



# International Quality Review Mid-Cycle Review of Amity University Uttar Pradesh

December 2021

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## About this mid-cycle review

This is a report of a Mid-Cycle Quality Review conducted by the Quality Assurance Agency for Higher Education (QAA) at Amity University Uttar Pradesh (AUUP). The mid-cycle review is desk-based and was conducted by a team of two reviewers, as follows:

- Professor Mark Davies
- Mr Alan Weale.

The full International Quality Review (IQR) in April 2018, resulted in a [published report](#). The QAA review team concluded that AUUP met all the 10 standards set out in Part 1 of the *Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance in the European Higher Education Area* (ESG).<sup>1</sup> The team identified five features of good practice and made three recommendations.

This mid-cycle review evaluates progress against the key actions since the IQR and considers any significant changes that may impact on the maintenance of the ESG standards.

## Outcome of the mid-cycle review

1 From the evidence provided the review team concludes that Amity University Uttar Pradesh is making **satisfactory progress** since the July 2018 International Quality Review and that the period of validity of the QAA Accreditation be extended to July 2023.

## Summary of IQR outcomes

### Overview of the institution

2 Amity University Uttar Pradesh (AUUP) is part of the Amity Education Group. The Amity Education Group is a large provider of education in India and beyond. It currently has campuses in Dubai, London, Abu Dhabi, Singapore, New York, Mauritius, China, South Africa and Romania. It delivers education at all levels from pre-school to doctoral level higher education. The group has approximately 150,000 students across all of its provision.

3 AUUP was established through the 'Amity University Uttar Pradesh Ordinance, 2005' passed by the State Legislature and assented by the Governor, notified vide UP Govt. Gazette Notification No. 403/VII-V-I-I(Ka)/I/2005 dated 24 March, 2005. It functions under the umbrella of the not-for-profit Ritnand Balved Education Foundation founded in 1986 by Dr Ashok K Chauhan, Chairman of AKC Group of Companies.

4 AUUP operates from three locations in the state of Uttar Pradesh: Noida, Greater Noida and Lucknow; and from an international location in Dubai. The University has 12 faculty of studies/domains, 43 research centres and seven research directorates. Each faculty/domain has several institutes/departments/centres. Each institution runs a number of programmes. The AUUP offers 327 programmes at bachelor, master and doctoral levels in various disciplines across its range of campuses. In the academic year 2017-18, the University had a total of 42,650 students. These were distributed across campuses as follows: Noida and Greater Noida - 35,739; Lucknow - 5,061; and Dubai - 1,850.

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<sup>1</sup> [www.enqa.eu/index.php/home/esg](http://www.enqa.eu/index.php/home/esg)

5 AUUP's vision is that of 'Building the nation and the society through providing total, integrated and transcultural quality education and to be the global front runner in value education and nurturing talent in which Modernity Blends with Tradition.' Its mission is:

'to provide education at all levels in all disciplines of modern times and in the futuristic and emerging frontier areas of knowledge, learning and research and to develop the overall personality of students by making them not only excellent professionals but also good individuals, with understanding and regard for human values, pride in their heritage and culture, a sense of right and wrong and yearning for perfection and imbibe attributes of courage of conviction and action.'

6 For the period 2017-22 the University is pursuing 10 broad-based goals:

- ensuring educational excellence
- ensuring student development including physical and emotional health and wellbeing
- creating culture of excellence in research, scholarship, innovation and creativity for high impact
- enhancement of quality of faculty and staff for outstanding performance
- advancing internationalisation
- enhancing relations with industry, alumni and society
- enhancing employability and promoting entrepreneurial initiatives
- committing to all aspects of social, economic and environmental sustainability
- enhancement of supporting resources
- ensuring excellence in organisational leadership and governance.

7 AUUP is led by the Vice-Chancellor supported by two Pro-Vice-Chancellors, Campus Heads, 12 Deans/Deputy Deans, 126 Heads of Institutions/Departments and Programme Leaders. The Vice-Chancellor, as the Principal and Executive Academic Officer, steers the University in fulfilment of its vision, leading the competent team at all levels.

