



ASEAN
University
Network

AUN-QA

IQA Management

Toolkit

Version 1.3

ASEAN University Network
(AUN) Secretariat

AUN-QA IQA Management Toolkit

Version 1.3

ASEAN University Network

(AUN) Secretariat



Table of Contents

Foreword	1
Eight Building Blocks of University Quality Management	3
Acknowledgements	5
1-Minute Summary	7
3-Minute Summary	8
5-Minute Summary	9
Chapter 1: Leadership Commitment	11
1.1 Leadership Commitment as the Foundation of IQA	12
1.2 Integrating QA into Performance Evaluations	12
1.3 Regular Stakeholder Engagement and Monitoring	13
1.4 Building a Sustainable Quality Culture	13
Chapter 2: Styles of Implementation	14
2.1 The Role of Centralised QA Principles and Frameworks	15
2.2 Decentralised Implementation for Flexibility and Contextual Adaptation	15
2.3 Alignment Across Institutional Levels	16
2.4 Achieving Institutional Coherence and Innovation	17
Chapter 3: Vertical and Horizontal Alignment	18
3.1 Vertical Alignment: A Unified Direction	19
3.2 Horizontal Alignment: Bridging Departments and Units	21
3.3 The Impact of Alignment on Quality Improvement	22
Chapter 4: Integration and Simplification	23
4.1 The Need for Integration	24
4.2 Policy and Process Streamlining	24
4.3 Simplification	25
Chapter 5: Staffing and Capacity Building	26
5.1 Building a Competent QA Team	27
5.2 Integrating QA Training into Staff Induction	27
5.3 Continuous Capacity Building and Professional Development	28
5.4 Career Development and Incentives for QA Engagement	28
Chapter 6: Incentives and Recognition	29
6.1 Building a Sustainable Incentive Model	30
6.2 Recognition as a Driver for Quality Culture	31
Chapter 7: Leadership as the Driver of QA Culture	32
7.1 Embedding QA Across University Policies and Processes	33
7.2 Fostering a Culture Where Quality is Everyone’s Responsibility	33
7.3 Recognition and Incentives to Sustain QA Engagement	34

Chapter 8: Leveraging Rankings and Data	36
8.1 Benchmarking for Strategic Improvement	38
8.2 Data-Driven Decision-Making	38
8.3 Enhancing Global and Regional Recognition	39
Conclusion	39
Annex: IQA Resources	41

Foreword

The journey towards developing a robust Internal Quality Assurance (IQA) system across ASEAN universities has been a continuous process of learning, collaboration, and refinement. Recognising the challenges and gaps in existing IQA practices, this initiative has brought together key stakeholders to critically examine the barriers to effective quality assurance, leading to the creation of a structured and adaptable management toolkit that responds to the diverse needs of higher education institutions in the region.

The initial efforts were organised through the “AUN Internal Quality Assurance (IQA) System Design and Development Workshop” in 2023 and focused on understanding why IQA systems often fail to achieve their intended outcomes and impacts. Through collaboration with the Vietnam Education Quality Management Agency (VQA), the Ministry of Education and Training, and Vietnam National University Ho Chi Minh City (VNUHCM), key obstacles such as misaligned university policies, insufficient data management capabilities, and a weak quality culture were identified. These findings highlighted the need for a more coherent and context-sensitive approach to IQA, one that goes beyond regulatory compliance and fosters a culture of continuous improvement within institutions.

Building on these insights, the *AUN-QA Framework for Internal Quality Assurance (IQA) (2024)*, known hereafter as the *AUN-QA IQA Framework*, was developed in 2024 to provide universities with practical guidance for structuring their IQA systems. The framework emphasises four essential components: QA Organization and Policies, QA Systems and Processes, Data Analytics and Information Management, and Evaluation and Enhancement, all of which are designed to align with an institution’s strategic environment. Rather than imposing a rigid model, the Framework allows universities to adapt quality assurance principles to their unique missions, regulatory landscapes, and institutional priorities.

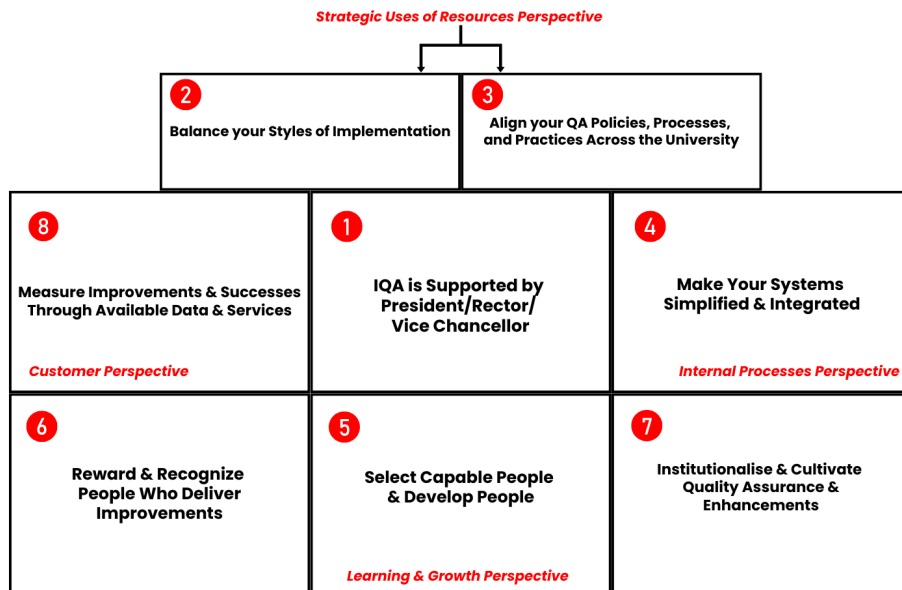
A significant milestone in this journey was achieved when Choltis Dhirathiti, the then Executive Director of AUN, set up and led the management consultancy arm of the AUN Secretariat and started the study on the successes of IQA practices in the selected leading universities in ASEAN. This led to the integration of real-world observations and best practices from leading universities in the region. Institutions such as Mahidol University (MU) in Thailand; the Universiti Malaya (UM) in Malaysia; De La Salle University (DLSU), Ateneo de Manila University (ADMU), and the University of Santo Tomas (UST) in the Philippines; and Industrial University Ho Chi Minh City (IUH) in Viet Nam, have provided valuable insights into how IQA can be effectively implemented in different educational settings. Their experiences have contributed to the refinement of quality assurance tools and strategies, ensuring that they are both practical and scalable.

The development of this *AUN-QA IQA Management Toolkit (2025)* represents the culmination of the insights from the "Why IQA Doesn't Work" systems diagram resulting from the 2023 workshop, the structured approach of the *AUN-QA IQA Framework* developed in 2024, and real-world implementation management from ASEAN universities. The goal of this *AUN-QA IQA Management Toolkit (2025)* is to ensure that IQA is not merely a procedural requirement but a fundamental driver of institutional development and high quality education across ASEAN. The *Toolkit* is made to be actionable, adaptable, and responsive to the evolving landscape of higher education, enabling universities to streamline their processes and embed quality assurance into their institutional cultures.

Based on the experiences and lessons learned from the six universities mentioned earlier, this *Toolkit* offers a list of practical implementation guides and suggestions on how effective quality management can be organised within a university.

