This review method is ESG-compliant

International Quality Review

Nazarbayev University

Review Report

September 2024

Contents

About this review

This is a report of an International Quality Review conducted by the Quality Assurance Agency for Higher Education (QAA) at Nazarbayev University. The review took place from 9 to 11 September 2024 and was conducted by a team of three reviewers, as follows:

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- Dr Rana Parween

- Mr Matthew Kitching (student reviewer)

The QAA Officer for this review was Dr Yue Song.

International Quality Review (IQR) offers institutions outside the UK the opportunity to have a review by the UK's Quality Assurance Agency for Higher Education (QAA). The review benchmarks the institutions' quality assurance processes against international quality assurance standards set out in Part 1 of the Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance in the European Higher Education Area (ESG).

In International Quality Review, the QAA review team:

- makes conclusion against each of the 10 standards set out in Part 1 of the ESG

- makes conditions (if relevant)

- makes recommendations

- identifies features of good practice

- comes to an overall conclusion as to whether the institution meets the standards for International Quality Review.

A summary of the findings can be found in the section: Key findings. The section Explanations of the findings provides the detailed commentary.

The QAA website gives more information about QAA and its mission. A dedicated section explains the method for International Quality Review and has links to other informative documents. For an explanation of terms see the Glossary at the end of this report.

Key findings

Executive summary

The establishment of Nazarbayev University (hereafter NU) was announced in 2006 by the First President of the Republic of Kazakhstan, and the University was founded in 2010 as the country's flagship institution. It is the country's first globally oriented, autonomous research university.

NU comprises eight schools offering both undergraduate and graduate programmes: the School of Engineering and Digital Sciences (hereafter SEDS); the School of Sciences and Humanities (SSH); the School of Medicine (NUSOM); the School of Mining and Geosciences (SMG); the Graduate School of Business (GSB); the Graduate School of Education (GSE); the Graduate School of Public Policy (GSPP) and the Center for Preparatory Studies (CPS). The programmes provide an intensive academic, scientific, and language proficiency preparation for English-medium studies.

At the time of the visit, there are 7502 students studying at NU, including 272 international students from 32 countries. There are 516 faculty members from 57 countries.

At the outset of its establishment, the University collaborated with the leading global universities to develop its educational provision. These included University College London who assisted in the development of engineering programmes and developed the initial foundation year programme. The National University of Singapore provided input in the development of graduate public policy programmes. The Fuqua School of Business (Duke University) continues to provide external feedback in annual review of the NU's business programmes. All schools are, or have been, supported by strategic partnerships with the world's leading institutions, research institutes, and laboratories.

NU's Vision: To give Kazakhstan and the world the scientists, academics, managers, and entrepreneurs needed to prosper and develop.

NU's Mission: To be a model for higher education reform and modern research; to contribute to the establishment of Astana as an international knowledge, innovation, and medical hub; and to prepare students for a world of increased volatility, uncertainty, complexity, and ambiguity.

NU's strategic priorities: Five strategic goals were established under the University's initial strategy, and have been retained in the current strategy. These are:

- Higher Education Reform Leadership: To ensure that the lessons of NU's experience are transferred and understood by other universities, schools, and research centres. Academic Excellence: To achieve NU's mission by developing and maintaining academic excellence.

- Research Excellence: To develop a programme of world-class research by partnering with the world's best researchers and research institutions.

- A Model for Creating Healthcare Services: To establish a healthcare system that will provide a model for healthcare services throughout Kazakhstan.

- Innovation and Translating Research into Production: To become Kazakhstan's main driver of innovation, leading the way for Astana to become a regional hub of innovation.

In reaching conclusions about the extent to which Nazarbayev University meets the 10 ESG Standards, the QAA review team followed the evidence-based review procedure as outlined

in the handbook for International Quality Review (October 2023). The University provided the review team with a self-evaluation and supporting evidence. During the review visit, which took place on 9-11 September 2024, the review team held a total of seven meetings with the President, Provost, Vice-presidents, senior management team, academic staff, professional support staff, students, alumni and external stakeholders. The review team also had the opportunity to observe the University's facilities and learning resources in Astana, Kazakhstan.

In summary, the team found six examples of good practice and was able to make 14 recommendations for improvement/enhancement. The recommendations are of a desirable rather than essential nature and are proposed to enable the University to build on existing practice which is operating satisfactorily but which could be improved or enhanced. The team identified one conditions that the University must satisfy to achieve QAA accreditation.

Overall, the team concluded that Nazarbayev University all the standards for International Quality Review **subject to meeting one specific condition**. This condition was subsequently met in July 2025. The University has now met all required standards for the International Quality Review.

QAA's conclusions about Nazarbayev University

The QAA review team reached the following conclusions about the higher education provision at Nazarbayev University.

European Standards and Guidelines

Nazarbayev University meets 9 of the 10 ESG Standards and Guidelines. The standard not met by Nazarbayev University is:

- Standard 1.9 Ongoing monitoring and periodic review of programmes.

Conditions

The QAA review team identified the following **condition** that must be fulfilled before all of the European Standards and Guidelines can be deemed met at Nazarbayev University. The condition must be addressed within 12 months:

- Fully implement the Periodic Review Policy as soon as possible with sufficient emphasis on all programmes within the school (ESG Standard 1.9).

- Following the submission of additional evidence in May 2025 the review team concluded that the Condition above has been fulfilled. The planned Periodic Review Policy (PRP) has been fully implemented in the Graduate School of Education (GSE). The evidence supplied shows that NU has implemented the PRP in a manner that is aligned with ESG Standard 1.9. The review process at GSE was programme-focused, incorporated internal review mechanisms, and was not dependent solely on external accreditation. The GSE has not only completed the review but has also begun acting on the findings and has mechanisms to monitor the effectiveness of follow-up actions.

- The Periodic Review Policy (PRP) is now fully operational, with clearly defined responsibilities and review mechanisms, and has been implemented in a manner that demonstrates both effectiveness and a strong institutional commitment to continuous quality improvement. Accordingly, the Review Team considers the condition to be fully addressed, and ESG Standard 1.9 to be fully met.

Good practice

The QAA review team identified the following features of **good practice** at Nazarbayev University:

- Strong collaborations with strategic partners to inform internal quality assurance (ESG Standard 1.1).

- High level of student engagement, including student representation in all committees in the governance structure (ESG Standard 1.2).

- The University's strong responsiveness to student feedback in the programme design and delivery (ESG Standard 1.3).

- The excellent range of campus facilities and services that enhance the student learning experience (ESG Standard 1.3 and Standard 1.6).

- The University giving schools autonomy for the use of AI to inform the innovation of learning and teaching (ESG Standard 1.3).

- The diverse, varied, and extensive group of high calibre international staff (ESG Standard 1.5).

Recommendations

The QAA review team makes the following **recommendations** to Nazarbayev University:

- Enhance the accessibility of information (including policies, programme information) through its website to enable a seamless user experience, make key documents, including the Academic Quality Framework, Code of Ethics, Faculty Policies and Procedures, Student Code of Conduct, and other QA-related policies more easily accessible on the University's website (ESG Standard 1.1 and Standard 1.8).

- Prioritise the finalisation, publication, and implementation of the Anti-Harassment Policy within the agreed timeline and ensure it is well disseminated to all stakeholders (ESG Standard 1.1).

- Extend its Quality Assurance policy to include formal procedures for the Annual Assessment of the administrative units, ensuring that these practices are aligned with the Quality Assurance Policy of NU. By doing so, NU would create a coherent quality assurance framework that encompasses both academic and administrative operations (ESG Standard 1.1 and Standard 1.6).

- Develop structured approaches for ongoing monitoring and periodically reviewing the contents, efficiency, and effectiveness of its quality assurance policies, ensuring they continuously align with NU's quality assurance and enhancement needs (ESG Standard 1.1).

- Develop structured approaches to engaging with potential employers and internship providers and keeps tracked records to ensure feedback from the industry can be systematically collected, considered and acted upon in the design of new programmes or the review of existing programmes (ESG Standard 1.2).

- Develop structured approaches to the internal moderation processes for all courses at all levels across all schools to ensure assessment is consistent, fairly applied to all students and carried out not relying on the judgements of single examiners (ESG Standard 1.3).

- Include an appeal process in relevant Admissions Policies and Procedures (ESG Standard 1.4).

- Ensure students can fully disclose disabilities at the point of enrolment to enable follow-up at the earliest opportunity (ESG Standard 1.4).

- Develop a policy for the recognition of informal learning (ESG Standard 1.4).

- Codify its strategy for student support (ESG Standard 1.6).

- Implement periodic evaluations or focus groups involving 2nd and 3rd years students to ensure consistent monitoring and continuous improvement of support services, and to address any emerging needs, and enhance overall student satisfaction during these vital middle years (ESG Standard 1.7).

- Review its data management processes to ensure that the collected data feeds into decision-making processes at different levels in a timely, comprehensive, and effective manner (ESG Standard 1.7).

- Codify its policy for the approval and monitoring and review of public information to ensure the public information remains accurate, up-to-date, and easily accessible (ESG Standard 1.8).

- Ensure comprehensive and coherent oversight of responses to external accreditation reports at the school level and associated action plans (ESG Standard 1.10).

Explanation of the findings about Nazarbayev University

This section explains the review findings in more detail.

Terms that may be unfamiliar to some readers have been included in a [brief glossary](#) at the end of this report. A fuller [glossary of terms](#) is available on the QAA website, and formal definitions of certain terms may be found in the operational description and handbook for the [review method](#), also on the QAA website.

Standard 1.1   Policy for quality assurance

Institutions should have a policy for quality assurance that is made public and forms part of their strategic management. Internal stakeholders should develop and implement this policy through appropriate structures and processes, while involving external stakeholders.

Findings

1.1   NU's Academic Quality Framework (AQF) and associated processes demonstrate a clear alignment with Environmental, Social, and Governance (ESG) principles. The framework emphasizes aspects like programme design and approval, ongoing monitoring and review, and external review, which all contribute to responsible and sustainable educational practices. For instance, the programme approval process ensures new offerings meet ESG standards and contribute to the University's strategic goals. This alignment ensures NU is not only delivering quality education but also considering its broader social and environmental impact.

1.2   NU's QA policy is governed by the NU Academic Quality Framework, which is developed in consultation with relevant stakeholders, including student representatives, and approved by the Academic Council (AC).

- The Academic Council is the primary policy-making authority on academic matters, chaired by the provost and composed of representatives from Schools, academic-administrative bodies, the Faculty Senate, and the Student Government. It oversees the maintenance of academic standards and the approval of academic programs. The Council operates with several sub-committees that focus on academic quality, accreditation, learning and teaching, and special learning needs. This structure is summarized in the Academic and Research Council structure chart and further detailed on the University's website (https://ie.nu.edu.kz/academic-council/).

- The Academic Quality Committee (AQC), composed of academic staff, management, and students, functions as an advisory body to the AC. It reviews and recommends the approval of new programmes, re-approves or withdraws existing programmes, and oversees the annual monitoring of academic programmes. The AQC also develops and recommends institutional quality enhancement actions through the annual Quality Enhancement Plan (NUQEP). These responsibilities and procedures are outlined in the AQC Bylaws, and more information can be found on the AQC webpage (https://ie.nu.edu.kz/academic-quality-committee/).

1.3   A well-defined QA structure exists at NU. The Academic Quality Committee (AQC) oversees the entire system, providing central guidance and ensuring coherence. Schools have delegated responsibility for program design, monitoring, and enhancement, fostering a sense of ownership and accountability. Additionally, clear roles and responsibilities are outlined for different stakeholders involved in QA processes. This structured approach promotes efficient and effective QA across the University.

1.4   The Academic Quality Enhancement (AQE) Unit supports quality assurance processes by designing and revising policies, providing operational support to the AQC, ensuring effective student representation on academic bodies, and managing the Annual Programme Monitoring (APM) processes. The unit is also responsible for drafting the NU Quality Enhancement Plan based on APM results. The AQE team is currently involved in projects such as the CurrIQunet project and conducting training sessions for regional and national universities.

- At the school level, Deans and Vice Deans are primarily responsible for quality assurance. Course and programme matters are addressed at School Learning and Teaching Committees or equivalent bodies, which play a critical role in the ongoing enhancement of academic quality. This bottom-up approach to quality assurance and enhancement is described in the NU Academic Quality Framework and detailed in the SED.

- Programme Leaders are responsible for the overall coherence, delivery, evaluation, and enhancement of academic programmes. Their responsibilities include leading curriculum development, monitoring academic standards, overseeing accreditation processes, and supporting student induction and advising. Although the role of Programme Leaders is not a formal position in most schools, their contributions are recognised as "service" within standard faculty contracts.

1.5   Data plays a crucial role in informing quality enhancement decisions at NU. The Institutional Research & Analysis (IR&A) unit provides valuable data on various aspects of teaching, learning, and student outcomes. This data is then used to identify areas for improvement, evaluate the effectiveness of existing programmes, and make informed decisions about resource allocation. For example, data on student engagement in QA processes can be used to assess the effectiveness of these processes and identify opportunities for improvement.

1.6   NU has established structured mechanisms for collecting and responding to student feedback at multiple levels within the University. The processes are integrated into the Annual Program Monitoring (APM) framework and include feedback from course evaluation surveys, institutional surveys (such as the Exit Survey and First Year Experience Survey), and input from student representatives. Student feedback is systematically incorporated into key institutional reports, including the Annual Course Monitoring Report (Point 5), Annual Programme Monitoring Report (Point 6), and the School Quality Enhancement Report (Point 3). These documents serve as critical review points where student feedback is analysed and acted upon to enhance academic programmes and institutional policies. NU provided various tracked records to demonstrate the effectiveness of their feedback processes:

- Diagram_Student Feedback Collection outlines the process of collecting student feedback.

- Abstract from the Minutes: Student Feedback Discussion highlights discussions on student feedback during institutional meetings.

