



UNIVERSITÀ DEGLI STUDI DI MILANO

University of Milan

Quality Assurance System

PARTICIPANTS and ENTITIES

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ACRONYMS

ANVUR	Italian National Agency for the Evaluation of Universities and Research Institutes	PSA	University Strategic Plan
QA	Quality Assurance	PTD	Departmental Three-Year Planning
AVA	Self-Assessment, Periodic Evaluation, Accreditation	RRC	Cyclical Review Report
CdA	Board of Directors	SA	Academic Senate
CdS	Study Programme	SMA	Annual Monitoring Report
CPDS	Joint Teaching Staff-Student Committees	SUA-CdS	Annual Study Programme Datasheet
DG	Office of the Managing Director	SUA-RD	Annual Department Research Datasheet
MUR	Ministry of Universities and Research	SUA-TM	Annual Third Mission Datasheet
NdV	Independent Evaluation Unit	TAB	Technical, Administrative & Library (Staff)
PQA	Quality Assurance Board	UniMi	University of Milan



1. INTRODUCTION

The goal of this document is to give an overview of the University of Milan's Quality Assurance (QA) System, as implemented in 2013, and as described on the University's [website](#).

1.1 Statutory and regulatory citations

- ✓ [Presidential Decree no. 76 of 1 February 2010](#) "Regulation concerning the structure and functioning of the Italian National Agency for the Evaluation of Universities and Research Institutes"
- ✓ [Law no. 240 of 30 December 2010](#) "Regulations on the Organisation of Universities, Academic Personnel, and Recruitment; Directive Issued to the National Administration to Incentivise the Quality and Efficiency of the University System"
- ✓ [Law-Decree no. 19 of 27 January 2012](#) "Fostering efficiency within the Italian university system through a performance-based programme to allocate public funding based on a set of criteria, as well as through periodic university accreditation renewals, and by optimising the use of fixed-term research staff, pursuant to Art. 5, paragraph 1, subpart (a) of Law no. 240 (30/12/2010)"
- ✓ [ANVUR Guidelines for the periodic accreditation of University Campuses and Study Programmes](#) (2017).
- ✓ [Ministerial Decree no. 289 of 25 March 2021](#) "Strategic Guidelines for Generating a Three-Year Plan for the University System (2021-2023)"
- ✓ [Ministerial Decree no. 1154 of 14 October 2021](#) "Self-assessment, periodic evaluation, accreditation and accreditation renewals for university campuses and study programmes"

1.2 Citations to official university documents and records

- ✓ [University Statute](#)
- ✓ [General Regulation](#)
- ✓ [University Strategic Plan](#)
- ✓ [Quality Policies](#)

2. QUALITY ASSURANCE SYSTEM

The main objective of the University of Milan's QA System is to exercise an independent responsibility in the use of public resources, and in collective and individual behaviour relating to the conducting of its operations.

The purposes and objectives of the QA System are delineated in "Quality Policies".

The QA System aims to allow students, as well as all stakeholders, to play an active role in the continuous-improvement process at the University.

The System complies with the law, and the most recently promulgated AVA Guidelines. The Quality Assurance System is modelled after [Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance in the European Higher Education Area](#) (ESG 2015).

The University of Milan has been actively engaged in quality control for over twenty years. The University has taken part in the Campus and Campus One projects (which involved a number of different study programmes in the 1990's), and boasts several degree programmes and administrative offices that have submitted voluntarily to accreditation by external entities.



The AVA system represents both an opportunity and the most effective tool to standardise and disseminate best practices currently in use within UniMi by making use of the instruments contemplated under the AVA system (cyclical review reports, CdS monitoring, CPDS reports, student-opinion surveys, SUA-CdS, SUA-TM datasheets), and by optimising internal tools such as the University Strategic Plan (PSA), and Departmental three-year planning (PTD). The PQA encourages adherence to established guidelines for the most salient of QA operations, according to a calendar set by the Ministry. These [guidelines](#) are available on the University's website, on the page marked "Quality Assurance".

The management of QA processes requires, especially at a leading university like UniMi, a concerted organisational effort, and the implementation of the proper lines of communication and document flows. These efforts need not only be carefully planned, but buy-in must be sought and achieved within the community. By the same token, the findings of all monitoring and assessments must be duly disseminated in order to keep everyone apprised of what works, and the challenges still to be overcome. To be sure, it is only by reflecting on how far we have come, and being accountable for the recommendations made by the QA governance entities, that the University can continue to improve its practices.

