

#### CAPITAL UNIVERSITY OF SCIENCES AND TECHNOLOGY

### **Institutional Quality Policy (Draft)**

Proposed Draft

By

**Quality Enhancement Cell (QEC)** 

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#### 1. Introduction:

Higher education is essential for the socio-economic growth of developing countries and the quality of education has a direct impact on the strength and value of the degrees and qualifications which are flourished at the higher education institutes. Therefore, quality assurance and accreditation have become an essential part of higher education quality management all over the world. To ensure sustainable high-quality education, it is essential to develop an internal quality culture in Higher Education Institutes (HEIs).

The successful development of a quality culture requires commitment and active collaboration of all the stakeholders. As *quality culture* is commonly misunderstood as a system of internal quality monitoring, it is pertinent to note that the development of quality culture requires structural, procedural, and behavioral changes at the institute level. A well-documented institutional quality policy plays a vital role in communicating the commitment of all the stakeholders to foster a quality culture at an institute.

#### 1.1. Purpose

To promote Quality Culture, CUST as an HEI must ensure continuous institutional improvement through its rules and regulations and activities related to faculty teaching, student learning, educational program, and administrative and educational support services, to provide students with a high-quality learning experience and attain nationally/internationally comparable qualifications and awards.

#### 1.2. Process

There are various External and Internal Quality Assurance (QA) processes which are regularly carried out at institutional and program level at CUST by QA bodies like:

- a. Review of Institutional Performance and Effectiveness (RIPE)
- b. Post Graduate Program Review (PGPR)
- c. Program Review of Effectiveness and Enhancement (PREE)
- d. Feedback Surveys
- e. Continuous Quality Improvement (CQI) through Outcome Based Education (OBE)

#### 1.3. Aims and Objectives

Quality Assurance practices in education play a pivotal role in ensuring the consistent delivery of high-quality education and fostering continuous improvement in academic institutions. CUST is

committed to elevating the standard of education by implementing a comprehensive strategy across all the faculties. Therefore, the main aim of the quality policy is to serve as the ultimate quality assurance guide to pave the way for all the stakeholders in implementing and fostering the quality culture in the university through CQI. It provides and sets out imprints of all the quality processes whether internal or external to achieve the following objectives:

- ✓ To provide guidance in understanding, developing, implementing, and reviewing internal and external quality assurance procedures and practices.
- ✓ To ensure that the quality of academic programs of all faculties at CUST meets standards laid out by the Higher Education Commission (HEC) and all the relevant councils.
- ✓ To ensure the development and transformation of students into excellent intellectuals and skilled professionals.
- ✓ To provide a foundation to all the stakeholders in practicing and implementing quality assurance practices through enhanced support processes.
- ✓ To facilitate the development of a culture of continuous quality improvement to achieve inclusive, innovative, and ethically sound academic excellence.

#### 1.4.Significance

The values that CUST is committed to achieving as stated in the vision and mission statement, can only be achieved if all the stakeholders of the university understand and participate in developing and fostering a quality culture and communication of the standards, expectations, and guidelines to achieve those standards in mandatory for that purpose alone.

A centralized quality policy not only administers the QA practices in the regular operational activities of the university but also creates awareness and ownership of the postulates presented and endorses them in the formally documented form.

#### 2. CUST Quality Policy

#### **2.1. Concept**

The idea to devise an overall institutional quality policy is, to de-centralize the idea of quality and communicate an overall *quality is everyone's responsibility* moto to all the stakeholders of the university. This document outlines the what, how, and why of the requirements, expectations, and quality assurance practices that are regularly undertaken and operationalized at CUST. Quality

Policy applies to all stakeholders including students, and academic and non-academic staff employed at or contracted to CUST. This includes members of Executive and Senior Management, Administrative, Technical, and Support staff, Senior Administrative and Professional staff, and Academic staff.

CUST wants to incorporate the quality principles stated in PSG-23 at the core and therefore, the six principles stated above have been integrated with the quality assurance practices as important dimensions.

