

Quality Assurance Framework

Proposed Revision, April 2017

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01 June 2017

Geneva, Switzerland



Revisions

April 2017

The present version is the third revision to the Quality Assurance Framework since it was issued in December 2012. Changes in this version were proposed following a review process, including the administration of a QAF usability survey to UNITAR staff, discussions within the Quality Assurance Committee, and discussions and presentations at the December 2016 staff meeting on quality assurance. The main revisions include a reduced number of quality standards (10), changes to the self-assessment and independent peer review processes, and extension of the QAF to the CIFAL Global Network in accordance with the CIFAL Guidelines.

August 2014

Revises QAF to extend the list of exceptions to include learning events less than one day, such as briefings and seminars in which learning objectives are specified.

October 2013

Revises the QAF to include exceptions to the requirement to undertake quality assurance self-assessments.

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Quality Assurance Framework

1. Quality is a fundamental pillar of the Institute's identity and figures among the building blocks of the UNITAR Six-Point Vision which will guide UNITAR programming over the years to come.
2. UNITAR established the Quality Assurance Framework (QAF) for learning events in 2012 to respond to the growing emphasis placed on learning outcomes and the strategic objective to strengthen the quality of training products and services as enshrined in the 2010-2012 Strategic Framework. Since 2010, the number and proportion of beneficiaries associated with learning events (defined in annex 1) and broader capacity development initiatives have increased significantly. In 2016, UNITAR delivered over 300 learning-related events, ranging from briefings, courses, workshops, seminars and fellowship programmes, to over 32,000 individuals, representing the largest outreach recorded to date in the Institute's history.
3. The QAF is a tool to (a) validate the quality of UNITAR training through relevant certification and/or accreditation schemes, and (b) to serve as a platform for sharing experiences and learning on quality. As illustrated below, the QAF is composed of three main elements, including:
 - a. The Quality Assurance Committee (QAC);
 - b. A set of quality assurance standards and guidelines; and
 - c. A self-assessment and peer review process.

Quality Assurance Framework



4. The QAC, quality standards and guidelines, and self-assessment and review processes provide useful opportunities to improve the quality of products and services developed and delivered by the Institute, while at the same time serving as a reference to external quality certification schemes and facilitating steps towards accreditation.

Quality Assurance Committee

5. The Quality Assurance Committee (QAC) was established through Administrative Circular AC/UNITAR/2010/02 and amended through AC/UNITAR/2012/10 and AC/UNITAR/2015/02.
6. The QAC serves as the custodian of the QAF and is composed of at least five members, including three rotating and two non-rotating members. The Managers of the Planning, Performance and Results Section (Chair) and the Knowledge Systems Innovations Section are committee's the two non-rotating members. The QAC has the mandate to address quality related elements, including the incremental development of quality standards for all types of programming and the review of their application. The QAC's terms of reference are provided in Administrative Circular AC/UNITAR/2015/02.

Quality Standards

7. Since its establishment, the QAC has initiated the process of developing quality standards and guidelines for projects and events associated with learning outcomes, with minimum criteria in key areas of instructional design applicable to learning and training, including analysis, design, development, implementation and evaluation (ADDIE).
8. The original QAF included 16 standards. Following engagement with managers and other staff, and a thorough review of lessons learned through the implementation of the QAF since its establishment, the 16 standards have been amalgamated into the following 10 with a view to streamlining the framework:
 - Standard 1: Learning Needs
 - Standard 2: Target Audience
 - Standard 3: Event Nomenclature and Title
 - Standard 4: Learning Objectives
 - Standard 5: Content and Structure
 - Standard 6: Methodology
 - Standard 7: Learning/Instructional Material
 - Standard 8: Training Expertise/Qualifications
 - Standard 9: Event Announcement Information
 - Standard 10: Evaluation and Follow-up
9. To facilitate the application of the quality standards, the QAC has developed a Guidance Document (annex 3) with a description of each criterion; guiding questions to facilitate their interpretation; practical examples illustrating application; and useful reference documents and resources, such as links to key content in the [Click4it learning and training wiki](#). The guidance document is intended to be read in conjunction with the Quality Standards and [Assessment Template](#) (annex 2)

Self-Assessment and Peer Review Process

10. The QAF requires a dual process of self-assessment and independent peer review. The process is designed to ensure that learning is analysed, designed, developed, delivered and evaluated in conformity with established standards of quality or, in cases where this may not be the case, that a framework exists to recognize and address the gaps and recommend action for quality improvement. The process is also intended to promote ownership in the development of a reflective culture on quality that is critical to realizing the Institute's strategic priorities and vision.
11. This revision to the QAF includes important changes to the self-assessment and peer review process, and is based on constructive feedback and lesson learning from the framework's application since 2013.

