

Quality Assurance Manual



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1. Introduction

INC Strategy sets out the mission, ethos and headline aims of the College. The overarching strategy is supported by three underpinning strategies, for Education, Knowledge Services and Professional Accomplishment.

The key aims INC in relation to the standard of its awards and the quality of provision can be summarized as follows:

- To maintain the standards required in education;
- To ensure an effective learning experience for our students;
- To promote a culture whereby all staff and students can contribute to reflection, evaluation, development and enhancement in the College. In order to achieve our mission, INC has established a quality assurance policy along with quality assurance and enhancement procedures.

2. Institution Mission

INC's mission is to continue to develop as a college of higher education by fostering a learning environment where students, faculty, personnel and stakeholders strive ethically to achieve their goals and fulfil their social responsibilities. We at INC will dedicate all our efforts to providing students personal support to excel academically, professionally and socially for today and the future.

INC's mission is based on seven central components:

- Exceptional Learning Environment
- Faculty and Student Development
- Professional Accomplishment
- Multicultural Integration and Diversity
- Integrity and Civility
- Lifelong Learning
- Corporate Social Responsibility

The INC mission is posted on the College website <http://www.internapa.ac.cy>

3. Institution Philosophy

INC is dedicated to providing educational programs that develop individual abilities, strengthen human relationships, enhance community welfare, and increase consciousness, with diversity as a source of renewal and vitality.

Having academic freedom as a guiding principal, INC's programs are modelled on American and European educational standards, providing students with diverse transfer opportunities. At INC assessment and adaptation is a fundamental tool in achieving educational quality, efficiency and continuous improvement and growth.

The College's strategic goals guide decisions for the future development of the institution:

- INC's major objective is to transmit and create knowledge, pursue truth and honesty, and encourage intellectual and moral development;
- To offer quality programs which integrate liberal arts and science, with professional preparation;
- To achieve the academic purpose through teaching, scholarly activity, analysis, debate, study and service;
- To provide a network of personnel and faculty who are always available to offer support to students experiencing either academic and/or personal issues;

- To prepare students to function effectively in a multicultural environment;
- To develop students' capacity to think, act and behave democratically;
- To select and retain qualified faculty and support their development;
- To support the educational programs through adequate human, physical and financial resources;
- Financial adequacy to support the future growth of the institution;
- To act as incubators of ideas and knowledge transferors and contribute to society and the business community through programs that will support the general development and welfare of Cyprus;
- To be acknowledged as an established accredited tertiary education institution offering a range of academic and vocational programs.

Each program of studies has its own set of purpose and objectives which can be found on the College website.

4. Quality Assurance Policy

To ensure quality is maintained and enhanced INC has developed a policy designed to promote adherence to meet accepted global standards and educational excellence.

This policy supports INC's mission by identifying a set of procedures and policies through the College Internal Quality Assurance Committee as well as through the Departmental Quality Assurance Committee.

The main objectives of the policy are to:

- Develop a culture of quality teaching;
- Monitor and ensure success in teaching through assessment, self-assessment and self-improvement.
- Harmonize the Institution with the local CYQAA regulations and through these European standards and directives;
- Monitor professional development activities;
- Provide opportunities for faculty development and research.

More specifically the quality assurance policy is implemented through both the College Internal Quality Assurance Committee at a college level and Departmental Internal Quality Assurance Committee at a departmental level.

The committees' duties and responsibilities are to:

- Ensure the implementation of quality criteria guidelines set by the College Internal Quality Assurance Committee
- Ensure college policies and procedures ensure a culture of quality assurance in the department
- Provide leadership in preparing school or program self-studies within the department
- Considers and provides direction on structure, content and development of department academic programs
- Prepare strategic analyses of the department or programs of the department
- Prepare financial budgets for department and programs annually as well as for future periods
- Analyse, review and update departmental objectives and that these are aligned with college targets for research, academic and other programs, teaching and faculty
- Analyse, review and update department, faculty and student performance, admissions, administrative and student affair objectives as required for the smooth running and progress of the department
- Provide guidelines on faculty recruitment needs, specifications of required faculty and faculty developmental needs

- Ensure mechanisms for appraisal of faculty teaching effectiveness, scholarship and professional activities, service to the College, community and personal development
- Ensure adequate and sufficient resources to offer academic and other programs and required services of the department
- Ensure active involvement of students in learning process
- Provide leadership, direction and oversees department research activity and output
- Periodically audit departmental quality assurance policies and procedures and take corrective action as appropriate
- Collaborate and provide feedback to College Quality Assurance Committee, regarding departmental performance and activities
- Prepare periodic and annual review of departmental work for approval by the College Quality Assurance Committee

Above all, the Quality Assurance Institution 's policy aims to:

- Support all organizational units, committees and staff members to assume their responsibilities in quality assurance;
- Ensure academic integrity and protect against academic fraud;
- Protect staff and students against injustice and discrimination against them.

