Quality Functions at American University of Beirut (AUB): Embedding Multi-players to Foster Improvement

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Outline

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- Role of Quality Assurance in Enhancing Collaborations
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Quality at AUB

- Quality at AUB has kept up with changes in conceptualizations of quality in higher education.
- Recent years have witnessed inclusion of learning outcomes assessment as standard for reviewing AUB performance, and not only measures of resources, faculty and staff qualifications and other established ‘earmarks’ of quality.
- Also, there has been a focus on teaching, documentation, and transparency with more public accessibility to information.
- Care for quality at all levels, a quality culture.
- Guided by AUB’s mission and values.
Quality Processes at AUB

- The initial purpose for the process was for continuous improvement and institutional renewal. Require ongoing reflection and critique of the way things are done to enhance student learning and success in achieving goals and realizing mission. An internal QA point of reference.

- With accreditation (2004) and re-accreditation (2009) the need arose for compliance with standards, an external QA perspective. The existence of a comprehensive explicit internal quality strategy facilitated the efficacy of external evaluation.

- Focus of internal assessment and approaches were then identified to help achieve purposes. Structure and processes were put in place to ensure dissemination of results, implementation of recommendations, and follow-up reviews to complete the quality action cycle.
Assessment Initiatives at AUB

To monitor quality and performance at AUB and its administrative & academic units from a variety of perspectives, a number of assessment initiatives were launched at institutional & unit levels. OIRA plays a leading (L) & supporting (S) roles in the monitoring performance.

- Strategic planning and assessment (L)
- Balanced Scorecards and Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) (L)
- Monitoring budgets & expenditures (S)
- Internal audit monitoring (S)
- Assessment of student learning outcomes (S)
- Assessment of General Education Program (S)
- Periodic Program Review (S)
- Office of Institutional Research & Assessment (OIRA) Activities (L)
Since 2004, AUB has embarked on its first strategic planning cycle with the development of plans for 15 major academic & administrative units, and an Institutional Strategic Plan has now been approved and will be implemented.

Each stage of the planning process involved assessment in some way (SWOT, external trends & influences, etc).

AUB is making use of Kaplan-Norton Balanced Scorecard (BSC) methodology to measure the achievement of objectives.

University’s vision was articulated in terms of operational objectives involving stakeholders (students, patients, faculty, employees and external actors), business processes and financial resources.

AUB has around 180 critical measures or KPIs.
Strategic Planning & Performance Indicators

The BSC measures & monitors University’s achievements as an institution of higher education in relation to the following objectives:

- AUB’s contribution to the intellectual and social growth of students, to developing their writing skills and to preparing them for careers;
- Student satisfaction with various processes (for instance, admissions and registration), the accessibility of faculty members, course design and delivery, and the way in which their feedback is solicited and used;
- The level of faculty and staff preparedness, productivity and satisfaction;
- Several factors related to the University’s financial stability.

Institutional BSC is reviewed annually by the president and his ‘Cabinet’, review process looks at trends indicated by KPIs and the steps to be taken to improve performance.
Monitoring Budgets & Internal Audit

- Monitoring budgets & expenditures.
  - AUB has a number of existing processes to document, track and assess financial performance at various levels.

- Internal audit monitoring.
  - AUB’s Internal Audit Office has performed 70 audits covering several areas, for instance, finances, operations and processes, and information technology.
  - Its reports help to assure the effectiveness and efficiency of University operations in targeted areas.
Assessment of Learning Outcomes

- **Assessment of Learning Outcomes in the Major**
  - Since the 2004 Self-Study, the University has devised, established the processes, and started implementing a comprehensive plan for the assessment of student learning in all faculties.
  - Assessment committees were formed, trained on development of assessment plans and tools.

- **General Education (GE) Learning Outcomes Assessment**
  - GE Committee has
    - developed standards for the designation of general education courses,
    - completed the designation of 220 courses in various disciplines, and
    - Developed an assessment and evaluation plan of the GE program learning outcomes using direct and indirect measures.
In June 2010, Senate approved the Program Periodic Review Policy, and implementation began fall 2010.

It entails the review of all of our programs at least once every six years.

Each department is required to evaluate its undergraduate and graduate degree programs simultaneously in accordance with a schedule set in consultation with the academic deans.

The process has four main steps.

