



Quality Assurance: The Role of Accreditation in Higher Education and Health Care

Prachi S. Tajne*, Vaishnavi S. Kalamb, Dr. Ravindra L. Bakal, Pooja R. Hatwar, Purva P. Bhojar

Shri Swami Samarth Institute of Pharmacy, At Parsodi, Dharamgaon Rly, Dist. Amravati (444709) Maharashtra, India.

*Corresponding author's E-mail: prachitajne56@gmail.com

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ABSTRACT

Quality assurance (QA) is a concept that ensures the quality of goods and leads to improving it. There are two types of QA mainly external and internal quality assurance. We cover quality management, where certification is mostly dependent on quality assurance. This article covers three strategies for ensuring quality: accreditation, quality audits, quality assessments, and accountability. Quality assessment in which self-assessment and external assessment are explained. Accreditation is one type of formal approval by an accrediting authority to maintain a certain level of standards. Several categories of US accreditation organizations are discussed. The purpose of this study was to ascertain how accreditation affects hospital standards and educational quality. Different types of accreditations, including institutional and programmatic, are then discussed in the article. The scope, principles concept and objective of accreditation are explained. The discussion moves on to accreditation systems affiliation. Accrediting agencies are responsible for evaluating and assessing the standards in educational as well as hospital accreditation. These accrediting organizations include the NAAC criteria, process, and standards.

Keywords: Accreditation, quality assurance, education quality, agencies, health care.

INTRODUCTION

Globally, quality assurance in higher education has grown to be a significant phenomenon. Monitoring, assessing, or reviewing higher education is referred to as quality assurance¹. Accreditation, a process intended to improve quality and safety, is well established internationally². Accreditation can be considered as one of several complementary measures in a quality assurance system, and the starting point is the need to maintain and improve good quality in institutions of higher education³. Accreditation is a powerful degree of quality assurance (QA) and quality improvement (QI) in medical education⁴. Quality, continuous improvement, and accreditation are now integral components of health services discourse and operations⁵.

Organizations known as accreditation agencies are in charge of analysing and rating the quality of training and education programs provided by establishments and making sure they adhere to a set of requirements. Generally speaking, accrediting bodies are autonomous, non-governmental entities that set and uphold performance and quality standards within their specialized sectors⁶.

Higher education developed and used accreditation, an external quality evaluation procedure, to examine schools, institutions, and programs for quality improvement and assurance⁷.

Recently, higher education institutions have begun to view quality assurance and accreditation as a trendy way to deliver high-quality education to meet global developments and produce outputs that meet labour market demands both locally and globally, with high efficiencies and excellence in a variety of fields⁸.

An increasingly popular strategy for guaranteeing health standards in both public and commercial systems for the funding and delivery of healthcare is the accreditation of healthcare systems⁹. An increasingly common method of improving quality at the level of health care delivery is accreditation, which the World Health Organization defines as a thorough assessment of the major systems that comprise a health care facility¹⁰. In order to train outstanding medical professionals, the World Health Organization mandates that nations set up accrediting organizations for quality management of education¹¹. Any system of health professions education (HPE) is thought to require effective accreditation¹². In worldwide healthcare, health service accreditation has spread as a purported indicator of safety and quality. Through internal and external evaluation, accreditation programs aim to track and improve healthcare organizations' performance in relation to pre-established ideal criteria¹³. Large and small health service organizations can incorporate patient safety and quality improvement programs into their everyday operations with the help of standards¹⁴.

Hospital accreditation processes, defined as the systematic assessment of hospitals against accepted criteria are done by independent agencies, external to the hospital structure, mainly involving nongovernmental and nonprofit organizations¹⁵.

Primary health care (PHC) is a vital component of health care systems. It offers affordable services like healthy nutrition, school hygiene, immunizations against infectious illnesses, treatment of non-communicable diseases (NCDs), mother and child health care, environmental health care, professional health care, and mental health care¹⁶. A qualified third party's official recognition of a laboratory's ability to perform particular services and its obligation to



consistently and sustainably generate precise, quantifiable results within reasonable industry bounds is known as accreditation. 70% of medical diagnoses are influenced by medical laboratories, making them important contributors to patient safety¹⁷.

DEFINITIONS

Quality Management

As stated by ISO 9000, quality management (QM) might involve setting up quality policies, quality objectives, and procedures to accomplish these goals through quality assurance, control, planning, and improvement¹⁸.

