

**Allied Quality Assurance  
(AQA)**

**Handbook**

**2024 Edition**

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# I. Introduction

## 1. Background

Allied Quality Assurance: Dual National and International Quality Assurance from Higher Education Evaluation and Accreditation Council of Taiwan (HEEACT) and the International Centre of Excellence in Tourism and Hospitality Education (THE-ICE), hereafter referred to as “Allied Quality Assurance” and also known by the acronym “AQA,” is devised for domestic or overseas higher education institutions (HEIs)/programs. The project has formulated a comprehensive quality assurance (QA) procedure for the academic programs in Tourism, Hospitality, Events, and/or Culinary Arts Management (TH&E). The development of this procedure is a joint effort between HEEACT and THE-ICE, drawing upon a comparative analysis of their operations and QA mechanisms. The AQA Handbook provides guidelines for HEIs and programs that intend to apply for AQA review by HEEACT and THE-ICE. This Handbook enables the applying unit(s) (hereinafter referred to as “applicant(s)”) to understand the requirements of application, AQA standards and indicators, as well as the accreditation process and procedures. The AQA review will be conducted in English.

## 2. Eligibility and Application Procedure

HEIs/programs seeking AQA review shall meet the following requirements:

- (1) Bachelor’s/Master’s/Doctoral programs having at least two cohorts of graduates. Associate degrees could be included if they have bachelor’s degrees.
- (2) Being a legally established educational provider in the country/jurisdiction(s).

HEIs/Programs applying for the AQA review shall submit an application (see Appendix 1), along with other required documents and information to HEEACT. HEEACT shall convene a meeting to review the application and determine whether the application is eligible to proceed or not.

# **II. Accreditation Process**

## **1. Submission of the Self-Assessment Report (SAR)**

The applicant must submit a SAR and the related documentation written in English, which will serve as the primary basis for document review and the on-site visit. Each application must provide electronic copies of the SAR in Word and PDF files.

The content of the SAR shall be written in accordance with the standards of AQA (see Appendix 2). For each standard, the applicant shall organize and compose the content for compliance at the institutional level (THE-ICE), and then at the program level (HEEACT). In particular, the applicant must describe the current status within each level for which accreditation is sought, including bachelor's degree, master's degree and doctoral degree.

The SAR shall not exceed 100 pages per program, including the content of the institutional level and the program level. It shall be written in 12-point Times New Roman font with 1.5 spacing. For each additional program, the applicant may add a maximum of 20 pages. Supporting documents (appendices) have no page limit.

## **2. Appointment and Composition of Review Panels**

(1) Reviewers shall be proficient in English and meet the following qualifications:

- Holding the position of associate professor or above in relevant academic discipline or fields of study, with experience in serving as an executive position of a HEI being preferred.
- Having experience in QA in higher education or QA agencies.

Preference will be given to reviewers serving/having served at an executive level within the relevant industry sector.

(2) HEEACT/THE-ICE will appoint professional reviewers for the Review Panel to conduct an on-site visit based on the academic disciplines or fields of study of the programs. The composition of a Review Panel is determined

based on the following principles:

- One department/program: A Review Panel will consist of three to five reviewers.
- For each additional department/program application under the same college, one to three reviewers may be added based on the number of departments/programs/fields of study.
- For a college with nine (or more) departments/programs applies for the AQA review, HEEACT/THE-ICE may increase the number of reviewers.

(3) Other relevant agencies may assign observers to participate in an on-site visit. A maximum of two observers are allowed per site visit. The observers shall not intervene in both the accreditation process and the accreditation results.

### **3. Itinerary of On-Site Visit**

An on-site visit for the AQA is usually completed in three days. The date and itinerary (see Appendix 3) of an on-site visit may be adjusted as required.

During an on-site visit, the Review Panel will review the institution/program according to the accreditation standards through the following:

- visitation of facilities,
- meetings and/or interviews with stakeholders, and
- document review.

The stakeholders may include board members, executives of administrative offices, deans of academic offices, faculty members, administrative staff, students, graduates, and industry representatives. The applicant shall provide a list of the proposed interviewees with detailed information to HEEACT/THE-ICE in advance.

