

# PSG-2023, QA Framework

## Executive Summary



# **Pakistan Precepts, Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance in Higher Education (PSG-2023)**

The Revamped Quality Assurance (QA) Framework, a collaborative effort between QAA UK and QAA Pakistan. This framework, developed through extensive consultations with key stakeholders such as Vice-Chancellors, Faculty, Directors of Quality Enhancement Cells (QECs), and Students from 22 diverse Public and Private Universities across different regions and institutional types, addresses both global best practices and local contextual challenges.

The framework not only integrates international QA standards but also incorporates localized solutions to address unique challenges faced by higher education institutions in Pakistan. By contextualizing global best practices within the local landscape, the framework offers tailored solutions that cater to the specific needs and nuances of the Pakistani higher education sector. This approach fosters a dynamic quality assurance mechanism that not only adheres to international benchmarks but also navigates through regional intricacies.

The collective insights garnered from extensive consultations have played a crucial role in bridging the gap between global ideals and local realities. As a result, the Revamped QA Framework embodies a holistic approach that aligns international benchmarks with the diverse challenges faced by Pakistani universities. This comprehensive framework underscores the commitment to continuous improvement and the pursuit of excellence in higher education, ultimately contributing to the enhancement of quality and accountability across the sector.

## Background:

Pakistan's higher education landscape has long grappled with significant gaps and challenges in its Quality Assurance (QA) practices. These issues have prompted a critical reevaluation of the existing QA framework, leading to the development of the Revamped Quality Assurance Framework, PSG-2023. The initiative, undertaken in partnership with the Quality Assurance Agency of the United Kingdom (QAA-UK) and facilitated by the British Council, seeks to address these gaps in consultation with international experts. Here are some of the key gaps and challenges in Pakistan's existing QA practices:

- I. **Lack of Consistency:** QA practices across different higher education institutions (HEIs) have lacked consistency, resulting in variations in quality standards and assessment methods. It also inconsistent policies and lack of institutionalization due to adhoc appointment of Tenured Administrative Positions.
- II. **Limited Stakeholder Engagement:** Engagement with various stakeholders, including students, faculty, and industry representatives, has been limited in QA processes, leading to an incomplete understanding of the decisions made and ineffective implementation of the decisions.
- III. **International Alignment Recognition Challenges:** Misalignment with international QA standards may hinder the recognition of Pakistani degrees and qualifications globally, affecting international collaboration and the mobility of students and faculty.
- IV. **Inadequate Self-Assessment:** Many HEIs have struggled with conducting robust self-assessments, hindering their ability to identify areas for improvement.
- V. **Lack of Effectiveness:** Existing QA mechanisms have often lacked effectiveness in ensuring the quality of education provided by HEIs.
- VI. **Transparency and Accountability:** The lack of transparency and accountability in QA practices has raised concerns about the integrity of assessments and the fairness of outcomes.
- VII. **Student-Centric Approach:** QA practices have historically favored a faculty-centric approach over a student-centered one, impacting the overall student experience.
- VIII. **Conformity Over Enhancement:** QA practices have leaned more towards a conformity approach, focusing on meeting minimum standards rather than promoting continuous enhancement.
- IX. **Reactive Rather Than Proactive:** The existing QA mechanisms have often been reactive in nature, addressing issues as they arise rather than proactively identifying and preventing quality-related concerns.
- X. **Isolation Over Collaboration:** Collaboration and knowledge-sharing among HEIs have been limited. HEIs have often operated in isolation, missing out on opportunities for collaborative initiatives and resource-sharing to improve overall quality.
- XI. **Fixed Standards Over Contextual Relevance:** The existing QA standards have been somewhat rigid that essentially mean it was sort of one size fits all and detached from the unique contextual challenges faced by Pakistani HEIs.
- XII. **Limited Student Engagement:** Students, as vital stakeholders in the education process, have been insufficiently engaged in QA processes. Their perspectives, insights, and feedback have not been consistently integrated into QA evaluations.
- XIII. **Limited Data Utilization:** Many HEIs have struggled with collecting and effectively utilizing data for decision-making and quality improvement. This has hindered their ability to implement evidence-based changes.

