

QUALITY ENHANCEMENT COMMITTEE ANNUAL REPORT

May 2023 - April 2024

Approved at the meeting held on 23 July 2024

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1. Preamble

According to the provisions of the "Regulations for the Operation of the Quality Enhancement Committee", Article 4, paragraph 3, the Quality Enhancement Committee (QEC) – referred to as "Presidio della Qualità" or PQ in Italian – of the IMT School (hereinafter also referred to as the "School") *produces an Annual Report on the accounting and planning of the activities for the following year. The Report is sent to the School's Director (now Rector), to the Academic Senate, to the Board of Governors, to the Assessment Board (AB) and to the Joint Students and Teachers Board (JSTB) and published on the institutional website.*

Continuing the practice of prior years, this Report refers to the period between May 2023 and April 2024. However, for the sake of completeness, references to the activities carried out in the months of May and June 2024 are also provided, which will be presented in detail in the next Report.

The Report is published on the School's institutional website, in the [Quality@IMT](#) section.

1.1. Membership of the Quality Enhancement Committee

The QEC was established for the 2021-2024 three-year period with the Director's Decree¹ no. 11733(364).II.19.14.12.21. The membership was subsequently modified with the Rector's Decree no. 10572(334).II.19.26.08.22 and no. 05473(155).II.19.06.04.23.

The members in office at the time of drafting this Report are:

- Prof. Massimo Riccaboni, Full Professor, serving as President;
- Prof. Ennio Bilancini, Full Professor;
- Prof. Andrea Averardi, Associate Professor;
- Prof. Mario Zanon, Associate Professor;
- Andrea Mola, Temporary researcher (Law 240/2010, Article 24, paragraph 3, letter b);
- Alice Bertolini, student in the XXXVIII PhD Program cycle;
- Valentina Calvi, Technical and administrative staff;
- Caterina Tangheroni, Technical and administrative staff.

1.2. Purpose of the Annual Report

¹ Following the statutory amendment published in the Official Journal of the Italian Republic - General Series - no. 105 of 6 May 2022, the naming of the School's Bodies and members has been aligned with the provisions of Article 2 of Law no. 240 of 30 December 2010 and the legislation in force on the matter.

The Report, drawn up annually by the QEC, aims to monitor and report on the activities carried out within the School's Quality Assurance (QA) system, verify the degree of implementation of actions to support quality and share the main issues that the QEC deems necessary to address over the next few years and the areas for improvement identified.

The Report therefore represents a communication tool of key importance to promote collaboration between the various actors of the QA system and the entire School community.

2. The role of the Quality Enhancement Committee

The Self-assessment - Evaluation - Accreditation system (referred to as "AVA" in Italian and defined by ANVUR, the Italian National Agency for the Evaluation of Universities and Research Institutes) highlights the role of the QEC in universities, making its adoption one of the requirements for accreditation.

According to the AVA3 model, "The Quality Enhancement Committee of a University is called upon to implement any initiatives deemed useful to promote the culture of quality within a single quality assurance process, concerning aspects inherent to educational aspects, research and the third mission/social impact. It supports the University's departments and offices in the development of Quality Assurance processes and related procedures, carries out supervision and monitoring activities for the implementation of QA procedures, proposes common QA tools, carries out training activities on QA and supports the Degree Programs, PhD Programs and Departments in carrying out QA activities.

The Quality Enhancement Committee is responsible for drafting guidelines and documentation to support the self-assessment, evaluation and review processes of the Degree Programs, PhD Programs, Departments and JSTB. It supports the University in monitoring the QA processes and in reviewing the Governance System and the QA System".

In consideration of the above, during the 2021-2024 three-year period, the work of the QEC was focused on the development of the School's Quality Assurance System, in close synergy with the Governance and the Commissions supporting the Rector.

To address the need, highlighted by the CEVS (Commission of Experts for the Evaluation of Higher Education) during the Initial Accreditation, to complete the definition of the QA System and then implement and test its effectiveness, the QEC has provided for the definition of self-assessment processes within the scope of the three institutional missions. In particular, with regard to Educational aspects, we highlight the following: adaptation of the questionnaires for collecting students' opinions to the schemes defined by ANVUR within the AVA3 model, the start of the work to define the review process of the PhD Programs, the drafting of the "Guidelines for Research Quality Assurance" for Research and the drafting of the "Guidelines for the Monitoring

of Third Mission Activities” and the subsequent first self-evaluation exercise for the so-called “third mission”.

2.1. Culture of Quality

In line with the AVA3 model, according to which the QEC “*is called upon to implement any initiatives deemed useful to promote the culture of quality within a single quality assurance process, concerning aspects inherent to educational aspects, research and the third mission/social impact*”, over the period covered by this Report the School’s QEC promoted and/or organized a number of initiatives aimed at both the student community and at the teaching and research faculty. At the same time, QEC members were constantly updated on QA-related developments.

2.1.1. Initiatives aimed at the Student Community

Two training initiatives reserved for the student community were carried out:

- “*Quality Assurance*” (16 November 2023), meeting between members of the QEC and students in the XXXIX cycle to illustrate the key concepts of QA, the operation of the QA system and the questionnaires being used;
- “*Copyright law and Copyright infringement*” (2 February 2024), training session held by Prof. Marilena Filippelli (University of Rome La Sapienza), promoted by the QEC and organized by the Library and Research Enhancement Office. Although primarily aimed at the student community, the meeting was also open to researchers at the School.

2.1.2. Training initiatives aimed at the Teaching and Research Faculty

During the period covered by this Report, the QEC organized and promoted the following training and refresher initiatives aimed at the teaching and research faculty:

- *The Advisor-PhD student interaction: Framework conditions and possible challenges. A roundtable discussion* (19 September 2023).
This first training session aimed at newly hired researchers (RTD-a/b) with limited supervisory experience at a PhD level took place in the form of a round table moderated by Prof. Castellacci (Visiting Professor at the School). The issues addressed were: *PhD supervision - General framework conditions at the IMT School (a clarification of: objectives, expectations, organization, timing); Thematic distance between supervisor’s competencies and PhD thesis’ topic (“How far can a supervisor stretch?”); Co-authorship between the supervisor and PhD student: Benefits and possible risks; Supervision of foreign (non-Italian) PhD students: Do cultural differences matter in the supervision relationship?*
- *Assessing the Research Quality - an introduction to the VQR (Research Quality Assessment) 2020-2024 exercise* (1 February 2024).

The event, aimed in particular at teaching and research faculty with no previous experience participating in Research Quality Assessment (VQR) exercises, was divided into two parts, the first dedicated to the presentation of the 2020-2024 Research Quality Assessment call and the second to the methods adopted for evaluating research products in the various scientific areas. Following the meeting, QEC members made themselves available for further discussion and individual meetings with those who could not attend.

It should also be noted that, in order to facilitate communication and place greater emphasis on the initiatives organized and/or promoted by the QEC, the dedicated web page has been restructured (<https://www.imtlucca.it/it/qualityimt/formazione-ed-eventi>), separating the general initiatives aimed at transmitting QA-related principles, from training and professional development initiatives aimed at the teaching and research faculty.

In planning further training and professional development initiatives aimed at the teaching and research faculty, in particular in response to the provisions of the AVA3 model (aspects to consider B.1.1.4, D.PHD.1.3, E.DIP.4.2), the QEC deemed it appropriate to open a discussion with the Vice-Rector for Teaching and Information Services. Following discussion of the topic with the Didactics Committee, the latter brought the following proposals to the attention of the QEC during the meeting held on 3 May 2024:

- institutionalizing the role of tutor, namely a senior teacher responsible for guiding and supporting a junior teacher in his or her teaching activity;
- scheduling *research symposiums* on a regular basis.

