



UNIVERSITÀ DEGLI STUDI DI MILANO

# University Quality Policies

Updated version following the publication  
of the 2022-2024 University Strategic Plan

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## RECTOR'S INTRODUCTION

Nothing will ever be the same. A commonplace that has become something of a mantra during the pandemic. Collective upheaval changes the course of history, without the luxury of a linear or predictable progression. Though our perception of reality may change, our outlook on that reality must be conscientious enough to properly appreciate the characteristics of what lies in front of us.

We must be capable of understanding reality as it takes shape before us. We are watching history as it unfolds through the actions of individuals that become the shared experience of a community. To achieve quality, and to make quality systematic, one must first know how to look. These days, a kind of playful carelessness reigns in terms of our attention spans. Yet we should be striving to peel back the layers and embrace complexity; we have to be able to make connections, and see both the divergence and continuity of the events unfolding before our eyes. Initially, there is a dissonance in what we see in front of us, an apparent disjointedness of the parts to the whole. When we look closer, however, we can appreciate those connections which the passage of time makes clear. With this perspective, one can see that individual phenomena are more than just atoms to be digested morsel by morsel. They are essential ties amongst all things which, once described, revealed, and shown, constitute the building blocks of new configurations.

The University is, perhaps, growing accustomed to this type of journey and its formalisation, whilst trying to keep it from becoming a mere formality. If this does become second-nature, as we hope it will, it is because over the past few years we have tried to provide a direct response to forces often outside our control. We have attempted to transform challenges into opportunities. Quality, and the quest for quality, can become a way of life. This way of life is a journey of discovery as well as a methodology. One that attempts to capture how the similarity amongst things subject to examination is rooted in the very nature of things. We cannot judge a book by its cover, we must delve deeper to comprehend internal structure and organisation. None of this happens by accident; instead, it is the fruit of an intention to construct a body, an organisational "species" capable of creating an iterative relationship between the whole and the parts. Quality must be more than lip service; it must manifest as concrete action. This way of life includes an examination of processes, a rooting out of meaning, whilst hewing closely to the method.

Quality assurance cannot just be a passing fad, or a vestige of the now defunct Humboldtian model of higher education. If a university is a training ground (as indeed it is) for ongoing growth and development, then quality is, the formal processes thereof notwithstanding, both a journey and a destination. To state it more plainly, quality is an objective. In these times of pervasive and even invasive communication, where appearances matter and perhaps trump substance, UNIMI has chosen a different path. We achieved an "A" rating following our CEV on-site evaluation by ANVUR not because of any grand gesture or slogan, but because of the indefatigable teamwork of students and instructors and staff. It's very simple: we believed in what we were doing, and we made improvements not just because they told us to, but because we implemented processes and built a path forward together. Let us not forget what we have achieved. Rhetoric would have us call it the starting point, but it is actually a finish line. As gratifying as ANVUR's recognition has been, though, we will not rest on our laurels - if anything, the achievement has spurred us to strive for even greater objectives in terms of quality. Quality comes in many forms, and we must be agile to adapt as the objectives of our strategic plan require, and as these unprecedented times continue to demand.

*Elio Franzini*

## QUALITY POLICIES

### Purpose

The goal of the Quality Policies, inspired by the *Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance (ESG) in the European Higher Education Area (EHEA)*<sup>1</sup> and current AVA accreditation requirements<sup>2</sup>, is to guide and codify the methods through which the University aims to achieve its goals, and to establish a series of necessary actions to implement ongoing improvement.

All processes implemented to reach the objectives set forth in the University's Strategic Plan (and, consequently, the Departmental Three-Year Plans) must align with these standards and criteria.

### Recipients

Quality Policies set forth in the instant document represent the University's undertaking toward:

- Students and their families
- University personnel (instructors and technical, administrative, and library personnel)
- Stakeholders within and outside the University
- Italian and European institutions
- Professional boards, businesses, and associations
- The national and international scientific community
- Any entities, institutions, universities involved in Research and Higher Education.

### Scope

Quality Policies, approved by the governing bodies and shared across all academic communities, may be implemented through the organisational structure and the strategic plan for the University. These are generated by internal players and by the impacted organisational units. They are monitored and advocated for by the Quality Assurance Board. They are subject to review by the Independent Evaluation Unit. The application of these standards, in accordance with established criteria, must be made manifest through tangible, measurable improvements in teaching, research, and the Third Mission, as well as administrative and management activities.

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<sup>1</sup> [https://enqa.eu/wp-content/uploads/2015/11/ESG\\_2015.pdf](https://enqa.eu/wp-content/uploads/2015/11/ESG_2015.pdf)

<sup>2</sup> <http://www.anvur.it/attivita/ava/accreditamento-periodico>

## FUNDAMENTAL PRINCIPLES

The University of Milan defines quality as the only channel through which to achieve its mission and objectives.

