جامعة الأمير سطام بن عبد العزيز
Prince Sattam Bin Abdulaziz University

عمادة التطوير والجودة
Deanship of Development & Quality

ACADEMIC QUALITY MANAGEMENT SYSTEM (AQMS)

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Deanship of Development and Quality 2018

Contents

1. Purpose of Academic Quality Management System (AQMS)

The Academic Quality management system (AQMS) is a dynamic system to ensure effective academic standards and quality improvements at Prince Sattam bin Abdulaziz University (PSAU). This system includes processes and procedures, along with responsibilities, to achieve quality policies and objectives. In order to enhance the quality performance and stakeholder's satisfaction level with the university's graduates and services, AQMS objectives are related to the PSAU's mission and meet the regulatory requirements of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia. These requirements include, but are not limited to, regulations of the Higher Education Council and universities, Saudi Arabia Qualifications Framework (SAQF), and National Center for Academic Accreditation and Assessment (NCAAA).

PSAU faculty and staff are responsible for ensuring and promoting the application of the guiding principles for academic quality standards of the AQMS. It is expected that key members with academic management roles at both university and college levels take lead responsibility for promoting the AQMS throughout the university.

2. Terminology

Quality
The value, worth, or standard of an institution or program in relation to generally accepted standards for an institution or program of its type.

Quality Assurance
Processes and procedures for ensuring that qualifications, assessment and program delivery meet quality standards. The activities that aim at safeguarding quality.

Internal Quality
Processes of quality assurance carried out within and by or

Assurance
for a higher education institution.

Qualification
The formal outcome of an assessment and validation process which is obtained when a competent body determines that an individual has achieved learning outcomes to given standards.

Program
A coherent course of study followed by students in an academic or professional field or leading to a professional qualification, the successful completion of which qualifies them for an academic award.

Course A self-contained unit of study on a particular topic, with defined level, credit value, aims, intended learning outcomes, mode(s) of delivery, scheme of assessment, and possibly also pre- and co-requisites

Learning Outcomes The term learning outcomes is commonly used to refer to the learning that results from a course or program undertaken by students. Learning outcomes are the result of the teaching process. Reference is often made to Intended Learning Outcomes to mean the learning objectives a course or program is designed to develop.

Standards Specifications and criteria which detail prescribed outcomes for qualifications or qualification institutions.

Assessment A process of measuring performance in relation to established standards or criteria

Evaluation The process of assessing and assigning value to a facility or activity

Accreditation Formal verification by a recognized authority that a program or an institution meets required standards.

3. Accountability

PSAU is accountable for the quality and academic standards of all academic units and activities under SAQF and NCAAA. Furthermore, PSAU is responsible to external stakeholders for the quality of the learning experience provided to the students. Thus, PSAU aims at establishing and applying the following principles in learning and educational matters: ensuring graduating outcomes conform with the integrated SAQF; enhancing the learning outcomes in accordance with national unified criteria for knowledge, skills and competence; articulating a common language ensuring the transparency of quality criteria. In addition, NCAAA requires universities applying for academic accreditation, to demonstrate the academic standards of its provision and the quality of the learning opportunities it provides for its students. PSAU's approach to quality assurance is guided by establishing the following concepts:

Completeness

Quality processes apply to all university provision in learning and teaching. The learning experience of all students is systematically considered and reflected upon regularly and periodically.

Coherence

The components of the Quality Framework are inter-related and act to draw together diverse individuals and information in a coherent and holistic review of quality.

Objectivity

Institution-led quality processes are informed by the views and input of external experts and bodies. The university undergoes Institutional Academic Accreditation organized by the NCAAA.

Efficiency and assurance

The components of the Academic Quality Framework are designed to ensure rigorous interrogation of academic standards and assurance of academic quality while meeting the needs of academic staff and minimizing the impact on workload. Accordingly, the processes themselves are subject to frequent – mostly annual – review.

Decentralized Responsibility

The university's staff are collectively responsible for maintaining academic standards. The components of our Academic Quality Framework are designed to support devolved responsibility, with everyone being involved in academic activity and to demonstrate that we are committed to providing a high-quality learning experience.