- Example of Closing Student Feedback Loop in the School of Engineering and Digital Sciences demonstrates a practical example of how feedback is addressed.

- Email to NU Faculty on Closing the Feedback Loop illustrates communication efforts with faculty regarding the importance of closing the feedback loop.

- Examples of Programme/Course Modifications Based on Student Feedback (MEM Modification Form) provides specific instances of program or course modifications in response to student input.

1.7   Additionally, NU has submitted further evidence of feedback consideration:

- Programme/School Level Student Feedback shows feedback at the programme or school level.

- University Level Student Feedback on the AI Guidelines and Response to it details how university-wide feedback led to adjustments in AI guidelines.

- Student Feedback and Initiative to Introduce UD/SD Grading During the COVID Pandemic documents how student feedback influenced amendments to the Grading Options Policy during the pandemic.

1.8   NU clarified the availability of its published QA Policy, known as the Academic Quality Framework (AQF). This document is accessible on the University website at https://nu.edu.kz/page/kontseptsiya-akademicheskogo-kachestva-nazarbaev-universiteta, (https://ie.nu.edu.kz/wp-content/uploads/2020/05/AcademicQualityFramework_eng.pdf) and (https://ie.nu.edu.kz/quality-enhancement/about-aqe/). It is also referenced in the SED and in references. In the site visit the Review Team was informed that the AQF is now available on the main university website, accessible from the homepage, and that NU is working on a new website that will improve accessibility features. This new site is expected to enhance the visibility and accessibility of key documents, including the AQF, by better integrating them into the main site's structure. Additionally, several QA-related documents are either not published or not easily accessible from the homepage:

- Code of Ethics: Establish behavioral expectations for all community members, including commitments to anti-bribery, data privacy, confidentiality, plagiarism, and appropriate social media conduct.

- Faculty Policies and Procedures: Outline the expected behaviours and responsibilities of academic staff.

- Student Code of Conduct: Provide information on reporting procedures for students, ensuring a comprehensive approach to handling misconduct across different groups within the University.

1.9   Addressing the concerns regarding the accessibility of essential quality assurance documents would enhance transparency and ensure they are readily available to all stakeholders. This issue was also acknowledged during the site visit, who recognised the need for resolution. Therefore, the Review Team **recommends** that NU makes key documents, including the Academic Quality Framework, Code of Ethics, Faculty Policies and Procedures, Student Code of Conduct, and other QA-related policies more easily accessible on the University's website.

1.10   NU has developed a clear QA framework which benefits from the involvement of a diverse range of stakeholders. Students participate in various QA processes, including programme approval and review, providing valuable insights into their learning experiences. External reviewers offer an independent assessment of the University's quality standards and benchmark them against international best practices. This comprehensive stakeholder involvement ensures a well-rounded perspective on QA and fosters a sense of shared ownership for the University's success. Building a strong quality culture across the University's diverse community is an ongoing effort. A genuine quality culture requires a shared commitment to continuous improvement from all staff and faculty. In the absence of this collective commitment, the effectiveness of QA processes may be compromised.

1.11   NU has made notable progress in establishing a framework to address issues of intolerance and discrimination. While overarching policies are in place, more specific and comprehensive guidelines are still under development. These efforts are reflected as follows:

- Overarching Policies: The University Code of Ethics and Student Code of Conduct outline general behavioural expectations for all community members and students, respectively. Both documents contain provisions related to intolerance and discrimination.

- Policy Development: A draft Anti-Harassment Policy is currently under development, demonstrating the University's commitment to directly addressing harassment, intolerance, and discrimination.

- Governance Structure: The creation of an Anti-Harassment Committee further emphasizes NU's intention to ensure a safe and inclusive campus environment.

1.12 In the additional evidence request and during the site visit, NU provided an update on the Anti-Harassment Policy's status. As of August 2024, the policy is in draft form, with a projected full approval by the end of January 2025. This timeline indicates that the policy remains under review and is yet to be finalised.

1.13 The process of approving the Anti-Harassment Policy is: the draft policy underwent a feedback phase including input from the Student Government, specifically the Student Rights Committee, as well as from administrative units and academic schools. This step is designed to ensure the policy incorporates the views and concerns of various stakeholders. Then the draft policy will be reviewed and approved by the Academic Council. As the time of the IQR review visit, the process remains in its early stages.

1.14 While NU has made commendable progress in drafting its Anti-Harassment Policy, the lack of a fully approved and published policy poses certain challenges. The lack of a formal policy leaves members of the NU community without a well-defined process for reporting and addressing harassment incidents, thus limiting the effectiveness of the existing governance structure. Therefore, the Review Team **recommends** that NU prioritises the finalisation, publication, and implementation of the Anti-Harassment Policy within the agreed timeline and ensures it is well disseminated to all stakeholders.

1.15 NU has established a multi-channel reporting system for students to report intolerance and discrimination. Students can report through email, security services, the Anti-Harassment Committee, a dedicated Telegram bot, or via QR codes displayed on campus materials. The Student Advocacy and Conduct Unit within the Department of Student Services serves as the initial point of contact for non-academic misconduct investigations (including student-to-student complaints). Students can report urgent matters to any university employee through various channels.

1.16 NU has established a framework for addressing academic dishonesty through multiple policies and procedures. The Student Code of Conduct (SCC) outlines the primary procedures for reporting academic misconduct, including categories of violations, reporting channels, and investigation steps (Chapter 2). The Code of Ethics complements these procedures with general behavioural expectations and confidentiality provisions.

1.17 NU emphasises confidentiality in the disciplinary process, with responsibilities assigned to Hearing Committee members. Additionally, disciplinary case records are archived under a special document register. The Faculty Policies and Procedures (FPP) outline disciplinary sanctions for academic staff related to academic dishonesty. Specific sanctions for students are detailed in the SCC. During the demonstration of the Learning Systems Management (LSM) and databases, the Review Team gained a deeper understanding of the specific steps involved in investigations, along with examples of sanctions for varying degrees of academic misconduct. These materials provided greater clarity and reinforced the effectiveness of NU's policies, leading the Review Team to conclude that NU has established a solid foundation for addressing academic dishonesty through well-defined procedures, confidentiality safeguards, and a range of appropriate sanctions.

1.18 Nazarbayev University has established strategic partnerships that with renowned institutions and research laboratories globally. Collaborations with prestigious organisations, such as the Colorado School of Mines, Duke University, the National University of

Singapore, the University of Cambridge, the University of Pennsylvania, and others. These have provided invaluable support across all schools. These partnerships are not only instrumental in enhancing academic quality but also play a crucial role in shaping the University's strategic direction.

1.19 In terms of academic support, NU is optimising resources from these strategic alliances, such as mentorship from the Fuqua School of Business at Duke University and academic reviews from the University of Wisconsin-Madison. This ensures that the University benefits from targeted support while fostering research collaborations and faculty exchanges, particularly with institutions like the LKY School at the National University of Singapore.

1.20 Moreover, external reviews, which include online programme evaluations, site visits, and interviews with key stakeholders, reinforce the quality assurance process. Strategic partners actively participate in the ongoing programme review, offering critical insights and feedback that inform improvements, particularly in the Graduate School of Education and the School of Sciences and Humanities. Since 2018, the strategic input from these partners has been instrumental in preparing for programme accreditation, exemplified by the recent ABET Readiness Review conducted by the University of Wisconsin-Madison for the School of Sciences and Humanities. Additionally, the partnership with the University of Pittsburgh significantly enhances faculty development in the Nazarbayev University School of Medicine (NUSOM) through workshops, master classes, and access to medical education seminars. The Review Team identifies NU's strong collaborations with strategic partners to inform internal quality assurance as a feature of **good practice**.

1.21 While NU has established a robust Academic Quality Framework (AQF) governing quality assurance for its academic operations, there is a notable absence of a formalised policy for evaluating the performance of administrative units. The documentation provided by NU lacks evidence of any structured assessment policy for these units. During the site visit, it was observed that some administrative units engage in annual evaluations of the unit work through the Weekly10 platform, and certain units submit annual unit review reports to their line managers. However, these practices are not grounded in a written policy. Most managers in support services (administrative units: IT, Students Services, Admissions Department, Academic Advising Office, Library, Marketing Department) were unfamiliar with the AQF, apart from the registrar. Managers in support services confirmed in the meeting that there is no standardised procedure in reviewing the performance of the unit work as a whole. While some administrative units do provide annual unit review reports, the processes following their submission remain unclear. It is uncertain whether these reports are discussed in meetings, lead to actionable recommendations, or result in follow-up actions to improve the unit work. The lack of a formal, structured approach to reviewing and acting upon these reports significantly weakens the feedback loop essential for continuous improvement. Therefore, the Review Team **recommends** that NU extends its Quality Assurance policy to include formal procedures for the Annual Assessment of the administrative units, ensuring that these practices are aligned with the Quality Assurance Policy of NU. By doing so, NU would create a coherent quality assurance framework that encompasses both academic and administrative operations.

1.22 NU indicated in its response to the second additional evidence request that a revision of its Academic Quality Framework (AQF) is scheduled for the second half of the 2024-2025 academic year. This revision shows good intention to integrate external and internal feedback from the Institutional Quality Review process, as well as outcomes from ongoing and completed accreditation cycles. However, there is no documentation outlining this review process, which raises concerns about the lack of formal evidence regarding previous reviews and their frequency. This planned revision reflects NU's commitment to enhancing its quality assurance processes, but without documented evidence, the effectiveness of these efforts remains uncertain. The absence of structured review guidelines for the AQF and related QA policies, as acknowledged during the site visit, could lead to several

challenges, including a lack of consistency in monitoring and assessing affecting not only the effectiveness but also the contents of these frameworks. Such gaps may prevent NU from responding effectively to evolving academic and institutional needs and could potentially impact compliance with quality assurance standards during accreditation and external evaluations. Therefore, the Review Team **recommends** that NU develops structured approaches for ongoing monitoring and periodically (e.g., every 3-5 years) reviewing the contents, efficiency, and effectiveness of its quality assurance policies, ensuring they continuously align with NU's quality assurance and enhancement needs.

1.23 NU has outlined the involvement of both internal and external stakeholders in its Quality Assurance (QA) processes. The university provides evidence of how stakeholders contribute to the development, approval, and implementation of academic policies and procedures.

1.24 Students are actively involved in the QA process through their participation in various committees and working groups. This involvement is confirmed by the Student Engagement Policy and the minutes from the Academic Council, Academic Quality Committee, and NU Learning and Teaching Committee.

1.25 Examples of key stakeholders' involvement include:

- Student Engagement Policy and Guidelines on Student Feedback Procedures: Discussion of these documents is documented in email communications.

- Student Government Reports: Reports, including the Student Government Annual Report 2023-2024, illustrate student involvement and feedback on policies.

- Feedback on AI Guidelines: University-level student feedback and responses to AI Guidelines.

- Grading Policy Amendments: Student feedback and initiatives during the COVID pandemic led to amendments in the Grading Options Policy.

- Administrative Staff: Academic policies are reviewed and approved by relevant administrative units, including the Legal Department, Department for Student Services, Bursar's Office, and School Deans. This process is managed through an internal documentation management system (Directum).

- Academic staff, including representatives from the Faculty Senate, participate in various QA-related committees (e.g., School Learning and Teaching Committee, Academic Quality Committee, NU Learning and Teaching Committee). This ensures that academic staff perspectives are integrated into the QA processes. Recent Example: The Academic Policies and Procedures for Graduate Programs, Courses, and Micro-Credentials discussed in Academic Council Minutes #28 (May 22, 2024).

- External stakeholders (Employers, Advisory Boards, and Alumni) are involved in NU's QA processes, particularly in the development and approval of policies. This involvement forms part of a broader stakeholder engagement process, including external reviews and the involvement of external examiners.

- Recent Example: The development of the Academic Policies and Procedures for Graduate Programs, Courses, and Micro-Credentials demonstrates the engagement of all stakeholders, including external ones.

1.26 Nazarbayev University (NU) has provided evidence of various training programmes, workshops, and seminars aimed at equipping programme leaders with the necessary skills and knowledge for effective programme delivery and quality assurance:

- Professional Certificate of Academic Practice and Enhancing Programme Leadership: NU offers the Professional Certificate of Academic Practice (2020) and the Enhancing Programme Leadership (EPL) by AdvanceHE (2021-2023). These programmes are designed to develop leadership skills and enhance program delivery. Documentation includes a list of cohorts, photos, a sample Fellowship Certificate, and a sample EPL certificate.

- Leadership Development Programme: The Leadership Development Programme (2019) by AdvanceHE focuses on leadership skills relevant to programme leaders. Provided documents include the programme invitation and photos from training activities.

- Course Design and Experience Sharing Workshops: NU organises course design workshops and experience-sharing sessions, facilitated by the Institutional Effectiveness office. These workshops are intended to support programme leaders in designing effective courses and sharing best practices. Documentation includes details on course design workshops and experience-sharing workshops.

- Learning and Teaching Toolkits and Guidelines: NU provides Learning and Teaching (L&T) toolkits and guidelines to support programme leaders in implementing quality assurance practices and effective programme delivery.

1.27 NU has developed a strong quality assurance system, underpinned by a comprehensive policy framework and aligned with the ESG standards. The system is supported by effective structures and processes for monitoring and feedback, with a structured approach, data-driven decision making, and active stakeholder involvement, all of which contribute to its effectiveness. This robust QA system ensures that NU graduates are well-prepared to thrive in a dynamic job market, enhancing the region's skilled and competitive workforce. Based on these observations, the Review Team concludes that Standard 1.1, Policy for Quality Assurance, is **met**.

Standard 1.2   Design and approval of programmes

Institutions should have processes for the design and approval of their programmes. The programmes should be designed so that they meet the objectives set for them, including the intended learning outcomes. The qualification resulting from a programme should be clearly specified and communicated, and refer to the correct level of the national qualifications framework for higher education and, consequently, to the Framework for Qualifications of the European Higher Education Area.

