



# Quality assurance at universities is risky business

The value of quality assurance at universities lies in how it is practised across the entire institution.

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[https://www.emerald.com/insight/content/doi/10.1108/QAE-06-2016-0027/full/pdf?casa\\_token=8JgSalEVx58AAAAA:vgv6\\_mvFMOqIkzyzblAGIMLpBOnNo0oyqAFuh8f-C2N6GBVeOpDXQiwghZAFegi-zUveJA6ukw9HpFhDB00HS73dBKnt24a2CeeqMJ5Pxq\\_gj1yvPA4](https://www.emerald.com/insight/content/doi/10.1108/QAE-06-2016-0027/full/pdf?casa_token=8JgSalEVx58AAAAA:vgv6_mvFMOqIkzyzblAGIMLpBOnNo0oyqAFuh8f-C2N6GBVeOpDXQiwghZAFegi-zUveJA6ukw9HpFhDB00HS73dBKnt24a2CeeqMJ5Pxq_gj1yvPA4)

Educators and learners have lost faith in the value of qualifications on offer at higher education institutions. Yet, the measures to assure the quality of the qualifications appear to have increased and become more governed. At the same time, educators find themselves disillusioned with the nature of managerialism, which has caused quality assurance efforts to become a ritual of compliance. Learners find themselves questioning the reputation of their qualifications and the institutions that offer them. Despite the new realities brought about by COVID-19, there is no shortage of stories where universities continue to suffer as a result of risks associated with their offerings.

Doubts concerning the quality of an institution's offerings lead not only to anxiety and frustration, but also to wasted resources with regard to the public higher education funding framework. The perceived decline in the quality of university offerings also has an impact on the employability of graduates. Adopting a compliance regime that undervalues academic judgment translates into institutional risks.

A researcher at UNISA has published an article offering five aspects needed to enhance academic quality assurance in a university to reduce the risks associated with ritualised quality assurance practices. The successful implementation of these five aspects calls for collaboration between policymakers, policy users and learners.

“Establishing quality assurance

policies in the unique context of the institution leads to fit-for-purpose practices,” says Professor Annemarie Davis. “When the efforts of policymakers are aligned with those of policy users, smoother implementation of the policies is ensured.”

Excessive monitoring of quality devalues the role of the academic and breaks down the collegial culture in the institution.



*Quality assurance at universities should not be merely a ritual of compliance.*

