Quality Assurance Framework (QAF)$^1$

To facilitate the reading of this document, the male gender is used to designate persons and functions regardless of gender.

In the case of conflicting meanings between language versions, the Italian version prevails.
1 Objectives of the QAF

The QAF defines the structure and organisation of the Quality Assurance System (QAS), in accordance with the Quality Policy and Strategy (QPS).

**Structure** describes the basic criteria that the QAS provides for the continuous improvement of key processes with regard to the setting of the SUPSI Quality Handbook (SUPSI QH) and its variants for affiliated schools (AS):

- Accademia Teatro Dimitri Quality Handbook – ATD QH
- Conservatorio della Svizzera italiana, University of Music Quality Handbook – CSI-SUM QH
- Fernfachhochschule Schweiz Quality Handbook – FFHS QH
- SUPSI Landquart Quality Handbook – SUPSI LANDQUART QH.

At the same time, it describes how to manage the reference documentation, including the reports on the continuous development of the QAS.

**Organisation** describes the *Matrix of competences and responsibilities in quality*, with the detail of the responsibilities of all the bodies involved in the QAS management.
2 Structure

The QAF is based on known quality-assurance methods, such as:
- the modelling of our organisation through a set of selected key processes,
- the development of the quality of the entire institution through the adoption of a continuous improvement cycle (PDCA or Deming cycle) in four phases for each individual process:
  1) definition and approval (Plan)
  2) execution (Do)
  3) self-assessment (Check)
  4) improvement (Act)
- the periodic external assessment (Check) through a critical comparison of quality assurance methods with external peers.

The QAF consists of the following key interlinked processes, divided into 4 operating contexts. An AS may include an additional process to the key processes identified if they are considered relevant to its quality. The processes are linked to the quality standards applicable to institutional accreditation and implement the requirements of the Federal Act on the Funding and Coordination of the Higher Education Sector (Higher Education Funding and Coordination, HEdA).

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2 The Deming cycle (or PDCA cycle, Plan – Do – Check – Act) is a model used for the control and continuous improvement of quality, processes and products. The model, theorized by W. E. Deming, is based on four phases (P-D-C-A) and serves to promote a culture of quality aimed at continuous improvement of processes and optimal use of resources.
## Operating context

1. **Strategy**

   - P1 – Strategy

2. **Institutional mandates:**
   - *education, research and service performance*
   - P2 – Evaluation of study programmes
   - P3 – Student learning experience
   - P4 – Student evaluation of teaching
   - P5 – Development of teachers’ pedagogical and teaching skills
   - P6 – Continuous training management system
   - P7 – Research projects and provision of services
   - P8 – Evaluation of research and service units
   - P9 – Intellectual Property

3. **Governance and management**
   - P10 – Participation
   - P11 – Definition of regulations
   - P12 – Indicators
   - P13 – Equal opportunities
   - P14 – Risk management
   - P15 – Internal audit

4. **Resources and stakeholders**
   - P16 – Employees
   - P17 – Finance and controlling
   - P18 – Information technology management
   - P19 – Real Estate and Facility Management
   - P20 – Student and employee Mobility
   - P21 – Student life cycle basic training
   - P22 – Organisational communication

In order to take account of the specificities of the AS, the QAF provides for the SUPSI QH with a specific variant for each AS. These variants describe the distinctive features and the consequent level of compliance with the SUPSI QH, in line with the affiliation contracts that govern the relationships of the AS within SUPSI. Each process is described in the own QH with a uniform structure.

In order to ensure adequate reporting on the ongoing development of the QAS, the following periodic reports are required:
- the *Self-assessment report (SAR)*, to be prepared every 7 years as part of the institutional accreditation process,
- the *Four-year report on the QAS*, integrated into the process of SUPSI's Four-year Strategy, to ensure full consistency between it and the Quality Strategy,
- the *Two-yearly report on the QAS*, halfway through the four-year period.

The specific reporting of each key process is to be considered as an integral part of the process itself and is outlined in the QHs.

QAS reference documents are archived and managed centrally via an appropriate document repository (Docuware®). The criteria and procedures for managing the documentation are set out in the QHs.
3 Organisation

The tasks and responsibilities in the area of quality are consistent with the general organisation of SUPSI as defined in the SUPSI by-laws and are spread over several levels. The organisation with the tasks and responsibilities are schematically represented in the Matrix of competences and responsibilities in quality, whose approval and management is the responsibility of the General Director, in collaboration with the members of the SUPSI management.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Quality Coordination Commission</th>
<th>DACD QC DACD</th>
<th>DEASS QC DEASS</th>
<th>DFA QC DFA</th>
<th>DTI QC DTI</th>
<th>ATD QC ATD</th>
<th>CSI-SUM QC SUM</th>
<th>FFHS QC FFHS</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>P1 - Strategy PM₁</td>
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<td>P2 - Evaluation of study programmes PM₂</td>
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</tbody>
</table>
| The names version of the Matrix of competences and responsibilities in quality is constantly updated and available for all collaborators.

The supervision and coordination of the QAS are guaranteed globally by the Quality Coordination Commission (QCC), managed by the General Director and brings together all the process managers (PMs) and the representatives of the Quality Service (QS).

At the Department (DEP) / AS level, the supervision, coordination and involvement of the stakeholders (collaborators, students and alumni) are guaranteed by the Quality Commission (QC), managed by the Director of the DEP / AS and formed by the Process coordinators of the specific unit.

The priority tasks of the instances involved in the QMS are described below.