During the meeting, the QEC also discussed the possibility of organizing training courses on the topic of soft skills held by teaching faculty with proven experience in the academic field, with voluntary participation.

2.2. Updating activities aimed at members of the Quality Enhancement Committee

The QEC has always been particularly careful to guarantee its members the possibility of staying constantly updated on the latest developments on Quality Assurance, both through direct participation in seminars and training/refresher courses and thanks to the sharing of materials and notions learned on such occasions.

For the period covered by this Report, the participation of a number of QEC members in the following initiatives should be noted:

- “AVA3 – Periodic accreditation: Evaluation Area B - Resource Management” webinar organized by ANVUR in collaboration with CONPAQ and CONVUI (30 October 2023);
- “AVA 3: QA of the PhD program” online training course held by Prof. Turri and organized by the CRUI Foundation (15 January 2024);

- “Techniques, strategies and models related to the Third Mission” online refresher course held by Prof. Zanola (12 February 2024).

Finally, with regard to the application of the AVA3 model to so-called Schools of Advanced Studies, it is important to note the meeting organized by ANVUR on 21 September 2023 and only open to the heads of the Schools. The event, attended by the Rector and the President of the QEC, was an opportunity to highlight the need to define a protocol dedicated to Schools of Advanced Studies, capable of making the most of the special characteristics that differentiate them from Universities.

2.3. The relationship with the Joint Students and Teachers Board and the Assessment Board

2.3.1. Joint session and actions adopted

On 18 September 2023, the second joint meeting of the Bodies responsible for QA was held at the School’s premises, with the participation of members of the QEC, the AB and the JSTB.

During the meeting, in addition to reiterating the benefits of the joint and coordinated action of the three bodies, the participants extensively discussed the issue of involving the student body in the QA processes. Specifically, methods of direct dialogue with the student community were discussed, aimed at highlighting eventual problems and stimulating timely corrective actions, as well as possible forms of recognition aimed at enhancing the role of student representatives in the School’s Bodies and Committees and their contribution to the development of the School.

2.3.2. Annual Report of the Joint Students and Teachers Board 2023 and presentation event

As per the School’s procedures, in December, upon completion of the drafting of the 2023 Annual Report, the JSTB sent the document to the QEC, requesting its feedback before the approval and publication of the Report.

Following a detailed analysis of the document, the QEC initiated a discussion on the Report during the meeting held on 13 December 2022 and, subsequently, forwarded its comments to the JSTB. The key general observations made by the QEC were:

- devoting more space in the Report to the analysis of the results of the End of Year Questionnaire (distributed for the first time according to the model defined by ANVUR for the AVA3) and the PhD Program Evaluation Questionnaire, commenting on critical aspects and indicating possible specific actions to be implemented in response;
- improving the readability of the document and the comparability of the results of the questionnaires by reporting all the data in the same scale.

Having taken into account some of the QEC’s observations, the JSTB 2023 Annual Report was approved on 21 December 2023 and subsequently published on the institutional website in Italian

and English. The Report was also presented to the entire School Community during the event held on 20 February 2024 in the Sagrestia (remote participation was made available). Similar to previous years, the meeting saw the participation of the President and of some members of the QEC, in addition to that of the Rector and the General Director, demonstrating the importance given to listening and dialogue with the School Community – and primarily to the student community.

3. Educational Quality Assurance

Continuing the periodic review and improvement activities of the Educational QA system, in the period covered by this Report the QEC began work on defining the review procedure of the PhD Programs and drafted a new questionnaire aimed at collecting the opinions of the enrolled students of the advanced courses offered by the School, called Executive Masters.

3.1. PhD Programs Review Procedure

The AVA3 model calls for the following aspects to be taken into consideration:

C.1.1 The University ensures periodic review of the activities of the Degree Programs, PhD Programs and Departments through analysis and evaluation tools made available by the Quality Enhancement Committee;

D.PHD.3.3 The PhD program periodically reviews and updates the educational and research offerings made available to PhD students, to align them with the cultural and scientific development of the scientific areas of reference of the PhD, also taking into account international best practices, feedback from stakeholders (internal and external) and the opinions and proposals for improvement of PhD students.

Having identified the need to more effectively structure the review of the PhD Programs, at the beginning of 2024 the QEC began work on defining the process, tasking the School's Governing Body to set up a Working Group responsible for defining the phases, the subjects involved and their roles and for drafting a written procedure proposal.

The Working Group presented the first proposal of the "Guidelines for the Review of PhD Programs" procedure to the QEC during the meeting held on 20 March 2024 and to the Vice-Rector for Teaching and Information Services on 25 March 2024. The updated version of the document, which incorporates the proposed changes and additions formulated by the two bodies was subsequently discussed during the QEC meeting held on 3 May 2024, in which the Vice-Rector for Teaching and Information Services participated.

The QEC subsequently promoted the direct involvement of the JSTB, inviting its members to reflect on the Board's role in the PhD Programs annual review procedure and on the most suitable ways to incorporate students' opinions during the annual review of the educational offering.

At the time of approval of this Report, the “Guidelines for the Review of PhD Programs” are still being finalized.

It should also be noted that, at the start of the work to structure this process, the QEC informed the Rector of the importance of involving the student community in the review and updating of the educational and research offering as regards the School’s PhD Programs.

Having obtained the Rector’s approval, the student representatives in the Bodies were invited to convene the student community to identify a representative for each PhD Program activated in the 2023/2024 academic year (XXXIX cycle).

Following the appointment (Rector’s Decree no. 2596(114).III.6.22.02.24), the names of the representatives were promptly shared with the Coordinators of the PhD Programs, together with the invitation to meet with their respective representative or, alternatively, to invite him or her to a meeting of the Scientific Board to give the student community the opportunity to present suggestions and proposals beneficial for defining the educational offering for the XL cycle.

Pending the definition of the review procedure, the Coordinators of the PhD Programs were also invited to promote a discussion between the Scientific Board and the relevant stakeholders (former students, companies, institutions involved in various capacities in the Program), as well as to take note of the recommendations made by the JSTB in the 2023 Annual Report and the results of the questionnaires distributed to the School’s students (Teaching Evaluation Questionnaire, End of Year Questionnaire and PhD Program Evaluation Questionnaire) when defining the educational offering for the XL cycle.

3.2. The role of the Scientific Boards in the Educational QA

Following an analysis of the role of the Scientific Boards in the Educational QA process with reference to the D.PHD evaluation area and the related (D.PHD.1, D.PHD.2, D.PHD.3) sub-areas, the QEC identified the following key issues:

- the lack of an analysis and discussion phase of the results of the surveys of students’ opinions during the review of the educational offering. In this regard, it should be noted that, having taken note of the request to streamline the process defined in the document entitled “Student Opinions and Satisfaction Survey System”, in 2022 the QEC abolished the drafting of the summary report by the Coordinator, instead providing for the presentation by the latter of the results of the questionnaires to the Scientific Boards, for the definition of appropriate corrective actions;
- the disparity of the approach based on which the representative is involved in the Program review process. The QEC hopes that, following the drafting of the “Guidelines for the Review of PhD Programs”, the Scientific Boards will be in a position to listen to and engage the student community in a more structured and uniform manner;

- the failure to communicate the results of discussions concerning the educational quality and/or the use of the results of surveys of students' opinions to the QEC. In this regard, the QEC deems it appropriate to invite the Coordinators to send an extract of the meeting minutes to the Committee every time a topic relating to QA is discussed;
- the failure to monitor third mission/social impact activities carried out by students and their results. The Annual Report, which students must fill out at the end of each academic year does not, in fact, include a section dedicated to this area.