The Quality Assurance Board (PQA) has generated, and continually maintains and updates, a road-map to the document and information flows critical for QA operations. The document entitled "[Mappatura dei documenti e delle informazioni di rilevanza per AQ: trasmissione, condivisione e diffusione - Road Map to QA-relevant records and annexes](#)" provides a comprehensive and detailed listing of all document flows generated by University bodies within both central and satellite administrative offices, noting the filing location and access authority for each. Through these operations, the PQA both monitors and enforces the completeness of all document and information flows which are significant to the QA process.

3. PARTICIPANTS AND ENTITIES WITHIN THE QA SYSTEM

Key players in the University's QA system include:

- ✓ Governance
- ✓ Quality Assurance Board
- ✓ Independent Evaluation Unit
- ✓ QA Steering Committee
- ✓ Academic Departments
- ✓ Study Programmes
- ✓ Joint Teaching Staff-Student Committees
- ✓ Students.

Working in support of these entities is the University's central administrative system, which reports to the Managing Director.

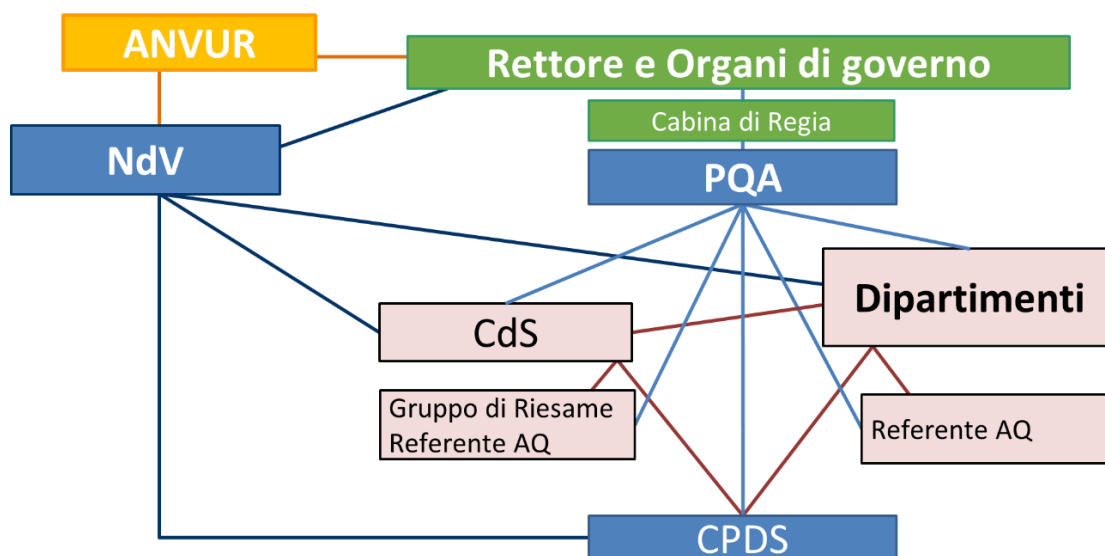


Table 1 – Participants and Entities of the University of Milan’s QA System

3.1 Governing Bodies

The University Governing Bodies are the Rector, the Board of Directors, and the Academic Senate¹. The responsibilities of the governing bodies in respect of the QA system include but are not limited to:

- ✓ delineating and creating updates to the [University Quality Policies](#)
- ✓ establishing a network of QA bodies to ensure the implementation of these Policies
- ✓ assuming responsibility, through the designated offices and entities, for carrying out those measures necessary to guarantee the ongoing improvement of all study programmes, departments, and the University at large.

3.2 Quality Assurance Board

The Quality Assurance Board (PQA) was initially implemented in 2013, and restructured in 2017. The following types of members sit on the board:

- teaching staff, selected to represent a variety of disciplines and subject areas
- technical-administrative staff assigned responsibilities in the areas of academics, research, and university innovation and community leadership (a.k.a. Third Mission)
- one student representative.

Current members and the Rector’s Decree serving to appoint them may be viewed on the [designated page](#) on the UniMi website. As required under ANVUR Guidelines, the PQA’s primary responsibility is to implement Quality Policies, cultivate a culture based on quality, and monitor QA processes.

Moreover, the PQA is tasked with:

¹ An Academic Commission has been established within the Academic Senate, tasked with conducting enquiries and studies, and chaired by the Deputy Rector for Education.



- ✓ cultivating and fostering a quality-informed culture, one focused on continual improvement, achieved by raising awareness among, and seeking buy-in from the University community; the PQA also produces training and informational sessions
- ✓ providing support and guidance to University governance on QA matters
- ✓ maintaining an open dialogue on QA processes, engaging all stakeholders and the governing bodies to allow them to take a holistic view of QA operations
- ✓ directing all QA processes by establishing [Guidelines and Policies](#), providing QA-related support to all University offices and departments
- ✓ ensuring information flows on QA processes, including those relating to internal control, i.e. to NdV and CPDS and ANVUR
- ✓ sparking, developing, and monitoring QA operations on a department level, and within the study programmes (beginning at the implementation stage).