5. INC Quality Assurance Framework

INC's Quality Assurance Framework has been adapted from the Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance in the European Higher Education Area (ESG 2015) and from the suggestions and criteria provided by the Cyprus Agency of Quality Assurance and Accreditation in Higher Education (DIPAE).

The Framework sets out the structures, responsibilities, processes and timelines for ensuring that academic programs are fit-for-purpose, viable, and meet national and international standards, and that students have a comparable educational experience regardless of where they study.

5.1 Evaluation of the QA Framework

The Academic Quality Assurance framework is reviewed by the College Internal Quality Assurance Committee on a regular basis to ensure that the Framework is meeting expectations and being implemented effectively.

6. Quality Assurance and Enhancement Procedures.

In order to achieve its mission, INC has established quality assurance and enhancement procedures. Clear understanding and acceptance of these procedures by all staff will ensure that the quality assurance and enhancement system works effectively. The aim is to provide the best possible student experience and to foster quality improvement at all levels.

6.1 Assure Quality of Student Experience

The focus of our quality assurance and enhancement procedures are not solely on maintaining the academic output standard of our programmes. We further aim to assure the quality of the students' experience while they are studying at INC. We recognise that all areas of INC's operations affect (directly or indirectly) the quality of that experience and may ultimately have an impact on student achievement.

6.2 Staff Responsibility

Quality is the responsibility of every member of staff. Everybody has a contribution to make. In order for this approach to be successful, there must be clear lines of responsibility and accountability for each area of operation and adequate support to enable staff to achieve their quality objectives.

6.3 External Involvement in Quality Assurance

We recognise that one important factor in assuring quality involves constant re-examination of our own approach against those of our peers. In this way we can assure ourselves that we are maintaining appropriate standards and also demonstrate accountability to external bodies such as the Cyprus Agency of Quality Assurance and Accreditation in Higher Education.

6.4 Student participation in Quality Assurance

We take into serious account views of our students and we recognise they make a valuable contribution to the assurance and assessment of quality within INC. We are therefore committed to seeking the views of our students and using the feedback that we gain to improve the quality of their experience.

6.5 Transparency

INC has as a basic principle transparency which is enabled through the publicity of decisions of college committees. All the decisions that concern the studies organization, the number of registered students, the logistics infrastructure and the whole of services are taken with students and minutes made available for signature by all members, so that each student or academic is fully informed of decisions concerning them.

7. Quality Management System

The College is ISO certified and has therefore documented and implemented a Quality Management System and aims to continuously improve its effectiveness in accordance with the requirements of the legislation and its stakeholders.

The management of INC has:

- Defined the processes needed for the quality management system;
- Defined criteria and methods required for their effective operation and control;
- Ensured the availability of resources and information necessary for the operation and monitoring of these processes;
- Ensured the monitoring, measurement and analysis of these processes where applicable;
- Implemented the actions necessary to achieve the planned results and to continuously improve these processes.

These processes shall be managed in accordance with the requirements of international quality standards and the applicable legal and regulatory requirements. The College Internal Quality Committee has the responsibility to coordinate, monitor and control the implementation of the system.

7.1 Quality Management System Documentation

The Internal Quality Committee is responsible for establishing and maintaining the quality management system in order to ensure that college services provided are consistent with the established requirements.

The management system documentation includes the following:

7.2 Quality Policy Statement

The Quality Policy contained in this Handbook determines the College's commitment to the quality of the services provided. The disclosure of this policy is part of the induction training of new employees. This policy is posted on the website and displayed in the College.

7.3 Quality Assurance Handbook

The Quality Assurance Handbook, which is the primary reference document for the quality management system, documents college policies, goals and objectives as well as duties and responsibilities to meet the requirements of all stakeholders.

