

Pakistan's Quality Assurance Standards For Higher Education: Implementation and Students' Satisfaction

Bisma Bashir ^a Obaid Ullah ^b

Abstract: The structured and systematic evaluation process of an institution to determine whether or not accepted standards of infrastructure, scholarship, and education are being reached, maintained, and improved is known as quality assurance. Policies are proposed by the Higher Education Commission to improve and make strong standards for the support of students at higher education, to making the way for higher level students to pursue higher education with all the support they needed in their institution. The purpose of the current study is to assess how well policies are being implemented and how satisfied students are with higher education in relation to the requirements set by the Quality Assurance Agency (QAA), HEC. Descriptive research design was used for quantitative investigation. All NUML students were the population, while 160 students from the departments of psychology, education, and English were chosen as a study sample. Data was gathered from the respondents using a standardized 5-point Likert scale questionnaire. The reliability of the questionnaire was evaluated using Cronbach's Alpha, and the result was 0.671 (range: 0.5 to 0.9). After verifying the fundamental assumptions, Ordinal Regression Analysis (ORA) was used to examine the gathered data. The findings show that there was an acceptable degree of student satisfaction with the services provided and that student support services were implemented correctly, which raises student satisfaction. Governing bodies must guarantee that students have access to support services, and it is advised that academic administrators and legislators examine every facet of student support services for quality assurance.

Keywords: Quality Assurance, Higher Education, Student Support Services, Ordinal Regression Analysis

Introduction

Higher education institutions are the main source of creating knowledge and developing new minds for the development and prosperity of the country (Department of Education and Training, 2011). The essential pillar of higher education institutions is the students' support services, which are very important for the satisfaction of students and their academic achievement. If the student support services are not being fully implemented, it causes a barrier for many students to achieve their academic success and higher education.

Pakistan's government is making efforts to make higher education institutions progressive and also striving to upgrade these institutions upgraded. In the 21st century, a big change has been seen in the sector of higher education. The Higher Education Commission (HEC) in Pakistan is working hard to raise the standard of institutions of higher learning. These efforts contributed well to the development of students' success rate. A rapid increase is being seen in the achievement of implementing access to students' support services.

The Higher Education Commission developed the Quality Assurance Agency (QAA) to improve the quality of education at the higher level and to promote higher-level education. QAA is a systematic, structured, and planned programme to identify whether or not the standards of higher education are being met. These standards include infrastructure, teaching quality, student support services, and other facilities for student satisfaction. An efficient, quality higher education system is essential for economic growth in developing countries like Pakistan the (Quality Assurance Agency QAA, 2023).

^a MPhil Education Scholar, Department of Educational Sciences, National University of Modern Languages, Islamabad, Pakistan.

^b Manager, Quality Enhancement Cell (QEC)/Assistant Professor, Department of Educational Sciences, National University of Modern Languages, Islamabad, Pakistan.

Background of the Study: The development of a knowledge economy and compatibility, as well as the attainment of competitiveness with worldwide standards, requires a substantial improvement in Pakistan's higher education levels. According to the Quality Assurance Agency (2023) the Higher Education Commission is making great efforts to improve the quality of higher education in order to bring university education up to worldwide standards for the provision of outstanding teaching, learning, research, and services. Therefore, the enhancement of the quality of knowledge taught at universities and other higher education institutions is the primary goal of the HEC's numerous long- and short-term programs. In order to strengthen the educational system, HEC proposed 16 criteria for higher education. The standard 10— student support services—is the subject of this investigation.

Significance of the Study: The provision of student support services is an essential component of higher education. It is necessary to promote this element and student support services at higher education institutions in order to enhance their implementation and quality. The implementation of student support services and the degree of student satisfaction with these services are the main topics of this study.

Objectives of the Study

- a) To assess the level of implementation of students' support concerning HEC QAA standards.
- b) To assess students' satisfaction level towards student support services at a higher level of HEC QAA.

Research Hypothesis

H₀₁: There is no significant relationship between the implementation of student support services and students' satisfaction at higher-level education.

Statement of the Problem: Student support services in educational institutions are very important at every level of education. In Pakistan, some universities lack student support services. The government had designed policies for student support services to make sure students get proper services in educational institutions. Several research studies have been done on various aspects of students' support services at the university level, but limited research has been done to assess student support services concerning HEC QAA.

Literature Review

Quality Assurance Programme of Higher Education in Pakistan

The present situation of Pakistani education system is not satisfactory or lacking in meeting the standards of higher education with reference to international education system. So, it is a major challenge for Higher Education Commission in term to improve the quality of education system (QAA, 2023).