#### 4. Accreditation Results

A final meeting will be convened to examine the Review Report and make a decision based on the accreditation results proposed by the Review Panel. The applicant will receive two different accreditation results: (1) one result from THE-ICE based on its performance at the institutional level; and (2) one result from HEEACT based on its performance at the program level. Please refer to Table 1 for more information regarding the accreditation results.

**Table 1 Accreditation Results**

Agency	Results	Follow-up action
THE-ICE	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Accredited</li> </ul>	Institutions who successfully demonstrate they meet the AQA Standards through the process are accredited for a period of 6 years. Institutions are required to participate in annual monitoring of student and alumni satisfaction, to demonstrate their progress against the outcomes of the accreditation and quality enhancement in general.
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Accredited with Requirements</li> </ul>	Institutions who are accredited subject to requirements will be evaluated (by one reviewer) after 6 months to determine if they have met the requirements. Unsuccessful institutions will have a further 6 months and (if required) one further and final evaluation (after 12 months) to determine if they have met the requirements. Institutions who meet the requirements (at either 6 or 12 months) will be accredited for 6 years from the date of the result.
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Not Accredited</li> </ul>	Institutions who have failed to meet the AQA Standards through the process will be individually counselled as to when a re-application may be feasible, but in any event, this will not be within 1 year of the initial application.

Agency	Results	Follow-up action
HEEACT	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Accredited for a validation period of 6 years</li> </ul>	<p>After 6 months of being accredited, the program shall submit a self-improvement report which describes the implementation of related improvement measures. The submitted information is used as a reference for the next accreditation application.</p>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Accredited for a validation period of 3 years</li> </ul>	<p>After 6 months of being accredited, the program shall submit a self-improvement report which describes the implementation of related improvement measures. The submitted information is used as a reference for the next accreditation application.</p> <p>The extension application shall be submitted within 2.5 years of being accredited; such extension may be applied no more than once. If necessary, HEEACT may appoint reviewers to conduct an on-site visit to determine whether to extend the program's accreditation status or not. A successful extension application will be granted accreditation for 3 additional years from initial accreditation. If the program is not granted an extension, it shall wait for 8 months to 1 year prior to the on-site visit to apply for a new round of accreditation.</p>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Failed in accreditation</li> </ul>	<p>The program may reorganize its information, improve its implementation measures, and subsequently re-apply for the AQA within 1 year after receipt of the result. Such re-applications are limited to once per accreditation cycle, and any submissions beyond this timeframe shall be considered as new applications.</p>

## **5. Appeal**

Should an applicant object to the accreditation results granted by HEEACT and/or THE-ICE, such applicant may file a written appeal to HEEACT within 30 days from the next day after receipt of the notice of the accreditation results. The reasons for the appeal and the outcome that the complainant is seeking should be clearly stated, with appropriate evidence provided. The written appeal will be considered by HEEACT and/or THE-ICE based on the regulated procedure, and the findings will be conveyed to the complainant and any respondent to the appeal in writing. The outcomes and findings from the appeals process will be final, and the process will be completed within 90 days from the next day after receipt of the written appeal.



## APPENDIX 1 – Application Form

# AQA Application Form (2024)

(Name of Institution)

<b>President (Signature)</b>	
<b>Name of Institution</b>	
<b>Location</b>	(City/State, Country)
<b>Contact Person</b>	<i>(name and position)</i>
<b>Contact Number</b>	<i>(Office)      (Mobile)</i>
<b>Address</b>	<i>(postcode)</i>
<b>E-mail</b>	
<b>Application Date</b>	YYYY/MM/DD

## I. Background of the Institution

Please provide the following information about your institution.