This “management list” is summed up in what we call the **Eight Building Blocks of University Quality Management**, and it is presented in the diamond-shaped diagram shown below:

The Eight Building Blocks of University Quality Management



The Toolkit is to be used within AUN-QA IQA Framework (2024)

Eight Building Blocks of University Quality Management



The Eight Building Blocks of University Quality Management



To be clear, this *Toolkit* is not about the technicalities or principles of quality assurance in a narrow sense. It is not about academic quality control or inspection checklists. It is not about total quality management systems or quality awards that some universities may pursue. And it is not about external quality standards imposed on universities from time to time, where quality assurance is treated as a one-off task, placed under the responsibility of a dedicated QA unit or department.

What this *Toolkit* focuses on is **how to set up, develop, and sustain** an internal quality assurance system and its practices. It does so by embedding IQA into your university's main strategies and by organising quality as a proactive and dynamic process throughout the entire university.

Within the *Toolkit*, you will find practical principles, implementation approaches, and adaptable methods and tools for managing academic quality in your institution.

We hope that **version 1.3 of the *AUN-QA IQA Management Toolkit (2025)*** will become one of your most trusted companions on your journey towards academic quality excellence.

Whatever quality standards you follow, whatever strategic direction your university is taking, and whatever excellence frameworks you aim to achieve, **this *Toolkit* is here to support you.**

Choltis Dhirathiti, Ph.D.
Centre Director, SEAMEO Regional Centre for Higher
Education and Development (SEAMEO RIHED)

Associate Professor Dr. Thanapan Laiprakobsup
Executive Director, ASEAN University Network (AUN)

Korn Ratanagosoom
First Officer, ASEAN University Network (AUN)
Secretariat

Bangkok
August 2025

Acknowledgements

The development of the AUN-QA Internal Quality Assurance (IQA) *Management Toolkit (2025)* has been a collaborative journey shaped by the insights, experiences, and commitment of our AUN-QA Member Universities, their university leaders, quality assurance practitioners, international relations' personnel and staff, Ministry of Education and Training, Viet Nam, our AUN-QA Quality Masters, AUN-QA Experts, AUN-QA Assessors, Special Advisors to the AUN Executive Director, QA partners and QA experts across ASEAN and beyond.

We deeply thank the Vietnam Education Quality Management Agency (VQA), Ministry of Education and Training of Vietnam (MOET) and Vietnam National University, Ho Chi Minh City (VNUHCM) for the invaluable support and organisation of the “AUN Internal Quality Assurance (IQA) System Design and Development Workshop” which took place from 24 to 26 April 2023 in Viet Nam. We extend our deepest appreciation to our AUN-QA Member Universities, whose candid reflections and engagement laid the foundation for identifying the systemic challenges faced by institutions and for envisioning new approaches. Their contributions in mapping the dynamics of internal QA provided the intellectual spark that guided this entire initiative. We would like to also thank Dr. Glòria González Anadón, Mr. Johnson Ong Chee Bin, Assoc. Prof. Dr. Kamolwan Lueprasert, and Dr. Miquel Vidal, for their expertise and perspectives during the workshop. Our appreciation is also extended to our local facilitators: Dr. Nguyen Quoc Chinh, Assoc. Prof. Dr. Le Quang Minh, Dr. Nghiem Xuan Huy, Assoc. Prof. Dr. Pham Van Tuan, Assoc. Prof. Dr. Hoang Dao Bao Tram, Dr. Luong Thị Hồng Gấm, and Dr. Nguyen Truong Sa for their support and contribution during the workshop.

Our sincere thanks also go to the members of the AUN-QA IQA Taskforce (Assoc. Prof. Dr. Tan Kay Chuan from National University of Singapore; Prof. Dr. Raymund Sison from De La Salle University; Prof. Dr. Satria Bijaksana from Institut Teknologi Bandung; and Assoc. Prof. Dr. Ngo Van Thuyen from Ho Chi Minh City University of Technology and Education) and the AUN-QA IQA Model Revision Working Group (Dr. Arnulfo P. Azcarraga from De La Salle University; Prof. Dr. Satria Bijaksana from Institut Teknologi Bandung; Prof. Dr. Suzeini Binti Abd Halim from Malaysia; Assoc. Prof. Chavalit Wongse-ek, Mahidol University from Thailand; Prof. Dr. Wyona C. Patalinghug from De La Salle University; and Assoc. Prof. Dr. Ngo Van Thuyen from Ho Chi Minh City University of Technology and Education), for the development of the *AUN-QA IQA Framework (2024)*, whose work provided the conceptual clarity and strategic components that can serve as a point of reference for the AUN-QA Member Universities. Their efforts helped articulate a shared regional understanding of how IQA can support institutional transformation.

We are especially grateful to the universities that generously shared their models, practices, and lessons learned, including Mahidol University, Universiti Malaya, De La Salle University,

Ateneo de Manila University, the University of Santo Tomas, and the Industrial University of Ho Chi Minh City. Their real-world examples bring the *AUN-QA IQA Management Toolkit (2025)* to life and offer inspiration for institutions seeking to localise and adapt internal QA systems.

We would also like to extend our sincere appreciation to Dr. Robyn Phillips, Director of XBorder Projects, whose expert review of *AUN-QA IQA Management Toolkit Version 1.0* provided valuable insights and thoughtful revisions. Her contributions have significantly strengthened the clarity, rigour, and overall quality of this *Toolkit*.

Additionally we would like to offer our most heartfelt gratitude to Assoc. Prof. Dr. Ngo Van Thuyen, Robyn Phillips, Prof. Dr. Satria Bijaksana, and Assoc. Prof. Dr. Tan Kay Chuan, for their commitment throughout the past years that resulted in this *AUN-QA IQA Management Toolkit (2025)*. Without their input, guidance and insights, this would not have been possible.

Lastly, we would like to acknowledge the contribution by the AUN Secretariat team (Mr. Korn Ratanagosoom, First Officer and Chief Strategy; Ms. Ing-orn Jeeraruensak, Chief Quality Assurance and Senior Programme Officer; Mr. Aldert de Vries, LL. M., LL. B., Programme Officer; Ms. Chanapatr Changprasert, Programme Officer; Mr. Gaetan Guichard Sutthanunt, Head Policy Analyst and Programme Officer; Mr. Panupong Sriudom, Assistant Chief Quality Assurance and Programme Officer; Ms. Sirapat Ardkla, Programme Officer; and Ms. Sasibhatra Kongsumrit, Programme Officer) that made this *AUN-QA IQA Management Toolkit (2025)* possible.

This resource reflects a shared regional effort to build internal quality assurance systems that are not only technically sound but also contextually relevant, inclusive, and sustainable. We hope it serves as a useful reference for universities across ASEAN as they continue their journeys toward institutional excellence and meaningful and practical quality improvement.

If you have...

...1 minute to read the *Toolkit* (a 1-minute summary)

The *AUN-QA IQA Management Toolkit (2025)* is a practical implementation guide to set up, develop, sustain, and enhance quality management in your university. The *Toolkit* is **not** about the technicalities or principles of quality assurance in a narrow sense. It is made to be actionable, adaptable, and responsive to the evolving landscape of higher education, enabling your university to streamline your processes and embed quality assurance into the institutional cultures. The goal of this *Toolkit* is to ensure that IQA is not merely a procedural requirement but a fundamental driver for your university's continuous development. The *Toolkit* offers a list of eight interdependent building blocks of university quality management of equal importance. The [Eight Building Blocks of University Quality Management](#) present 8 sets of tools and convey the linkages among these 8 toolsets. All the tools must be working together to push for the success; and the diamond is also useful for evaluating the progress of the quality mission. Whatever quality standards you follow, whatever strategic direction your university is taking, and whatever excellence frameworks you aim to achieve, this *Toolkit* can be your trusted companion on your journey towards academic quality excellence.

