UNIVERSITY QUALITY POLICY

Approved by the Academic Senate and the Board of Directors
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Introduction

The purpose of this document is to describe the Quality Policy of the University of Pisa (UniPi), which sets out the general objectives and guidelines relating to quality.

The principles and objectives of the University's Quality Policy are promoted and implemented by the University's Governing Bodies and the members of its governance system. All mechanisms and procedures that guide the University's activities toward achieving its quality objectives are aligned with these principles and objectives.

In order to implement its Quality Policy, the University has also established a Quality Assurance (QA) Policy, based on the principles promoted by the European University Association (EUA)[1] and set out in the *Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance in the European Higher Education Area (ESG 2015)*[2], as well as in line with

[1] https://eua.eu/
[2] https://www.enqa.eu/wp-content/uploads/2015/11/ESG_2015.pdf

the requirements of the national AVA accreditation system (Self-assessment, Evaluation and Accreditation)[3], operational since 2013.

Quality Assurance (QA) consists of the set of processes and activities through which an organization that produces goods or provides services defines, manages, and controls its resources and activities in order to meet customer needs and expectations. This involves providing goods or services that meet established requirements, while maintaining an ongoing commitment to the continuous improvement of its performance and its ability to satisfy customers.

At the University of Pisa, Quality Assurance (QA) represents an opportunity for growth and development that, through the involvement of the entire university community, allows the University to:

- Plan activities consistent with the strategic objectives of the University;
- Implement procedures to ensure effective internal processes, particularly those related to teaching, research, third mission/social impact, as well as administration and management;
- Promote a culture of quality among those working at the University to ensure the highest effectiveness of the services provided.
- Maintain a clear overview of the activities carried out, assess the results achieved, and implement improvement measures.

The continuous monitoring of processes and the results achieved is a prerequisite for the implementation of the Quality Policy and entails clear accountability towards all internal and external stakeholders.

UniPi Stakeholders

The University of Pisa, in line with its mission and the institutional functions entrusted to it, interacts with a wide range of stakeholders. These are divided into internal stakeholders, belonging to the university community, and external stakeholders, representative of the institutional, social, and economic context in which the University operates.

Internal Stakeholders

Internal stakeholders are those who contribute to the University's day-to-day activities and, consequently, have a significant influence on the achievement of its strategic objectives and, ultimately, the fulfilment of its institutional mission.

The main internal stakeholders of the University are represented by:

- Students (enrolled students, graduating students, graduates)
- Academic and research staff (professors, researchers, PhD candidates, specialisation students)
- Technical-administrative and library staff.

The composition of UniPi's academic and research staff shows a good degree of differentiation and significant diversity across disciplinary areas and scientific fields, reflecting the breadth of its educational offer and the strength of its research potential in promoting scientific culture and supporting local development.

The University promotes opportunities for consultation and dialogue aimed at identifying emerging needs and developing targeted organisational responses and dedicated services.

[3] Guidelines for quality assurance systems in universities

UniPi attaches particular importance to its students, whose opinions on teaching, services, and university life constitute a key element in shaping institutional policies. The University's Statute ensures that the voices of both staff and students are heard, including through their representation on the various governing bodies and committees.

The University of Pisa is also committed to enhancing the skills and potential of every individual by providing training opportunities, ensuring suitable conditions for study, work, and research, and fostering an environment that promotes the well-being of its internal stakeholders.

External Stakeholders

The University has long been committed to intense collaboration with public and private organizations, at the local, national, and international levels, with the aim of supporting a broad process of growth and expanding development opportunities. Within this framework, UniPi works with external stakeholders at various levels:

- Local: developing targeted solutions to address the needs of local communities.
- National: coordinating initiatives with multiple stakeholders to maximize the impact of projects.
- International: promoting the growth of development and internationalization opportunities through contracts and agreements.

The University's key external stakeholders include:

- Upper secondary schools considered both a source of prospective students and partners in guidance and orientation activities.
- Students' families.
- Former students (alumni): interactions and opportunities for dialogue with former students are guaranteed, with a view to exchanging experiences and combining professional skills.
- Businesses and the world of work. UniPi develops collaborations with companies across research, consultancy, professional training, and third-party contract activities. It promotes direct engagement between employers and students through dedicated events and workshops aimed at enhancing internship and placement opportunities. In particular, UniPi enters into structured framework agreements with large enterprises, while offering tailored training programs for start-ups.
- Other universities and national and international research centres. UniPi collaborates with numerous research institutions, participating as a partner in joint projects and contributing, through these synergies, to cultural growth at the local, national, and international levels.
- Civil society organisations (cultural associations, NGOs and foundations). The University promotes initiatives designed to advance and recognize its social role.
- The wider community. UniPi plays an active role in society through its research and public engagement activities.
- Government. UniPi receives funding and responds to academic and research policy guidance.
- Local institutions and public authorities: including Regions, Provinces, Municipalities, and other public bodies that collaborate with UniPi and support its initiatives.

