

## SELF-EVALUATION REPORT OF QUALITY ASSURANCE SYSTEM IN THE AZERBAIJAN TOURISM AND MANAGEMENT UNIVERSITY

May 21, 2021

Please describe your answers under each question with the limit of 100 words for each.

### 1. Policy for quality assurance

1.	Do you have an institutional strategic plan or equivalent document? / (If yes, when adopted and which period covers, main institutional goals)	The Azerbaijan Tourism and Management University (hereinafter ATMU) is institutionally affiliated with the State Tourism Agency of the Republic of Azerbaijan (hereinafter STA) - the governmental agency responsible for policymaking in the fields of tourism and hospitality. In late 2018, ATMU adopted a tentative strategy (see Attachment 1) to implement a series of institutional changes in line with UNWTO.TedQual and ISO 9001:2015 - Quality Management System standards. These changes were spurred by STA's working strategy entitled "Azerbaijan's tourism strategy 2023" (see Attachment 2), which had identified quality in tourism education as one of its pillars. ATMU later fine-tuned its earlier strategy as a new document called "Transition strategy 2019-2020" (see Attachment 3). In coordination with STA, ATMU is working on a longer term strategy document (for 2021-2025). This new document is based on the analysis of the university's longer term development objectives and is informed by the Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance in the European Higher Education Area (ESG).
2.	Does your institution have a policy for quality assurance that is published and specifies structures and processes through which it is implemented?	The general framework for QA policy has been produced within the framework of the EQAC project and published on the <a href="#">project's website</a> . The upgraded version of the policy document is planned to be adopted in the first implementation year of "ATMU's Strategy for 2021-2025". The quality policy of the Faculty of Tourism and Hospitality is premised on ISO 9001:2015 - Quality Management System requirements. The management of the university plans to integrate ESG and ISO standards into a single quality policy as a part of the new Strategy.
3.	Do you have an institutional quality assurance (QA) policy statement?	Please see the comment above.

4.	Who is responsible for QA?	ATMU's management (including, rector's adviser and EQAC coordinator) provides strategic direction to relevant staff on quality policy, including its implementation through the phases of quality planning, assurance, control and improvement. At the operational level, the Department for Quality Assurance and Accreditation (hereinafter DQAA) is responsible for ensuring quality requirements, which are followed through by faculties and chairs, as well as relevant departments. At ATMU quality is understood as a collective value and the management promotes responsibility among its core stakeholders (staff and students) through a variety of channels, such as inclusion in monitoring, participation in surveys, decision-making and improvement processes.
5.	How would you define the role of senior leadership (rector, vice-rector) in building a quality culture within your institution?	<p>The senior leadership leads the process of change by defining priorities and strategic objectives to be accomplished by staff members, students and ensures the participation of other stakeholders. In addition, the management determines and promotes values through the communication of institutional expectations, responsibilities and tasks.</p> <p>ATMU is currently working on a system of rewards to induce academic and administrative staff to help diffuse quality culture throughout the organization (for more information please see the comment next to the question 27 in this report).</p>
6.	Does your institution review its quality assurance policy on a regular basis? Is there a specified period for review?	<p>As noted in response to Question 1, ATMU has generally relied on tentative, shorter term strategies and policies with immediate attention to how these guidelines can be upgraded going forward. The management has done its best to avoid setting lofty goals only to fail to live up to them at the end. The objectives set have been concrete and time-bound, which partly explains how ATMU has been able to mobilize its resources to successfully go through UNWTO.TedQual and ISO 9001:2015 certification audits. To sum it up, at this early stage of ATMU's institutionalization, policies are regularly reviewed to bring them in line with the needs of the day. ATMU cooperates with a consultant under a USAID-supported program to help develop a more consistent policy framework across the institution.</p> <p>On a more practical level, the institution monitors and analyzes the implementation of quality assurance through two parallel processes:</p> <p>1. DQAA reports annually to the Academic Board on the results of the implementation by relevant departments of their yearly work plans and makes</p>