On a local level, the PQA is supported by the network of Department and Study Programme QA Delegates, who encourage a QA-informed approach on a local level, monitoring findings, and providing support to the PQA in its Quality-Assurance communication and awareness-raising efforts.

The PQA posts summaries on recently completed monitoring efforts, meeting minutes, and an annual report of its operations [on its webpage](#). The PQA maintains an open line of communications with all governing bodies through its chairman.

The PQA has an [Administrative Support Office](#). Heads of those organisational units most directly involved in processes relating to assessing and managing academics, research, and University innovation and community leadership (Third Mission), sit on the PQA, and ensure a constant link between the board and those working “in the field”.

3.3 Independent Evaluation Unit

The Independent Evaluation Unit (NdV) has been a statutorily mandated (Law no. 537) entity since 1993, and operates pursuant to legislative provisions, liaising with the designated national assessment entities. The Unit members, who are nominated by the Rector and appointed by the Board of Directors, include a maximum of nine experts with advanced technical and professional expertise, primarily sourced from outside the university; member CVs are posted to the University's website. At least two of the members must be experts in (academic and non-academic) assessments. The Unit also includes a student member. The Unit's current membership may be viewed on the [designated webpage](#) on the UniMi website. The Unit is tasked with the following:

- ✓ issuing a binding (as against the University) opinion on whether the University meets the criteria for initial accreditation, as set by ANVUR, for purposes of establishing any new study programmes
- ✓ providing support to governing bodies and to ANVUR for monitoring results achieved as against established quality-performance indicators, as well as generating additional performance indicators to monitor the University's strategic objectives
- ✓ auditing (through document review or hearings), and submitting recommendations on the quality of study programmes, taking into account performance indicators, CPDS reports, and student feedback
- ✓ auditing (through document review or hearings) and submitting recommendations regarding research undertaken at the department level
- ✓ reviewing the proper functioning of the University's QA system
- ✓ issuing an opinion regarding whether the scientific and professional background of contracted teaching staff is sufficient
- ✓ annual audits on the efficiency and economic-financial sustainability of all University operations and achievements, as well as the efficiency and efficacy of administrative services
- ✓ assessment of all offices, departments, and personnel, with the goal of championing excellence, and improving performance.



The NdV generates an annual report on the findings of its assessments. That report, along with meeting reports and promulgated guidelines, is [posted](#) to the UniMi site. This report is likewise submitted directly to the governing bodies.

The NdV relies on the support of a [designated office](#), identified in the University's Charter, and is tasked with collecting and coordinating informational components (whether on a single or comparative basis, both national and international) for purposes of planning and all decision-making processes that require adequate technical and informational support. The heads of the various academic, scientific, and administrative offices are, moreover, required to supply information to the NdV upon request.

3.4 QA Steering Committee

Established in 2019 to coordinate the initial steps towards seeking accreditation from the ANVUR experts, the QA Steering Committee was re-established by the Rector in April 2021 with the goal of coordinating QA operations, and supplying opinions, advice, suggestions, and strategic guidelines to the Rector, for the purpose of establishing objectives, priorities, plans, programmes, and general directives for administrative action in this arena.

Sitting on the Steering Committee are the Rector, Vice-Rector responsible for Research Strategies and Policies, Deputy Rector for Education, General Director, Chairman of the PQA, Manager of the Performance Office, QA, Assessment, and Open Science Policy Division, and the head of the Training Programmes Planning, Governance, and Accreditation Sector. The Chairman of the NdV also takes part in Steering Committee operations.

3.5 Departments

Departments are the organisational building blocks of the University. Department functions include carrying out scientific research, University innovation and community leadership (Third Mission), and academic training and instruction through the study programmes. University departments, based on the principle of “restricted” autonomy, as set by the University, are periodically called upon to establish their own objectives, consistent with the goals of the PSA, by generating a Departmental three-year planning (PTD). These objectives, which are based on research, academics, University innovation and community leadership, and QA, are matched with performance indicators subject to periodically monitoring.

In terms of research and University innovation and community leadership, the PTD is supplemented by annexes that document the monitoring process, and the implementation of improvements. The PTD and its annexes provide a complete overview of the department, and are strictly related to its strategies. In terms of academics, the QA system is enacted on a priority basis through the study programmes (Cds), as contemplated by the AVA system.

QA Director and Delegate

The QA Director and Delegate, appointed by the Director, are responsible for QA processes at a department level. Each department organises its internal QA processes as they see fit, and as department needs warrant. The structure is then communicated within the designated section on the PTD, and posted to the designated page on the department's website.