...3 minutes to read the *Toolkit* (a 3-minute summary)

The *AUN-QA IQA Management Toolkit (2025)* is a practical, adaptable, and actionable guide for setting up, developing, sustaining, and enhancing quality management in universities. Rather than focusing on the narrow technicalities of quality assurance (QA), it embeds QA into institutional culture so it becomes a fundamental driver of continuous improvement. At its heart are the [**Eight Building Blocks of University Quality Management**](#): a set of interconnected tools, each of equal importance, represented in the *Toolkit*'s diamond framework. The diamond shows how all blocks must work together to achieve lasting success, and it is also a valuable tool for evaluating the progress of your university's quality mission.

The *Toolkit* begins with **leadership commitment**, ensuring that quality is championed from the top and woven into strategic planning, policies, and decision-making. It promotes a **balance between centralised and decentralised implementation**, where central frameworks ensure coherence while faculties and departments adapt approaches to their specific contexts. **Vertical alignment** then ensures institutional strategies flow down to every faculty, department, and individual, while **horizontal alignment** connects peer units to share data, resources, and good practices, avoiding duplication.

Integration and simplification streamline policies, processes, and language so that the QA system is both comprehensive and easy to use. The **people dimension** is equally critical: selecting and training capable QA practitioners, building QA into staff induction, and providing ongoing development. **Incentives and recognition**, whether financial or non-financial, keep staff engaged in QA efforts. Finally, **data and benchmarking** enable informed decision-making, goal-setting, and monitoring, drawing from both internal indicators and external rankings.

Each building block reinforces each other: leadership empowers people, alignment strengthens integration, data informs action, and recognition sustains culture. Whatever standards or frameworks your university follows, this *Toolkit* can serve as your trusted companion on the journey to academic quality excellence.

...5 minutes to read the *Toolkit* (a 5-minute summary)

The *AUN-QA IQA Management Toolkit (2025)* is designed as a practical, adaptable, and culturally embedded resource to help universities move beyond compliance checklists and build internal quality assurance (IQA) systems that truly drive continuous institutional development. Its purpose is to make QA an integral, proactive part of everyday operations which is aligned with strategic goals, rather than an isolated administrative function.

At the core of the *Toolkit* are the [Eight Building Blocks of University Quality Management](#), each of **equal importance**, represented in the diamond framework. The diamond shows not only how these building blocks work together as an interconnected system but also serves as a practical tool for evaluating the progress of your university's quality mission.

It starts with **leadership commitment**, where top-level advocacy ensures QA is a strategic priority integrated into governance, policies, and performance evaluations. This leads into **balanced implementation**: centralised frameworks provide institution-wide coherence, while decentralised flexibility allows faculties and departments to tailor approaches to their disciplines and contexts.

Vertical alignment cascades institutional goals down to every academic and administrative level, ensuring clarity and accountability. **Horizontal alignment** fosters collaboration between peer units, enabling shared objectives, coordinated action, and effective use of resources. These alignments make sure policies are applied consistently and meaningfully across the institution.

Integration and simplification bring together all core components; QA organisation and policies, systems and processes, data analytics, and evaluation; into a clear, accessible structure. Simplifying language, removing redundancies, and leveraging digital tools make the system more user-friendly and efficient.

The *Toolkit* also stresses the importance of **people**: building a competent QA team, integrating QA training into staff induction, and investing in continuous professional development. **Incentives and recognition**, from promotions and awards to public acknowledgment, encourage sustained participation in QA activities.

Lastly, **data and benchmarking** give QA its evidence base. Internal dashboards track real-time performance indicators, guiding timely interventions, while external rankings and peer comparisons help set realistic targets and enhance institutional visibility.

In this interconnected system, leadership fuels alignment, alignment supports integration, integration empowers people, people sustain culture through recognition, and data guides continuous improvement. By applying all **Eight Building Blocks of University Quality**

Management together, the *Toolkit* becomes a trusted companion for embedding quality excellence across your university.

Chapter 1:

Leadership

Commitment

The effective implementation of Internal Quality Assurance (IQA) in higher education institutions requires effective leadership: a strong commitment at all levels. A genuine commitment by university administrators, including Presidents/Rectors/Vice Chancellors, is crucial in ensuring that quality assurance (QA) is embedded in the university's overall strategies or strategic plan. The commitment of leadership not only provides direction but also fosters a culture where quality assurance is prioritised and actively integrated into institutional governance and management.

1.1 Leadership Commitment as the Foundation of IQA

The key insights from the “AUN Internal Quality Assurance (IQA) Insights Sharing Visits” emphasise that the commitment of university leadership is the foundation for a thriving quality assurance ecosystem. The President’s/Rector’s/Vice Chancellor’s mandate plays a decisive role in the successful implementation of an IQA system and Quality Standardization efforts. It is through their explicit endorsement and advocacy that quality assurance becomes an institutional priority rather than a compliance-driven function.

To operationalise QA policies and strategies effectively, it is recommended that the Vice President, Vice Rector, or Deputy Vice Chancellor be formally authorised to oversee their implementation and ensure alignment across units. This delegation of authority from the President/Rector/Vice Chancellor ensures that QA policies are not only developed but also actively implemented and monitored within academic and administrative structures.

1.2 Integrating QA into Performance Evaluations

One of the key mechanisms in embedding quality assurance within the university is linking QA outputs and outcomes to performance evaluations of university staff. Leaders should establish policies where the results of QA policies and strategies directly impact staff performance assessments, promotions, and rewards.

By making QA an integral part of performance evaluations, universities reinforce a culture of accountability and continuous improvement. “Accountability” refers to assigning clear responsibilities and expectations to those involved in the quality assurance processes. When staff know that their QA outputs and outcomes will be measured and rewarded, they are more likely to take ownership of their roles and strive for excellence. This approach ensures that all academic and support staff recognise the value of quality education and quality assurance and actively contribute to the institution’s overall QA objectives.

1.3 Regular Stakeholder Engagement and Monitoring

Effective leadership also involves continuous engagement with internal stakeholders to drive the implementation of university quality assurance policies. Engagement refers to ensuring the active participation and feedback from all relevant stakeholders (whether QA practitioner, academic and support staff, or other staff) within the process. This may be done through regular meetings with key stakeholders; such as academic and support staff, QA practitioners, and administrative leaders; to help monitor progress, address challenges, and exchange feedback. This structured dialogue approach ensures that QA processes are dynamic and responsive to the needs of all people involved.

Moreover, the university should establish a formal structure to facilitate effective coordination between different academic and administrative units. This can be achieved through mechanisms such as university-wide QA committees, advisory panels, and feedback mechanisms that allow for the continuous engagements to drive QA practices based on the real-time university data and stakeholder inputs.

1.4 Building a Sustainable Quality Culture

Beyond university policies and strategies, the commitment of leadership must also be reflected in fostering a truly sustainable culture of continuous improvement within the institution. This involves:

- Integrating QA into all university activities and decision-making processes.
- Encouraging and incentivising faculty and staff to participate in QA initiatives through recognition programmes, career development opportunities, and financial incentives.
- Ensuring clear communication of QA policies, objectives, and targets across all levels of the university.

The *AUN-QA IQA Framework (2024)* highlights that institutions with mature QA systems have successfully cultivated a culture where quality assurance and enhancement is viewed as an ongoing institutional priority rather than a periodic assessment exercise.