		<p>necessary recommendations. The Academic Board decides on the actions needed to address the shortcomings, including by making necessary changes to policy documents, as well as QA policy in place.</p> <p>2. Moreover, the university conducts quarterly internal audits based on ISO 9001:2015 QMS standards, which allows it to identify non-conformities and to correct them.</p>
7.	How did you introduce a quality assurance system?	<p>The significant work on the establishment and introduction of the quality assurance system was done within the framework of two following projects:</p> <p>1. <a href="#">"Capacity building of the Azerbaijan Tourism and Management University"</a> (UNDP Azerbaijan) - Within the framework of the foregoing project, ATMU introduced UNWTO's TedQual Certification and ISO 9001:2015 – Quality Management System standards (Attachment 4) with a specific focus on the Faculty for Tourism and Hospitality.</p> <p>2. <a href="#">"Establishment and development of Quality Assurance Centers in Azerbaijan universities, EQAC"</a> (Erasmus+ CBHE) – As a part of this project, ATMU has adopted QMS institutional framework, introduced or significantly revised a number of guidelines, e.g., Change management procedures (see Attachment 5) and assessment mechanisms, as Risk assessment (see Attachment 6), trained relevant staff on quality planning and implementation, including in relation to the planned changes to educational content and methodologies.</p>
8.	What is the place of a Quality Assurance Center within an organizational structure?	<p>DQAA's institutional role is central in terms of setting policies and ensuring their implementation. DQAA directly reports to the rector's office and is closely engaged with EQAC institutional coordinator. Once DQAA's institutional capacity is fully established (i.e. fully trained staff and enough resources), it is planned to formalize DQAA's autonomy within the new organizational structure. In the new structure, DQAA will act as a fully autonomous internal quality assurance center whose agenda will be informed by that of Agency for Quality Assurance in Education.</p>
9.	What is the main role of the Quality Assurance Center at your university?	<p>In accordance with <a href="#">DQAA's statute</a>, the department oversees internal quality planning and control, provides QA related support and leads institutional preparations for international and national accreditation, including by the Quality Assurance Agency for Education (under the Ministry of Education).</p>

10.	Did you launch the Quality Assurance Center within the EQAC project?	Yes, the Quality Assurance Center (DQAA) was established in the first year of the EQAC project, i.e. 2018.
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## 2. Design and approval of programmes

11.	What kind of structure do you have in place to support the internal quality assurance processes for the study programmes?	DQAA monitors key documents' content against a set of metrics to ensure study programs meet quality requirements as demanded by ESG and national accreditation regulations. Respective faculty deans and chairs are expected to develop study programs (to be precise, designing <i>elective</i> courses, as <i>core</i> courses remain the purview of the Ministry of Education - see Section 12 for more information).
12.	Does your institution have in place (a) procedure(s) for the design and / or approval of programmes?	<p>Study programs are (re)designed by ad-hoc commissions set up by the Ministry of Education every 5 years. ATMU representatives are included in some of these commissions (i.e. commissions for tourism management, tourism guidance and museum studies). In other words, ATMU cannot directly take part in designing the curricula of other specializations. However, starting from last year, higher education institutions were granted flexibility in designing elective courses per each specialization, amounting to 60 credits in total (one third of course credits). Deans and relevant faculty chairs are responsible for ensuring that elective courses are introduced on a needs basis (i.e. demand in the labor market) and their content (i.e. syllabi, including course learning outcomes, class materials) is properly designed and conveyed.</p> <p>As for tourism programs' curricula, ATMU and the State Tourism Agency (STA) jointly worked on the program's content with input from the industry and international partners. Both programs' curricula were approved by the commissions established by the Ministry of Education.</p> <p>ATMU is collaborating with STA and the Ministry of Education to introduce two new study programs (involving heritage management and hotel administration), which will be developed in close cooperation with employers and international partners.</p>
13.	How does the process for designing syllabuses work within your institution?	The syllabi are designed in accordance with the Education Programmes officially confirmed by the Ministry of Education and are based on the approved Syllabus