8 In pursuing its aim to provide quality education, AUUP recognises a range of challenges, including those of fast-changing technology and pedagogical innovations, and the need to keep pace with global developments in higher education and research. Attracting competent faculty at Associate Professor and Professor levels presents a challenge in some subject areas that are less well-established in higher education. AUUP is also endeavouring to create a higher degree of awareness among students (and their parents) who are aspiring to enter the University about the breadth of academic programmes on offer that go beyond traditional university subjects.

## **Recommendations of the 2018 International Quality Review**

- Clarify the *Policy Guidelines for Quality Assurance* to articulate how the various quality assurance processes are either discrete or integrate across Amity University Uttar Pradesh (Standard 1.1).
- Strengthen the approach to minuting committee business so that discussion and decisions are captured consistently (Standard 1.1).
- Develop and implement a scheme that facilitates the development of new faculty in learning, teaching and assessing in higher education (Standard 1.5).

## Good practice identified by the 2018 International Quality Review

- The wide-ranging initiatives that collectively support student progression into employment (Standard 1.4).
- The Academic Planning Worksheet which allows students to design and manage course choices to meet their individual needs effectively (Standard 1.6).
- The bespoke Amity Intranet Zone (Amizone), which makes a substantial contribution to the effective management and monitoring of student learning (Standard 1.6).
- The embedding of 'value added' courses into programmes providing wide-ranging personal development opportunities for all students (Standard 1.6).
- The extensive use of stakeholder feedback, which makes a significant contribution to the continuous quality improvement of academic programmes (Standard 1.7).

## Changes since the last IQR review visit

9 Since the IQR of 2018, major changes in the university structure have taken place with respect to the Governing Body (Court), the Executive Council (The Principal Executive Body of the University) and the Academic Council (The Principal Academic Body of the University) in accordance with the *Uttar Pradesh Private Universities Act, 2019*. The mid-cycle report provided by the University to the panel, details these changes which are entirely changes to the membership of each of the governing bodies and reflect the changes required by legislation.

10 Several strategic developments have been introduced, particularly regarding accommodating restrictions resulting from the COVID-19 pandemic. These developments include moving teaching and learning online, the introduction of online internships, and moving the six-week summer school online. The online internships were designed and delivered in accordance with guidelines from the All India Council for Technical Education (AICTE). A total of 122,596 online classes and interactive sessions have been delivered during the pandemic and over 3,000 webinars, conferences and workshops have been undertaken.

11 Three other significant strategic developments have taken place:

- **Aligning curriculum with Industry 4.0:** With the arrival of the fourth industrial revolution known as Industry 4.0, education has had to keep pace with the employability requirements of industry and, hence, alignment of curriculum with Industry 4.0 is of strategic importance. In this context, AUUP has been taking a series of strategic initiatives in this regard and these are called Education 4.0.
- **Remote-Learning using Digital Platforms:** The impact of technology on education in general and also that of COVID-19, has fuelled the adoption of technology in education and remote learning/e- learning has become an indispensable part of higher education. In this context, building and developing resources - human, physical and electronic - has been one of the strategic preoccupations of AUUP.
- **Implementation of the Indian University Grants Commission (UGC) Quality Mandates:** In 2020, UGC adopted 11 Quality Mandates for improving the quality of higher education and released guidelines for each mandate (see also paragraph 32).

12 Development of research initiatives has continued, comprising: the establishment of research clusters in more than 50 areas of research including Cancer Biology, Artificial Intelligence, Herbal and Natural Products, Public Health, Natural and Man-made Calamities, Drug Discovery and Development, Biofuels, NeuroSpine, Agricultural Biotechnology, Space Science; the setting up of Global Networks like the 'Amity Global Research Network on Novel Viruses' and 'Amity Global Research Network on NeuroSpine'; the founding of the Amity Foundation for Science, Technology and Innovation Alliances (AFSTIA) for promotion of research collaboration with emphasis on funded research projects; and a range of other research activity.