<p><b>Introduction and Background of the Institution</b></p>	<p><i>(Briefly describe the background of your institution in 300-400 words)</i></p>
<p><b>Year of Establishment</b></p>	
<p><b>Recognitions and Accreditations</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>Provide details if the institution is legally recognized and/or already accredited by a national or equivalent government body.</i></li> <li>• <i>Provide details if the institution holds any other accreditations and/or recognitions.</i></li> </ul>
<p><b>Type of Institution</b></p>	<p><input type="checkbox"/> National  <input type="checkbox"/> Public  <input type="checkbox"/> Private</p>
	<p><input type="checkbox"/> <i>University</i>  <input type="checkbox"/> <i>Universities of Applied Sciences</i>  <input type="checkbox"/> <i>University College/ School</i>  <input type="checkbox"/> <i>College or Academy</i></p>
<p><b>Number of Schools, Departments, and Programs</b></p>	
<p><b>Numbers of TH&amp;E Schools, Departments, and Programs</b></p>	

<b>Total Number of Faculty Members and Administrative Staff</b>	
<b>Total Number of TH&amp;E Faculty Members and Administrative Staff</b>	
<b>Total Number of Students</b>	<i>(Present the data by academic degrees)</i>
<b>Total Number of TH&amp;E Students</b>	<i>(Present the data by academic degrees)</i>
<b>Total Number of International Students</b>	<i>(Present the data by academic degrees)</i>
<b>Total Number of International Students in TH&amp;E Programs</b>	<i>(Present the data by academic degrees)</i>
<b>Memberships, Partnerships, Community/Social Responsibility Engagement</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Briefly describe the institution's industry advisory board or other mechanism for industry engagement, where applicable.</li> <li>• Provide a full list if the institution has professional associations or partnerships with major tourism, hospitality, events, and/or culinary arts companies (e.g., airlines, hotel chains, travel agents, catering companies, tour companies), nationally and/or internationally.</li> </ul>
<b>Website of Institution</b>	

## II. Program Details

Please provide the following information regarding the program(s) applying for the AQA review.

No.	Name of the Program	Sub-field	Degree & Duration	Campus Location	Expected Date for On-Site Visit	Previous Accreditations	Note
	Full name of the program.	Sub-field of the program (i.e., Tourism, Hospitality, Events, Culinary Arts, etc.)	Conferred degree title, such as bachelor's degree, master's degree or doctoral degree. <i>e.g., Master's Degree (2 Years)</i>	The campus where the on-site visit will take place.	Expected time period of on-site visit (at the maximum of three months). <i>e.g., 2021 January to March)</i>	Previous accreditation results and validation periods. <i>e.g., IEET, 6 years, Accredited/Expired</i>	Additional information you would like to share.
1.-							
2.-							
3.-							
4.-							
...							

\*\*Please submit the application form together with the certificate/evidence of the previous accreditation result.

## **Definitions**

### **University**

A “university” is an institution of higher education and research which grants academic degrees in a variety of subjects and provides both undergraduate and postgraduate education.

A “university” has a duty to undertake some research and publication. If a “university” is offering educational programs at Masters-level or above, there is an expectation that staff, in addition to engaging in scholarly activities, will also undertake student supervision, research and publication.

### **Universities of Applied Sciences**

“Universities of Applied Sciences”, UAS (FH-Fachhochschule or Hochschule) are well established in the German-speaking countries. Within this category of higher education providers, some specialize in a particular field (e.g., technology or business). The term is commonly applied to technical, technological and/or vocational universities.

“Universities of Applied Sciences” are designed with a focus on teaching professional skills. UAS and Universities are "separate but equal". It is a generic term internationally understood to describe institutions awarding academic degrees in higher education at Bachelor's and Master's levels, but not doctoral degrees themselves. However, a UAS may co-run doctoral programs, with doctoral degrees being awarded by the partner university.

### **University College**

The term "university college" is used in a number of countries to denote college institutions that provide tertiary education, but do not have full or independent university status. A university college is often part of a larger university. The precise usage varies from country to country.

- In Australia, the term University College has been used to refer to educational institutions that are like universities, but lack full autonomy.
- In Canada, "university college" has three meanings: a degree-granting institution; an institution that offers university-level coursework; or a university college of a university. "University college" can refer to institutions that offer both college diplomas and undergraduate degrees. The term is extensively used by

institutions that do not have full university status, but which do extensive teaching at degree level.

