# Quality Culture Framework

## Version 7

**Young Universities for the Future of Europe**

**YUFE QA Board – January 2026**

## Contents

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# 1  Introduction

The YUFE Quality Assurance Board (QAB) coordinates overall quality assurance (QA) activities, the building of a quality culture, and general evaluation, monitoring and QA reporting within the YUFE Alliance.

The YUFE Quality Culture Framework describes the governance system, basic principles and quality assessment dimensions of the YUFE Quality Assurance System. It contains relevant quantitative and qualitative key performance indicators, that can be used for a regular YUFE benchmarking exercise. The aim of the exercise is continuous improvement of quality of activities and outputs.

It remains the responsibility of YUFE management to ensure that all planned YUFE activities are carried out to the best possible extent, but it is the YUFE QAB's task to assess and monitor the quality of these activities.

## Dynamic instrument

The YUFE Quality Culture Framework is a flexible and dynamic instrument, that can adapt to and grow with the different stages of YUFE. The first version was approved by the YUFE Strategic Council in September 2020, with subsequent versions in Sep 2020 (v2), Nov 2023 (v3), Mar 2024 (v4), May 2024 (v5), Aug 2024 (v6) and the current version 7 (Dec 2025).

## Effective quality assurance

This framework provides an overview of the principles, procedures, processes and instruments YUFE wants to use for its internal quality assurance system. Effective quality assurance assumes the presence of a quality culture. This quality culture refers to the set of shared values and norms about quality and it manifests itself in the specific behaviour of people. Quality culture is improvement-oriented.

Therefore, quality assurance does not only consist of the functioning of procedures and systems, but it has a dynamic character that focuses on progress, innovation and sharing best practices among the partner universities, and takes into account the evolving system it aims to support.

## Dual focus

The YUFE QAB's approach to quality assurance has a dual focus:

- On the one hand, we evaluate, monitor and report on the quality of YUFE's activities and outputs. This is done through a lean system: a PDCA approach with quality indicators and quality assessment instruments, such as surveys, focus groups, personal development plans, etc.
- On the other hand, this framework covers the quality assurance of YUFE's educational offer. The whole educational portfolio of YUFE encompasses academic courses and programmes as well as skills and activities. Quality assurance of the educational offer has another focus (compliance with ESG standards – see annex 9.1 - is key) and requires a more long-term vision that goes beyond project phases.

# 2 Basic principles

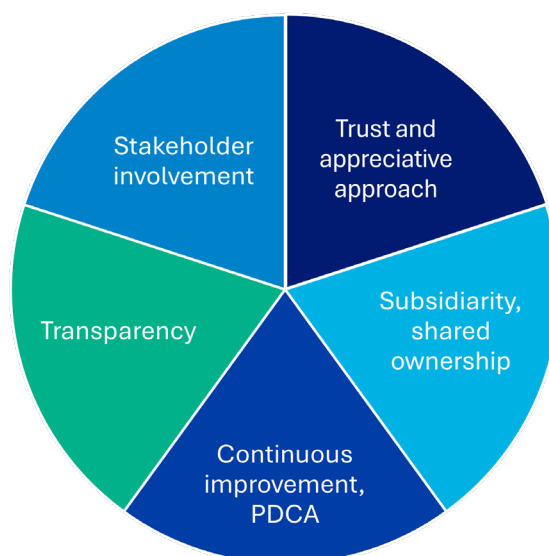The YUFE QA System is built on five basic principles, with quality culture at the centre.



**FIGURE 2-1: YUFE BASIC PRINCIPLES OF QA**

### 1. Trust and appreciative approach

Universities collaborate in teaching activities, underpinned by mutual trust in the quality of each other's education. All partners and their programmes hold accreditation by an EQAR-registered QA agency, meeting ESG standards. The appreciative approach fosters a quality culture, assuming shared responsibility for education quality from each institution's unique context.

### 2. Subsidiarity, decentralised responsibility, shared ownership

Quality responsibility should rest as much as possible with those directly involved. YUFE activities must be jointly initiated, developed, and monitored. Subsidiarity, while important, doesn't eliminate the need for central coordination. General principles, instruments, and methodology are outlined in a shared mission and implemented at the alliance's appropriate level.

### 3. Continuous improvement, sharing (best) practices, PDCA

All activities rely on the PDCA cycle, familiar to all YUFE partners. It offers a suitable framework for launching and improving plans, policies, and objectives systematically, fostering continuous improvement. The ten YUFE partners collaborate and share ideas and best practices towards advancement.

### 4. Transparency

Subsidiarity and an appreciative approach require transparency in all processes, procedures, and outcomes. This entails providing objective, visible, public, and evidence-based information on activities. Specifically for quality assurance, all members of the YUFE Alliance offer public information on their internal and external quality assurance processes on their website (see annex 9.2).

## 5. Involvement of stakeholders (quadruple helix)

Students, staff, and stakeholders are central to YUFE's quality culture, and contribute together to achieve the best quality of our offer. The quadruple helix enhances stakeholder engagement, integrating YUFE into society, promoting knowledge transfer, and empowering active citizens.

These five principles are the foundation for all methods and quality assessment instruments in the YUFE QA approach, always in accordance and combination with the ESG Standards and guidelines for QA in the EHEA.

# 3 Quality assurance in YUFE partners

## Quality assurance survey

As it was decided that the common quality assurance policy for YUFE should be based on the expertise of all partners, we conducted an extensive survey in the run-up to the official launch of YUFE. All YUFE's full partners at that time completed a questionnaire on the characteristics of their external quality assurance, on the organisation of their internal quality assurance, on stakeholder involvement, on quality indicators and on internal and external reporting.

Common principles and values in the various internal quality assurance systems of all full partners are: university-wide values and high quality objectives, decentralised responsibilities and shared ownership, the application of a Plan-Do-Check-Act system (PDCA) or quality loop and continuous improvement, the role of feedback, the strong involvement of stakeholders, especially students, alumni and external experts, the dissemination of best practices, and the focus on quality culture. These principles are applied through different types of procedures, which meet the requirements of the accreditors, but with similar and complementary instruments, and with recurring indicators.

## Trust and transparency

All partner institutions and their programmes are accredited or recognised by an EQAR-registered quality assurance agency and they all meet the standards of desired quality of education as set out by the ESG. They all strive to achieve the highest possible quality and nurture continuous improvement in everything they do. Therefore, we believe that no additional layer of YUFE quality assurance is required for existing processes, products and activities.

The individual recognitions also ensure that the necessary trust, which is crucial when ten partners choose to work closely and intensively together, is a reasonable assumption in the YUFE Alliance. Together with transparency on individual quality assurance processes and results, both between the YUFE partners, and between the partners and the alliance, this trust provides a solid basis to build the YUFE initiatives upon the experience of the ten partner universities.

## Strengthening the quality culture

At the same time, the partnership in YUFE also offers an excellent opportunity for individual partners to improve the quality of their own programmes and initiatives, by exchanging knowledge and experience. Every institution will therefore share quality assurance best practices and provide information on existing internal and external quality assurance and the results thereof to each other, to YUFE management and to other YUFE stakeholders. This will strengthen the quality culture in each of the partners and of the alliance.

We strive towards a modus operandi where all partners share best practices at YUFE events, such as workshops, open days and conferences. Additionally, they provide information on their own websites, while a general overview of YUFE quality assurance will be available on the YUFE Alliance website.

# 4 Quality assurance of YUFE's educational offer

Already in December 2020, the YUFE Alliance opened applications for its educational offer. The original offering has been upscaled to allow for even more inclusive and flexible student-centred education within the format of Open Programmes and currently a three-layered educational system is being implemented.

The three layers of this approach can be seen below: layer 1 – Open YUFE, layer 2 – YUFE Minors and layer 3 – YUFE Degree Programmes.

