

Quality Assurance Policy of the study program

The ABF Department adheres to the Cyprus University of Technology Quality Assurance Policy. CUT is dedicated to excellence in order to be established in the international academic and scientific environment as a pioneering center of excellence in research and teaching, continuously contributing to social progress and culture. The Quality Assurance Policy (QAP) of the Cyprus University of Technology is an integral part of its strategic plan, governs the mission and vision of the University to ensure and reinforce over time:

- Excellence in learning and teaching
- The development of innovation and research
- Internationalization
- Economic empowerment and sustainability
- The excellence of staff and effective administrative organization.

The CUT's Quality Assurance policy adopts the following pillars of action:

1. The continuous review, revision and improvement of CUT Study programs incorporating new demands and technology innovations to the curriculum.
2. The enhancement of the learning outcomes by designing and improving the programs of study offered.
3. The improvement of student performance.
4. The reduction of the percentage of students that abandon or delay to finish their studies.
5. The support of research work undertaken by CUT research staff and students.
6. The improvement of the rank of the CUT in the European and International Academic Rankings.
7. The constant improvement of the teaching and working environment at CUT.
8. The constant improvement of the teaching and student facilities at CUT.
9. The development and enhancement of intra-departmental joint study programs as well as the cooperation with Cypriot and International Universities in offering joint programs.
10. The publication and announcement of the teaching and research work performed in the Departments of the University in the Cypriot community.
11. The continuous development of the working environment facilitating the attraction of high-quality academic (teaching and research staff) staff.
12. The use of alternative sources of funding such as the participation to international programs, self-funded study programs and available grants.
13. The continuous organization and implementation of actions leading to direct and indirect support of financially disadvantaged social groups.
14. The continuous involvement of the alumni network and use of their social reach towards implementing the CUT academic aims and social responsibility.

The Quality Assurance System evaluation tools/criteria are categorized as internal and external. The Internal Quality Assurance evaluation tools for the most important functions/activities of the University are given below:

Activity 1: Evaluation of Teaching and Research Staff

- Evaluation processes for the recruitment and career advancement of Academic staff.
- Annual or biannual Research Report.
- Evaluation and report for a Sabbatical leave.
- Instructors' assessment by students.
- Evaluation and review of internal research programs.

- Code of Ethics for Research.

Activity 2: Evaluation of the current/established curricula or establishment of new Faculties

- Participation of Advisory committees in the establishment and development of new Departments and Faculties.
- Procedure for development of new curricula.
- Review procedure for established curricula.
- Self-Assessment of the Department.

An important pillar of the Quality Assurance Policy at CUT is the quality assurance of the program of studies through continuous improvement and upgrading. Academic experts from other universities and institutions are involved in the design and redesign of the curricula.

Employers, professional associations, civil society, specific population groups, CUT graduates, external lecturers (e.g. visitors) are consulted in the curriculum design for improvements in the design of courses based on the needs of international and Cypriot market (industry, services, etc.) and the labor market. Periodically (every 3-4 years) the content of the curricula is evaluated.

During the revision of the program of study: 1) the current and future needs of Cyprus economy, society and stakeholders (e.g. industries, institutes, public sector, etc.) are considered following a survey or communication with stakeholders, 2) If necessary, courses are updated in order to conform with developments in technology and science, and 3) the adequacy of elective courses is evaluated.

Any significant changes to the curricula are submitted to the Council of each Department, approved by the Senate Committee of Undergraduate and Postgraduate Studies and the Internal Quality Committee, and are approved by the Senate. All new and existing curricula are submitted to the Cyprus Agency of Quality Assurance and Accreditation in Higher Education (CYQAA) for evaluation and accreditation, after being approved by the Strategic Planning and Development Committee, the Undergraduate and Postgraduate Studies Committee and the Internal Quality Committee, and approved by the Senate and the Council.