Chapter 2:

Styles of

Implementation

Ensuring consistency in the management or implementation of Quality Assurance (QA) across a university requires a well-designed organisation structure that **balances** central oversight with localised flexibility. AUN-QA's approach to Internal Quality Assurance (IQA) emphasises a centralised system i.e. a set of principles, rules, frameworks, or guidelines that provide coherence and reasonable control across the university while allowing faculties, departments, and academic units the autonomy to tailor implementation according to their specific needs and contexts. This balance is essential for institutional effectiveness, ensuring alignment of QA policies with the university's strategic objectives while fostering localised innovation on their own quality improvement and enhancement.

2.1 The Role of Centralised QA Principles and Frameworks

A university's centralised QA policies and framework ensures that all faculties and departments operate under a common set of standards, policies, and procedures that define expectations for quality education, research, and services. By establishing these principles at the institutional level, universities provide a structured and unified approach to quality assurance, reducing inconsistencies and ensuring that all academic and administrative units adhere to shared institutional values and objectives on high quality education.

The *AUN-QA IQA Framework (2024)* outlines that universities should have clearly defined QA policies that align with their Vision-Mission, national regulatory requirements, and international good practices. These policies serve as a foundation for all quality assurance activities, ensuring consistency and results across the university while also integrating internal and external quality assurance mechanisms.

2.2 Decentralised Implementation for Flexibility and Contextual Adaptation

While centralization ensures consistency and results, a rigid top-down approach may not be suitable for diverse needs of academic disciplines and operational effectiveness. Decentralization in QA implementation allows faculties, departments, and units to adapt the overarching framework to their specific contexts, ensuring relevance and results.

For instance:

- Faculties and departments can develop customised QA procedures that align with their academic disciplines while maintaining compliance with central institutional guidelines.
- Academic programmes with specific accreditation or regulatory requirements can tailor their assessment processes to meet discipline-specific quality standards.
- Units can implement localised feedback mechanisms to ensure continuous improvement in teaching, learning, and research based on their unique student and faculty needs.

This decentralised approach is particularly beneficial in institutions with multiple campuses or diverse academic disciplines, where a one-size-fits-all model would be ineffective. Instead of enforcing uniform QA procedures, universities can establish guiding principles that allow academic units to implement quality assurance in ways that best suit their unique situations.

2.3 Alignment Across Institutional Levels

To maintain coherence between central policies and faculty-level adaptations, it is strongly advisable that the university establish effective systematic alignment of quality assurance practices across the university. The good practices observed from the “AUN Internal Quality Assurance (IQA) Insights Sharing Visits” highlighted that the integrated approach to QA ensures the alignment between faculty and department policies and procedures with institutional frameworks, creating a seamless quality assurance ecosystem.

Examples of mechanisms that can support this integration include, but are not limited to:

- **QA Committees and Task Forces:** University-wide QA committees can oversee quality management while faculty-based QA teams handle localised implementation.
- **Standardised Reporting Mechanisms:** While faculties and departments have flexibility in implementation, they should report their QA activities and assessment results using a standardised institutional reporting system.
- **Cross-Level Coordination Meetings:** Regular meetings between central QA offices and faculty-level QA coordinators help align local adaptations with university-wide objectives.

- **Digital QA Systems:** A centralised digital platform for data analytics and quality monitoring can streamline reporting while allowing faculties to manage their localised QA processes.

This alignment is explored further in detail within *Chapter 3: Vertical and Horizontal Alignment*.

2.4 Achieving Institutional Coherence and Innovation

The balance between centralization and decentralization ensures that QA efforts are both institutionally coherent and contextually adaptable. A centralised framework provides the necessary oversight and alignment, while decentralised implementation fosters ownership, engagement, and responsiveness among faculties and departments.

Successful cases of IQA management and practices in our region show that universities that effectively integrate this dual approach benefit from:

- Improved compliance with accreditation and regulatory requirements.
- Greater adaptability to evolving academic and industry trends.
- Enhanced faculty and staff engagement in quality assurance initiatives.
- A dynamic quality culture that supports continuous improvement across all levels of the institution.

By designing QA systems with a structured yet flexible approach, universities can ensure quality education and institutional excellence while empowering academic units to innovate and refine their quality assurance processes in alignment with their specific situation and needs.

Chapter 3:

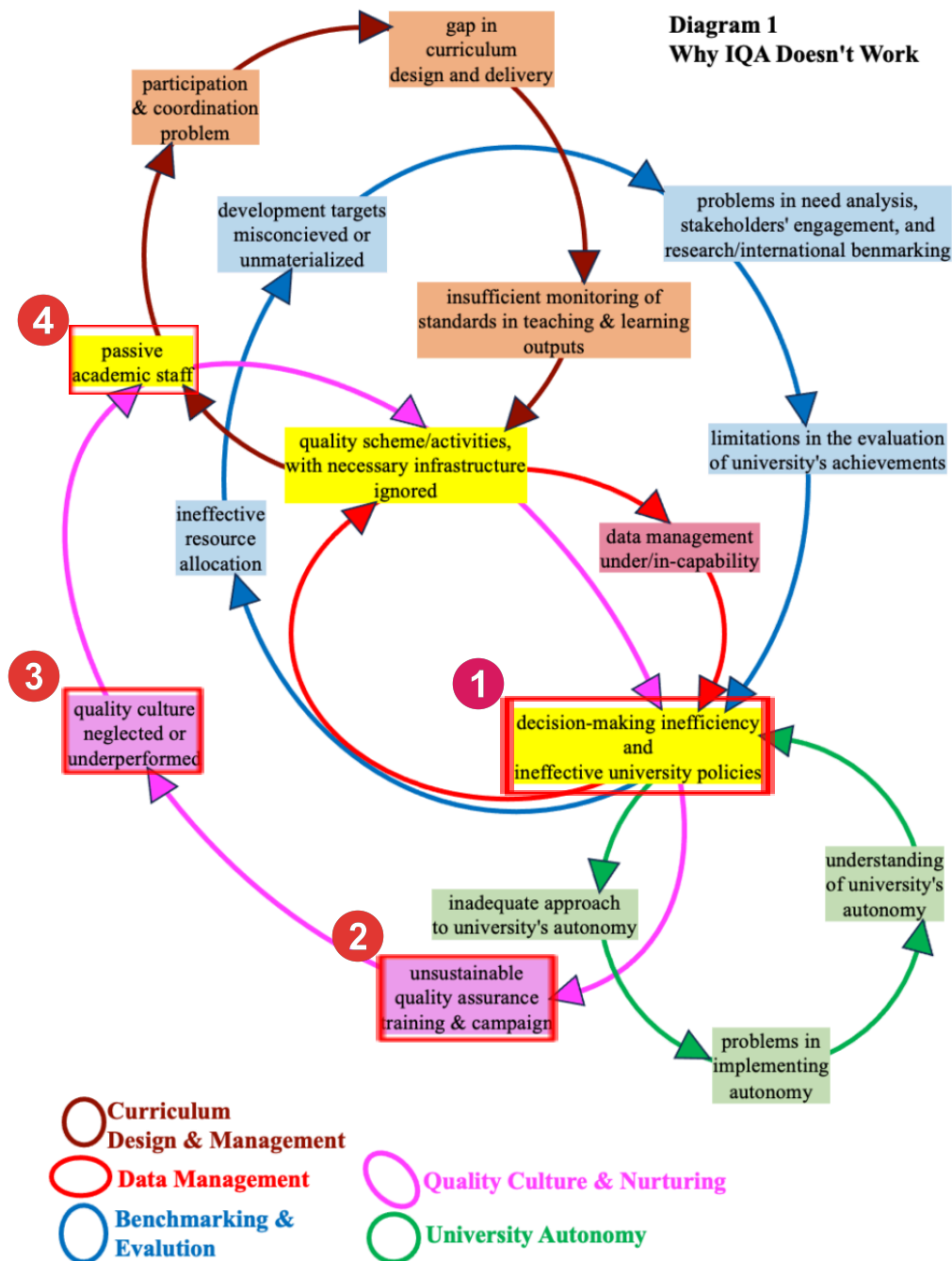
**Vertical and
Horizontal Alignment**

The Internal Quality Assurance (IQA) system must function cohesively across all levels of the university. This means ensuring that the IQA System is functioning institutionally, and that QA policies and processes align both vertically across institutional, faculty, and departmental levels, and horizontally across different departments and academic units. This alignment requires cohesion and collaboration.