**YUFE Degree Programmes**
Enrol in a YUFE degree programme, based on an open and flexible curriculum, interdisciplinary and student-centred. YUFE minors will be fully integrated in the programme.

**YUFE Minors**
Enrich your curriculum through a specialised or interdisciplinary minor of 30 ECTS that fully integrates challenge-based learning.

**Open YUFE**
Enrich your curriculum with academic courses, language learning, skills training and extracurricular activities.
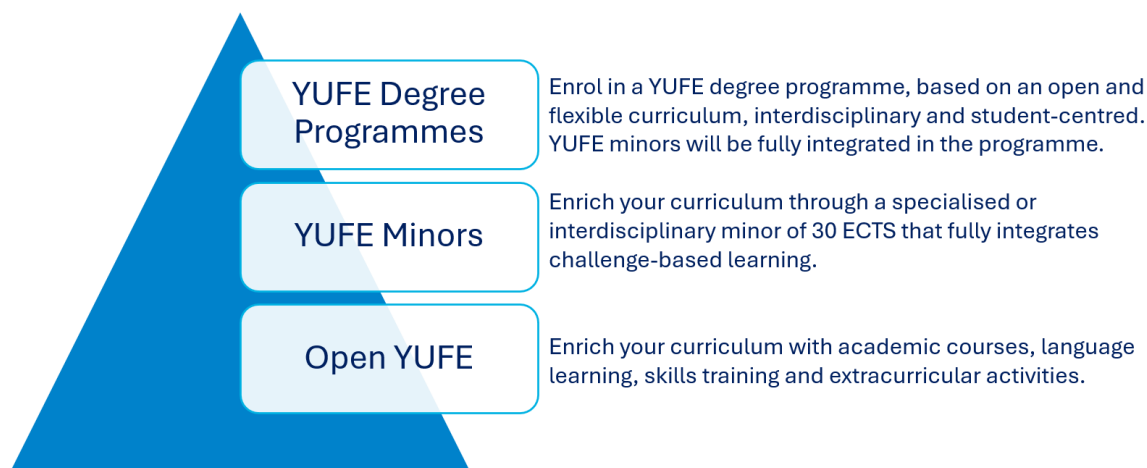
FIGURE 4-1: YUFE 3-LAYERED EDUCATIONAL OFFER

Open YUFE was designed and implemented in 2020, the YUFE Minors in 2023 and the YUFE Joint Bachelor in Urban Sustainability studies was launched in 2025-2026.

All three layers will be available to offer YUFE education as inclusively as possible, both to students already enrolled in academic degree programmes at YUFE universities and to students who are not yet enrolled at a YUFE institution, but who wish to participate in a full YUFE degree programme.

## Ground rules

This quality assurance dimension is fully directed to students, teaching and learning, and it is developed within the framework of ESG standards, as is also the case for the educational portfolio at all YUFE partners.

All three layers of the YUFE educational offer are subject to this QA Dimension. There is, however, substantial interaction between the two first QA dimensions. A significant number of courses and activities in the YUFE course catalogue originate from the individual YUFE institutions' portfolio and fall under the existing QA procedures of the partners. On top of that, we create a lean new layer of YUFE QA, that focuses on YUFE added value, coherence, consistency, satisfaction and impact.

In line with our five basic principles, continuous improvement is a key aspect of YUFE quality assurance. In this chapter we show how the PDCA-cycle is implemented, and which evaluation and monitoring instruments are put in place for the two first layers.

Stakeholder evaluations are important instruments to monitor the quality of the various YUFE components. Wherever possible, we try to combine evaluations or use and adapt evaluations already present at the YUFE partners in order to minimise the total number.

## 4.1 Open YUFE

Students from all YUFE universities are able to register for Open YUFE, meaning they can enrol in YUFE courses and activities offered by the ten YUFE partners. The YUFE course catalogue contains over 800 courses and activities which fall within the scope of the YUFE focus areas. YUFE students can apply for one or more of these courses either as part of, or complementary to their curriculum.

*The acceptance of the ECTS credits into the curriculum depends on the regulations of the partner institutions where the students are enrolled.*

### PDCA cycle

For all courses and activities included in the YUFE catalogue, the PDCA cycle is carried out by the organising partner university. This includes:

- Plan => the design of the course
- Do => the implementation of the course
- Check => the quality assurance of the course
- Act => any necessary adjustments

### Information

For each YUFE course, an information sheet is accessible, containing information on the level of the course and admission criteria, the number of ECTS credits, the learning outcomes, a description of the content and planned learning activities, the examination method, and a contact person.

### YUFE monitoring

Next to qualitative data, YUFE collects quantitative information on participation and success.

### QA of Open YUFE in practice

The quality assurance of Open YUFE entails a combination of QA procedures applied at two levels.

#### Quality assurance of Open YUFE components

As mentioned before, trust, subsidiarity, and transparency are vital in the YUFE Quality Culture Framework. Quality of academic courses, language learning, and skills training provided by YUFE partners through Open YUFE is assured through the implementation of QA mechanisms within each partner university. Each university has an effective QA system, including tools and processes to guarantee the PDCA-cycle, and is thus responsible for teaching and learning quality.

#### Quality assurance of Open YUFE as a whole

Ensuring the overall quality of Open YUFE involves an additional layer of quality assurance.

Each year, a range of evaluation activities (including surveys, interviews and focus groups) are conducted among Open YUFE stakeholders, encompassing both students and staff. These evaluations explore expectations and experiences, complementing the standard education-related course evaluations conducted by the partner institutions. In

designing these activities, we aim to collect the information necessary for continuous optimisation while carefully avoiding evaluation fatigue among participants.

YUFE admission officers maintain close communication with YUFE students and staff, serving as the primary contact for administrative support.

Participation data is stored in the Virtual Campus and undergoes annual monitoring. In the future this process will be facilitated by the forthcoming QA Dashboard (1st version expected in November 2026).

Evaluation results are shared within the alliance for analysis and follow-up, and necessary adaptations and changes are implemented within a few months to complete the quality loop.

## 4.2 YUFE Minors

Since 2023, YUFE students can participate in YUFE minors. These are all larger modules of 30 ECTS that are rewarded by a diploma supplement or a certificate, but that do not yield to a degree.

Minors are offered by partner universities in both the spring and fall semesters. By registering for a minor, students can earn credits through a combination of compulsory and elective courses, and by participating in a Challenge Team. This Challenge Team is a form of teamwork with problem-based learning organised by the partner university around a topic related to the focus of the minor and in close cooperation with the community and/or other stakeholders.

Minor courses are held on-site at the host university with possible online courses from another alliance university contributing to it. Each minor defines specific learning outcomes (ILOs) attained through courses and challenges, with students enjoying considerable elective choices.

### PDCA cycle

The overall follow-up of the minors is carried out by the YUFE Student Journey colleagues and the various minor coordinators. This includes:

- Plan => the conditions and design of the minors
- Do =>  the implementation of the minors
- Check => the quality assurance of the minors
- Act => any necessary adjustments

The follow-up of the different components of the YUFE minors in the Check-stage is done by the existing QA procedures at the partner institutions.

### Information

A description sheet is drawn up for the YUFE minor, with information on the learning outcomes, a description of the components, and a minor coordinator contact.

### YUFE monitoring

Next to qualitative data, YUFE collects quantitative information on inflow and outflow, and monitors the number of participating students and their results.

### QA of YUFE Minors in practice

Similar to Open YUFE, the quality assurance of YUFE Minors involves QA procedures at two levels.

#### QA of Minor Components

In alignment with YUFE QA principles and dimensions, the quality of minor components is assured by the QA mechanisms at the partner university with oversight from YUFE. Additional support is provided for new elements, such as Challenge Teams.

To strengthen quality and quality assurance at YUFE level, minimum expected QA standards for minor components align with YUFE QA indicators. These minimum expected items cover detailed course content, study material, quality of teaching and general course satisfaction through surveys, interviews or focus groups.