As its commitment to continuous quality improvement, inclusive and ethical educational leadership, and innovative and critical learning independence, the policy document states clear goals and practices that allow the university to achieve the standards and objectives highlighted in the mission and vision of CUST. All the principles complement and enhance the regularly conducted Quality Assurance practices and steer the activities to stretch further to excel at all levels.

Another important idea/ concept to be noted here is that the Policy applies equally to the University's academic operations (design and all modes of delivery of taught programs and courses, research and innovation) and non-academic operations (design and delivery of administrative, financial, technical, professional and support services) as well as to its formal and public engagement. This way all the stakeholders shall endorse the document and be aware of its terms and references.

#### **2.2.CUST Vision and Mission**

#### **Vision statement:**

To be recognized as a leading institution for transforming students into competent professionals and instrumental in societal growth.

#### **Mission Statement:**

Capital University of Science and Technology, through the pursuit of excellence in an ethical and inclusive environment, is committed to developing the intellectual, professional, social, and personal skills of its student population through innovations in learning, scholarship, and creative endeavors to meet the challenges of the future.

#### 2.3.<u>HEC PSG – 23 Principles</u>

#### Principle 01:

*Quality is everyone's responsibility:* That essentially includes statuary positions; that is, Vice-Chancellor, Registrar, Controller, Deans, HODs, faculty members, staff, students, and the Statutory Forums, that is, Syndicate/BOG, Academic Council, BoF, BoS, BASR, and so on. Also, QEC, ORIC, and other non-statutory positions of the university.

Incorporation of "Quality is everyone's responsibility" at CUST as an HEI shall encourage all the stakeholders to develop a 'quality culture' as a central institutional focus at all levels. It has to be an integral part of academic practices and should promote the development of an enabling learning environment for students. It assumes that everyone has a responsibility for quality

#### Principle 02:

Quality of learning opportunity for students and other stakeholders: All the students, faculty, and staff must be provided a high-quality opportunity for academic learning (including remedial learning), personality development, and character building.

The university shall ensure that it recruits, retains, and develops a body of faculty that could serve the institutional purpose of providing quality learning opportunities for the students and ensure that learning and teaching practices are informed by reflection, evaluation of professional practice, and subject-specific and educational scholarship. Moreover, management shall safeguard and maintain physical, virtual, and social learning environments that are safe, accessible, and reliable for all stakeholders. The university is already committed to expanding and strengthening academic initiatives as one of the six identified strategic pillars. Moreover, the strategic plan provides a clear road map and required actions to achieve the outcomes prescribed in the objectives of strategic pillars. Enhancing graduate employability is one of them. University leadership pays serious attention to these concerns as they determine the sustainability of the institutes and their graduates.

#### Principle 03:

**Quality and contribution to society:** The quality of the higher education provision is judged by how well it contributes to the socio-economic development of the surrounding areas, region, and national and international development.

University aims to achieve such a standard of educational experience that can enable the students to learn independently and enhance the capacity to develop analytical and critical thinking skills which can contribute to the socio-economic development of the state especially benefitting the marginalized areas of the society. The university's curriculum and projects are designed to achieve such outcomes with the help of specified learning objectives. Expanding civic engagement is also one of the pillars on which the strategic plan of CUST stands. Therefore, CUST has full commitment to make sure its stakeholders especially the student body commit to the socio-economic development of the society and engage in civic roles at different levels. The university also envisions achieving this outcome by strengthening the industrial linkages with inclusive initiatives which can help in balancing and connecting the remote and marginalized areas with development industries and organizations.

#### Principle 04:

**Quality and good governance:** Complete compliance with the Charter/Act, and the essential elements of governance must be ensured at all levels; that is participation, rule of law, transparency, responsiveness, consensus-oriented, equity and inclusiveness, effectiveness and efficiency, and accountability.

Quality and good governance go hand in hand. University governance systems shall be inclusive and comply with all the elements that are critical in facilitating the fulfillment of its mission and goals and shall strengthen institutional effectiveness and integrity. The university shall adhere to the statutes mentioned in the Charter/ Act, with strong institutional mechanisms by all the statutory authorities.