Recognizing these gaps, Pakistan has embarked on a transformative journey to overhaul its QA practices. PSG-2023, the result of this collaborative effort with QAA-UK and the British Council, aims to address these challenges comprehensively. PSG-2023 promotes a shift towards enhancement-driven QA practices,

a proactive approach to identifying and rectifying issues, and a strong focus on student-centered education. The framework encourages collaboration among HEIs, contextual relevance, robust data utilization, and equitable resource allocation. By tackling these challenges head-on, PSG-2023 lays the foundation for a QA system that not only meets international standards but also reflects the unique needs and aspirations of Pakistan's higher education sector. This transformative initiative ultimately serves the best interests of students and positions Pakistani HEIs on a path of continuous improvement and global competitiveness.

### How the revised QA Framework addresses these challenges:

The revised Quality Assurance Framework, PSG-2023, is designed to comprehensively address the myriad gaps and challenges that have long persisted in Pakistan's higher education Quality Assurance (QA) practices. Here's how the framework tackles each of these issues:

- I. **Consistency:** PSG-2023 introduces standardized QA processes and assessment criteria, ensuring consistency in QA practices across various higher education institutions (HEIs); this, inter alia, include discouraging adhoc appointments of statutory, tenured administrative positions Registrar, Controller of Examinations, Director of Finance, Director QECs.
- II. **Stakeholder Engagement:** The framework places a strong emphasis on stakeholder engagement. It includes mechanisms for involving students, faculty, industry representatives, and other stakeholders in QA processes, ensuring a more holistic understanding of the educational landscape.
- III. **International Alignment:** PSG-2023 integrates global best practices and conforms to international QA standards, bolstering the acceptance of Pakistani academic credentials worldwide. PSG-2023 bears significant resemblance to the ESG-2015 (European Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance in the European Higher Education Area) concerning its overarching approach, although adapted to distinct contexts. Both frameworks share a common objective of elevating and assuring higher education quality. The connection between PSG-2013 and ESG-2015 lies in their harmonization with global best practices and fundamental principles. Both frameworks offer guidance on critical aspects of quality assurance and enhancement, with an emphasis on transparency, accountability, and ongoing improvement, all while considering their specific contextual requirements.
- IV. **Self-Assessment:** The framework not only encourages HEIs to conduct robust self-assessments, helping them identify their strengths and areas but also gives a robust and effective institutional mechanism for continuous quality improvement (CQI).
- V. **Effectiveness:** PSG-2023 incorporates enhanced monitoring and evaluation mechanisms to ensure the effectiveness of QA practices and their impact on the quality of education provided.
- VI. **Transparency and Accountability:** The framework promotes transparency and accountability through clear guidelines, reporting mechanisms, and audit processes, ensuring the integrity of assessments.
- VII. **Student-Centric Approach:** PSG-2023 shifts the focus from a faculty-centric approach to a more student-centered one. It prioritizes student experiences, satisfaction, and outcomes.