Each university evaluates the minor components according to their local QA timeline. This regime counts for both existing courses and courses newly created for the minor.

In line with European data protection regulations, , the follow up of QA activities and procedures stays with the partner university, but aggregate information on all minor components can be provided to the YUFE QAB through its different QA expert members who serve as liaison officers.

#### QA of Minors as a whole

Ensuring the overall quality of YUFE Minors rests with YUFE Student Journey and the YUFE QAB and involves an additional lean layer of quality assurance.

- During the preparatory stage QA focuses on minor design, emphasising ILOs and course alignment. All minor ILOs contain the same three types of skills: content-specific skills, research skills and transferable skills, defined at European Qualifications Framework level 6 (Bachelor). A matrix connects course outcomes to minor ILOs, demonstrating student acquisition. This stage also considers minor prerequisites, admission processes, and mobility arrangements. After establishing a minor, QA shifts to evaluating teaching and learning quality, and student satisfaction.
- A key element of the QA process involves the introduction of a survey for minor students, which may be supplemented by interviews or focus groups. This evaluation is centred on assessing overall student satisfaction, with a specific emphasis on information related to minors and their components, the application process, the quality of teaching and learning, and the sense of belonging in the YUFE community.
- Student feedback is augmented by staff interviews, encompassing both academic and professional services staff members.

The results of these evaluations are analysed for each cohort, and the gathered information is used to enhance and refine the YUFE minors.

## 4.3 YUFE Joint Bachelor in Urban Sustainability Studies

The YUFE Joint Bachelorin Urban Sustainability Studies (USS)is a three-year (180 ECTS - 360 CATS) programme for personalised urban sustainability studies education across Europe that started in 2025-2026.

Students enrol and start at one of the degree-awarding universities and complete the first year. In the following three semesters they can freely combine minors offered by all YUFE universities, with one to three mobility semesters. The last semester is mostly dedicated to the bachelor's project capstone and is again carried out at the starting university.

The programme is offered by seven degree-awarding partners offering the whole programme, and three mobility partners offering minors. Successful completion leads to a joint diploma that fulfils the requirements of the laws of all countries involved and is legally valid in those countries.

The programme is recognised in all countries of the degree-awarding partners, after a successful initial accreditation process carried out by NVAO Flanders (the Dutch-Flemish QA agency) in 2024, using the European Approach for Quality Assurance of Joint Programmes.

The YUFE Joint Bachelor aligns fully with the open curriculum philosophy - students own their curriculum and enjoy multilateral mobility, choosing their starting university, minors, and electives based on their interests and future plans.

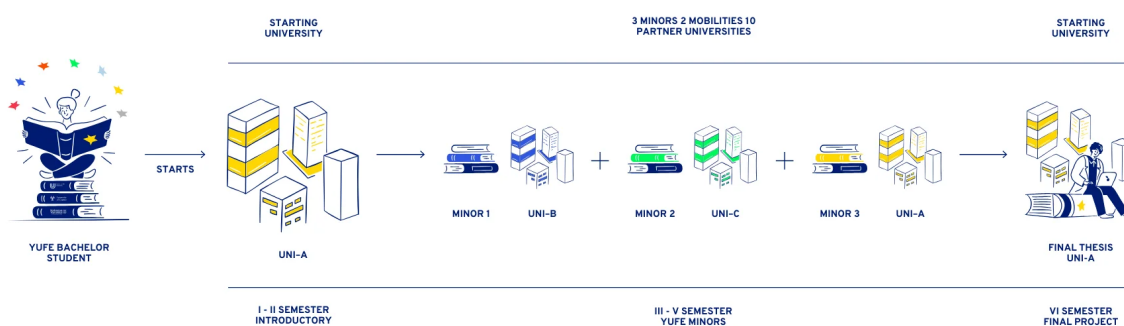

**FIGURE 4-2: YUFE BACHELOR STRUCTURE**

## Six-year QA cycle

The quality assurance of the YUFE Joint Bachelor in Urban Sustainability Studies follows a six-year cycle that consists of three components.
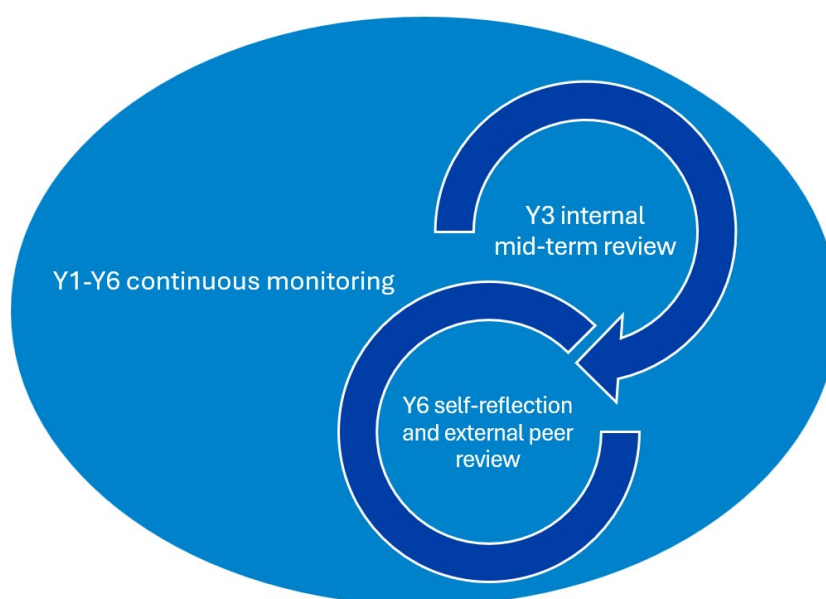


**FIGURE 4-3: YUFE SIX-YEAR QA CYCLE**

*Year 1-6 Continuous monitoring*

Throughout the six-year cycle the programme undergoes different evaluations, analyses and follow-up both on the YUFE overarching level as on the level of the partner institutions. Minimum QA requirements, as defined by the YUFE QAB, outline essential topics, stakeholders involved, and the timing of these evaluations. The resulting documents or actions are stored in the programme portfolio of the YUFE Bachelor.

The YUFE QAB oversees quality assurance across all levels, conducting monthly online meetings and convening in person once per semester.

*Year 3 Mid-term internal YUFE review*

We approach the extensive six-year QA cycle by breaking it down into two more manageable three-year cycles. At year three, the YUFE QAB plans a moment of comprehensive internal process monitoring and guidance, based on the preceding three-year cycle.

Based on the information in the programme portfolio, the YUFE QAB conducts an analysis to identify strengths and weaknesses, and discusses the conclusions with the Programme Committee, resulting in a co-created development plan for the next three-year cycle.

*Year 6 Self-reflection with external review*

By completing the three-year cycle twice within the six-year cycle, we can prepare for re-accreditation through the European Approach for Joint Programmes in year six, based on the development plan established after the initial three-year cycle and implemented during the second cycle.

## QA of YUFE Bachelor in Urban Sustainability Studies in practice

**Continuous monitoring**

The Ba USS Programme Committee serves as the operational body responsible for ensuring the day-to-day quality management of the programme, while working within the broader YUFE Quality Culture Framework and receiving support from the QAB for technical aspects of quality assurance. This responsibility is structured around the familiar PDCA cycle, where the Programme Committee:

- **Plan**: plans the conditions and further development of the overall Bachelor's programme, its minors, and and other components
- **Do**: oversees the implementation of the aforementioned
- **Check**: ensures quality assurance of the aforementioned
- **Act**: implements any necessary adjustments

Individual courses and activities included in the YUFE Bachelor are subject to the PDCA cycles of the respective partner universities, in line with the subsidiarity. This also includes jointly developed new courses: they will be part of the QA processes of the coordinating or hosting university. Minimum QA requirements, as defined by the QA Board, outline essential topics, stakeholders involved, and the timing of these evaluations.

