



UNIVERSITÀ
DEGLI STUDI
DI PADOVA

University Quality Committee

Quality Assurance System (abstract)

April 2019

University Quality Committee

Educational Offer and Quality Assurance Office

Email: presidio.qualita@unipd.it

1. Introduction

The Quality Assurance (QA) system of the University of Padova sets objectives, monitors action and carries out inspections in order to ensure the success of its quality policy and the continuous improvement of the educational offer, research and Third Mission activities.

Quality Assurance covers the planning, introduction, monitoring and inspection of University business and encompasses the action needed to instil sufficient confidence in its interlocutors so that the processes and activities meet the University's own self-set goals efficiently and transparently.

The first Teaching Quality Committee was established at the University of Padova in 2010, with the objective of coordinating activities and proposing ideas that would improve teaching and the monitoring of the processes and results of the University's entire teaching evaluation effort. The University also established its own Research Observatory in a bid to collect information that would help evaluate its research facilities and initiatives, as well as put forward criteria for classifying scientific production.

In 2017, the University introduced a new quality commission to monitor its Third Mission activities. Over the years, its system has developed and adapted to comply with both Italian and European legislation.

Today, the University's QA system covers three domains: Teaching, Research, and Third Mission. It is based on the European Standard and Guidelines for Quality Assurance (ESG 2015) in the European Higher Education Area (EHEA) and comprises the processes of Self-assessment, Assessment and Accreditation (AVA) established by Italy's National Agency for the Assessment of the University System and Research (ANVUR).

The system is organised in a series of entities, one for each level of the University's academic structure. It encompasses the levels corresponding to the following facets of University business: representation, operation and management, technical and administration, and support and promotion of innovation. The system is designed to encourage the various levels to interact and to provide the competences required to ensure the smooth implementation of Quality Assurance policy.

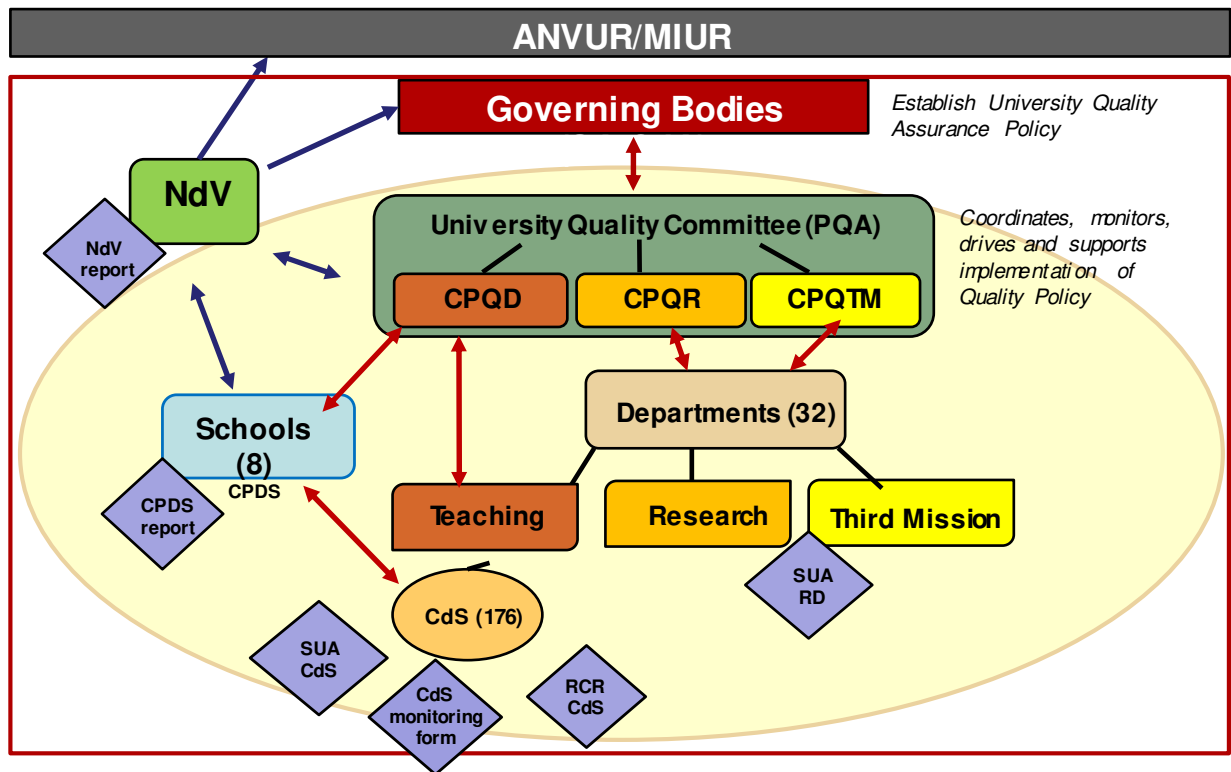
2. Organisation of the Quality Assurance System