13 AUUP has continued to develop its information management infrastructure with the introduction of a new digitised system of research project management. A new human resource management system has also been developed. The solution covers the entire employee life cycle - from recruitment through various phases of resource management, to talent retention and development.

## Findings from the mid-cycle review analysis

14 In response to the IQR report, published in April 2018, the University created an action plan to address the three recommendations, with a completion date of December 2018.

15 In response to the recommendation to clarify the *Policy Guidelines for Quality Assurance*, the University made considerable changes to the document. The University reported that the changes were made in consultation with representation from all university campuses.

16 The revised Guidelines make plain that, while they and the underlining policies are primarily driven by and adhere to the requirements of the University Grants Commission (UGC), India, the transnational nature of the University means that some jurisdictions have particular and different requirements. For example, the Dubai campus must follow the requirements of both the Knowledge and Human Development Authority, Dubai, and its University Quality Assurance International Board. The revised Guidelines contain tables that show which parts apply to which campuses, and in doing so, which external bodies the Guidelines reflect.

17 The Guidelines' objectives have been supplemented with maintaining performance during conditions of volatility, uncertainty, complexity and ambiguity (a pre-COVID-19 pandemic initiative), and ensuring clarity in quality processes that apply at specific campuses.

18 The scope section of the Guidelines has been enhanced to clarify that they apply to both the University's academic and non-academic operations, and are a single set to be followed, unless exception is required by local legislation. The relationship between the Internal Quality Assurance Cells at institutional (effectively department), domain and university-levels is specified, as is the business that these cells should conduct.

19 Overall, the revised Guidelines present a clearer picture of the University's approach to, and deployment of, mechanisms for quality assurance and enhancement. Although the revised Guidelines more clearly demonstrate the distinct functions of the University's committees and how they integrate into a coherent committee structure, there is still work to be done in making more explicit the specific remits of the various quality audits, their frequency, and how they link to committee decision-making. Nonetheless, the University has made satisfactory progress against the recommendation.

20 In response to the recommendation concerning strengthening the approach to minuting committee business, the University established a committee comprising members from the Quality Assurance and Enhancement Department and the Registrar's Office to examine the University's practice, compare it with that of other universities internationally, suggest suitable recording and dissemination strategies for minutes, and develop and share guidelines for effective practice. The committee considered that current practice was deficient in parts in resolving action points, capturing discussion, and disseminating information, including action points. It recommended the adoption of a standard format and practices, acknowledging that change would also positively impact on the University's interaction with PSRBs. The committee also asked deliberative bodies to engage in reflection to self-evaluate and improve their performance, including in respect of timely agenda distribution, and time allocation for each item. The committee communicated its conclusions via a reference document on Amizone and the delivery of workshops for academic and professional services staff. The reference document emphasises that minutes should be the single, self-standing source of meetings' procedures used for sharing of information and decisions across the University, particularly between levels of the committee structure. The document gives useful guidance on what should be included in the minutes and how they are to be presented, including the generation of a reference number; action planning is emphasised. A template for recording minutes is provided. Monitoring of compliance with the new scheme is the responsibility of the relevant Internal Quality Assurance Cell.

21 To illustrate revised practice, the University supplied a small sample of minutes. These minutes showed that debate was captured well, and action points were explicit and were followed up in subsequent meetings. However, there is some scope for improvement since minutes of previous meetings are not always considered and accepted as a true record. Given this finding the University was asked to provide further samples of minutes showing consecutive meetings of the same body so that the consideration of minutes and action planning could be assessed. For one body, the minutes showed a complete record, with consideration of previous minutes and actions, but for another, only one set of minutes was supplied and that did not include the consideration of previous minutes or any actions contained within them. The University has some way to go before fully complying with the recommendation but has made good progress.