From a detailed analysis of the meetings of the Scientific Boards held in the last two academic years (2022/23 and 2023/24), the QEC identified a certain disparity with regard to the frequency of the meetings, the preferred methods of carrying them out, as well as the topics covered.

In light of the data, the QEC has the following recommendations for the Scientific Boards:

- as a good practice, to meet on a regular basis and in a manner that allows for effective discussion of the items on the agenda;
- pay greater attention to aspects relating to the PhD program that extend beyond mere teaching activities.

This analysis will be followed by a communication to the Coordinators of the PhD Programs, enabling them to ensure that all aspects of the PhD program (including the initiation of research, publications and placement) are the subject of appropriate discussion in the Scientific Boards.

3.3. Questionnaires for collecting students' opinions

During the meetings held on 4 and 24 October 2023, after taking note of the results of the meeting between the Rector, the Vice-Rector for Teaching and Information Services and the Coordinators of the PhD Programs held on 3 October 2023 and concerning the methods adopted to collect the opinions of PhD students and having identified general support in favor of continuing to distribute the Teaching Evaluation Questionnaire (TEQ), the QEC highlighted the effectiveness of the TEQ as an improvement tool, which guarantees students the possibility of providing direct feedback to the relevant program coordinators/professors, provided that the low response rate is taken into account.

At the same time, following the feedback received from the offices involved, the QEC took note of the key issues that characterize the current procedure for distributing and managing the TEQ results and in particular that:

- the distribution of the questionnaire and the subsequent sharing of the results with the relevant professors are strictly linked to actions by the latter, namely keeping track of attendance and recording exam results. The failure to keep the attendance log updated for each lesson, in fact, prevents the verification of the minimum attendance that determines access to the evaluation questionnaire, as well as its distribution during the

last lesson. Moreover, delays in defining exam dates and/or in recording exam results inevitably affect the timing of the sharing of questionnaire results with the relevant professors and with the other stakeholders;

- for courses with an optional final exam, the eventual exams agreed upon with the student are frequently communicated to the Office only at a later date, when the results of the questionnaire have already been shared with the relevant professor.

To address this issue, the QEC suggested reminding teaching and research faculty to clarify the examination procedures in the Syllabus, as well as to communicate them to the PhD and Higher Education Office using the Attendance Log.

The QEC also noted the following:

- to the General Director, the need to optimize the process of distribution and management of the questionnaires through adequate information support to automate the mechanism for the creation and dissemination of the surveys, to avoid human error in transcribing the results of the same, reducing the time necessary for sharing the results with the relevant stakeholders, first and foremost the JSTB;
- to the JSTB, the need to modify the approach adopted by the Annual Report, giving greater emphasis to the analysis of the results of the End of Year Questionnaire and of the PhD Program Evaluation Questionnaire, as these questionnaires are provided for by the AVA3 model.

It is important to note that both items were promptly addressed. Table B in the 2023 Annual Report drawn up by the JSTB, in fact, presents an accurate analysis of the results of the two questionnaires, in particular the End of Year Questionnaire, which follows the model provided for by ANVUR. Moreover, the 2024-2026 objectives defined by the School's Governing Body include "D.1.1 - Optimization of the Process of Distributing Questionnaires for Collecting Students' Opinions", aimed at optimizing and automating the process of creating and disseminating the questionnaires, as well as the creation of a database for storing the results.

Following the achievement of this objective, the QEC reserves the right to review and update the documentation relating to Educational QA, in particular the "Guidelines for the Distribution and Management of the Results of the Questionnaires for the Collection of Students' Opinions" and the document entitled "Student Opinions and Satisfaction Survey System", dating back to 2019.

3.4. Focus Groups

As already mentioned several times, the QEC has explored the potential of focus groups as a tool for evaluating key issues or to provide feedback in specific areas not covered by the questionnaires, such as, for example, services aimed at the student community. In particular, an in-depth analysis was carried out on the Università Cattolica case, which for years has given voice

to the opinions and suggestions of the student community of the various campuses (Milan, Brescia, Piacenza-Cremona and Rome) using online focus group sessions.

Following a proposal from EDUCatt consultants to experiment with focus groups at the School, the QEC engaged the student community to assess their actual interest in using the tool.

As the results of the first survey showed little interest (29 responses out of 213 subjects interviewed), the QEC decided to distribute the questionnaire again on 26 June 2023. Given the still limited interest (64 total responses, of which 48 in favor of the experiment) and the significant economic commitment associated with the experiment, the QEC has decided not to proceed with the activation of the focus groups at this time, however, remaining open to re-evaluate the introduction of this tool in the future.

3.5. Quality Assurance of Masters and Executive Masters

As already described in the previous Annual Report, following the expansion of the School's educational offering and the launch of the School's first Executive Masters, in the meeting held on 30 January 2023 the QEC noted the need to start work on defining an ad hoc QA system.

The questionnaire for the evaluation of Masters and Executive Masters, approved during the QEC meeting held on 2 May 2023 and attached to the previous Annual Report, was distributed twice:

- on 22 July 2023, coinciding with the last day of classes for the Executive Master in "Light Leadership and Innovation in Education and Training Organizations";
- on 14 December 2023, following the conclusion of the Executive Master in "Sports Law and Governance of the Sports Phenomenon".

It should be noted that, in addition to examining the organization of the individual program, this questionnaire also looks at general and transversal aspects, such as administrative services, residential facilities offered by the School, and the city of Lucca as the location of the Executive Master.

The response rates recorded, which overall are quite high, are reported in Table 1.

	Light Leadership and Innovation in Education and Training Organizations	Sports Law and Governance of the Sports Phenomenon
No. of participants	36	10
No. of questionnaires filled out	32	7
Response rate	88.9%	70%

Table 1. Executive Masters - response rates for questionnaires distributed in 2023.

Even though this is the first edition of the aforementioned Executive Masters, the analysis of the participants' opinions highlighted an overall more than adequate level of satisfaction.

At the QEC's request, as part of the review of the content of the Executive Master in "Light Leadership and Innovation in Education and Training Organizations", the results of the questionnaires were discussed and taken into consideration. In particular, from the surveys conducted it emerged that the participants:

- would have preferred to be able to participate in all the online modules, instead of having to choose 2 out of the 4 offered;
- would have preferred having a smaller number of professors with a greater number of teaching hours each, allowing them to more thoroughly explore a smaller number of topics;
- would have found it challenging to participate in a fourth weekend in person and therefore increasing the number of hours in person, although desirable, would be complex;
- very much appreciated both the sharing opportunities provided (coffee breaks, lunches and dinners), as well as the round table with expert professionals external to the academic world.

Taking the above into account, the following changes have been made to the second edition of the Executive Master in "Light Leadership and Innovation in Education and Training Organizations":

- reduction of online modules to three, all mandatory;
- reduction in the number of professors, while keeping the total number of hours of in-person teaching unchanged.

As regards the Executive Master in "Sports Law and Governance of the Sports Phenomenon", the second edition is still being defined. The results of the surveys will, in any case, be taken into due consideration as part of the planning of the same.

3.6. Future prospects

In line with the 2024-2026 objectives defined by the School's Governing Body and, in particular, with objective "D.1.1 - Optimization of the Process of Distributing Questionnaires for Collecting Students' Opinions", in the second half of 2024 the process of creating and disseminating TEQs will be optimized thanks to the transition to a different platform.