3.1 Vertical Alignment: A Unified Direction

Vertical alignment refers to the seamless integration of the university's centralised QA policies and framework from the highest level down to the individual staff at faculty and department level. The *AUN-QA IQA Framework (2024)* and key insights from the "AUN Internal Quality Assurance (IQA) Insights Sharing Visits" emphasise that QA policies must be embedded into the university's vision and strategies, ensuring that institutional goals trickle down effectively into faculty-specific and departmental objectives and targets.

As illustrated in the "Why IQA Doesn't Work" diagram from the *Report of the Redesigning of University IQA System (Version 1.0) (2023)*, when vertical alignment is weak, gaps emerge. Weak vertical alignment leads to (1) decision-making inefficiency and ineffective university policies. This results in (2) unsustainable quality assurance training and campaigns. As a result, (3) the cultivation of a quality culture is neglected or underperformed, and (4) academic staff become passive in their engagement. In this cycle, passive academic and support staff demonstrate a failure to integrate institutional goals into faculty and department practices. If academic and support staff are not actively engaged in quality improvement due to lack of incentives or unclear policies, the institution-wide objectives remain unimplemented at the ground level.



Strong vertical alignment is then crucial to ensure institution-wide coherence, where the university leadership sets clear expectations, allocates necessary resources, and ensures that every faculty and department follows a unified quality assurance direction (i.e. university's quality policies and strategies). Moreover, by integrating QA into the university decision-making system, institutions can create an ecosystem where policies are not just imposed but become an intrinsic part of decision-making and daily operations. For instance, a university's strategic plan

may outline institution-wide goals for improving Outcome-Based Education (OBE) as was observed at Mahidol University, De La Salle University, and University of Santo Tomas. In a well-aligned system, these goals are translated into faculty-level curricula adjustments and departmental-level implementation strategies, ensuring that OBE is applied consistently and effectively throughout the institution.

Good practices gained from the “AUN Internal Quality Assurance (IQA) Insights Sharing Visits” suggest that the university should provide structured regular and systematic training programmes for QA practitioners, academic staff, and support staff. The insights have also shown that the university should establish performance-based incentives to facilitate adoption of QA at all levels.

3.2 Horizontal Alignment: Bridging Departments and Units

While vertical alignment ensures that QA policies and strategies cascade effectively, horizontal alignment is equally important to maintain consistent synergy across different academic and administrative units of the same level. Often, faculties and departments operate independently, leading to unrelated and resource-wasting QA practices that impact overall institutional coherence. Institutional coherence and communication is important because it ensures that all units (i.e. academic, administrative, and support services) are working toward shared quality objectives. Without it, even well-designed QA policies can fail in practice, as inconsistent approaches between units may lead to duplicated efforts, misaligned priorities, and uneven implementation across the institution.

The university should foster collaborative quality management, where faculties, departments, and administrative units engage in shared QA practices and data exchange. This guarantees that resources, good practices, and innovations in quality assurance and enhancement are not confined to isolated units but benefit the university as a whole.

A key element of this process is leveraging Data Analytics and Information Management, ensuring that real-time data and performance indicators are accessible across departments for benchmarking and strategic decision-making.

However, as seen in the "Why IQA Doesn't Work" diagram mentioned earlier, ineffective horizontal alignment results in data management under/in-capability, leading to several other problems in IQA implementation and management. If departments do not share quality assurance data, they cannot collectively identify gaps and develop improvement strategies. Likewise,

without cross-department collaboration, faculties may struggle to implement reforms that require interdisciplinary input, further exacerbating inefficiencies.

3.3 The Impact of Alignment on Quality Improvement

When vertical and horizontal alignment are effectively implemented, they create a self-reinforcing cycle of quality enhancement. Vertical alignment ensures policy coherence and accountability, while horizontal alignment fosters collaboration, resource optimization, and innovation sharing. Together, to repeat the key points, these dimensions of alignment allow university to:

- Reduce inconsistencies in QA implementation across faculties and departments.
- Facilitate knowledge-sharing and capacity-building initiatives.
- Enhance responsiveness to emerging challenges in higher education.
- Streamline data-driven decision-making for continuous improvement.

Chapter 4:

**Integration and
Simplification**

Universities often struggle with complex, overlapping, or redundant policies and processes that create confusion rather than clarity and efficiency. Thus, in order for Internal Quality Assurance (IQA) to function well in the university, all the processes and mechanisms of the IQA system need to be both comprehensive and comprehensible. To ensure sustainable and impactful quality assurance practices, integration and simplification of university's IQA policies and processes and mechanisms are essential.

Many past failures in IQA implementation stemmed from fragmented policies, unclear terminology, and a lack of streamlined coordination.

Addressing these problems requires a structured approach that eliminates inefficiencies while fostering engagement and accountability.

4.1 The Need for Integration

The *AUN-QA IQA Framework (2024)* emphasises that IQA should not function in isolation but as an embedded system within the broader university management system. The *AUN-QA IQA Framework (2024)* identifies four key components essential for a robust IQA system:

1. **QA Organization and Policies**
2. **QA Systems and Processes**
3. **Data Analytics and Information Management**
4. **Evaluation and Enhancement**

Each of these components must interact dynamically to ensure a seamless quality assurance process that aligns with institutional goals, stakeholder expectations, and regulatory requirements. The university should strive for integration of these components, where IQA policies and practices are aligned vertically (across institutional levels) and horizontally (across departments and faculties) as reflected within the *Chapter 3: Vertical and Horizontal Alignment*.

4.2 Policy and Process Streamlining

To enhance clarity and efficiency, the university should:

- **Use clear and concise language in policies and guidelines**, avoid unnecessary ambiguous terminology.
- **Develop centralised frameworks with decentralised implementation**, to ensure consistency while allowing faculties and departments the flexibility to adapt QA

processes to their specific needs and situations.

- **Reduce procedural redundancies** by identifying overlapping tasks and consolidating them into streamlined workflows.
- **Leverage digital tools** to automate administrative processes, such as data collection, reporting, and documentation, thereby minimising manual workload and human errors.
- **Design internal software tools** to manage curriculum mapping, CLO/PLO alignment, and data dashboards. These tools offer an institutional model for digital integration of QA that simplifies data tracking and supports faculties' and departments' autonomy.

4.3 Simplification

The effectiveness of an IQA system also depends on how accessible and understandable it is to all stakeholders, including the QA unit, faculty, department, and staff. One of the key recommendations from the “AUN Internal Quality Assurance (IQA) Insights Sharing Visits” is the **elimination of unnecessary complexity in policies and processes**. Simplifying technical jargon and making quality assurance mechanisms more user-friendly increases engagement and ownership among different stakeholders.

One example of this is the simplification of **OBE** terminology. While OBE is an essential pedagogical approach, many educators struggle with its implementation due to the technical language used to describe learning outcomes, assessment criteria, and performance indicators. Overly technical terminology around learning outcomes and assessment criteria often creates confusion. One of the ways De La Salle University (DLSU) tackles this issue is through creating and implementing a simplified *IQA for Busy People* guide. The guide allows QA practitioners to quickly go through basic elements of the IQA system with simplified terminologies as applied within DLSU. DLSU also simplifies their information requests forms and processes to streamline data collection and minimise workload for their QA practitioners.