- In the United Kingdom, any institution may describe itself as a "university college", but the use of the term "university" in a title requires government approval. For this to be obtained, institutions must have degree-awarding powers, though some still choose to have their degrees awarded by other institutions. Generally, institutions with this title teach degree programs, often of a specialist nature, and may also carry out research, but their key focus is teaching. However, there are *also* some long-established university colleges that are constituents of a relatively loose-knit association of other institutions within the same region (e.g. London and Oxford), however are yet fully independent and internationally recognized universities in their own right.
- In the United States, the term "university college" is used for the division dedicated to continuing education and the needs of the non-traditional students.

### **School, College or Academy**

The term "school, college or academy" refers to Hotel Schools, specialist state entities (such as Technical and Further Education institutions or TAFE) or private institutions specializing in the TH&E fields. These providers may offer only vocational (Certificate, Diploma, Advanced Diploma and/or Associate Degree) programs, only higher education programs (undergraduate and/or postgraduate), or both vocational programs and higher education programs.

## APPENDIX 2 – Standards of the AQA Review

### 1. Status of Institution

The institution must be a reputable vocational education and training (VET) or higher education institution (HEI) duly registered/incorporated with the relevant authority and/or education board in its state, territory, or country to provide accredited programs in the TH&E field at the approved level.

- The institution/program should provide formal documents related to its registration/incorporation, including documents related specifically to its establishment and development.

### 2. Governance, Leadership and Administration

The institution/program is to:

- Identify the staff member(s), who have the major strategic responsibility for the program(s), and demonstrate how its leadership provides input to the courses and curriculum offered. Ideally, the leadership of institution/program also encourages and fosters engagement with relevant industry sectors and communities as well as other providers.
- Demonstrate that there are appropriate management approaches and related regulations in place, including appropriate administrative support and resources available for delivery of programs, and that the relevant School/Department/Program makes good use of these administrative support and resources.

### 3. Vision, Mission and Objectives

The institution/program is to provide and describe its:

- Vision, mission and objectives.
- Knowledge bases/disciplines and conceptual frameworks.
- Plans and strategies for development based on its positioning and major goals.
- Approaches to networking and interacting with other academic TH&E

providers, government, and industry, and how these collaborative relationships are practically realized within the planning and implementation of the curriculum.

- Approaches to publishing and articulating relevant information about the institution's/program's mission, vision and objectives to faculty members, students, parents, and other stakeholders.

#### **4. Curriculum, Courses, and Graduate Outcomes/Attributes**

The institution/program is to:

- List awards that are available to domestic and international students in the areas of TH&E (e.g., VET, undergraduate, postgraduate coursework, and research degrees) and indicate the TH&E percentage in each of those awards.
- Develop appropriate plans and approaches for student recruitment.
- Indicate the admission requirements at each academic level, including the respective required English proficiency level.
- Describe the overall curriculum structure, objectives, and graduate outcomes/attributes of the programs applying for the accreditation.
- Describe how the overall curriculum structure, teaching activities, and student core competencies reflect the major goals and objectives.
- Articulate and quantify (duration or number of hours) whether industry placements/internships are a mandatory part of the awards and their intended goals. Any graduate destination data and approaches should be described.
- Provide evidence of how industry input informs curriculum design, graduate outcomes/attributes, assessment methods, the use of industry placements/internships, and mentoring and evaluation of the courses, to ensure professional relevance in the TH&E School/Department/Program (this is not required for research degrees).
- Develop assessments, methods and standards to assess student learning outcomes, such as graduation requirements.



## **5. Approaches to Teaching and Learning**

The institution/program is to:

- Describe the teaching philosophy, approaches, and relevant policies to teaching and learning adopted by the School/Department/Program responsible for TH&E courses. This should include information about the patterns of class contact for programs at different qualification levels/degree levels (e.g., VET, undergraduate or postgraduate programs), and the number and nature of any blended or online courses. For blended and online courses, the institution/program should describe the mechanism employed to support student participation across different modes of delivery (such as students who are off campus or in remote locations).
- Provide details of each external, joint delivery or offshore course and demonstrate the comparable objectives, learning experiences and graduate outcomes to the onshore equivalent.
- Describe how faculty members are encouraged to develop an appropriate curriculum and teaching strategies to achieve the course objectives and ensure the learning quality.
- Where applicable, describe any areas of research within the institution/program offering TH&E education that are considered to contribute to teaching and learning outcomes.

