



ISSUE #16  
October 2022

# DEAN'S DIGEST

## It's not just a (quality) system, it's a culture

*“Quality means doing it right when no one is looking.”*

*Henry Ford.*

*ITU has recently been granted a positive accreditation from the Accreditation Council following a thorough accreditation process. A positive accreditation means that ITU's quality assurance system for study programmes meets all the requirements from the Danish Accreditation Institution. Whilst thankful for the decision and the highlighted strengths of our quality system, I will also dwell on the areas for development that the report and the process uncovered.*

## The positive result is a shared achievement

Does ITU's Quality Assurance System for study programmes meet the criteria for Institutional Accreditation and does the system work well in practice? This is—in broad terms—what the Danish Accreditation Institution and an international accreditation panel have assessed during 2021 and 2022, drawing on interviews with management, teachers, and students as well as an abundance of written documentation of our quality system and practice. Late September, the process ended with the best possible outcome: a 'yes' to the above questions and a positive accreditation. Among the strengths of our quality assurance system, the Panel highlighted the decentralized quality organisation, the Employers Panels and the committed and engaged quality actors, not least the students and teachers they met during their visits.

I would like to thank all the teachers, students, administrative staff, and members of management who took part in the accreditation process; dedicated time for gathering documentation, participated in preparatory meetings and in interviews with the panel and so forth. Your participation was highly valued.

At the same time, let's not forget that quality assurance is not just a system to show off during accreditation processes. It's a culture taking place every day at ITU. As the Ford quote says, “quality means doing it right when no one is looking”.

## What can we do better

In the report, the panel points to some areas of development in ITU's quality work. Among their observations and recommendations for future work are:

1. *SAT*. The role of SAT is unclear. The panel encourages ITU to improve the communication about the role and function of SATs in quality assurance as well as the SAT onboarding process of students.
2. *Research-based learning*: The panel acknowledges the work being done and recommends ITU to *"continue widening your reflections and discussions of research-based teaching and learning in the context of quality assurance"*. Moreover, ITU is recommended to map and discuss research-informed activities with the purpose of supporting students' reflections on and use of relevant scientific methods, including the activities taking place in labs.
3. *Workload*. High or imbalanced workload is a recurrent issue in some SAT's and in course evaluations and the panel suggests that ITU considers monitoring workload and perceptions of workload in a more systematic manner.
4. *ITU's Teaching Assistants*. The panel suggests that ITU considers *"whether and how closer integration of TAs in your quality assurance work could support the opportunities for dialogue and feedback between students and teachers"*.

## We're on it

The institutional accreditation process has paved the way for fruitful discussions on various parts of our quality system and culture, the recommendations are useful and in line with work already initiated.

For example, we are working on making research-based learning at ITU more visible through the collection of research-based learning practice examples and description of how labs contribute to student's research-based learning. Moreover, we have initiated a TA project to ensure a smoother process of TA hiring, onboarding, retention and to define more clearly the role of TAs. The [BEWISE strategy](#) as well as local action plans are also focusing on workload and feedback to ensure student wellbeing.

The positive accreditation is indeed a shared achievement of the whole ITU community of quality assurance actors who every day provides student-centred and research-based teaching, participates in course evaluations, ensures inclusive and transparent quality processes and so forth. For that I thank all members of the ITU community who do their best to engage in high quality education.

Now let's continue the work for a transparent and inclusive quality culture.

Pernille Rydén ([pryd@itu.dk](mailto:pryd@itu.dk)), Dean of Education, ITU