Self-Assessment

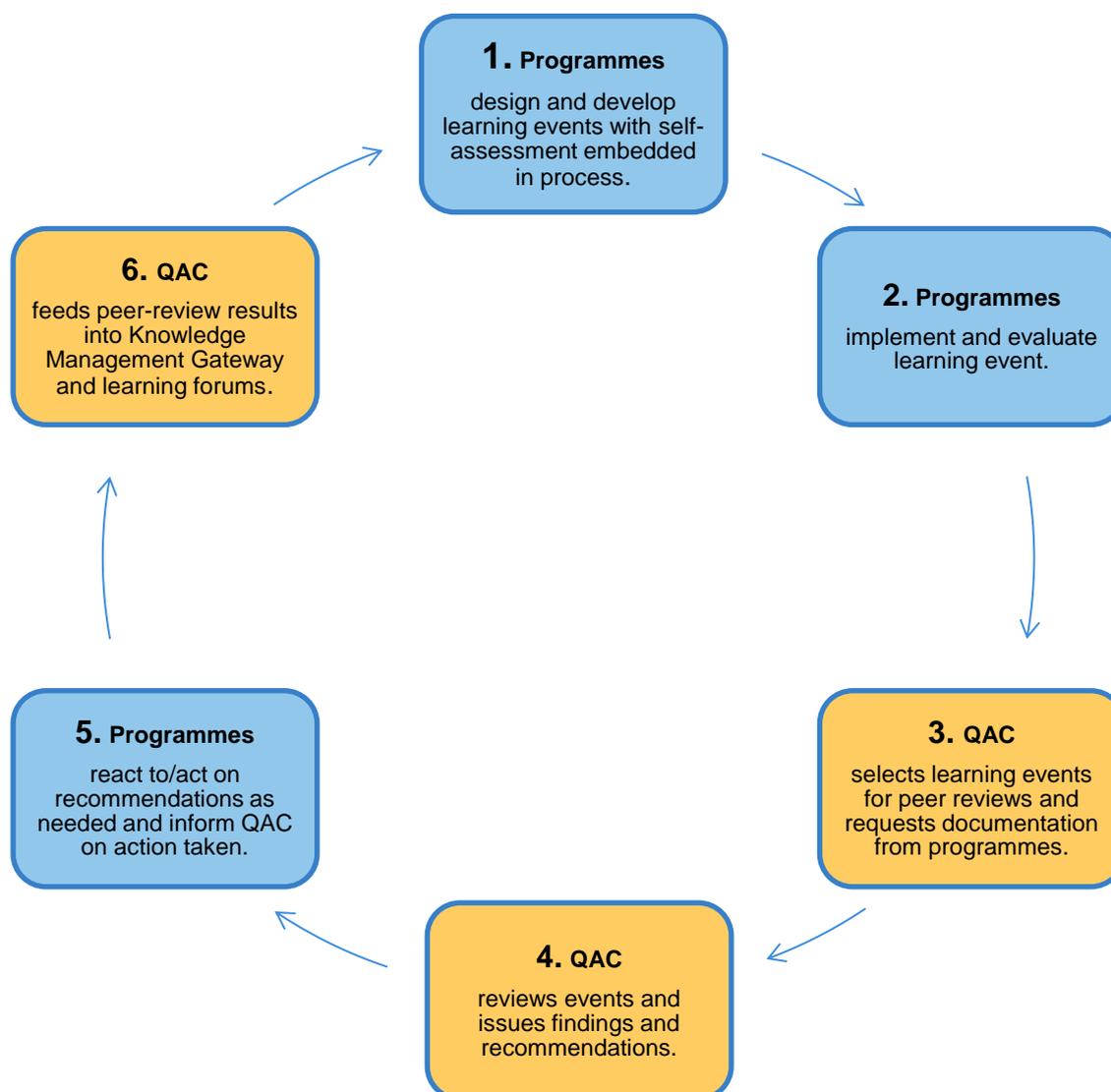
12. The application of the QAF is initiated by the Institute's offices, programmes, sections and units (collectively, "divisional entities") by ensuring that there is alignment with the 10 quality standards and the associated indicators in the design, development and delivery of learning events/projects. This 'self-assessment' process enables the divisional entities to address quality matters upfront. Self-assessment also enables divisional entities to adjust elements of the event following delivery based on evaluation and feedback from beneficiaries. While divisional entities are encouraged to use the standard assessment template as a tool for the self-assessment process (Annex 2), there is no requirement to submit the assessment template prior to event delivery.

