

# University Quality Policies

Approved by the Academic Senate on 24/07/2018

Approved by the Board of Directors on 26/07/2018

## INTRODUCTION

The University of Parma updated its Quality Policy Document, first approved by the Governing Bodies in July 2014 and subsequently in March 2017, in order to realign its priorities with the vision of the new Rector of the University, appointed in November 2017.

The Document takes into account the principles expressed by L.240/2010 and subsequent decrees, as set out in the ANVUR Guidelines for the periodic accreditation of universities and Courses of Study, with the goal of improving the organisation of the University and strengthening the Quality Assurance at the basis of the services provided for students and all stakeholders of the University.

The policies included in the Document, which aim at realising the University's vision of Quality in teaching, research, and the Third Mission, are a point of reference and at the same time a stimulus for the improvement of all University areas. The policies have a close connection with the 2019-2021 Strategic Plan and the 2019-2021 Integrated Performance Cycle Management Plan, as well as with the three-year objectives of the individual Departments, which have embarked on an improvement process in the planning, monitoring, and assessing of their activities, consistent with Quality Assurance policies.

The inspiring principle of the document is not to define Quality policies as abstract criteria, but to make a commitment to implement concrete objectives that translate into strategic and organisational actions for the institution for the people who study in it, for the people who work in it, and for the social and economic context in which the University operates, as outlined in the Strategic Plan and the Integrated Plan, guided by the Performance Measurement and Evaluation System.

Below are the policies identified for the reporting period by the Rector and the Pro-Rectors, which refer to what is stated in the election programme<sup>1</sup> of the Magnificent Rector. These policies led to the definition, in the Strategic Plan and the Integrated Plan, of the actions necessary for their implementation, defined by setting out responsibilities, timeframes, indicators and targets.

Finally, the document also contains a section on the Policies for Quality Assurance in Teaching, Research and Third Mission with the aim of strengthening the Quality

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<sup>1</sup> [www.unipr.it/ateneo/elections-statute-and-regulations/elections-of-the-rector/elections-of-the-rector-20172018-20222023](http://www.unipr.it/ateneo/elections-statute-and-regulations/elections-of-the-rector/elections-of-the-rector-20172018-20222023)

Assurance at the basis of the services provided for students and all stakeholders of the University.

### Quality Policies for Teaching

The University holds as a primary objective for the Quality of Education to continuously improve the quality of its teaching and is therefore committed to maintaining a student-centred teaching environment that allows students to:

- follow their educational path and achieve quality learning outcomes as detailed by the different Courses of Study on the basis of the educational demands of the job market, as well as of the economic, political and social community;
- gain awareness of their future role in the job market and in society at large, by pursuing their personal development in a stimulating and innovative learning environment.

The main policies for Education Quality are to:

- update and improve the educational offering to ensure that the University's Courses of Study meet the training demands of the job market;
- expand the undergraduate teaching offering, especially in the STEM (*Science, Technology, Engineering and Maths*) area, consistently with sustainability criteria and in coordination with the University's postgraduate offering, taking into account the job market, the specific features of the University of Parma and its region and the national revision process of Courses of Study;
- consistently expand the postgraduate offering considering sustainability criteria and harmonisation with the University's doctoral and postdoctoral offerings, taking into account the job market, the specific features of the University of Parma and its region and the national revision process of Master degree courses;
- increase the quality of training efforts by focusing on the transfer of knowledge and research experience to second and third level courses also in connection with higher education initiatives and in line with the needs of the local context;
- enhance interdisciplinarity and the development of inter-departmental and inter-university teaching projects, while fostering relations with other universities, particularly those in the Emilia-Romagna region;
- promote internationalisation through involvement in international research and higher education networks, including by increasing the number of foreign students in undergraduate, graduate and doctoral Courses of Study;
- increase the internationalisation of degrees and simplify international student mobility;

- strengthen orientation services, with particular focus on out-of-province students and students with disabilities;
- consolidate the organisation of training courses to support teachers in course and educational design and enhance the use of innovative teaching methodologies.

### Quality Policies for Research

The University makes it one of its primary objectives for the Quality of research to continuously improve its scientific production and other research results and is therefore committed to supporting research teams at the regional, national and international level, by creating a stimulating and innovative research environment.

We believe that the success of University research is essentially based on four elements:

- human capital;
- efficient infrastructure and modern research equipment;
- adequate funding for internal research programmes;
- contact and dialogue with international research players.

The main policies for Research Quality are to:

- encourage the participation of researchers in European calls for proposals by setting up reward mechanisms;
- encourage the recruitment of young researchers from other universities or countries by facilitating stabilisation mechanisms;
- ensure effective administrative support for the University's lecturers in the project phase;
- strengthen research infrastructure and equipment in order to make the university's research groups competitive on an international level;
- establish multi-year funding programmes aimed at research excellence;
- promote the internationalisation of research activities with specific programmes for incoming and outgoing mobility for lecturers and researchers;
- promote the communication of the University's research activities and results.