In Pakistan there is need to develop and improve the internal processes of universities for quality assurance and to improve the whole system of education. There is huge gap between present situation of education quality and desired level of quality level.

Academic Standards and Students (Standard 10: Student Support and Services)

Academic standards are very important for students' development at higher education. Academic standards are basis for developing students progress and success. Academic support services did not only help in students' enrolment but it also help to make meaningful goals for the development of each student. If academic standards are stated clearly it provides meaningful goal for achieving students' success. Academic standards serve as foundation for individualized programs. It helps to making decisions for students who need support services at higher level. With well defined standards for all students, it provides multiple measure for determining proficiencies of students and provide greater accountability for the students' progress. (Wisconsin's Model Academic Standards for Environmental Education, 1998).

Quality Education

Quality Education is the one which is inclusive, accessible to and effective which gives students needed knowledge, skills and competencies which students need to become successful in life. Quality education system also include teachers with proper skills and capabilities. It involves effective curriculum and

supportive learning environment. A quality education system possesses fair assessment practices and its main focus is on lifelong learning for all. A quality education program helps students to foster their creative thinking skills and make them creative and productive for their society. It also helps to develop students morally. Intellectually and spiritually (Brewster et al., 2022).

Libraries and Quality Education

Quality education and the term "library" are inherently linked, coexist, and rely on each other. Because they are interrelated, they cannot exist independently. Since the beginning of human civilization, they have been essential in responding to shifting demands and conditions at various periods of human life, and acknowledged that they are a means of achieving a common end. Libraries are widely acknowledged as important research centers and vital information empowerment resources. Their importance cannot be emphasized, as they greatly assist the general population (Dei & Asante, 2022). Because libraries assist economic, social, and cultural growth, provide information, and promote literacy, academic libraries are essential to improving education. Libraries are vital resources that facilitate knowledge access, assist research, encourage literacy, create a positive learning environment, and encourage lifelong learning for both students and teachers. This is why libraries are important to high-quality education. For students, academic libraries are extremely valuable since they support them on their path to success. These libraries provide a further benefit in terms of improving comprehension by serving as a portal to investigate knowledge from around the globe. The importance of the library in teaching and sharing knowledge has been further highlighted by developments in distant learning, continuing education, and the Open University system, Komalla stated.

Career Counselling at Higher Education and Students' Satisfaction

Career counselling is a broad range of professional actions that help people get past problems linked to their careers. Career counsellors assist teenagers who are interested in examining their career options, seasoned professionals who are thinking about changing careers, parents who want to go back to work after raising their child, and job seekers such Career counselling, according to Savickas, includes career exploration, professional decision-making, job transition management, lifetime career development, and addressing a range of work-related issues (Savickas, 2019).

The same is true for career counselling, which Shertzer & Stone, (1976) described as a blend of Islamic and Western methods: "Counselling is the process of combining Islamic and western approaches to assist an individual in better understanding himself and his surroundings."

Co-Curricular Activities at Higher Level

Co-curricular activities have a significant impact on students' performance development because they help them learn the fundamentals of teamwork, individual and group responsibility, and a number of other skills that reduce the likelihood that they will fail in their social and professional lives. According to The Impact of Co-curricular Activities Supported by Generic Skills on Students' Performance, students' social skills—acquired through co-curricular activities—are crucial for developing their ability to interact both individually and collectively in their social and professional lives. Intellectual intelligence alone is insufficient for students to succeed.

According to Haensly et al., (1985), extracurricular activities could be supplementary to or special additions to academic education. Based on 21st century abilities, these activities can be successfully developed outside of the conventional classroom. Children who participate in a variety of extracurricular activities can lower their risk of committing crimes and dropping out of school. They can also improve their abilities in areas like self-confidence, teamwork, and oral communication.

Students Benefit by Using Support Services on Campus

Benefits of Using Campus Support Services According to research, students' persistence at the university is positively correlated with their use of particular on-campus support services. One may argue that for students who are uncomfortable talking about their problems at home, on-campus student support

programs are the ideal choice. University services offer students academic support, including tutoring and remedial course recommendations, in addition to emotional support (Bettinger et al., 2013). Students can attain learning objectives and self-regulation while requesting assistance in developing their capacity for autonomous problem-solving and self-determination.

