**AALBORG
UNIVERSITY**

QUALITY POLICY

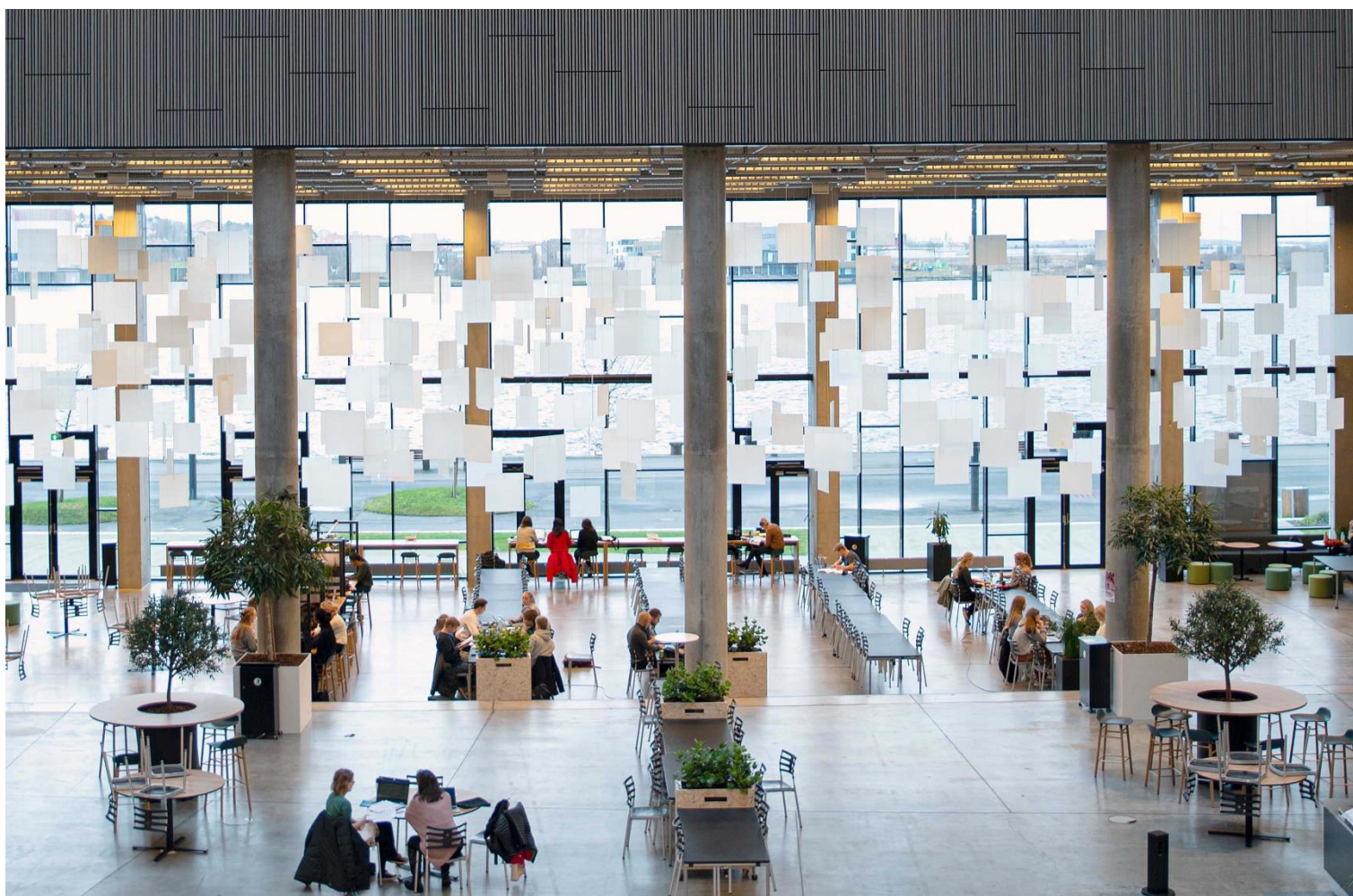## AAU Quality System

Overall framework

02-03-2021

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1. INTRODUCTION

Aalborg University's quality assurance policy sets the overall framework for quality work[1] in the field of education for Aalborg University (AAU).