### Quality policies for the Third Mission

The University's primary objectives for the quality of its Third Mission include its continuous qualitative improvement and the commitment to supporting technology transfer initiatives and public engagement activities to become a point of reference for local businesses and society at large, and ultimately a privileged stakeholder at the national level.

The main policies for Third Mission Quality are to:

- stimulate and exploit the positive impact the University's activities have on businesses to increase competitiveness, for instance in terms of innovation of products and processes, research and development, patents, trademarks, and intellectual property. This policy is to be implemented through joint research projects between the University and local businesses and with the centres of the Emilia-Romagna Region High Technology Network;
- consolidate a programme of communication events in partnership with the city;
- promote the well-being of those who live university life;
- invest in the University Museum System.

### Quality Assurance Policies

The University of Parma directs its activities towards a strong self-evaluative effort to identify opportunities for improvement and to enhance its reputation and its ranking.

In particular, the University fosters and guarantees the quality of teaching, research, Third Mission and services through:

- the implementation and maintenance on the part of the teaching, research and service areas of a Quality Assurance model that includes procedures, roles and responsibilities for the quality of training and research at both central and departmental levels;
- the participation and contribution of all University components to the management of quality of teaching, research and services;
- the systematic collection of data and information on activities carried out, objectives pursued, resources used, and on student, faculty and staff satisfaction;
- the adoption of reporting and transparency tools to allow interested parties to continually verify their efforts;
- the adoption of an organisational structure and operational mechanisms that will allow the actualisation of the plans for the implementation of the Quality vision, including through an optimisation of the allocation of human and technical resources with respect to external demand and to the development of scenarios conceived by the Departments (this is to be carried out with special attention to information systems, how objectives are defined and articulated, internal training, meritocratic criteria for recruiting and staff assessment, methods for verifying and monitoring results and performance, and to the Bonus system);
- the annual review of this QA policy to assess its relevance and the extent to which its annual objectives have been met;
- the continuous improvement of both internal and external communication as a fundamental tool for participation, transparency and control by employees and

stakeholders.

More specifically, with regard to Quality Assurance in Education, the University is committed to systematically implementing and maintaining the following processes:

- regularly surveying the employment and professional landscape to assess demand, quality of training services, and job orientation opportunities;
- preparing an educational offer centred around learning objectives suited both to the cultural development of students and to the needs of the job market and other external stakeholders. This involves devising accurate methods to verify the learning objectives achieved sustainably, with the available human and material resources;
- implementing incoming orientation processes to guide aspiring freshmen and help them make informed and conscious choices to minimise chances of future failure;
- implementing outgoing orientation processes to accompany students into the job market according to their inclinations and potential;
- promoting the informed participation of students in the collegiate bodies which call for their presence and involving them in activities to improve teaching quality;
- verifying the perceived effectiveness of teaching methods by analysing student opinion forms to identify relevant problems, analyse their causes and work towards appropriate solutions;
- promoting a culture of Quality among those responsible for Quality Assurance in education by making support available through targeted training activities;
- utilising the University website to provide useful, complete and up-to-date information on the educational offer.

With regard to the Quality Assurance of Research and Third Mission, the University is committed to systematically implementing and maintaining the following processes:

- ensuring that its staff and students adhere to sound ethical principles both during the carrying out of research and at the time of results publication<sup>2</sup>;
- optimising the management of research and Third Mission activities according to the needs of researchers and the administration, verifying with all interested parties the effectiveness of both existing and new procedures;
- promoting a culture of Quality among those responsible for Quality Assurance in research and Third Mission by making support available through targeted training activities;
- utilising the University website to provide useful, complete and up-to-date information on research results and Third Mission activities.

The task of assessing compliance with these basic guidelines is entrusted to the University's

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<sup>2</sup> The Governing Bodies recently approved the 'Guidelines for Good Scientific Practice and Research Dissemination' available at: <https://www.unipr.it/node/21810>

Evaluation Committee, while the Quality Assurance Committee monitors their implementation and guarantees the necessary support to ensure that Quality Assurance is actualized through the adoption of appropriate organisational processes.

The structure of the University of Parma's Quality Assurance system<sup>3</sup>, and the University's annual Quality Assurance objectives<sup>4</sup> which derive from these guidelines, are made available to all interested parties in the documents on the University's QA website ([www.unipr.it/AQ](http://www.unipr.it/AQ)).

Parma, 2 August 2018

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<sup>3</sup> [www.unipr.it/www.unipr.it/AO/architetturaAQ](http://www.unipr.it/www.unipr.it/AO/architetturaAQ)

<sup>4</sup> [www.unipr.it/www.unipr. it/ AO/architectures raAO/objectives](http://www.unipr.it/www.unipr.it/AO/architectures raAO/objectives)