To that end, the University has equipped itself with a quality-assurance system inspired by the “AVA” System (Self-Assessment, Periodic Evaluation, and Accreditation for the University System). The system is predicated on internal procedures for design, management, self-assessment, and ongoing improvement in the areas of teaching quality, research, the Third Mission, as well as in all organisational, administrative, and management operations. The main objective of the University of Milan’s Quality-Assurance policy is responsible independence in the use of public resources, and in collective and individual behaviour relating to its operations.

The University of Milan is committed to constantly improve and implement its Quality Assurance system and to propose it to the entire academic community as a shared method of planning, performance monitoring and analysis at the individual and group level, as the backbone of the University’s development under the Strategic Plan, as a path of collective and individual growth, as a tool for the enhancement and mutual integration of the skills of teaching and administrative staff, as an incentive to create value for the public.

The University of Milan pursues these fundamental quality principles, listed below in no particular order:

- Student-centred approach
- Transparency, lawfulness, integrity
- Inclusion, gender equality, and a focus on personal wellbeing
- Internationalisation, and promoting exchanges and mobility
- Listening and engaging stakeholders inside and outside the University
- Sustainability and environmental protection.

These fundamental principles, in addition to guiding the University towards continuous improvement, represent a kind of pact with civil society regarding the quality of our teaching programmes, research, and the Third Mission.

These are made manifest through the different activities carried out by the University, keeping their key recipients’ interest in mind, and through an alignment with a series of Quality Assurance objectives stated in the 2022-2024 Strategic Plan.

## DELINEATION OF PRINCIPLES

### Student-centred approach

The University of Milan abides by the *European Standards and Guidelines (ESG) for Quality Assurance in the European Higher Education Area (EHEA)* promoting the centrality of the student during his or her academic journey. The idea is to spark their engagement, participation, and motivation in order to amplify learning outcomes.

The University will take steps to ensure all its missions (teaching, research, and the Third Mission) converge and coalesce for the benefit of the student and his/her educational journey. The University undertakes to ensure an academic experience which is constantly improving, and which stays strongly rooted to the outside world. It ensures training that meets European standards, is accessible to all students, respectful and attentive to the individual needs of each person, whether in terms of their advantages or vulnerabilities, not only within the context of applicable regulatory provisions, but by constantly increasing, using all available methods, the right to an education. This means putting all students front and centre of an integrated system of services, and ensuring that the University is an engine of education and science at both the national and international level.

The University encourages listening to students, soliciting their feedback and buy-in for all decision-making processes, and encouraging them to take an active part in the University bodies.

### Transparency, lawfulness, integrity

The University of Milan intends to develop and constantly deploy all available monitoring actions and tools to ensure transparency, lawfulness and integrity, in order to be fully accountable both internally and to society. The University of Milan is actively committed to promoting transparency, lawfulness, and integrity in teaching, research, the Third Mission, and all management and administrative operations, cognizant of the central role they play in Quality Assurance.

The University clearly delineates internal roles and responsibilities in order to render all decision-making processes transparent, and all objectives clear, along with the strategies enacted to reach them, and their expected outcomes. Moreover, the University intends to adopt a management system for all across-the-board, integrated processes in terms of functional responsibilities, with a view toward ensuring high standards of service for all users inside and outside the University, and to achieve ongoing improvement. The implementation of rules will be supported by efforts to raise awareness and educate the community, producing educational and informational opportunities to develop a culture of lawfulness.

In that respect, the University has taken a proactive stance on implementing guidance from Italy's Anti-Corruption Authority, tailoring the recommendations to the realities of university operations, making it an institutional priority.

On the topic of accountability with respect to research, the University pursues the principles of Open Science, aimed at ensuring open access to the findings of publicly-funded scientific research. Within the University an Open Science Commission has been established to apply international standards for open access to scientific research findings and data, pursuant to the Declaration of Messina<sup>3</sup>, signed by our University (in 2005, no less) in support of the Declaration of Berlin<sup>4</sup> and through the document produced by LERU, *Open science and its role in Universities*<sup>5</sup>. The University promotes and guarantees compliance with Research Integrity, organising training opportunities for the academic community, with a focus on doctoral students.

### Inclusion, gender equality, and a focus on personal wellbeing

The University of Milan considers the wellbeing of the academic community to be a central objective, one that must always guide its actions, and believes that equality, diversity and inclusion are indispensable elements in the pursuit of that objective. These principles take shape in the following ways: by removing all gender-based discrimination, by establishing a number of safeguards to create an environment that focuses on equality between the sexes, and to raise awareness within academia regarding gender violence. Also critical is a series of concrete actions to overcome discrimination based on culture, race, religion, sexual orientation, and disability. The University is committed to strengthening the network of gender policy delegates at the departmental level and to developing a "hub of social inclusion" in the local area, aimed at promoting educational, research and training activities for combating discrimination.

The University of Milan considers disabilities an enrichment and expansion of the University community. Within this arena, the University relies on dedicated services and offices to implement targeted actions. The University of Milan works to ensure protection of refugee rights, and to welcome them onto campus. In order to create an environment that lends itself to personal wellbeing, the University ensures psychological counselling for students, and protections for all staff.

