

OPERATIONALIZING QAA-HEC'S QUALITY ASSURANCE FRAMEWORK

1. Background

The Quality Assurance Agency of the Higher Education Commission (QAA-HEC) has introduced the Pakistan Precepts, Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance in Higher Education (PSG-2023), set to be effective from July 01, 2024. The PSG-2023 comprises of three main components, i.e., Review of the Effectiveness of Quality Assurance and Accreditation Bodies (REQAAB), Review of Institutional Performance and Enhancement (RIPE) and the Program Review for Effectiveness and Enhancement (PREE). However, only two, i.e., RIPE and PREE, are pertinent to the quality assurance mechanisms of Higher Education Institutions (HEIs).

2. Review of Institutional Performance and Enhancement (RIPE)

RIPE encompasses sixteen standards to evaluate an HEI's performance. These are;

- i. Standard 1: Vision, Mission, Goals and Strategic Planning
- ii. Standard 2: Governance, Leadership and Organization
- iii. Standard 3: Institutional Resources and Planning
- iv. Standard 4: Audit and Finance
- v. Standard 5: Affiliated Colleges/Institutions
- vi. Standard 6: Internationalization of Higher Education and Global Engagement
- vii. Standard 7: Faculty Recruitment, Development and Support Services
- viii. Standard 8: Academic Programs and Curricula
- ix. Standard 9: Admission, Progression, Assessment, and Certification
- x. Standard 10: Student Support Services
- xi. Standard 11: Impactful Teaching and Learning and Community Engagement
- xii. Standard 12: Research, Innovation, Entrepreneurship and Industrial Linkage
- xiii. Standard 13: Fairness and Integrity
- xiv. Standard 14: Public Information and Transparency
- xv. Standard 15: Institutional Effectiveness, Quality Assurance and Enhancement
- xvi. Standard 16: CQI and Cyclical External Quality Assurance

The judgment framework of RIPE defines four levels - Effective, Progressive, Ineffective, and Unclassified - for categorizing HEIs based on their performance against the standards. Following will be assessed to determine the category level of an HEI;

- i. Policies exist against each requirement of all standards
- ii. Policies are developed through consultative mechanisms
- iii. Policies are approved through provided statutory processes
- iv. Policies are widely disseminated among all relevant stakeholders
- v. Policies are implemented through effective arrangements

3. Program Review for Effectiveness and Enhancement (PREE)

PREE encompasses eight standards to assess all the academic programs being offered by an HEI. These are;

- i. Standard 1: Programme Mission, Objectives and Outcomes
- ii. Standard 2: Curriculum Design and Organization
- iii. Standard 3: Subject-Specific Facilities
- iv. Standard 4: Student Advising and Counselling
- v. Standard 5: Teaching Faculty/Staff
- vi. Standard 6: Institutional Policies and Process Control
- vii. Standard 7: Institutional Support and Facilities
- viii. Standard 8: Institutional General Requirements

The judgment framework of PREE outlines four outcomes - Approved, Approved with Recommendations, Approved with Conditions, and Unapproved - for categorizing programs based on their performance against the standards.

4. Implementing Quality Policy of the College

Following policy is proposed in this regard;

“At the Lahore School of Economics, our commitment to quality is ingrained in every aspect of our institution's operations, fostering an environment of continuous improvement and excellence. To uphold our commitment, we hereby establish the following Quality Policy:

- 1. Visionary Leadership and Strategic Planning**-The Lahore School of Economics is committed to being a leader in higher education by setting clear strategic objectives aligned with national priorities and the evolving needs of our stakeholders. This includes:
 - Developing a comprehensive strategic plan that outlines the vision, mission, and goals of the institution.
 - Regularly reviewing and updating the strategic plan to ensure it remains relevant and effective.
- 2. Inclusive Governance and Organizational Integrity**-The Lahore School of Economics maintains an inclusive governance structure that fosters transparency, accountability, and integrity. This includes:
 - Ensuring all governance structures and processes are transparent and inclusive.
 - Promoting ethical practices and decision-making at all levels of the institution.
- 3. Resource Optimization and Planning**-The Lahore School of Economics ensures effective utilization of all available resources, including financial, human, physical, and technological, to support its institutional mission and goals. This includes:
 - Developing and implementing comprehensive resource management plans.
 - Regularly reviewing resource utilization to ensure efficiency and effectiveness.
- 4. Financial Sustainability and Accountability**-The Lahore School of Economics prioritizes financial sustainability and accountability through robust auditing systems and prudent financial management. This includes:

- Implementing rigorous financial management and auditing procedures.
 - Ensuring transparency and accountability in all financial transactions and reporting.
- 5. Academic Excellence and Standards Assurance**-The Lahore School of Economics' academic programs adhere to national and international standards, with a focus on continuous improvement to meet the evolving needs of our students, employers, and society. This includes:
- Developing and implementing rigorous academic standards and assessment processes.
 - Regularly reviewing and updating academic programs to ensure they remain relevant and of high quality.
- 6. Student-Centric Approach and Support Services**-The Lahore School of Economics is committed to providing comprehensive support services that promote the holistic development and well-being of our students. This includes:
- Developing and implementing a wide range of student support services.
 - Regularly reviewing and updating student support services to ensure they meet the needs of our students.
- 7. Research, Innovation, and Community Outreach** -The Lahore School of Economics fosters a culture of research, innovation, and community outreach, encouraging meaningful contributions to societal advancement and economic development. This includes:
- Promoting and supporting research and innovation among faculty and students.
 - Engaging with the community to address local and national challenges.
- 8. Ethical Practices and Transparency**-The Lahore School of Economics upholds the highest ethical principles, ensuring fairness, integrity, and transparency in all its interactions with stakeholders. This includes:
- Developing and implementing comprehensive ethical guidelines and policies.
 - Ensuring all stakeholders are aware of and adhere to these guidelines and policies.
- 9. Continuous Improvement and Quality Enhancement**-The Lahore School of Economics embraces a culture of continuous improvement, implementing robust internal quality assurance mechanisms and participating in external quality reviews. This includes:
- Regularly conducting internal quality assurance reviews and assessments.
 - Participating in external quality assurance processes to benchmark and enhance institutional effectiveness.

10. Global Engagement and Collaboration-The Lahore School of Economics actively seeks opportunities for internationalization, fostering collaboration and academic exchange to enrich the educational experience and broaden the global perspectives of our stakeholders. This includes:

- Developing and maintaining international partnerships and collaborations.
- Promoting and supporting international academic exchange programs.

Aligning Quality Policy with RIPE & PREE

- i. **Visionary Leadership and Strategic Planning (Quality Policy I)**. Aligns with RIPE Standard 1 and PREE Standard 1 as all emphasize the importance of having a clear vision, mission, strategic objectives, and a plan to achieve these objectives.
- ii. **Inclusive Governance and Organizational Integrity (Quality Policy II)**. Aligns with RIPE Standard 2 and PREE Standard 6, highlighting the importance of governance structures that support integrity, transparency, and effective management.
- iii. **Resource Optimization and Planning (Quality Policy III)**. Aligns with RIPE Standards 3 and 7 and PREE Standards 3 and 7, ensuring that resources are utilized effectively to support institutional mission and goals.
- iv. **Financial Sustainability and Accountability (Quality Policy IV)**. Aligns with RIPE Standard 4 and partly with PREE Standard 7, both ensuring robust financial management and sustainability practices.
- v. **Academic Excellence and Standards Assurance (Quality Policy V)**. Aligns with RIPE Standards 5, 8 and 11 and PREE Standards 2 and 5, ensuring that academic programs meet rigorous standards and align with national/international benchmarks.
- vi. **Student-Centric Approach and Support Services (Quality Policy VI)**. Aligns with RIPE Standard 10 and PREE Standard 4, both emphasizing the provision of comprehensive support services to facilitate student success and well-being.
- vii. **Research, Innovation, and Community Outreach (Quality Policy VII)**. Aligns with RIPE Standard 12 and PREE Standard 8, promoting a culture of research and innovation that contributes to societal and economic needs.
- viii. **Ethical Practices and Transparency (Quality Policy VIII)**. Aligns with RIPE Standards 13 and 14 and PREE Standard 6, ensuring ethical conduct, fairness, transparency, and accessible complaint mechanisms.
- ix. **Continuous Improvement and Quality Enhancement (Quality Policy IX)**. Aligns with RIPE Standards 15 and 16 and PREE Standard 6, focusing on continuous quality improvement and participation in external quality reviews.
- x. **Global Engagement and Collaboration (Quality Policy X)**. Aligns with RIPE Standard 6 and PREE Standard 8, fostering international collaboration and adherence to global standards and best practices.

5. Proposal for Renaming the Quality Enhancement Cell (QEC)

The current designation of "Quality Enhancement Cell (QEC)" at the Lahore School of Economics primarily emphasizes the enhancement aspect of quality assurance. However, to fully align with the Pakistan Precepts, Standards, and Guidelines for Quality Assurance in Higher Education (PSG-2023) and to encapsulate the broader scope of responsibilities, it is proposed to rename the QEC to "Office of Quality Assurance and Institutional Effectiveness."

This change will serve multiple purposes:

- a. **Alignment with National Standards:** Adopting the terminology used in PSG-2023 ensures that the Lahore School of Economics' quality assurance practices are in line with national standards and expectations set forth by the Higher Education Commission (HEC).
- b. **Broadening the Scope:** The new name reflects a broader mandate that includes not only quality enhancement but also comprehensive quality assessment and institutional effectiveness, thereby encompassing all facets of PSG-2023.
- c. **Clarity and Perception:** The term "Office of Quality Assurance and Institutional Effectiveness" provides clarity to internal and external stakeholders about the office's role, reinforcing its pivotal position in driving quality and effectiveness across all institutional domains.
- d. **Strategic Focus:** The renaming aligns with the strategic goals of PSG-2023, emphasizing a systematic and proactive approach to quality assurance and institutional improvement.