Findings

2.1   Nazarbayev University (NU) was announced in 2006 by the First President of the Republic of Kazakhstan, and the University was founded in 2010 as the country's flagship institution. It is the country's first globally oriented, autonomous research university, performing independently from the Ministry of Higher Education. As a university with full institutional autonomy, the University Charter explicates that it takes full responsibility of developing its educational programmes, determining the procedures of all its educational activities, including admissions, managing student progressions, designing and delivering learning, teaching and assessment.

2.2   NU collaborated with several leading global universities to develop its educational provision. The University is comprised of a Centre for Preparatory Studies which provides one-year intensive foundation programme, five schools which offer both undergraduate and graduate programmes and three professional schools. All schools are, or have been, supported by strategic partnerships with the world's leading institutions, research institutes, and laboratories. For example, University College London assisted in the development of engineering programmes and developed the initial foundation year programme. The National University of Singapore provided input in the development of graduate public policy programmes. The Fuqua School of Business (Duke University) continues to provide external feedback in annual review of the NU's business programmes. In addition, as confirmed in the provider submission and meeting with the senior management team, the Colorado School of Mines (USA), Duke University (USA), National University of Singapore (Singapore), University of Cambridge (UK), University of Pennsylvania (USA), University of Pittsburgh Medical Centre (USA), University of Wisconsin Madison (USA), University College London (UK) contributed as strategic partners to the design, approval, and delivery of the programmes at NU.

2.3   NU has a formal procedure and process to manage the start-to-end design and approval of new academic programmes. Programmes are initially designed within schools. This is guided by Academic Quality Framework. The programme leader takes the lead on the design of the programme proposal. The programme proposal is discussed with the Department Chair, Vice Dean for Academic Affairs, Dean, and appropriate senior managers prior to the programme design, to ensure suitable resources (including budgetary and other resources) and support are in place for the programme delivery. The programme proposal is then submitted to the School Learning and Teaching Committee (SLTC), which include student representation. Programmes that are approved by the SLTC are submitted to the Academic Quality Committee (AQC) for review before presentation at the Academic Council (AC). AQC is the key committee responsible for reviews and recommendations, its bylaws provide recommendations to AC for the approval, re-approval, and withdrawal of programmes. Once the programme is recommended by AQC for approval, it is reviewed and discussed at the Academic Council, which makes the final decision on the programme approval.

2.4   There are clear flow charts which specifies the roles and responsibilities of relevant stakeholders and committees that review, recommend, and approve the proposal of the new

programmes. The committees involved in the programme design and approval process include the School Learning and Teaching Committee (STLC), the Academic Quality Committee (AQC) and the Academic Council (AC).

2.5   The process of programme design and approval is communicated to students, academic and professional support staff via regular email communications, introductory information sessions at the beginning of each academic year, and via the website, as well as during the induction processes. During review visit students and staff showed clear awareness of how they could contribute to the programme design and approval process, including how to report to the School Learning and Teaching Committee (STLC) and the Academic Quality Committee (AQC).

2.6   There is a programme proposal form which is used to check whether the programme is set at the appropriate academic level in line with the Qualifications Framework of the European Higher Education Area, Bologna Cycle and Dublin Descriptors, Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance in the European Higher Education Area (ESG) and the ECTS Users Guide. QAA Subject Benchmark Statements, SEEC Level Descriptors and the requirements of accrediting bodies are also used. In addition, the programme's alignment with internationally recognised standards is reviewed by expert reviewers/advisors from other universities. During the reviewer visit, staff articulated their awareness of the proposal form, interspersed with hyperlinks to graduate attributes as well as to the Qualification Framework for the European Higher education Area. Additionally, they mentioned the availability of institutional regulatory framework for undergraduate and well as graduate courses as reference points for programme design with overall programme objectives that are in line with the institutional strategy and have explicit intended learning outcomes.

2.7   The programme proposal maps out programme learning outcomes (PLOs) and elucidates where, and how the PLOs will be achieved through modules. The programme proposal form with links to the Qualification Framework for the European Higher Education Area helps formulate intended aims for the programme, compatible with the University and School mission and strategic goals. With a focus on its graduate attributes, which is also hyperlinked into the programme proposal form, NU's programmes are designed with overall programme objectives that are in line with institutional strategy.

2.8   The quality assurance and enhancement systems encourage and support a decentralised and bottom-up approach to programme design and management. Programmes are developed in consultation with the department chairs and faculty members involved in the programme delivery, as well as Department of Finance, Admissions Department, placement/ internship providers, the Marketing Department, librarians, IT staff, student representatives, potential employers, external reviewers and experts in the field. Committees such as AQC, AC and STLC, that are responsible for programme approval, have staff and student representation from undergraduate as well as graduate courses. The Special Learning Needs Committee and Centre for Innovation in Learning and Teaching are regularly engaged in programme design to ensure that the proposed programmes are inclusive and student oriented. During review visit, support staff reported that once the proposal form has been completed, they are given the opportunity for providing feedback. Support staff confirmed their membership at the academic council, as well as the teaching and learning committee.

2.9   During the review meeting, industry representatives, as well as internship providers confirmed their feedback was collected during the design of a new programme or the review of an existing programme. Minutes of SMG Industry Advisory Committee, School of Engineering and Digital Sciences Industrial Advisory Board, GSB International Advisory Board, as well as NUSOM and GSPP elucidate NU's consultation with industry regarding emerging marketing trends, programme development, and skillset required. There was, however, a lack of formal tracked record of such communications happening across all schools. The review team **recommends** that NU develops structured approaches to

engaging with potential employers and internship providers and keeps tracked records to ensure feedback from the industry can be systematically collected, considered and acted upon in the design of new programmes or the review of existing programmes.

2.10 There is commitment to building a student-oriented academic culture and engendering a supportive environment that enables students to play a key role in informing programme design and enhancement. Student Engagement Policy (SEP) considers students to be full partners in Higher education governance. Guidelines on Students Feedback Policy in conjunction with the SEP, provides guidelines for students' representation and feedback process. All committees have student representation from undergraduate as well as graduate courses. This ensures students' input in the programme development process. The review team identifies high level of student engagement, including student representation in all committees in the governance structure, as a feature of **good practice**.

2.11 All students are encouraged to provide feedback in course evaluation surveys at the end of each semester. The NU Student Engagement Policy and Guidelines on Student Feedback and Procedures encourage and facilitate student contribution to programme enhancement through student representatives, course and programme evaluation surveys. During the review visit, students confirmed their active participation in evaluation surveys and gave examples of where their requests were met. Academic staff at the review meeting also gave examples of how they considered and acted upon student feedback, including changing of tutorial contact hours from 15 minutes to 30 minutes.

2.12 Programmes are designed to enable smooth student progression with appropriate, level specific challenge as seen in the BSc Physics programme and BSc in Biological Science programme. Due consideration is given to expected student workload. Both the programme proposal and the programme specification template are available on CurriQunet platform with emphasis on student workload, Besides the ETC User's Guide, students' workload is also included within course specification form. The Assessment Strategy recommends a balance of assessment task, its timing and volume.

2.13   To explore students' workload further, the course evaluation survey has been adapted to include specific questions asking students to give their own estimation of their workload. This change is envisaged to assist the course instructors to better understand, and more accurately estimate, the student workload associated with the specified ECTS credits.

2.14 The course specification form, the course proposal form and the student handbooks, BSc, MSc and PhD are produced for each programme of study. These documents have specified the details of credits, the programme learning outcomes, and the teaching and assessment methodologies. For Nazarbayev University School of Medicine (NUSOM), where students are taught at the medical/ hospital complex near the main university, the educational programme has a clearly formulated set of intended learning outcomes, conductive to the development of competences in public health and which are responsive to changing environment, health needs and demands of populations. The placement opportunities within the hospital are well-outlined in the programme documentation. During the review visit, students appreciated the availability of course related information including course handbooks, grading matrices, and programme specifications that illustrate the expected workload, and assist in effective time management and planning, hence enabling smoother progression.

2.15   A mapping of course learning outcomes to programme learning outcomes is included under the assessment strategies of each course programme proposal, ensuring programmes are designed at the appropriate academic level. A mapping of each assessment methodology deployed across the constituent courses of a given programme of study is also provided to ensure balance and that a variety of assessment types are being utilised across each programme. To assist staff who are responsible for programme development, NU delivered a workshop on writing appropriate learning outcomes. During the

review visit, students confirmed their awareness of the intended learning outcomes, the grading matrix, as well as the link between the learning outcomes and the grading matrix.

2.16 NU did not have a digital programme database and curriculum management platform until 2024. To improve the programme management processes, the AQE unit is leading the initiative of transferring all academic programmes and courses to the CurrIQunet digital curriculum management platform.

2.17 In accordance with the External Review Policy, all new programme proposals and modifications are subject to external review process. For instance, MSc Geosciences was externally reviewed by University of Calgary. There is evidence to illustrate how the external reviewers feedback has been incorporated in the programme design. For the BSc Chemistry course, part of the programme learning outcome has been rephrased in response to the recommendation made by the External Reviewer. Additionally, during the review visit, external reviewers reported their input into the design of a new programme or a review of an existing programme.

2.18 There are mechanisms in place, such as programmes reviews, to ensure that the programmes are subject to a formal institutional approval process. The core principles are in line and strongly support implementation of the institutional Academic Quality Framework and ESG standards, along with compatibility with the NU Strategy, NU Learning and Teaching Strategy, Assessment Strategy, Regulatory Framework for Undergraduate Programmes and Courses, Regulatory Framework for Graduate Programmes, Micro-Credentials and Courses. During the review visit, attendees explained their role in the review and enhancement of curricula.

2.19 The University has several departments assuring the quality of programme design and delivery. For example, Institutional Effectiveness of the Office of Provost (IE) manages institutional quality, institutional research and analytics, and accreditation and ranking. The Academic Quality and Enhancement (AQE) has the responsibility of strategic and operational management of the academic quality system and associated activities, and management of the Academic Quality Committee (AQC). Institutional Research and Analytics (IRA) is responsible for data collection, reporting and analysis to support evidence-based decision-making. Both Academic Quality and Enhancement (AQE) and Institutional Research and Analytics (IRA) are responsible for managing institutional effectiveness. Centre for Innovative Learning and Teaching (CiLT) supports institutional learning and teaching, with a focus on high quality pedagogy, innovation and professional development. In addition, schools' strategic partners provide guidance and support on the programme design and development, to ensure the programmes are designed in line with the National Qualifications Framework and the University's mission, vision and strategic priorities.

2.20 NU refers to external reference points and develops structured processes to ensure that programmes are designed with overall programme objectives that are in line with the institutional strategy and have explicit intended learning outcomes. NU is making appropriate use of external reference points within the programme development process, which ensured new programmes are clearly aligned to the reference points and are responsive to the needs of both students and employers. NU's programme development is supported by the production of high-quality programme documentation which ensures a detailed record of the structure, design and learning outcomes that students are expected to obtain by studying each programme. The review team considers Standard 1.2 – Design and approval of programmes is **met**.

Standard 1.3   Student-centred learning, teaching and assessment

Institutions should ensure that the programmes are delivered in a way that encourages students to take an active role in creating the learning process, and that the assessment of students reflects this approach.

Findings

3.1   NU has updated its first Learning and Teaching Strategy (2015 – 2020) and developed the Learning and Teaching Strategy for 2023-2030 in accordance with its strategic learning and teaching priorities in line with the NU's Strategy 2018-2030. The Learning and Teaching Strategy was developed through the NU Learning and Teaching Committee with representation from the Vice-Deans of Academic Affairs (VDAA) for each School.

3.2   The NU Learning and Teaching Strategy outlines the strategic learning and teaching priorities for the University. At the school level, learning and teaching are responsibility of the VDAA. School-based Learning and Teaching committees report to the Dean. The NU Learning and Teaching Committee works cooperatively with the Academic Quality Committee. These committees have student representation from the undergraduate and graduate courses. During the review visit, staff confirmed their membership at the committees and role they play in those committees, specifically on issues related to student centred teaching and learning. Additionally, during the review visit, students confirmed their membership at these committees, and the role they play in those committees to inform effective and course specific teaching.

3.3   Student voice and opinion is considered effectively in all aspects of institutional decision-making. Video and written evidence has been submitted to illustrate NU's commitment to promote mutual respect within the learner-teacher relationship. With a student-centred approach to all aspects of the design, implementation and review of learning, teaching and assessment, the requirement for student engagement in the quality processes of the University is outlined in the Student Engagement Policy. The university works closely with the student Government, which is organised into Ministries to ensure that student representation occurs on all university committees, including the Learning and Teaching committee. Student Government has clear roles as outlined on the University's website. During the review visit, all present students, confirmed that their voice and opinion is considered effectively in all aspects of institutional decision making. An example was given regarding students' request to include Kazikhani philosophers within the courses, alongside Westerns philosophers. Based on student request, and to preserve Kazakhstan's, historical skills, and knowledge base, the University considers country specific knowledge embedded within the curricula, across all courses, where possible. NU staff demonstrated strong commitment to continue their effective and responsive engagement with the students. The review team identifies the University's strong responsiveness to student feedback in the programme design and delivery as a feature of **good practice**.

3.4   In the last three years, learning and teaching has become a high priority area with the development of a dedicated Centre for Innovative Learning and Teaching (CiLT). The establishment of the CiLT provides a dedicated unit with responsibility for coordinating learning and teaching, and planning and overseeing the implementation of the Strategy's priorities. During the review visit, members of the Senior Management Team, the General Director for CiLT confirmed that it was within the remit of CiLT to support staff develop student centred teaching, learning and assessment. Additionally, within the review visit, the academic staff, including a new staff member, showed awareness of provisions of training at the CiLT for the enhancement of teaching and learning.