4. Saudi Arabia Qualifications Framework (SAQF)

Saudi Arabia Qualifications Framework (SAQF) is a unified, inclusive system aimed to raise the quality of national qualifications. It sets criteria and procedures for the development and classification of qualifications, based on learning outcomes, for national and international recognition. SAQF aims to:

- Build an integrated national framework that includes all qualifications in the education and training sectors.
- Set national unified criteria for learning outcomes based on knowledge, skills and competences.
- Articulate a common language to ensure the transparency of quality criteria and assist comprehension.
- Support comparison of the different types of qualifications to ensure consistency and accuracy of qualifications.
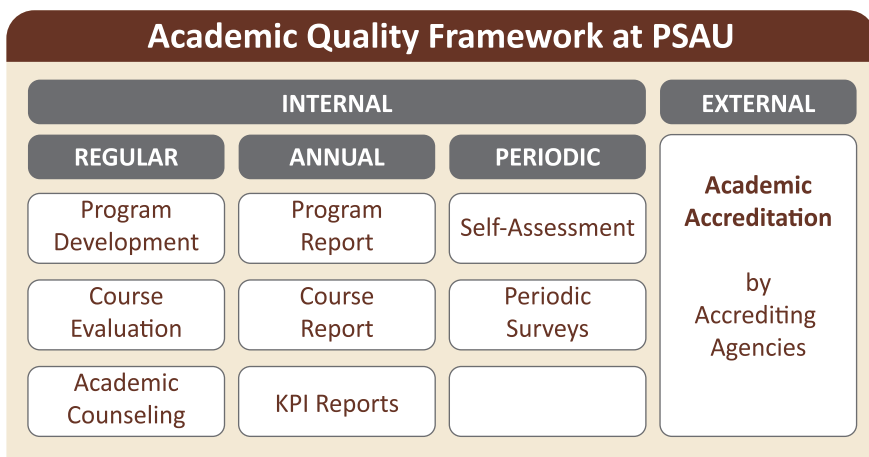- Contribute to improving employment capabilities and enhance workforce

competitiveness to participate in social and economic development.
- Raise the quality of and increase the trust in qualifications.
- Gain national and international recognition and promote lifelong learning.
- Develop flexible educational, training, and employment progression pathways by facilitating enrolment, progression and transferability.
- Use classifications to assemble similar qualifications at unified levels to help establish an understanding of the quality, strength, and purpose of these qualifications.
- Provide a national register of qualifications and Awarding Bodies that have met SAQF standards.

5.   Academic Quality Framework at PSAU

The Academic Quality Framework at PSAU has been designed as a tool to support both self-evaluation and external quality assurance activities. The content of the framework was developed over time, starting with a review of national and international polices, and regulation, taking into the account feedback from key stakeholders and the outcomes of a variety of testing exercises.

PSAU places great importance and value on student involvement in its processes and seeks to promote student engagement in quality wherever appropriate. These include the participation of the students in survey evaluations of issues related to quality and development. It is important to note that each process is informed by the output of others, to create a coherent framework. The following diagram represents a summary of the university's framework of quality assurance processes:

Academic Quality Framework at PSAU

INTERNAL			EXTERNAL
REGULAR	ANNUAL	PERIODIC	**Academic Accreditation** by Accrediting Agencies
Program Development	Program Report	Self-Assessment	
Course Evaluation	Course Report	Periodic Surveys	
Academic Counseling	KPI Reports		

6. Regular Activity

6.1 Program development

PSAU provides guidelines to support the development of new programs or updating existing programs. The guidelines include information sheets on key strategic areas that should be considered as a checklist to guide the process of designing and reviewing programs, and a comprehensive list of pedagogic principles. The university must ensure that it fulfills its responsibilities for quality standards through its procedures for program approval. Hence, several measures have been taken into consideration. These include:

1. External reference points, including any relevant subject benchmark statements.
2. SAQF and NCAAA criteria and standards.
3. The requirements of professional and statutory bodies, where appropriate.
4. The compatibility of program proposals and developments with the university and college missions.
5. The program's commitment to the university's Graduate Attributes.

All programs at PSAU provide a coordinated package of learning experiences within which all components contribute to the learning expected of students. Each course in any program has specific goals/objectives reflecting part of the learning outcomes package of the program. All programs have to be developed to reflect clearly the goals and learning outcomes and ensure that the learning is delivered by the courses included within the program. Program design, development and approval are important steps in setting programs at an appropriate academic standard. Adaptation of any international standards needs to respect the NCAAA's and SAQF Standards for Quality Assurance.