#### Principle 05:

Quality and accountability: Having a Charter from the Parliament/Public Institutions, it is the responsibility of the university to sustain a strong commitment to accountability, transparency, and public disclosure; engendering public confidence and sustaining public trust. That includes evidence of strong commitment to the requirement of accreditation councils and government regulations and other national/international quality assurance & accreditation entities, including QAA/HEC Pakistan.

CUST is committed to continuous quality improvement in its pursuit of excellence which can be achieved through transparency and accountability at all the levels of the institution. As regularly practiced, the university shall make efforts to acquire accreditations from national and international councils and accreditation bodies to enhance public trust and deliver the quality standards outlined in its vision and mission statement. The university's vision to become a globalized university also contributes to achieving these outcomes as international recognition requires meticulous documentation and disclosure of QA practices along with sound evidence which enhances and expands the accountability of the HEI.

#### Principle 06:

**Quality and change:** Quality higher education needs to be inclusive, flexible, creative, and innovative; developing and evolving to meet students' needs, to justify the confidence of society, and to maintain diversity.

The university motivates and encourages the faculty members and the student body towards advanced research and innovation to meet the national and international standards of quality education. CUST is committed to strengthening and providing an environment that fosters inclusion, creativity, and innovation. The mission statement of CUST draws the attention of all the stakeholders to this principle and puts the responsibility on every stakeholder to take ownership in implementing and achieving standards in this domain.

#### **2.4.CUST Quality Policy Statement**

CUST shall strive to achieve excellence in continuous quality improvement by creating a quality culture and enhancing the ownership and shared responsibility of quality education to all

stakeholders by ensuring effective and efficient quality assurance mechanisms. The university shall make efforts to develop ethically sound professionals by integrating the core values of inclusion, scholarship, innovation, and leadership.

## 2.5. <u>Program Education Objectives (PEOs)</u>, <u>Program Learning Outcomes (PLOs)</u>, <u>Course Learning Outcomes (CLOs)</u> and <u>Research Learning Outcomes (RLOs)</u>

CUST has adopted and implemented the "Outcome Based Education (OBE)" system throughout the university's five faculties. This shift has added challenges, efforts, and new dimensions to the functions and responsibilities of primary stakeholders of the university especially, students, faculty, and management. As a result, the planning and review committees were constituted, and program-wide educational objectives were developed. The PEOs then are broken down into the program learning objectives and course learning objectives. Therefore, the university monitors the attainment of "Course Learning Outcomes (CLOs)", "Program Learning Outcomes (PLOs)" and "Program Educational Objectives (PEOs)" quite diligently as the whole OBE system of education stands on these dimensions. The faculties constantly review and revise the objectives and learning outcomes. The feedback surveys are also designed in such a way to gather feedback from the alumni and employer regarding the level of achievement of the learning outcomes and objective of the program of the graduate.

#### 3. Institutional Quality Assurance (QA) Strategies

This section focuses on the current QA Practices that are regularly followed and implemented at CUST as a mandate entrusted to HEIs via HEC QAA. The Quality Assurance processes, contribute towards the professional growth of faculty, related to teaching-learning and research competencies/skills. These processes include external and internal reviews which are administered by the university regularly. The QA guidelines/ standards were introduced to enable the HEIs to offer a conducive learning environment, to their students. It also facilitates students learning by equipping them with the requisite skills as per job market requirements. The QA processes, designed by HEC, lead towards the improvement of the teaching-learning and research environment of the institution. These interventions help institutions of higher learning to become world-class universities by producing quality graduates, suitable for the job market both at the national and international level.