Particular attention is dedicated to students in the final years of upper secondary education, for whom UniPi organises numerous guidance and orientation initiatives each year to present its degree programmes and overall educational offer.

At the degree programme level, consultation with external stakeholders contributes to defining educational pathways, ensuring their alignment with the needs of the labour market and society. Collaboration with these stakeholders also promotes the creation of synergies, the exchange of resources (including funding for

academic positions, research grants and doctoral scholarships, as well as commissioned research projects), and the sharing of values and mutual trust, all of which enhance the effectiveness of project initiatives.

At UniPi, relationships with external stakeholders are managed with the aim of:

- identifying the interests and expectations of different interlocutors;
- maintaining continuous, transparent, and proactive communication in order to provide information and gather feedback;
- actively involving stakeholders in decision-making and innovation processes, thereby gaining valuable insights for the improvement of products, services, and processes;
- building a relationship of reciprocity that brings benefits to all, contributing to continuous and sustainable growth;
- enhancing social responsibility through open and constructive dialogue.

In order to foster these relationships, UniPi has created Pro-Rectors and Delegates roles within its governance structure, with responsibility for ensuring open dialogue, stakeholder engagement, and active listening. Relationships with key stakeholders, including the Government, the Tuscany Region, and the University Hospital, are instead managed directly by the Rector.

Quality Policy Principles

The principles underlying the Quality Policy at UniPi include:

- Promoting and disseminating a culture of self-assessment and evaluation that supports the continuous improvement of the quality of educational, research, and third mission/social impact activities;
- Clearly defining the stakeholders, processes, responsibilities, procedures, and tools that, taken together, enable the effective implementation of the Quality Policy;
- Encouraging the active participation of the entire university community (students, academic staff, researchers, technical-administrative, and library staff) in the QA process, as well as involving key stakeholders external to the University (families, alumni, associations, companies/institutions);
- Enhancing the best practices and positive experiences gained in managing the QA system, both internally and externally.

The University's 2023-2028 Strategic Plan[4] also identifies a set of **values** that reflect the identity of the University of Pisa (UniPi):

- valuing and promoting talent;
- expanding the frontiers of knowledge;
- opening up to the world;
- conducting its activities in a transparent manner;
- fostering cohesion and sharing;
- managing collective resources sustainably.

In accordance with these principles and values, the University of Pisa is **committed** to:

- defining a clear Quality Assurance (QA) Policy for education, research, third mission/social impact activities, as well as administration and management;

[4] 2023-2028 Strategic Plan

- promoting targeted training initiatives and support activities for those responsible for education, research, third mission/social impact, administration, and management, in order to facilitate the implementation of the QA Policy through the annual preparation of a Training Plan. This Plan constitutes an integral part of the Integrated Plan of Activities and Organization (PIAO)[5];
- ensuring the widest possible dissemination and visibility of its QA Policy both within the University and externally;
- presenting, at a joint meeting of the Academic Senate (SA) and the Board of Directors (CdA), the annual report on the activities carried out by the University Quality Committee (PQA) together with the annual report on the activities carried out by the University Evaluation Board (NdV)
- creating a dedicated page of the University's website presenting the Quality Policy and all documentation relating to the organization of the QA system.

Quality at the University of Pisa: A Long-Established Path

At the University of Pisa, the implementation of the principles underpinning the University's Quality Policy has been a well-established and deeply rooted process that has been in place for many years.

The University of Pisa has promoted quality policies since the late 1990s through projects such as the Campus/CRUI Project (1996-2000) and the Campus-like Project of the Tuscany Region, and subsequently in the early 2000s through the CampusOne/CRUI Project (2001-2004) and the CampusOne-like Project of the Tuscany Region.

Following the introduction of the ANVUR document Self-Assessment, Evaluation and Accreditation of the Italian University System (AVA) on 9 January 2013, the University of Pisa established[6] the University Quality Committee (PQA) in order to ensure the full implementation of the policies governing the accreditation of degree programmes.

The Committee was entrusted with overseeing the proper and consistent implementation of Quality Assurance procedures in both educational and research activities. By Resolution No. 107 of 27 February 2013, the Board of Directors, determined that the University Quality Committee should comprise six academic staff members, one representing each of the six scientific and cultural areas, one student representative designated by the Student Council, and the Head of the competent administrative directorate (or a delegate).