- First, faculty members conduct a departmental self-study that provides descriptive and evaluative information about its programs, faculty, and students; and suggests areas and plans for improvement and identifies future program needs, direction/s, and priorities.
- Second, external reviewers visit the campus and prepare a separate report.
- Third, an internal review committee studies the documents and drafts a final report to the provost.
- Finally, the provost presents the plan’s financial implications to academic and administrative heads for their input and asks the Senate to consider and approve its educational aspects.
Involvement of Multi-Players

Above listed activities involved faculty, students, staff, administration, alumni, & business community

- Strategic Planning Committees
  - 19 committees 1st cycle  
  - 17 2nd cycle
- Accreditation Committees (14, one for each standard)
- Program Review Committees
- General Education Committee
- Course Learning Outcomes Assessment

In addition, close involvement with business and community

- International Advisory Council
- Advisory Boards for various faculties especially OSB, FAFS, & FEA.
School of Business. Guided by two independent boards: an International Board of Overseers (the “IBO”) comprising international leaders in business and education, and a Middle East Advisory Board (the “MEAB”) composed of accomplished regional thought leaders and trend setters in business. The IBO and MEAB advise the Dean and help OSB stay tuned to key business developments at the regional and international levels.

Center for Advanced Mathematical Sciences (CAMS). Has an International Advisory Committee made up of eminent scholars and scientists. The purpose of the committee is to oversee the activities of CAMS; to assist it in planning; and to evaluate, on an annual basis, the center’s success in meeting its objectives with recommendations. Members of the Committee may also provide help in securing continued external funding for CAMS.
International Advisory Board (IAB)

- IAB supports President and Trustees, and members are selected based on their leadership, expertise, and experience in scientific, technical, business, finance, public service, and academic domains.
- The IAB members bring expertise and a worldwide perspective to areas of key concern to the University.
- The advice and recommendations of the IAB provide the university leadership with guidance on the overall academic development of the University as well as on major strategic decisions and assure adherence to the University’s mission.
Office of Institutional Research & Assessment (OIRA)

- OIRA
  - coordinates institutional assessment and research activities,
  - collects, analyzes and disseminates accurate and timely information about AUB’s performance and environment
  - Provides trend analysis data for various institutional indicators and these have been benchmarked against parallel data from seven ‘peer’ institutions
  - plays a critical role in developing a culture of inquiry on campus that says

  ‘we use data to make decisions’
Institutional Research: Role and Functions

- Performance of institutional research involves a full range of activities
  - collecting data,
  - the analysis and restructuring of these data into information, and
  - the dissemination of the results of the activities to key constituents to be used for
    - decision making and
    - strategy support.

- In this respect, the information is converted into increased organizational intelligence which supports organizational learning.
OIRA Main Functions

**External & Internal Reporting**
- **Internal**
  - Fact book
  - Facts & Figures
  - Faculty Workload
- **External**
  - College Board Survey
  - Common Data Set
  - Thomson Petersons Surveys
  - ASHA
  - Middle States IP

**Planning & Assessment Support**
- • Enrollment projections
- • Revenue projections
- • Accreditation self-studies
- • Strategic Planning KPIs
- • Units in preparation of assessment plans
- • Special research projects

**Data Management Technical Support**
- • Student database
- • Data warehouse
- • Hardware & software support
- • Faculty workload & evaluation database
- • Faculty evaluation

**Assessment and Research**
- Outcomes assessment: institutional
- Program & General Education
- Survey research
- • Campus climate research
- • Institutional effectiveness
- • Alumni studies
OIRA Activities

- Use systematic comprehensive approach,
  - Prepare annual assessment plan,
- Collect data from various sources for various purposes,
  - Ongoing and cumulative. Over time, assessment efforts build a body of evidence
  - Multi-faceted. Assessment information is collected on multiple dimensions, using multiple methods
- Create and maintain databases and warehouses,
  - Develop queries to extract data and port it for archiving and analysis.
- Report information influencing use and decision making.

During these processes, data is collected then transformed into actionable information that increases organizational intelligence and learning leading to evidence-based decision-making.
Adopted Principles

