

**AUTONOMOUS ORGANIZATION OF EDUCATION  
«NAZARBAYEV UNIVERSITY»**

**EXTERNAL REVIEW POLICY**

Approved by the resolution of the Academic Council of  
the autonomous organization of education “Nazarbayev University”  
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## 1. General Provisions

1. This External Review Policy (hereinafter – the Policy) of the autonomous organization of education “Nazarbayev University” (hereinafter – NU) is derived from the NU Academic Quality Framework<sup>1</sup>. External review provides one of the principal means for maintaining and enhancing academic standards at NU. It is therefore an integral and essential part of the institution’s quality assurance and enhancement processes.

## 2. Overview

2. A number of external review mechanisms are employed across NU to provide objectivity and externality to assist in the establishment and maintenance of internationally-benchmarked academic standards. These include:

- 1) Consideration of external reference points in the setting of academic standards and curricula appropriate to the award;
- 2) Rigorous program and course approval with external participation (which can include partners, industry stakeholders, experts and other academic and/or professional bodies);
- 3) Accreditation by professional, statutory and regulatory bodies;
- 4) External review by established NU strategic partners;
- 5) The employment of external examiners.

3. It is recognized that strategic partners also have an important role to play, particularly in the development of new programs and the review and modification of existing programs.

4. In the context of this policy the term “external reviewers” refers to both academic reviewers from NU strategic partners and recognized institutions, and appointed external examiners from reputable international universities.

Schools employ an appropriate, yet comprehensive range of external review mechanisms to provide evidence that the academic standards they establish in their programs are internationally-benchmarked, and that these standards are rigorously and consistently verified and maintained.

5. External reviewers also assist in the identification (and subsequent dissemination) of good practice in teaching, learning and assessment. In this context reviewers are expected to provide recommendations for the continuous enhancement of academic programs.

## 3. External Review within the NU Quality Framework

6. Within the NU Academic Quality Framework there are three key components where external review can make an important contribution. These are:

- 1) Program Approval;

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<sup>1</sup> Nazarbayev University Academic Quality Framework (05/03/14). Available at [my.nu.edu.kz](http://my.nu.edu.kz)

- 2) Annual Program Monitoring;
- 3) Periodic Review.

7. Program Approval. As part of the program development process, due consideration should be given to external reference points in the setting of academic standards and curricula appropriate to the award. External reference points can include subject benchmark statements<sup>2</sup>, academic level benchmark statements (e.g. the Dublin Descriptors<sup>3</sup>, the SEEC level descriptors<sup>4</sup> or the Degree Qualifications Profile<sup>5</sup>), key elements of the Bologna Process (e.g. ECTS<sup>6</sup>) and the specific requirements of program accrediting bodies.

8. NU's Program Approval processes<sup>7</sup> include external review of a new program's content and academic standards in the form of a supporting statement. This review can be conducted by recognized and highly reputable international universities (including strategic partners) or faculty members and experts in a relevant subject area. Similarly, the NU Proposal Form for an Academic Program<sup>8</sup> requests Schools to describe the role of external reviewers in the assessment process as a means of verifying standards.

9. Annual Program Monitoring. The primary purpose of Annual Program Monitoring<sup>9</sup> (APM) is to provide an academic quality appraisal of all taught programs and their constituent courses; it also helps to maintain currency of programs after initial approval. Where schools choose to utilize external reviewers as part of the APM process, external reviewers can provide informative comments and recommendations on:

- 1) The verification and maintenance of academic standards;
- 2) The assessment processes – specifically whether summative assessments rigorously and fairly assess program and course learning outcomes, in-line with NU policies and regulations;
- 3) Documentation (particularly School, program and course handbooks (or their digital equivalents)) provided to students for their information and guidance;
- 4) Good practice and innovation in teaching, learning and assessment.

10. The provision of feedback by external reviewers provides a basis for the development of an action plan to enhance the program's quality in the subsequent academic year. The evidence required for external reviewers is detailed in Annex 1, which accompanies this Policy.

11. External reviewers may also consult with students to ascertain their degree of satisfaction with the program, its associated resources and administration.

<sup>2</sup><http://www.qaa.ac.uk/assuring-standards-and-quality/the-quality-code/subject-benchmark-statements>

<sup>3</sup>[http://www.ehea.info/Uploads/QF/Bologna\\_Framework\\_and\\_Certification\\_revised\\_29\\_02\\_08](http://www.ehea.info/Uploads/QF/Bologna_Framework_and_Certification_revised_29_02_08).

<sup>4</sup> <http://www.seec.org.uk/seec-credit-level-descriptors-2010-revised-2004/>

<sup>5</sup> <http://degreeprofile.org/>

<sup>6</sup>[http://ec.europa.eu/education/library/publications/2015/ects-users-guide\\_en.pdf](http://ec.europa.eu/education/library/publications/2015/ects-users-guide_en.pdf)

<sup>7</sup> Available at [my.nu.edu.kz](http://my.nu.edu.kz)

<sup>8</sup> Available at [my.nu.edu.kz](http://my.nu.edu.kz)

<sup>9</sup> Available at [my.nu.edu.kz](http://my.nu.edu.kz)

12. Schools employing external reviewers are encouraged to formally respond to their feedback and incorporate agreed recommendations into their annual action plans resulting from the APM process.