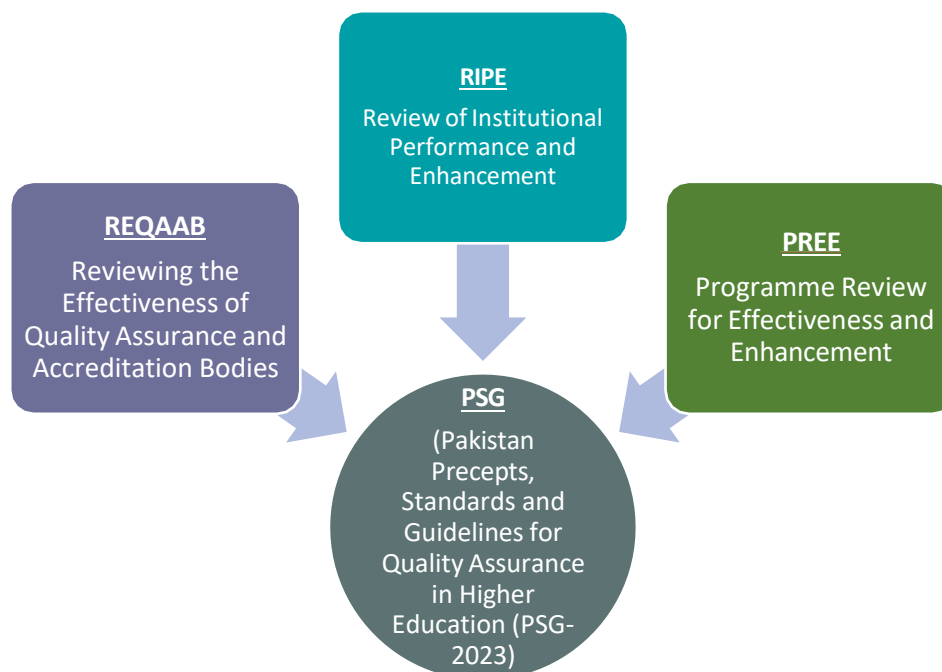
- VIII. **Conformity vs. Enhancement:** The framework strongly encourages HEIs to move beyond mere conformity with standards and instead adopt a culture of continuous enhancement, fostering innovation and improvement.
- IX. **Proactive Approach:** PSG-2023 promotes proactive QA practices, such as risk assessment and early intervention, to address quality-related concerns before they escalate.
- X. **Collaboration:** PSG-2023 encourages collaboration among HEIs, promoting knowledge-sharing, resource-sharing, and collaborative initiatives to enhance overall quality.
- XI. **Contextual Relevance:** The framework allows for flexibility and contextualization of QA standards, enabling HEIs to adapt practices to their unique challenges and needs. It also allows HEC/QAA for focused intervention as per specific classification /categorization of the University as result of the review under the revised framework.
- XII. **Student Engagement:** PSG-2023 integrates students into QA processes, actively seeking their feedback and insights to inform quality improvements.
- XIII. **Data Utilization:** The framework emphasizes data-driven decision-making and provides guidance on collecting, analyzing, and utilizing data for QA and improvement purposes.

In summary, PSG-2023 represents a transformative shift in Pakistan's QA practices. It addresses longstanding gaps and challenges by promoting a culture of continuous improvement, proactive problem-solving, stakeholder engagement, and alignment with international standards. By doing so, the framework aims to enhance the quality of higher education in Pakistan, ensuring that students receive a world-class education that equips them for success in a competitive global landscape. PSG-2023 is a pivotal step in Pakistan's journey toward excellence in higher education, fostering innovation, transparency, and accountability across the sector.

## Pakistan Precepts Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance in Higher Education (PSG-2023)

The revamped QA framework is a robust framework that envisions a transformative approach to quality assurance within the higher education landscape of Pakistan. PSG-2023 introduces a holistic and comprehensive outlook on quality enhancement by addressing critical aspects across diverse domains. The following brief provides a concise overview of the domains within the Revised Framework.

**Attachment Link:** For a detailed review please see **Annexure-A** /(click →), [Draft Policy-01 PSG-2023.pdf](#)



### REQAB - Reviewing the Effectiveness of Quality Assurance and Accreditation Bodies:

Under the REQAB domain, PSG-2023 introduces a systematic mechanism to assess the effectiveness of Quality Assurance and Accreditation Bodies (QAABs) operating within the higher education sector. This domain recognizes the pivotal role of QAABs in upholding and improving educational quality. The framework evaluates their methodologies, procedures, and impact, fostering accountability and ensuring that these bodies continually align with global best practices. These bodies include:

- a. All the Accreditation Councils
- b. Quality Assurance Agency (QAA), Pakistan; (to be reviewed by any international Body such as given below)
  - i. Quality Assurance Agency for Higher Education (QAA) - United Kingdom  
Website: <https://www.qaa.ac.uk/>
  - ii. Council for Higher Education Accreditation (CHEA) - United States  
Website: <https://www.chea.org/>