Through the same resolution, the Board of Directors authorized the Rector to identify the academic members, taking into account the recommendations provided by representatives of the disciplinary areas serving on the University's governing bodies.

In view of its commitment to strengthening the quality culture within the academic community, in May 2013, at the initiative of the University Quality Committee, the University approved both its Quality Policy and its Quality Assurance Macro-Process (Academic Senate Resolution No. 110 of 10 May 2013). The latter provided

[5] PIAO 2025-27
[6] Rector's Decree No. 451/2013 of 26 February 2013

for the establishment, within each Department, of a Quality Assurance Officer, acting as the interface between the University Quality Committee and the Department with regard to the QA system.

In 2015, following the revision of the European higher education quality assurance framework and the introduction of the new *Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance in the European Higher Education Area - ESG 2015*[7], which promote a student-centred approach to learning and teaching, emphasize the complementarity between research and education, encourage flexibility in educational pathways, support the development of teaching competences, and foster experimentation with innovative teaching methods and tools, the University of Pisa adopted a Quality Policy for Research[8].

In 2018, following an amendment to its Statute[9], the University of Pisa transformed the University Quality Committee into a University body, assigning it responsibility for overseeing the proper and consistent implementation of quality assurance procedures, ensuring the internal flow of information among the relevant structures, and liaising externally with ANVUR.

In 2019, the University of Pisa successfully obtained[10], with a fully satisfactory evaluation, the periodic accreditation of the University and its degree programmes in accordance with the Quality Assurance requirements of the AVA 2 Framework[11].

Quality Assurance Policy in Relation to Institutional Missions

In close alignment with its Quality Policy, the University of Pisa (UniPi) has established a Quality Assurance Policy for the areas of Education, Research, and Third Mission/Social Impact. The Quality Assurance Policy consists of a set of guidelines and procedures that an organization implements to ensure that its products or services meet the required quality standards.

With regard to teaching and learning, the Quality Assurance Policy aims to:

- Ensure the effectiveness of information, guidance, and orientation services for prospective students, as well as support for entry to the University and specialized tutoring throughout degree programmes.
- Develop a sustainable educational provision over the medium term, aligned with the University's areas of expertise and responsive to the needs of society and, more specifically, of the stakeholders who engage directly with its services.
- Promote the internationalization of Degree Programmes by fostering international mobility opportunities for both students and academic staff, and by expanding double-degree programmes and programmes developed within the framework of European University Alliances.
- Support the education of capable and deserving students with limited financial means through appropriate measures supporting the right to education; support students in overcoming prior learning gaps; and foster inclusion and assistance for individuals facing any form of disadvantage or difficulty.

[7] Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance in the European Higher Education Area 2015 (ESG 2015)
[8] Approved by the Board of Directors by Resolution No. 12 of 28 January 2015
[9] Rector's Decree No. 1378/2018 of 3 August 2018
[10] Ministerial Decree No. 227 of 19 June 2020
[11] AVA Guidelines for the Periodic Accreditation of Universities and Degree Programmes

- Evaluate the effectiveness of teaching and learning throughout and upon completion of degree programmes, with a view to identifying opportunities to improve the organization and delivery of educational activities.
- Conduct continuous annual monitoring of the performance of Degree Programmes and Doctoral Programmes, and ensure the periodic review of educational processes and, more broadly, of the educational services provided.

With regard to research, the Quality Assurance Policy aims to:

- Design and implement research activities in line with the expertise of research staff, while promoting the integration of the gender dimension in research content and innovation.
- Increase the international dimension of research, including through training initiatives that support researchers in their academic and professional development.
- Promote actions that enhance the visibility and value of the University's research activities and ensure maximum visibility of its scientific output.
- Foster the development of culture, scientific knowledge, and innovation, while encouraging the dissemination of open science.
- Promote a research assessment approach that recognizes the diversity of research outputs, practices, and activities, and that supports research ethics, integrity, and responsibility.
- Monitor outcomes at least annually and periodically assess achievements through a comprehensive review process, in order to evaluate progress towards the planned objectives.

With regard to Third Mission activities and social impact, the Quality Assurance Policy aims to:

- Promote Third Mission activities (knowledge and technology transfer, public engagement, lifelong learning, career services, and the management and enhancement of cultural heritage) that are sustainable over the medium term through well-defined processes for planning, data collection, periodic review, and corrective actions, including at the departmental level.
- Ensure that research valorization activities (intellectual property, spin-offs, commissioned research, and collaborations with public bodies and enterprises) are supported by clear procedures, measurable indicators, and systematic evaluation of their results and impact on regional innovation ecosystems.
- Develop knowledge co-creation activities with local communities and regional stakeholders, ensuring that partnerships with institutions and organizations, responsible innovation and entrepreneurship initiatives, lifelong learning activities, career services, public engagement initiatives, and cultural knowledge transfer activities are planned, monitored, and reported transparently, thereby contributing to the realization of Unipi's vision as an innovation ecosystem.