#### 3.1. External Review

As per the requirements of the Higher Education Commission, Quality Assurance Agency, the university shall conduct the external review after three years depending upon the performance of the institution. In order to improve the performance of HEIs, HEC has started with the primary step of outlining the Performance Evaluation Standards for the HEIs to be used for the purpose. A total of eleven standards are defined in this document and all eleven standards are equally important to be met by the HEIs to achieve the desired certification to quality provision in higher education, international visibility, and significant place in the regional and international rankings of the HEIs. Now according to the new PSG- 23 QA Framework, these standards have been further improved. For external quality assurance, institutions are expected to conduct a Review of Institutional Performance and Enhancement and a Program Review for Effectiveness and Enhancement (RIPE and PREE) against the 16 RIPE and 8 PREE Standards as required in the Quality Assurance Framework. According to PSG-23, the standards for RIPE are divided into three tiers namely; Strategic development, Academic Development, and Institutional development. RIPE for Internal Quality Assurance orientates around an institutional quality assessment. The institutional assessment evaluates the institution's performance in the last academic year against the RIPE Standards as outlined in the Quality Assurance Framework. The institutional selfassessment should take account of program assessment and, if appropriate, departmental assessment. Similarly, PREE revolves around the program reviews, and the university shall conduct PREE and prepare the program assessment report which is to be submitted to the Higher Education Commission as part of the Yearly Progress Report.

#### 3.2 Internal Review

The same institutional and program-level Quality Assurance practices are followed annually by the institution and all the HEIs are supposed to conduct self-IPE, Self-PGPR, and prepare the Self-Assessment reports of all the programs being offered at the university. The same practices become part of the Internal Quality Assurance and are administered and conducted by the university itself The quality Enhancement Cell is responsible for the smooth conduction and reporting of the whole process through the Implementation plan which is approved by the university's competent authority and is then submitted to the Higher Education Commission as part of the yearly progress report just like the External Quality Assurance.

#### 3.3 Continuous Quality Improvement (CQI) Cycle

CUST follows a comprehensive CQI process that is based on the implementation of three cycles i.e., CLO assessment, PLO assessment, and PEO assessment, which run simultaneously. Two levels of curriculum review are carried out using these three assessment cycles. The first level is course level review which includes a review of CLOs, and their mapping, course contents, teaching methodology, course activities, etc. The second level is the program level review which includes reviewing PLOs and their mapping, roadmap of degree, modification of courses, etc. to comply with the OBE system. These include the curriculum design process which is done once and completed, and assessment and CQI, which are ongoing processes. The curriculum design process has been completed twice and the most recently updated version is to be implemented in all the faculties throughout the university.

The process of curriculum design is a top-down process that commences by defining PEOs and linking them to the University's Vision and Mission. Then defining PLOs and linking them with PEOs, defining/updating curriculum roadmap. including the structure and all courses involved, defining CLOs and course contents of individual courses, and linking them with PLOs. Finally, defining learning levels of each CLO as defined in Taxonomy.

Assessment is a bottom-up process starting from course assessment through quizzes, assignments, class projects, midterm, and final term, then CLO assessment, PLO assessment, and PEO assessment. Afterward, program CQI initiates by reviewing PLOs, if necessary, reviewing the roadmap and program structure, reviewing individual CLOs, reviewing course contents, and finally reviewing teaching methodology if needed.

The overall process is based on data that includes students' feedback on courses, course review reports (that include course contents, PLOs, and CLOs assessment) counselors' feedback, exit survey of graduating students, alumni survey, employer's feedback, internship feedback, and final year project evaluation. Student Course Feedback and Exit Survey is collected by the Quality Enhancement Cell (QEC) of the University. Corporate Linkages that is Industrial Liaison Office keeps records and collects Alumni feedback and Employer's feedback of interns and alumni with departmental help. Design projects evaluation report including the feedback of industrial representatives during the open house and the student's feedback from counseling sessions is collected by the HoD office.

This assessment data is first analyzed and evaluated against the KPIs by the QAC departmental member, and the summary is presented in the CQI Review Report. The CQI report is the central and most important part of our CQI process. Along with regular quantifiable data like Course CLO/PLO assessment, FYP marks, and survey satisfaction percentages, student feedback of course/teacher, comments of the teacher on CRR, and important points in Counseling meetings are also considered for CLO, PLO, and PEO evaluation.

