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## **GUIDELINES FOR OPERATING QUALITY ASSURANCE SYSTEMS WITHIN EDUCATIONAL INSTITUTIONS IN THAILAND**

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### **Abstract**

Educational quality assurance has been mandated in the National Education Act, in Thailand which specifies the need for both internal and external quality assurance systems to improve the quality and standards of education at all levels. Educational quality assurance is a process that educational institutions undertake to foster confidence, trust, and satisfaction among stakeholders, including students, parents, the public, and society. It ensures that the institution provides education in accordance with established quality standards. The process of internal quality assurance within educational institutions involves managing and executing activities according to the institution's operational plan, with the goal of continuously improving the quality of students. This process is designed to assure stakeholders that the institution's educational management is efficient and that students meet the desired standards of quality or possess the qualities specified by educational standards. Internal quality assurance involves the evaluation and monitoring of educational quality and standards from within, carried out either by the institution's personnel or by its supervisory agency. There are seven steps in the internal quality assurance process. The institution must first establish its educational standards. Once these standards are set, the institution should develop an educational management plan that focuses on achieving quality in line with the set standards. The next step involves implementing the educational management plan. The institution must also monitor and evaluate the quality of education throughout this process. After the plan is fully implemented, an internal quality assessment must be conducted in accordance with the institution's standards. An annual report, detailing the internal quality assessment, should then be produced. Lastly, the institution must ensure continuous improvement in educational quality. This process ensures that educational institutions operate efficiently and provide high-quality education, reinforcing the trust and confidence of all stakeholders involved.

**Keywords:** quality insurance system, educational institution

### **Introduction**

Modern Thailand education exists within a globally interconnected, open learning society. The rapid advancement of technology has revolutionized educational methodologies in Thailand institutions, enabling self-directed learning and research. This adaptation is crucial for keeping pace with the boundless possibilities of the modern, interconnected world. Education, in its broadest sense, is a continuous learning process that transcends geographical and temporal limitations. Regardless of size-small, medium, large, extra-large all educational institutions share a fundamental, unavoidable process: the need for a systematic and ongoing approach to quality assurance. This systematic approach is essential for comprehensive institutional quality enhancement. It ensures students develop the knowledge, skills, and desirable attributes aligned with the institution's established standards. Furthermore, it encompasses effective management, curriculum development, teacher training, resource

development, and the creation of a collaborative environment involving the school, parents, the community, and internal and external organizational units. The effectiveness of education hinges significantly on the quality of its quality assurance processes. A robust and comprehensive quality assurance system ensures continuous improvement and development across all aspects of the institution. Conversely, inadequate or insufficient quality assurance mechanisms may hinder the institution's progress and prevent it from reaching its full potential. Therefore, the implementation of effective quality assurance processes is not merely a regulatory requirement but a critical factor in achieving educational excellence and preparing students for success in a rapidly evolving world. A well-structured quality assurance framework ensures that educational practices are aligned with national standards, while also fostering innovation and adaptation to meet the unique needs of the students and the community it serves. This holistic approach fosters a culture of continuous improvement, ensuring that the institution remains responsive to the changing demands of the 21<sup>st</sup>-century learning environment. The emphasis on collaboration and stakeholder engagement underscores the importance of a shared commitment to excellence in education. The success of education in Thailand in this era of rapid technological advancement depends heavily on the effective implementation and continuous improvement of its quality assurance systems. This involves not only adhering to established standards and procedures but also embracing innovative approaches to teaching and learning that leverage technology to enhance student engagement and outcomes. The ultimate goal is to cultivate a learning environment that empowers students to become lifelong learners, critical thinkers, and active contributors to society. This necessitates a dynamic and adaptable quality assurance system that can respond effectively to the evolving needs of students and the demands of a rapidly changing world. The ongoing evaluation and refinement of quality assurance processes are therefore essential for ensuring that Thai education remains relevant, effective, and responsive to the needs of its students and the broader community. The National Education Act B.E. 1999 and the amended version (No.2) B.E. 2002 have stipulated that there shall be educational quality assurance implemented in order to develop quality and standards at all education levels, with rules and regulations as prescribed in the Ministerial Regulations. Details are provided in Chapter 6 on Standards and Educational Quality Assurance. Section 47 requires that there shall be an educational quality assurance system consisting of internal quality assurance and external quality assurance to develop quality and standards. Section 48 requires that the governing agencies and educational institutions provide internal quality assurance systems, and such internal quality assurance is part of the educational administration process that needs to be conducted continuously. An annual report must be prepared and submitted to the governing agencies and related agencies as well as disclosed to the public, in order to lead to quality and standard development and to support external quality assessment. External quality assurance, according to Section 49, requires that there shall be an Office for National Education Standards and Quality Assessment, with the status of a public organization, performing duties of developing criteria, methods and conducting external evaluation of educational provision in order to examine the quality of educational institutions, with regard to objectives, principles and approaches at each level as stipulated in this Act. There shall be external quality assessment of all educational institutions at least once in every five years from the last assessment. The assessment results shall be proposed to related agencies and the public. Therefore, internal quality assurance within an educational institution is a process that the institution has to conduct systematically and continuously in order to develop quality learners that meet the standards set by the institution, improve the management processes, improve the teaching and learning processes to meet the quality requirements, and establish confidence among students, parents, community and stakeholders that the institution is effective.

