Quality Strategy of the University of Zurich 2020–2026

(Issued by the Executive Board of the University on 19 May 2020; approved by the Extended Executive Board of the University on 26 May 2020)

Introduction

The University of Zurich is committed to achieving the highest standard of quality in all its activities. This principle is anchored in both the mission statement and the strategic principles of the University. Via the University Act, the Executive Board of the University is mandated to make provisions to secure the quality of UZH's research, teaching and services.

This quality strategy defines five goals for quality assurance and development at UZH in the period 2020–2026:

1. The system of quality assurance and development helps UZH to attain its overarching goals.
2. Processes of quality assurance and development form the basis of research excellence in all areas.
3. Complete quality management cycles are implemented in the areas of teaching and learning, evaluation and management processes.
4. University-wide and faculty-level measures of quality assurance and development are interlinked effectively.
5. A culture of quality is fostered and practiced throughout the University.

Goal 1: The System of Quality Assurance and Development Helps UZH to Attain Its Overarching Goals

The actions of UZH are guided by defined goals. For the long term, these goals are drawn from the University's mission statement, strategic principles and policies. In the medium term, the University strives to implement the relevant four-year priority program defined by the Executive Board of the University. For each current year, decisions and actions are informed by the goals set out in the development and financial plan. The priority programs defined by the Executive Board of the University are complemented by faculty-level programs.

UZH's goals are determined by a variety of factors. They are shaped by its legal mandate from the Canton of Zurich as well as the demands of research excellence and high academic standing. UZH is guided in its work by national and international standards as well as recognized best practices; in this regard, the League of European Research Universities (LERU) provides a key benchmark. Another factor is the expectations of the UZH community, namely those of the students and employees in their various roles, and also those of key contacts in the spheres of politics, industry and society.

The system of quality assurance and development is structured so as to help UZH attain its goals in a way that is underpinned by evidence. In particular, it provides for regular dialogue – based on current management information – between all relevant stakeholders; such dialogue focuses not only on defined goals and their level of realization, but also on the related challenges and risks they entail. Stakeholder dialogue further serves to define measures that continually improve goal attainment.

Goal 2: Processes of Quality Assurance and Development Form the Basis of Research Excellence in All Areas

The quality of research at UZH is primarily secured and developed via funding instruments, competitive processes, peer-review processes and feedback from in-house and external experts. Beyond applying scientific and university-wide standards, each research area at UZH defines its own quality requirements, which are complemented by quality assurance measures.

UZH develops and communicates its rules for competitive funding via the relevant committees and working groups. By continually improving the funding process, it ensures that the requirements of highest research quality are satisfied.

As a cosignatory to the San Francisco Declaration on Research Assessment (DORA), UZH plays its part in the improvement of research evaluation. In particular, in its research quality, UZH is committed to the highest standards of transparency, reproducibility and enabling the broadest possible access to its research results. Likewise, UZH strives to ensure that both interdisciplinary and disciplinary research are adequately and equally evaluated.

Goal 3: Complete Quality Management Cycles Are Implemented in the Areas of Teaching and Learning, Evaluation and Management Processes

Besides funding measures and favorable framework conditions, the system of quality assurance and development at UZH is underpinned by complete quality management cycles, particularly in the areas of teaching and learning, evaluation and management processes.

Such quality management cycles are integrated in the daily business and activities of the University. They are designed to enable the evaluation of achievements, to identify areas for action, and to adopt or adapt necessary measures on the basis of regular assessments. This fosters continual improvement processes (CIPs) while enabling UZH to quickly respond to challenges and actively pursue opportunities. Quality management cycles at UZH are integrated to allow the sharing of management information between quality cycles in accordance with defined access rights.

The system of quality assurance and development ensures that members of the UZH community are aware of and understand the relevant quality cycles, processes and instruments. The University employs digital tools to simplify such processes, especially when it comes to sharing information and standardizing procedures and reporting.

Goal 4: University-Wide and Faculty-Level Measures of Quality Assurance and Development Are Interlinked Effectively

Due to the size of UZH and the autonomy of its faculties, quality assurance and development is not homogeneous across every level and every area of activity. Rather, as in several areas of the University, decentral and central initiatives are coordinated according to the principle of subsidiarity and UZH's self-conception as an organization of experts.

The system of quality assurance and development is designed to allow decentral and central measures to be integrated effectively and systematically. The measures adopted by the faculties should be systemically compatible within the context of the relevant faculty. In addition, by determining specific measures that are binding for all faculties, the Executive Board of the University establishes a coherent standard of quality for the University as a whole.

The system of quality assurance and development requires the Executive Board of the University and the faculty deans to confer regularly on the effective integration of university-wide and faculty-level measures.

Goal 5: A Culture of Quality Is Fostered and Practiced Throughout the University

To successfully attain the four goals outlined above, a culture of quality is fostered at the University. The management bodies of UZH cultivate dialogue with the university community on matters of quality; in their communication work, they emphasize shared university values such as sustainability, participation, diversity and equal opportunities. The management bodies also work to promote awareness that quality – beyond efficient processes and transparent structures – is primarily the product of individual performance and the commitment of those working and studying at the University.

In promoting a culture of quality, UZH can draw on key aspects of its self-conception and aspirations. These are based on a culture of dialogue on academic matters and university policy, on the principle of stakeholder inclusion, on the willingness to bear personal responsibility as well as on openness to self-reflection, criticism and ongoing learning.