The final aim is not only to automate the process of generating and distributing the questionnaires, but also the management of the results, thus eliminating the risk of errors in the transcription/processing of the data and reducing the time it takes for the data to be made

available to the relevant stakeholders (QEC, JSTB, the Coordinators of the PhD Programs, teaching faculty).

The updating of the “Guidelines for the Distribution and Management of the Results of the Questionnaires for the Collection of Students’ Opinions” will also reflect the process changes introduced by the transition to the new platform.

4. Research Quality Assurance

As defined in the “[Guidelines for the Quality Assurance System in Universities](#)”² made available by ANVUR, with reference to research activities, the QEC “*monitors and supervises the regular execution of the relevant QA procedures in accordance with what has been declared and planned and ensures the correct flow of information to and from the Assessment Board*”.

4.1. Guidelines for Research Quality Assurance

During the meeting held on 4 October 2023, the QEC began work on defining a Research QA system with the aim of carrying out the first monitoring and self-assessment exercise during 2024. In order to define a process which, starting from the collection phase would lead to a self-assessment within the Research Unit and then culminate with a general evaluation of the quality of research at a School level, the QEC has:

- sought the collaboration of the Vice-Rector for Research and Innovation so that, in her capacity as President of the Research Board, she would involve the Board in defining the key aspects relating to the process;
- delegated to the School’s Governing Body the appointment of a Working Group (WG), composed of technical and administrative personnel, dedicated to drafting the procedure, in the form of Guidelines.

The interaction between the QEC, the Research Board and the WG resulted in the definition of the “Guidelines for Research Quality Assurance”, approved by the QEC during the meeting held on 27 February 2024 and by the Academic Senate on 20 March 2024, after obtaining the positive opinion of the Assessment Board. The document was then issued with the Rector’s Decree no. 5462(190).I.3.04.04.24 of 4 April 2024 and published on the School’s institutional website in the [Research Quality](#) section.

The procedure outlined in the Guidelines provides for:

- the monitoring of data from the last 5 years with reference to the research activities defined in the latest Research Quality Assessment (VQR) call, also extended to territorial and national research projects and to the placement of former PhD students;

² Approved with the Resolution of the ANVUR Board of Directors no. 62 of 4 April 2024.

- a self-assessment by each Research Unit, whose results are reported by the respective Director in a short report to be submitted to the attention of an ad hoc Committee;
- an overall evaluation by the ad hoc Committee, resulting in a report that includes both a summary of the self-assessments produced by the individual Research Units and the overall picture of the School's research activities.

It is also expected that the process, launched annually in January, may be integrated by specific preparatory actions in conjunction with the implementation of the Research Quality Assessment (VQR) exercise.

In the monitoring and self-assessment phase, the various subjects involved will be able to make use of the Criterium³ software, a support tool for the evaluation of scientific work that allows for reproducing the Research Quality Assessment (VQR) indicators and evaluating the self-assessment data for the National Scientific Qualification.

The data collected, as well as the results of the evaluation, may be used both by the Rector when defining the guidelines and strategic objectives, and by the Directors of the Research Units for planning their research activities.

4.2. Management of the Performance Fund - Review of Criteria

The "Regulations for the Management of the Performance Fund" of the IMT School provide that additional compensation be paid annually to full-time teaching and research faculty members in relation to the results achieved annually in teaching, research and third mission activities on the basis of parameters contained in a specific document, linked to the "Three-Year Planning", proposed by the Rector and approved by the Board of Governors, following consultation on the subject with the Academic Senate.

The procedure for the disbursement of the fund for the year 2023 was implemented for the first time in October 2023, according to the criteria approved with the resolution of the Board of Governors of 31 January 2023.

During the screening phase of the applications received and, in particular, as part of the verification of compliance with the minimum criteria for access to the fund, some key issues were identified, both in the collection of data and in the interpretation of the criteria themselves. Addressing this issues lengthened the processing timeframes, causing a delay in the disbursement of the relative shares, which took place in June 2024. Consequently, the timing of the definition of the criteria for 2024 has also been postponed. To allow a comparison between the first two exercises, the School's final choice was to re-propose the same criteria as the previous year for 2024, however, taking care to try to clarify the meaning in cases where key issues had been found.

³ The School has signed the five-year Criterium contract stipulated by CRUI with Svelto S.r.l.

Having taken note of the choice not to modify the access criteria to the fund for 2024, the QEC deemed it appropriate to immediately start the process of reviewing the same criteria for the subsequent year, in light of the recommendations formulated by the Assessment Board and the Board of Auditors regarding the adoption of more stringent criteria.

On 30 May 2024, through a written communication addressed to the Rector, the QEC invited the Governance to promptly define how to adapt the award criteria requested by the Board of Auditors (based on the strength of specific indicators or the variety of actions undertaken). The QEC also recommended having the new criteria defined by October to ensure, following the opinion of the Assessment Board and the Board of Auditors, the possibility of making any eventual changes with ample time to attach the criteria to the 2025-2027 Three-Year Planning, to be submitted for approval to the Bodies in December.

In the same communication, the QEC reported to the Rector the poor participation of fixed-term researchers in the procedure for 2023 (0 applications submitted by RTD-A, 6 by RTD-B), inviting the Governance to evaluate the opportunity to define differentiated criteria for research staff or to maintain the same criteria, but provide for different thresholds depending on the category to which they belong.

In this regard, the QEC hopes that, when reviewing the criteria, the various Commissions supporting the Rector involve, if not present within the same, a representation of the research staff in order to resolve the aforementioned issues.

4.3. Future prospects

Taking into account the 2020-2024 Research Quality Assessment (VQR) timetable, the first internal research monitoring and evaluation exercise has been postponed to the second half of 2024 to support its preparation. With the aim of continuous improvement, following the first application of the "Guidelines for Research Quality Assurance", the QEC will review the process to address any issues that may emerge.

5. Third Mission Quality Assurance

As defined in the "[Guidelines for the Quality Assurance System in Universities](#)"⁴ made available by ANVUR, with reference to third mission activities, the QEC monitors and supervises the regular execution of the relevant QA procedures in accordance with what has been declared and planned and ensures the correct flow of information to and from the Assessment Board.

⁴ Approved with the Resolution of the ANVUR Board of Directors no. 62 of 4 April 2024.

5.1. Guidelines for the Monitoring of Third Mission Activities

Taking into account the feedback provided by the CEVS following the Initial Accreditation visit regarding the need to complete the definition of the QA system and implement it, to then test its effectiveness, in November 2022 the QEC began an exercise focused on defining a monitoring process for third mission activities, also taking into account the not fully satisfactory outcome of the evaluation of the Third Mission case study presented as part of the 2015-2019 Research Quality Assessment (VQR) exercise.

The Vice-Rector for Communication, Third Mission and Disability and the Communication Committee were involved from the very beginning in defining this monitoring process and in setting up the form to be used to collect information relating to the activities carried out. After collecting their suggestions, the QEC drafted the "Guidelines for the Monitoring of Third Mission Activities", which were later shared with the Rector, the Vice-Rectors and the General Director.

Following the positive opinion expressed by the Assessment Board during the meeting held on 30 June 2023, the "Guidelines for the Monitoring of Third Mission Activities" were approved by the QEC during the meeting held on 5 July 2023 and by the School's Bodies in the respective meetings held on 19 July 2023 and later issued with the Rector's Decree no. 14385(311).I.3.02.08.2023.