### **Quality assurance within educational institutions**

The Royal Institute Dictionary does not offer a definition for "internal quality assurance in educational institutions." However, we can derive a meaning by analyzing the component words. "Assurance", functioning as a verb, signifies guaranteeing responsibility for any resulting damages. "Quality", a noun, denotes the superior attributes of an individual or object. "Internal", also a noun, means inside. "Institution" is a noun signifying a location or institution, while "education" is a noun representing the processes of learning, training, and education. Therefore, "internal quality assurance in educational institutions" can be understood as the assurance that the school is of high quality and operates effectively within its own environment. The Office of the National Education Standards and Quality Assessment (Public Organization) defines internal quality assurance as the internal evaluation and monitoring of an educational institution's quality and educational standards, conducted by those involved within the institution or by the overseeing agency. The Office of the Basic Education Commission defines internal quality assurance in educational institutions as the establishment of systems and mechanisms to control, monitor, and evaluate the institution's operations, ensuring alignment with established policies, goals, and quality standards. This process, undertaken by the institution or supervising agency, aims to provide a clear understanding of the actual situation, thereby informing strategies and improvements based on pre-defined criteria and standards on a consistent basis. The Office of Educational Testing defines internal quality assurance as the internal assessment and monitoring of educational quality and standards, carried out by associated personnel within the institution or by the supervising agency. This is presented as an ongoing management process focused on continuous improvement, ultimately aiming to cultivate high-quality learners a core objective already inherent in the responsibilities of educational institutions. These varied definitions highlight the multifaceted nature of internal quality assurance. While the core concept ensuring high educational quality remains consistent, the specific approaches and responsibilities vary depending on the defining organization. The commonality lies in the commitment to continuous evaluation, monitoring, and improvement of internal educational practices. This internal focus distinguishes it from external quality assurance processes conducted by outside entities. The emphasis on internal stakeholders underscores the shared responsibility and collaborative efforts required to maintain and improve educational quality. The continuous improvement aspect highlights the dynamic nature of quality assurance, needing consistent adaptation and refinement to meet evolving needs and standards. Collectively, these definitions illustrate a robust and multifaceted system designed to ensure the consistent delivery of high-quality education within educational institutions. The focus on internal processes, stakeholder involvement, and continuous improvement emphasizes the importance of a proactive and self-reflective approach to quality assurance, aiming for sustainable enhancement of educational standards and student outcomes. The differences in emphasis across the definitions reflect the varied perspectives and priorities of organizations involved in educational quality assurance. Mahamabakori Mazo (2021) stated that internal quality assurance in educational institutions is a high-quality organizational management process that utilizes the principle of participation from personnel within the school, recognizing the goals and benefits for students as paramount. Internal quality assurance in educational institutions must consider three key principles: decentralization, participation, and demonstrable accountability for the school's performance. Matthanit Dondong (2021) stated that educational quality assurance is a process of executing the institution's mission to instill confidence in students, parents, communities, and society. It is a systematic internal management process within the institution to continuously improve the quality of education and the quality of learners. There is planning of operations, setting of process standards, and implementation according to the established plans and standards, with all personnel in the

organization participating in planning and goal setting. This includes controlling, inspecting, and evaluating operations to instill confidence in service recipients. Internal educational quality assurance means the management process of the institution that involves planning, evaluating, and monitoring educational quality and standards from within to continuously develop learners' quality. It is an internal self-evaluation by the institution's personnel or the supervising agency to build societal confidence that the institution can provide quality education and develop learners to the desired quality. From the aforementioned definition, it can be concluded that internal quality assurance in educational institutions refers to a systematic management process that must be continuously developed. It is a process where administrators, teachers, staff, and all stakeholders collaboratively plan, set goals, determine methods, and implement the plan at every stage. This includes systematic recording, monitoring, and inspection to ensure that students receive education of quality according to the established standards. It also instills confidence in stakeholders or interested parties by providing them with the actual situation, which will lead to guidelines and quality development according to the set criteria and standards effectively, achieving the desired goals.

