



QUALITY POLICY

OF THE VENLO UNIVERSITY B.V.

2018

QUALITY POLICY

- **What does quality mean to VU**

Quality is a **priority value** of VU. There is a statement on the university's website that **VU's objective is** to "*Achieve high quality of education for students with scientific knowledge, applicable skills and professional competences*".

The major quality regulator in the university is *the System for education quality assessment and maintenance (SEQAM) of the academic staff* – a legal act being considered a university standard. It sets out both quality assessment and maintenance.

- **Academic standards**

Quality is understood as *multidimensional set of properties and features of the object (discipline academic standard, discipline, lecturer) which allow it to meet predefined or presumed **requirements** thereto*.

Requirements are contained in academic standards which can be amended according to specific procedure. The quantitative assessment of the quality measures the extent to which it meets the defined requirements, i.e. the academic standards as reference of the assessment unit.

Academic standards are adopted in relation to:

- **Bachelors and masters** of VU. They substantiate the requirements of the National Qualification Framework and translate them to the territory of the university and the professional line;
- **Disciplines**. In addition to the discipline academic standard, they contain a number of other requirements (to lecturers, to facilities, to interaction with students, to external examination, to anonymity of written examination, etc.) and define the formulas used to calculate the final mark for the discipline. For each discipline, knowledge, skills and competences are defined in such way that in aggregate all the elements of the curriculum achieve the academic standards for the respective education and qualification degree (EQD).
- **The standard** also defines **the numerical marks** (excellent, very good, good and fair) for each disciplines, thus limiting the assessors' subjectivism.
- **Philosophy for achieving quality**

Motivation for quality.

In addition to material, information and organisational prerequisites, **stakeholders** (students, lecturers, administration) **should be motivated** to achieve quality – everyone in their own field of action.

In most cases, the internal motivation to this effect is not sufficient, and traditional **administrative and disciplinary measures**, especially in non-state university, “do not work” effectively. It is assumed that motivations can be invoked mainly through **financial incentives**. Therefore, the University implements

common policy to provide financial incentives for the quality of **lecturers’** work and for the quality of **students’** education.

Based on this philosophy, quality is “organically woven” in the University’s finances. Quality should be paid for – through the remuneration of **lecturers** and through adjustment of **students’** tuition fees.

Assessment.

In order to encourage the quality carrier (student, lecturer, director), their achievements should be **assessed according to quality scales** ensuring equivalent remuneration to provide incentives.

However, assessments **may and should be** trusted if they are adequate, objective, fair, scientifically justified. Thus, we reach to the conclusion that quality is related to **assessment adequacy**. In its turn, adequacy requires more sophisticated and precise methods. And in the age of advanced information technologies this is an issue that can be easily solved. When adequate quantitative assessments for quality are achieved they may be based on equivalent financial benefits. This means, **the quantity of work and the quality of results are paid for.**

- **Lecturers.**

Main components of lecturer’s remuneration

Lecturer’s remuneration (see *Ordinance on the formation of salary of lecturers*) depends on:

- **Quality** of results measured on annual basis according to 100-point’s scale of SEQAM.
Mechanism:
 - **Academic standards** and related requirements to the assessed are defined. ○ Criteria, methods, rules and assessment scales are defined and applied.
 - Then
 - **expert**
 - **multi-factor (multi-criteria)**

- multi-subject
- quantitative

assessment is made taking in consideration *the different weight* of criteria and *the different awareness and competence* in terms of each indicator of the assessors – students, professional organisations, consumers and employers.

- **Academic load** during the current academic year measured in academic hours (self-load hours). The standard comprises three components with minimum admissible values for each of them:
 1. Academic load;
 2. Scientific achievements;
 3. Activities for the development and strengthening of the university's position.

Thus, each lecturer wants to teach, to make science and to work for the university.

3. **The assessment of the lecturer during the statutory attestation** (article 57 of the Higher Education Act), which is made every 5 years (3 years for non-habilitated lecturers, respectively).
This assessment is also a quantitative assessment but has “background” effect.
4. Acquired scientific and professional qualification evaluated mainly on the basis of **scientific () and academic degrees** (with base salary for each degree).

Formula

The salary of a lecturer to be approved by the president is personal and is calculated with a formula containing the following 5 variables:

The formula itself (as a concealed function) and the values of the coefficients it contains define the policy of the university management.