3.5   Courses are delivered through lectures, practical workshops and laboratories and group-based projects. Students also have opportunities to complete internships and

capstone programmes where they can choose potential sites for their experience. NUSOM self-assessment report outline the variety of pedagogical approaches such as evidence-based practices are emphasised while implementing educational technologies, emphasis on interpersonal skills. Standardised Patients Programme facilitates a role play style in teaching and assessment of clinical skills in a patient-oriented and problem-based manner. During the review visit, attendees confirmed the variety of approaches and modes of delivery, where appropriate within various schools. For instance, utilising both national and international industry, and academic specialist to enrich students' learning experience.

3.6   NU has world-class laboratories and STEM-focused learning spaces, including a well-equipped research laboratory. During the visit, the review team visited a well-equipped modern research lab, a well-stocked library and its variety of independent, and group learning spaces, a teaching classroom, as well as a world class swimming pool and other sports facilities. All facilities and learning resources at NU provide students with an enriching, and extensive learning, as well as extracurricular activity resources. An extensive and weatherproof atrium, and covered walkways facilitate students' mobility and students' community feel throughout the year irrespective of weather conditions. The review team considers the excellent range of campus facilities and services that enhance the student learning experience as a feature of **good practice**.

3.7   Nazarbayev School of Medicine (NUSOM) has a Medical Doctor Curriculum Committee comprises of the Dean of School, the Committee Chair, the Committee Vice Chair, Block Leads years 1-2, Clerkship Leads years 3-4, two student representatives (one each years 1-2 and 3-4), four additional faculty members, two preceptors/UMC representatives, one Ministry of Health representative and one administrative staff member. The committee oversees the overall design, management and evaluation of the curriculum for the Medical Doctor programme. It is responsible for overseeing the quality assurance of the programme, ensuring that the curriculum design maintains coherence and that courses follow a logical sequencing and harmony within and across the academic years. The committee is also responsible for a regular course update, reviewing of student results and making recommendations for the NUSOM Teaching and Learning Committee regarding student progression through the four years of the programme. During the review visit, staff, including NUSOM staff clearly outlined their role in the committee, and in the updating of course, and its alignment with the local needs and contemporary research and development.

3.8   Students have the choice of entering NU through two pathways. Direct admission into an Undergraduate programme gives students accesses to a Core Curriculum Programme, with the ability to identify areas of major study. The undergraduate programmes are organised according to the Regulatory Framework for Undergraduate Programmes and Courses (including the Undergraduate Core Curriculum).

3.9   Students also can enter an undergraduate programme or graduate programme after completion of the NU First Year Program (NUFYP) or the NU Zero Year Program (NUZYP, for future graduate programs) offered by Centre for Preparatory Studies. The Minutes of a CPS Learning and Teaching Committee Meeting are evidence of student involvement in the review of a proposal for 3, non-credit bearing and Type II, multi-level Academic English courses for commercial purposes. The minutes also note the input of student representatives into the discussion of the use of AI in CPS courses. Thus, NU respects, and attends to the diversity of students and their needs, enabling flexible learning paths.

3.10   Students are provided with an orientation programme to assist their induction into the learning journey. All information such as Moodle, student portal, the library, registrar and other university-wide induction information, is provided on the website. Schools provide additional programme specific induction opportunities. During the review visit, students confirmed the availability of relevant documents at various platforms, and in various formats, including face to face meetings with relevant staff.

3.11 Programme Student Handbooks provide information to students about their academic pathways: BSc, MSc and PhD. Besides the core curriculum, the students select 'major' areas of study. The Undergraduate Academic Handbook provides detailed information to students about the process of selecting a 'major' which can vary between disciplines. The Academic Advising Office is responsible for assisting students with their decision making. During the review visit all attendees confirmed that all students at NU have designated academic advisors for academic help and support. During the review visit, staff commented on the frequency of meetings between students and academic advisors. First year students have more regular meetings with their academic advisors as compared to the subsequent years, encouraging a sense of autonomy in the learner, while ensuring adequate guidance and support from the teachers.

3.12   Students are encouraged to take responsibility of their own learning by accessing a range of additional learning enhancement opportunities such as courses provided through the Library, and the Writing Centre. Faculty provide "Office Hours" for individual consultation with students for a minimum of two hours per week, as outlined in Faculty Handbooks. The Academic Advising Office provides a range of additional information and support services to students.

3.13 NU considers the diversity of their students and the modalities that will enable them to be successful. Inclusivity is one of the six key principles of the Learning and Teaching Strategy 2023-2030. During the review visit, and the visit to the library, staff mentioned the support mechanism in place to assist students with specific needs, for instant the availability of books in brail.

3.14 In 2022, the Special Learning Needs Committee was established to provide mechanisms to accommodate students with special learning needs - both short-term and long-term. The committee approves adjustment on student assessment arrangements. A video introducing the work of this committee and the services available is provided to students. The video was developed by a student through a competition to engage other students.

3.15 NU has clear mechanisms for handling students' complaints and appeals. The Student Handbook section 3.7 regarding complaints and grievance, suggests that students who have an academic or non-academic complaint or grievance regarding a student, an instructor or a course should speak with the Senior Teaching Fellow for Student Advising, the Head of Department or the General Director as appropriate. Complaints and grievances are handled under the NU Student Code of Conduct, and NU Faculty Policies and Procedures.

3.16 The Student Code of Conduct identifies the expected student conduct, and processes associated with a breach of those expectations. This document outlines the students' right to appeal. The process depends on the nature of the misconduct and is divided into categories. During the review visit, students, confirmed that they found approaching a member staff regarding any issues easily. Additionally, during the review visit, staff mentioned that their students were not hesitant in voicing their opinion and would not have reservations in making complaints. They mentioned non-academic and academic claims of both minor and major categories. During the review visit, staff explained a detailed catalogue of tracked ad recorded complains and the outcome of those complaints which demonstrates that NU has appropriate procedures for dealing with students' complaints.

3.17 The Programme Handbook has guidance on grades appeal procedure in case of an error. Information regarding the complains process is also available on the My Registrar site. During the review visit, students confirmed their awareness of the procedure associated with complaints, and the systemic contacts to be made at the initial and the subsequent levels.

3.18 NU adopted a primarily face-to-face delivery method of teaching and learning, with students residing on campus. Since Covid 19, the University has adopted more flexible

delivery mechanisms which include block delivery modes and hybrid (face-to-face and online) delivery. During the review visit, students mentioned their own course specific teaching methodologies which was inclusive of laboratory work, face to face teaching, online courses, guest lectures, and representatives from industry as well as alumni, contributed to contemporary and industry focused teaching.

3.19 Staff adopt effective pedagogical approaches into their teaching as is evidenced by the video faculty handbook and learning and teaching strategy. Staff have the provision of a Learning and Teaching Toolkit to facilitate writing of LOs, assessments, rubrics and teaching. During the review visit, the academic staff, particularly new staff, confirmed an online induction training for enhanced pedagogical approaches. Additionally, they confirmed the awareness of the CiLT, and its provisions for asserting with enhanced learning, teaching and assessments methods.

3.20 NU has a system of monitoring all aspects of learning and teaching. Faculty members provide a review of their courses, including the consideration of student feedback, which feeds into the Annual Programme Monitoring process. The Programme Director synthesises reports into a programme-based report. The programme reports are synthesised into a school report. During the review visit, students gave several examples where changes had been made because of student surveys indicating that NU regularly evaluates and adjusts the modes of delivery and pedagogical methods.

3.21 NU has developed a policy to introduce micro credentials to provide access to higher education for a broader range of students by enabling the accumulation of stackable micro-credentials thus considering and tending to the diversity of students and their needs, enabling flexible learning paths.

3.22 To ensure students awareness of academic integrity, NU is considering the introduction of an online compulsory academic integrity course to be taken by all students. The review is being conducted by a working group of the Learning and Teaching Committee. Besides this, the Assessment Working Group is developing a policy that will provide a more granular level of guidance addressing issues of consistency, equity and the acceptable use of AI. All assessments at NU are required to be aligned with the relevant learning outcomes, which allows students to demonstrate the extent to which the intended learning outcomes have been achieved. Judgements can be made by the course and programme leaders regarding the appropriateness of the assessments and the performance of the students. Additional processes are used by other schools depending on their accreditation requirements, for instance ABET requirements. There are performance indicators and rubrics for each Student Programme Learning Outcome (PLO), ABET performance indicators and on student's assessment forms. The Annual Programme Monitoring Report Template for Graduate School of education identified the mapping of PLOs as one of the areas of enhancement planned for 2022-23. During the review visit, students showed awareness of their assessment types, the associated LOs, as well as the grading matrices. They confirmed extensive, clear and useful feedback given to them by their professors. In cases where the feedback was unclear, they had the opportunity to meet with staff at a mutually agreed time.

3.23 NU also has an AI working group that was established in January 2023, to provide guiding principles, practices and policies related to AI-assisted learning and teaching. The AI working group surveyed faculty and student knowledge of Generative AI. The working group presented a report to the Learning and Teaching Committee (LTC), which identified principles to guide the use of AI. At the direction of LTC, a policy entitled NU Response to Generative AI in Learning and Teaching was developed. This outlined the responsibilities of schools to develop, from their units, Acceptable Usage Statements. Students were actively involved in the AI working group, LTC and finally the approval of the document at Academic Council. The review team identifies the University giving schools autonomy for the use of AI to inform the innovation of learning and teaching as a feature of **good practice**.

3.24 The key principles of setting up assessment are outlined in the Academic Policies and Procedures and Assessment Strategy. Assessment requirements are specified in Programme Handbooks, course documents such as course specification forms and student handbooks. Faculty are expected to post Course Specification Forms two weeks prior to the commencement of the semester. These include a description of the assessment, its weighting and submission date, the criteria and rubrics. Course materials also usually contain the grading scales, as published in the programme handbook. During the review visit, students confirmed the accessibility of these documents at the start of the course, at several places including Moodle and Myregistrar.

3.25 The Regulatory Framework for Graduate Programmes, Micro-Credentials and Courses of autonomous organisation of Education Nazarbayev University requires all PhD programmes to have an Advisory Committee and use an external examiner. The use of second markers is a process used in some schools, particularly in relation to thesis examination for Master's programmes. There are time-restrained processes in place to ensure internal verification of all these. The process involves a reconciliation meeting between the examiners with the opportunity to send the thesis to a third marker if grade reconciliation is not possible. External Examiners are involved in the evaluation of marked work. During the review visit, staff reinstated the utilisation of second markers for the Master's programmes, and external examiners for the PhD programmes. Staff confirmed that not all undergraduate programmes are using second marking.

3.26 Grades are determined by individual instructors. In the case of School of Science and Humanities (SSH), Graduate School of Education (GSE), School of Mining and Geosciences (SMG), School of Engineering and Digital Sciences (SEDS) student results are individually uploaded by instructors to the Registrar's website. In the case of Center for Preparatory Studies (CPS), Nazarbayev University School of Medicine (NUSOM), and Graduate School of Public Policy (GSPP), results are reviewed by an Assessment Committee or examination boards as in the case of CPS. During the review visit, staff mentioned that, for courses where the Assessment Committee reviews the results, it adds another layer of confirmation and parity amongst students. This also identifies any at risk students. Additionally, during the review visit, staff mentioned complaints on errors in marking which is effectively resolved by the office of the registrar. The review team therefore **recommends** that the University develops structured approaches to the internal moderation processes for all courses at all levels across all schools to ensure assessment is consistent, fairly applied to all students and carried out not relying on the judgements of single examiners.

3.27 The Centre for Innovation in Learning and Teaching (CILT) provides workshops on assessment methods to schools. The Writing Centre provides additional resources to support faculty members, including materials on How to Write Rubrics. During the review visit, staff mentioned the provisions of staff development sessions on writing the grading rubrics.

3.28 There is a clear Assessment Strategy which requires assessments to be inclusive, authentic, and equitable and that students receive feedback within two weeks/ or maximum of 15 working days of submitting assessments. During the review visit, students confirmed a timely return of assessment and feedback. Additionally, during the review visit, attendees confirmed giving and receiving of formative feedback prior to submission of the final piece of work

3.29 NU uses both formative and summative assessment as a means of ensuring students' attainment of the intended learning outcomes. NU also utilises different assessment methods to ensure a balance of different assessment types. Students undertake a course evaluation survey for the evaluation of their learning experiences. This provides data for the Annual Programme Monitoring Report, as described in the Student Feedback Policy. During the review visit, students confirmed participating in several surveys whilst being on the course to ensure student views are heard and then responded to.

3.30 The University reported that students will participate in the Undergraduate Exit Survey upon graduation. Data collected through this survey help provide information on the level/quality of academic support that NU provided to its eighth cohort of undergraduate students (class of 2023) and support institutional self-assessment.

3.31 In summary, NU has clear approached to designing and delivering student-centred learning, teaching and assessment. The review team recommends that the University develops structured approaches to the internal moderation processes for all courses at all levels across all schools to ensure assessment is consistent, fairly applied to all students and carried out not relying on the judgements of single examiners. But overall, the review team confirmed that Standard 1.3 - Student-centred learning, teaching and assessment is **met**.

Standard 1.4   Student admission, progression, recognition and certification

Institutions should consistently apply pre-defined and published regulations covering all phases of the student "life cycle", e.g. student admission, progression, recognition and certification.

Findings

4.1   The University states that Admission to Nazarbayev University is based on meritocracy and ensures that applicants are reviewed in a fair and equal manner regardless of their age, beliefs, gender, or ethnicity. The Admissions Department organises and administers admission to over seventy programmes from application to enrolment of students. Admission requirements are outlined in the relevant Admissions Policy and Procedures (NUFYP and Undergraduate, Master's, and PhD). Separate documents detail Minimum Requirements. New staff go through onboarding training which allows them to oversee all processes according to the requirements of policies and procedures. Students confirmed that the website was clear, information sessions were provided, and queries were responded to promptly throughout the application and admissions process.