Peer Review:

13. The QAC samples learning-related projects/events and undertakes peer reviews on an annual basis, usually during the third or fourth quarter. Each sampled project/event will be reviewed and certified by two QAC members against the 10 standards and associated indicators.
14. The QAC will identify a representative sample across UNITAR programming, and request the Managers of sampled projects/events to submit a completed self-assessment template and/or documented evidence that the event was aligned with the 10 quality standards. The QAC will issue a report to the Manager of the divisional entity and include main findings and recommendations.
15. In cases where there may be disagreement between the two peer reviewers on the review's findings or recommendations, a third QAC member will be consulted. QAC members are not permitted to review events where there is or may be a conflict of interest.
16. In case of non-alignment with the quality standards, a set of recommendations will be provided to the Manager of the relevant divisional entity. In such cases, the Manager is required to address the recommendations prior to future delivery or provide sufficient rationale for not accepting the recommendation(s). In addition to recommendations, the QAC may also issue suggestions, which do not require specific action/follow-up by Managers.
17. The QAC shall report the results of its reviews of self-assessments to the Executive Director on an annual basis, incorporate lessons learned from peer reviews on the Knowledge

Management Gateway on UNITARNet, and organize a learning forum to share results from peer reviews with a view to contributing to knowledge sharing and organizational learning.

QAF Self-Assessment and Peer Review Process



Application of the QAF

18. The QAF is generally applicable to all learning events/projects, such as individual briefings, courses, seminars and workshops (or, in the case of projects, events that may be clustered), which are organized by UNITAR or co-organized by the UNITAR and partners.
19. The QAF also applies to learning projects/events that are developed and delivered by the Global Network of International Training Centres for Authorities and Leaders (CIFAL) and by implementing partners on behalf of the Institute. In such cases, the Manager of the concerned divisional entity is responsible for ensuring that the Director of the CIFAL or the implementing partner adheres to the framework.

Exceptions:

20. The QAF does not apply to the following learning related projects or events:
 - a. Events organized by other organizations in which UNITAR is invited to contribute in the form of a lecture, presentation, facilitated exercise, etc. Such events are not UNITAR events, and the UNITAR contribution is minimal.
 - b. E-Learning courses which have received ECBCheck certification for the period in which the certificate remains valid;
 - c. Events in which self-assessments reviewed by the QAC have been found to meet all quality standards for a period of three years if the parameters of the event (e.g. needs, objectives, methods, etc.) do not change and if standards continue to be met;
 - d. Events which are sub-contracted to implementing partners which apply recognized quality assurance processes (in such case the recognized quality assurance practices should be shared with the QAC if the project or event is sampled for peer review); and
 - e. Events of a length of one day or less, such as briefings, seminars and webinars.

Responsibilities

21. Quality is a collective good and all Managers and other personnel are responsible for working together to ensure quality training, opportunities for learning and improvement in programming.
22. Managers and staff of divisional entities are responsible for ensuring that learning events are designed, developed, delivered and evaluated in accordance with the quality standards and criteria, and for taking appropriate action on recommendations to improve quality, when required, as well as for engaging actively in opportunities to share experiences and learn from others.
23. The QAC is responsible for providing sound peer reviews based on the information provided, and for ensuring that recommendations stem from findings and are actionable. The QAC is also responsible for engaging with Managers and relevant staff following peer reviews to help ensure utilization of recommendations, and for identifying lessons learned which can be discussed at an annual learning forum with a view to contributing to organizational learning and quality improvement across the Institute.

Review

24. The application of the QAF as revised in this present version will be reviewed in 2019 and amended to account for adjustments other elements as required, based on the evolving nature of quality assurances and taking into consideration international good practices.

Annex 1 – Definitions

Learning event: any event with objectives and processes that aim to develop new or strengthen existing knowledge, skills, attitudes and/or beliefs. Briefings, courses, seminars, workshops and webinars are examples of learning-related events.

Peer review: the process by which the QAC assesses the project/event against the quality standards and indicators and issues findings, recommendations and/or suggestions for improvement as may be relevant.

Quality: the fitness for purpose of a product or service according to a set of required standards.

Quality Assurance: the systematic monitoring and evaluation of the standards applicable to the various types of programming implemented by UNITAR to guarantee the quality of its products and services against minimum standards of quality and respective performance indicators to maximize the probability of the standards being achieved.

Quality Standards: the core elements of a quality framework outlining the required or agreed level of quality. They describe the expected or required minimum level of quality that needs to be attained. The aim of quality standards is to guarantee that UNITAR delivers products and services that are aligned with recognized standards applicable to the training industry.

Self-Assessment: a process in which divisional entities are required to consider indicators, answer questions and to judge the results against pre-determined criteria.

Standards: Measurable criteria that provide the basis for forming judgments concerning the performance of a learning-related event.

Annex 2 – Self-Assessment Template

Annex 3 – Guidance Document