5.2. Outcome of the first monitoring exercise

To implement the first monitoring exercise of third mission activities, the Third Mission Evaluation Committee (Rector's Decree no. 15950(329).I.11.05.09.23) was appointed on 5 September 2023.

On 28 September 2023, the first monitoring exercise of third mission activities began, organized at an institutional level, by the Research Units (individually or in collaboration), by other School departments and offices (including those undertaken by the School's Governing Body) and those in partnership with external subjects, whether public or private. The Directors of the Research Units, the Coordinators of the internal departments, as well as the Directors of the Offices were invited to select and present, using a specific online form, the best case (or cases) selected from the third mission activities carried out by their specific areas during the 2022/23 academic year.

This phase ended on 31 October 2023 with a total of 17 forms submitted (Table 2), which highlights a broad participation by the Research Units.

Reference Research Unit / Department / Office	No. of forms submitted
AXES	3
DYSCO	1
LYNX	4

MOMILAB	1
NETWORKS	2
NS Lab	1
PhiBor	1
Library and Research Promotion Office	1
Communication and Events Office	3
Total	17

Table 2. Subdivision of the monitoring forms of third mission activities relating to the 2022/23 academic year.

The Third Mission Evaluation Committee met on 6 November 2023 to review the forms and define the working methods and on 1 December 2023 to formulate a qualitative evaluation of the third mission activities presented, taking into account the following criteria:

- consistency with the School's strategic guidelines;
- completeness of the information provided;
- impact achieved through the actions taken.

Following the analysis of the forms submitted, the Third Mission Evaluation Committee expressed its appreciation for the outcome of the first monitoring and evaluation exercise, highlighting how in recent years the School's activities have expanded and strengthened in all areas of action relating to the third mission, presenting multiple high-quality initiatives with a strong economic, social and cultural impact, in particular outside the academic world.

The Third Mission Evaluation Committee also formulated general recommendations highlighting:

- the need to pay greater attention to the description of the actions to be evaluated and the impact they generate, clearly detailing the type of involvement by the School and qualifying its contribution;
- the importance of promoting greater awareness among Community members of the third mission actions implemented.

The Third Mission Evaluation Committee also made some recommendations with regard to the next monitoring and evaluation exercise:

- specify in the monitoring form the main field of action, indicating, where necessary, further applicable fields of action;

- consider as best cases to be submitted for evaluation only the largest and most structured initiatives, as well as those organized by the School or with a leading role played by the same, to ensure that a comparison can be made with other initiatives and an accurate evaluation of the impact.

Finally, the Third Mission Evaluation Committee shared the results of the qualitative evaluation of the individual case study presented to the relevant owner.

The data collected and the results of the evaluation exercise were taken into consideration for the drafting of the 2024-2026 Three-Year Planning document, approved by the Board of Governors during the meeting held on 21 December 2023.

During its meeting held on 4 March 2024, the Assessment Board acknowledged the results of the first monitoring exercise of third mission activities and decided not to express an opinion on the Quality Assurance process of the third mission and its effectiveness, postponing any type of evaluation until the process has been consolidated.

5.3. Future prospects

As reported by the Third Mission Evaluation Committee, the QEC deems it appropriate to initiate a joint discussion aimed at defining a set of indicators to be used for the future evaluation of the impact of third mission activities.

Following the second monitoring of third mission activities, which will be carried out in conjunction with the preparation for the 2020-2024 Research Quality Assessment (VQR) exercise, the QEC and the AB will review the process, evaluating the overall effectiveness of its operation.

6. Campus and student services

With reference to the QA of services related to the Campus model adopted by the School, the QEC has addressed some issues that have proven to be of particular importance, both from the perspective of the Periodic Accreditation system and as relating to improving the perception of the quality of accommodations and services by students.

6.1. Assignment of spaces to students

In preparation for the Periodic Accreditation and the start of the next PhD cycle, taking into account the recent expansion of the Campus following the acquisition of the residence in Via Brunero Paoli on free loan for use and the purchase of Palazzo Boccella, the QEC has identified the need to formalize the process of assigning spaces (residence rooms and study spaces) to students. This need arises not only from the final assessment report prepared by the CEVS as

part of the Initial Accreditation⁵, but also based on feedback received from the student community itself.

After determining that the assignment of rooms in the School’s residences takes place according to a consolidated practice managed by the Campus Management and Front Office, but never formalized in a written procedure, and that the study spaces are self-managed, without the use of a formal assignment mechanism, the QEC proposed for a procedure to be drafted to unambiguously define the allocation and management of the spaces reserved for students and, at the same time, to evaluate whether or not these are sufficient to satisfy the School’s needs.

The QEC therefore involved the Delegate for Building, Facilities and Sustainability and the Facilities Committee chaired by the latter, asking them to draft a proposal for a procedure for the assignment and management of study stations reserved for the student community.

During the meeting held on 3 May 2024, the Delegate for Building, Facilities and Sustainability illustrated to the QEC the data relating to the workstations currently available on Campus (San Francesco Complex, the residence in Via Brunero Paoli and the Library) in relation to the number of students currently enrolled (Table 3). The data highlighted the anomaly of the Campus model since, including in the count the desks present in the rooms of the two residences, the overall number of study stations is significantly higher than that of the PhD students.

Number of students	Study stations in shared spaces	Study stations in residence rooms	Total study stations
162 ⁶	124	108	232

Table 3. Study stations available on Campus.

During the same meeting, the Delegate for Building, Facilities and Sustainability also indicated that the Facilities Committee would share a questionnaire with the student community aimed at understanding their needs and highlighting the key issues affecting the current situation.

The questionnaire, sent in mid-May, was positively received by the student community, as evidenced by the response rate of 60.5% (98 responses out of 162 potential respondents). The survey identified a strong preference for workstations located in common areas and, in particular,

⁵ Among the aspects to be improved, the final assessment report prepared by the CEVS following the Initial Accreditation audit reports the following: “*The School should improve the availability of workstations and study rooms for students, taking advantage of the additional spaces already identified by the School (Refectory Hall of the San Francesco Complex) and avoiding the use of spaces available only upon request by students (e.g. spaces in the San Micheletto Complex) whose use does not seem to be easy, particularly as a possible increase in users is expected*”.

⁶ The count includes students enrolled in the active PhD cycles (XXXVI, XXXVII, XXXVIII and XXXIX). With reference to the National PhD Program in Cybersecurity, only holders of scholarships funded by the IMT School are included. Considering all the students enrolled National PhD Programs with administrative headquarters at another University, but with a scholarship funded by the IMT School, and those enrolled in the XXXIV and XXXV cycles who have requested an extension, the total number is equal to 231.

those in the San Francesco Complex and on the third floor of the Library. A comparison between the occupied position and the desired one also revealed a picture of general satisfaction, with the exception of first-year students, who are more frequently forced to use the study station in their own room.

Following an in-depth analysis, the Facilities Committee proposed extending the use of the reservation software (Affluences) currently in use in the library for the management of spaces open to the external public to all study stations in shared areas. In addition to representing an immediate and concrete action aimed at mitigating, if not solving, the problem of assigning study stations, the adoption of the reservation system would facilitate constant monitoring of the requests. Nevertheless, in order to minimize the number of reservations and avoid daily movements between the various available stations, the Facilities Committee indicated its preference for a long-term reservations system (on a monthly basis), without a daily check-in.

With a view to transparency, in addition to sharing its analysis and proposals with the QEC, on 30 May 2024 the Committee held a feedback event open to all students.