The University assesses quality using the AVA system, which is based on a series of in-house procedures covering the planning, management, self-assessment and improvement of Teaching, Research and Third Mission activities. Quality is also assessed with a clear and transparent inspection by a third-party body.

This system ensures that the University is able to introduce a set of continuous quality improvement processes; to trace the efficiency and results of its services; to make all of the system's entities fully aware of their duties so that they can perform them competently and quickly; and to involve all of the University's stakeholders in the continuous improvement of quality.

The QA system (Fig. 1) encompasses a number of entities appointed to carry out QA functions: the Accreditation and Assessment Groups (GAV) for each Degree Course; the Joint Student-Professor Commissions (CPDS) for each School; the *Nucleo di Valutazione* (NdV), an independent university performance watchdog; and the University Quality Committee (PQA) at central level.

Fig. 1 The Quality Assurance System



3. Quality Assurance System Entities

The entities in the University of Padova QA system are its:

- University Governing Bodies (Rector, Director General, Board of Governors, Academic Senate);
- University Quality Committee (PQA)
- *Nucleo di Valutazione* (NdV)
- Joint Commissions;
- Degree Courses (CdS);
- Assessment and Accreditation Groups (GAV);
- Departments;
- Schools.

The University Governing Bodies, i.e. the Rector, Director General, Board of Governors and Academic Senate, set University Quality Policy and disseminate it by raising awareness among, sharing it with, and involving the entire University. They also ensure that the Quality Management System is implemented and kept up-to-date in a bid to enact quality policies and pursue quality objectives, with a focus on continuous improvement.

The University Quality Committee (PQA) coordinates, monitors and supports the implementation of Quality Policy, and also acts as a consultant to the University's Governing Bodies and the Departments. It oversees, monitors and supports University facilities, designs training courses on QA and on the continuous improvement of both training and research. It monitors the effectiveness of any improvement action and implements action recommended and/or conditions formulated by ANVUR's Evaluation Commission (CEV) during accreditation visits. It also draws up and approves the annual QA policy plan and writes an annual report.

The PQA coordinates the activity of the three permanent commissions:

- Commission for the Supervision of Teaching Quality (CPQD)
- Commission for the Supervision of Research Quality (CPQR)
- Commission for the Supervision of Third Mission Quality (CPQTM)