A lean layer YUFE-specific QA complements partner QA by focusing on overall stakeholder experiences, including learning, teaching, support, resources, learning outcomes, and mobility. It incorporates best practices from partner universities, with adjustments as needed. Data analytics from the coordinating university UAntwerp will support monitoring of study effectiveness and improvements, tracking student progress from enrolment to graduation.

## Mid-term internal review

In year three, the YUFE QAB organises a moment of comprehensive internal process monitoring and guidance, based on the continuous monitoring of the preceding three years and aligned with the duration of the programme.

The mid-term internal review focuses on monitoring the quality of the programme from a process-oriented perspective, assessing how the Programme Committee engages with the quality assurance process to continuously strengthen the programme.

Through desk research, the QA Board analyses the programme portfolio and examines, among other elements:

- How the Programme Committee reflects systematically on the programme and its learning environment, making use of evaluation results and other QA materials, and what the outcomes of this reflection are.
- How quality assurance instruments, processes, and policy documents are used to support ongoing improvement.
- How the programme has developed over the past three years.
- The status of the development plan following the previous peer review.

Based on the desk research, the YUFE QAB organises a co-creative feedback meeting with the Programme Committee to discuss the strengths and challenges of the programme, its learning environment, and the outcomes of continuous monitoring. In this meeting, the QAB presents its observations and areas for further development, while the Programme Committee has the opportunity to respond, clarify questions arising from the analysis, and share reflections on the QA processes. This two-way dialogue helps refine QA procedures and ensures that the QA support remains aligned with the Programme Committee's needs.

## Self-reflection with external review

Every six years, the programme undergoes a systematic and in-depth reflection on the quality of the programme and future challenges through an External Review under the European Approach for Joint Programmes, conducted under guidance of a national QA Agency registered in EQAR.

An external peer review team identifies strengths, suggestions and areas for improvement based on the programme's self-reflection report and discussions with various stakeholders, including the Programme Committee. The peer review team makes a statement about the quality of the programme and its prospects.

Following the peer review, the Programme Committee formulates the programme's plans for the future in the development plan for the coming three-year cycle, incorporating the external review findings and recommendations.

# 5 Quality assurance of YUFE activities & outputs

To ensure the quality and continuous improvement of activities and outputs within the YUFE Alliance, the YUFE QAB defines high-level quality indicators and quality assessment instruments, and articulates how these are used in a coherent quality assurance approach to support continuous improvement.

Monitoring and assessing the quality of the YUFE activities and outputs is broad in nature: it encompasses quality assurance of the YUFE Alliance, as well as all activities and outputs of the various WP's and as such requires a more general PDCA approach than the quality assurance of the educational offer.

When assessing the quality of YUFE's activities and outputs we differentiate between deliverables on the one hand and quality indicators on the other hand.

Deliverables indicate the quantifiable item that was created during this commitment of time, resource and effort and their success can be measured by the reaching of the deliverable, usually a number or a yes or no answer. Following up on the deliverables is the responsibility of YUFE management.

Deliverables do not to give good feedback on performance or quality, because they only indicate whether the initiatives have been implemented. They do not give information about whether those initiatives have worked nor on the quality thereof. Knowing what works and what does not is a fundamental condition for continuous improvement. This is the core task of the YUFE QAB.

Quality indicators are specific key performance indicators that link quality of activities and outputs to the YUFE vision and targets. Quality indicators allow monitoring, measurement and reporting on quality to internal and external stakeholders.

## Quality indicators

In order to keep YUFE's QA system lean and consistent, we selected three quality indicators that are applicable to all of YUFE's activities and outputs and that link back to our basic principles. The four quality indicators are:

**Stakeholder information**
- Providing accessible information is linked to our basic principle of transparency. The YUFE website and the YUFE Virtual Campus are designed to provide clear information about all YUFE initiatives and provide insight into participants' experiences and quality assurance.

**Stakeholder satisfaction**
- Stakeholder satisfaction measures the perceptions of an activity or service. It is paramount in our quality assurance approach and is measured through various qualitative instruments.

**Stakeholder impact**
- Stakeholder impact focuses on the tangible and sustainable effects of YUFE activities on learners, staff and partner institutions. It assesses how initiatives contribute to improvement, innovation and long-term value creation, and is reflected in outcomes, follow-up actions and institutional change.

**Stakeholder participation**
- Stakeholder participation leads to empowerment and to joint ownership and is measured through various quantitative metrics.
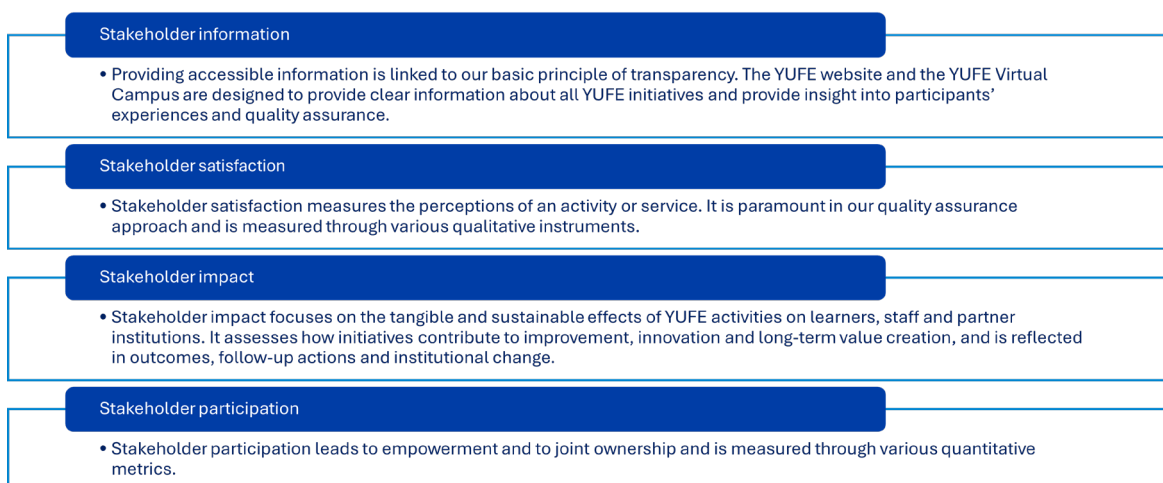
**FIGURE 5-1: YUFE QUALITY INDICATORS**

## Quality instruments

To evaluate the quality of the realised deliverables, we need to choose adequate instruments. Quality assessment instruments allow the YUFE QAB to keep track of the indicators throughout their quality assurance activities. They include surveys, focus groups, pre- and post-evaluations, user testing, etc.

As much as possible, we will use or start from existing monitoring instruments of the partners, both to limit the administrative burden, but more importantly to build on the expertise of the partners. In the matrices below, various possible instruments are listed, but the intention is not to use them all. Instead, the goal is to select, to limit and to rotate.

## Quality matrix

The YUFE QA matrix links YUFE's quality indicators to possible quality assessment instruments as can be seen below.

| Quality Indicator | Type | Possible Instruments | Location |
|---|---|---|---|
| **Accessible information** | Qualitative | Factsheets<br>Infographics<br>Manuals<br>Tutorials | YUFE website<br>YUFE Virtual Campus |
| **Stakeholder participation** | Quantitative | Power BI analytics<br>Desk research<br>Web statistics | YUFEnet QA page<br>YUFE Data Dashboard |
| **Stakeholder satisfaction** | Qualitative<br>Quantitative | Surveys<br>Interviews<br>Focus groups<br>Pre- and post-evaluations<br>Personal development plans<br>User testing<br>Feedback button<br>Reflection documents | YUFEnet QA pages<br>YUFE Data Dashboard |
| **Stakeholder impact** | Qualitative | Surveys<br>Interviews<br>Focus groups<br>Pre- and post-evaluations<br>Personal development plans<br>Reflection documents | YUFEnet QA pages |

## Quality roadmaps

Quality roadmaps give a clear overview of chosen QA actions during a specific academic year and contain detailed information on timing, internal and external stakeholders,

quality assurance set-up, results and actions. These details are discussed during annual QA meetings between the QAB and the YUFE work package leads.