4.2   Applicants to foundation and undergraduate programmes are required to sit the NU Entrance Test (NUET), which is administered by the Cambridge Assessment Admission Testing (UK) and is free of charge for applicants. A more varied approach is employed to graduate applications, though applicants usually need to demonstrate a GPA between 2.5 and 4.0, IELTS/TOEFL between 6.5, to 7.0 and work experience, among other criteria.

4.3   The team found that the application process set out in detail in the Admission Policy and Procedures is clear and appropriate and that the University's Admissions Committee works to ensure fairness within these procedures. The University informed the review team that, where necessary, the committee conduct interviews to evaluate the analytical, critical thinking and potential research skills of prospective students, in alignment with the University's strategy.

4.4   The panel clarified that there was no appeals process in place pertaining to admissions decisions. Complaints may be received through letters submitted to the Department of Documentation Support, however the process for raising such admissions concerns is not documented in formal regulations. The University informed the review team that they would clarify the reasons for their decision but not revise their admissions decision in any circumstances. The team considered that the University had no arrangements to safeguard against procedural irregularity or mistakes in its admissions process. Consequently, the review team **recommends** that the University includes an appeal process in relevant Admissions Policies and Procedures.

4.5   The Office of the Registrar is responsible for the student database along with the organisation and monitoring of the educational process, including admissions. Each individual student, after enrolment to the University, is assigned their own profile on MyRegistrar. The system records all academic performance, including grades and credits. Students with disabilities are provided with early registration for courses during online registration. The University stated that they considered the international make-up of the University, including international faculty, resulted in them having a leading role in the region. The team recognises this and the range of support available under the Support for Students with Disabilities Policy and Procedures. The university has constituted a Special Learning Needs Committee, with a series of working groups supporting institutional practice and staff development. However, there is an overreliance on students declaring a disability to the Committee post-enrolment and the review team **recommends** that NU ensures students can

fully disclose disabilities at the point of enrolment to enable follow-up at the earliest opportunity.

4.6   Orientation week is conducted by the Office of Enrolment Management and includes all student-related departments. The week incorporates presentations from all student-related departments and students confirmed that they felt induction was effective in preparing them to commence their studies. The University also has monitoring and evaluation strategies in place in the form of surveys, to obtain feedback on application and induction.

4.7   Student academic progress criteria are defined in the Academic Policies and Procedures for Undergraduate students, Graduate students, Doctor of Medicine students and NUFYP and NUZYP students separately. Students are evaluated at the mid-semester assessment and at the end of the course with final assessments. Mid-semester status reports are required from all course instructors in all courses to help the University identify and assist students who may need additional academic guidance. Mid-semester grading is based on Satisfactory (S) and Non-Satisfactory (NS) grades. To continue in any undergraduate programme at the University, a student must be in Good Academic Standing at the conclusion of Fall and Spring semesters, excluding the summer term. Having a CGPA and GPA of a 2.00 or above is a Good Academic Standing. A student with 3 or more NS grades is placed on Academic Warning after the mid-term status reports are submitted. This status warns them that they are at risk of being placed on academic probation at the end of the semester. Notification of Academic Warning is sent by the Office of the Registrar to the student, the School's Vice Dean and the student's advisor. The student will be advised to limit their social activities during this period and may not be considered for university sponsored travel. If students fail to satisfy the conditions for Good Academic Standing at the end of Fall and Spring semesters, they are placed on Academic Probation. At the end of one semester of Academic Probation, students are subject to dismissal from the university if they have not achieved the necessary conditions to return to Good Academic Standing. The office also monitors Satisfactory Progress towards degree completion. The university expects students to complete their degree requirements within the defined programme period. A student averaging 30 ECTS credits per semester will be considered in Satisfactory Progress towards their degree. Any student who falls behind 30 or more ECTS will be subject to dismissal from the university. The team found that these requirements were well understood by staff and students, although university electronic systems made maintaining an institutional overview and reporting for monitoring purposes relatively cumbersome.

4.8   Academic Advising is central to supporting student progression at the University. The system is overseen by the Academic Advising Office (AAO), which coordinates academic advising for all 1st and 2nd year students, transfer students and 5th and 6th year students. During the 3rd and 4th years of study, students are expected to work closely with the faculty for academic advice. First and second-year students are assigned advisors from the AAO. The AAO has 9 advisors, and each advisor is assigned at least 300 students.. An advisor meets with every assigned student at least once a semester during the 1st year, and students can schedule an appointment with his/her advisor upon request. For 2nd year students there are no mandatory meetings, and closer work is conducted primarily for academic probation and undeclared major students. In addition, advisors are available for the one-to-one meetings. After each advising session, summary notes are entered into the MyRegistrar online advising platform. Apart from individual advising sessions, students also have the opportunity to participate in group advising sessions (topics vary from time-management to study skills and stress management), academic probation support group sessions, tutoring sessions on core courses for Majors, peer advising sessions, the Majors Fair, Major Discovery sessions, and the Freshman Marathon Challenge. Students reported that they were satisfied with the support and guidance available through the Academic Advising system.

4.9　NU has processes for the recognition of prior certified learning, which is typically managed at the School level, but does not at this stage extend to non-formal/informal learning. In order to apply for accreditation of prior learning, students must submit an External Transfer of Credits form at undergraduate level or Transfer Credit Evaluation Form at graduate level, as well as transcripts for the previous credit. A maximum of 25% of total approved programme course credit requirements may count towards a graduate degree as transfer credit. Transfer credit must be approved by the Vice Dean of the School. The team heard from staff that discussion has taken place about introducing accreditation of prior experiential learning and the review team **recommends** that NU develops a policy for the recognition of informal learning.

4.10　Undergraduate students have eligibility requirements for the Completion of Degree. Students are allowed to graduate when they successfully accumulate a minimum 2.00 GPA and CGPA at the end of their final semester. Students must also have a minimum 240 ECTS (or as designated in the relevant Handbook). Students must normally complete all degree requirements within seven years, including any leave periods, of the initial programme registration date. Graduate students must follow Graduate Research Milestones. All graduate programmes require successful and timely completion of specific research milestones such as a research project, research proposal, thesis and defence to demonstrate the student's ability to conduct research. Research milestones completed as a credited course are subject to assessment using standard letter grades. Research milestones not taken as a specific course are normally assessed by Pass/Fail grading. Unless specified in a handbook, the grade for the thesis is awarded on successful completion of the defence. The team found that information presented in handbooks about recognition and award criteria were clear and that they were well understood by students and consistently applied by staff.

4.11　After the End of Term Report, Schools and the Office of the Registrar conduct an annual degree audit. Schools are responsible for their major and minor requirements, and the Office of the Registrar is responsible for general university requirements. Based on this information, the Office prepares a decision for awarding the academic degree, which is approved and signed by the Provost of the University. Diploma supplements are produced by the Office of the Registrar. The Office of the Registrar are currently working to automate the production of supplements. The team viewed samples of academic transcripts and diplomas, which were appropriate and contained clear reference to the modules studied, ECTs and overall award.

4.12　Monitoring of the University's arrangements for student admission, progression, recognition and certification takes place in a variety of ways. For example, surveys relating to students' experience of admission and while they are on their course, as well as about their exit from the University and the programme inform departmental reflection and the construction of plans such as the annual plan of the admission department. The team also found that regular retreats organised by the University contribute to quality assurance, as they provide an opportunity to share progress and good practice in relation to admission, progression, recognition and certification practices. However, and as discussed in Standard 1.6, the approach between institutional and school level and between individual administrative departments with responsibility for different parts of the student life cycle varies.

4.13　In summary, the review team considered there are pre-defined and published regulations covering all phases of the student "life cycle": student admission, progression, recognition and certification and that these were fit-for-purpose and well applied. Overall, the review team concludes that Standard 1.4 Student admission, progression, recognition and certification is **met**.

Standard 1.5 Teaching staff

Institutions should assure themselves of the competence of their teachers. They should apply fair and transparent processes for the recruitment and development of the staff.

Findings

5.1   NU consists of around 500 full-time faculty and 78 research staff and teaching assistants. The number of students per academic staff is 13.5. The ratio of female and male faculty members is 37:63. The academic community come from 58 countries, 69% of academic staff are international, and a third of academic staff are Kazakhstanis. The top five countries of origin are the USA, UK, Russian Federation, Turkey, and Canada. Accessibility of a wide range of academic and technical staff, who bring a plethora of global expertise, knowledge and skills was acknowledged as an enriching learning experience by all the students present during the meeting. The availability of such a learning environment prepares the students for local, national and global academic as well as contemporary career pursuits. The review team identifies the diverse, varied, and extensive group of high calibre international staff as a feature of **good practice**.

5.2   NU's staffing plan includes 1620 full time staff, including 559 professional staff supporting learning and teaching (e.g., academic advising, student services, and IT support). NU's Data Digest is produced by Institutional Research and Analytics (Office of the Provost) and provides a comprehensive overview of growing trends of the number of students. The Data Digest is the official source for NU statistics to facilitate a needs analysis. This digest provides school specific numerical figures on student enrolment, retention, and graduation which supports the University's planning on staffing. It also includes staff data including their qualifications, gender, and citizenship. During the review visit, members of the senior management team detailed the process of staff request being identified by the Deans of schools based on students' numbers and the required staff expertise.

5.3   NU has clear Policy and Procedures for Hiring Faculty which outlines the teaching staff's recruitment and selection process, including 1) a vacancy announcement; 2) job-specific assessment of knowledge, skills or abilities; and 3) assessment of core values and motivation. An up-to-date job description, describing the duties, responsibilities and job requirements is published prior to recruitment as per the Policy and Procedures for Hiring Faculty (2022). The recruitment of faculty members is managed by Human Capital Development (HCD) based in each school with support from the University's centralised Human Capital Development. All appointments are reviewed and approved finally by the provost.

5.4   The University upholds the Code of Ethics (2021) in the hiring process, including principles of objectivity and confidentiality of personal information, non-discrimination based on gender, age, disability, race, nationality, language, sexual identity, social status and position, place of residence, religion, political views and public association, as described in the Policy and Procedures for Hiring Faculty (2022). The document outlines processes for recruitment and transfer of faculty. Staff elaborated on the process of recruitment, appointment and induction of staff which is in-line with NU's Policy and Procedures for Hiring Faculty (2022) and Recruitment and Selection Policy.

5.5   Each School has a range of standing committees, described in the School Bylaws, which includes a School Hiring Committee (SHC) Bylaws of the School of Science and Humanities and bylaws of the Graduate School of Business. The hiring process is normally held at least once a year, depending on the needs of the school. The hiring committees make recommendations for appointment to the Dean and the Provost.

5.6 The university uses the electronic Smart Recruiters platform to administer recruitment processes, with job advertisements available on the NU website and other international recruiting sites such as Times Higher Education and Headhunters. All job postings on the University website must be in three languages (Kazakh, English and Russian). For senior positions, additional consultancy services are used, for example, Korn Ferry to identify competitive international appointees. Application through the E-recruitment system is mandatory and relevant candidate information, in particular, the candidate's employment history must be included into the candidate's profile or resume.

5.7 New faculty are required to complete a range of induction activities which include generic HR information, Health and Safety and IT security. There is also an induction presentation on Academic Quality Processes. Since 2023, the CiLT has been providing a Learning and Teaching induction at the beginning of each semester (August and January), available online and face-to-face. During the review visit with academic staff, all staff including a new member of staff highlighted the role of CiLT and the induction processes in offering opportunities for, and promoting the professional development of teaching staff;

5.8 There are relevant policies and process to ensure fair renewal of contract, promotions, and professional development opportunities provided to staff. The Centre for Innovation in Learning and Teaching (CiLT), with a dedicated leadership position (General Director), established in 2024 (previously the Innovative Hub 2017), provides guidance on the development of learning and teaching and oversees the staff professional development across the University.

5.9 While staff professional development is organised within schools, particularly using the expertise of strategic partners, CiLT provides additional learning opportunities for staff professional development through externally contracted agencies, including Advanced HE, Epigeum and Linked In Learning. During the review visit, staff mentioned the role of CiLT in encouraging innovation in teaching methods and the use of new technologies.

5.10 Faculty performance is reviewed annually as described in the Faculty Handbook. The annual reviews are typically conducted by Department Chairs and Vice Deans in conjunction with the Dean. The Annual Review process is linked to the process for contract renewal or promotion. It is a requirement to include Student Evaluation feedback as part of the annual performance review process. While peer observation is encouraged, there is no requirement for this to be included as part of the review process. The centre for Innovation in Learning and Teaching provides peer observations as per school requests. During the review visit, students reported that their course survey includes feedback on teaching staff as one of the components of the survey.

5.11 NU has a process to recognise excellence in Learning and Teaching through the NU Learning and Teaching Awards, since 2016. Additional categories have been added to the awards, with nine categories available: Innovative Teaching, Inclusive Teaching, Research-Integrated Teaching, Academic Integrity, Leadership of Teaching, Master Teacher, Internationalization, Sharing of NU Experience and Teaching Assistant Award. The awards are conducted through the NU Learning and Teaching Committee, with recipients of the awards expected to share their expertise with the broader NU community. Each school can forward one nomination in each category for consideration at the institutional level.

5.12 In summary, there are fair and transparent processes for the recruitment and development of staff to ensure they are sufficient, appropriately qualified and skilled. NU has clear qualification criteria for teaching staff at different levels. The recruitment of staff is dictated by students' numbers and is based on course requisites. The recruitment process itself is fair, transparent and responsive to NU's needs. The University provides support for staff professional development and reviews their performance to ensure they keep academic and professional currency. The review team confirmed that Standard 1.5 -Teaching staff is **met**.

Standard 1.6   Learning resources and student support

Institutions should have appropriate funding for learning and teaching activities and ensure that adequate and readily accessible learning resources and student support are provided.