- iii. The European Association for Quality Assurance in Higher Education (ENQA) <https://www.enqa.eu/>
- iv. The European Quality Assurance Register for Higher Education (EQAR): <https://www.eqar.eu/>
- v. The International Network for Quality Assurance Agencies in Higher Education (INQAAHE): <https://www.inqaahe.org/>
- vi. Tertiary Education Quality and Standards Agency - TEQSA: [www.teqsa.gov.au](http://www.teqsa.gov.au)

**Quality Standards (REQAAB):**

<b>REQAAB Quality Standards</b>	<b>Standard 1</b>	Official status of quality assurance and accreditation bodies
	<b>Standard 2</b>	Activities, policy and processes for quality assurance and accreditation bodies
	<b>Standard 3</b>	Independence
	<b>Standard 4</b>	Thematic analysis
	<b>Standard 5</b>	Institutional resources
	<b>Standard 6</b>	Internal quality assurance and professional conduct
	<b>Standard 7</b>	Cyclical external review of quality assurance and accreditation bodies
	<b>Standard 8</b>	Consideration of internal quality assurance
	<b>Standard 9</b>	Designing methodologies fit for purpose.
	<b>Standard 10</b>	Implementing processes.
	<b>Standard 11</b>	Review panel/peer-review experts
	<b>Standard 12</b>	Criteria for outcomes
	<b>Standard 13</b>	Reporting
	<b>Standard 14</b>	Complaints and appeals.

**Attachment Link:** For a detailed review please see **Annexure-B** /(click →) [Draft Policy-02 REQAAB.pdf](#)

**RIPE - Review of Institutional Performance and Enhancement:**

The RIPE domain sets the stage for a comprehensive evaluation of institutional performance, growth, and advancement. This aspect acknowledges the multifaceted nature of higher education institutions and emphasizes their ongoing evolution. Through RIPE, institutions will undergo rigorous assessments that encompass not only academic achievements but also areas such as governance, research, community engagement, and infrastructure. This domain aims to foster a culture of continuous improvement, ensuring that institutions evolve in response to changing educational landscapes.

- a. External Review by QAA Pakistan
- b. Self-assessment Review

### Following are the Standards:

STRATEGIC DEVELOPMENT	Standard 1	Vision, mission, goals and strategic planning
	Standard 2	Governance, leadership and organization
	Standard 3	Institutional resources and planning
	Standard 4	Audit and finance
	Standard 5	Affiliated colleges/institutions
	Standard 6	Internationalization of higher education and global engagement
ACADEMIC DEVELOPMENT	Standard 7	Faculty recruitment, development and support services
	Standard 8	Academic programmes and curricula
	Standard 9	Admission, progression, assessment, and certification
	Standard 10	Student support services
	Standard 11	Impactful teaching and learning and community engagement
	Standard 12	Research, innovation, entrepreneurship and industrial linkage
INSTITUTIONAL DEVELOPMENT	Standard 13	Fairness and integrity
	Standard 14	Public information and transparency
	Standard 15	Institutional effectiveness, quality assurance and enhancement
	Standard 16	CQI and cyclical external quality assurance

**Attachment Link:** For a detailed review please see **Annexure-C** /(click →) [Draft Policy-03 Institutional level IQAEQA Guidance.pdf](#)

### **PREE - Program Review for Effectiveness and Enhancement:**

The PREE domain focuses on the heart of higher education – academic programs. PSG-2023 proposes a meticulous evaluation of program effectiveness, relevance, and impact on student learning outcomes. By reviewing curricula, pedagogical methodologies, research components, and industry integration, this domain aspires to elevate the quality of educational offerings. PREE's emphasis on the alignment between programs and evolving industry needs underscores its commitment to nurturing graduates who are well-prepared for the professional world.

