



SCUOLA
NORMALE
SUPERIORE

QUALITY CONTROL UNIT



Report of Quality Control Unit on the QA 2019



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Introduction

The annual report of the Quality Control Unit describes the activities carried out by the body in terms of promotion, development, consultancy, support and monitoring of the Quality Assurance (QA) activities of the Scuola Normale.

The composition of the Scuola's Quality Control Unit was renewed in January 2019 by Decree of the Director no.13 prot. 989 of 17-01-2019 and began its activities with a session held in the same month.

During 2019, the Quality Control Unit, assisted by two staff units of the Organisation and Evaluation Service, focused its activities on the development of the Scuola's Quality Assurance System. In addition to this core function, the Unit consolidated its relations with the Evaluation Team and the Joint Teacher-Student Commissions and collaborated in the preliminary accreditation procedure that the Scuola underwent.

In short, in 2019 the course of action taken in order to enhance the University's quality assurance and to adjust the related procedures accordingly, was based on three main axes:

- 1. Quality Policies**
- 2. Enhancement of information flows** between the Quality Control Unit, the Evaluation Team and the Joint Teacher-Student Commissions.
- 3. Support in the preliminary Accreditation procedure**

1. Quality Policies

The first axis concerned the policy documents on quality in the different areas that constitute the main activities of the Scuola (Education, Research, Services and Third Mission).

Without prejudice to the commitment to include in the strategic planning document objectives in line with the principle of continuous improvement, it was clear that Quality Policy documents were necessary.

The Scuola Normale, being federated with the Scuola Sant'Anna and the IUSS of Pavia, presented to the Quality Control Unit a general Quality Policy document that had already been adopted by the other two Scuole.

The Scuola approved this document, which allowed the achievement of two objectives:

- 1) implementation of the Federation's policies from a perspective of shared adoption of tools, bodies and documents;
- 2) greater compliance with ministerial requests for accreditation on the specific issue of the presence and functioning of the Quality Assurance System at the Scuola.

Since the very beginning, however, the document has served as a reference framework for these specific policies. It was therefore necessary, also with regard to the identity of the



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Scuola and its specific features, to prepare other documents that defined in a precise and concrete way the quality levels selected and how these levels applied in the relative sectors (education, research, third mission, services), as well as those of the strategic framework of the Scuola.

The first step in this sense was establishing the concept of quality for the Scuola. Analysing the different definitions of the concept of quality proposed by the "Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance in the European Higher Education", the Quality Control Unit suggested the following on the basis of its similarities with the reality of the Scuola: "The concept of quality [...] is essentially the product of the interaction between professors, students and the learning context of the Institution".

This definition, approved by the Executive Council, was then translated, with different facets, in the two documents "Policies for the Quality in Education" and "Policies for the Quality in Research" submitted to the approval of the Governing Council and the Council in the session of 25 June 2019.

The two documents show how the concept of quality is embodied in the educational and research activities that are carried out on a daily basis within the Scuola.

The documents basically present the following scheme: definition of the context of the specific area addressed (education, research), brief description of the Quality Flow and relevant mapping of the main actions according to the rationale of the Deming cycle (Plan, Do, Check, Act), presentation of monitoring tools and role, in terms of additional value, of the Administrative Services involved.

2. Improvement of information flows

The second axis dealt with the evolution and strengthening of information flows between the Quality Control Unit - Evaluation Team - Joint Teacher-Student Commissions (CPDS) to favour the virtuous circle of information between the bodies and Governance.

This renewed information flow has revealed the need to address the issues expressed by the students and raised in the Annual Reports of the CPDS and to positively manage the requests of the various components of the Scuola so as to prepare for the accreditation.

As a matter of fact, several members of the Unit were also auditioned by the Evaluation Team, both as members of the Unit itself and because of their institutional role (Dean of Faculty/department or and/or coordinator of a PhD course).

Also, within the framework of this axis, the Quality Control Unit has started an intense communication work with the CPDS with the aim of consolidating their evaluation procedures and their focus on the issues most relevant to the students. For this purpose, the results of the questionnaires of the evaluation of the educational courses of undergraduate and PhD students were analysed, with special attention to the students' open-ended comments.

As far as the Third Mission is concerned, the Unit has become the voice of the need to enhance the huge amount of cultural, informative, social and educational activities that the Scuola offers to the community. This enhancement must be achieved through a more coordinated planning of these activities and, in particular, through the evaluation of the impact of the initiatives that the Scuola provides as social engagement, aimed at strengthening democratic values and civil responsibility in the community.



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3. Support in the preliminary Accreditation procedure

The third axis focused on the support in the preliminary accreditation procedure. The Quality Control Unit maintained a constant update on the issues identified at the time of publication of the required indicators and supported the Governance in the interpretation of some points that concerned all Institutes with a special status. In addition, some members of the Unit participated in the training day "Preliminary and Periodic Accreditation Procedures for Scuole with a Special Status" held on 13 June 2019 at the Scuola Normale, which was also attended by members of the Support Offices of other Scuole, thus further developing shared competences and creating greater opportunities for synergies and collaboration.