AAU's quality system must support AAU's vision[2] for education. The vision is for AAU to educate students for the society of the future and that AAU's educational portfolio must be future-oriented, robust and in line with the university's profile.

Staff members, students and management work together to maintain and further develop the quality and relevance of the study programmes; and everyone focuses on the fact that AAU's programmes are grounded in an attractive study environment that supports problem- and project-based learning (PBL).

AAU's educational profile is a common frame of reference for the qualities that define AAU's study programmes and characterise AAU's graduates. The educational profile forms the basis for the quality assurance policy and the AAU quality system (version 2021) by providing a frame-work for the quality areas and their objectives.

The work with quality in education is based on the students' journeys through their studies. The quality areas in the quality system are therefore defined as a process from recruitment and study start to the educational process itself, the students' pathway into the labour market and their subsequent lifelong learning.

This policy describes the AAU quality system, the principles of quality work, the structure of the quality system, the quality areas of the system and the objectives in each of these areas.

2. QUALITY PRINCIPLES – THE BASIS FOR A COMMON QUALITY CULTURE

AAU's quality work is anchored in a common quality culture in which staff members, students and management work together to maintain a high quality of education and develop the study programmes so that they constantly match the societal developments.

In order to develop and work in a well-functioning quality system, it is crucial that knowledge from all organisational levels and areas is included and that everyone share a common understanding of the quality work at AAU.

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[1] The term "quality work" is generally used in the documentation of the AAU quality system and includes all activities and methods aimed at systematically and purposefully ensuring, developing and documenting the quality and relevance of AAU's efforts in the field of education

[2] Vision for education from AAU's strategy 2016-2021 "Knowledge for the World"

As a whole, AAU is based on the following principles in its work to support the common approach to quality work:

- AAU's distinctive features and educational profile together form the basis of the quality work. Problem-based and project-based learning are central to the quality work.
- Quality work is a prerequisite for the implementation of AAU's strategy in the field of education and its ambition to offer programmes at the highest level.
- Quality work is a shared concern, which is based on common approaches where it is considered appropriate.
- The quality of education is created in cooperation and dialogue between students, staff members[3], management, prospective employers and other stakeholders.
- Quality work is characterised by an inclusive and learning quality culture, based on disciplinary expertise, open dialogue and knowledge sharing for stakeholders at all organisational levels and across programmes.
- Quality work is based on a clearly communicated division of roles and responsibilities between students, teaching staff, management and staff functions (including technical and administrative staff (TAP).
- The management ensures a clear division of responsibilities and work, the necessary information and resources for the work, and that stakeholders at all levels of the organisation take ownership of and implement the established procedures in the quality system.
- Quality work is organised to improve the quality of education in practice and to avoid unnecessary bureaucracy.
- The quality work follows the quality circle (Plan, Do, Check, Act), see Figure 1.

Figure 1. The quality work follows the quality circle. The implementation of the quality circle is described in the document "Overall framework and processes for quality work".

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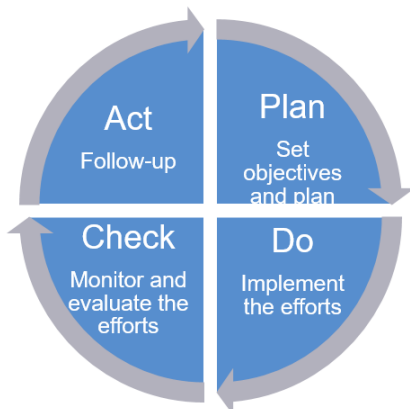
[3] In this case, staff members are scientific as well as administrative employees (e.g. teaching staff, programme secretaries, semester coordinators).