- a. External Review by QAA Pakistan
- b. Self-assessment Review



## Quality Standards under PREE:

<b>PREE Quality Standards</b>	<b>Standard 1:</b>	Programme mission, objectives and outcomes
	<b>Standard 2:</b>	Curriculum design and organization
	<b>Standard 3:</b>	Subject-specific facilities
	<b>Standard 4:</b>	Student advising and counselling
	<b>Standard 5:</b>	Teaching faculty/staff
	<b>Standard 6:</b>	Institutional policies and process control
	<b>Standard 7:</b>	Institutional support and facilities
	<b>Standard 8:</b>	Institutional general requirements

**Attachment Link:** For a detailed review please see **Annexure-D**/(click →) [Draft Policy-04 Programme level IQAEQA Guidance.pdf](#)

### Judgement Framework:

This Judgement approach represents a significant departure from traditional quality assessment methodologies, marking a paradigm shift in how institutions are evaluated. The incorporation of the color classification system adds a layer of clarity to the evaluation process, providing a tangible visual representation of an institution's performance. The four categories, ranging from "Effective Institutions" to "Unclassified Institutions," offer a structured way to differentiate and categorize institutions based on their commitment to quality enhancement and performance.

The QA Framework's classification system empowers the Higher Education Commission (HEC)/Quality Assurance Agency (QAA) with strategic insights to steer the quality enhancement journey effectively. The colors associated with each category signify the extent of improvement, aligning with the institution's dedication to quality:

- **Green (Effective Institutions):** Represents institutions that have consistently demonstrated and retained impressive improvements over time (Effective Improvement Retained - EIR).
- **Blue (Progressive Institutions):** Denotes institutions making progress with a few areas needing further improvement (Limited Improvement Required - LIR).
- **Yellow (Average Institutions):** Indicates institutions performing satisfactorily while maintaining potential for adequate improvements (Adequate Improvement Required - AIR).
- **Grey (Unclassified Institutions):** Represents institutions that require substantial improvements across various areas (Significant Improvement Required - SIR).

## Judgement Process:

### QUALITY EVALUATION & ENHANCEMENT MATRIX(QEE MATRIX) Review Methods & Judgment Framework

[LINK OF QEE MATRIX](#)

#### **Review & Categorization of Expectation Outcome Indicators (EOIs)**

Through a web-based application, based on the given Parameters for Review of Expectations/EOIs (PRE) , the Evaluator will review all the details and finally will score each "Expectation Outcome Indicators" (EOI) that will automatically "categorize EOIs into Different Colors" indicating the level of improvement required.

#### **Categorization of Standard**

Based on the defined Categorization of Expectations & Standards (CES) Criteria, the "Standard gets categorized, depending how much scores/color each EOIs has got".

#### **Classification of HEIs**

Based on the defined Categorization of Expectations & Standards (CES) Criteria, the " HEI gets Classification, depending how many Standards have got different score /colors"

## Judgement Framework:

### 360° Mechanism

EVALUATION MATRIX AND JUDGMENT FRAMEWORK				
REVIEW OF EOIS	CATEGORIZATION OF STANDARD	CLASSIFICATION of HEIs	Review Cycle	CQI Plan
Effective Improvement Retained (EIR)	EIR	EFFECTIVE	5 years	Biennial Self-assessment
Limited Improvement Required (LIR)	LIR	PROGRESSIVE	4 years	Yearly Self-assessment
Adequate Improvement Required (AIR)	AIR	AVERAGE / INEFFECTIVE	3 Years	Will be part of Institutional Mentoring Program (IMP) arrangements. + Biennial Self-assessment
Significant Improvement Required (SIR)	SIR	UNCLASSIFIED/ POOR	2 Years	Will be part of Institutional Mentoring Program (IMP) arrangements. + Yearly Self-assessment