Higher education counsellors support students with a variety of tasks, including preparing them for social and academic problems (Abiola & Paul, 2019). Additionally, counsellors can inspire kids and help them with career planning. They can also urge students to talk honestly with their parents or guardians about their issues (Jackson, 2017). In order to boost student persistence, Kuh et al., (2022) contend that learner-centered support services, like peer tutoring and specialized writing and math labs, should be made available to students. Speaking and writing tutoring centers are offered by the majority of academic services. Academic services have a major impact on students' perseverance, (Jackson, 2017).

Student Wellbeing

The wellbeing of students is very important aspect to be consider at higher level education and it is also growing very fastly in this field (Brewster et al., 2022). Researchers have shown that students at higher level have high level of anxiety in which they want some support form the counsellors i the education institution to feel comfortable to share their issue with them (Brown, 2016), that's why demand for career counsellors and psychological support become more at higher education level. There is a clear relationship between students' satisfaction and students support services related to students wellbeing. So, it is recommended that universities need to bring this kind of services for students to make them successful and feel satisfied in their educational settings. It will also help to leading towards meaningful learning outcome and students' success (Stone & O'Shea, 2019).

The relationship between students' satisfaction and students support services is well documented and highlighting at higher education level and it is discussed that how we can consider students support services for students.

Method

The design of the study was a descriptive research study, which was a non-experimental research design.

Population and Sample/Study Group

Students of social sciences from National University of Modern Language Islamabad were respondents of this study. The sample size of study was 150 students were randomly selected through standard table of determining sample size (Krijice, 1970).

Data Collection Tools

The questionnaire was used for collecting data. Close-ended questions will be asked of respondents in a questionnaire to find out the satisfaction level of students towards student support services and their implementation at a higher level. A 5-point Likert scale is used in a questionnaire, which limits respondents to answer "strongly agree," "agree," "neutral," "disagree," and "strongly disagree". The fifth theme was designed by research objectives. Each theme of the questionnaire comprises 6 items.

Data Collection

The questionnaire was given to respondents for data collection after pilot testing. The responses were 100% from the selected sample.

Analysis of Data

In this study quantitative method was used to analysis data which was collected by the respondents. This study used ordinal regression analysis to test hypothesis through SPSS.

Results and Discussion

The results of the ordinal regression analysis for each theme are discussed according to the responses of

the themes.

Theme 1: Teaching Quality

In this theme six items were included, which were designed in accordance which the objectives of the study. In table 1 the percentage and frequency of responses from respondents was analysed separately for each item.

Model Fitting Information

Based on the model fitting data given below, the model's fit was rejected at the 5% level of relevance and with 18 degrees of freedom since the computed Chi-square value was greater than the value shown in the table.

Table 1
Model Fitting Information, Goodness-of-Fit, Pseudo R-Square

Model	-2 Log Likelihood	Chi-Square	DF	Sig.	Pseudo R-Square
Intercept Only	173.440				
Final	149.531	23.910	18		
Pearson		128.064	124	.383	
Deviance		112.529	124	.761	
Cox and Snell					.138
Nagelkerke					.166
McFadden					.083

Goodness-of-Fit

Further, the model's goodness-of-fit was rejected at the 5% level of significance and 124 degrees of freedom (df) since the computed Chi-square value exceeded the tabulated value. Our hypothesis, due to which "there is no significant relationship between implementation of student support services and students' satisfaction at higher level education," was thus rejected as a result of these findings.

Theme 2: Career Counselling

In this theme, the total number of items is 5 regarding the implementation of career counselling and students' satisfaction at a higher level.

Model Fitting Information

According to the model fitting data presented below, the model's fit was rejected at the 5% level of relevance and with 18 degrees of freedom since the computed Chi-square value was higher than the tabulated value.

Table 2
Model Fitting Information, Goodness-of-Fit, Pseudo R-Square

Model	-2 Log Likelihood	Chi-Square	DF	Sig.	Pseudo R-Square
Intercept Only	247.306				
Final	214.194	33.112	18		
Pearson		177.254	156	.117	
Deviance		176.644	156	.123	
Cox and Snell					.186
Nagelkerke					.216
McFadden					.105

Furthermore, the model's goodness-of-fit was rejected at the 5% level of significance and 156 degrees of freedom (df) since the computed Chi-square value exceeded the tabulated value. Our hypothesis, according to which "there is no significant relationship between implementation of student support services and students' satisfaction at higher level education," was thus rejected as a result of these findings.

Pseudo-R-Square confirmed that our null hypothesis (Ho) was rejected. Ordinal regression analysis's post-hoc treatment showed a rise, indicating a well-fitting model. Therefore, based on the results, we can say that we may accept the model that was employed to test our null hypothesis, which was rejected.