The results of all the activities and procedures detailed in the quality assurance roadmaps will be the input for the annual YUFE QA reports.

The translation of the high-level quality indicators through the QA matrix into QA roadmaps enables us to create a flexible QA approach:

- Each YUFE work package can choose which stakeholder/instrument combination(s) is the most important at any given time.
- Stakeholders and instruments can be included in a rotation system: not everything has to be evaluated all the time.
- The targets to be achieved can evolve with the project: short-term versus long-term targets can differentiate, while the overarching objective can stay the same.

## QA of the YUFE activities in practice: YUFE Stars
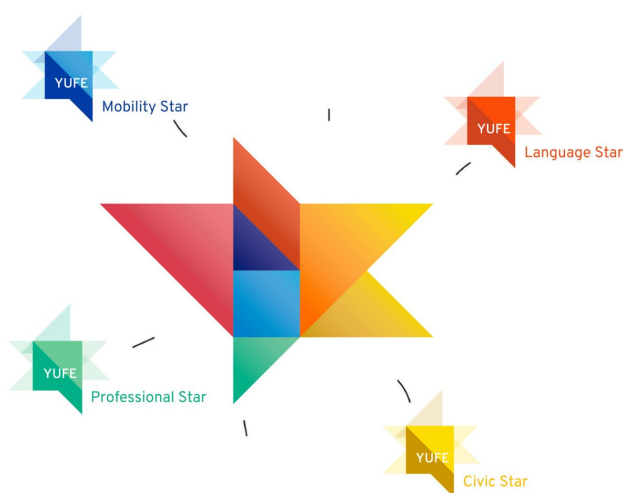


The YUFE Star system, YUFE's innovative recognition system, undergoes a quality assessment process that closely aligns with the evaluation procedures applied to other offerings within the YUFE Alliance.

YUFE Stars are awarded for physical or virtual mobility, language learning, professional training and community volunteering, in order to fully pursue personal and professional development.

The quality assurance of YUFE Star System involves QA procedures at two levels:

### QA of YUFE Star Components

Similar to the QA of the Minor Components and the Open YUFE Components, the quality of the Star System Components is assured by the QA mechanisms at the partner university with oversight from YUFE.

### QA of YUFE Stars as a whole

- Star satisfaction is part of the Open YUFE student survey.
- All students taking up a YUFE activity in order to obtain a star are asked to work with a Personal Development Plan (PDP), specific to each star. This Personal Development Plan, including a Reflection Report, is used to track students' personal and professional skills performance and growth, as well as evaluating expectations and experiences. The Personal Development Plan is an example of using an existing tool for quality assurance in order to keep the monitoring lean.
- The information gathered from the evaluations and surveys is analysed and used to enhance the quality and organisation of the YUFE Star System.

# 6  Quality Culture Workflow

Across QA dimensions, we have implemented a quality assurance workflow that comes into play when monitoring instruments need to be developed. The figure below visualises the various steps and responsibilities. A larger version is available in annex 9.2.
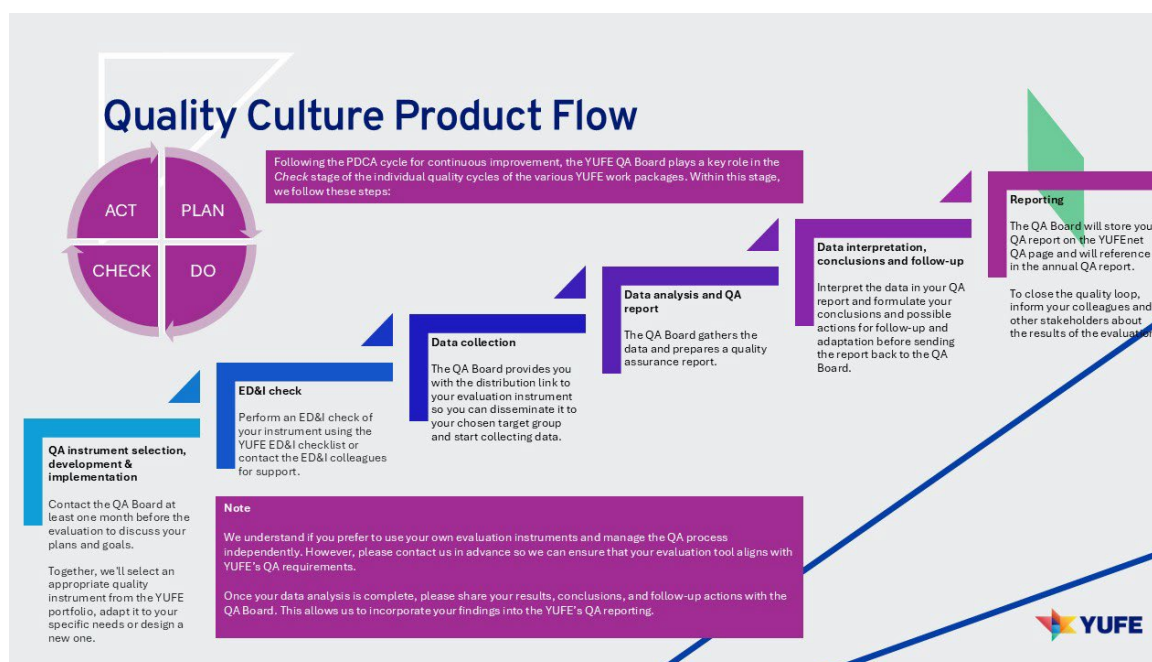


**FIGURE 6-1: YUFE QC WORKFLOW**

# 7 Quality Assurance Governance

Two distinct governance bodies are dedicated to quality assurance in the YUFE Alliance: the YUFE QA Board and the External QA Advisory Board.

The YUFE QAB is responsible for monitoring the quality of the totality of YUFE's offer, designing and implementing joint quality enhancement policies and monitoring progress towards targets, in line with the ground rules and the three-layered approach. The YUFE QAB also remains the place for exchanging knowledge and expertise on QA in the partner institutions in order to further strengthen quality culture throughout the whole alliance.

The External QA Advisory Board (EQAAB), plays a vital role as an advisory body. Its primary function is to provide support to the YUFE QAB. The latter, in turn, is accountable to the Strategic Council, reporting as necessary and deemed appropriate.

**Position of QA Boards in YUFE governance structure**

The image below visualise the overall YUFE structure in dark blue and orange and the degree programme structure in aqua.



FIGURE 7-1: DEGREE PROGRAMME YUFE GOVERNANCE

## 7.1 YUFE Quality Assurance Board

**Mandate and formality**

The mandate and formality of the QAB differs between the three QA dimensions as set-up in the alliance.

*Dimension 1: Institutional QA*

No formal mandate is needed, the YUFE QAB fully endorses and welcomes the established institutional QA processes, focusing on the cultivation of knowledge sharing and the adoption of best practices. This approach ensures the ongoing enhancement of the quality culture across all partner universities.

*Dimension 2: QA of the YUFE 3-layered educational offer*

Formal responsibilities - outlined in consortium agreements - are essential for overseeing the YUFE degree programmes. Compliance is necessary for accreditation and smooth functioning of educational activities. The governance structure and decision-making processes need to be clearly defined and visualised.

*Dimension 3: QA of all other YUFE activities and outputs*

No formal mandate is needed, the YUFE QAB prioritises collaboration and support to work package representatives and colleagues in fostering development and continuous improvement.

## Independence and governance

The YUFE QAB is designed to function as an independent governance body. For the YUFE joint Bachelor in particular, the YUFE QAB works distinct from the Bachelor governance bodies as illustrated in the organisational chart. This autonomy is crucial in maintaining objectivity and impartiality in its oversight functions. Recognising the evolving landscape of academic programmes, the board's structure is adaptable to accommodate future degree programmes, eliminating the need for the creation of separate QA boards for each programme.