In addition to the CUT quality assurance policy, the ABF Department in particular implements a number of additional actions / measures to ensure the quality of its program of study. Since the establishment of ABF, the Undergraduate and Postgraduate Studies Committee has been dealing with issues related to the quality and improvement of the curriculum in order to provide students with the required background determined by market needs. Recently, a three-member Quality Assurance Committee has been set up in the Department, with a student representative, according to the relevant rules of the CYQAA.

Quality indicators for Programmes of Studies:

The quality indicators of the programs of study offered by the Department that are taken into account for the internal evaluation by the Departmental Council are:

- Satisfaction of students from curriculum (questionnaires)
- Satisfaction of students by teachers (questionnaires)
- Candidate (prospective student) level of interest in the programme (number of applications)
- Ratio of Academic staff in relation to the number of students
- Average Graduation Time
- Percentage of students who graduated in a normal period per curriculum
- Number of students who failed to graduate

- Prospective employer opinion about the adequacy of the programme of study to prepare graduates for the job market.

The quality of the program of study is ensured in the following ways:

a) Development and explicit disclosure of learning objectives:

- The Department fully complies with the provisions of the ECTS system and has procedures to evaluate their implementation
- Course diagrams include the objectives and learning outcomes that are communicated to students at the beginning of each academic semester.
- The lesson / academic evaluation questionnaire is completed at the end of the courses, before the students start their final exams, and includes at least one question about achieving these learning objectives.

b) Particular attention to the design, monitoring, review and approval of the program of studies

- The Department has mechanisms for periodic evaluation (every 3-4 years) of the curriculum content (e.g. comparison of courses and course content to avoid excessive overlap).
- To design or amend the program of study consultation is obtained by employers, professional associations, the Council of Agriculturalists, which is the official body for granting a license to practice the profession of agronomist, as well as special groups, graduates, external lecturers (e.g. visitors). Improvements in courses are based on the needs of the international and Cypriot market (industry, services, etc.).
- Curriculum design and redesign is provided with feedback from academic experts from other universities and institutions abroad.
- The curriculum, courses and content are comparable to the curricula of other universities abroad, and cannot be compared with a corresponding Department in Cyprus, since there is no other Agricultural University in the country.
- Any major changes to the program of study require approval by the Undergraduate and Postgraduate Studies Committee, the Quality Assurance Committee, the Departmental Council, the Senate Study Committee, and the University Quality Committee prior to being submitted to the CYQAA body.

c) Provision of appropriate learning resources and infrastructure

- The Department has fully equipped laboratories for carrying out the laboratory courses included in the curriculum. At the same time, the university allocates to the Department funding for the purchase of consumables for the laboratory exercises. In addition, the Department has a greenhouse for the practical training of the students as well as an Experimental Farm, which has been recently allocated to the Department and is in a development process aiming to cover training practical needs of the Curriculum.
- The Department has established a procedure for promoting requests for continuous upgrading and maintenance of the laboratories and equipment and for the smooth and continuous access of students to the laboratories.
- The University has designated rooms for group and individual study, a library, learning and research areas. The Department periodically evaluates the adequacy and appropriateness of these sites and informs the responsible authorities of the University for further actions required.

d) Monitoring of the progress and achievements of students and graduates

- The Department implements and upgrades the monitoring of student progress. At least once a year, the Council of each Department holds a discussion on student performance / progress on how to improve and solve problems that arise.
- The Department has access to the academic history and progress of each student.
- The Department, in collaboration with the Career Office, monitors and records the professional development of graduates, i.e. the absorption in the labor market, on an organized and systematic basis (industry, academic institutions, governmental and semi-governmental organizations, etc.). This could be enhanced by collecting data from employers through questionnaires and interviews.

e) The Department has procedures for student participation in quality assurance.