Quality Control [QC]

The QA component of QM is concerned with meeting quality standards; it involves actions that enforce particular standards of quality on a process and include assessing the real-world performance characteristics of a system or device, contrasting it with the intended outcomes, and taking appropriate action based on the discrepancy; QC examines a process's input to make sure that crucial components or process-specific parameters are accurate¹⁸.

Quality Assurance [QA]

One modern idea in overall quality management is quality assurance, which has evolved into a strategy for businesses looking to enhance and boost performance⁸. Quality assurance is the organization's guarantee that the goods or services it offers fulfil acceptable quality standards. It encompasses all actions pertaining to evaluating and enhancing the value of one (or more) standards in the implementation process¹⁹.

Three types of compliance accreditation, accountability, and assessment can be used in quality assurance; each requires a separate set of methods²⁰.

In quality accreditation, two common concepts are internal quality assurance (IQA) and external quality assurance (EQA)¹⁹.

TYPES OF QUALITY ASSURANCE

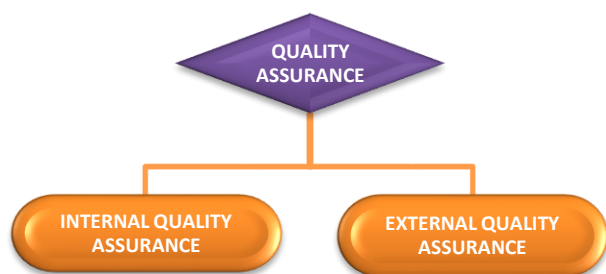


Figure 1: Types of Quality Assurance²¹

• Internal Quality Assurance

Internal quality assurance ensures that an institution or programme has policies and mechanisms in place to make sure that it is meeting its own objectives and standards that

apply to educational institutions in general or to each career field in particular and satisfies the market's needs²¹.

• External Quality Assurance

An organization outside of the institution handles external quality assurance. The organization evaluates the institutions or its programs operations to see if they adhere to the predetermined or agreed-upon^{21,19}. The three most popular types of quality assurance are accreditation, quality audit, and quality assessment¹.

QUALITY AUDIT

The process of quality assurance begins with quality audits²¹. The quality audit approach may allow institutions to make quality decisions with greater autonomy¹. An audit is an externally conducted, peer review process used for internal systems for quality assurance, assessment, and improvement. Audit, in contrast to assessment, concentrates on the procedures that are thought to result in quality as well as the ways in which academics reassure themselves that quality has been reached²². Quality audits assess the adequacy of an institution's or one of its subunits' quality assurance procedures by looking at their existence²¹.

QUALITY ASSESSMENT

Quality assurance follows quality evaluation²¹. Evaluations of the quality of student study programs and the delivery of instruction and learning are known as quality assessments²².

The international, national, regional, and institutional contexts are all taken into consideration during the quality evaluation process²¹. Initiatives for assessment have placed a greater emphasis on the results of educational experiences and the institutional mechanisms that support those goals²⁰.

The techniques employed in quality assessment

- Self-assessment
- External assessment

Self-Assessment (self-study, self-evaluation)

A program, institution, or system's internal reflection process used to assess adherence to externally set norms⁴. This self-assessment aids the accreditation committee in getting ready for site visits, which involve talks with teachers and students, documentation checks, and inspections²³. SWOT analysis is a common tool used in self-evaluation. Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, and Threats, SWOT is an acronym that describes the internal and external strengths and weaknesses of an institution or organization as well as the opportunities²⁴.

External assessment

A program, institution, or system's degree of conformance with defined accrediting requirements is assessed by people outside the program, institution, or system⁴. Globally, external evaluations of the quality of instruction

are currently being adopted at a rapid pace ²². Depending on the kinds of evidence available and when they become accessible during the accreditation process, different systems use different documentation as part of an external assessment against standards ⁴. Since accreditation includes an "external peer review" meant to render a value judgment on an institution's cleanliness, safety, and quality, it is frequently seen as a final evaluation method rather than a tool for formative training ²⁵.

ACCOUNTABILITY

The focus on the requirements that must be met by any educational system in order for it to be held responsible for the accomplishment of its objectives is known as accountability ²⁰.