PSAU adopts several stages to ensure proper developing of its programs. These include a proposal/planning stage, a development/design stage, and an approval stage. The Standing Committee of Study Plans, presided over by the Vice Rector of Education and Academic Affairs, is responsible for studying proposals for new programs and making recommendations to the University Council for the approval of the developed program. This can be summarized in the following procedures:

a) Colleges, through their departments, have the authority for the development of new programs or modifications in the existing ones. This is done through proposals that are submitted to the Standing Committee for Study Plans.

b) New program proposals or any modifications in the existing programs are

assessed and approved or rejected by the Standing Committee for Study Plans using criteria that ensure thorough and appropriate consultation in planning and capacity for effective implementation.

c)   If these proposals are approved by the standing committee, then they are submitted to the university council for final approval.

d)   If they are rejected by the standing committee then they are sent back to the college with the relevant recommendations for further study.

e)   PSAU has delegated the authority for minor changes in programs such as change of text and reference lists, modify planned teaching strategies, details of assessment tasks and minor updating of course content, to the relevant colleges.

An approval is a multi-stage activity involving the Department/College Council, Standing Committee of Study Plans and the University Council, which is responsible for the final approval. After a program has been approved, then following each cycle of delivery there will be a monitoring stage (typically course and program annual monitoring) and a periodic review stage, which typically takes place five years after the last program approval (this is shortened to four years when a program is approved for the first time).

6.2 Course Evaluation

Courses at PSAU are evaluated using an electronic survey, which requires a written or selected response in answer to a series of questions in order to evaluate the instruction of a given course. These surveys provide constructive feedback which the faculty members and university can use to assess the quality of course delivery.

The process of (a) gathering information about the impact of learning and teaching practice on student learning, (b) analyzing and interpreting this information, and (c) responding to and acting on the results is valuable for several reasons.

It enables instructors to review how others interpret their teaching methods. The information can also be used by administrators, along with other input, to make summative decisions and make formative recommendations (e.g., identify areas where a faculty member needs to improve). Typically, these evaluations are combined with peer evaluations, supervisor evaluations, and results of student's test scores, to create an overall picture of teaching performance. Course

evaluations are implemented in one of two ways, either summative or formative. PSAU encourages staff to use a variety of mechanisms to obtain student feedback to promote ongoing dialogue between students and staff and to minimize over-reliance on one particular mechanism. To ensure practice is consistent, the university sets out its requirements for gathering course evaluation data from students via questionnaires in its course evaluation policy. The key elements of the university's policy on course evaluation are:

1. Students should be given clear instructions on how to complete the questionnaire and advised when it will be circulated.

2. The data from the completed questionnaires should be summarized in a summary statistical annual report.

3. Access to all data associated with individual courses is restricted; aggregated data will be more widely distributed and used for institutional purposes.
    (Course evaluation template)
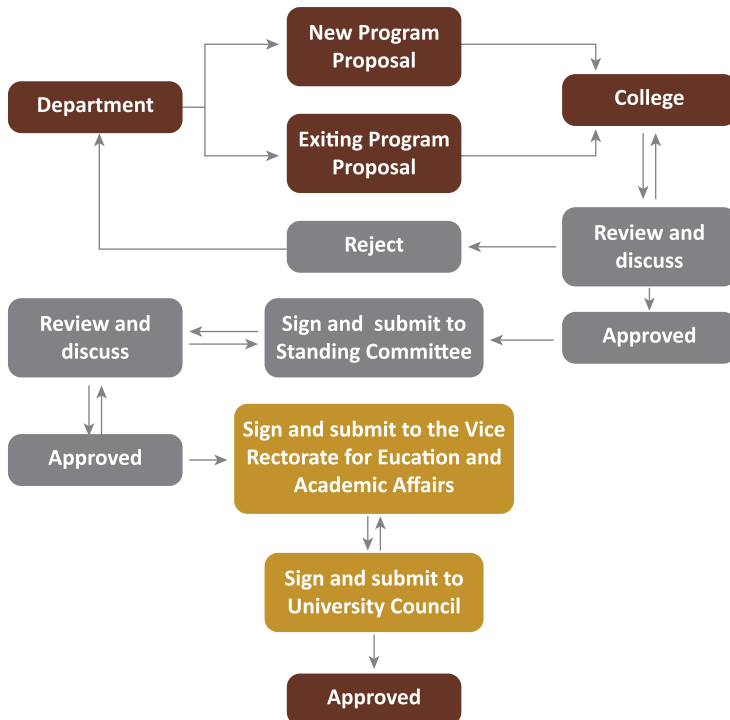
6.3   Academic counseling