3.1 Strategic tasks

The following strategic tasks fall within the remit of the SUPSI Board and the Boards of AS. For the latter, the tasks refer to the area of competence of the AS.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Task</th>
<th>SUPSI Board*</th>
<th>AS Board</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Approve the QPS, in line with the SUPSI four-year strategy.</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>-</td>
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<tr>
<td>Approve the QAF, as recommended by the SUPSI management.*</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>-</td>
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<tr>
<td>Support the measures proposed by the SUPSI management aimed at the development of a culture of quality.</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
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<tr>
<td>Approve, upon proposal by the management, the level of harmonisation for Affiliated Schools, based on affiliation contracts.</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
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<tr>
<td>Approve the SAR and the position statement following the AAQ accreditation proposal.</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
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</tbody>
</table>
Approve the improvement measures implemented as a result of the decision of the Swiss Accreditation Council. | X | X |
Approve measures of its own competence following external evaluation reports with external peers. | X | – |
Approve the two-yearly report and the four-yearly report on the QAS with the related action plan. | X | X |

*The SUPSI Board may delegate some of its tasks to the Management and Governance Commission.*

### 3.2 Operational tasks

#### 3.2.1 General Director

The General Director:
- is responsible for the implementation of the QAS in all its aspects,
- presides over the work of the SUPSI management and the QCC,
- is responsible for the management of the *Matrix of competences and responsibilities in quality*, in collaboration with the members of the SUPSI management,
- is responsible for implementing the measures to ensure the resolution of any non-conformities highlighted in the management of the QMS,
- is responsible for categorizing the processes with respect to the SUPSI QH in accordance with the affiliation contracts
- is responsible for approving the inclusion or exclusion of a sub-process in the QAS,
- stimulates the development of internal communication on the QAS, which is the responsibility of the specific PR.

In order to carry out these tasks, the General Director is supported by the Quality Service.

#### 3.2.2 SUPSI Management

The SUPSI Management:
- supports the General Director in the implementation of the QAS,
- proposes to the SUPSI Board the level of harmonisation for Affiliated Schools based on the affiliation contracts,
- gives notice of periodic reports for approval by the SUPSI Board,
- approves the contents of the QHs and resolves any differences in their application within the units,
- implements any improvement measures adopted by the SUPSI Board, also in the wake of the Swiss Accreditation Council’s decision,
- actively supports internal communication on the QAS.

The AS directors approve the contents of the QH of their AS and chair their respective Quality Commissions (QC). The DEP directors chair their respective QC. The Directors of mandate, the Administrative Director and the Head of the General management services are members of the QCC.

#### 3.2.3 Quality Coordination Commission and Quality Commission

They are the coordinating bodies, respectively:
- the QCC, at the system level that integrates the Process Managers (PM) and the Quality Service,
- the QC, at DEP/AS level, which includes all the Process Coordinators of the respective units (PC).
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Task</th>
<th>QCC</th>
<th>QC</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Coordinates and harmonises QAS processes to ensure an overall view.</td>
<td>x</td>
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<tr>
<td>Defines the criteria for the management of individual processes and their networks, ensuring its implementation through the PMs.</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Responsible for preparing the two-yearly and four-yearly reports on the QAS, adequately involving those engaged in the respective processes.</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>-</td>
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<tr>
<td>Defines the criteria for the QAS's document management and ensures that it is processed by the PM.</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>-</td>
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<tr>
<td>Proposes and keeps updated the methods and instruments adopted by the QAS.</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>x</td>
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<tr>
<td>Highlights non-conformities in the application of QAS.</td>
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<td>x</td>
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<tr>
<td>Monitors the actions of continuous quality improvement.</td>
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<td>x</td>
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<tr>
<td>Coordinates the internal communication of the QAS.</td>
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<td>x</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

PMs, in addition to the tasks under the QCC, are responsible for developing and implementing quality on the basis of that defined in the QAS. They are required to regularly inform the General Director of the implementation of their process and eventual non-conformities, and make use of the active support of the UPCs, in compliance with the affiliation contracts with regard to the AS.

### 3.2.4 Quality Service

The Quality Service ensures the following tasks:
- supports the General Director in the performance of his/her duties,
- ensures the form and harmonisation of the QH content,
- collaborates with the PM in the definition of processes and related improvement aspects,
- is responsible for the management of the QAS documentation, in close collaboration with the PM,
- ensures quality control,
- coordinates the QCC meetings,
- collaborates on internal QAS communication.

### 3.2.5 Employees, students, and Alumni

Employees, students and Alumni are regularly involved in the different QAS practices. In particular, they actively participate according to the P10 - Participation process, in the following areas:
- the relevant colleges, when they are consulted on quality issues,
- the procedures that are described in the individual QAS processes,
- meetings for the preparation of the SAR within the context of institutional accreditation.

Consistent with the provisions of the Charter of participation, the Ethical Code and the SUPSI Educational Agreement, employees and students are aware of their individual responsibility for the effective adoption of the principles and operating procedures of all QAS processes.

### 3.2.6 External peers

The QAS with its framework is open to comparison with peers from other schools or experts who are regularly involved in the process analysis, as described in the QH.
Version 0 approved on April 2, 2019 by the SUPSI Management and Governance Commission, as delegated by the SUPSI Board.

Version 1 approved on November 26, 2019 by the SUPSI Management and Governance Commission.

Version 2 approved on February 19, 2020 by the SUPSI Management and Governance Commission.

Version 3 approved on May 26, 2020 by the SUPSI Management and Governance Commission.