### Internationalisation, and promoting exchanges and mobility

Creating a true melting pot – multicultural, multilingual, and transnational – for universities: this pledge must inform all our operations.

The University of Milan considers this principle to be a priority strategic objective, and undertakes to promote internationalisation of the students' experience in the classroom and in a practical setting. We encourage student mobility through study abroad programmes, international double-degree programmes, alternative international experiences, as well as academic cooperation between universities. These actions will be developed as part of a network of Universities with shared educational and research goals. The University of Milan has joined the 4EU+ European University Alliance to design and test a new development model for the European educational system.

As a research-intensive university, the University of Milan promotes the international side of research. Pursuant to the European Charter for Researchers, it encourages all manners of mobility within a global human-resource policy. It takes into account (within its performance-review and professional advancement system for researchers) the value of mobility itself.

The University of Milan, whether independently or as a member of the League of European Research Universities (LERU), promotes the sharing of best practices on an international level, and undertakes to adopt standards and guidelines that promote the University's international outlook.

<sup>3</sup> [http://cab.unime.it/decennale/wp-content/uploads/2014/03/Dich\\_MessinaITA.pdf](http://cab.unime.it/decennale/wp-content/uploads/2014/03/Dich_MessinaITA.pdf)

<sup>4</sup> [https://openaccess.mpg.de/67682/BerlinDeclaration\\_it.pdf](https://openaccess.mpg.de/67682/BerlinDeclaration_it.pdf)

<sup>5</sup> <https://www.leru.org/publications/open-science-and-its-role-in-universities-a-roadmap-for-cultural-change>

### Listening and engaging stakeholders inside and outside the University

The University of Milan solicits feedback and encourages engagement from all members of the academic community, and from all stakeholders both inside and outside the University.

In terms of setting its development goals, the University believes it essential to seek input, prior to taking action, from all internal stakeholders, and to share the objectives and methods to reach them.

In terms of educational offerings, the University promotes a periodic review which takes into account the findings of study-programme monitoring in terms of enrolment, supporting students to stay on track in their studies, and helping to provide them with professional opportunities after graduation, whilst also listening to student feedback. The University of Milan gives ample strategic weight to designing educational offerings with input from the business world and from the job market. It therefore promotes ethical, ongoing, and fruitful discussions with external stakeholders to ensure its educational offerings align with a swiftly changing professional job market and socio-economic climate. This is done with a view towards increasing the employment options for graduates of the various study programmes.

In terms of research and the Third Mission, the University of Milan solicits feedback and buy-in from its own scientific, political, and social stakeholders. The goal is to work towards a consensus, and thus public and private investments and funds, with all external stakeholders. The University of Milan has set an objective to increase the impact of its own scientific and intellectual production, understood as research's influence on society, as a beneficial transfer of experience, knowledge, discoveries, and lines of thought through baseline, applied, and translational research, as well as through public engagement as well as educational, business and social activities aimed at influencing the decision-makers, public policies, and professional practice.

### Sustainability and environmental protection

The University of Milan intends to actively promote the standards and objectives contemplated under the UN's 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development<sup>6</sup>, assuming a leadership role for the region, within the scope of the University's expertise, insofar as sustainability and environmental protection are concerned. To that end, the University has equipped itself with an organisational support dedicated to sustainability, including for example the initiatives geared toward reducing emissions and the use of plastic, energy savings, and the promotion of sustainable mobility.

The University, as an agent responsible for educating the citizenry, feels called to contribute to creating the conditions for raising awareness on sustainability in all forms within the community. Within that framework, the University intends to promote pathways for Sustainable Development for students and staff.

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<sup>6</sup> <https://sdgs.un.org/2030agenda>

## QUALITY GOALS

The fundamental principles of the Quality Policies, which must inform all University missions and operations, are reflected in a series of Quality Assurance objectives set forth in the 2022-2024 Strategic Plan<sup>7</sup>, as shown in the table below.

QUALITY POLICIES	2022-2024 PSA Strategic Goals				
	<i>Quality in internationalization</i>	<i>Aligning educational offerings with current challenges</i>	<i>Departments as key players in research planning and monitoring</i>	<i>Digital and evidence-based administration</i>	<i>A major project for the student services system</i>
	QA1	QA2	QA3	QA4	QA5
Student-centred approach	😊	😊		😊	😊
Transparency, lawfulness and integrity			😊	😊	😊
Internationalization, and promoting exchanges and mobility	😊	😊			😊
Listening and engaging stakeholders inside and outside the University		😊	😊	😊	😊
Inclusion, gender equality and wellbeing	😊	😊			😊
Sustainability and environmental protection		😊		😊	

<sup>7</sup> The 2022-2024 PSA builds on the previous one. Therefore, it should be read in continuity with the previous plan and the quality policies approved in 2019.