7.4 Handbooks and Manuals

Handbooks and Manuals are documents that define the purpose and scope of activities of a department or service and describe in detail who is responsible and when an activity is being carried out, the materials and equipment required, the documentation required and the control (monitoring and measurement) required, in accordance with the policy and objectives set out in the Quality Assurance Handbook.

7.5 Internal Regulations

Are issued by the top management or department managers and are aimed at guiding the staff in performing specific tasks.

External Documents (Standards, Legislation, Regulations, Good Practice Guides)

All external documents required by the College to ensure effective design, operation and control of process are controlled and form an integral part of the system. Such documents may include, *inter alia*, laws, regulations, standards, international conventions, codes of good practice etc.

Other documentation

Other documents needed by the College to ensure effective design, operation and control of its processes such as forms, job descriptions, and so on.

Records

Records are maintained concerning all operations of the College.

7.6 Control of Records

The College maintains documented control procedures for all documents and data related to the quality management system.

The College Internal Quality Committee ensures that the documents used for the operation of the system have been identified and that they are controlled. It also ensures external documents are identified and that their distribution controlled.

The Heads of the Departments in cooperation with the Internal Quality Committee review and approve system documents, areas of responsibility so as to ensure adequacy and suitability prior to their issue or re-issue. The original document is forwarded to the Internal Quality Committee

which ensures that relevant issues of the applicable documents are available where work is essential to effectively implement the quality management system.

The Internal Quality Committee ensures that obsolete (old) documents held for legal or knowledge-based purposes are removed from all points of issue or use so that they cannot be misused. Such documents are appropriately marked as invalid or obsolete documents.

Changes are specified where possible in the text of the document or in appropriate attachments (e.g., identifying changes and current revision status).

A list of documents specifying the current issue of each document is established and maintained to exclude the use of invalid and / or old documents as well as the distribution of each document to the personnel and department involved. Documents and data may be in any form or type of medium, including paper or computer versions.

7.7 Mechanism for Managing Quality Assurance

INC realizes its responsibility for internal quality assurance, standards and enhancement procedures and for that purpose, a number of mechanisms are in place to evaluate the quality of the program.

Some of those mechanisms are:

- Recruitment of academic staff and teaching personnel qualifications and experience are reviewed by the Program Coordinator, School Head and Rector on their relevance to the program.
- Ensuring quality of the teaching staff, including recruitment criteria, the ways in which teaching efficiency is assessed, improved and rewarded.
- Faculty induction and development are the responsibility of the Rector.
- Faculty are required to complete annually a self-appraisal covering all areas of faculty responsibility: teaching effectiveness based on student evaluation, peer evaluation and self-appraisal, scholarlyness including research, other professional activity including memberships, as well as service to the College and community. The appraisal is then appraised by the Program Coordinator. A similar appraisal process follows for Program Coordinators reporting to the Head of the Department who in turn reports to the Rector.
- Every semester, prepared course outlines, midterms and final exams must first be approved by the Program Coordinator.
- All course portfolios at the end of the semester are approved by the Program Coordinator. These include: course outline, midterm, final exam and set assignments. Program Coordinators also review grade portfolios containing: grade report, grade distribution and attendance lists.
- Students' experience as learners are monitored, as are the improvement of learning opportunities.
- Students provide feedback and evaluate all courses, the faculty members and the administration staff along with the College orientation procedures, administration and infrastructure.
- Data collected from student surveys are statistically analyzed and actions are proposed to improving weak areas.
- Program review on an annual basis is based on a live document, reviewed by each program coordinator and submitted to Departmental Internal Quality Assurance Committee for review before the final approval by the College Internal Quality Assurance Committee.
- The academic levels that are expected to be achieved by the students.
- Regular updating of the assessment criteria to be in line with each learning outcome. Each course has own assessment criteria matched to each learning outcome.