ACCREDITATION

An international technique known as accreditation is a quality assurance system that follows a set of guidelines and has been authorized by an accrediting authority²⁶. "An external quality review process used by higher education to examine colleges, universities, and educational programs for quality assurance and quality improvement" is what accreditation is. The process through which a non-governmental or private organization assesses the overall quality of a higher education institution or of a particular educational program in order to legally acknowledge it as having fulfilled some preset minimal criteria or requirements is known as accreditation ³. To make sure that the accrediting mechanisms are operating effectively, efficiently, and fairly, it is necessary to examine accreditation processes and the organizations in charge of carrying them out. Governmental organizations and independent non-governmental organizations can both establish accreditation processes ²⁰. The World Health Organization defines accreditation as a thorough assessment of the essential components of a healthcare facility and notes that it is a technique that is becoming more and more popular for raising standards at the point of health care delivery ¹⁰. The ISO has created two worldwide standards: ISO 17025, which is for testing laboratories generally, and ISO 15189, which is exclusively for medical laboratories ²⁷.

OBJECTIVES OF ACCREDITATION

These objectives can be traced in the following

- i. High efficiency is demanded of graduates of these programs.
- ii. The method used to evaluate students' educational programs is accurate and reliable.
- iii. Ongoing program improvement ⁸.

TYPES OF ACCREDITATIONS

The process by which a certification agency or organization assesses and acknowledges the calibre and standards of a program or institution is known as accreditation. Depending

on the sector and kind of organization, there are several kinds of accreditations ⁶.

There are two main types of educational accreditation: "institutional" and "specialized" or "programmatic" ^{2,8}.

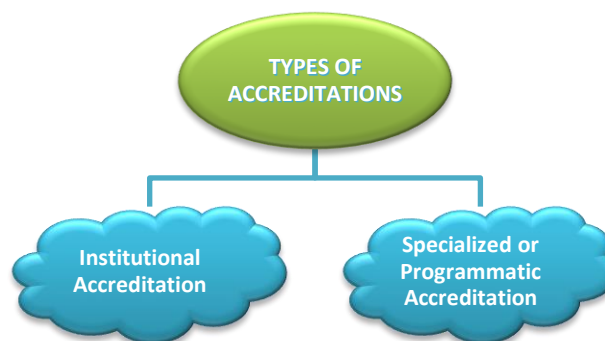


Figure 2: Types of Accreditations ^{2,8}

The Institutional Accreditation

Typically, a regional or national accrediting body bestows institutional accreditation ⁶. A license to operate is essentially provided by institutional accreditation. Typically, it is predicated on an assessment of the institution's compliance with predetermined minimal (input) standards, including those related to staff credentials, studies, student enrollment, and educational resources ²⁸. Mission, governance, academic programs, teaching personnel, learning materials, students and related services, physical facilities, and financial resources are the domains that are evaluated as part of institutional accreditation ²¹. An entire organization is assessed by an institutional accrediting authority before being granted accreditation ³. An entire institution is evaluated as part of institutional accreditation, with the goal of confirming the administrative policies, practices, and stability ⁸.

Specialized or Programmatic Accreditation

The assessment of an institution's program to guarantee its quality and suitability for the level of certificate awarded is known as specialized accreditation ⁸. Because of their significance to the country, some state-regulated programs may be subject to mandatory accreditation under specific accrediting schemes ²¹. Within an organization, specific departments, schools, or programs are assessed by specialized accreditation authorities ³. Within an institution, specialized accreditation assesses the standard and requirements of particular academic departments or programs ⁶. Programs needing specific accreditation include those in business, engineering, medicine, pharmacy, and law ⁸. Programs can receive accreditation for their academic standing or more commonly known as "professional accreditation" for producing graduates who are competent to practice as professionals ²⁸.

TYPES OF U.S. ACCREDITING ORGANIZATIONS

Four categories of accrediting bodies exist:

- Accreditors in the region: - accredit two and four-year, public and private, mostly nonprofit, degree-granting institutions.
- National accreditors for religion: - accredit fundamentally and religiously oriented institutions.
- National accreditors for careers: - primarily accredit career-based, for-profit, single-purpose, degree-granting, and non-degree-granting institutions.
- Accreditors that use programs: - accredit specialized courses, occupations, and independent schools, such as the legal, medical, engineering, and health fields ⁷.

SCOPE OF ACCREDITATION

This role is carried out by a Ministry of Education agency in certain nations, but it is carried out by a confederation of professional societies or volunteer organizations in several industrialized nations. There is currently no national body that unites most professional societies in our nation. However, there are a number of quality control (inspection) procedures in place, including university affiliation, professional society recognition, and AICTE clearance for new and ongoing programs ²⁴.