		<p>Form. Syllabi generally conform to the loose template recommended by the Cabinet of Ministers (see the example in the Attachment 7). This template covers key aspects, including course description, learning objectives and outcomes, assignments and due dates, grading criteria (rubrics) and other course requirements.</p> <p>At the beginning of the academic year, chairs and respective academic staff review and where necessary, make revisions to the course syllabi. Academic staff submit syllabi to their respective chair 20 days prior to the start of the academic year. Starting from Academic Year 2020/2021, prospective teachers are required to submit a syllabus of the course they wish to teach based on a calibrated template designed at ATMU.</p>
14.	Are these processes designed by involving students and other stakeholders (employers and other partners)?	<p>Student feedback via the Course Evaluation Survey (see Attachment 8) are taken into account in designing the syllabi. This is particularly the case in adjusting methodological and organizational aspects of the teaching and learning process to students' needs. ATMU has a direct and regular line of communication with employers and their input informs internal decisions on process and content design. The management conducts focus group discussions with businesses, including ATMU alumni who are in key positions across the tourism and hospitality industries. ATMU's Career and communication department also conducts assessment of students' performance during their internship, including by soliciting their employers' feedback (see Attachment 9). This in turn allows the university to better analyze the skills gaps and calibrate the programme design and modes of delivery to address them.</p>

### 3. Student-centred learning, teaching and assessment

15.	How do you evaluate if the students reached the expected learning outcomes?	<p>Over the past year, in part, as an outcome of ATMU's involvement in the EQAC project, the university has intensified its efforts to ensure that course content, teaching methods and assessment are guided by course learning outcomes. To this end, a series of training has been conducted for chairs and teaching staff to throw light on Bloom's taxonomy. Exam types and questions are expected to gauge varying levels of cognitive competencies set out in the learning outcomes. This need is regularly communicated to the chairs, its implementation is</p>
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		<p>monitored by DQAA. Chairs and respective staff members in each department are responsible for examination questions' design and approval. In the existing format, questions are later submitted to DQAA for review and upon its approval, to Education Department. The Education Department coordinates final examinations (generally conducted as written examinations) and randomly assigns examination questions.</p> <p>In addition, "Course Evaluation Surveys" (see Attachment 8) help systematically assess student experience and design changes to enhance it.</p>
16.	Does your institution use a variety of teaching and learning methods, including those which encourage active and interactive engagement of students in their learning?	<p>The university has organized consultative sessions and workshops for members of its teaching staff (esp. in the tourism and management related specializations) to introduce them to innovative teaching and learning strategies. In particular, ATMU has relied on the services of international education experts and a manual (see Attachment 10) has been developed for this particular purpose. In 2020/2021, ATMU conducted a competitive recruitment process, which measured candidates' familiarity and willingness to use interactive teaching methods, as one of the key recruitment requirements. Despite the institution's best efforts, this area remains one of the most problematic issues at the moment. ATMU's new strategy seeks to set up Center for Learning and Teaching Excellence to find a more sustainable solution to academic staff development.</p> <p>On a side note, the Career and Communication Department has organized a series of workshops each semester to develop academic staff's and PhD candidates' academic and professional competences. For instance, <a href="#">the latest training sessions</a> conducted in April 2021 covered areas such as communication skills, innovative thinking, academic ethics, corporate communication and leadership.</p>
17.	Does your institution evaluate and adjust the modes of delivery of programmes, teaching and learning methods on a regular basis?	Please refer to the response in Section 16.
18.	Does your institution publish in advance the criteria for and method of assessment as well as criteria for marking?	These requirements are formally set forth in respective government regulations. DQAA, Education Department and respective chairs ensure that academic staff include this information in the syllabi.
19.	Does your institution evaluate checks if procedures, methods and criteria enable assessing the extent to which the intended learning outcomes have been achieved by students?	Please refer to the response in Section 15.

