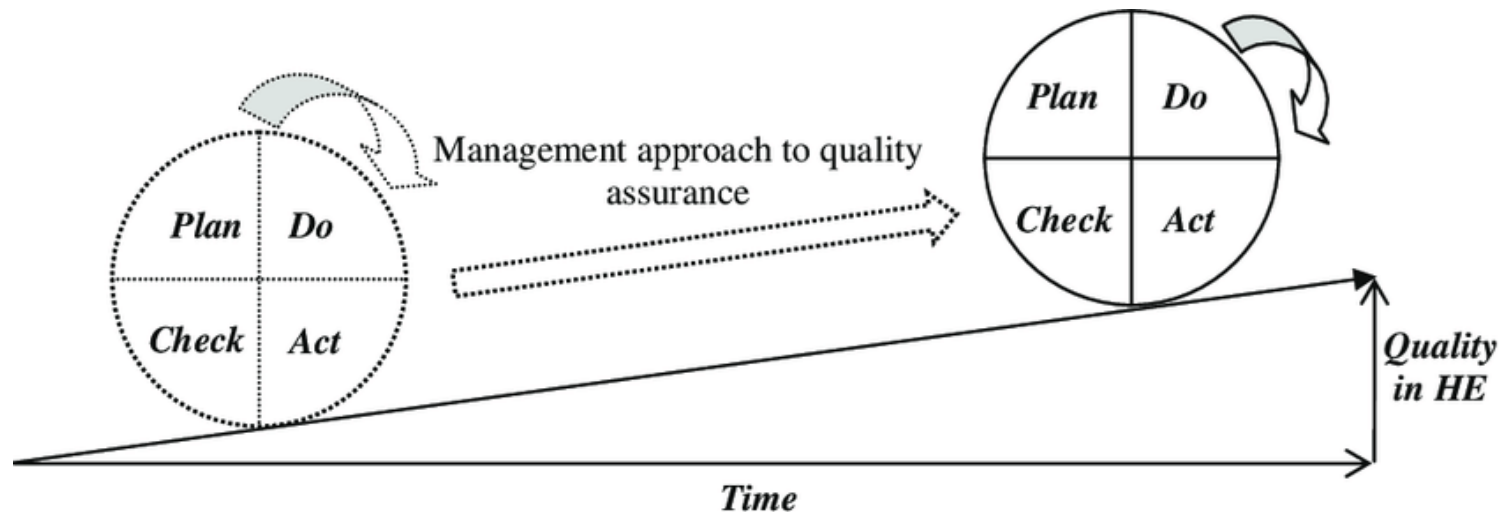


Plan – Do – Check - Act





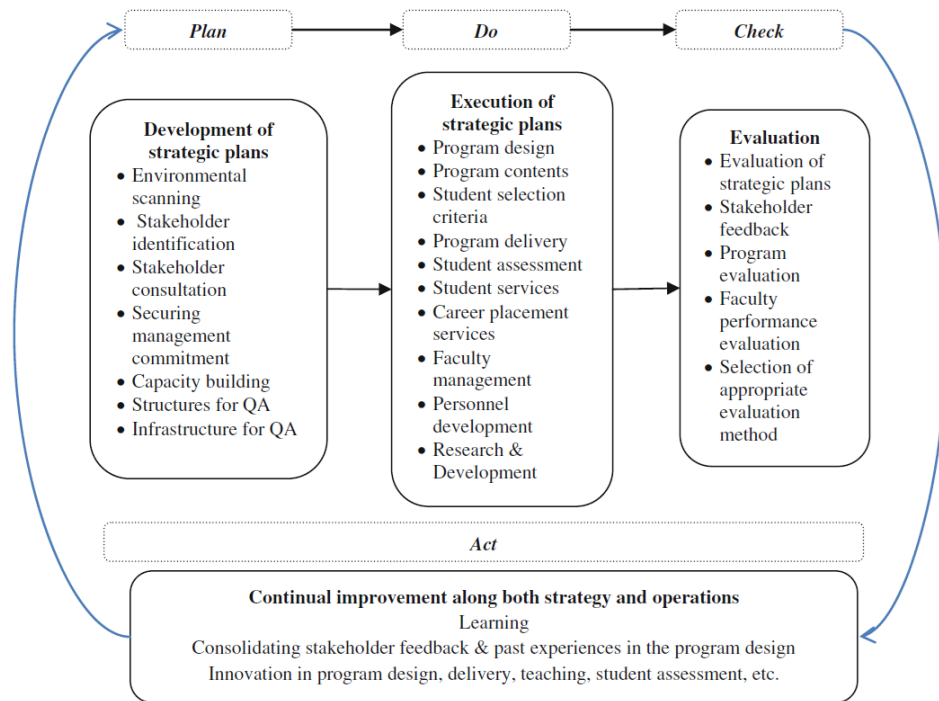
Plan – Do – Check – Act in HE



Asif, Muhammad & Raouf, Abdul. (2011). [Setting the course for quality assurance in higher education](#). Quality & Quantity. 47. 10.1007/s11135-011-9639-2.



Plan – Do – Check – Act in HE



Asif, Muhammad & Raouf, Abdul. (2011). [Setting the course for quality assurance in higher education](#). Quality & Quantity. 47. 10.1007/s11135-011-9639-2.



Funded by
the European Union



Thank you for your attention!

Quality Assurance for Reform and Transformation of HEIs in Uzbekistan - QUARTZ

Call: ERASMUS-EDU-2023-CBHE-STRAND-1

Project Number: 101127171