Chapter 5:

**Staffing and Capacity
Building**

The effectiveness of a university's Internal Quality Assurance (IQA) system depends on selecting the capable QA practitioners and regularly developing them. The insights gathered from the "AUN Internal Quality Assurance (IQA) Insights Sharing Visits" emphasise that for QA implementation to be successful, universities must invest in staffing and capacity-building efforts. This involves ensuring that QA practitioners are well-trained, adequately supported, and continuously developed to sustain a culture of quality improvement.

5.1 Building a Competent QA Team

A strong QA system begins with appointing the right individuals to design, implement, and monitor quality assurance processes. The good practices observed from the "AUN Internal Quality Assurance (IQA) Insights Sharing Visits" underscore the importance of having qualified and experienced staff in key QA roles, as these individuals serve as the backbone of institutional quality management.

- **Selection of QA Practitioner:** The university should ensure that officers and coordinators working in quality assurance and enhancement have relevant expertise in quality management, accreditation standards, and higher education policies.
- **Clear Roles and Responsibilities:** QA roles should be well-defined within the organisation structure of the university ensuring that QA practitioners understand their responsibilities in aligning faculty, departmental, and institutional quality assurance efforts.

By carefully appointing or deploying skilled staff in various QA positions, the university can increase the capacity to effectively plan, organise, and manage quality systems at all levels.

5.2 Integrating QA Training into Staff Induction

To institutionalise a quality culture, training in Quality Assurance should be incorporated into new staff induction programmes. This ensures that all academic and administrative personnel, regardless of their role, understand the university's commitment to quality education and their responsibilities within the organisation.

- **Institutional and Departmental QA Policies:** Induction programmes should introduce new staff with university-wide QA policies as well as faculty- or department-specific quality assurance mechanisms.
- **QA Awareness and Compliance:** Training should emphasise the importance of compliance with QA policies, accreditation requirements, and continuous quality improvement efforts.
- **Introduction to QA Tools and Procedures:** Staff should be equipped with practical knowledge on QA tools, procedures, mechanisms and processes.

By integrating QA into staff induction, universities lay the groundwork for a proactive and quality-driven workforce.

5.3 Continuous Capacity Building and Professional Development

QA practitioners require ongoing professional development to stay updated on good practices in QA and quality management in higher education. Regular training and capacity-building initiatives help strengthen institutional QA systems by improving staff competencies.

- **QA Workshops and Seminars:** The university should conduct periodic training sessions on quality frameworks, assessment methodologies, and accreditation processes.
- **Benchmarking and Learning from Good Practices:** The university should encourage staff participation in QA conferences, both at the national and international levels, to exchange good practices and insights to enhance quality management.
- **Internal Peer Learning and Collaboration:** Establishing internal QA communities within universities fosters knowledge-sharing and collaboration among QA practitioners. This can also be through rotating QA roles and building capacity through internal mentorship. QA practitioners would be able to diversify exposure and ensure broad-based QA literacy across academic levels whilst also allowing experienced staff to pass on knowledge to new QA practitioners.

Continuous training and peer learning will foster a university-wide culture where quality assurance and enhancement is not just a regulatory requirement but a core value of the QA practitioners.

5.4 Career Development and Incentives for QA Engagement

Motivating staff to actively engage in QA practices requires career development opportunities and recognition for their contributions. The university should provide structured career pathways for QA practitioners and faculty members involved in quality assurance.

- **Recognition and Rewards:** Staff who contribute to QA initiatives should be acknowledged through awards, incentives, and career progression opportunities.
- **Opportunities for Leadership in QA:** Faculty members involved in quality assurance should have pathways to assume leadership roles in QA offices, accreditation committees, and institutional review boards.
- **Support for Further Education and Certifications:** The university can enhance QA knowledge and capabilities by supporting staff in obtaining quality assurance certifications, such as professional training in accreditation standards or higher education management.

By investing in career development, institutions ensure that QA remains a valued and integral aspect of academic and administrative operations.

Chapter 6:

**Incentives and
Recognition**

An effective Internal Quality Assurance (IQA) system depends on the commitment of university QA practitioners and academic staff, and also the continuous engagement with various stakeholders including the students. In general, quality assurance tasks often come with an additional workload beyond regular teaching, research, and administrative responsibilities of the academic staff. To ensure academic staff stay QA practitioners throughout their employment within the university, it is recommended that universities should set up incentive structures that acknowledge and reward academic and support staff contributions. With incentives and recognition, universities can cultivate an environment where QA is not merely an obligation or an added burden but a valued component of professional and institutional development. Encouraging participation in QA through meaningful rewards will ensure that quality improvement efforts are sustained and integrated into the university's long-term strategic goals.

Financial incentives, such as salary increments, performance-based bonuses, and career progression opportunities, serve as strong motivators. Academic and support staff who take on QA responsibilities as an additional workload should have their contributions reflected in promotion criteria, ensuring that quality assurance work is valued at the same level as research and teaching activities. Additionally, non-financial incentives, such as public recognition, awards, and opportunities for professional development, can foster a culture where QA is seen as a prestigious and meaningful endeavour.

6.1 Building a Sustainable Incentive Model

A sustainable incentive model requires the university to balance financial and non-financial rewards while aligning QA responsibility with career progression and institutional priorities.

The university should consider:

- Allocating budgetary support for QA-related professional development programmes; and
- Embedding QA responsibilities into promotion and tenure policies; and
- Establishing institutional awards and recognition programmes for QA excellence; and
- Encouraging peer-driven recognition, where faculty and staff can nominate colleagues for QA contributions; and
- Promoting cross cultural learning and peer learning communities to build long-term buy-in based on shared institutional values from different perspectives based on experiences from others; and
- Participating in external assessments in order to receive specific budget support, with individual incentives for coordinators. This institutional budgeting aligns QA success with tangible rewards.

6.2 Recognition as a Driver for Quality Culture

Recognition plays a crucial role in reinforcing a university's quality culture. The good practices observed from the "AUN Internal Quality Assurance (IQA) Insights Sharing Visits" showed that fostering a sense of ownership and accountability in QA processes requires a visible and sustained effort to acknowledge individual contributions within the QA process. This can be achieved through formal recognition mechanisms such as institutional awards for QA excellence, articles highlighting major QA contributors in university publications, and invitations to QA contributors to participate in high-level decision-making QA committees. Moreover, integrating QA contributions into annual performance reviews ensures that faculty and staff receive due credit for their involvement in quality assurance and enhancement.

The university can further strengthen engagement by offering exclusive networking opportunities, access to additional research funding, or leadership training for those actively participating in QA initiatives.

Chapter 7:

**Leadership as the
Driver of QA Culture**

Leaders play a critical role in embedding QA at all levels of the university. The *AUN-QA IQA Management Toolkit (2025)* highlights that university Presidents/Rectors/Vice Chancellors shall actively advocate for quality assurance, ensuring it is recognised as a university's priority. It sets the tone for a university-wide quality culture, encouraging faculties, departments, and support units to integrate QA into their daily operations.

By reinforcing QA as a strategic priority, leaders help shape policies, allocate resources, and ensure that quality enhancement efforts are sustained over time. It is also strongly recommended that university leadership link QA efforts to institutional performance metrics and faculty/staff evaluations, creating accountability across all levels of the institution.