6. Establishing a Quality Assurance Advisory Board

- i. **Composition:** The Quality Assurance Advisory Board (QAAB) will comprise a diverse group of stakeholders to ensure comprehensive oversight and expertise in the quality assurance processes at the Lahore School of Economics (LSE). The proposed composition is as follows:
 - Rector
 - Pro Rector
 - All Deans (Members)
 - Two HoDs from each Faculty for a term of two years to be nominated by the Rector on recommendation of respective Dean (Members)
 - Registrar (Member)
 - Controller of Examinations (Member)
 - Chief Financial Officer (Member)
 - Head Quality Enhancement Cell (Member)
 - Director Quality Enhancement Cell (Secretary-cum-Member)
 - One Alumni Representative, to be nominated by the Rector (Member)

- Two Student Representatives, to be nominated by the Rector on the recommendation of Director Quality Enhancement Cell (Members)

The Rector may add more members as deemed necessary, and such changes will be reported to the BOG at the next meeting.

ii. Terms of Reference:

a. Responsibilities in Relation to the Quality Policy:

- Guide the periodic revision of the Quality Policy to ensure it meets PSG-2023 standards.
- Recommend the revisions to Quality Policy for approval to the Board of Governors (BOG).
- Oversee the strategic implementation of the Quality Policy across all departments and programs.
- Ensure adequate resources and support structures are in place for effective implementation of the Quality Policy.
- Monitor compliance with the Quality Policy and PSG-2023 standards through regular audits and evaluations. For this purpose, compile and present annual compliance and performance reports to the Board of Governors.

b. Monitoring External Guidance and Requirements: Monitor all relevant external guidance and requirements related to quality assurance, initiating and coordinating appropriate actions.

c. Development and Review of Policies: Develop and keep under review the Lahore School of Economics' academic policies and quality assurance framework, including systems, policies, and guidance for assuring and enhancing the quality of students' learning experiences and maintaining academic standards.

d. Oversight of Information Accuracy: Oversee the Lahore School of Economics' approach to ensuring the completeness, accuracy, reliability, and fitness for purpose of information provided to applicants and students.

e. Academic and Student-Related Policy Oversight: Maintain operational oversight of academic and student-related policies and legislation, considering proposals for minor and operational legislative changes.

f. Program Review and Management: Consider proposals for the addition, withdrawal, suspension, and exceptional amendment of programs of study at the Lahore School of Economics. This will normally be undertaken by the chair's action for regular reporting to a subsequent meeting of the BOG.

g. Institutional Performance and Self-Assessment Reports: Ensure the preparation of the Institutional Performance and Self-Assessment Reports required for quality audits and reviews as per RIPE/PREE standards.

Operational Procedures:

- a. **Meetings:** The QAAB will meet at least once every quarter. Special meetings may be convened as needed by the Chairperson. Meeting agendas and relevant documents will be circulated at least one week in advance.
- b. **Decision-Making:** Decisions will be made by consensus where possible; otherwise, by majority vote. In case of a tie, the Chairperson will have the casting vote.
- c. **Quorum:** The quorum will consist of at least half of the members, including the Chairperson or Vice-Chairperson, with fractions being counted as one.
- d. **Sub-Committees:** The QAAB may establish sub-committees as necessary to address specific areas such as curriculum review, faculty development, and student services. Sub-committees will report their findings and recommendations to the QAAB.
- e. **Secretariat:** The Office of Quality Assurance and Institutional Effectiveness, formerly the Quality Enhancement Cell, will act as the secretariat of the QAAB.

By establishing the QAAB, the Lahore School of Economics aims to institutionalize a robust quality assurance framework that aligns with PSG-2023, ensuring sustained excellence in higher education and fostering a culture of continuous improvement.

Conclusion: Call for Approval by the Board of Governors

In conclusion, the implementation of the Pakistan Precepts, Standards, and Guidelines for Quality Assurance in Higher Education (PSG-2023) at the Lahore School of Economics represents a significant step towards aligning our institution with quality assurance standards. Given the critical importance of these initiatives for the future of the Lahore School of Economics, we respectfully seek the approval of the Board of Governors for the proposed Quality Policy, the renaming of the Quality Enhancement Cell, and the establishment of the Quality Assurance Advisory Board. Your kind approval will empower us to operationalize PSG-2023 effectively, positioning the Lahore School of Economics as a leader in higher education quality assurance, both nationally and internationally. We urge the Board of Governors to endorse these proposals, thereby reaffirming our shared commitment to excellence at the Lahore School of Economics.

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