At the Facilities Committee's request, starting in July 2024 the School has equipped all study stations on the third floor of the Library with a monitor, to minimize the disparity compared to the study stations in the San Francesco Complex.

Overall, with regards to study stations, the QEC would like to highlight the following key issues:

- the lack of clear criteria for the management of study stations mostly impacts on first-year students;
- at present, also taking into account the recent acquisitions of buildings, the number of study stations (excluding those in students' rooms) is not sufficient to guarantee the assignment of a fixed station to each student for the entire duration of the PhD Program;
- in addition to currently not being feasible, the assignment of a study station for the entire duration of the PhD Program is an inefficient solution for the School, considering that during periods of travel abroad or stay at other partner universities/companies the stations would be unused or underused;
- the Affluences software does not allow the user to make long-term bookings; bookings on a monthly basis would have to be entered manually, generating a considerable increase in the workload of the offices concerned;
- the implementation of a reservation system without a corresponding check-in would not allow monitoring of the actual use of the available spaces, key to mapping the School's ability to meet requests.

In light of these key issues, the QEC asked the Facilities Committee to evaluate the adoption of other software solutions capable of fully responding to the School's needs.

The QEC also agreed with the Facilities Committee on the need to carefully monitor the situation concerning first-year students, in particular by evaluating their satisfaction with the rooms assigned and the use of study stations at the beginning of the 2024/25 academic year.

The drafting of specific guidelines for the assignment of rooms and study stations will be handled by a dedicated Working Group in the second half of 2024.

6.2. Reports to the General Director

6.2.1. Maintenance and repair works

During the meeting held on 20 December 2023, the QEC briefly addressed the issue of maintenance of the heating/cooling systems in the San Francesco Complex, which falls under the responsibility of the Cassa di Risparmio di Lucca Foundation.

Noting that, in particular, the problems related to the heating system are widespread and impact multiple buildings and that the reports are generally not followed up by any written updates, the QEC has asked the Campus Management and Front Office for clarifications regarding the process for the management of service disruption reports. The QEC's goal was to verify the traceability of the information flow to and from the Foundation, as well as the possibility for users to verify the status of such reports (in progress, resolved, awaiting intervention, etc.) and the outcome of maintenance/repair interventions.

In the subsequent meeting held on 30 January 2024, noting that at present it is not possible to obtain feedback from the Foundation regarding the outcome of maintenance/repair interventions, the QEC determined the need to report the matter to the General Director, highlighting a potential risk related to the issue of safety in the workplace.

The President then brought to the attention of the General Director the proposal to discuss with a representative of the Foundation possible solutions to improve the exchange of information between the latter and the School, also evaluating the involvement of the Health and Safety Manager and of the Prevention and Protection Service Officer.

6.2.2. Access to Campus and Resources

With the email dated 15 December 2023, the JSTB reported to the QEC some key issues related to access to the Campus facilities, to the network and to electronic resources encountered by visiting students, holders of collaboration contracts and those who have just ended their relationship with the School (with particular reference to former students and former holders of contracts for carrying out research activities).

The QEC addressed these reports in the meeting held on 30 January 2024, highlighting the need for greater commitment from the School in providing users with more information regarding the termination of access. In particular, the QEC recommended that:

- the PhD and Higher Education Office should explain to PhD Candidates, in conjunction with the definition of the thesis discussion date, that starting from the day after the degree is awarded, their IMT account (name.surname@imtlucca.it) will be transformed into name.surname@alumni.imtlucca.it and that, at the same time, storage space associated with the account will be reduced;
- the Human Resources Office will communicate to owners of expiring contracts, with adequate notice, that at the end of the same their IMT account will be deactivated, giving them the opportunity to make a backup of their emails and data, also giving them the possibility of requesting for their emails to be forwarded to a different address;
- the School will ensure that the "Regulations to Use the Internet and Emails" are updated and, specifically, that an article is added which specifies the deadline by which the rights to access the institutional account expire.

Regarding physical access to the Campus, the QEC has identified some possible key issues in terms of safety in the workplace related to the necessary use of a badge to access some doors.

Following the meeting, the President brought both issues to the attention of the General Director, also presenting the possible solutions proposed by the QEC. During this meeting, noting that the current access management system is close to reaching the maximum number of manageable users, the President suggested, on behalf of the QEC, to evaluate, together with the Foundation, the purchase of a new access management system capable of supporting the expected future growth of the School.

7. Good Practice 2023/24 Project

With the aim of monitoring the quality of the services provided, the School has renewed its participation in the Good Practice Project (GP), coordinated by the Polytechnic University of Milan, for the eighth consecutive year (2023/24 edition).

7.1. Customer Satisfaction Survey Results

For the GP 2023/24 edition, the QEC once again played an active role in promoting the distribution and compilation of the Customer Satisfaction questionnaires used to identify user satisfaction with regard to administrative services.

The survey was sent out on 20 February 2024 and ended on March 18.

During this time, the Planning, Control and Quality Office, on behalf of the QEC, was tasked with sending the communication detailing the launch of the surveys and sending regular reminders to

the teaching and research faculty, to PhD students and research fellows, and to the technical-administrative staff⁷.

The QEC regularly monitored response rates and, noting a significantly lower participation than the previous year, encouraged an active role in promoting the questionnaire by student representatives in the School's various Bodies and Committees. The QEC also took advantage of the JSTB Annual Report feedback event (held on 20 February 2023) to remind participants to fill out the questionnaire and requested the Rector's intervention, which resulted in a reminder to participate in the GP survey sent out to all participants on 12 March 2023.

The response rates recorded at the end of the survey are reported in Table 4 and compared with those of the previous edition. While the participation of the academic component remained almost unchanged, the decline already highlighted in the previous report was confirmed with regard to the School's technical-administrative staff.

It is important to note the significant increase in the number of research grant holders who took part in the survey; in the previous annual report, the QEC had, in fact, identified the need to pay greater attention to the engagement of this specific category.

	<i>Good Practice 2022</i>			<i>Good Practice 2023</i>		
	No. of questionnaires filled out	No. of potential questionnaire recipients	Response rate	No. of questionnaires filled out	No. of potential questionnaire recipients	Response rate
Professors (Full, Associate)	17	25	68.0%	19	29	65.5%
RTDa/b	19	22	86.4%	26	36	72.2%
PhD students	78	180	43.3%	105	266	39.5%
Fellows	9	52	17.3%	15	38	39.5%
Total PhD students and Fellows	123	279	44.1%	165	369	44.7%
Technical-administrative staff	38	43	88.4%	39	46	84.8%

Table 4. Participation rates in the Good Practice project Customer Satisfaction surveys with reference to the services provided in 2022 and 2023.

⁷ It should be noted that only users who had an active contract at the School for at least part of 2023 were involved and took part in the survey.

7.2. Meetings with administrative office representatives

In May 2024, the President and Caterina Tangheroni met with the Heads of the administrative offices to discuss the results of the Customer Satisfaction surveys. In particular, as it has already happened in the previous two years, the meeting was an opportunity to comparatively analyze the results of the last two editions of the project and to discuss any eventual key issues reported by the JSTB in the most recent Annual Report. The items discussed during the aforementioned meeting are reported in Table 5.

In addition to the key issues related to specific processes and services, the President deemed it appropriate to highlight the need to proceed quickly with the recruitment of new technical-administrative staff in response to the recent increase in academic staff and activities, as well as in view of the further growth prospects outlined in the 2024-2026 Three-Year Planning.