**Attachment Link:** For a detailed review please see (click →) [Annexure-E LINK OF QEE MATRIX](#)

### Outcome of Judgement Framework:

- i. **Length of External Review Cycle:** The duration between external reviews can be tailored based on the institution's classification, ensuring a balance between oversight and flexibility.
- ii. **Length of Internal Review/Self-Assessment Cycle:** Similar to external reviews, internal review cycles can be adjusted to suit the institution's performance level, optimizing the use of resources.
- iii. **Institutional Mentoring Program:** Within the framework, an Institutional Mentoring Program is established to pinpoint institutions that can derive value from mentorship, streamlining the mentoring process for greater effectiveness. This approach centers on empowering stronger institutions to support and guide their less robust counterparts. It cultivates an environment of collaboration and shared learning among institutions that exhibit varying levels of capacity and performance.
- iv. **Customized Policy Interventions:** Tailored policy interventions can be designed to address specific improvement areas, promoting targeted progress vis a vis the particular context of institutional category.
- v. **Grant Funding Allocation:** The institution's performance classification can serve as a basis for allocating grant funding, rewarding institutions for their achievements.
- vi. **Targeted Research and Innovation Grants:** Allocate research and innovation grants to institutions in the "Effective Institutions" and "Progressive Institutions" categories. These grants can encourage institutions to engage in research and innovation projects that contribute to academic excellence.
- vii. **Performance-Based Accreditation Cycle:** identify the accreditation cycle based on the institution's performance category. Institutions in higher categories will have a long review cycle, incentivizing sustained quality enhancement and those with lower categories will not only have shorter cycle of review but also will be part of Institutional mentoring (IMP) providing them valuable opportunities for learning and advancement.
- viii. **Self-Accreditation Status for Effective Institutions:** Grant "Effective Institutions" the privilege of self-accreditation status based on their sustained high-level performance in the external institutional review. Self-accreditation status acknowledges the institution's proven ability to maintain and enhance quality standards. It signifies a high level of institutional autonomy and trust in the institution's internal quality assurance mechanisms. However, this may not include the accreditation of Professional Programs and will also be subject to review but with a longer cycle of review.

### Overall Desired Outcome of the Framework:

The desired outcome of the Revamped Quality Assurance (QA) Framework, PSG-2023, is to usher in a new era of excellence and accountability in Pakistan's higher education sector. This comprehensive framework aims to bring about a transformative shift by addressing longstanding gaps and challenges. It seeks to create a higher education ecosystem that is characterized by consistent quality, international recognition, and a student-centric approach. Through PSG-2023, institutions are empowered to proactively assess their performance, identify areas for improvement, and align their practices with international best standards. This initiative envisions institutions that not only meet the diverse needs of their students but also prepare them for global success.

Furthermore, PSG-2023 aspires to foster a culture of transparency, collaboration, and continuous improvement. It encourages active engagement with stakeholders, including students, faculty,

administrators, and accreditation bodies, to ensure that the higher education system remains responsive and accountable. By promoting contextual relevance and data-driven decision-making, PSG-2023 aims to equip institutions with the tools and strategies needed to thrive in a rapidly evolving educational landscape. Ultimately, the desired outcome of this framework is a higher education sector in Pakistan that stands as a beacon of quality, innovation, and inclusivity, contributing significantly to the nation's development and global recognition. In summary the desired outcomes of the revamped framework, PSG-2023, are briefly given in the points below:

- Enhanced international recognition and acceptance of Pakistani degrees and qualifications.
- Greater consistency and effectiveness in quality assurance practices.
- Improved transparency and accountability mechanisms.
- A shift towards a student-centric approach in higher education.
- Transformation from conformity-based to enhancement-driven practices.
- Proactive rather than reactive quality assurance measures.
- A transition from faculty-centered to student-centered educational environments.
- Encouragement of collaboration over isolation among institutions.
- Emphasis on contextual relevance over fixed standards; avoiding one size fits all approach.
- Increased stakeholder engagement and participation.
- Utilization of data for informed decision-making and continuous improvement.
- Strengthened self-assessment practices.
- A comprehensive and inclusive quality assurance ecosystem.
- Enhanced quality and employability of graduates.
- A thriving higher education sector contributing to national development.

These outcomes collectively represent the framework's commitment to fostering a culture of quality, excellence, and continuous improvement within Pakistan's higher education institutions.