The CQI report is presented and thoroughly reviewed in the Departmental Faculty Meeting which assigns the tasks of Program or Course level review to the Curriculum Review Committee (CRC). The CRC thoroughly analyzes the data including Course files and summary evaluation reports by QAC members and sorts out concrete corrective actions related to the revisions required in the program or individual courses as discussed in the previous sections, these corrective actions may be in the overall program or maybe in the individual course. For course-level corrective actions, the BoS is the final approval authority. However, for the program level corrective actions, like change in curriculum, placement of courses in the roadmap, addition of new courses in the curriculum, review in PLOs or PEOs, BoS finalizes the recommendations, and the final approval authority is the Academic Council of the University. For student-level corrective actions which are identified every semester by QA team data analysis, the HoD office forwards the lists of the students who have not attained PLOs in the semester to the respective student and his counselor. For individual student-related issues, regular counseling sessions are conducted and findings are shared in central counseling sessions for further action. The Head of the Department facilitates the implementation of recommended actions.

#### 3.4 Self-Assessment Reports (SARs)

Self-assessment is an important toolset for assuring the academic quality of a program and provides feedback to the department /faculty and university administration to prepare the required improvement action plan. The basic purpose of the self-assessment exercise is to maintain and enhance academic standards enabling the promotion of students' learning, verifying academic programs, and ensuring institutional objectives and goals. Relevant documentation/ data of programs were gathered against eight set standards and thirty-one attributes through the Self-Assessment process, reviewed critically, and suggested important remedial action/steps for future improvement of the program. Recently with the launch of the Higher Education Commission,

Precepts, Standards, and Guidelines in 2023, the process has been revamped and the program assessment reports will be conducted under the revised standards from the year 2024 onwards.

#### 3.5 Surveys

Feedback surveys serve as an important assessment tool for gathering information in the form of quantitative and qualitative responses from the important stakeholders of the university therefore, QEC CUST conducts six surveys as advised by HEC QAA regularly. The surveys include the Freshman Survey, Course and Teacher Evaluation Survey, Faculty Satisfaction Survey, Exit Survey for Graduating Students, and Alumni and Employer Survey. These surveys are conducted at the beginning or end of the semester or after two years depending upon their nature, as prescribed by the Higher Education Commission. The survey results are gathered and a detailed report with the findings and recommendations along with an executive summary is prepared which is then shared with the Vice Chancellor after the approval from the competent authority, the same is communicated to the concerned departments to take further action and relevant measures for the improvement of the quality of education at CUST.

#### 4. QA Bodies and Functions

#### 4.1. Quality Assurance Agency (QAA)

QAA is a policy-making and monitoring organization for enhancement and assurance of quality in Higher Education Institutions. With the vision "To promote, enhance and assure the quality of higher education across HEIs in Pakistan" the Quality Assurance Agency (QAA) was established in 2005 by the Government of Pakistan through the Higher Education Commission (HEC). It is involved in the systematic implementation of quality enhancement procedures/criteria to attain improved levels of international compatibility and competitiveness at institutional and program levels. The main functions of QAA include:

- **1.** Developing practical guidelines and policies for establishing Quality Enhancement Cells at all universities for integration of quality assurance in the higher education system.
- 2. Monitoring, Evaluation, and Capacity Building of all Quality Enhancement Cells.
- **3.** Capacity building of selected professional staff of Quality Enhancement Cells to serve as Master Trainers after receiving training in quality assurance, to increase the levels of international compatibility through skill enhancement in the respective field.

**4.** Hiring the services of local as well as foreign experts, having practical exposure to academic quality assurance for conducting training/workshops/seminars for the capacity building of QAA & QEC staff.

QEC CUST closely coordinates and works with the Quality Assurance Agency of the Pakistan Higher Education Commission to ensure smooth functioning and achievement of the quality standards set to improve the quality of higher education at CUST.

# 4.2.Quality Enhancement Cell (QEC)/ Office of Institutional Quality Assessment and Effectiveness (IQAE)

Quality Enhancement Cell (QEC) at Capital University of Science and Technology (CUST) was established on August 28, 2015, with a vision:

"To enable Capital University of Science and Technology to become a leading institution, instilling and pursuing the highest quality assurance practices, at national and international level".