- Quality assurance procedures are timed throughout the year with prompts to ensure the necessary actions that have been taken at the right time.
- There are appropriate records / discussions / quality assurance decisions at the appropriate levels.
- There is consistency between the various sources of information provided to students, in particular manuals, program details and the institution's website.
- An appropriate flow of information takes place between various committees and management.
- Publicly available information on the quality of the programs
- Ensure that the College keeps its ISO certification status (INC is ISO 9001 certified for all the programs it offers since 2015)

7.8 Management Responsibility

Senior management provides evidence of its commitment to developing and implementing the quality management system and to continuously improving its effectiveness through:

- Communicating to staff the importance of meeting the requirements of all stakeholders concerned, as well as legal and regulatory requirements;
- The establishment of quality policy;
- Ensuring that objectives and targets are set for the quality and safety of staff and students;
- Conducting management reviews;
- Ensuring the availability of learning resources.

7.9 Measurable Objectives

The management of INC has set the general quality objectives in the Quality Policy Statement. Taking into account these objectives as well as the process measurement indicators, it sets out specific measurable objectives that are always consistent with the Quality Policy and provide a basic framework for evaluating the performance of the institution, its individual organizational units and processes. Measurable objectives are defined, monitored and reviewed as part of the Management's Quality Management Review.

Measurement indicators include, but are not limited to, the following indicators:

- Number of academic staff / number of students
- Number of supporting personnel / number of students
- Student Employer Percentage
- Student satisfaction
- Satisfaction of employers
- Success exam rates of students
- The quality of the programs at the College is monitored by the College's Internal Quality Committee, which is responsible for the annual and periodic review of each curriculum.

7.10 Design of the Quality Management System

INC management ensures that it:

- Identifies key processes, their sequence and interaction;
- Applies the above mentioned processes and checks them based on predefined criteria;
- Ensures the availability of the learning resources necessary to support, operate and monitor the quality management system processes. Resource adequacy is reviewed in the framework of the quality management system review;

- Monitors, measures and analyses processes through measurement of quality objectives and implements actions to achieve and improve them continuously;
- Maintains the integrity of the system when designing and implementing changes, by providing the necessary resources, informing staff and closely monitoring the effectiveness of each change.

7.11 Responsibilities, Authorities and Communication

Responsibilities and authorities for staff are established, documented and communicated within the College to ensure the effective operation of the quality management system. The responsibilities, accountability and authority of the personnel are set out in the handbooks, procedures, regulations and job descriptions of personnel which are subject to the relevant legislation.

College staff is informed of the College's open policy on departmental and inter-departmental communication issues and the responsibility for stopping any non-compliance identified. In the event of disagreement between the staff, the disagreement will be referred to their immediate supervisor such as the program coordinator or the head of the department.

7.12 Resources

The College Internal Quality Assurance Committee in cooperation with the Departmental Internal Quality Assurance Committee:

- Identify and make available the necessary resources and supervision of staff in order to perform their duties;
- Ensure that the predetermined requirements for the operation of the quality management system are implemented and maintained, including the requirements for the management of human resources;
- Examine and make decisions on issues related to student and other stakeholder demands;
- Ensure that college staff is free from any unjustified internal and external commercial, financial and other pressures and influences that could adversely affect the quality of services provided.

7.13 Internal Communication

The College Internal Quality Committee and the Heads of Departments shall ensure that the necessary information is effectively promoted and communicated, both departmentally and inter-departmentally. Such information may consist of:

- College policies, objectives and targets
- Procedures and work instructions
- Records and data
- Requirements for legislation, etc.

Various methods may be used to communicate the necessary information, such as:

- Documents and records
- Meetings and management reviews
- Education and informational meetings
- Electronic updates
- Written internal memos and announcements, etc.

7.14 Management of Learning Resources

Availability of Resources

INC ensures that adequate and appropriate learning resources are provided that are consistent with European and international standards and/or international practices that are needed to:

- Implement and maintain the quality management system and continuously improve its effectiveness; and
- Increase student satisfaction by fulfilling their requirements.

7.15 Implementation of Services

Design and Implementation of Services

The College plans and develops the processes needed to provide its services to students. The design of the implementation of the services offered is consistent with the requirements of the other management system processes.

When designing the implementation of the services provided, the College defines as appropriate, the following:

- The quality objectives and the requirements for the programmes of study;
- The need to establish processes, documents, and resource allocation;
- The required verification, validation, monitoring and control activities, as well as the criteria and procedures for the admission of students;
- The records needed to provide evidence that the implementation processes meet the requirements.

The results of this design are in a form appropriate to the method of operation of the College.