## Tasks and responsibilities

The YUFE QAB is responsible for monitoring the quality of YUFE's educational offer with the YUFE Joint Bachelor in particular, designing and implementing joint quality enhancement policies and monitoring progress towards targets, in line with the basic QA principles and QA dimensions as laid down in the YUFE Quality Culture Framework. Additionally, the QAB actively promotes the exchange of knowledge and expertise, further strengthening our commitment to the YUFE quality culture.

## Membership and institutional representation

Institutional representation is not just encouraged but mandated for the YUFE QAB, emphasising a commitment to the YUFE Quality Culture, inclusivity and broad stakeholder engagement. This representation extends to the Student Forum, recognising the invaluable perspective and input of students in maintaining and enhancing educational quality.

The composition of the board reflects the expertise of its members, all of whom are QA specialists, comprising both policy professionals and academics. Importantly, each member holds a QA mandate at the central level of their respective institutions.

## Decision-making process

In a demonstration of commitment to equitable representation, voting rights for issues related to the YUFE joint Bachelor within the QAB are not restricted solely to degree-awarding partners. Mobility partners and students are also integral participants in the decision-making process.

To ensure fairness and balance, the number of votes is capped at one per institution and two for the Student Forum, emphasising an equal voice for all stakeholders. This inclusive decision-making approach reinforces the democratic and collaborative nature of the YUFE QAB.

## 7.2 YUFE External QA Advisory Board

In February 2024, the YUFE Strategic Council approved YUFE QAB's proposal to establish an External QA Advisory Board.

### Tasks and responsibilities

The YUFE QA External Advisory Board, acting as a critical friend with an external perspective, provides advice and support to the YUFE QAB on a range of quality assurance topics, without decision-making authority.

The YUFE QAB reports to the Executive Committee and the Strategic Council as deemed necessary and appropriate.

### Membership and profiles

The YUFE External QA Advisory Board includes:

- One chair with competence in quality management in higher education
- At least two experts with complimentary competence in one or more of the fields below:
  - higher education and accreditation systems
  - quality management in the business community, public institutions and third sector organisations
  - design and implementation of QA systems in higher education
- One student representative external to the YUFE alliance
- One YUFE representative as an observing member with a supporting role

### Selection

The composition of the External QA Advisory Board involves a selection process initiated by proposals from members within the YUFE QAB. Competency profiles of the candidates are outlined in the proposals, and individuals meeting the specified competence criteria are put forward for the selection process.

The YUFE QAB does not operate a formal endorsement procedure for External QA Advisory Board members. Instead, the YUFE Executive Committee and the Strategic Council are informed of the proposed appointments. No additional validation or voting process by another YUFE governance body is foreseen at this stage.

### Approach towards topics

The YUFE External QA Advisory Board combines both reactive and proactive strategies in providing guidance to the YUFE QAB.

- Reactively, the YUFE External QA Advisory Board provides advice on specific QA topics upon request by the YUFE QAB.
- Proactively, the YUFE External QA Advisory Board may offer guidance on best practices and seize opportunities related to QA topics within the YUFE QAB.

### Timing

The External QA Advisory Board will be assembled once or twice per year in an online setting, with the aim of reducing both the workload impact on members as well as the financial impact on the Alliance.

In addition to regular meetings, External QA Advisory Board members may receive invitations to attend YUFE events such as townhalls, fostering an interconnected and collaborative approach to our shared objectives.

## Membership duration

The External QA Advisory Board functions on two-year terms, recognising the possibility of a student's status evolving upon the completion of their education. We foresee the option of certain members extending their tenure to three years to facilitate knowledge transfer and ensure continuity within the Board.

In the event of a Board member's resignation, the process for appointing a new member will be guided by the unique competences represented by the departing Board Member.

Selection of a new member will follow the same process as described above.

## Operational procedures

Ahead of each meeting, the supporting/observing member from the YUFE QAB provides the External QA Advisory Board with an agenda and supporting materials. Throughout the meetings, this member clarifies and presents the key elements of the topic under discussion along with the provided materials.

Upon the meeting's conclusion, the Chair articulates the Board's recommendations. The administrative support or observing member records these recommendations and subsequently presents them to the Chair for approval.

This structured approach ensures efficient communication and collaboration within the Board's operational framework.

# 8 Monitoring and Reporting

The YUFE QAB supplies multiple QA reports and is currently developing a QA Dashboard to monitor performance against set targets and milestones and to evaluate and identify points of improvements and opportunities in the overall YUFE Alliance, with a special focus on the YUFE Student Journey and all student-related activities in other work packages.

## 8.1 QA reports



**FIGURE 8-1: YUFE REPORTS**

Each academic year, the YUFE QAB produces a report presenting the progress and achievements for each of the five tasks of the current project phase, being

- the development and implementation of the YUFE Quality Culture Framework
- the efforts to ensure quality across all activities
- the establishment of the External QA Advisory Board
- the road towards initial accreditation of the YUFE Joint Bachelor
- contributions to European policy development via networking and reporting.
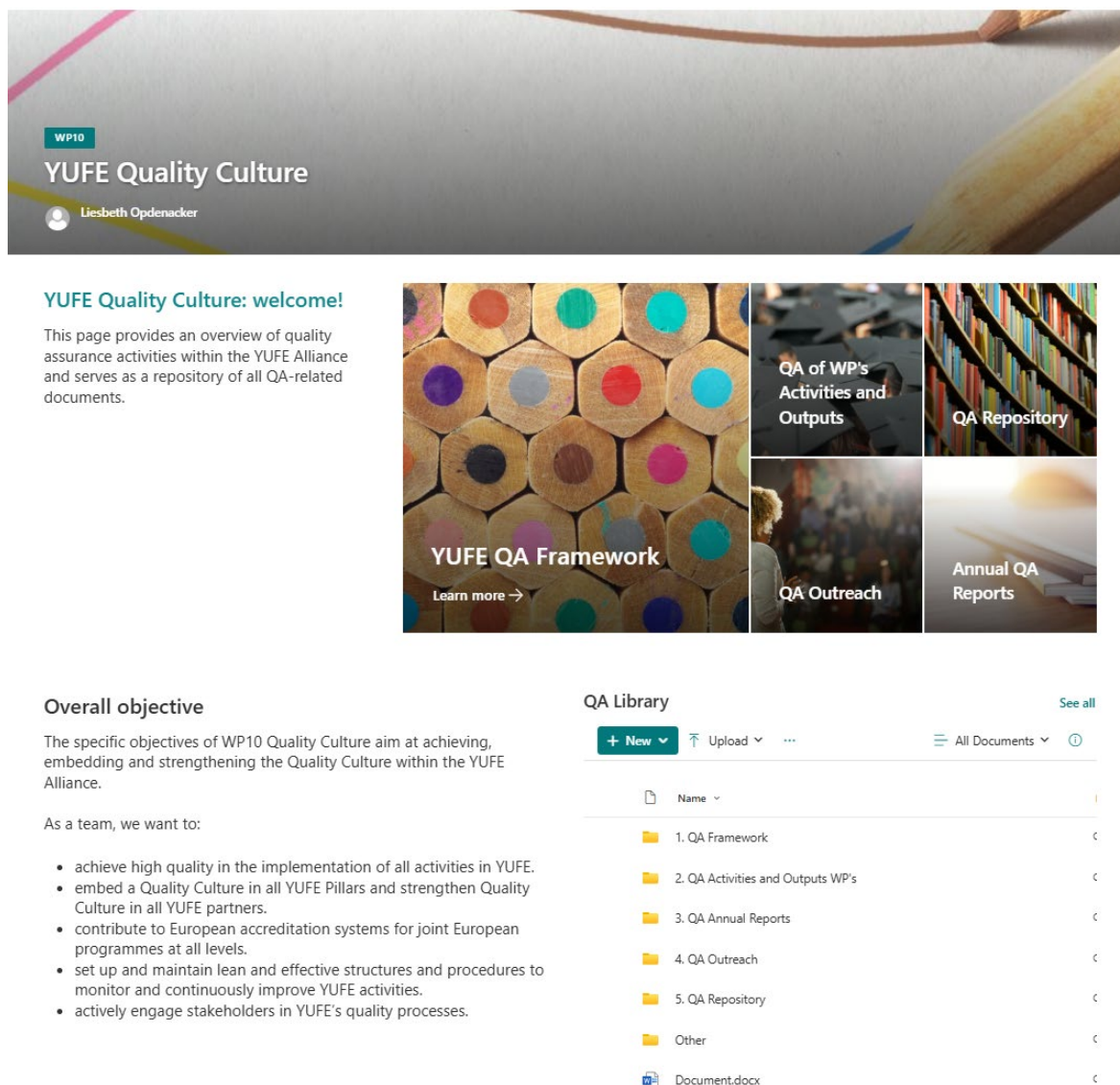
The report also examines the challenges encountered and the strategies employed to address them, offering a comprehensive overview of the QAB's commitment to fostering the quality culture within the YUFE Alliance.