### **Guidelines for internal quality assurance in educational institutions in Thailand**

The Importance of Educational Quality Assurance in an Era of Rapid Technological Advancements. In this era of rapid technological advancement, the success of education in Thailand heavily depends on the effective implementation of quality assurance systems. These systems must not only adhere to established standards but also embrace innovative approaches to teaching and learning, using technology to enhance student engagement and outcomes. Educational quality assurance guidelines are designed to establish a system for monitoring, inspecting, and evaluating the operations of each educational component according to specified indicators. The goal is to ensure that educational institutions can produce quality outcomes, are ready for external assessments, and meet certification standards. The Royal Gazette (2018) stipulates that basic education institutions must have an internal quality assurance system in place. This system follows a set of guidelines and practices for internal quality assurance, which consists of eight key steps. First, the educational standards of the institution must be established. Then, a development plan for the institution's educational management, aimed at quality according to the institution's educational standards, must be created. This includes organizing a management and information system that facilitates operations. Once the planning is complete, the institution must implement the educational management development plan, ensuring systematic monitoring and evaluation of educational quality. After completing all tasks, an internal quality assessment according to the institution's educational standards must be conducted to track and verify the results. An annual report, which serves as an internal quality assessment report, must also be prepared. The final step is to ensure continuous development of educational quality. Various educational bodies and researchers have summarized these guidelines in similar steps. For instance, the Office of Educational Testing (2011) and Jarukit Suksook (2022) have described the process in eight steps that align with the Royal Gazette. The Bangkok Metropolitan Administration has streamlined this into a seven-step process, focusing on standards, development plans, quality monitoring, and reporting. Some studies, such as Mayuree Vorawan's research (2020), have observed that certain schools follow a six-step process for internal quality assurance, focusing more on practical implementation and self-assessment reporting. This simplified approach is aligned with Pricha Sapayoi's summary (2023), which also identifies six steps in the process. Across various educational institutions in Thailand, the internal quality assurance process consistently emphasizes setting standards, developing and implementing improvement plans, monitoring, evaluation, and continuous improvement. The process may vary slightly depending on

institutional context, but the core focus remains on maintaining and enhancing educational quality through a structured and evaluative approach. The guidelines for internal quality assurance in educational institutions in Thailand emphasize continuous improvement and quality development, starting with setting educational standards. Institutions must define their own standards, aligning with the national framework or customizing them to meet their specific goals. This internal review should identify key learning outcomes, teaching methods, and resources that align with both national requirements and the institution's mission. These standards serve as the foundation for all subsequent quality assurance activities. After establishing the standards, institutions must develop an educational management plan that focuses on improving teaching and learning outcomes. The plan should outline strategic goals and detailed action steps, which may include curriculum modifications, teacher development programs, learning environment enhancements, and resource allocation. It should follow the SMART criteria—Specific, Measurable, Achievable, Relevant, and Time-bound. A strong management and information system is essential for implementing the educational management plan. Institutions must have an administrative structure, including an information system for monitoring progress and making data-driven decisions. This system will help gather, store, and analyze data on student performance, resource usage, and other relevant indicators, allowing for ongoing quality monitoring and timely adjustments. The next step is the effective implementation of the plan. Institutions must ensure that all outlined actions are carried out in practice. Educational administrators should clearly assign roles and responsibilities, ensuring timelines are followed and resources are used efficiently. Regular meetings and feedback loops with teachers and staff help address challenges and improve implementation. Continuous monitoring and evaluation are critical to keeping institutions on track to meet their educational standards. Internal audits, surveys, and classroom assessments should be conducted regularly. Schools should establish committees or teams to oversee these evaluations, ensuring that feedback is used for ongoing improvements. The Internal Quality Assessment (IQA) is a process by which institutions evaluate whether they meet their educational standards. IQA may be conducted annually or at intervals depending on the institution. A comprehensive evaluation should cover student outcomes, teacher performance, infrastructure quality, and administrative effectiveness. External evaluators or peer reviews can offer valuable insights. Institutions must prepare an annual Self-Assessment Report (SAR) that documents the results of their internal quality assessment, highlights successes, and identifies areas for improvement. The SAR should be a reflective document, addressing both achievements and challenges, and offering strategies for addressing these issues. It should be shared with stakeholders, such as students, parents, and governing bodies, to promote transparency. Finally, institutions must commit to the continuous development of educational quality. This involves creating a continuous improvement plan based on the IQA and SAR findings. The plan may include professional development for staff, curriculum updates, or facility improvements, and it should be flexible to evolve as the institution grows and develops.

## Conclusion

Internal quality assurance in educational institutions is a process undertaken by the institution itself to build confidence, trust, and satisfaction among stakeholders, including students, parents, the public, and the community. This process aims to ensure that the institution provides high-quality education that meets established standards and that its administration and management are effective. The internal quality assurance process consists of several key steps, starting with planning. The institution sets clear goals and objectives, develops an operational plan aligned with educational standards, assesses community needs, and defines strategies to address those needs. Following the planning stage, the implementation phase begins. The

institution puts its educational development plan into action, requiring a robust management and information system to support execution. The focus during this stage is on delivering high-quality teaching and effective administration, with continuous monitoring to ensure the plan is being followed. Monitoring and evaluation are critical steps in verifying whether the institution is achieving its goals. This involves collecting data on educational management, student learning outcomes, and analyzing this data to inform necessary improvements. Based on the evaluation results, the institution makes improvements and developments to its processes, concentrating on enhancing teaching methods, learning environments, and teacher competencies to better meet student learning needs. Finally, the institution reports its progress to relevant authorities, ensuring ongoing quality monitoring and continuous improvement in educational effectiveness. This internal quality assurance process is thus an essential tool for educational institutions, driving consistent and effective quality enhancement.

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