- **Students**

Approach for financial incentives for quality

In addition to traditional motivation means, such as scholarships, prizes, Erasmus – mobility, etc., VU applies **regular (systematic) financial incentives**.

What do they comprise?

To study, students pay tuition fees several times higher than those in state universities, which ensure the University's support as it does not receive state subsidies. The quality of students' education is measured with their result from the previous academic year. Depending on their result,

they pay a tuition fee **decreasing according to a scale**, and the tuition of excellent students is free of charge.

Annual result = measure for the quality of education?

As the numerical value of the study result becomes financial incentive, marks (here again!) should be **objectified, adequate to knowledge and applicable skills**. Otherwise, false “quality” may be encouraged, and the University’s finances may be lost.

How to achieve adequacy and objectiveness of marks for the result?

- The examination does not cover only knowledge, attitudes and values, **but also the skills to apply the knowledge in practice**, which make the marks adequate to the student’s preparedness for independent and team work in the profession (if possible, close to the actual working environment).

- External assessment at every semester examination of every student.

- The result is calculated as weighted arithmetic mean of all marks obtained by the student during the previous academic year, whereas taking in consideration the number of credits for the respective discipline (its weight to the curriculum).

Weight coefficients are the credit points of disciplines as per the curriculum, i.e. the formula for the average annual mark is applied:

where disciplines $1, 2, \dots, n$ of the curriculum are with the credit points, and respectively the marks awarded for each of them are.

- **Final mark m** , which determines the financial incentive for the student, defines the extent to which the respective student has achieved the study goal defined in VU’s academic standard.

It is calculated on the basis of three components:

- The mark for the student’s activity and performance during the semester (open). Here it is assumed that the profoundness and the persistence of knowledge, skills and competences depend on the way they are acquired. Their rhythmic, methodological and

gradual (and not session- or campaign-like) studying provides sustainable knowledge.

- The anonymous mark of the university discipline main lecturer over the semester examination material;
- The anonymous mark of external (foreign, from another university, from the business) examiner (nominated by the Academic Council) over the semester examination material;

The formula that considers these marks is:

where the weight of each of the three marks is defined in the academic standard of the relevant discipline.

6. Quality maintenance

As the SEQAM system not only assesses but also maintains quality, it contains requirements that are tested during the assessment of lecturers and disciplines. These requirements are contained in the criteria and indicators themselves, for example:

- Harmonisation of taught study content and requirements for knowledge and skills with partner universities.
- Advanced teaching methods and means, including interactive methods, discussions, team work, teaching peer-learning, active involvement of the student in the study process.
- Establishment of required qualities and (except for the special ones) generally transferrable knowledge (soft), skills and applicable key competences.
- Electronic support for the students and online study with most advanced forms and means of ICT.

SUMMARY

It should be noted that the quality has motivated VU to establish complete **governance complex based on the legal documents** and has “penetrated” into each of them. This complex consists of: admission of students, study process management, examinations, assessment and incentives for students, motivation and active involvement of students in the study process, student mobility (in particular, one semester in a foreign university), attestation and development of the academic staff, formation of lecturers’ sales depending on the quality they produce.

Study quality is guaranteed by:

1. **Study content**, which:

- corresponds to EQF and NQF;
- is **harmonised** with European partners and universities, in particular the university that admits EUP students for one semester.

1. **Academic standards** on the requirements to knowledge, skills and competences upon completion of the respective education and qualification degree (EQD), on the disciplines, as well as **standards on numerical marks** (excellent, very good, good and fair), which limit the assessors' subjectivism.
2. Advanced **teaching methods and means**, including interactive methods, discussions, team work, teaching peer-learning, active involvement of the student in the study process.
3. **The involvement of scientists and lecturers from foreign universities** in the regular study process, such as academic partners, including by video conferences.
4. Encouraging **the study process during the semester**, the rhythm of mastering the materials and the activity of the students.
5. Anonymous assessment by two lecturers, the one being the discipline main lecturer from the university, and the other one – **an external** (foreign, from another university, from the business) examiner.
6. Calculating the **final mark with a formula comprising the three marks** – from the semester (open) and of the two examiners (anonymous).
7. **Financial incentives for the quality of lecturers' work and the quality of students' education**, being measured on the basis of their study results.