Findings

6.1   NU has a wide range of readily accessible learning resources and student support for students. These resources and services are situated across the University's main campus and University Medical Centre (UMC). The main campus includes a residential complex with 4800 beds that houses students and faculty. It contains a wide range of facilities from a pharmacy and minimarket to canteen and laundry.

6.2   The University's library is spread across the main campus and the UMC. The University website contains detailed information about library services, including 'how to' guides, electronic resources and databases and support information for researchers on topics such as grey literature and publishing. The Director of the Library is supported in their work by a Library Committee whose mission is to enhance the library and information services by making appropriate recommendations and preparing proposals for the University Academic Council. The review team considered that the University has a well-resourced library collection and appropriate staff support to provide students with the necessary learning resources.

6.3   The University's laboratories include facilities for: space, industry and transportation; fundamental science; electronic and photonic systems; high-performance computing, networking and cybersecurity; environmental and energy research; intelligence, cognition and robotics; behavioural science and education; the environment and resource efficiency; and biology.

6.4   The UMC provides healthcare with a capacity of 475 in-patient beds and 500 out-patient ambulatory examinations per shift. The School of Medicine (NUSOM) also has a Simulation Laboratory where students, medical practitioners, and other specialists learn and improve clinical skills using mannequins, simulators, and special equipment, with the help of specially trained personnel.

6.5   In addition to medical and laboratory facilities, the University has a range of innovative active learning spaces that have been developed following the work of the Future Learning Working Group. This work is aligned to the Learning and Teaching Strategy 2023-2030 that contains an objective to ensure optimisation and expansion of physical and digital learning infrastructure, for contemporary, flexible, and innovative learning'. As part of this strategy, the University has developed classrooms dedicated to hybrid learning delivery.

6.6   IT infrastructure is overseen by Information Services (IS), which was established in 2020. The service is responsible for end-user experience and the protection of the information assets of the University. The University informed the review team that moving the IT service 'in-house' from 2020 delivered several benefits for the University, including enhanced service for English speaking faculty, an improved ticketing system and faster response times. The University makes use of a range of technology as part of its pedagogy. This includes software such as Moodle, Padlet, Gradescope, Labster, Kahoot, Lockdown Browser, WebWork, Turnitin and statistical packages (SPSS, NVIVO, MathWorks, Wolfram Mathematica). The university also uses MS Teams and Google Meet. Students informed the review team that they receive timely and effective assistance with any IT issues, can request new software and that the range of technology available enhances their learning experience.

6.7   The University has a wide range of services designed to support students' well-being and development. The Department of Student Services (DSS) is responsible for providing

personal and professional support. DSS oversee student government, financial assistance, psychological counselling and student clubs, among other services. In total, DSS facilitates 102 student clubs with 30% of student engaged. Academic Advising, discussed under Standard 1.4, is also central to this support as demonstrated by the 2023 Undergraduate Experience Survey, where 75% of students were satisfied with the quality of academic advising and 71% with the availability of instructors outside lessons. Students confirm that support is highly accessible and beneficial.

6.8   The University established an Anti-Harassment Committee following a series of incidents in 2022 and has drafted an Anti-Harassment Policy that is due to be approved by the end of 2024. The University is also developing a mandatory anti-harassment induction module for new students. The Committee is a standing committee that will oversee this area of the University's work and has a series of sub-committees, including for policy, education and communication.

6.9   NU has a dedicated Office of International Students and Scholars who aid with migration, visas, employment, housing and social adaptation. Specifically, the office assist with Kazakh documentation, including identification numbers and licences, required medical check-ups and assist with the orientation process. International students confirmed that this enabled them to transition to study at NU smoothly. Language support is also available for students with some undergoing a one-year intensive foundation programme at the Centre for Preparatory Studies (CPS) before entering undergraduate (NUFYP) or graduate (NUZYP) programmes. CPS programmes provide intensive academic, scientific, and language proficiency preparation for English-medium studies. Annual Program Monitoring (APM) reports also consider language support needs. For example, the APM Report for MSc in Educational Leadership identified and acted on a need to determine how students can be better supported with Academic English over the summer semester when instructors are on annual leave.

6.10 Students' academic development is also supported through the Writing Centre, who work to facilitate the development of writing skills by offering tutorials, seminars, webinars and a range of resources for students and faculty. This includes a range of credit-bearing courses that the Writing Centre deliver as part of the undergraduate core curriculum.

6.11 Arrangements for enabling students to disclose disabilities were discussed under Standard 1.4. Following enrolment, students with disabilities can access a range of support including accessible accommodation and a wide range of resources, including audio and braille resources, in the library. The university also provided evidence of improvements being made to aid accessibility. These included the insertion ramps at entrance areas and implementing a sound system in elevators and tactile tracks to assist visually impaired individuals in navigating campus.

6.12 The Career Advising Centre (CAC) support students' employability by organising internships, recruitment events, company presentations and field trips. CAC activities are promoted through social media platforms and the University website. The centre regularly seeks feedback through there "Help Us Improve!" survey campaigns and the review team were provided with examples of improvements based on feedback such as refinements to the structure of mock interview sessions. Students confirm that the range of careers support helps them prepare for graduate life.

6.13 Students are provided with information about the full range of support services and learning resources through information on the website, student handbooks, social media, email and by staff and advisors. The University Service Management (USM) is responsible for managing and maintaining facilities, processing service requests, and enhancing campus life. USM actively participates in regular meetings with key campus stakeholders, including the Campus Life Committee, Faculty Senate members, and Student Government representatives. This collaboration helps USM stay informed about campus life issues and

student needs. Students confirm that they are well informed about support service and learning resources and able to provide feedback that is acted upon. As commended in Standard 1.3, the review team considers the excellent range of campus facilities and services that enhance the student learning experience as a feature of **good practice**.

6.14 NU does not have an explicit or dedicated policy that governs its approach to learning resources and student support. Rather, the University has a highly responsive approach to student needs. Currently, strategic planning for learning resources and support services is considered through quality assurance processes relating to the programme, including approval, annual monitoring and periodic review. The University directed the review team to the Future Learning report as setting out strategic intent regarding learning resources and student support. The report does identify a series of strategic recommendations that relate to learning resources and student support, for example assembling a Space Optimization Working Group to audit current space usage and make recommendations for future space usage and expediting selection of a learning management system (LMS). However, the remit of the report is analytical in nature and the panel determined that it does not constitute an institutional strategy for student support that establishes ongoing principles and approaches to the delivery of student support and learning resources and the review team therefore **recommends** that NU codifies its strategy for student support

6.15 The University informed the review team that the focus of monitoring in relation to support services has been the individual, in terms of setting targets and performance indicators. Currently, monitoring practice at the level of individual service departments varies, in terms of format and content as does the level of institutional engagement, through the governance structure with annual reporting. The review team viewed a range of annual reports, such as the library report and reports for the Career and Advising Centre, Library, Department of Student Services, and Admissions. The University also informed the panel that consideration is embedded in annual programme monitoring and student surveys, as well as through ad hoc reporting to Academic Council. The panel confirmed that students are asked to provide feedback on student services and learning resources through surveys and recognises that reflection does take place within departments leading to action. However, the panel determined that the University would benefit from strengthening analysis of this feedback together with other relevant management information to consider the performance of its services linked to its strategy for student support and learning resources. The University itself acknowledged that it could strengthen institutional level monitoring arrangements for support services. The review team therefore **recommends** that the University develops a structured annual system of review for the performance of administrative departments, including through institutional governance structures.

6.16 Nevertheless, the review team found comprehensive and high-quality facilities, high levels of student satisfaction with resources and support and a responsive approach to feedback ensures readily accessible learning resources and student support are provided. The review team therefore determined Standard 1.6 Learning resources and student support is **met**.

Standard 1.7   Information management

Institutions should ensure that they collect, analyse and use relevant information for the effective management of their programmes and other activities.

Findings

7.1   NU collects data on applicants' demographics, social makeup, and performance on the NU Entrance Exam (NUET), and the NU Socio-Economic Survey (SES). NU's SES provides a broad picture of the applicant pool. The NUET, designed and managed by Cambridge University, ensures standardised assessment across years.

7.2   NU has a well-developed system for monitoring key performance indicators (KPIs) and gauging student satisfaction throughout various stages of the academic journey. This system includes data collection through the Undergraduate Exit Survey, Graduating Exit Survey, Graduate School of Education Report, Alumni Survey, and the Alumni Professional Status Dashboard, Entering Student Surveys, First-Year Undergraduate Experience Surveys, and Course Evaluation Survey. The University also demonstrates responsiveness to the data collected, as seen in the inclusion of questions on safety and respect following the establishment of the Anti-Harassment Committee, indicating an active effort to address and improve students' academic and social experiences based on feedback.

7.3   The SED details the extensive resources (well-resourced library, student services department, student governance opportunities, financial aid, health and wellness services, and student clubs) available to NU students.

7.4   IR&A tracks career paths through alumni surveys conducted every three years. The alumni survey provides insights into graduate career paths and perceptions of NU's contribution to their skill development. The SED states that this alumni survey is designed in conjunction with various stakeholders including the Office of the Provost, Office of the President, Deans/Vice Deans, the Learning and Teaching Committee, and the Career Advising Centre.

7.5   The Institutional Research & Analytics (IR&A) unit plays a critical role in continuously evaluating the socio-economic profiles of applicants and enrolled students. This ongoing analysis helps identify potential socio-economic hardships, enabling the University to adapt its support mechanisms to address any emerging inequities in student preparedness, thereby promoting an inclusive academic environment. The following points illustrate NU's efforts to ensure equitable opportunities for all students:

7.6   Since 2019, NU has administered the annual Applicant Socio-Economic Survey Report, which tracks key socio-economic indicators such as parental educational attainment and employment status. The IR&A unit's analysis reveals that 80% of mothers and 79% of fathers of applicants in 2019 had attained bachelor's or graduate degrees, a trend that remained stable in 2023 with 83% of mothers and 78% of fathers. This data enables NU to monitor the socio-economic status of its applicants and address any potential disparities in student preparedness.

7.7   To further support students facing socio-economic challenges, NU established the Social Development Fund, a non-profit organisation that provides financial, informational, administrative, and organisational assistance to students and employees. By July 2024, the fund had provided targeted support to 3,679 students, reflecting the University's commitment to reducing socio-economic barriers and enhancing student success through a wide range of supportive programs for underprivileged students.

7.8   NU has a long-standing commitment to supporting underprivileged students, investing in social support programs since 2012. These programmes assist students in overcoming socio-economic challenges during their studies. In addition, state grants are available for students admitted to preparatory programs such as the NU Foundation Programme and Zero Year Graduate Programme, which are designed to prepare students for undergraduate and graduate studies at NU.

7.9   The Institutional Research & Analytics (IR&A) unit systematically tracks student progress through grade distribution reports, the Data Digest, and dashboards, providing comprehensive insights into academic performance, graduation rates, and trends across different cohorts and programs. These tools play a vital role in helping NU monitor and analyse key performance indicators, such as retention and graduation rates, and they facilitate informed decision-making at the school level. The yearly Data Digest provides detailed statistics for both undergraduate and graduate students, broken down by programme, enabling schools to identify trends, address potential concerns, and implement strategies that support student success and programme completion. Additionally, information from the Data Digest and student surveys is utilised by each school to conduct an annual programme review process, as described in Standard 1.9 of the SED. When retention rates for a particular year are observed to be low, the corresponding student experience reports are examined to identify potential areas of weakness that may contribute to higher drop-out rates.

7.10   In addition to quantitative data, NU gathers qualitative data through student experience surveys and exit surveys. These surveys are designed to assess the quality of both the social and academic experiences of students at NU. The survey results are also broken down by program, providing granular insights into student experiences and potential issues within specific programmes.

7.11   Survey results are regularly discussed during school meetings. An example is the Graduate School of Public Policy (GSPP) meeting held on (Jan. 19, 2024), where "Student Feedback" was a key agenda item. The dean presented the results of the exit survey, highlighting a downward trend in overall programme satisfaction and research experience satisfaction, and collaborated with staff to identify improvement areas. The Quality Review Committee reports document responses to previous issues and outline actions for programme improvement. Examples of implemented changes include faculty hiring efficiency, balancing course loads, mapping programme learning outcomes, enhancing assessment rubrics, and refining recruitment strategies. These actions demonstrate a commitment to continuous improvement based on student feedback.

7.12   Each school at NU is required to prepare an annual School Academic Quality Enhancement Report, which includes an analysis of student performance, graduation rates, and retention figures. Schools are responsible for reviewing this data and outlining any necessary actions to address identified challenges. These reports incorporate the results of various student surveys, including the Graduate Exit Survey and are used to identify and address key issues within the academic programmes. The reports follow a standardised format across the University, listing "Key points for review" (column 1), "Comments/Reflections" (column 2), and "Identified/Implemented Actions" (column 3).

7.13   For example, the Graduate School of Education (GSE) took proactive measures to improve timely PhD completions by closely monitoring ethics application submissions, which had been causing delays in research progress. In contrast, the Graduate School of Business (GSB) reported no significant retention issues in its 2022-2023 academic year report. Overall, NU's approach to tracking and analysing student data has been effective in maintaining high undergraduate graduation rates (70-100% within five years) and addressing specific delays in program completion through targeted interventions. This systematic use of data underscores NU's commitment to improving retention and graduation outcomes.

7.14 The Institutional Research & Analysis (IR&A) unit utilises a range of surveys to assess the adequacy and effectiveness of NU's support services. A key instrument is the First Year Undergraduate Experience Survey, which captures student satisfaction with services such as the library, classrooms and laboratories, sports centre, international cooperation services, career and advising services, and psychological counselling. This survey focuses on early feedback from students transitioning into university life, providing valuable insights into the initial effectiveness of support services.

