

## **Guidelines for Programmes Undergoing their Second Self-Assessment Review (2<sup>nd</sup> cycle)**

As per the AKU [Academic Quality Framework](#) (AQF, policy#.030), cyclical reviews occur every five years to ensure continuous programme improvement. Whilst you will follow the same process as you conducted your first Programme Self-Assessment Report (SAR). Ideally, if actions have been taken over the last five years to address the weaknesses identified in your first SAR and external peer review (PAR), you will have a different set of improvements to make. The guidance below identifies how you must reflect on your first cyclical review as part of your second SAR.

These guidelines are intended to serve as a driver of continuous improvement and facilitate academic programmes that have already been through one SAR (1<sup>st</sup> cycle) and are preparing to navigate the second QA self-assessment programme review process (2<sup>nd</sup> cycle). The items in the table are **mandatory** to be filled out by the Chair, and SAR team which shall be included in the 2<sup>nd</sup> SAR report.

1. QTL\_net conducts the programme SAR training following the IUCEA QA model as agreed in the AQF (policy 030). The QA resource toolkit is available at:  
<https://www.aku.edu/qtl/resources/Pages/tools.aspx>
2. During the SAR training session, please consider any changes that have occurred in the University's QA processes since the last cycle and take note of them. Also, consider changes through the Improvement Plan (IP) that was shared with QARC annually.
3. In case you are the new SAR Chair, reach out to the former SAR Chair at your entity/programme, if available, for additional guidance. S/he will be a valuable resource for you.
4. In the 2<sup>nd</sup> SAR, identify how the recommendations from the 1<sup>st</sup> external peer reviewers PAR were addressed, and describe the programme's approach to continuous improvement. Provide evidence of how successful or not those actions have been with justifications. ***Please fill out the Table on page 3 of this guideline document.***
  - a. In the Executive Summary of the 2<sup>nd</sup> SAR, it is imperative to encapsulate a summary detailing how the recommendations from the previous review have been addressed.
5. The second cycle should be centred on a new focus on SAR thematic areas, aiming for continuous improvement by embracing the following guidance for assessing completeness before the external peer review of the programme
  - a. Identify the greatest need(s) of the programme based on the previous PAR and recent SAR recommendations, the resulting revised improvement plans and the current state of the programme.
  - b. The second QA cycle should primarily focus on promoting the enhancement of teaching and learning and assessment (theme 3) at the programme level, Programme

- content and structure: learning outcomes (theme 2) and the improvement of students' learning experiences (theme 5).
- c. The 2<sup>nd</sup> SAR should have a **different set of programme improvements** compared to the 1<sup>st</sup> SAR and 1<sup>st</sup> PAR.
  - d. Since the first cycle, the institution has emphasized developing an outcomes-based approach to education. Please identify how you have aligned graduate attributes with programme learning outcomes (PLOs) and mapped Course Learning Outcomes (CLOs) to PLOs. Additionally, describe the methods used to assess PLOs.
  - e. Identify the alignment of teaching and assessment strategies with CLOs.
  - f. How were students engaged in preparing a separate section of SAR in the 2<sup>nd</sup> cycle? The focus themes in the students' SAR shall be: Teaching and Learning and Assessment, Faculty and Staff Quality, and Student Support System for student success.
  - g. Compare the attributes of the most recent cohort of graduates to those in the first SAR cycle.
  - h. Allow for the dissemination of current evidence-based good practice.
  - i. When reviewing and analyzing themes/cells/standards, ask yourself not just 'how well are we doing?' but 'how well are we doing in relation to our first SAR?'
  - j. Make comparisons with other institutions and sector-wide expectations i.e. who are you benchmarking to?
  - k. Provide more specific information on areas that were neglected and/or not identified in the previous SAR and why?
  - l. What new practices or changes in practices have been introduced/initiated (faculty member level, programme level, entity level, and/or student experience) due to the 1<sup>st</sup> SAR? Provide evidence of it.
  - m. Provide evidence of aligning entity's strategic plan priorities with programme improvements through the development of **Program Improvement Tracking**

**Table 1: To be filled out by Chair, SAR**

The table must be read in conjunction with the **Guidelines for Programmes Undergoing Second Self-Assessment Review (2<sup>nd</sup> cycle)**. The table below **MUST** be completed by the Programme undergoing the 2<sup>nd</sup> Self-Assessment Review. Include the table in the Executive Summary of the 2<sup>nd</sup> SAR report. In the Executive Summary of the 2<sup>nd</sup> SAR, it is imperative to encapsulate a summary detailing how the recommendations from the previous review have been addressed with evidence, and their impact.

Area identified for Improvement/ Recommendation during the 1 <sup>st</sup> Review Cycle	Identified in SAR/ PAR/ Both	Evidence-based Actions Taken (What was done?) – Insert Evidence	Outcome/ Impact. Insert Evidence	Reflection and Way Forward	Reasons/ Justification if recommendation not implemented

**Guiding questions to fill out the above table:**

The following questions will assist in filling out the above table:

1. What has been the impact of changes made from 1<sup>st</sup> QA review SAR cycle on the overall programme?
2. How have the actions taken improved learning outcomes and students’ achievement since the last SAR report?
3. What combination of strategies, improvement plans and investment in your entity has worked to improve student and institutional outcomes? For example, what structural changes/governance/curriculum committees (students become contributing members of a committee) are made at the entity and programme level to deliberate and incorporate SET results, and how these SET results are used to inform curriculum and pedagogical improvements?
4. If there are Recommendations that have not been adequately addressed, it is important to justify and prioritize them in the new improvement plan for the 2<sup>nd</sup> cycle SAR.
5. What student support mechanisms were created as a result of the first SAR review to ensure the enhancement of the student experience?

The QTL\_net team remains available ([angelus.ngatunga@aku.edu](mailto:angelus.ngatunga@aku.edu); or [faisal.notta@aku.edu](mailto:faisal.notta@aku.edu)) if you have any questions, or need clarifications.

## References:

Closing the Student Impact Gap: Maximize Student Success with Data-Activated Strategies 2023: Student Success Impact Report. Civitas Learning. Available at: <https://www.civitaslearning.com/blog/sustainable-outcomes/close-student-success-gaps-with-a-data-activated-student-impact-strategy/>

Council on Higher Education (CHE). Framework for Institutional Quality Enhancement in the Second Period of Quality Assurance 2014. Available at: <https://www.uj.ac.za/corporateservices/quality-promotion/Documents/quality%20docs/national/QEP%20Framework%20Feb%202014.pdf>

Institutional Planning *Second Cycle of Quality Assurance*. University of Cape Town. Available at: <http://www.institutionalplanning.uct.ac.za/second-cycle-quality-assurance>

Quality Assurance Council. Second Audit Cycle Manual. Available at: <https://www.ugc.edu.hk/doc/eng/qac/manual/auditmanual2.pdf>

Second Cycle of Quality Assurance 2017. South Africa. Available at: [https://www.ufs.ac.za/docs/librariesprovider42/sasse-documents/workshops-documents/second-cycle-of-quality-assurance-43-eng.pdf?sfvrsn=2c66c921\\_0](https://www.ufs.ac.za/docs/librariesprovider42/sasse-documents/workshops-documents/second-cycle-of-quality-assurance-43-eng.pdf?sfvrsn=2c66c921_0)

Student Success Framework, Advanced HE, UK. Available at: [advance-he.ac.uk/membership/all-member-benefit-projects/student-success-framework-review-and-redesign](http://advance-he.ac.uk/membership/all-member-benefit-projects/student-success-framework-review-and-redesign)

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