Themes 3: Co-Curricular Activities

Model Fitting Information

According to the model fitting data provided below, the model's fit was rejected at the 13 degrees of freedom and 5% level of significance because the computed Chi-square value was higher than the tabulated value.

Table 3

Model Fitting Information

Model	-2 Log Likelihood	Chi-Square	df
Intercept Only	168.406		
Final	152.088	16.318	13

Goodness-of-Fit

Additionally, the model's goodness-of-fit was rejected at the 5% level of significance and 129 degrees of freedom (df) since the computed Chi-square value exceeded the tabulated value. Our hypothesis, according to which "there is no significant relationship between implementation of student support services and students' satisfaction at higher level education," was thus rejected as a result of these findings.

Table 4

Goodness-of-Fit

	Chi-Square	Df	Sig.
Pearson	121.346	129	.672
Deviance	99.924	129	.973

Pseudo R-Square

A The post-hoc (Pseudo-R-Square) test is used to confirm that our null hypothesis (Ho) was rejected. Ordinal regression analysis's post-hoc treatment showed a rise, indicating a well-fitting model. Therefore, based on the results, we can say that we may accept the model that was employed to test our null hypothesis, which was rejected.

Table 5

Pseudo-R-Square

Cox and Snell	.096
Nagelkerke	.119
McFadden	.061

Theme 4: Lab Facilities

Model Fitting Information

In line with the model fitting data provided below, the model's fit was rejected at the 5% level of significance along with 12 degrees of freedom since the computed Chi-square value was greater than the tabulated value.

Table 6

Model Fitting Information

Model	-2 Log Likelihood	Chi-Square	Df
Intercept Only	241.927		
Final	221.137	20.790	12

Goodness-of-Fit

The model's goodness-of-fit was rejected at the 5% level of significance and 186 degrees of freedom (df) since the estimated Chi-square value exceeded the tabulated value. Our hypothesis, due to which "there is no significant relationship between implementation of student support services and students' satisfaction at higher level education," was thus rejected as a result of these results.

Table 7

Goodness-of-Fit

	Chi-Square	Df	Sig.
Pearson	173.159	186	.741
Deviance	162.395	186	.893

Pseudo R-Square

The researcher used a post-hoc (Pseudo-R-Square) treatment to confirm that our null hypothesis (Ho) was rejected. Ordinal regression analysis's post-hoc treatment showed a rise, indicating a well-fitting model. Therefore, based on the results, we can say that we may accept the model that was employed to test our null hypothesis, being rejected.

Table 8

Pseudo R-Square

Cox and Snell	.121
Nagelkerke	.135
McFadden	.057

Theme 5: Other Facilities

Model Fitting Information

According to the model fitting data provided below, the model's fit was rejected at the 5% level of significance and with 15 degrees of freedom since the computed Chi-square value was higher than the tabulated value.

Table 9

Model Fitting Information

Model	-2 Log Likelihood	Chi-Square	Df
Intercept Only	299.193		
Final	278.768	20.425	15

Goodness-of-Fit

In addition, the model's goodness-of-fit was rejected at the 5% level of significance and 303 degrees of freedom (df) since the computed Chi-square value exceeded the tabulated value. The hypothesis, according to which "there is no significant relationship between implementation of student support services and students' satisfaction at higher level education," was thus rejected as a result of these results.

Table 10

Goodness-of-Fit

	Chi-Square	Df	Sig.
Pearson	347.867	303	1.000
Deviance	227.838	303	1.000

Pseudo R-Square

We used a post-hoc (Pseudo-R-Square) treatment to confirm that our null hypothesis (Ho) was rejected. Ordinal regression analysis's post-hoc treatment showed a rise, indicating a well-fitting model. Therefore, on the basis of results, model is accepted that was employed to test our null hypothesis, being rejected.

Table 11*Pseudo R-Square*

Cox and Snell	.119
Nagelkerke	.133
McFadden	.056

Discussion

In light of this study, it is concluded that students of the university are satisfied with student supporting services provided by the universities, but there is a need to maintain these facilities and to ensure access of the facilities for students. It is also concluded that there is proper implementation of the students' support services. Students feel satisfied with the quantity of books in the library and also with the facilities available in the institutions. It is also found that teaching quality is satisfactory.

Some lacking is found in career counselling some students feels that there is less implementation for the availability of career counsellors in the institution. Most of the students are satisfied with the implementations for other facilities like indoor and outdoor sports facilities, hostel facilities, transport facilities, and health care facilities.