3. STRUCTURE OF AAU'S QUALITY SYSTEM

The AAU quality system consists of an overall framework followed by a number of quality areas (see Figure 2 below). The overall framework is "AAU's educational profile", which forms the entire foundation for the quality work at the university's study programmes, and thus puts into words what AAU understands as high quality in the programmes and with its graduates.

This is followed by the present document, "Quality Assurance Policy for Education", which sets out the overall policies and principles for quality work and thus provides direction for the overall quality work.

The document "Responsibility and roles in quality work" defines the organisation of quality work, the roles of staff members, students and management as well as where the responsibility for the quality work lies. In this context, it is important to note that at AAU we work with an involving and collaborative quality culture, where the stakeholders' contributions are important to ensure continuous development of all study programmes.

The document "Overall processes for quality work" defines the framework for the processes that continuously drive the quality work, including annual quality follow-up, programme evaluation and evaluation of the educational portfolio.

The overall framework of AAU's quality system therefore ensures – based on the quality circle in Figure 1 – that objectives are set, actions are planned and implemented, that actions are monitored and evaluated, and that achievements and actions are followed up on. The education management[4] and study boards can therefore take continuous and sound decisions to ensure and further develop the quality and relevance of the university's study programmes within the six quality areas.

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[4] The education management means all levels of management from Pro-dean to Chair of the Study Board, see these in the document "Responsibility and roles in quality work".

Figure 2. The structure of AAU's quality system.
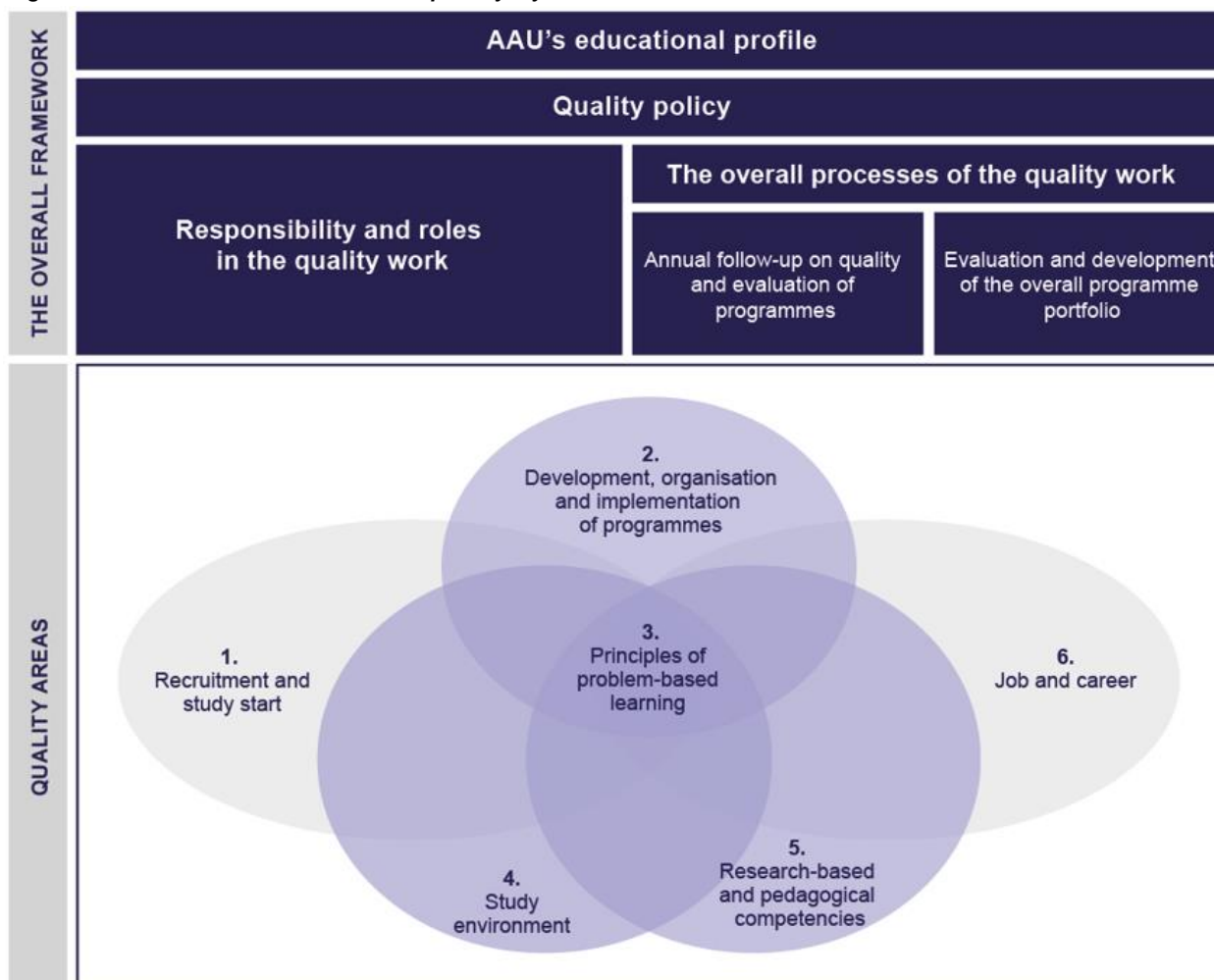
As mentioned earlier, the six quality areas of the AAU quality system are designed in a process model, where the students' path through their education at the university forms the basis for the quality work in each programme – from when students are recruited and begin their studies (quality area 1), through their studies (quality areas 2, 3, 4 and 5) until they graduate and commence or continue their career (quality area 6).