Tasks of the QA Delegate:

- ✓ fostering a quality-informed culture within the department
- ✓ coordinating review and monitoring operations
- ✓ providing support to the Director and other designated parties in conducting QA operations
- ✓ acting as a department liaison to the PQA, encouraging the proper flows of information.



3.6 Study Programmes

Study programmes include: Bachelor's degree programmes, Master's and single-cycle Master's degree programmes; these may be offered by a main department (departmental academic board) or joint departments (interdepartmental academic board).

Chairman, Academic Board, Review Group, and QA Delegate

Those responsible for QA processes within the departments are: the Chairman, the Academic Board, the Review Group, and the QA Delegate. These processes involve compliance relating to the initial accreditation, and the renewals for the study programmes, monitoring and review operations, discussion of the findings of all monitoring operations, and CPDS and NdV reports.

Each Study Programme is required to:

- ✓ apply Quality Policies to the extent relevant to the instruction provided through their programme, and provide support to the PQA in cultivating a quality-informed culture, especially among the student body
- ✓ strive for ongoing improvement and auditing the efficacy of all measures implemented
- ✓ generate a SUA-CdS and SMA each year, pursuant to PQA guidelines
- ✓ periodically undertake monitoring and self-assessment on the overall performance of the CdS, highlighting any critical areas and proposing solutions, including by identifying those administrative sections needed to carry out the same
- ✓ perform a cyclical review when requested to do so by the designated entities.

The Chairman of the Academic Board is tasked with managing and improving the QA system within the study programme. He or she oversees review operations, opens a dialogue on the analysis and suggestions provided by the CPDS, and ensures that all instructions by the PQA and University bodies are carried out.

The Review Group, which includes a student contingent, and the QA Delegate, is chaired by the Chairman of the Academic Board, and must implement all monitoring and review processes. The members of the Review Group are listed in the Annual Study Programme Datasheet (SUA-CdS) under the heading "QA Management Team".

The QA Delegate for the study programme:

- ✓ fosters a quality-informed culture within the study programme
- ✓ participates in Review Group operations
- ✓ provides support to the Chairman for QA processes in the field
- ✓ acts as a study-programme liaison to the PQA, facilitating the proper flow of information.

3.7 Joint Teaching Staff-Student Committees

The **Joint Teaching Staff-Student Committees (CPDS)** are made up of an equal number of instructors and students. For any programme lacking a student representative, a procedure is launched to engage the students through a call for applications, for those spots needed to ensure the study programmes all have an equal voice and standing to participate.

The CPDS has the following functions:

- ✓ monitoring educational offerings, and the quality of instruction, as well as the quality of service offered to students by professors and research staff
- ✓ identifying performance indicators for assessing the findings of the same
- ✓ developing opinions on which programmes should be closed, and which new programmes should be instituted
- ✓ generating an annual report based on a model contemplated under the AVA system, and the PQA guidelines.



Furthermore, the CPDS is responsible for the following:

- ✓ developing opinions on whether the credits awarded for educational activities are truly commensurate with their learning objectives
- ✓ assessing learning retention on the basis of metrics established by law
- ✓ measuring student satisfaction in individual classes, and in other educational offerings, and on the study programmes overall, in tandem with other efforts implemented by the university, and in coordination with the NdV
- ✓ raising awareness within the student body regarding University quality policies.

3.8 Students

In establishing its Quality Policies, the University has positioned its students front and centre. This is one of the basic principles of the policies. Students are encouraged to play an active role in the process to develop and enhance quality levels within the University by taking part as a [student representative](#) on a related board, as well as through student evaluation surveys on classes attended, and by fielding student complaints.

These [evaluation surveys](#) allow students to express their satisfaction with the quality of University teaching, the organisation of courses and facilities, and to report any issues they come across. Taking ownership of these reports is a fundamental QA process for the University.

The process of [fielding and reviewing complaints](#) includes submitting reports periodically to the study programmes, as well as to all implicated administrative services, and to the governing bodies.

Establishing an open line of communication with the student body is crucial both to safeguard student rights and to monitor all processes, with a view towards ensuring ongoing improvement of University instruction and dedicated services. Amongst the tools available to students are:

- the [Student Council](#)
- The [University Observatory on the University Education Incentive Programme](#): established in 2019, the Observatory facilitates an ongoing, and direct line of communication on the proper functioning of the main services offered to students
- The [Undergraduate and Postgraduate Student Ombudsman](#), an institutional figure vested with impartiality and independence of judgement, who facilitates discussions between students and instructors, monitors compliance with University regulations, fields complaints and reports, and suggests improvements or efforts to provide supports and accommodations.