7.1 Embedding QA Across University Policies and Processes

Institutionalizing QA requires embedding quality assurance principles within the university's governance, strategic planning, and operational procedures. This includes:

- **Integration with Strategic Plans:** QA should be aligned with the university's mission and vision, ensuring that all quality initiatives contribute to long-term institutional goals.
- **Routine Monitoring and Review:** Establishing mechanisms for periodic assessment of quality standards through internal and external evaluations.
- **Stakeholder Engagement:** Actively involving students, alumni, employers, and industry partners in shaping quality initiatives.

By aligning QA with institutional governance, the university can create sustainable structures that support continuous quality enhancement.

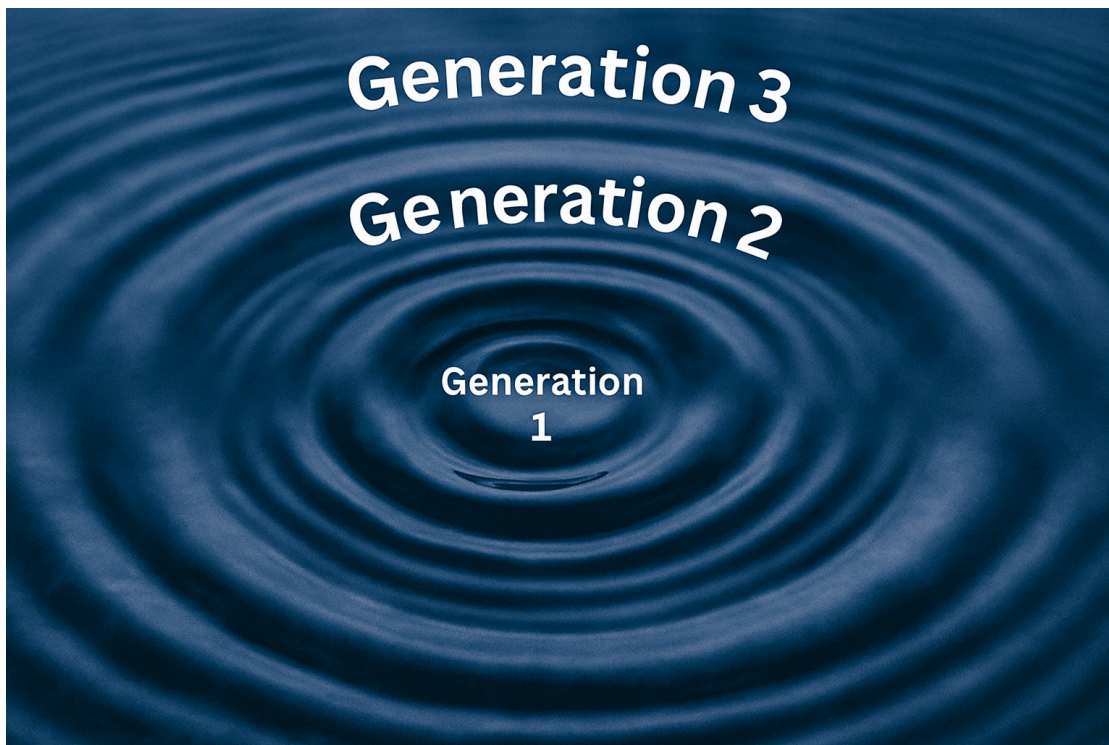
7.2 Fostering a Culture Where Quality is Everyone's Responsibility

For QA to be institutionalised, it must extend beyond the university's QA office and be embedded in the actions and mindsets of all faculty, staff, and students. The *AUN-QA IQA Framework (2024)* emphasises that each individual should act as a “Chief Quality Officer” within their own domain. This means:

- **Academic Staff:** Faculty members should ensure continuous improvement in teaching and curriculum design, integrating feedback from students, external reviewers, and industry stakeholders to refine learning outcomes.
- **Administrative and Support Units:** Non-academic departments, such as student services, IT, and library services, must align their processes with quality standards to enhance overall student experience and management efficiency.

- **Students and Stakeholders:** Students should be engaged in QA efforts through course evaluations, student representation in QA committees, and active participation in curriculum development discussions.

Embedding QA across all functions helps shift the perception of quality assurance from being an external imposition by the QA unit to a shared institutional responsibility. Mahidol University, for example, deploys a **ripple effect model**, where the QA unit initiates the process by training a first generation of QA practitioners within faculties, who then go on to mentor subsequent generations. This ripple effect model promotes learning from within the group approach and allows each generation of QA practitioners to “tailor” QA practices for their specific context within their faculty or department. It helps embed QA values into everyday routines of academic/administrative work, ultimately making QA an integral part of the university’s culture rather than a separate or imposed task. By distributing QA expertise across the university, this model builds structure and resilience, ensuring that system is still functional even after leadership transitions.



7.3 Recognition and Incentives to Sustain QA Engagement

Institutionalizing QA requires mechanisms for recognition and motivation. The good practices observed from the “AUN Internal Quality Assurance (IQA) Insights Sharing Visits” suggests that universities should implement reward systems to recognise and promote QA contributions by their QA practitioners and academic and support staff. These may include:

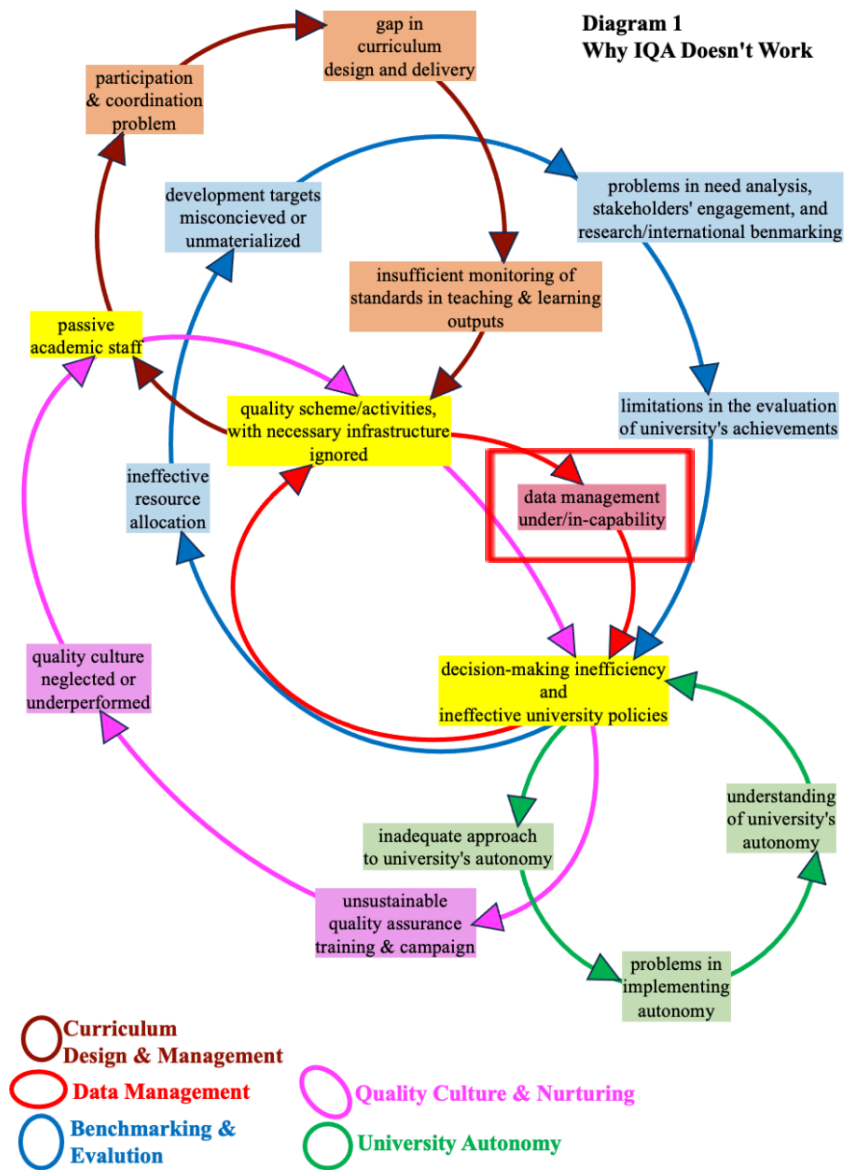
- **Performance-based incentives:** Tying QA engagement to promotions, pay increments, or recognition awards.
- **Public acknowledgment:** Showcasing departments or individuals who demonstrate best practices in quality improvement.
- **Capacity-building initiatives:** Providing professional development opportunities for staff to enhance their understanding and application of QA principles.