The University, building on its full commitment to the objectives set out in the Strategic Plan, also puts the fundamental principles of Quality Assurance into practice across a wide range of other initiatives. These initiatives concern not only research, Third Mission and social impact, and teaching and learning, but also staff recruitment, the improvement of working conditions and the quality of life of the University community, as well as compliance with environmental sustainability criteria.

Architecture of UniPi's Quality Assurance System

UniPi implements its Quality Assurance Policy through processes of planning, implementation, monitoring, and continuous improvement, following the PDCA (Plan-Do-Check-Act) cycle. To this end, it relies on an organizational structure in which each actor is fully aware of their responsibilities and carries them out in accordance with the established planning, thereby ensuring effectiveness, transparency, and traceability.

The University relies on the activities of the University Quality Committee (PQA), which oversees the implementation of QA procedures and serves as the coordinating body for the University's quality assurance structures (Departments, Schools, Degree Programmes and Doctoral Programmes). This is achieved through an effective system of communication and exchange among the various bodies involved, foremost among them the Joint Teaching Staff-Student Committees (CPDS) and the University Evaluation Board (NdV).

The system also provides for a Departmental Quality Assurance Coordinator, whose role is to coordinate the activities of those responsible for fulfilling the requirements of the AVA System, primarily Degree Programme Chairs, Doctoral Programme Coordinators and Heads of Department.

In November 2022, the position of Rector's Delegate for Quality was established[12] within the University's governance structure, with the aim of promoting the University's quality culture and coordinating the institutional actors involved in its implementation. In 2023, the position was also entrusted with serving as the University's liaison with ANVUR for accreditation procedures.

The UniPi Governance System and its related Quality Assurance system—with particular reference to the actors involved and their interrelationships—are described in detail in the document *Architecture of the Governance and Quality Assurance System* [13].

Revision of the Quality Policy

The UniPi Quality Policy is aligned with the University's strategic planning cycle, as it forms part of the process of evaluating and redefining the University's strategic priorities, strategic positioning, and key actions. Accordingly, the Policy is reviewed in line with revisions to the University's Strategic Plan and with developments in the regulatory framework.

The Rector's Delegate for Quality is responsible for updating and revising the University's Quality Policy in consultation with the University Quality Committee.

[12] Rector's Decree No. 2118/2022 of 4 November 2022
[13] Approved at the joint meeting of SA and CdA on 15 December 2025

Glossary

Quality Assurance: All planned and systematic activities implemented within a quality system and, where appropriate, demonstrated to provide adequate confidence that an entity will fulfil quality requirements.

[AVA 3] Quality Assurance: The set of processes and activities aimed at providing confidence that quality requirements will be met.

Self-assessment: An evaluation activity carried out by an organization on itself against a predefined assessment model, with the aim of identifying its strengths and weaknesses in order to plan improvement actions. Self-assessment should take into account users' feedback (through satisfaction surveys), the organization's perspective (through audits, interviews, and questionnaires), and process performance (through intermediate and final process indicators).

Corrective action: An action taken to eliminate the causes of existing non-conformities, defects, or other undesirable situations in order to prevent their recurrence.

Preventive action: An action taken to eliminate the causes of potential non-conformities, defects, or other undesirable situations in order to prevent their occurrence.

[AVA 3] Improvement action: An activity aimed at increasing the ability of a process, product, service, or activity to satisfy established requirements.

Entity: Anything that can be described and considered individually. An entity may, for example, be:

- an activity or a process;
- a product;
- an organization, a system, or an individual;
- any combination of the above.

Quality management: Coordinated activities to direct and control an organization with regard to quality. It includes establishing a quality policy and quality objectives, as well as quality planning, quality monitoring, quality assurance, and quality improvement.

Continual improvement: A recurring activity aimed at increasing the ability to fulfil requirements and achieve intended outcomes.

Quality improvement: The actions undertaken within an organization to increase the efficiency and effectiveness of its activities and processes for the benefit of both the organization and its customers.

Quality Policy: The general objectives and direction of an organization relating to quality, as formally expressed by top management.

Quality: The set of characteristics of an entity that determines its ability to satisfy stated and implied needs.

Quality requirements: The expression of needs, or their translation into a set of requirements expressed quantitatively or qualitatively, relating to the characteristics of an entity in order to enable its realization and evaluation.

Quality Assurance requirements: Requirements demonstrating that an organization has an established Quality Assurance system.