Scope	Key issues	Solutions implemented and/or proposed	Subjects involved
Communication	Poor public engagement in the School's social media	Financial investment by the School for the sponsorship of institutional posts.	Communication and Events Office, Communication Committee.
Purchases	Unclear and lengthy purchasing procedures	As part of the process review, in 2024 the Procurement Office made changes to the purchase request form and oversaw the drafting of an operational guide for purchase requests for sub-threshold goods and services. In terms of timing, digitalizing the process could speed up the authorization steps. It may be helpful to create a Q&A document for faculty use.	Procurement Office, General Director.
IT systems	Management of email accounts at the end of contracts	Better communication is needed regarding the deactivation of email accounts in conjunction with the termination of the relationship with the School (also see section 6.2.2) and, for former students, the transition to the name.surname@alumni.imtlucca.it email account.	IT Services Office, Human Resources Office, PhD and Higher Education Office.
Education-related services	Management of questionnaire results	The use of Qualtrics for the distribution of questionnaires and the analysis of results should guarantee an improvement of the process and compliance with the timing of sharing data with the relevant stakeholders (primarily the Scientific Board and the JSTB).	PhD and Higher Education Office, Planning, Control and Quality Office, IT Services Office, QEC, JSTB.

Table 5. Overview of the key issues and possible areas of intervention discussed during the meetings between the President of the QEC and the Heads of the administrative offices.

7.3. Future prospects

Given the constant recurrence of reports highlighting challenges in relating some questions contained in the Customer Satisfaction questionnaire to the specific characteristics of the School and the contextual absence of questions capable of mapping satisfaction with references to the services that best characterize the residential Campus dimension, the QEC recommends having an in depth discussion with the future Rector and the General Director concerning adoption of the GP Project and the possible introduction of a questionnaire created specifically for this purpose.

Should the School choose to renew its adoption of the GP Project, the QEC suggests examining the relative output, evaluating a more extensive use of the same, with a view to improving the efficiency and effectiveness of the administrative services offered.

8. Self-assessment

With reference to the development prospects outlined by the QEC in the previous Annual Report, the implementation status of the proposed actions is reported in Table 6.

8.1. Points of attention and key issues

In view of an analysis of the state of maturity of the School's QA system, taking into account the provisions of the AVA3 model, the QEC deems it appropriate to highlight, in Table 7, points of attention and key issues in the hope that they may stimulate discussion by the School's Governing Bodies and the consequent adoption of appropriate corrective measures.

QA System

Updating of the QA System in accordance with the AVA3 model	In progress	The review and updating of the documents is ongoing and will take into account the internal changes related to the new Governance as of 1 November 2024.
Training activities to promote the culture of quality (with particular attention to student representation)	Postponed	Given the need to complete the Research and Third Mission QA systems, initiatives to promote the culture of quality in addition to those already planned at the start of the PhD programs have been postponed to the 2024/25 academic year.
Organization of a process to accompany the Accreditation audit	Postponed	Taking into consideration that ANVUR has not yet released, within the AVA3 model, a Periodic Accreditation protocol dedicated to Schools of Advanced Studies, the QEC chose to postpone this activity.
Continuation of joint initiatives with the AB and the JSTB	In progress	The collaboration and coordination of the bodies responsible for QA have proven to be a useful tool to ensure the correct operation of the QA system. Joint meetings between the QEC, the AB and the JSTB take place on a regular basis.
Planning of joint hearings with the AB	Suspended	After careful analysis, taking into account the specificities of the School and its limited size, the QEC believes that the AB is the most suitable entity to carry out the hearings, maximizing the effectiveness of the tool. The QEC formulates its considerations on the basis of the post-hearing form produced by the AB.

Educational QA

Definition of the PhD Program Planning Process	Postponed	In view of the recent changes to the PhD courses/programs offered and having ascertained that the 2024-2026 Three-Year Planning does not envisage new activations of PhD programs, the QEC decided to focus attention on the definition of the PhD Programs review process, postponing the definition of Guidelines for the planning of new PhD Programs.
Adaptation of the student opinion survey system to AVA3 requirements (including the decision to maintain TEQs, not provided for in the AVA3 model)	Completed	The End of Year and PhD Program Evaluation Questionnaires were modified according to the models defined by ANVUR. The School has also decided to continue using and distributing the TEQs. For more details also see section 3.3 .
Updating of the Guidelines for the Distribution and Management of the Results of the Questionnaires	Postponed	Taking into account objective D.1.1 defined by the School's Governing Body aimed at optimizing the process of distributing questionnaires for collecting student opinions, the Guidelines will be accordingly updated once the use of the Qualtrics software has been implemented.
Monitoring the results of the first survey for the collection of PhD students' opinions	Completed	Please refer to section 3.5 .
Organization and promotion of the training materials aimed at the teaching and research faculty	In progress	Please refer to section 2.1.2 .

Research and Third Mission QA

Completion of the Research and Third Mission QA system	Completed	The QEC has completed the work of configuring the Research and the Third Mission QA system. The first monitoring and evaluation exercise of third mission activities was completed at the end of 2023, while the Research one is planned for the second half of 2024.
Guidelines for the Monitoring and Self-Assessment of Third Mission Activities	Completed	Please refer to section 5.1 .
Monitoring the results of the first self-assessment exercise of third mission activities	Completed	Please refer to section 5.2 .
Definition of the process for monitoring PhD students' publications	In progress	The definition of the "Guidelines for Research Quality Assurance" includes the monitoring of the scientific production and publications made by former students who completed a PhD in the five years preceding the date of the survey.

Services QA

Decision on the implementation of focus groups on residential services (on an experimental basis)	Completed	It was decided not to proceed with the experiment. For more information in this regard, please refer to section 3.4.
Decision on the customization of questionnaires on the quality of services provided	Postponed	The School has renewed its participation in the Good Practice Project for the 2023/24 edition. The Customer Satisfaction questionnaire used is the standard one offered by the project coordination group, without any customizations.

Table 6. Status of implementation of the actions proposed by the QEC in the 2022-2023 Annual Report.

QA System

According to the Statute, the School's strategic planning is defined in the "Three-Year Planning" document, with an annual focus. However, the School has not adopted a Strategic Plan in which its mission and priorities are defined over a multi-year time frame, in addition to defining the long-term strategic objectives with related indicators and targets

In view of the start of the new Rector's term, the QEC hopes that the School can, **for the first time, adopt a Strategic Plan** with a horizon equal to the duration of the latter's term of office. The document should define the development lines and strategic objectives to which the various plans produced on an annual basis can then be directly connected (e.g. Integrated Activity and Organization Plan, Communication Plan) as well as the planning of the objectives of the School's Governing Body.

The need to carry out a review of the Governance System and of the QA System as provided for in the attention point A.4 of the AVA3 model

The QEC suggests that the beginning of the new Rector's term of office could be an opportunity for a review aimed at determining the suitability, adequacy and effectiveness of the Governance System in implementing policies and strategies and in achieving the defined objectives, as well as the suitability, adequacy and effectiveness of the QA System in achieving the same.

In view of a possible revision of the Statute, the QEC suggests that **the Quality Enhancement Committee and the Joint Students and Teachers Board**, entities whose role within the School has been consolidated over the years, **might be formally recognized in the Statute.**

The need for a critical review of key QA documents

The documents entitled "Quality Policies" and "Quality Assurance System" were drafted and approved in 2019. In view of the evolution of the internal and external context, these documents are currently in the process of being reviewed and updated. The changes will need to take into account the updates introduced by the AVA3 model, as well as the internal changes that have affected the School linked to the start of the new Rector's term of office (1 November 2024), in particular at a Governance and strategy level.