Incorporating a cascading training model along with empowering mature programmes to mentor others, are also key factors to sustaining QA engagement within the university. This decentralised and peer-driven method fosters both recognition and capability expansion across different offices and departments. Recognition and incentives reinforce the message that QA is not just an administrative exercise but a key factor in professional growth and institutional success.

Chapter 8:

**Leveraging Rankings
and Data**

A common challenge in internal quality assurance (IQA) systems, as illustrated in the *Report of the Redesigning of University IQA System (Version 1.0) (2023)*, is under/in-capability in data management which has contributed to the failure of the IQA system and practices in many universities. The university should adopt a proactive approach that integrates rankings and data-driven decision-making into their IQA planning and practices, with the aim to measure quality improvements and successes through available data and public sources. This practice has been observed in many leading universities in the ASEAN region.



8.1 Benchmarking for Strategic Improvement

Benchmarking is important as an approach for assessing institutional strengths and identifying areas for improvement and quality enhancement. External rankings, such as Times Higher Education World University Ranking (THE), Quacquarelli Symonds World University Rankings (QS), World University Rankings for Innovation (WURI), and University Performance Metrics (UPM), offer valuable insights into performance indicators, including research outputs, faculty qualifications, student engagement, and employability outcomes. By analysing the metrics obtained from rankings, the university is able to benchmark itself with other universities. The university can then use this data to set realistic targets for improvement and quality enhancement. Additionally, national and regional benchmarking allows institutions to compare themselves against peer universities with similar missions and educational contexts.

8.2 Data-Driven Decision-Making

The *AUN-QA IQA Framework (2024)* and good practices observed from the “AUN Internal Quality Assurance (IQA) Insights Sharing Visits” highlighted the necessity of robust data management systems to support institutional evaluation and enhancement. Real-time data collection enables universities to monitor and evaluate relevant QA information, such as student performance and faculty productivity. The university should then integrate data analytics into quality assurance processes to make informed decisions related to the quality management of teaching and learning, research, and services that will eventually yield the desirable outcomes. Digitalising IQA processes such as data collection and reporting, helps reduce administrative burden as well as improves accuracy. For example, developing a data dashboard allows the university to track in real-time its QA indicators. This data dashboard can enable the university to take prompt action on student support, which may lead to curriculum revision if the tracking shows that students are no longer coping with the curriculum and the delivery of these curricula. Advanced analytics tools also help the university predict trends, assess risks, and develop proactive strategies that align with their strategic goals.

8.3 Enhancing Global and Regional Recognition

Participation in external rankings and benchmarking initiatives elevates the university's visibility and credibility within the global academic community. The good practices observed from the “AUN Internal Quality Assurance (IQA) Insights Sharing Visits” suggests that the university should actively engage with ranking agencies, accreditation bodies, and quality assurance networks to showcase their strengths and achievements. Such engagements not only promote institutional branding but also attract international partnerships, funding opportunities, and top-tier students and faculty members.

Conclusion

The *AUN-QA IQA Management Toolkit (2025)* brings together the shared knowledge, lived experiences, and proven practices of ASEAN universities to offer a clear, adaptable guide for internal quality assurance (IQA). Drawing from the *AUN-QA IQA Framework (2024)* and enriched through real-world observations from institutions such as Mahidol University, Universiti Malaya, De La Salle University, Ateneo de Manila University, the University of Santo Tomas, and the Industrial University of Ho Chi Minh City, it translates quality assurance principles into practical approaches that work in diverse contexts.

At the centre of this *Toolkit* are the [**Eight Building Blocks of University Quality Management**](#), represented in the diamond framework. These blocks, which include leadership commitment, balanced implementation, vertical and horizontal alignment, integration and simplification, staffing and capacity building, incentives and recognition, leadership as a driver of QA culture, and leveraging rankings and data, are each essential. Their greatest impact comes when they are applied as an interconnected system. Each strengthens the others: leadership enables alignment, alignment supports integration, integration empowers people, people sustain culture through recognition, and data drives informed action.

The chapters in this *Toolkit* show how these building blocks work in practice. They detail how to embed QA into strategic planning and governance; balance coherence with flexibility; align institutional goals both top-down and across units; simplify policies and processes while maintaining rigour; invest in capable QA practitioners; create meaningful incentives; cultivate a shared responsibility for quality; and use data and benchmarking to guide decision-making and demonstrate progress. Together, these components transform IQA from an administrative function into a driver of institutional development.

This *Toolkit* is not a prescriptive checklist. It is an implementation companion that is structured enough to ensure that all core elements of quality management are addressed, yet flexible enough to adapt to your university's mission, structure, and context. Whether establishing an IQA system for the first time or enhancing an existing one, the principles can be tailored to your specific needs and priorities.

In a rapidly changing higher education landscape, maintaining quality is not a static task. It requires agility, inclusivity, and a culture of continuous improvement. By applying the **Eight Building Blocks of University Quality Management** in a connected way, your university can create systems that are resilient, responsive, and impactful. The result is more than compliance. It is a living quality culture that advances teaching, research, and service excellence, strengthens institutional identity, and fosters a thriving quality culture that enhances the university's own capacity for excellence while contributing to the shared progress of universities across ASEAN and the global higher education community.

Annex: IQA Resources

IQA Resources from the AUN Secretariat
2023
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Report of the Redesigning of University IQA System (Version 1.0)</i>
2024
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>AUN-QA Framework for Internal Quality Assurance (IQA) (2024)</i>

IQA Resources from the “AUN Internal Quality Assurance (IQA) Insights Sharing Visits”
Malaysia
Universiti Malaya <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>‘University Malaya’ (2024)</i>
Philippines, the
Ateneo de Manila University <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>‘Strategy and Quality Management Office’ (2024)</i>
De La Salle University <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>‘QA For Busy People’ (2024)</i>
University of Santo Tomas <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>‘University Santo Tomas’ (2024)</i>
Thailand
Mahidol University <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - <i>‘AUN-QA: MU experience’ (2024)</i>
Viet Nam
Industrial University of Ho Chi Minh City <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>‘AUN Internal Quality Assurance (IQA) Insights Sharing Visit At Industrial University of Ho Chi Minh City (IUH)’ (2025)</i>

- *'AUN QA Assessment at Programme Level Faculty of Chemical Engineering' ()*
- *'AUN ' (2025)*
- *'Faculty of Mechanical Engineering: Bachelor of Mechanical Engineering Technology' (2025)*
- *'Evaluation of ELOs attainment of Program: Master of Management of Natural Resources and Environment' (2025)*
- *'A review of accreditation journey from Faculty of Information Technology (FIT-IUH)' (2025)*



ASEAN
University
Network

www.aunsec.org