Recommendations

1. It is recommended there is need to review the aspects included in students support services and it need to be done by policy makers and academic administrators.
2. The review of quality assurance at higher education for students is needed.
3. There is need to make sure that higher bodies may ensure that students have access to all the supporting services in universities.

Recommendations for future research

1. The present study only focused on the students of NUML Islamabad Future study can be conducted at other institutions.
2. A comparative study can be done between different universities to assess the implementation of student support services.
3. A study may focus on the other aspects of the HEC QAA standard, as this study only focused on standard 10: student support services.

References

- Abiola, O. B., & Paul, A. T. (2019). The inclusion of guidance and counseling program into basic education curriculum for quality assurance. *Asian J. Interdisciplinary Res*, 2(2), 33-43. <http://dx.doi.org/10.34256/ajir1924>
- Bettinger, E. P., Boatman, A., & Long, B. T. (2013). Student supports: developmental education and other academic programs. *The Future of Child*, 23(1), 93-115. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/23409490>
- Brewster, L., Jones, E., Priestley, M., Wilbraham, S. J., Spanner, L., & Hughes, G. (2022). 'Look after the staff and they would look after the students' cultures of wellbeing and mental health in the university setting. *Journal of Further and Higher Education*, 46(4), 548-560. <https://doi.org/10.1080/0309877X.2021.1986473>
- Brown, P. (2016, September). *The Invisible Problem?: improving students' mental health*.
- Collings, R., Swanson, V., & Watkins, R. (2014). The impact of peer mentoring on levels of student wellbeing, integration and retention: a controlled comparative evaluation of residential students in UK higher education. *Higher education*, 68(6), 927-942. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s10734-014-9752-y>
- Dei, D. G. J., & Asante, F. Y. (2022). Role of academic libraries in the achievement of quality education as a sustainable development goal. *Library management*, 43(6/7), 439-459. <https://doi.org/10.1108/LM-02-2022-0013>
- Department of Education and Training. (2010g). *Annual Report 2009-2010*. Darwin.
- Haensly, P. A., Lupkowski, A. E., & Edlind, E. P. (1985). The role of extracurricular activities in education. *The High School Journal*, 69(2), 110-119. <https://www.jstor.org/stable/40365131>
- Holdsworth, R. (2021). Give me a place to stand and I'll move the earth: Some reflections on 42 years of publishing connect. *Connect*, (250), 6-10.
- Jackson, D. (2017). The impact of work-integrated learning on career planning among business students. In *New Zealand association for cooperative education 2017 conference proceedings*.
- Morgan, K. (1970). Sample size determination using Krejcie and Morgan table. *Kenya Projects Organization (KENPRO)*, 38(1970), 607-610. <https://www.kenpro.org/sample-size-determination-using-krejcie-and-morgan-table/>
- Kuh, G. D., Kinzie, J., Schuh, J. H., & Whitt, E. J. (2022). *Student success in college: Creating conditions that matter*. John Wiley & Sons.
- Savickas, M. (2019). *Career counselling*. American Psychological Association Washington, DC.
- Shertzer, B., & Stone, S. C. (1976). *Fundamentals of guidance*. Houghton Mifflin.
- Stewart, S., Lim, D.H., Kim, J., (2015). Factors influencing college persistence for first-time students. *J. Dev. Educ.* 38(3), 12-20. <https://www.jstor.org/stable/24614019>
- Stone, C., & O'Shea, S. (2019). Older, online and first: Recommendations for retention and success. *Australasian Journal of Educational Technology*, 35(1). <https://doi.org/10.14742/ajet.3913>
- Stone, C., Freeman, E., Dymont, J. E., Muir, T., & Milthorpe, N. (2019). Equal or equitable?: The role of flexibility within online education. *Australian and International Journal of Rural Education*, 29(2), 26-40. <https://search.informit.org/doi/abs/10.3316/informit.639619709196818>
- Quality Assurance Agency – QAA, (2023), Review of Institutional Performance and Enhancement (RIPE); A Handbook for Internal and External Quality Assurance at the Institutional Level, Published by Higher Education Commission, Pakistan.
- Fortier, J. D., Grady, S. M., Lee, S. A., & Marinac, P. A. (1998). *Wisconsin's Model Academic Standards for Environmental Education*. Bulletin No. 9001. Wisconsin Dept. of Public Instruction, Publication Sales, Drawer 179, Milwaukee, WI 53293-0179.