- The Department has an internal Quality Assurance Committee with the participation of students.
- According to CUT policy, all students have to fill in questionnaires evaluating the content, structure and resources for each course, plus the teaching abilities and efficiency of the faculty members and hired external staff. Evaluation results are provided to each Faculty member for all courses they teach and are also given to the Head of the Department. Evaluation scores are also considered during assessments of the Faculty members for their promotion.
- The Department has established procedures for recording graduates' views on the effectiveness of the program of study (e.g. interviews, focus groups, questionnaires).
- Student representatives bring their issues at the monthly Council Committee meetings. The Studies and Quality Assurance Committees examine the information provided by the students for improvement purposes while the Head of the Department discusses any serious teaching and learning concerns of the students with staff members.
- The coordinators of each Program of Study get oral and/or written assessments and suggestions from the students every year for the curricula of ABF. Any problems and/or suggestions for improvements are taken into consideration for upcoming revisions of the curricula (approximately every three to four years) in close collaboration with the relevant stakeholders, including the Agricultural Registry Council, which is the official body for checking the eligibility of graduates to work as professional in Agriculture and providing the respective official license for all three specialization of each direction, including Food Science and Technology.
- Complementary to the above, the learning process of ABF Department is ensured with the use of a range of assessment forms including exams (mid-term and final), presentations, coursework and practical skills. At least two assessment methods must be used for each course, with a mandatory final exam representing a maximum of 60% of the course grade. All course outlines are being provided to the students at the beginning of the semester in the Course Syllabus that includes the following sections: (1) Instructor(s), (2) Aim and scopes of the course, (3) Detailed lecture program, (4) Learning aims, (5) Learning Outcomes, (6) Course grading methods (7) Bibliographic sources and (8) Contact hours.
- The University has a process whereby any teaching staff should be excluded from main duties when there are strong family, personal, psychological and other reasons.

f) Learning resources and other support mechanisms accessible to students.

- The Department ensures, in collaboration with IT services, that information technology laboratories are equipped with all databases and software for the purposes of most courses. There is also a person in charge of databases and related software to help students in whatever they need.

- The laboratories of the Department are accessible to undergraduate students under supervision for safety and health reasons. There are also arrangements for unobstructed access to university facilities for people with disabilities.
- Course materials are published electronically on the University's online learning platform (Moodle), so that all information and lecture material for each course (including the course outline and literature / bibliography) are accessible by all students.
- At the 1st semester of their studies, all students are assigned a tutor, who is a member of the Academic Staff of the Department (Faculty Member or Special Teaching Staff). There is particular emphasis on proper academic counseling, as it allows the exchange of information between students and teachers to help students achieve their learning objectives and their further career goals. In addition to the ongoing and meaningful academic supervision of students, academic advisors help students to choose courses and understand the impact of their choices. When necessary, students are suggested alternative courses of the curriculum according to their impact on prospects for employment and / or further studies.

The teaching and learning environment promoted by the Department includes the combination of formal lectures, tutorials, laboratory (computer) practice, seminars, lectures by invited speakers and hands on laboratory exercises. The Department applies the principles of continuous assessment of students as faculty members are encouraged to use a variety of student assessment methods and this is evident by the course syllabus that each faculty member submits to students and the Department at the beginning of each semester. In addition, during their bachelor dissertation each student is guided by his/her academic supervisor on the following topics:

- Bibliographic review of a topic
- Learning lab techniques or field research techniques
- Data processing and analysis
- Presentation of data
- Writing of dissertation

At the same time, the Department's program of study invests in strengthening the interconnection with the industry on the basis of three key pillars:

- Students conduct summer internships in private / public bodies / companies in order to connect students with the business world and enhance students' practical training to acquire skills and know-how in real work environments. The Department encourages students to do Internships abroad, using the ERASMUS mobility system. The internship rules and the specific internship forms are listed in Annex 5.
- Holding meetings with representatives of the Agricultural Registry Council mainly composed of members from the Agricultural business world, which is the official body for checking eligibility and provide official license for the profession of Agriculturists.
- Monitoring and strengthening the relations with the graduates of the Program through the organization of seminars and events on the prospects of employing the graduates of the Department.