Faculty members of PSAU are required to provide academic counseling to ease student difficulties. Students who, for instance, show a below average performance are provided with the necessary counseling by their advisors. Academic advisors are faculty members who have experience in and have been trained on the range and extent of support services available to the students. The regular meetings with students and the analysis of surveys on students' satisfaction with the academic counseling process provide feedback on the adequacy of assistance and counseling provided.

Furthermore, the Deanship of Development and Quality (DDQ) monitors the conduct of academic advising during its on-site visits to colleges through reviewing the evidence and face-to-face meetings with students. Faculty members strive to assist students in learning, counseling, and other academic activities. In addition to the teaching load specified by the Council of Higher Education, an experienced faculty member is allotted a group of students, to whom they will provide academic advice during the semester. The process is automated / system-generated in order to obtain a uniform and an unbiased allocation. The same method is being followed in all colleges of PSAU (Academic Advisor   Guidebook).

Each student is regularly provided with the name and office hours of his/her academic advisor. At the beginning of each semester, the Academic Advising Unit of each college / department organizes orientation sessions to the newly recruited faculty members regarding the Academic Advising activities. The majority of academic advising sessions are conducted face to face with documentation of the events in special forms.

7.   Annual Activities

Annual activities are carried out which evaluate the operation of academic activities; these activities include reviewing courses and program reports, key performance indicators (KPIs), student performance and other measures of the quality of the student learning experience throughout the preceding year.

Annual monitoring of programs and courses is the cornerstone of the quality assurance process. The aims of annual program/course reports are:

1. To evaluate the statistical information on student recruitment, grades, progression   and   completion

2. To consider and respond to inputs and feedback from students, and if appropriate, external agents such as professional and accreditation bodies

3. To reflect on the learning, teaching and assessment strategies deployed and consider any recommendations for change

4. To review the appropriateness and effectiveness of the learning outcomes in securing the program aims and objectives

5. To recommend changes for improving the student learning experience or curriculum content.

7.1   Annual Program Report and Annual Course Report

Annual monitoring of programs and courses is a continuous process by which a program and its constituent courses are kept under review. The outcomes of this review are reported in an Annual Program Report (APR). All academic programs are required to identify their strengths and weaknesses and set action plans to act upon them through program and course reports based on NCAAA templates (https://www.ncaaa.org.sa/Portal/Accreditation/Programmatic/Pages/Forms.aspx).

APRs are prepared by the program coordinator in consultation with faculty members in the program. The reports are submitted to the head of department or college and used as the basis for any modifications or changes in the program. The APR information is considered as a record of improvements in the program, which is used in the Self Study Report for Programs (SSRP) and by external reviewers for accreditation. A separate course report (CR) should be submitted for every course and for each section or campus location where the course is taught, even if the course is taught by the same person. Each CR is to be completed by the course coordinator at the end of each course and given to the program coordinator. A combined, comprehensive course report should be prepared by the course coordinator and the reports from the separate locations are to be attached, based on the NCAAA requirements.

In order to implement these improvement plans effectively, PSAU has set out a mechanism for reviewing the course and program reports. This mechanism work at program, academic department, college and university levels. This ensures the integration of evaluation and quality improvement plans with the normal administrative process (Fig.2).