20.	Does your institution have in place a procedure to ensure consistency and fairness in student assessment is in place?	ATMU provides for students' right to appeal on the outcomes of their assessment. This process is regulated by the Regulations on Appeals (see Attachment 11). For further information please see below.
21.	Does your institution have in place a procedure for student appeals/complaints in place?	Over the studying period, students may submit their appeals to the Department of General Affairs in the written format. For students who are dissatisfied with the results of the examination session at ATMU, at the end of each semester an Appeals Commission is established by the order of the rector. The Commission regulates its work under the Regulations on Appeals. The regulations set out the rules for dealing with student complaints. Student complaints are considered by the members of the commission consisting of an examiner, a teacher who teaches the course, which is the subject of an appeal, an additional expert on the course and a student. If a student is dissatisfied with the result, the exam paper is sent to another higher education institution by official letter for external examination.

#### 4. Teaching staff

22.	What is your role in quality assurance as a faculty dean/chair?	<p>Faculty deans have a wide array of responsibilities as faculty executives and quality assurance in the faculty is within their purview. As leaders of their respective teams, they promote institutional values, guide faculty development and day-to-day operations, supervise effective program design and delivery, etc.</p> <p>According to both ESG and ISO 9001:2015 QMS standards, deans at ATMU are supposed to premise their faculty's operations on the PDCA model, not least by conducting regular SWOT analyses, identifying risks and opportunities, writing annual Work Plans, setting quality objectives and defining KPIs. Deans represent the Faculty in the Academic Board and relevant work groups. They report to the rector and the Academic Board quarterly and annually.</p> <p>Chairs bear primary responsibility for providing quality control of teaching and learning activities. They also co-lead a process of monitoring teachers' performance and evaluation. Chairs are involved in the process of curriculum development. They are expected to ensure a proper quality review of academic materials developed by their colleagues, etc.</p>
23.	What is the role of academic staff in QA?	Academic staff's role in QA is critical, because it is ultimately their performance that matters most in terms of learning outcomes. For this reason, ATMU has



		pursued a very competitive and transparent recruitment policy to bring in the best talent available in tourism and hospitality industries. ATMU has drafted the guidelines to conduct yearly performance appraisal to promote the best performers and to better fill in the skills gap.
24.	How does your institution ensure that the teaching staff is qualified and competent?	ATMU annually conducts a thorough transparent and fair academic staff recruitment process. This allows the management to recruit the most qualified teaching staff. Moreover, to assess the effectiveness of the pedagogical methods the chairs of ATMU with the support of the Quality Assurance and Accreditation Department conduct 'open classes'. The university recently upgraded the assessment methodology and integrated the experience acquired during the study visit to the Middlesex University London within the framework of the EQAC project. (see Attachment 12)
25.	Do you organize pedagogical training for academic staff?	The university attracts international experts in conducting training sessions for the academic staff on improved teaching methodologies and assessment system at ATMU. For instance, one of the outcomes of such training programmes is the "Manual on developing teaching methodologies and assessment system at ATMU" (see Attachment 10).
26.	Does your institution offer incentives to encourage the use of new technologies in teaching?	Due to present challenges in physical infrastructure, the university is not in a position to fully integrate new technologies into its educational processes. However, as a result of the pandemic and subsequent transition to distance learning, the university has taken a number of steps to ensure teachers are properly trained and can conduct online classes reasonably well.
27.	Does your institution have in place mechanisms for rewarding teaching achievements?	ATMU has identified the development of the Performance Evaluation System of the Academic Staff as a priority in the Strategy 2021-2025. For the purpose to establish the thorough mechanism, the university has already accomplished several activities in this regard. For instance, with the support of a SES expert (Senior Experten Service, Germany) the university has designed the "Preliminary Framework for the Performance Appraisal of the Academic Staff" (see Attachment 13). In addition, in March 2021, ATMU hosted two sessions on the exchange of best practices with local universities on the subject of performance appraisal.
28.	Does your institution regularly assess the performance of teaching staff?	Please see the comment above.