PRINCIPLE

- keep your attention on the program's objectives.
- Create and provide adaptable standards to promote creativity.
- Make diagnostic suggestions rather than prescriptive ones.
- Be aware of and considerate of institutional diversity.
- Even for specialized programs, steer clear of solitary evaluation; instead, connect and compare with other programs wherever you can.
- Reduce the amount of work associated with accreditation.
- Get advice from the relevant institution regarding the visiting team's makeup ²⁹.

ROLES

- Assuring quality - The main way that schools, institutions, and programs guarantee quality to the public and students is through accreditation.
- Access to federal and state funds- Access to government monies, including student aid and other federal programs, requires accreditation.
- Engendering private sector confidence- When deciding whether to give privately, people and foundations search for proof of accreditation.

- Easing transfer- For students to transfer courses and programs across colleges, universities, and programs smoothly, accreditation is crucial ^{3,7}.

PURPOSE

- Transparency and accountability.
- Improvement of quality.
- Making it easier for students to move around ²¹.
- Define certification in the health professions in a modern, global context.
- Explain the connection between health care results and educational accreditation.
- Put out a framework of necessary components for modern HPE accreditation ¹².
- Public health and financial protection are typically given top priority on government agenda; this is increasingly seen as a means of minimizing practice variation, boosting efficiency, and ensuring patient safety ³⁰.
- Assure quality assurance and control, usually in relation to a certification program in the fields of teaching, training, testing, etc ²⁴.

ACCREDITATION AGENCIES

According to regulatory and accrediting bodies, accreditation is an essential tool for fulfilling requirements and confirming the validity, standing, and acceptability of higher education programs ³¹. Regional and national accrediting agencies are the two types of accrediting agencies. National accrediting organizations assess programs and institutions nationwide, whereas regional accrediting organizations assess institutions within a particular geographic area of the US ⁶.

Since 2004 the OAQ also operates as official accreditation agency for medical education. Based on solid worldwide practices and in conformity with World Federation of Medical Education (WFME) recommendations, the OAQ commenced with programme accreditations in undergraduate medical education as well as in postgraduate medical education ³². WFME is an international organization dedicated to improving medical education standards across the globe ⁶.

Pharmacy Technician Accreditation Commission (PTAC)

The PTAC is jointly appointed by the American Society of Health-System Pharmacists (ASHP) and ACPE as part of their partnership on the accreditation of pharmacy technician education and training programs. The Pharmacy Technician Accreditation Commission met on May 6, 2020. The recommendations of the Commission were also approved by the ASHP Board in June 2020 and the ACPE Board of Directors in their meetings in July and August of 2020. The boards of directors of the ASHP and ACPE approved the accreditation actions for Pharmacy Technician Education



and Training Programs that had been recommended by the Pharmacy Technician Accreditation Commission³³. The national governing organization in charge of establishing and upholding high standards for medical education and recognizing medical certifications is the Medical Council of India (MCI). The primary Continuing Medical Education (CME) regulators in India are the MCI and the 26 State Medical Councils (SMCs)³⁴.

Based on the recommendations of the National Policy on Education of 1986, government initiatives started in 1994 with the establishment of independent accreditation bodies such as the National Board of Accreditation (NBA) by the All-India Council for Technical Education (AICTE) and the National Assessment and Accreditation Council (NAAC) by the University Grants Commission (UGC). Specific technical and managerial programs are accredited by NBA, and institutions, departments, and schools are evaluated by NAAC²⁹.

Accreditation Criteria—NAAC

SR.NO.	CRITERION
1.	The curriculum-related element
2.	Instruction, assessment, and learning
3.	Investigation, invention, and expansion
4.	Resources for education and infrastructure
5.	Student assistance and advancement
6.	Leadership, management, and governance
7.	Best practices and institutional values

Table 1: NAAC Criteria²⁹.

CONCLUSION

The ideal method for predicting mistakes and identifying issues prior to their occurrence during the organization's plan execution is quality assurance. In the global education and health sectors, accreditation is essential. Accreditation agencies play a vital role in ensuring the quality of education by providing rigorous evaluation and assessment of educational institutions and programs. The achievement of excellence and ongoing performance improvement can be positively motivated by certification from reputable national and international accreditors. Accreditation also contributes to the unity of the professions by bringing together practitioners, teachers and students in an activity directed at improving professional preparation and professional practice.

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