The need to clearly define the roles of the various actors involved in the QA system and the relationships between these and the other bodies of the Governance System

As part of the review of the QA system and the updating of key documents, the School should clarify and communicate to the entire Community not only the roles and responsibilities of the QEC, the AB and the JSTB, but also the ways in which these bodies can, where necessary, involve other internal subjects in the performance of their tasks, such as, for example, the Bodies and Committees supporting the Rector and the administrative offices.

Culture of Quality

The need for greater involvement of faculty and administrative offices in QA processes and to enable a broader sharing of QA principles within the School Community

The QEC meets with new students on an annual basis, providing them with an overview of the QA system and explaining their active role in improving the quality of the PhD Programs and of the services offered.

Once a year the QEC also meets with the heads of the administrative offices to discuss the results of the Customer Satisfaction surveys relating to the services provided (referred to in [section 7.2](#)).

The QEC deems it appropriate to **organize**, also in preparation for the Periodic Accreditation, **training activities to promote the culture of quality and the involvement of the entire School Community**.

Educational QA

The evaluation of the quality of PhD Programs is still unbalanced towards educational aspects, with limited attention to research initiation, supervision and placement

During the drafting of the 2023 Annual Report, the QEC invited the JSTB to place greater emphasis on the results of the End of Year Questionnaire and of the PhD Program Evaluation Questionnaire, which analyze all aspects of the PhD experience.

The QEC also hopes that **as part of its reviews of the PhD Program, the Scientific Board evaluates the structure and effectiveness of the research support process**, the publications of PhD students as well as the employment success of former students (placement).

Given the average time required to obtain the degree and the significant teaching load that characterizes some PhD programs, the QEC has found that the three-year duration of the PhD program does not give students sufficient time to complete their thesis project

The QEC believes that it is appropriate to evaluate the implementation of policies, including budgetary ones, aimed at encouraging the extension of grants beyond the standard 3 year duration of the PhDs or to lighten the teaching loads during the first year.

The QEC has repeatedly highlighted the need to pay greater attention to the completion of the cycle of improving the quality of educational aspects, in particular to the phases of discussing the results of the questionnaires for collecting the opinions of the students and of defining and implementing the appropriate corrective actions

Despite recent progress in discussing the results of the questionnaires for collecting opinions from the Scientific Boards, it is necessary to insist and ensure that improvement actions are directly linked to the improvement areas through the analysis of the questionnaire results.

As already highlighted by the JSTB in its Annual Report, the timing with which the results of the questionnaires collecting the opinions of students are made available to the Scientific Board and to the JSTB itself is a key issue that impacts on the review process

At the QEC's request, the School's Governing Body has included among its 2024-2026 objectives the optimization of the process of distributing questionnaires for collecting student opinions.

Please refer to [section 3.6](#).

Research QA

Despite having drafted the Guidelines for Research QA, the School has not yet implemented them

The first internal research monitoring and evaluation exercise will be carried out in the second half of 2024 in conjunction with the preparatory activity for the 2020-2024 VQR exercise.

In view of the limited size of the School, the strong heterogeneity of the faculty and the excellent results obtained in the VQR exercises, there is a widespread perception that there is no need to implement research quality assurance measures

The QEC suggests promoting **an external benchmarking action** with particular attention to other similar institutions, such as for example Schools of Advanced Studies.

In the discussion with ANVUR, the QEC suggests highlighting the specific characteristics that are associated with Schools of Advanced Studies, allowing for the development of appropriate research assessment models, with particular reference to interdisciplinary research.

As regards the diffusion of the culture of quality, please refer to the relevant item in this table.

Monitoring the publications made by former students is extremely complex

The QEC suggests **that upon enrolment in the School, each student be asked to create an ORCID profile**, thus making it possible to monitor eventual publications by the School's former students after earning a degree using the identifier in question

Third Mission QA

The first monitoring exercise of third mission activities highlighted a fragmentation of the same

The QEC invites the School to **pay greater attention to the coordination of third mission activities**, with the aim of relating them back to common macro areas defined at a strategic level.

The first monitoring exercise highlighted challenges in identifying indicators and parameters for evaluating third mission activities

The QEC agrees with the findings highlighted by the Third Mission Evaluation Committee regarding **the need to initiate a discussion on a set of indicators to be used for the evaluation of the impact of the various activities**.

Services QA

The QEC has noted on numerous occasions that the quality of services provided is negatively impacted by the undersizing of technical-administrative staff. The number of technical-administrative resources employed is not sufficient to support the needs of the School, negatively impacting the quality of the services provided, as well as the ability to carry out a periodic review of the administrative processes aimed at improving them

The QEC is confident that the selection procedures currently underway will allow for a sufficient **strengthening of the administrative offices**. If accompanied by appropriate quality training initiatives, this strengthening of administrative staff could translate into a significant increase in the quality of services offered.

At present, also taking into account the recent acquisitions of buildings, the number of study stations (excluding those in the student's rooms) is not sufficient to guarantee the assignment of a fixed station to each student

In this regard, the QEC has initiated a dialogue with the Facilities Committee aimed at identifying solutions that guarantee efficient use of the available study stations. For more details, please refer to [section 6.1](#).

The student community has requested to reintroduce the contribution for the purchase of IT equipment to ensure that everyone has access to a laptop or to other devices required for the completion of their research project

The QEC highlights the need and urgency of ensuring that students have access to adequate computing resources, including through the evaluation of specific budgetary policies.

As also highlighted by the JSTB in its Annual Report, internal communication is sometimes lacking and ineffective

The QEC invites the School **to evaluate possible alternative tools to enhance internal communication**, particularly towards the student community. The update of the School's website, currently underway, could help improve communication. The

<p>In particular, the student community does not believe that emails, which are the most commonly used means of communication by the School, are the most appropriate communication tool</p>	<p>QEC also recommends that the School promote training actions dedicated to the theme of effective communication towards users.</p>
<p>The need to improve the organization of the Intranet and of the institutional website to facilitate access to information by users</p>	<p>The review and updating of the institutional website, which is deemed urgent, is underway and should be completed by the end of 2024. The QEC invites the School to engage the Community in defining the content of the website and in evaluating its usability.</p> <p>As far as the SIIMT Intranet is concerned, to which some changes have recently been made as a temporary measure, the QEC identifies the need for a redesign aimed at strengthening and making the tool more effective.</p>
<p>The need to define and share the external communication strategy</p>	<p>The QEC invites the School to clarify both the communication strategies, as well as the role of the Communication and Events Office. In this regard, it recommends the drafting of Guidelines available to internal users, in which the methods for implementing the School's communication strategy are defined.</p>

Table 7. The column of the left reports the points of attention and the key issues that the QEC intends to highlight in view of the analysis of the maturity status of the School's QA system, while the column of the right reports the improvement actions proposed by the QEC.

9. Annexes

A. List of Quality Enhancement Committee Meetings

During the period covered by this Report, the QEC met 13 times on the following dates:

Date	Method	Notes
2 May 2023	Mixed	Meeting originally scheduled for 26 April 2023
30 May 2023	Mixed	
15 June 2023	Mixed	
5 July 2023	Remote	
18 September 2023	Mixed	Joint session between QEC, AB and JSTB
4 October 2023	Mixed	
24 October 2023	Mixed	
29 October 2023	Remote	
20 December 2023	Mixed	
30 January 2024	Mixed	
27 February 2024	Mixed	
20 March 2024	Mixed	
3 May 2024	Mixed	Meeting originally scheduled for 30 April 2024