## **6. Planning, Program Review, and Quality Assurance Mechanisms**

The institution/program is to describe and demonstrate, where applicable:

- That it has a planning and review cycle that allows periodic monitoring of its performance and quality, and regulatory mechanisms to review and revise its positioning, curriculum structure, objectives, characteristics, and strategies. Each program must have a regular review process for quality assurance of curriculum, teaching and learning materials.
- Any review and feedback mechanisms used to analyze students' learning performance.

- Any agreed articulation or credit transfer from vocational to specific higher education qualifications, as well as issues on recognition of prior learning (RPL) and assessment standards.
- Any mechanisms used to monitor and improve quality of delivery arrangement with other campuses or institutions, if applicable.
- Any mechanisms employed to monitor and improve the quality and effectiveness of industry placements/internships, such as feedback reports from internship coordinators and students.
- How student feedback, course evaluations, and course assessments are used to enhance the teaching quality and capacity of faculty members.
- Mechanisms for external or internal referencing of the quality and standing of programs (e.g., benchmarking, moderation, peer review, and international staffing exchanges).
- Follow-up mechanisms in place to respond to recommendations in previous re-/accreditation reports.
- Any follow-up mechanisms used for its graduates and alumni.

## **7. Level of Internationalization**

The institution/program is to:

- Briefly describe the policy towards internationalization within the institution and within the program offering TH&E courses. Describe how this policy is interpreted and implemented in TH&E education and curriculum.
- Describe the enrollment of international students in the program(s), including the number and percentage of international students in the program.
- Demonstrate the extent to which an international perspective is incorporated in the curriculum (i.e., in program outlines, pedagogy, texts, other curriculum materials, lectures/tutorials, practical sessions, case studies, assessments, etc.).
- Describe any specific learning outcomes/graduate attributes for internationalization and provide any evidence of achievement of these outcomes.

## 8. Physical Resources and Facilities

The institution/program is to demonstrate that faculty members and students are provided with sufficient support and resources:

- **Teaching Facilities**

It is expected that the teaching areas must be adequate for the number of students and be fitted with essential instructional resources and media appropriate to the courses being taught (e.g., data projector, video, web portal connection, and online learning resources). There should also be description of any generic or dedicated TH&E computing facilities or learning centers for students. The institution/program must make adequate provisions for student access to web-based and other electronic learning materials.

- **Learning Resources/Library**

The institution/program must provide students with access to physical and/or online learning materials needed for the courses being taught. All prescribed, background and further readings must be available in physical and/or electronic form. The institution/program should describe (or link to exemplify) the scope of shelf holdings in the TH&E field, including any relevant database subscriptions, and/or any 'virtual/digital library' facilities that are used in the courses. Where learning materials are provided through arrangements with a third party (e.g., another HEI), the effectiveness of such arrangements must be demonstrable.

## 9. Student Support Services

The institution/program is to describe its provision of student support services and resources, which may include but are not limited to the following, and demonstrate an integration of these resources:

- Admission and enrollment support.
- Accommodation advice and support.
- Orientation procedures.

- Advice and support regarding academic progression and academic difficulties.
- Advice on options for further study and career pathways.
- Appropriate system to support students' experience, counseling, health, etc.
- Effective grievance handling procedures, conducted with cultural sensitivity.
- Special services for international students (e.g., assistance with student visa extension).
- Tracking and assessing student retention, learning progression, and outcomes.
- Student satisfaction feedback mechanism(s).
- Support for students' extracurricular learning activities and campus life experiences.

## **10. Industry Advisory Board**

The institution is to:

- Provide the 'Terms of Reference' of its Industry Advisory Board. Such information should include details (e.g., name and bio-sketch) of the Chairperson and Members, terms of office and frequency of meetings.

The program is to:

- Describe the mechanism by which it consults or collaborates with industry via the Industry Advisory Board.

## **11. Staffing Resources**

The number of faculty members in the TH&E program(s) must be sufficient to cover the breadth of expertise required to maintain continuity in the event of faculty turnover and to provide guidance for part-time/sessional faculty members.