## 5. Information management

29.	Does your institution have an overarching information system (i.e. database) used for the effective management of its activities? Please describe the system.	Starting from the academic year 2020/2021, ATMU has integrated the e-university education management system <a href="#">Eduman</a> . The system allows to ensure communication between students and teachers, particularly upload and download course materials, check participation, manage student and staff profiles, make announcements, update on schedule, regulations, and academic plan, easily access to document templates. It is a reliable cloud system with a single database and minimum data entry points.
30.	How do you measure the quality of the programmes?	Each subject program is discussed at the chair before the start of the academic year. Prior to this discussion, an external expert's opinion on the relevant program is obtained. Upon completion of the relevant discussions, the approval of the programs is submitted to the Methodological Council for discussion. In addition, the opinion of the Quality Assurance Department on the development of curricula in accordance with the relevant accreditation rules is obtained before submission to the Methodological Council.
31.	How often do you conduct the surveys among students?	ATMU conducts <a href="#">online course evaluation surveys</a> at the end of each semester. The results of the survey analysis are the subject of feedback sessions and discussion at the Faculty Academic Council. Academic staff receives relevant recommendations. Students' feedback on other support services is taken into consideration to improve student experience.
32.	What kind of data does your institution collect on a regular basis? Please specify if you collect the following data:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Student profile and succession rate (Please see the comment to the questions 34, 35)</li> <li>- Course Evaluation Surveys (Please see the comment to the questions 36, 37)</li> <li>- Graduates' employment profile (Please see the comment to the question 38)</li> </ul>
33.	A defined set of key performance indicators for the institution	The university has established and implemented KPIs in the Faculty of Tourism and Hospitality. With the new strategy being planned to be completed by September 2021, key metrics will be defined for performance assessment in all relevant departments at ATMU.
34.	Profile of the student population (e.g. age, gender, domicile; level, mode and subject of study)	The profile of the student population is built starting from the first days of Admission. The information is collected by the Registration Unit of the Education Department and the open information is available for statistical processing to the

		<p>respectful units. When registering the following information about newly admitted students is collected and updated upon the request:</p> <p>personal information (birth records, sex, nationality, language of communication, marital status, citizenship, health state); means of communication (telephone number and e-mail address), knowledge of foreign languages; computer skills; information about family members.</p> <p>Integration of Eduman allows to collect and process information in the single database.</p>
35.	Student progression, success and drop-out rates	<p>The information on student progression, success and drop-out-rates is available in the Eduman e-university platform. The information stored in the system consists of the following data: year of enrolment, year of graduation, forms of education, language of education, educational status, course of study, availability of scholarship, exam scores, university admission score, tuition fees, etc.). This information is reviewed at the end of each semester, after final exams complete. The faculty discusses the statistics at the Faculty Council and reports to the Academic Board.</p>
36.	Students' satisfaction with their programmes	<p>The students' satisfaction rate is identified based on the analysis of the Course Evaluation Survey, undertaken twice a year, at the end of each semester. For further information please refer to the response in Section 31.</p>
37.	Learning resources and student support available	<p>The Course Evaluation Survey allows to assess resources and administrative support provided through ought the course, which is in the focus of the assessment (see Attachment 8, point 6).</p>
38.	Indicators of graduates' employability	<p>Since the year 2019, ATMU collects information on the profile of graduates. Particularly, the basic database containing contact details of alumni, the status and field of employment is available. ATMU's Strategy for 2021-2025 considers the establishment of a comprehensive system for continuous assessment of the graduates' employment status. With the provision of a new and more advanced system, it will be possible to collect and process the employment data of graduates at a more professional level.</p>
39.	Indicators of internationalisation of the institution	<p>The International Relations Department regularly review the international performance of the university. As a requirement enforced by ISO 9001:2015 QMS, the services provided by partner HEIs are assessed, online survey is carried out to collect students' feedback on their mobility experiences.</p>
40.	Other, please specify: ....	