22 The University formed a committee of Deans to formulate a plan to address the recommendation to develop and implement a scheme that facilitates the development of new faculty in learning, teaching and assessing in higher education. The scheme developed largely comprises mandatory modules to be delivered as part of the orientation programme for new faculty members. An examination of the module titles suggests that, while some concern understanding the University's regulations, policies and procedures, others directly relate to pedagogy and the promotion of positive learning experiences for students. In practice, the modules are each short sessions of 30-90 minute duration. At the time of reporting, the modules have been deployed five times and have seen 344 participants.

23 While the established faculty development programme is of considerable value, many new academic recruits arrive with little by way of teaching experience in higher education, and such short sessions can be of limited effectiveness in preparing them for their initial teaching engagements and initial development as reflective practitioners. While the University has taken a step in the right direction, there is scope for further work in developing the pedagogic competencies of new faculty members.

24 The IQR report identified five features of good practice and the University has consolidated its position on these, as follows.

25 In terms of the wide-ranging initiatives that collectively support student progression into employment, the University has maintained its support position through the Student Aspiration Survey which helps allocate students into seven categories that then guide them in which career enhancement programme to follow. The initiatives described in the IQR report remain in place, supplemented by a raft of new initiatives, including developing Industry 4.0-ready graduates, with a soft focus on entrepreneurship.

26 The Academic Planning Worksheet has been expanded to accommodate additional course types, including entrepreneurship, professional ethics, outdoor activities including sports, and MOOCs delivered by the National Programme on Technology Enhanced Learning, India. These changes will likely increase the ability of students to make informed choices about their overall study pattern.

27 Amizone has been enhanced by increased functionality including linking to the admissions system; loop-closing on student feedback; hosting the faculty appraisal system and pre-populating forms; and the introduction of COVID-19 pandemic-driven features - such as integration with commercial meeting hosting systems, allowing results processing and progression, and the generation of electronic graduation certificates.

28 'Value-added' courses have continued, supplemented by additional student clubs. Significant change has occurred owing to the COVID-19 pandemic; most activity has been shifted to an online mode via Amizone. Student-centred conferences, such as the Amity International Literature Festival, the Amity Youth Festival, and the Amity International Model United Nations Conference have also moved to online platforms.

29 The positive use of stakeholder feedback has continued, with the sensible addition of evaluating the University's performance in curricular delivery and assessment during the COVID-19 pandemic. The University supplied convincing examples, arising since the IQR report, of where stakeholder feedback has been used to enhance the student learning experience.

## **Progress in working with professional, statutory and regulatory bodies (PSRBs) and other external bodies since the review**

30 Since the IQR report the University has continued to engage with relevant PSRBs in programme accreditation and recognition. In addition to ongoing monitoring processes, the Rehabilitation Council of India, the Pharmacy Council of India, and the Council of Architecture (CoA) India conducted periodic reviews of the University and its relevant programmes. Where these bodies made recommendations for action, or identified areas for improvement or of concern, the University responded positively, though in some cases the PSRB was asking the University to follow the PSRB's established rules - recommendations that the University could have predicted. However, in general the outcomes of these reviews were positive and one review identified no deficiencies to be addressed.

31 At the time of the IQR the University was undergoing its second cycle of accreditation by the National Assessment and Accreditation Council (NAAC). Accreditation was granted in late 2018 with the University scoring A+, the second-highest award category. The accreditation runs until late 2023. The NAAC report indicated nine recommendations for quality enhancement, five of which are of relevance to the ESG. To understand how the University responds to external accreditation the University was asked to supply its response to the NAAC's accreditation report, including any action plan. In responding, the University supplied NAAC documents only and it is concluded that there is no formal mechanism for

coordinating a response to external accreditation, including addressing recommendations, which is something the University may wish to develop.

32 The University is also required to comply with mandates issued by the UGC, India. The UGC 'adopted' (issued) a Quality Mandate in 2020 that comprised 11 initiatives in the form of guidelines and frameworks, and requested that universities form task groups to address each initiative. The University formed such task groups, involving Quality Champions from each institution, and its Mid-Cycle Review Report noted that a progress 'report on the mandates has already been uploaded on [the] UGC website'. The University demonstrated that they have addressed the mandates by supplying Action Plans related to all 10 mandates.

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