7.15 Survey results are monitored annually, enabling year-on-year comparisons and tracking of trends in student satisfaction through consistent questions. Another crucial tool is the Undergraduate Exit Survey and Graduate Exit Survey, conducted prior to graduation, allowing students to reflect on their entire experience with support services. The survey includes 19 questions covering academic advising, counselling, library resources, IT services, and other topics. In the 2023 Exit Survey, only 2.2% of respondents indicated a need for improvement in areas such as "better academic advising and counselling" or "better student support services," indicating a high level of satisfaction among graduates.

7.16 While NU does not conduct comprehensive support services surveys for students in their 2nd and 3rd years, feedback is collected through school-level surveys that focus on academic programmes and include questions on the quality of laboratory equipment and academic facilities. Students are also encouraged to provide open-ended feedback on any concerns they may have, which can include support services. The responses are reviewed at the school level and incorporated into annual quality enhancement reports. In the second additional evidence, the review team inquired about student feedback during these middle years and received a similar explanation: NU opts not to conduct comprehensive support services surveys for 2nd and 3rd years students to reduce survey fatigue and ensure more meaningful feedback when collected. This approach was reaffirmed during the site visit. However, not surveying these students may leave a gap in understanding their unique needs and experiences. By not capturing feedback from 2nd and 3rd years students, NU risks missing out on insights that could inform improvements in support services at critical points in the undergraduate journey. Therefore, the Review Team **recommends** that NU implements periodic evaluations or focus groups involving 2nd and 3rd years students to ensure consistent monitoring and continuous improvement of support services, and to address any emerging needs, and enhance overall student satisfaction during these vital middle years.

7.17 During the site visit, the review team noted significant challenges in NU's data management, particularly in the collection and analysis of critical student data such as progress and dropout rates. It was revealed during the demonstration of the Learning Systems Management (LSM) and databases that staff are using two tools—an in-house software and MS Excel—to manage student records. While the in-house system provides flexibility for customisation, the complexity of extracting reports, visualisations, and performance metrics hinders timely reporting to senior management. This was further acknowledged in discussions with NU president and senior staff, who stated that the current system delays decision-making and presents inefficiencies in managing student data. Streamlining these processes will improve data accessibility, reduce complexity for staff, and ensure that senior management receives timely, accurate, and easily accessible reports, facilitating more informed and efficient decision-making at the institutional level. Therefore, the Review Team **recommends** that NU reviews its data management processes to ensure that the collected data feeds into decision-making processes at different levels in a timely, comprehensive, and effective manner.

7.18 Overall, the Review Team found that NU has established a strong foundation for effective information management by dedicating substantial time and resources to this area. The Institutional Research & Analytics (IR&A) unit, in collaboration with other key institutional departments, plays a central role in collecting, analysing, and disseminating data on various aspects of student experience and programme outcomes. This data includes a

comprehensive overview of the demographic attributes and academic capacities of applicants, enrolled students, and alumni. Key performance indicators (KPIs) are closely monitored at both the school and administrative levels to facilitate continuous improvement in programme and course delivery, ultimately leading to optimal outcomes for alumni. Additionally, NU offers a broad range of social, health-related, medical, and psychological support services that enrich students' academic experiences. Through a combination of surveys, assessments, and administrative data, NU effectively monitors student demographics, progression rates, and satisfaction levels, ensuring a robust system for continuous improvement. Accordingly, the Review Team concludes that Standard 1.7 Information Management is **met**.

Standard 1.8   Public information

Institutions should publish information about their activities, including programmes, which is clear, accurate, objective, up-to date and readily accessible.

Findings

8.1   Academic Council hold ultimate responsibility for public information, and approve all formal information related to academic programmes. This information is preliminarily reviewed by School Learning and Teaching Committees, or equivalent bodies, and Academic Quality Committee. Published programme handbooks are also approved by Academic Council and all programme information on NU's main website and Schools' individual websites is based on these master documents. Internal policies and regulations are published on the Regulations Repository platform and available to all NU community members. Papers with restricted access require authorisation. The Department of Documentation Support oversees a broad file register and collects information on documents with restricted access through the established documents management system.

8.2   The university's central Marketing Department and Press Office are responsible for communicating information externally. The department oversee and maintain NU's official website and social media accounts and provide media interaction training for internal stakeholders. The University has a central website and separate sites for its academic schools. The team reviewed the institutional site and confirmed it carries information about NU's mission and vision, strategic priorities, international partnerships, student demographics and graduate employment and testimonials.

8.3   The University informed the team that detailed programme information is available on each school's website, which typically contains the programme description, module information, programme learning outcomes, entry requirements, qualification, job opportunities, accreditation status (if any) and other details. All modules are communicated via the Public Course Catalogue, including pre-requisites and course descriptions and the catalogue itself is maintained by the Office of the Registrar. The information is provided in three languages (English, Kazakh and Russian). The team verified that detailed and suitable programme information is in place and accessible, though not necessarily consistent, as the exact style and format can vary slightly between schools and programmes, for instance surrounding the depth of information available regarding modules within a programme.

8.4   Each academic school employs marketing and communication specialists, who manage their communication strategies, develop content and update the individual websites and social media accounts. Their responsibilities for monitoring and evaluating public information are detailed in relevant job descriptions and employment contracts and each unit (e.g., Admissions Department, Career and Advising) is responsible for ensuring that the published information pertinent to its area of activities is accurate, up-to-date and easily accessible. Staff informed the team that the central university website is monitored periodically by the central Marketing Department and Press Office, however they have limited resource and are therefore unable to review schools' websites for clarity, accuracy and accessibility. The University also acknowledged that the range of websites presents challenges in relation to the user experience. To address this, NU are currently working on an updated version of its website and plan to launch the new site in 2025. However, at the time of the review visit this work was at an early stage and the team was unable to review and verify detailed workplans or timescales. The team considers this development is necessary to improve stakeholder ability to navigate public information and therefore **recommends** that the University enhances the accessibility of information (including policies, programme information) through its website to enable a seamless user experience.

8.5   The university confirmed that while there is no policy regulating the publication of information for certain groups of stakeholders. The universal requirement for all internally and externally published information is the availability of the information in three languages and information accuracy. However, the University informed the team that it recognises the consistent and regular updating of programme information on all websites and sources of information for the public is a challenge, largely due to the regulatory obligation to provide information in Kazakh, Russian and English. Central marketing staff also reported to the team that owing to the delegated responsibility for public information and autonomous nature of academic schools, responses to requests for information or changes to public information can be slow. The team determined that while individual responsibilities in relation to information are clearly set out in job descriptions, the absence of institutional and school policies relating to the approval and monitoring of public information mean that collective responsibilities are less transparent. The team therefore **recommends** that the University codifies its policy for the approval and monitoring and review of public information to ensure the public information remains accurate, up-to-date, and easily accessible.

8.6   However, while the University would benefit from adopting a clearer policy framework in relation to the management of public information the panel found that existing information is broadly clear, accurate, objective, up-to date and readily accessible. The team therefore concludes that Standard 1.8 Public information is **met**.

Standard 1.9 Ongoing monitoring and periodic review of programmes

Institutions should monitor and periodically review their programmes to ensure that they achieve the objectives set for them and respond to the needs of students and society. These reviews should lead to continuous improvement of the programme. Any action planned or taken as a result should be communicated to all those concerned.

ESG Guidelines
Regular monitoring, review and revision of study programmes aim to ensure that the provision remains appropriate and to create a supportive and effective learning environment for students. They include the evaluation of: • the content of the programme in the light of the latest research in the given discipline thus ensuring that the programme is up to date • the changing needs of society • the students' workload, progression and completion • the effectiveness of procedures for assessment of students • the student expectations, needs and satisfaction in relation to the programme • the learning environment and support services and their fitness for purpose for the programme. Programmes are reviewed and revised regularly involving students and other stakeholders. The information collected is analysed and the programme is adapted to ensure that it is up to date. Revised programme specifications are published.

Findings

9.1   A main component of the Academic Quality Framework is the Annual Programme Monitoring (APM) which has a well-defined and transparent process, demonstrating NU's commitment to continuous quality improvement through structured oversight, management, and stakeholder involvement as follows.

9.2   The APM process is initiated at the beginning of each academic year, with the Academic Quality Enhancement (AQE) unit distributing the APM timeline, templates, and links to grade distribution reports and data digests. This information is also published on the University's website (https://ie.nu.edu.kz/quality-enhancement/annual-programme-monitoring/) and in the SED. The availability of these resources ensures that all stakeholders are informed and prepared for the APM process.

9.3   The Institutional Research & Analytics (IR&A) Team plays a crucial role in preparing data for analysis during the APM process. This data serves as the foundation for evaluating course and program performance, enabling informed decision-making throughout the monitoring process.

9.4   The APM process begins with a course-level review conducted by the course leader. The course-level reports are subsequently reviewed by the program leader, who is responsible for developing the programme level report. This hierarchical review structure ensures that issues are identified and addressed at the appropriate level before being escalated for further consideration.

9.5   The vice dean for academic affairs consolidates programme level reports into a School Quality Enhancement Report. This report is discussed at the School Learning and Teaching Committee and reviewed by the Dean. This collaborative approach allows for the identification of school-specific quality enhancement areas and good practices, contributing to the overall quality of education provided.

9.6   All School Quality Enhancement reports are reviewed and discussed at the Annual Health Check Event. The insights gained from these discussions inform the development of the NU Quality Enhancement Plan (NUQEP), which identifies institutional quality enhancement areas and good practices. This step ensures that the APM process contributes to continuous institutional improvement and alignment with strategic goals.

9.7   The NUQEP is developed by the Academic Quality Committee and the AQE Team, with input from relevant stakeholders. The plan is then discussed and approved by the Academic Council. Once approved, stakeholders are notified via the University's website, ensuring transparency and accountability in the implementation of quality enhancement actions.

9.8   Samples of Annual Programme Monitoring (APM) reports and student feedback reports were provided in the SED. These reports illustrate how student feedback is analysed and used to inform programme modifications and enhancements. Specific examples include reports from the Graduate School of Education, and the School of Engineering and Digital Sciences. The APM reports demonstrate a systematic approach to using student feedback for programme improvement. The reports detail how feedback is collected, analysed, and translated into actionable changes within the programmes. This process underscores NU's commitment to maintaining programme relevance and quality through regular assessment and adaptation. NU provides transparency in its review processes through the availability of documents such as meeting minutes and APM reports.

9.9   The Annual Programme Monitoring (APM) templates require programme leaders to reflect on course content and ensure it is informed by current research, and the schools are encouraged to establish strong research communities involving students. However, there is limited evidence demonstrating various referencing points, data and information have been collected, analysed and considered to assess whether the programmes are current. A special guidance (Toolkit #1) was developed to support faculty in integrating research into teaching. However, the impact on programme content updates is unclear.

9.10 The Skills Working Group collaborates with employers to identify the top 10 skills needed at work, and the APM template is amended accordingly to reflect these skills. This demonstrates a strong effort to address changing societal needs. NU Schools have established or are establishing industry advisory boards to engage with employers, and employers provide feedback that informs curriculum development during APM, ensuring graduates are equipped with relevant skills. However, the impact of industry advisory boards and other stakeholders is not explicitly measured, and their effectiveness in influencing curriculum development requires further assessment.

9.11 The APM template requires a review of programme data and statistics, including student progression, enrolment, and completion. Student workload is monitored via course evaluation surveys analysed in annual reports. NU participated in a Bologna Hub project to estimate student workload and its alignment with learning outcomes. Programme modifications are made to address workload concerns identified through the APM process,

indicating responsiveness to student needs. Overall, the APM process appears to comprehensively monitor student workload, progression, and completion through data analysis and surveys.

9.12 Student representatives are involved in the APM process and informed about how feedback is used. The Institutional surveys (First-Year Graduate Survey, Graduate Student Exit Survey, Socio-Economic Survey) gather student feedback on programme satisfaction and achievement of learning outcomes. The schools and faculty are required to take actions in response to student feedback or explain why concerns cannot be addressed. The APM templates request programme leaders to close feedback loops with students. Some Schools (Electrical and Computer Engineering) share summaries of planned actions based on student feedback.

9.13 Training sessions are offered to programme leaders and student representatives on how to contribute to the feedback loop process. However, some challenges remain in closing the feedback loop effectively:

9.14 While some good practices exist, such as sharing summaries of planned actions, these are not uniformly implemented across the University. There is a need for more systematic practices to ensure all schools and programmes consistently address student concerns.

9.15 Training sessions for programme leaders and student representatives are a positive step, but their impact on overall effectiveness needs to be assessed.

9.16 NU has established policies and procedures for monitoring the learning environment and student support services, supported by the NU Learning and Teaching Strategy. The Learning Environment and Student Support policy ensures a favourable and inclusive learning environment. Programme leaders and School administration staff monitor the learning environment and support services. Student feedback mechanisms gather information on the learning environment and support services. The NU Quality Enhancement Plan 2024-2025 includes a set of actions planned to support implementation of this theme (NUQEP. Area 1). However, this appendix and the SED don't show enough details about ensuring effective communication and closing the loop on identified issues requires improvement.

9.17 While the APM process is currently operational the University does not have an active Periodic Review process in place. Despite the numerous strengths of the APM process, which demonstrates a well-structured approach to ongoing monitoring, the system primarily focuses on monitoring and does not address several critical aspects required by Standard 1.9, including:

- Regular evaluation of programme content to ensure it is up to date with the latest research in the discipline;

- Alignment with changing societal needs and student progression;

- Effectiveness of student assessments and workload monitoring;

- Consistent involvement of students and other stakeholders in programme revisions;

- Evaluation of the learning environment and support services comprehensively to ensure they meet the evolving needs of students.

9.18 Another component of the Academic Quality Framework is the "Periodic Review Policy". NU has established a comprehensive framework for the periodic review process as outlined in the Periodic Review Policy. This policy, approved in 2023, is available on the

University's website and details the procedures that schools must follow for programme reviews. The policy is designed to ensure that programmes remain aligned with current research and academic standards. A key component of the Periodic Review Policy is the emphasis on curriculum currency. Appendix 2 in the policy document, specifically includes curriculum currency as a point of review. This ensures that programmes will be regularly evaluated for their alignment with the latest research findings and academic developments.