- **Assessment for improvement** is emphasized,
- Activities are accomplished with complete transparency and objectivity.
- **Communication and collaboration** are key elements in the success of activities
- **Dissemination of findings** is essential for ensuring that results were made use of in planning and effecting change
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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Survey</th>
<th>Population</th>
<th>Time Period Administered</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Entering Student Survey (ESS), ACT*, Registration Survey</td>
<td>Admitted students</td>
<td>Fall (orientation week), annually</td>
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<td>College Outcomes Survey (COS), ACT</td>
<td>Representative sample of undergraduate students</td>
<td>Spring (May), annually</td>
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<td>Collegiate Assessment of Academic Proficiency (CAAP), ACT</td>
<td>Enrolled junior students</td>
<td>Spring, annually</td>
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<td>Graduating Senior Exit Survey (GSS)</td>
<td>Graduating students</td>
<td>Spring/Summer (June), annually</td>
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<td>Instructor Course Evaluation (ICE)</td>
<td>All students in courses</td>
<td>End of every semester</td>
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<td>Faculty Survey, HERI**</td>
<td>Faculty</td>
<td>Spring, every three years</td>
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<td>Alumni Survey (AS),</td>
<td>Faculty</td>
<td>Summer, every five years</td>
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<tr>
<td>Employee Satisfaction Survey (ESS)</td>
<td>All AUB employees</td>
<td>Fall, every three years</td>
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<td>Special Studies/ Satisfaction Surveys</td>
<td>Constituent groups</td>
<td>Fall and spring, annually, 10 departments/year.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Common Data Set (CDS), College Board Data, Peterson’s, etc.</td>
<td>Institution</td>
<td>Annually</td>
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Dissemination & Sharing of Results

- All OIRA reports appear on its webpage (http://wwwlb.aub.edu.lb/~weboira/)
- They are shared with stakeholders by e-mail and through print publications.
- Once results are disseminated, focus groups, forums, and special meetings are scheduled to discuss findings, highlight improvements and challenges, and aid in future planning.
Current/Future Directions: Integrating Quality Functions

- Institutional Assessment Committee
  - Develop a strategy for coordinating various assessment functions.
  - Develop, supervise implementation and periodically review Institutional Assessment Plan (IAP).
  - Review assessment reports and recommend actions for improvement.

- Institutional Assessment Plan (IAP)
  - A systematic and ongoing process of collecting information for improving the overall effectiveness of the institution.
  - Lays a comprehensive approach to assessment, a complete framework of assessment for all units, departments, programs and offices with uniform standards and consistency of implementation, documentation and dissemination of assessment activities and results.
Institutional Assessment Plan (IAP)

Purposes

I. Educational Excellence
- To assess the quality and extent of learning achieved by students in the major and general education.
- To assess the effectiveness of teaching and research.

II. Institutional Effectiveness
- To assess the ability of the institution to achieve its stated mission and its long-range plan.
- To assess congruence of external and internal policies and procedures of the University with its stated mission.
- To assess institutional support efforts to effectively meet students’ educational needs.
Integrating Major Data and Information Functions

Such integration

- would create a focal point for AUB’s commitment to effectiveness, use of data and research in decision making,
- assure that major data foundations are addressed in a coherent integrated manner, and
- assure that important information and performance measures do not fall through isolated offices.
Integration of Data Functions

- At its core, integration reflects Data Diamond.
- Sustains a culture of evidence-based decision-making and continuous improvement.
- An integrated model of quality & data functions are the latest practices in higher education institutions & are effective means of achieving a quality culture.
Role of Quality Assurance in Enhancing Collaborations

Universal interest in quality assurance and the need to incorporate its principles and practices resulted in widespread discussions, collaborations, and partnerships at various levels:

- **National**
  - Forum for Lebanese universities. Monthly sessions to share best practices, learn from each other, and discuss quality issues.
  - Organizing workshops, conferences, and panels to discuss quality issues.
  - Legal and regulatory measures on part of MOHE, development of law for higher education institutions and for establishment of quality assurance association.
**Role of Quality Assurance in Enhancing Collaborations: Regional**

Needed as national insufficient, networking, training

Serve a dual purpose: “internationalizing” local programs and “localizing” international standards

- Association of Arab Universities (Council for Quality Assurance and Accreditation (2007))
- National quality assurance associations (14 countries, mostly geared towards accreditation, lack autonomy)
- ANQAHE. Received funding from World Bank’s GIQAC
  - Support and enhance quality assurance organizations in the Arab region
  - Develop the human resources and establish a mechanism of cooperation in the field of quality assurance in higher education in the Arab region
  - Sustain regional and international cooperation
- MENA-AIR
  - Benchmarking & Data Sharing
  - Best practices & training
Role of Quality Assurance in Enhancing Collaborations: International

Role of international organizations as a framework, a reference, and a source of validation for the regional committees

- **World Bank. Global Initiative Quality Assurance Capacity Building (GIQAC)**
  - provide mechanism for global support of regional networks, and
  - promote capacity for effective quality assurance in higher education in developing and transition countries
  - activities focused on collecting, sharing and disseminating information and knowledge about QA in the region.

- **UNESCO & UNDP**
  - establish quality assurance committees
  - conduct quality assurance of programs (10 programs in humanities & sciences)

- **OECD**

- **AHELO**
Thank YOU

- OIRA Website
  http://www.aub.edu.lb/oira/Pages/index.aspx
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