All annual reports are published on the YUFEnet QA page and will be complemented by information on the QA Dashboard.

## 8.2 YUFE QA Intranet

As mentioned above, all relevant QA reports are stored on the designated [YUFEnet](#) Quality page. The YUFEnet also serves as a repository of QA best practices, outreach and networking activities, and data collection efforts.



**FIGURE 8-2: YUFENET QA PAGE**

## 8.3 YUFE QA Dashboard

To support our commitment to a data-driven decision-making we are currently establishing the YUFE QA Dashboard to unlock data from the YUFE Virtual Campus and make it accessible through various visualisations in Power BI.

The objective is to gain valuable insights that contribute to the achievement of key objectives. All generated data will be handled in strict compliance with the General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR) to ensure the privacy and confidentiality of YUFE learners and other stakeholders.
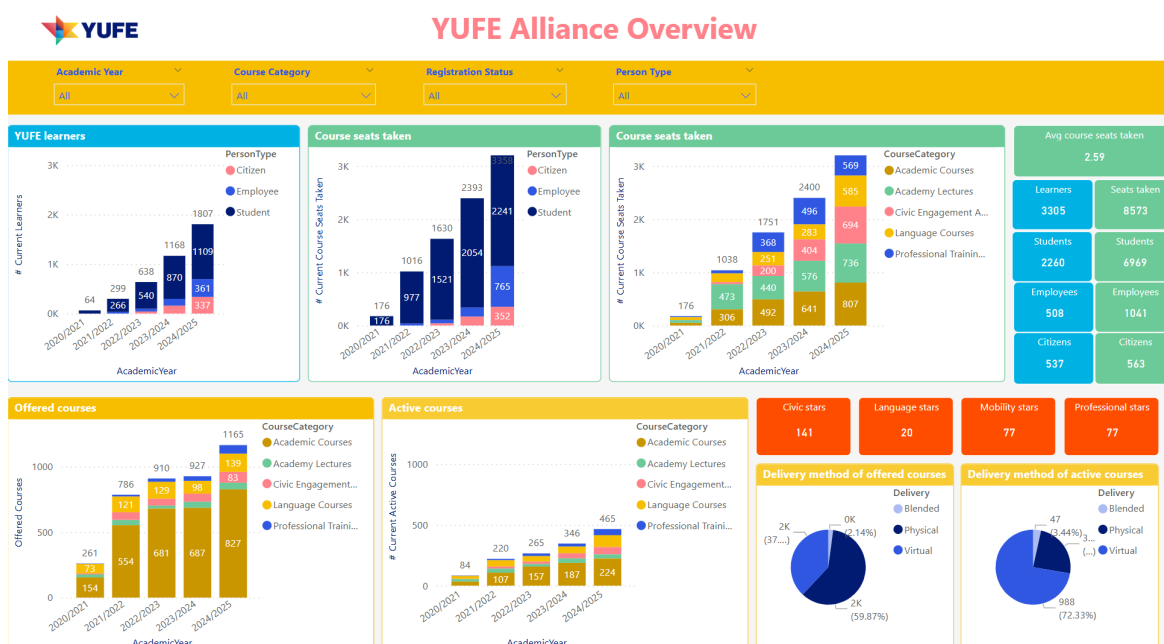


**FIGURE 8-3: YUFE QA DASHBOARD**

# 9  Annexes

## 9.1  European Standards and Guidelines for QA

YUFE partner universities and the YUFE Alliance adhere to the ESG Standards and Guidelines for the Quality Assurance in the European Higher Education Area.

The ESG refer to the following aspects:

1. **Policy for quality assurance**
   YUFE partner universities and the YUFE Alliance have a QA policy that is made public and forms part of their strategic management. Internal stakeholders develop and implement this policy through appropriate structures and processes, while involving external stakeholders.

2. **Design and approval of programmes**
   YUFE partner universities and the YUFE Alliance have processes for the design and approval of their programmes. The programmes should are designed so that they meet the objectives set for them, including the ILOs.  The qualification resulting from a programme are clearly specified and communicated, and refer to the correct level of the national qualifications framework for higher education and, consequently, to the Framework for Qualifications of the European Higher Education Area.

3. **Student-centred learning, teaching and assessment**
   YUFE partner universities and the YUFE Alliance ensure that the programmes are delivered in a way that encourages students to take an active role in creating the learning process, and that the assessment of students reflects this approach.

4. **Student admission, progression, recognition &  certification**
   YUFE partner universities and the YUFE Alliance consistently apply pre-defined and published regulations covering all phases of the student life cycle, e.g. student admission, progression, recognition and certification.

5. **Teaching staff**
   YUFE partner universities and the YUFE Alliance assure themselves of the competence of their teaching staff. They apply fair and transparent processes for the recruitment and development of the staff.

6. **Learning resources and student support**
   YUFE partner universities and the YUFE Alliance have appropriate funding for learning and teaching activities and ensure that adequate and readily accessible learning resources and student support are provided.

7. **Information management**
   YUFE partner universities and the YUFE Alliance collect, analyse and use relevant information for the effective management of their programmes and other activities.

8. **Public information**
   YUFE partner universities and the YUFE Alliance publish information about their activities and programmes. This information is clear, accurate, objective, up-to date and readily accessible.