The Mechanism for reviewing the course & Program Reports
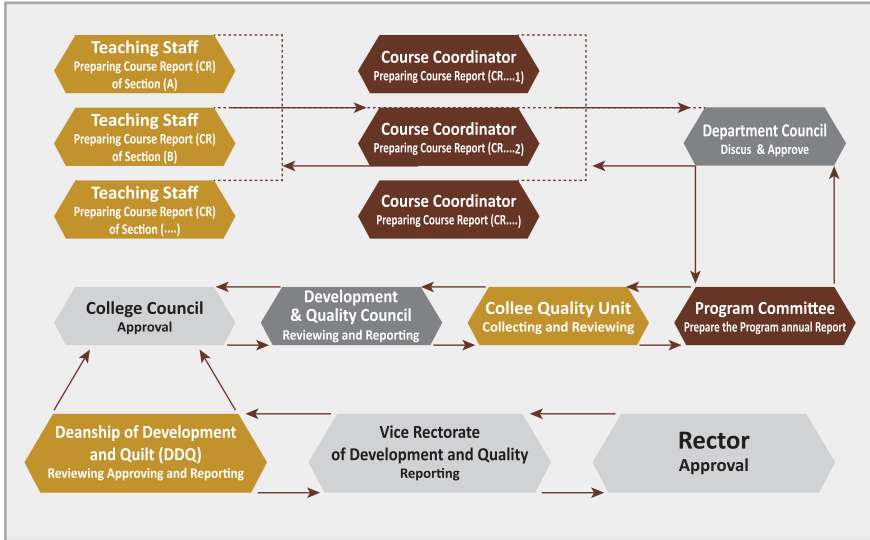
According to this mechanism, the Department Council will discuss and approve the APRs and CRs prepared by the program coordinator and course instructors respectively. in turn, the program committee will prepare the APR / CRs for the College Quality unit which will review the Program Annual Monitoring report and prepare a College Annual Monitoring report. The reporting procedure is designed to ensure that issues arising from monitoring are properly considered, reflected on and acted upon at each stage and by the relevant committees. In turn, these reports are submitted to the Development Quality council for reviewing and reporting to the College Council, which will approve these reports. If approved, each report will be submitted to the DDQ for review and approval and finally reported to the Vice Rectorate of Development and Quality which then reports to University Council for the final approval. Responses are also provided at each stage - closing the feedback loop and ensuring that actions and outcomes are reported back to staff and students is a crucial element of Annual Monitoring as well as other processes.

7.2 Key Performance Indicators (KPI's)

In addition to the NCAAA recommended indicators, PSAU has adopted many KPIs, such as completion rates, retention rates, and graduation rates to monitor and evaluate the quality of courses and programs. By doing so, PSAU aims to achieve the following:

1. Controlling and monitoring the level of progress towards achieving the university's strategic objectives

2. Assisting those with authority to make decisions based on correct and accurate information

3. Monitoring performance for benchmarking with other universities

4. Ensuring transparency and good governance

5. Facilitating the process of institution and program evaluations to achieve one of the most important requirements for academic accreditation.

The results of these indicators are updated regularly for all academic programs and used for internal and external benchmarking comparison. A collective report containing the results of those KPIs for the whole institution is prepared annually and distributed to relevant parties. PSAU has established a standing committee for KPIs, which is responsible for identifying and approving the KPIs that should be used by academic programs to monitor and evaluate their performance. This committee has issued A "Guidebook of Key Performance Indicators", with a detailed explanation of the adopted KPIs. These KPIs were classified into NCAAA KPIs and PSAU KPIs, which are designed according to the objectives of the university's units.

In addition, PSAU conducts 21 electronic surveys measuring the satisfaction of students, academic and administrative staff, alumni and employers regarding a number of university provisions. This will provide staff in university programs, sections, and branches with the necessary data to help them in internal benchmarking and preparing implementation strategies for improvement. Recently, PSAU has adopted an interactive electronic system to allow senior administrators to monitor different sets of KPIs that are related to their context.

8. Periodic Activity

The University operates two periodic internal review processes: Self-assessment and Satisfaction of PSAU Stakeholders.

8.1 Program Self-Assessment

All PSAU programs periodically prepare their Self-Study Reports (SSPRs) in compliance with the requirements of "The Standards for Quality Assurance and Accreditation" defined by the NCAAA. Each SSPR should include all the necessary information to be read as a complete self-contained report on the quality of the program and provide a thorough examination of the quality of the program. The mission and objectives of the program and the extent to which they are being achieved are thoroughly analyzed according to the standards for quality assurance and accreditation defined by the NCAAA.

The SSRP is considered as a research report on the quality of the program. It should include sufficient information to inform a reader who is unfamiliar with the program about the process of investigation and the evidence on which conclusions are based and enable him or her to have reasonable confidence that those conclusions are sound.