9.19 The Periodic Review Policy, approved in 2023, has not yet been implemented due to ongoing accreditation processes across all schools within NU. NU has established a detailed timeline indicating its commitment to initiating the review process when circumstances allow. However, as mentioned in the timeline, the earliest Periodic Reviews is not planning to happen until the academic year 2025/26 and only two schools will go through the process in 2025/26.

9.20 To summarise, the review team confirms that:

- While the annual monitoring procedure (APM) process aligns with certain aspects of this standard, it primarily serves as a monitoring mechanism without incorporating a comprehensive review of all relevant criteria outlined in ESG Standard 1.9, meaning that NU cannot meet standard 1.9 if only relying on annual monitoring procedure (APM) to assure the quality of programmes.

- The Periodic Review Policy states that 'Where accreditation review processes (typically mid-cycle) show close similarity with those of PR, then the School will not be required to conduct PR.' It is clear that NU does not use the external report as evidence in the consideration of internal review but rather cause for an exemption. On that point NU were not unequivocal in the meetings about whether this meant a full exemption or a deferral to a later point in time (e.g. the next academic year). Although NU kept strengthening their use of external reviews and industry consultations to inform quality assurance of their programmes, external reviews, including reviews done by accreditation bodies or strategic partners, cannot be directly used as a substitute for the Periodic Review (PR), which should be the University's internal procedures for full review of the programmes on a periodic basis.

- As mentioned in PRP, 'Where accreditation review processes (typically mid-cycle) show close similarity with those of PR, then the School will not be required to conduct PR.' It is not clear how NU defines the 'close similarity' to define which schools could exempt from PR. How they mapped the similarity and adjusted the PR process to account for any gaps isn't well covered in the policy. How the exemption works when the external accreditation is for a programme and the PR is at School level isn't well described in the policy either.

- The Periodic Review Policy states clearly this is the school level review, although it outlines things to assess in the periodic review which includes programme content, outcomes, etc, it does not mention clearly whether all programme under the school will be reviewed or whether a sampling approach will be applied. The PRP is a school-based review approach, it is not clear from the Policy whether and how every single programme within the school will be fully considered in the PRP in meeting ESG Standard 1.9.

- Meeting Standard 1.9 requires both annual monitoring (APM) and periodic review (PR) procedures in place. Though PRP has been drafted but was yet to be implemented until 2025/26. Students and staff demonstrated no clear understanding of PRP in the meeting. Consequently, the review team were unable to assess the effectiveness of the institution's approach on the full periodic review of programmes.

9.21 To enhance the effectiveness of the PRP, it is crucial for NU to monitor the progress of these accreditation activities and commence implementation as soon as feasible.

Furthermore, the PRP currently exempts programmes with external accreditation from internal reviews; however, ESG Standard 1.9 requires a periodic internal review that should be clearly defined in the policy. It is essential for NU to outline responsibilities for evaluating the alignment between external accreditation processes and the PRP. Finally, in line with ESG Standard 1.9, the periodic review should be programme focused.

9.22 The Review Team therefore concludes that Standard 1.9 Ongoing Monitoring and Periodic Review of Programs is currently **not met but is capable of being met on the condition** that NU fully implements the Periodic Review Policy as soon as possible with sufficient emphasis on all programmes within the school. The condition should be addressed within 12 months, meaning that before the end of 2025, the programme periodic review procedure should have been developed and at least all programmes within one school should have gone through the periodic review cycle to demonstrate the efficiency and efficacy of the approach to assure the quality of programmes.

9.23 In May 2025, NU submitted evidence that it has implemented the Periodic Review Policy by conducting an internal review of its Graduate School of Education (GSE). The submitted documentation collectively confirms that NU has effectively operationalized its Periodic Review Policy (PRP) within one academic unit and has completed a full review cycle, addressing all critical elements of the condition.

9.24 Nazarbayev University has documented the sequence of activities undertaken and provided narrative evidence that the PRP at GSE was conducted comprehensively. The process involved a combination of self-evaluation, student feedback, peer review, and the integration of insights from the Annual Programme Monitoring (APM).

9.25 The self-evaluation document demonstrates that GSE undertook structured reflection on its academic provision, quality assurance mechanisms, and strategic goals. The accompanying Action Plan is particularly notable for its focus on measurable improvement, and its linking of recommendations to responsible parties and timelines.

9.26 A review panel was appointed that included representatives from other parts of the university as well as an external member and a student representative. A site visit was conducted in January 2025**.** The institutional review panel report confirms that the review was conducted through a multi-stakeholder process involving leadership, faculty, staff, and students, ensuring a holistic understanding of programme quality and operations. The report also indicates that the review process was iterative, with feedback mechanisms allowing the GSE to engage with and respond to the draft findings. This process supports transparency and shared ownership of quality enhancement.

9.27 The subsequent Institutional Review Panel (IRP) Report provides the formal evaluation outcomes of the periodic review, including both commendations & development-oriented recommendations. It confirms that the IRP engaged critically and constructively with the self-evaluation materials and conducted its work in alignment with NU's PRP framework.

9.28 A finalised action plan provides evidence that GSE has subsequently transitioned from review to implementation. The document shows that recommendations made by the IRP have been mapped into a structured and time-bound plan, with regular monitoring mechanisms in place (e.g. quarterly reviews) to ensure timely delivery and impact tracking. In addition, the GSE Accreditation Newsletter serves as evidence of inclusive stakeholder engagement and ongoing communication about QA efforts. It demonstrates that GSE has kept its internal and external stakeholders informed and involved, in line with best practice and ESG expectations.

9.29 The review team therefore concludes that the conditions for standard 1.9 of the ESG have been addressed and that the standard is now fully **met**.

Standard 1.10 Cyclical external quality assurance

Institutions should undergo external quality assurance in line with the ESG on a cyclical basis.

Findings

10.1 NU's strategy commits the university to achieving "gold standard" accreditation for its programmes by 2025, and institutional accreditation by 2030. The institution is not required to undertake external cyclical review as a national regulatory requirement. Therefore, to achieve this objective this institution has identified a range of accreditation bodies from Europe and the United States, reflecting the international composition of the institution. Through these agencies the institution is seeking to gain institutional and programme accreditation. The team found that NU have a demonstrable commitment to external quality assurance as a means of enhancing its provision.

10.2 Accreditation with these agencies is in various stages of completeness. The institution underwent external evaluation through the European University Association's Institutional Evaluation Programme (IEP) in 2017 and a subsequent follow-up procedure in 2019. The University has engaged the University of Wisconsin-Madison (UWM) as a strategic partner to conduct various enhancement reviews. The institution provided the team with examples in Economics, Biology, Chemistry, and Mathematics among others. The panel found that these reports were detailed, informing enhancement, especially at programme and department level and being used to ensure rigorous preparation in advance of external accreditation procedures.

10.3 The Graduate School of Public Policy's Master's programmes in Public Administration and Public Policy were successfully accredited by the European Association for Public Administration Accreditation (EAPAA) in 2019 and the Network of Schools of Public Policy, Affairs, and Administration (NASPAA) in 2023. In preparation for NASPAA accreditation the school made a series of changes to programme learning outcomes to ensure they were aligned with accreditation criteria.

10.4 The Graduate School of Business is pursuing AACSB accreditation and received its second progress report from AACSB in September 2024 and will receive notification in December 2024 as to whether they will be subject to a site visit. The school's full-time and Executive MBA programmes have already been accredited by the Association of MBAs (AMBA) and Business Graduates Association (BGA). The AMBA report led to a series of recommendations. The institution provided the action plan addressing these recommendations, which was detailed, appropriate and demonstrated the institution's responsiveness. For example, a recommendation to strengthen leadership in the core curriculum had led to the introduction of a core course in leadership. The action plan did however lack deadlines that would enhance the institution's ability to monitor progress.

10.5 Other external accreditations include the School of Medicine's Doctor of Education programme, which is accredited by the Eurasian Centre for Accreditation and Quality Assurance in Higher Education and Health Care (ECAQA), as well as the English for Academic Purposes programme accredited by BALEAP. The institution is also preparing the readiness document for ABET and is due to submit this before the end of the 2024.

10.6 Regarding monitoring arrangements for external quality assurance, reports relating to the institution are scrutinised and overseen by the Office of the Provost. This includes the Institutional Evaluation Programme report from the European University Association, which informed a university transformation project. Accreditation reports relating to programmes are subject to scrutiny at the level of academic schools, who are responsible for devising actions to address recommendations. The Nazarbayev University Quality Enhancement Plan (NUQEP) is developed following the production of School Quality Enhancement Report

(SQERs) and the Annual Health Check and refers to the University's work to secure programme accreditation from various organisations. However, the plan contains relatively few actions, and the team considered it could be strengthened to maintain an overview of all conditions and recommendations issued by external quality assurance agencies. The university informed the team that, although some scrutiny of the actions may take place at senior committees through consideration of school strategic plans, oversight of these plans at institutional level could be strengthened. The team therefore **recommends** that the institution ensures comprehensive and coherent oversight of responses to external accreditation reports at the school level and associated action plans.

10.7 The panel noted that while the institution has not previously undergone external, cyclical review at institutional level this has not been a regulatory requirement. Despite this NU have shown a demonstrable commitment to external accreditation as a means of enhancement. NU intend to use QAA International Quality Review as cyclical review at the institutional level. Owing to the age of the institution at present, only BALEAP accreditation of the English for Academic Purposes programme has reached the second cycle and been subject to reaccreditation, but the university is actively working to maintain its various accreditations at programme level and the team considered Standard 1.10 Cyclical external quality assurance is **met**.

Glossary

Action plan
A plan developed by the institution after the QAA review report has been published, which is signed off by the head of the institution. It responds to the recommendations in the report and gives any plans to capitalise on the identified good practice.

Annual monitoring
Checking a process or activity every year to see whether it meets expectations for standards and quality. Annual reports normally include information about student achievements and may comment on the evaluation of courses and modules.

Collaborative arrangement
A formal arrangement between a degree-awarding body and another higher education provider. These may be degree-awarding bodies with which the institution collaborates to deliver higher education qualifications on behalf of the degree-awarding bodies. Alternatively, they may be other delivery organisations who deliver part or all of a proportion of the institution's higher education programmes.

Condition
Conditions set out action that is required. Conditions are only used with unsatisfactory judgements where the quality cannot be approved. Conditions may be used where quality or standards are at risk/continuing risk if action is not taken or if a required standard is not met and action is needed for it to be met.

Degree-awarding body
Institutions that have authority, for example from a national agency, to issue their own awards. Institutions applying to IQR may be degree-awarding bodies themselves, or may collaborate to deliver higher education qualifications on behalf of degree-awarding bodies.

Desk-based analysis
An analysis by the review team of evidence, submitted by the institution, that enables the review team to identify its initial findings and subsequently supports the review team as it develops its review findings.

Enhancement
See **quality enhancement**.

European Standards and Guidelines
For details, including the full text on each standard, see www.enqa.eu/index.php/home/esg.

Examples of practice
A list of policies and practices that a review team may use when considering the extent to which an institution meets the standards for review. The examples should be considered as a guide only, in acknowledgment that not all of them will be appropriate for all institutions.

Externality
The use of experts from outside a higher education provider, such as external examiners or external advisers, to assist in quality assurance procedures.

Facilitator
The member of staff identified by the institution to act as the principal point of contact for the QAA officer and who will be available during the review visit, to assist with any questions or requests for additional documentation.

Good practice
A feature of good practice is a process or way of working that, in the view of a QAA review team, makes a particularly positive contribution to the institution's higher education provision.

Lead student representative
An optional voluntary role that is designed to allow students at the institution applying for IQR to play a central part in the organisation of the review.

Oversight
Objective scrutiny, monitoring and quality assurance of educational provision.

Peer reviewers
Members of the review team who make the decisions in relation to the review of the institution. Peer reviewers have experience of managing quality and academic standards in higher education or have recent experience of being a student in higher education.

Periodic review
An internal review of one or more programmes of study, undertaken by institutions periodically (typically once every five years), using nationally agreed reference points, to confirm that the programmes are of an appropriate academic standard and quality. The process typically involves experts from other higher education providers. It covers areas such as the continuing relevance of the programme, the currency of the curriculum and reference materials, the employability of graduates and the overall performance of students. Periodic review is one of the main processes whereby institutions can continue to assure themselves about the academic quality and standards of their awards.

Programme of study
An approved course of study that provides a coherent learning experience and normally leads to a qualification. UK higher education programmes must be approved and validated by UK degree-awarding bodies.

Quality enhancement
The process by which higher education providers systematically improve the quality of provision and the ways in which students' learning is supported.

QAA officer
The person appointed by QAA to manage the review programme and to act as the liaison between the review team and the institution.

Quality assurance
The systematic monitoring and evaluation of learning and teaching, and the processes that support them, to make sure that the standards of academic awards meet the necessary standards, and that the quality of the student learning experience is being safeguarded and improved.

Recognition of prior learning
Assessing previous learning that has occurred in any of a range of contexts including school, college and university, and/or through life and work experiences.

Recommendation
Review teams make recommendations where they agree that an institution should consider developing or changing a process or a procedure in order to improve the institution's higher education provision.

Reference points
Statements and other publications that establish criteria against which performance can be measured.

Self-evaluation document

A self-evaluation report by an institution. The submission should include information about the institution as well as an assessment of the effectiveness of its quality systems.

Student submission

A document representing student views that describes what it is like to be a student at the institution, and how students' views are considered in the institution's decision-making and quality assurance processes.

Validation

The process by which an institution ensures that its academic programmes meet expected academic standards and that students will be provided with appropriate learning opportunities. It may also be applied to circumstances where a degree-awarding institution gives approval for its awards to be offered by a partner institution or organisation.