13. **Periodic Review.** Periodic review provides a further opportunity for comprehensive external review over an extended timeframe, particularly to evaluate the impact of the incremental enhancements made to programs through the annual program monitoring process. Periodic review is one of the main ways by which NU will assure itself of the quality of the student learning experience and identify opportunities for further enhancement. It provides a formal opportunity for a School to reflect on, critically evaluate and continuously improve its provision, to benefit from constructive dialogue with senior academics external to the School and to take action as appropriate.

The external review implementation guidelines are outlined in Annex 2.

#### **4. Accreditation**

14. Accreditation is a process whereby institutions and/or programs are externally reviewed to determine whether they meet defined standards of quality. Accreditation is renewed periodically to ensure that the quality of the academic program or the institution is maintained. It is, therefore, an important mode of external review and integral to the future of NU.

15. Program accreditation:

1) Provides an independent, rigorous and valid assessment of programs, and indicates that an individual program of study (at either undergraduate or graduate level) has received international recognition of its quality;

2) Eases entry to professions through licensure, registration, and certification, and guarantees to potential students that a course can satisfy the academic requirements of those professions;

3) Makes it easier to promote the standing of courses within Kazakhstan and internationally;

4) Ensures the participation of faculty and other staff in self-assessment and continuous quality improvement processes.

16. Where it is appropriate and available, accreditation should be pursued for all academic programs by NU Schools.

17. Whilst program-level accreditation may not exist or be appropriate for all academic programs, institutional accreditation is a key goal of the University as it seeks to instill national and international confidence in its programs, resources and governance.

18. Institutional evaluation is an important mechanism by which external review is applied to those programs where accrediting bodies do not exist, and where Schools choose not to employ external examiners.

Annex 1  
to the External Review Policy

### **Guidelines for External Reviewers**

1. The External Review provides a means to ensure the quality and standards of awards, the standards of student performance and the validity of assessment processes. Equally importantly, the External Review system is a valuable means by which good practice is shared within NU.

2. All External Reviewers should be provided with sufficient information and support to enable them to carry out their duties effectively. External Reviewers must become familiar with the program structure, learning and teaching methods and assessment techniques in his/her assigned programs and courses (particularly the consistency and standards of marks/grades), provide advice and comment on such matters and recommend change where appropriate.

3. External Reviewers should have the opportunity to review, comment upon, or contribute to, the following:

- 1) School handbooks (including Academic Policies and Procedures);
- 2) Program handbooks (including program structure, aims and learning outcomes);
- 3) Course/Module descriptions (including course aims and learning outcomes);
- 4) Assessment information (including methods, briefs provided to students, grading criteria, descriptors and scales, marking practices (e.g. verification of marking));
- 5) Draft examination papers;
- 6) Graded examination scripts (an appropriate sample should be provided);
- 7) Dissertations/project reports (an appropriate sample should be provided);
- 8) Coursework/continuously assessed work;
- 9) Orals/professional placements/internships and other summatively assessed activities;
- 10) Relevant professional guidelines/policies;
- 11) Final examination boards.

4. Note that these guidelines may be adapted by Schools to meet their individual requirements. Additional elements deemed necessary by Schools may also be added.



### **Implementation Guidelines**

1. In order to guarantee input that is fully external and objective, the use of accrediting bodies and external examiners are considered to be the optimal modes of external review at NU. Schools are encouraged to use external examiners and should in addition, where it is appropriate and available, pursue program-level accreditation.

2. External Reviewers:

1) Schools should review their options for appropriate external review of their programs and decide which forms of external review they intend to adopt. These should be discussed and agreed with the Provost.

2) Appropriate external reviewers should be identified and approached to participate in these processes. Their specific duties should be agreed by the School (Annex 1).

3. Program Approval:

1) Schools are encouraged to use external review in their Annual Program Monitoring processes.

2) Supporting statements from external reviewers should be obtained for new programs, and those experiencing major modifications.

4. Annual Program Monitoring:

1) External review should be built into Schools' Annual Program Monitoring processes.

2) Schools should formally respond to the feedback of external reviewers and agreed recommendations should be incorporated into the annual enhancement action plans which form part of the Annual Program Monitoring process.

5. Accreditation:

Schools should carefully investigate their options for program accreditation and produce action plans and self-assessments as appropriate with a view to making applications for accreditation as soon as is reasonably possible.

6. Periodic Review:

At the appropriate juncture external reviewers should be identified and subsequently approached to assist with the Periodic Review process, with their duties being carefully designed in accordance with the NU Periodic Review Policy.