Faculty members must be adequately qualified and experienced in the TH&E field, and actively engaging in scholarly activities. There must be sufficient academic and other expertise to provide program leadership for the

management, development, and monitoring of programs. There must be a sufficient number of full-time equivalent (FTE) faculty members with relevant qualifications and experience in teaching TH&E courses at the major location where the program is taught, supported by appropriate administrative support and resources.

The institution/program is to:

- Detail the number of full- and part-time faculty members delivering the program(s), with their qualifications, relevant industry experience, and position title responsible for higher education programs (e.g., Professor, A/Professor, Senior Lecturer, Lecturer, etc.) and VET programs (e.g., Teacher, Head Teacher, etc.).
- Describe the regulations and procedures for the recruitment and appointment of full- and part-time faculty members, including the assignment of a reasonable teaching workload and the orientation/induction support available to new and part-time/sessional faculty members applicable to carrying out their role.
- Describe any specific regulations and policies implemented to support faculty members in research development, related academic performance, and professional services.
- Detail the research and consultancy activities in the School/Department/Program offering TH&E courses, supported with examples where appropriate.
- Describe any appropriate administrative support and resources.

## **12. Financial Resources**

The institution/program is to identify its funding sources and to provide evidence that it has appropriate financial resources and sufficient financial stability for provision of sustainable services to meet its obligations to the enrolled students.

## **13. Memberships, Partnerships, and Community/Social**

## Responsibility Engagement

The institution/program is to:

- Provide evidence of membership with academic associations, professional associations, and/or significant partnerships with major TH&E operators (e.g., airlines, hotel chains, travel agents, catering companies, and tour operators) nationally and internationally.
- Provide evidence of any involvement in domestic and/or international corporate social responsibility initiatives and activities.

## 14. Areas of Excellence

The institution/program is to provide evidence of excellence or exceptional achievements in the TH&E field, including any specific regulations and policies in place to support faculty members' provision of professional services, growth, and recognition. Recognition by international bodies is particularly desirable. Such evidence may include, but is not limited to:

- Essential
  - Continuing professional skills upgrading of faculty members.
  - Significant professional and/or industry leadership.
  - Collaboration with international and national TH&E enterprises and industry associations.
  - National or international awards to the institution or its faculty members (e.g., export awards, tourism awards, teaching awards).
  - Scholarly activities and research being undertaken by the faculty members and evidenced by the number of publications and research grants received.
  - Details of students' outstanding performance (e.g., achieving positive outcomes from international competitions or unique extracurricular activities).
- Desirable
  - Accreditation by international agencies.
  - Faculty members invited as speakers at national or international conferences or industry forums.

- Hosting of national or international conferences.
- Editorship (by the faculty members) of national or international professional journals or industry publications, where applicable.

### APPENDIX 3 – Example Itinerary of On-Site Visit

	Time	Agenda
<b>Day 0</b>	14:00-15:00	Arrival meeting (for the Review Panel only)
<b>Day 1</b>	09:30-09:45	Preparatory meeting (for the Review Panel only)
	09:50-10:50	The applicant’s presentation & meeting with the administration team and the executive team
	11:00-12:00	Group interview with the QA team
	12:00-13:00	Lunch break
	13:00-14:00	Facility tour
	14:10-15:10	Group interview with the administration team (e.g., academic advisors, counselors, staff members of international relations, librarians, and student services coordinators)
	15:15-16:15	Group interview with students
	16:20-17:30	Document review & discussion meeting (for the Review Panel only)
<b>Day 2</b>	09:30-09:45	Preparatory meeting (for the Review Panel only)
	09:50-10:40	Interview with the program head
	10:50-11:50	Group interview with academic staff (e.g., senior lecturers, advisory board, academic advisors, and internship coordinators)
	11:50-13:00	Lunch break
	13:00-14:00	Group interview with alumni and related administrative staff
	14:10-15:00	Group interview with industry representatives
	15:05-17:30	Discussion meeting (for the Review Panel only)
17:00-17:30	Closing meeting / The end	
<b>Day 3</b>	9:30-12:00	Discussion meeting
	12:00	Departure

Note: In the event of any changes in the itinerary, the latest notification from HEEACT shall prevail.