4. ACADEMIC QUALITY ASSURANCE POLICY

1. Purpose

ADA University is committed to ensuring an environment of academic excellence to its students, faculty and staff. This presupposes regular, systematic and standardized processes of quality assessment and enhancement that cover all matters related to teaching, learning, assessment and research. The purpose of this policy is to establish such processes. More specifically, it serves to define the general structures and procedures of academic quality assurance at ADA University. These are further specified in the quality assurance policies that are part of each area covered by the *Academic Quality Assurance Standards and Guidelines*.

2. Scope and Recommendations

This policy applies to the following areas: (1) Academic Program, (2) Teaching, Learning and Assessment, (3) Research, (4) Students, (5) Faculty and Staff, and (6) Equity and Transparency. It provides a general framework for the assessment and enhancement of standards and guidelines, key documents, actual outcomes as well as of quality assurance structures and procedures. It furthermore covers all documents of Section I of the *Academic Quality Assurance Standards and Guidelines* as well as its Appendices.

This policy should be read in conjunction with the document *Quality Assurance Governance* and with the quality assurance policies that are part of each of the areas covered by the *Academic Quality Assurance Standards and Guidelines*.

3. Definitions

Quality Assurance describes the regular assessment / evaluation and enhancement / improvement of standards and guidelines, principles and propositions, rules, processes, structures and outcomes. Q*uality Assessment* refers to the review of documents *and* of related outcomes. The *Enhancement of Quality* covers the development or modification of documents *as well as* their implementation and the corresponding achievement of intended outcomes.

A *Quality Review Cycle* is a systematic and comprehensive process of quality assessment that is completed within a predefined timeframe and that is regularly repeated.

4. Quality Assurance Committee

4.1 Responsibility for the regular, systematic and comprehensive assessment and enhancement of academic quality at ADA University rests with the Quality Assurance Committee, with its Subcommittees, and with the Office of Quality Assurance and Accreditation (for details, see the document *Quality Assurance Governance*).

4.2 The process of quality assurance at ADA University must incorporate an external perspective. To this end, the Quality Assurance Committee will include two members from at least one of ADA University's international partners.

4.3 In all matters related to student success, program effectiveness and the implementation of learning outcomes, the Quality Assurance Committee will consult with its Subcommittees at School level (for details, see the document *Quality Assurance Governance*). The Quality Assurance Committee will thoroughly consider all feedback and recommendations received from the Subcommittees.

4.4 The Quality Assurance Committee's responsibilities are:
   a. Regular supervision of the implementation of the entire *Academic Quality Assurance Standards and Guidelines*.
   b. Regular review of actual outcomes of individual components (documents).
   c. Comprehensive review of the entire *Academic Quality Assurance Standards and Guidelines*.
   d. Regular review of individual components (documents) of the *Academic Quality Assurance Standards and Guidelines*.
   e. Modification of existing documents and development of new documents (based on these review processes).

4.5 Further provisions related to the composition and responsibilities of the Quality Assurance Committee and its Subcommittees are delineated in the document *Quality Assurance Governance*.

5. Quality Review Cycle

5.1 Quality assurance at ADA University is based on a 5-year review cycle. During this period, all academic quality and quality assurance documents and all related outcomes are subject to rigorous processes of quality assessment and (where appropriate) quality enhancement.

5.2 Outcomes are reviewed throughout the academic year according to the reporting timeline set forth in the University's *Data Management and Reporting Regulations*. In case outcomes do not meet the quality standards, requirements and indicators set forth in the *Academic Quality Assurance Standards and Guidelines*, the Quality Assurance Committee will take appropriate steps towards the improvement of outcome quality (including the review of relevant documents).

5.3 The composition and implementation of the *Academic Quality Assurance Standards and Guidelines* are reviewed annually. This is to ensure that potential deficits and gaps are identified and addressed in a timely manner. Improvements (such as the development of new documents) must take into consideration international best practices and the Quality Standards and Quality Guidelines set forth in the *Academic Quality Assurance Standards and Guidelines*.

5.4 Each document must be reviewed (and potentially improved) at least once during the quality review cycle, and this based on the following structure:
   a. First Year: Context and Framework of Academic Quality and Quality Assurance (Section I, Introduction, Appendices, Quality Assurance Policies)
   b. Second Year: Area 1 (Academic Program)
   c. Third Year: Area 2 (Teaching, Learning and Assessment)
   d. Fourth Year: Areas 4 and 5 (Students; Faculty and Staff)
   e. Fifth Year: Areas 3 and 6 (Research; Equity and Transparency)

5.5 In addition, the Quality Assurance Committee is free to review any academic quality and quality assurance document at any time during the 5-year review cycle.

6. Quality Assurance Procedures

6.1 The Quality Assurance Committee will meet regularly throughout the academic year in order to discuss issues related to the assurance of academic quality at ADA University (for details, see the document *Quality Assurance Governance*).

6.2 Whenever appropriate, the Quality Assurance Committee may invite further members of ADA University to participate in its meetings and to offer feedback and suggestions on specific issues under discussion.

6.3 The Quality Assurance Committee will base its evaluation and required improvements of *outcome* quality:

    a. on the quality standards and requirements set forth in the *Academic Quality Assurance Standards and Guidelines*.

    b. on the quality indicators defined in the quality assurance policies of each area covered by the *Academic Quality Assurance Standards and Guidelines*.

    c. on quantitative information (such as statistical data) and on qualitative information (such as feedback from students, graduates and employers) (for details, see the University's *Data Management and Reporting Regulations*).

6.4 The annual assessment of the *implementation* of the entire *Academic Quality Assurance Standards and Guidelines* and of all of its individual components (documents) will be based on the indicators and information mentioned in 6.3. Where appropriate, the Quality Assurance Committee will request further data and reports from relevant stakeholders of ADA University and initiate improvements (if required).