It is worth noting that quality area 3 "Principles of problem-based learning" is at the very centre of the model (Figure 2). The reason being – as mentioned earlier – that AAU study programmes are characterised by problem-based project work, which is based on a set of principles for education that constitute a very specific learning model – the AAU model of problem-based learning. From the time students are recruited and commence studies until they graduate, PBL will be the central and continuous learning approach, which is why the PBL principles and the quality assurance of these are placed as the central quality area in the structure of AAU's quality system. The PBL principles and problem-based learning are thus a subset of all quality areas in the system. Through PBL, AAU puts students' learning at the centre throughout their studies – from study start to graduation.

4. OBJECTIVES OF THE QUALITY AREAS

The quality areas of the AAU quality system are shown in Figure 2 above. For each quality area a number of objectives have been formulated, specifying common intentions and objectives for quality work. Objectives for all quality areas appear below.

1. RECRUITMENT AND STUDY START

AAU aims to attract well-qualified Danish and international students. AAU aims to promote a conscious and qualified choice of education and to provide the new students with a positive transition to student life at the university. The systematic work on recruitment and study start involves:

1.1. The university's recruitment of new students ensures a sustainable admission to the programmes.
1.2. Potential students are given the opportunity to make a deliberate choice of study on an informed and objective basis.
1.3. The university offers new students a well-organised and inclusive study start.

2. DEVELOPMENT, ORGANISATION AND OPERATION OF PROGRAMMES

AAU aims to offer study programmes with academic progression and study activity corresponding to the ECTS credits for which the overall programme is standardised. The programmes are structured so that students have an influence on their own studies in order to enhance the learning throughout the programmes and the motivation to complete them.
Systematic work on development, organisation and operation of study programmes involves:

2.1. The study programmes are developed taking into account the current and future needs of society and the labour market.
2.2 Aalborg University offers study programmes whose level and competence profiles correspond to the type description of the qualification framework.
2.3 The organisation and implementation of the study programmes, including the forms of examination, support the students' achievement of the competence profile of the programmes.

3. PRINCIPLES OF PROBLEM-BASED LEARNING

AAU's Principles for Problem-Based Learning (PBL) provide students with tools for independent acquisition of knowledge, skills and competencies at an advanced academic level.
AAU must follow developments and set new standards for what new types of students, new staff, changed physical environments, new technologies, etc. mean for AAU's PBL principles.
Quality assurance and development of PBL principles involves:

3.1 AAU develops PBL principles to meet the learning and competence needs of students and society.
3.2 The PBL principles are implemented in the study programmes.