7.16 Provision of Services

Implementation of Services Provided

INC has established arrangements for these processes, including:

- The criteria for reviewing and approving processes
- The system and student assessment criteria
- The procedure and student admission criteria
- A complaints procedure
- A policy and a process for preventing and dealing with plagiarism
- A curriculum evaluation procedure
- A process to assure the quality of the learning process
- A process of ensuring transparency in decision-making
- A staff assessment process,
- Use of specific methods and processes,
- Record requirements, etc.

The Rector and Head/Program Coordinators of the departments are responsible for the placement of competent and evaluated staff for the provision of the offered services of the College.

All stages of the provision of services that directly or indirectly affect quality have been identified and covered by documented procedures, regulations and work instructions. The correct implementation of the procedures and the work instructions is the responsibility of all staff and the monitoring by the management is continuous.

Every effort has been made to ensure that the documents and forms used are simple and easy to implement.

Measurement, Analysis and Improvement

- INC has established the necessary measurements and indicators in order to:
- Demonstrate that its services comply with the established requirements;
- Ensure that the Quality Management System is always up to date and designed to meet the needs and expectations of students as well as the legislation requirements;
- Ensure that the effectiveness of the Quality Management System is continuously improving.

7.17 Monitoring and Measurement

Measuring Students Satisfaction

INC collects information regarding the satisfaction of its students so that it continuously improves the quality of the curricula it provides and adapts the Quality Management System according to their changing needs.

The information is recorded in questionnaires, which are distributed to students following the completion of each course (including internship), in accordance with the provisions of the Cyprus Agency of Quality Assurance and Accreditation in Higher Education. In addition, to ensure the satisfaction of the students, the institution has established a complaints management process, through which it manages all complaints from its students.

Measuring the Performance of the Quality Management System.

In order to systematically check the compliance of the quality management system, internal audits are carried out by the College Internal Quality Committee at planned intervals. These audits ensure the correct implementation of the system and identify possible weaknesses so that it can be continually improved.

The frequency of audits is determined taking into account the status and importance of the processes and areas to be audited, as well as the results of previous audits. Irrespective of this, every aspect of the management system is inspected at least once a year.

Internal audits are carried out by appropriately trained personnel, independent of the activity being audited, in accordance with the documented procedures.

The results of the audits are recorded and communicated by the College Internal Quality Committee to the College Administrative Committee and staff directly responsible for the review of the quality management system and the implementation of appropriate corrective and preventive actions. The implementation and effectiveness of corrective and preventive actions is verified and recorded in the framework of surveillance audits. The institution maintains a documented procedure for conducting internal audits.

Control of Quality of Services Provided

During the course of implementation of the study at the College, the student, through the regular completion of satisfaction questionnaires per course, enables the management of INC to check the quality of the curricula provided at regular intervals.

7.18 Integrity

Management of Student Property and Personal Data

The College receives from students' personal data and other data used to ensure traceability and to enable the provision of College services such as, but not limited to, registration documents, medical examination certificates, dissertations, etc.

In this case, data and documents provided by the student are checked to ensure their suitability and correctness, as well as the adequacy of the data for the execution of the requested task. If problems are identified, the student is promptly informed to take the appropriate corrective actions.

Any documents and data received by the College from the student are recorded in box files or electronic records and are kept safely, as provided by college procedures and legislation

The personal data of college students are not disclosed to third parties and are in no way publicized or in any way exploited. This information is only used to the extent that it is strictly necessary for the College to fulfil the terms and conditions of services provided.

The College ensures by appropriate measures the exclusion of loss, damage or destruction of data and property of students placed under its custody or possession. In the event of material or data being destroyed or forfeited under the responsibility of the College or communicated without the consent of the person concerned, the management, through its competent bodies, shall inform the person concerned and arrange for compensation for any damage that may have been caused.

In addition, the College, through the operation of the library and in particular the lending process, also manages the material of other libraries.

Handling, Storage, Preservation and Delivery

All data relating to the service provided by the College to its students and directly related to each student's course (e.g. grades) are managed and maintained safely, both in databases, as well as physical records, and before they are delivered to the students, the necessary checks are carried out according to the processes included in the quality management system.

Directors and heads of departments ensure that the above practices are followed by all personnel in their area of responsibility. All college staff follows the rules and best practices for handling and safe retention of data in the implementation of processes.

The methodology, responsibilities and documents required are covered in more detail in documented handbooks, regulations, procedures and guides.