The SSPR is written with a focus on clarity and completeness of all information and supportive evidence from the program concerned. In addition, a verification of the analysis, and advice from others deemed able to offer an unbiased and independent opinion are used during the preparation of this report. The completed star evaluation sheets for the best practices, and for each standard as a whole, are prepared in accordance with the specific requirements contained in NCAAA's document 'Self-evaluation Scales for Higher Education Institutions' (SESI).

This multi-faceted task is accomplished through wide participation among faculty members in the program, in which many teams are formed comprising members from male and female sections who actively participate. Each team is assigned specific duties, and a steering committee of the program is established to coordinate all tasks related to the preparation of the self-study report.

Programs' SESIs and SSPRs are submitted to the DDQ to be evaluated by PSAU's board of internal assessors. Assessors' feedback is then submitted to the program quality unit to accept and modify these changes and finally resubmitted to an experienced external reviewer, to obtain an independent evaluation of the two documents. The reviewer evaluates the SESI and SSPR drafts in the light of all supportive evidence and key performance indicators (KPIs).

8.2 Periodic Survey

PSAU uses many surveys as instruments of indirect evaluation of its quality assurance processes. These surveys are centrally administered, and the results are provided to the respective units for the sake of comparison and analysis as a basis for their development plan. Among other things, these surveys (online/ offline) measure the satisfaction level of stakeholders with university services such libraries, IT services, and the experience of learning in general. PSAU uses a unified survey tool (both online and offline) for internal stakeholders such as students, faculty, staff.

The DDQ regularly distributes questionnaires to the university's stakeholders, including students and academic and administrative staff, to measure their level of satisfaction regarding the policies of the university, the current and future plans, the level of performance of the staff and faculty members, the adequacy of equipment and facilities and other topics that directly or indirectly relate to the students' experience. The questionnaires distributed to the students gather their understandings, opinions and perceptions of the issues relevant to them. These eleven questionnaires comprise:

- A program evaluation survey
- A survey evaluating the student's experience
- A survey evaluating the student activities and services provided
- A survey evaluating the university's mission statement - students
- Alumni survey
- A survey evaluating manuals and regulations
- A survey evaluating academic advising
- A survey evaluating electronic services
- A survey evaluating library and learning resources
- A survey evaluating the digital library
- A survey evaluating facilities and equipment

    The opinions of faculty members and administrative staff are also obtained regarding different issues, such as policies, facilities, and services provided by the university, by periodically conducting several questionnaires as follows:

- A survey of academic and administrative staff and leaders, evaluating the university's mission statement –
- A survey evaluating educational service quality and information resources
- A survey evaluating the services provided to the administrative staff
- A survey evaluating manuals and regulations
- A survey evaluating electronic services

- A survey evaluating library and learning sources
- A survey evaluating the digital library
- A survey evaluating the facilities and equipment

Based on these surveys, the DDQ's statistical report is divided into 23 sections. Each section deals with a single questionnaire in terms of analysis and interpretation of the survey data. In each section, the findings are discussed in three basic paragraphs: the first paragraph highlights the survey results' analysis at the university level, the second paragraph reports the analysis at the gender level, and the third paragraph reports the analysis at the branch level.

9. Academic Accreditation by Accrediting agencies (AAs)

Accrediting agencies is an umbrella term for a very diverse group of bodies, including a large number of professional bodies, regulators and those with statutory authority over a profession or group of professionals. Accreditation is the process whereby a professional association or non-governmental agency gives recognition to a school or institution for its demonstrated ability to meet predetermined criteria for established professional, statutory or regulatory standards.

The academic content and other aspects of taught programs can often be influenced by the requirements of accrediting bodies and professional associations.

Accreditation provides potential benefits for students:
- It offers recognized fast-track routes for graduates seeking professional status.
- It provides a further way of assuring and enhancing the quality of teaching and learning provision in particular subjects.

Typically, an accredited agency will carry out periodic reviews of degree programs to ensure that they continue to meet the requirements for accreditation and reflect current thinking about the profession and its development. Such reviews normally take the form of visits by a panel of members of the relevant body, who prepare a report on their findings. The format and organization of these reviews and what is required of subject areas in preparation are defined by the relevant accrediting agency. The university's programs in a large number of subject areas are endorsed or accredited by relevant professional, statutory or regulatory bodies that provide an additional layer of externality and objectivity to the monitoring of our provision.

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