9. **Ongoing monitoring and periodic review of programmes**
YUFE partner universities and the YUFE Alliance monitor and periodically review their programmes to ensure that they achieve the objectives set for them and respond to the needs of students and society. These reviews lead to continuous improvement of the programme. Any action planned or taken as a result is communicated to all those concerned.
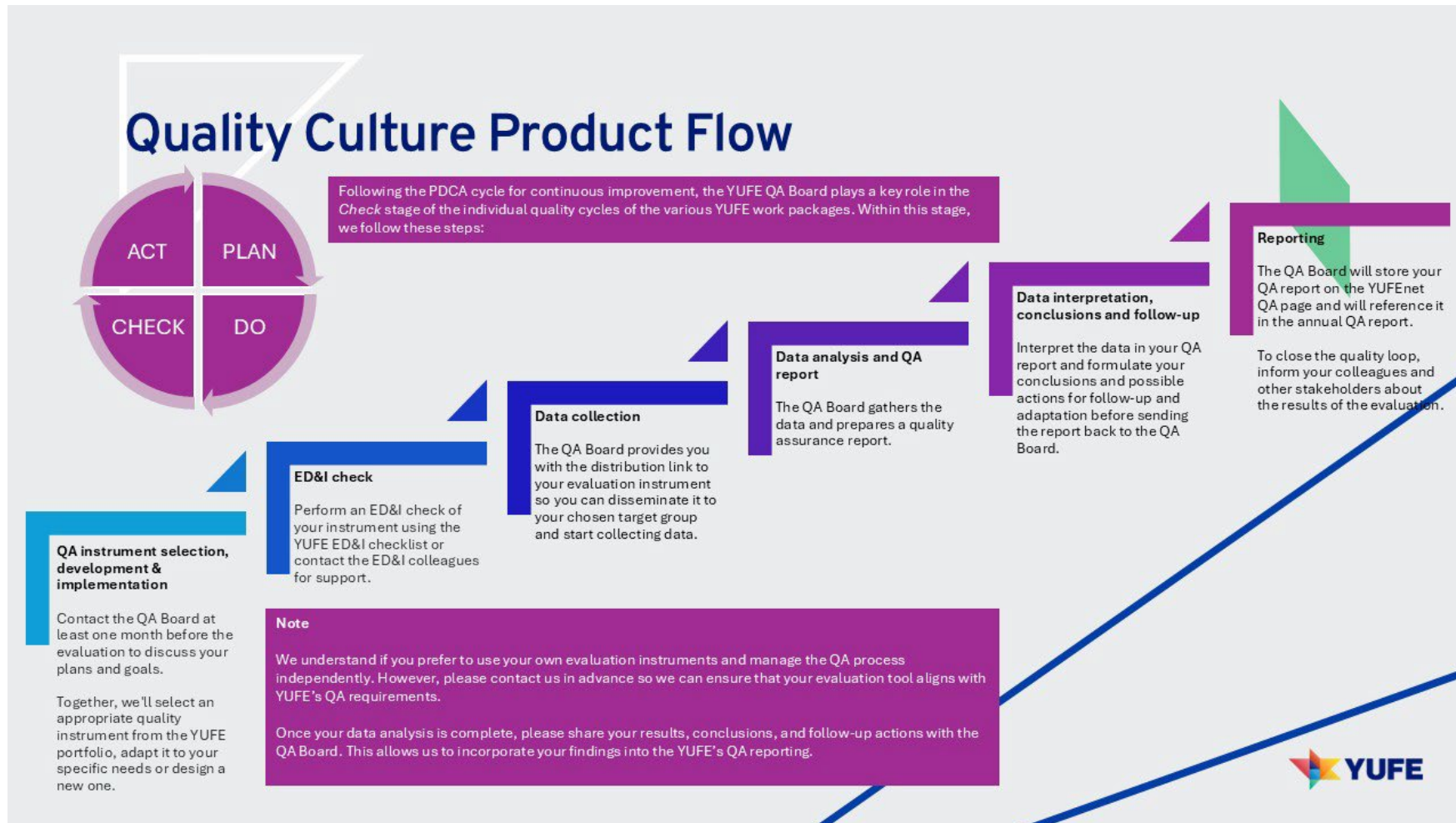
10. **Cyclical external quality assurance**
YUFE partner universities and the YUFE Alliance undergo external quality assurance in line with the ESG on a cyclical basis.

## 9.2 Public information on QA at YUFE partner institutions

| Partner | URL |
|---|---|
| Maastricht University | https://www.maastrichtuniversity.nl/education/why-um/quality-assurance (QA system in English)<br><br>www.nvao.net/en/decisons/universiteit-maastricht (accreditation status in Dutch and English) |
| Nicolaus Copernicus University in Toruń | www.jakosc.umk.pl/en/ (QA system in English)<br><br>www.pka.edu.pl/en/database-of-the-assessed-higher-education-institutions-units-and-programmes/institutional-evaluations/ (assessment reports in Polish) |
| Universidad Carlos III de Madrid | www.uc3m.es/quality/home (QA system in English, 'verification reports' in Spanish) |
| University of Antwerp | www.uantwerpen.be/en/about-uantwerp/organisation/quality-assurance/ (QA system and assessment reports in English)<br><br>www.uantwerpen.be/nl/overuantwerpen/organisatie/kwaliteitszorg/kwaliteit-van-het-onderwijs/opleidingsbeoordeling/#rapporten (assessment reports in Dutch)<br><br>www.hogeronderwijsregister.be/instellingen?search=universiteit%20antwerpen (accreditation status in Dutch and English) |
| University of Bremen | www.uni-bremen.de/en/qm-portal/qa-in-teaching-studies (QA system in English)<br><br>www.akkreditierungsrat.de/en/node/35 (accreditation status in German) |
| University of Cyprus | https://www.ucy.ac.cy/qa/?lang=en (QA system in English)<br><br>www.dipae.ac.cy/index.php/en/ (accreditation status in English, assessment reports in Greek) |
| University of Eastern Finland | www.uef.fi/en/quality-management (QA system in English)<br><br>karvi.fi/en/higher-education/ (accreditation status in English) |
| University of Essex | www.essex.ac.uk/staff/academic-standards-and-quality (QA system in English)<br><br>https://www.qaa.ac.uk/reviewing-higher-education/quality-assurance-reports (Institutional assessment report) |
| University of Rijeka | uniri.hr/en/about-university/quality-assurance-system/ (QA system in English) |

| Partner | URL |
| --- | --- |
| Sorbonne Nouvelle University | www.sorbonne-nouvelle.fr/les-conseils-de-perfectionnement-732628.kjsp?RH=1179926084097 <br> (Continuous improvement process in French) <br><br> www.sorbonne-nouvelle.fr/evaluations-et-examens-695982.kjsp?RH=1179926084097 <br> (Assessment system in French) <br><br> www.sorbonne-nouvelle.fr/evaluation-des-enseignements-par-les-etudiants-759525.kjsp?RH=1271340399432 <br> (Student evaluation of teaching in French) <br><br> www.sorbonne-nouvelle.fr/medias/fichier/hceres-paris3-rapport-formations-reponse-officielle_1547549389375.pdf <br> (External accreditation report in French) |

## 9.3 Quality Culture workflow



# Quality Culture Product Flow

Following the PDCA cycle for continuous improvement, the YUFE QA Board plays a key role in the *Check* stage of the individual quality cycles of the various YUFE work packages. Within this stage, we follow these steps:

**ACT   PLAN**

**CHECK   DO**

**ED&I check**

Perform an ED&I check of your instrument using the YUFE ED&I checklist or contact the ED&I colleagues for support.

**Data collection**

The QA Board provides you with the distribution link to your evaluation instrument so you can disseminate it to your chosen target group and start collecting data.

**Data analysis and QA report**

The QA Board gathers the data and prepares a quality assurance report.

**Data interpretation, conclusions and follow-up**

Interpret the data in your QA report and formulate your conclusions and possible actions for follow-up and adaptation before sending the report back to the QA Board.

**Reporting**

The QA Board will store your QA report on the YUFEnet QA page and will reference it in the annual QA report.

To close the quality loop, inform your colleagues and other stakeholders about the results of the evaluation.

**QA instrument selection, development & implementation**

Contact the QA Board at least one month before the evaluation to discuss your plans and goals.

Together, we'll select an appropriate quality instrument from the YUFE portfolio, adapt it to your specific needs or design a new one.

**Note**

We understand if you prefer to use your own evaluation instruments and manage the QA process independently. However, please contact us in advance so we can ensure that your evaluation tool aligns with YUFE's QA requirements.

Once your data analysis is complete, please share your results, conclusions, and follow-up actions with the QA Board. This allows us to incorporate your findings into the YUFE's QA reporting.

## 9.4 Abbreviations

| | |
|---|---|
| ED&I | Equity, Diversity & Inclusivity |
| EHEA | European Higher Education Area |
| EQAAB | External Quality Assurance Advisory Board |
| EQAR | European Quality Assurance Register for Higher Education |
| ESG | Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance in the European Higher Education Area |
| HE | Higher Education |
| PDCA | Plan Do Check Act |
| QA | Quality Assurance |
| QAB | Quality Assurance Board |
| WP | Work Package |
| YUFE | Young Universities for the Future of Europe |