QEC has a mandate of carrying out academic quality assurance activities, devising quality standards/parameters, based on the guidelines provided by, regulators (Higher Education Commission and Professional Councils), ensuring its implementation to institutionalize a quality culture and develop a sense of commitment contributing towards continuous quality improvement, within CUST. QEC follows up on the implementation plans developed by the departments and monitors the progress of proposed actions supposed to further strengthen and uplift the internal & external quality of education within the institution. According to the PSG-23, QEC will function as the Office of Institutional Quality Assessment and Effectiveness (IQAE) with revised Terms of References. The IQAE within each institution is the focal point for all quality assurance policies and practices and has an important role in facilitating the development and delivery of internal and external quality assurance. One of their main functions is the management of internal quality assurance processes, at both program and institutional levels. They also have a key responsibility in liaising with external quality assurance bodies, including the HEC, QAA, and accreditation councils.

IQAEs have clear authority within the institution to develop, deliver, and manage quality assurance policies and procedures. The offices are led by a senior manager (equivalent to the status of Dean/Administrative Head) who directly reports to the head of the institution (Vice

Chancellor/Rector or equivalent), and who has quality assurance within their remit. IQAEs include staff aligned to each faculty or department, to help ensure effective and consistent operation across the institution. There is an expectation that IQAEs will promote ways to engage students in quality assurance, including in the Office's operation.

The role of the IQAE is crucial in enabling the university to develop an organizational quality culture oriented to enhancing the quality of its programs.

#### **4.3.** Quality Assurance Committee (QAC)

The CUST Quality Assurance Committee (QAC) has been constituted as per mandate, entrusted by HEC, to plan, monitor, and implement IQA policies and practices within institutes in close coordination with all academic departments.

The QAC forum plays an effective role in the improvement of the quality of academic standards, programs, and processes of the institution. Every academic department is represented by its nominee, nominated by the respective department head, duly approved by the university's competent authority for two years. Given the importance of the advisory role of the QAC two members from other statutory bodies are also nominated to be part of QAC one from the Academic Council and the other from the Executive Committee. QAC CUST has 14 members representing different departments of all the five faculties at CUST and is chaired by the Director QEC.

#### 4.4. Institutional Quality Circle (IQC)

For effective implementation of PSG-23, a new statutory body has to be constituted in every university namely, the Institutional Quality Circle (IQC) headed by the Vice Chancellor. According to the QA Framework, the IQC is a key tool for the IQAE in establishing a quality culture within an institution. It is chaired by the Vice Chancellor and facilitated by the IQAE. Aside from ratifying the institutional self-evaluation (described above), the IQC meets four times a year in its role as the ultimate delegated authority for the management of quality assurance at the university. Terms of reference for the Institutional Quality Circle (IQC)

- To monitor all relevant external guidance and requirements related to quality assurance, initiating and coordinating action as appropriate.
- To develop and keep under review the university's Academic Policy and Quality Framework, that is, the systems, policies, and guidance for assuring and enhancing the

quality of students' learning experience and maintaining academic standards, and to

consider and manage the outcomes of these processes.

To have oversight of the university's approach to ensure the completeness, accuracy,

reliability, and fitness for the purpose of the information provided for applicants and

students.

To maintain operational oversight of academic and student-related policy and legislation,

considering proposals for minor and operational legislative changes, and consulting with

legal services as appropriate.

To consider proposals for the addition, withdrawal, suspension, and exceptional amendment of

programs of study of the university. This will normally be undertaken by the chair's action for

regular reporting to a subsequent meeting of the committee.

During these discussions, the IQAE will ensure that the IQC is informed by, and considers, the

key questions under each element of the university/institutional performance report. In this way,

the discussions of the IQC are rooted in the student life cycle epitomized by the Institutional

Performance Report as a result of RIPE and the data that is generated by student activity.

A key output of the discussions of the IQC is the identification of opportunities for enhancement

across the institution.

Membership

As per the guidelines provided by the PSG- 2023 QA Framework the composition of the IQC shall be as

follows:

Chair: Vice Chancellor

• Deputy chair: Pro-Vice-Chancellor

• Head of the Institutional Quality Assessment and Effectiveness unit

• Heads of Department

Student Council representatives (2)

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