## 6. Public information

41.	Do you inform the public about the results of evaluations carried out internally and externally?	The results of evaluations are reported at the institutional level. Please see the report (Attachment 14) and the presentation (Attachment 15) of the latest internal audit carried out against the criteria of ISO 9001:2015 QMS.
42.	Does your institution publish information about its programmes and graduate employment?	The information about the programmes is promoted among prospective students through 'Abituriyent' journal published by the State Examination Centre and widely referred to in high schools. It is also available on the website of the university. ATMU releases the information on graduates success stories including the employment on the university's website and invites alumni to share their experiences on the online <a href="#">"ATMU Alumni Platform"</a> . In close cooperation with the Career and Communication Department, the Education Department carries out <a href="#">online sessions</a> and <a href="#">virtual info tours</a> , which increase two-way communication between ATMU and prospective students.

## 7. On-going monitoring and periodic review of programmes

43.	What kind of processes do you have in place for monitoring programme design?	Please refer to the comment in the section 11.
44.	Do you prepare a self-evaluation report annually?	The institutional self-assessment report is prepared once every 5 years in accordance with the "Rules for accreditation of educational institutions" approved by the Cabinet of Ministers of the Republic of Azerbaijan on September 21, 2020 No. 348. At the end of each academic year all structural units (including faculties, chairs, and department) submit the report on the activities undertaken over the year.
45.	Who is responsible for the evaluation of SER?	DQAA is responsible for the preparation of the internal self-evaluation report at the institutional level. The evaluation of the report is carried out by the Agency for Quality Assurance in Education, which has the status of a public legal entity under the Ministry of Education of the Republic of Azerbaijan.
46.	Do you have internal monitoring processes?	The internal monitoring processes are enforced in accordance to the standards of ISO 9001:2015 QMS. The Audit Commission established by the order of the rector quarterly conducts an audit and reports to the university management. The results are presented to the university community and suggestions for the improvement are discussed on the feedback sessions.

## Existence of the documents

47.	QA policy	The preliminary version of QA policy designed within the framework of the EQAC project is published on the <a href="#">project's website</a> .
48.	QA strategy	Not available, but considered to be produced in the process of implementation of the Strategy 2021-2025.
49.	Statute of QA Centre	Available on the <a href="#">university's website</a> in Azerbaijani language only.
50.	QA staff job description	The preliminary version is available on the <a href="#">project website</a> . The document will be elaborated according to the new Organizational chart to be designed in the process of execution of the Strategy 2021-2025.
51.	Stakeholder mapping	The version designed in the framework of the EQAC project is available on the <a href="#">project website</a> .
52.	QA action plan	Available in Azerbaijani language only. Please see the Attachment 16.
53.	QA reports	Available in Azerbaijani language only. Please see the report in the Attachment 17.

## Final questions

54.	How will you evaluate the impact of the project for your institution? What has changed over the project? Please present what has been done according to the EU recommendation after the first monitoring?	<p>The following actions have been undertaken with an eye on the recommendations provided after the initial monitoring:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- ATMU has defined the scope of QAS as based on the standards of ISO 9001:2015 and conducts regular monitoring based on the requirements of the stipulated QMS.</li> <li>- The focal point for QA at ATMU was defined as DQAA. Clear objectives were set for ensuring the proper operation of the department as well as precise tasks were identified.</li> <li>- The university has significantly improved the assessment procedures for goods and service providers. In particular, the emphasis was made on the fact that the key service providers have been teachers, the attention is focused on proper recruitment and improved student experience.</li> <li>- The regulatory framework (as KPIs, SWOT analysis, risk analysis, stakeholder mapping, etc.) was identified.</li> </ul>
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55.	How many people trained during the project?	The approximate number of persons (including staff and students) that attended training, as well as online awareness raising sessions is 250.
56.	How many retraining sessions are organized at the university?	The number of training is counted as 15.

I hereby confirm that I have fully acknowledged the content of the presented report.

Signature and stamp of the rector

**Ilham Madatov**