6.5 The Quality Assurance Committee will base its assessment of the *composition* of the *Academic Quality Assurance Standards and Guidelines* on an annual review of international best practices.

6.6 International best practices serve to guide the entire process of quality assurance at ADA University. Based on the review structure delineated in 5.4, and for each *document* (or group of related documents) under discussion, the Quality Assurance Committee will appoint two of its members to identify and report on these practices and to prepare suggestions for improvement. The process of document review will furthermore be based on the quality indicators defined in 6.7 and in the respective quality assurance policy of each area covered by the *Academic Quality Assurance Standards and Guidelines*.

6.7 When reviewing the quality assurance policies and the documents contained in *Section I*, the *Introduction* and the *Appendices*, the process of quality assurance must particularly ensure and demonstrate:

    a. that the purpose, scope and composition of the *Academic Quality Assurance Standards and Guidelines* continue to serve the objectives of promoting the mission of ADA University and of providing an environment of academic excellence.

    b. that ADA University's institutional purposes and its guiding academic principles continue to be aligned with its mission and to serve the interests and needs of students and other relevant stakeholders.

    c. that all quality assurance policies and procedures continue to foster academic quality and excellence at ADA University.

    d. that the quality assurance governance structure is appropriate to achieve these objectives and that the Quality Assurance Committee has a demonstrable record of effective quality improvements.

    e. that the policies and regulations governing the development and modification of academic quality and quality assurance documents adequately reflect proceedings at ADA University and that they are efficient and likely to produce results of high quality.

6.8 Quality indicators and (where required) further quality assurance procedures pertaining to the areas *Academic Program*; *Teaching, Learning and Assessment*; *Research*; *Students*; *Faculty and Staff*; and *Equity and Transparency* are specified in each area's respective quality assurance policy.

6.9 The Quality Assurance Committee can initiate proposals for academic quality and quality assurance document modification.

   a. To this end, the Committee will appoint two of its members, who will develop a draft of the proposed document modification.

   b. The draft of the proposal will be shared with all stakeholders of ADA University that are concerned with the respective academic quality and quality assurance document, all of whom will supply feedback letters on the draft (feedback from Schools will consist of one comprehensive report from each School).

   c. After thorough consideration of all feedback received, and after having finalized the proposal for document modification, the Committee will submit it to the Deans' Council (together with a description of the rationale behind the proposal and all feedback letters received). The Committee must ensure that their proposal fully corresponds to relevant Quality Standards and Quality Guidelines and to the *Document Format Regulations* set forth in the *Academic Quality Assurance Standards and Guidelines*. If applicable, it must also be aligned with related policies, statements or regulations of the University.

   d. At one of its next regular meetings, the Deans' Council will discuss and take a vote on the proposal. Approval by the Deans' Council is granted if the proposal is accepted by the majority of its members.

   e. If approved by the Deans' Council, the proposal (together with the description of the rationale behind the proposal and all feedback letters received) will be placed on the University Senate's agenda, who will discuss and take a vote on the proposal at one of its next regular meetings. Approval by the Senate is granted if the proposal is accepted by a majority as defined in Article 3 of the Senate's By-Laws.

   f. If accepted by the Senate and approved by the Rector, the modification becomes effective at the earliest date possible, and no later than in the academic year following the Senate's approval. It will be updated on the University's website and in the respective handbook(s). An electronic copy of the revised document will be provided to all members of ADA University by the Vice Rector for Institutional Effectiveness and Development.

   g. The Quality Assurance Committee must ensure full and timely implementation of the modified document.

6.10 Procedures for the development and submission of proposals for new and for the suspension of existing academic quality and quality assurance documents initiated by the Quality Assurance Committee are regulated by the policies included in Appendix I of the *Academic Quality Assurance Standards and Guidelines*.

6.11 Procedures for proposed modifications of degree programs or individual courses initiated by the Quality Assurance Committee are regulated by the *Quality Assurance Policy: Academic Program and Learning Outcomes*. Procedures for the development and submission of proposals for a new and for the termination of an existing degree program initiated by the Quality Assurance Committee are regulated by the *Degree Program Development and Modification Policy*.

6.12 The Quality Assurance Committee will annually report to the University Senate. The Committee must particularly demonstrate its effectiveness in assessing and enhancing academic quality at ADA University.

6.13 At the end of each review cycle, the University Senate will initiate a process of external evaluation. This process will focus on the effectiveness of ADA University's system of quality assurance in general and of the Quality Assurance Committee in particular. The Senate will thoroughly consider the results of the external evaluation and initiate improvements wherever appropriate.

7. Student Participation

7.1 The process of quality assurance at ADA University must incorporate the perspective of students.

7.2 The ADA Student Government will elect one of its undergraduate and one of its graduate members to serve on the Quality Assurance Committee. The student representatives will participate in meetings related to (and will have the right to vote on) matters concerning the learning experience of students at ADA University. These include (but are not limited to) the evaluation of teaching, learning and assessment; the assessment, development and modification of programs, curricula and courses; the review of credit and degree regulations and of issues related to student admission and retention.

7.3 The Quality Assurance Committee will thoroughly consider the results from student course evaluations conducted at the end of each semester.

7.4 The Quality Assurance Committee will furthermore ensure that all students of ADA University are regularly made aware of the opportunity to contribute to the process of quality assurance by submitting feedback and suggestions for improvement to the Committee via the ADA Student Government or the Office of Quality Assurance and Accreditation. Student suggestions and feedback may address any issue related to the learning experience of students at the University.

7.5 The Quality Assurance Committee will thoroughly consider feedback from graduates on their learning experiences at ADA University and on potential improvements of its educational offerings (for details, see the University's *Data Management and Reporting Regulations*).