

Quality Management System at Adam Mickiewicz University

The Quality Management System (QMS) has been created to support self-development of AMU 14 faculties rather than to control them. The system is meant to be a signpost towards the Quality Culture, which is characterised by both a cultural/psychological aspect and structural/managerial component. It is crucial to distinguish between quality culture and quality assurance processes, which form a structural basis for the quality management system.

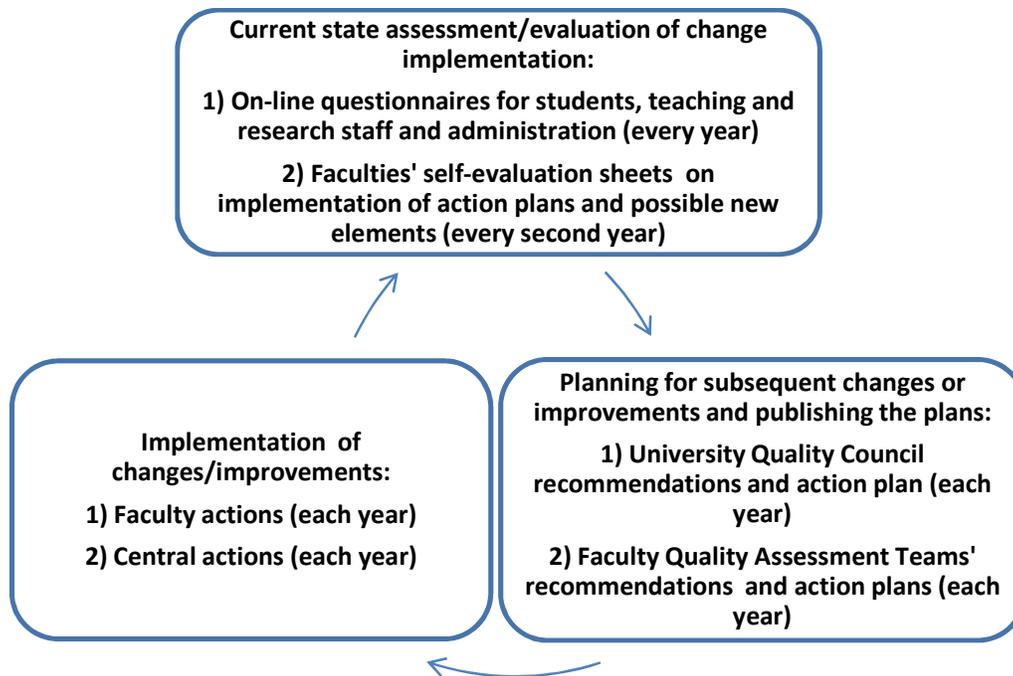
Description of the QMS at AMU: underlying principles, structure and procedures

Fostering the quality in education and all related services provided by the university is a challenging task in such a complex institution as AMU. Since a high level of research determines creativity and innovation of teaching staff at AMU, the question has arisen how to create a framework for quality assurance which, on the one hand, forces faculties and programme directors to engage in quality enhancement, and, on the other, leaves enough room for creativity and pursuing faculty's specific objectives. Therefore, the following questions have been asked:

- How to implement the Quality Management System while respecting and reflecting the principle of faculty autonomy?
- How flexible should the QMS be to preserve university diversity but align with the overall university mission, goals and culture?

As a result, pursuant to the decree of the Minister of Science and Higher Education of 12 July 2007 (Journal of Laws No. 164 § 3.1.) on education standards, the Development Strategy of Adam Mickiewicz University in Poznań for the period 2009-2019, and the Senate of Adam Mickiewicz University in Poznań Resolution No. 126/2010 of 25 January, the QMS has been created. Its main objective is to stimulate the quality enhancement in education and all related services provided by the university. The structure of QMS has been established at the university and faculty levels. At the university level the University Quality Council (UQC) has been set up, consisting of the Quality Assurance and Quality Assessment Committees. At the faculty level Faculty Quality Committees (FQC) have been created, comprising two teams: the Quality Assurance Team and Quality Assessment Team. The work of all bodies is coordinated by the Quality Council Office. Vice-Rector for Education is the supervisor of the system and Rector's Plenipotentiary for Quality Management chairs the work of all participants.

In order to fulfil the tasks set for the QMS at AMU, the following procedures have been introduced, based on an annually repeated cycle system of planning, doing, checking and acting (The Deming cycle):



It should be emphasized that the analysis of faculties' self-evaluation reports and questionnaires' results by the members of UQC and FQC is a process which is meant to be self-reflective and supportive rather than judgemental and comparative.

The results of these studies (in the form of recommendations and action plans) together with the reports are published on the AMU and faculties' web sites dedicated to quality assurance.

Description of the first quality cycle

The goal of the first cycle was to identify strong and weak points of education at AMU.

To this end:

- The first edition of an on-line questionnaire for students (including doctoral candidates) was conducted. The survey was accompanied by extensive promotional campaign (posters, leaflets) conducted in cooperation with the students' union.
- Faculties' self-evaluation sheets were prepared at the university level by UQC using a collegial approach, that is, in collaboration with the academic community, including students and in accordance with the mission and objectives of AMU. The main problem was to define the common performance indicators for evaluation of all the faculties which specialise in so different disciplines varying from the humanities to social and hard sciences. European Quality Assurance Standards and Guidelines (2005) were used as a starting point and

modified according to specific needs. The self-evaluation was conducted by quality assessment teams at faculties.

The whole process was accompanied by a range of conferences and workshops organized at AMU, on such topics as: the Bologna Process, European Higher Education Area, European and National Qualification Frameworks, internal and external quality assurance systems.

Results of the first quality cycle

17 % of students answered the questionnaire, which allowed to point to strengths and weaknesses of teaching and learning processes from the students' perspective. The results of faculties' self evaluation were not fully satisfactory, which might be the result of much statistical data required, perceived by the academic community as 'overburdening bureaucracy'. Nevertheless, these reports were also very insightful and helped UQC arrive at general conclusions. Much good practice in faculties could be identified on their basis. A wide discussion in the academic community concerning the need for changes in many activities of the faculties and university constituted an important added value.

On the basis of students' questionnaire and faculty evaluation sheets UQC prepared recommendations for change/improvement in various areas. They were general in nature and each faculty decided autonomously which actions were of priority. This information together with all the results were published on the University web site. In addition, central decisions were made concerning the requirement of description of all programmes in all faculties according to the Polish Qualification Framework, which is under discussion at present and will be implemented soon. Workshops dedicated to that topic were organised as a follow-up.