4. STUDY ENVIRONMENT

AAU aims to create an attractive and inclusive study environment that helps to attract and retain Danish and international students. A good study environment implies academic and social integration, engagement, well-being and supports learning.

The systematic work to continuously develop the study environment at AAU involves:

4.1   The university offers an attractive and inclusive study environment that supports the pedagogical learning model.
4.2   The students at the university have influence and share responsibility for the development of the study environment.
4.3   The university offers study and well-being guidance throughout the study period.

5. RESEARCH-BASED AND PEDAGOGICAL COMPETENCIES

AAU aims to offer and develop attractive research-based bachelor's, master's and professional master's programmes as well as attractive professional bachelor's and diploma programmes based on a solid academic competence linked to an active research environment, so that the students are educated to the highest level.

The systematic work on continuous development of research-based and pedagogical competencies at AAU implies that:

5.1   The university's bachelor's, master's and professional master's programmes are research-based and linked to active, high-quality research environments.
5.2   AAU's professional bachelor's and diploma programmes have a knowledge base that is development and research-oriented; and the programmes are linked to active, high-quality academic environments.
5.3   The lecturers have pedagogical and didactical knowledge and competencies that are continuously developed.

6. CAREER OPTIONS

AAU educates for the regional, national and international labour market and aims to ensure that study programmes completed at the university lead to attractive jobs and careers. The students should experience that there is a link between the content of the programmes and the needs of society – nationally as well as internationally.

The overall aim of AAU's educational profile is that graduates create value for society and are characterised by being:

- able to work in a problem-oriented manner
- academically strong
- able to collaborate
- able to work interdisciplinary

The systematic work on the link between the study programmes to the students' jobs and careers involves:

6.1 The university supports the students' employability throughout the study programmes.
6.2 The university supports the students' transition from education to work.
6.3 The university gives graduates the opportunity to continue their academic development throughout their careers (lifelong learning).

5. EVALUATION AND DEVELOPMENT OF THE AAU QUALITY SYSTEM

The Council for Quality Assurance and Development is responsible for ensuring the continuous evaluation and development of "Quality Assurance Policy for Education".

The quality system is systematically evaluated in terms of compliance with the principles of quality work, and feedback concerning the quality system is continuously collected in the quality processes. The Council for Quality Assurance and Development decides on the ongoing evaluation processes.

6. REQUIREMENTS AND FRAMEWORKS

The quality system at AAU is based on:

- European Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance, in the European Higher Education Area, version 2015
- The University Act, Accreditation of Higher Education Institutions Act and other relevant legislation
- Strategy for Aalborg University, Aalborg University's strategic framework agreement and Article for the independent institution Aalborg University
- Strategic initiatives set by Aalborg University's Board and Executive Management

7. RESPONSIBILITIES

The Council for Quality Assurance and Development is responsible for ensuring that the quality assurance policy is continuously developed and updated. The quality assurance policy is submitted for consultation to the Main Joint Consultation Committee (HSU) and approved by the Executive Management, after which the University Board is informed.

The quality policy, together with the overall description of the quality system, must be made publicly available on the website www.kvalitet.aau.dk.

8. CHANGE LOG

Date	Change	Cause	Executing (Initials)
2020-05-12	1st version	Document approved by the Council for Quality Assurance and Development	Lhl
2021-01-21	2nd version updated with adjusted objectives	The framework documents for quality area 1, 2, 4, 5 and 6 are approved by the Council for Quality Assurance and Development with the adjusted objectives and associated standards and indicators	Lhl

2021-03-02	3rd version updated with ad-justed objectives	The framework document for quality area 3 is approved by the Council for Quality Assurance and Development with the adjusted objectives and associated standards and indicators.	Lhl