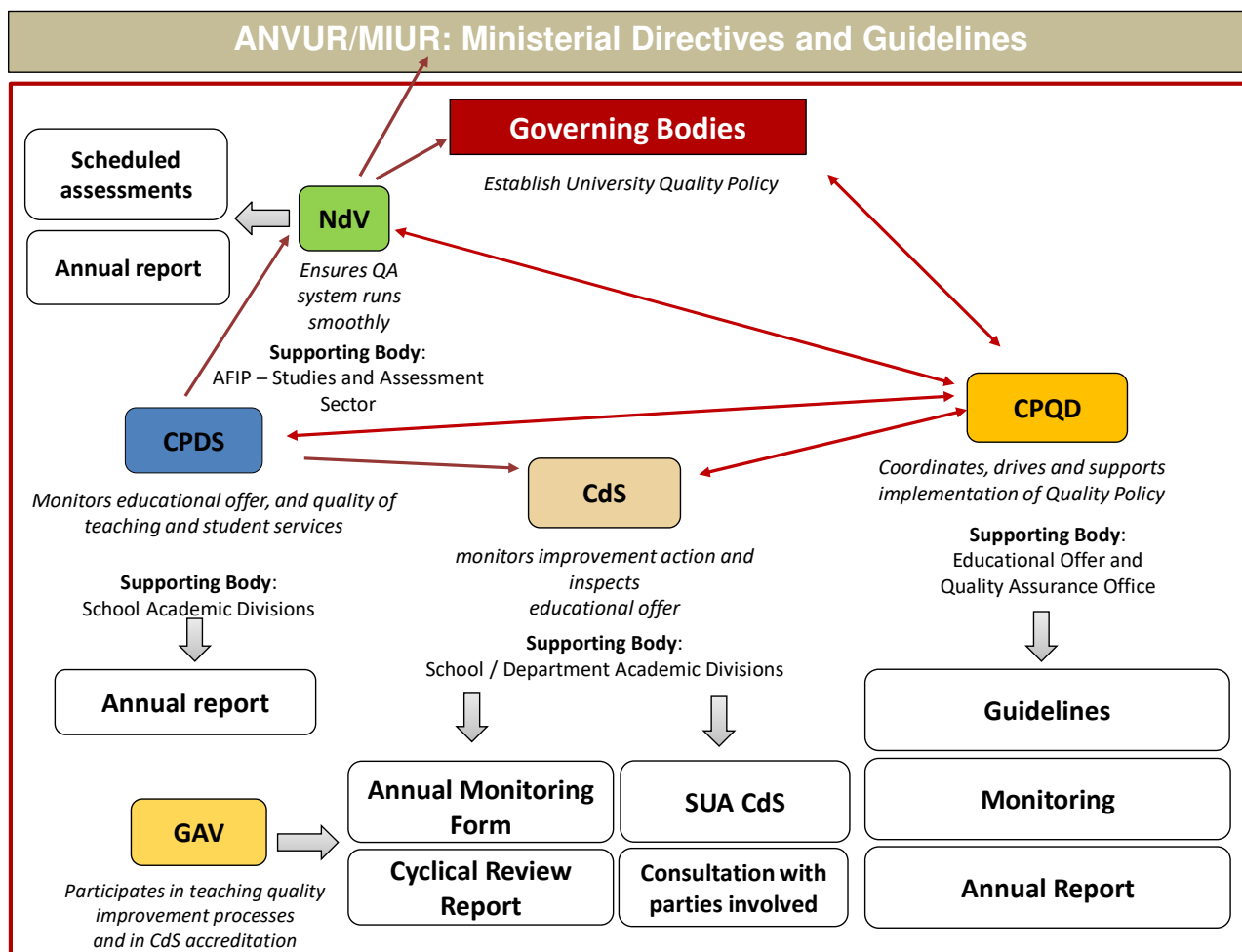
Commission for the Supervision of Teaching Quality (CPQD)

The CPQD aims to continuously improve quality by providing information and training. It puts forward and disseminates the QA model for Teaching, analyses staff levels of QA competence, and establishes the needs for staff training. It also provides the Schools with figures and information so that they can draw up QA documentation; it monitors and checks results, and ensures that documentation has been uploaded to ministerial databases. Finally, the CPQD liaises with the *Nucleo di Valutazione*.

The University also adopts clear procedures to ensure the quality and sustainability of its Degree Courses (CdS), as it has adopted a system of strict controls on the requisites for the new and the established Degree Courses. The new CdS are assessed on their compliance with the University's Strategic Development Plan, while the established educational offer is assessed mainly on the results of talks with social partners and on the sustainability of teaching and research. The Teaching QA processes involve the following levels of the University's academic hierarchy, with their various functions and competences (Fig. 2):

- Degree Courses (CdS) and related Self-assessment and Accreditation Groups (GAV);
- Departments;
- Schools and related Joint Student-Professor Commissions (CPDS);
- *Nucleo di Valutazione* (NdV);
- Commission for the Supervision of Teaching Quality (CPQD).

Fig. 2 University action towards Teaching Quality Assurance



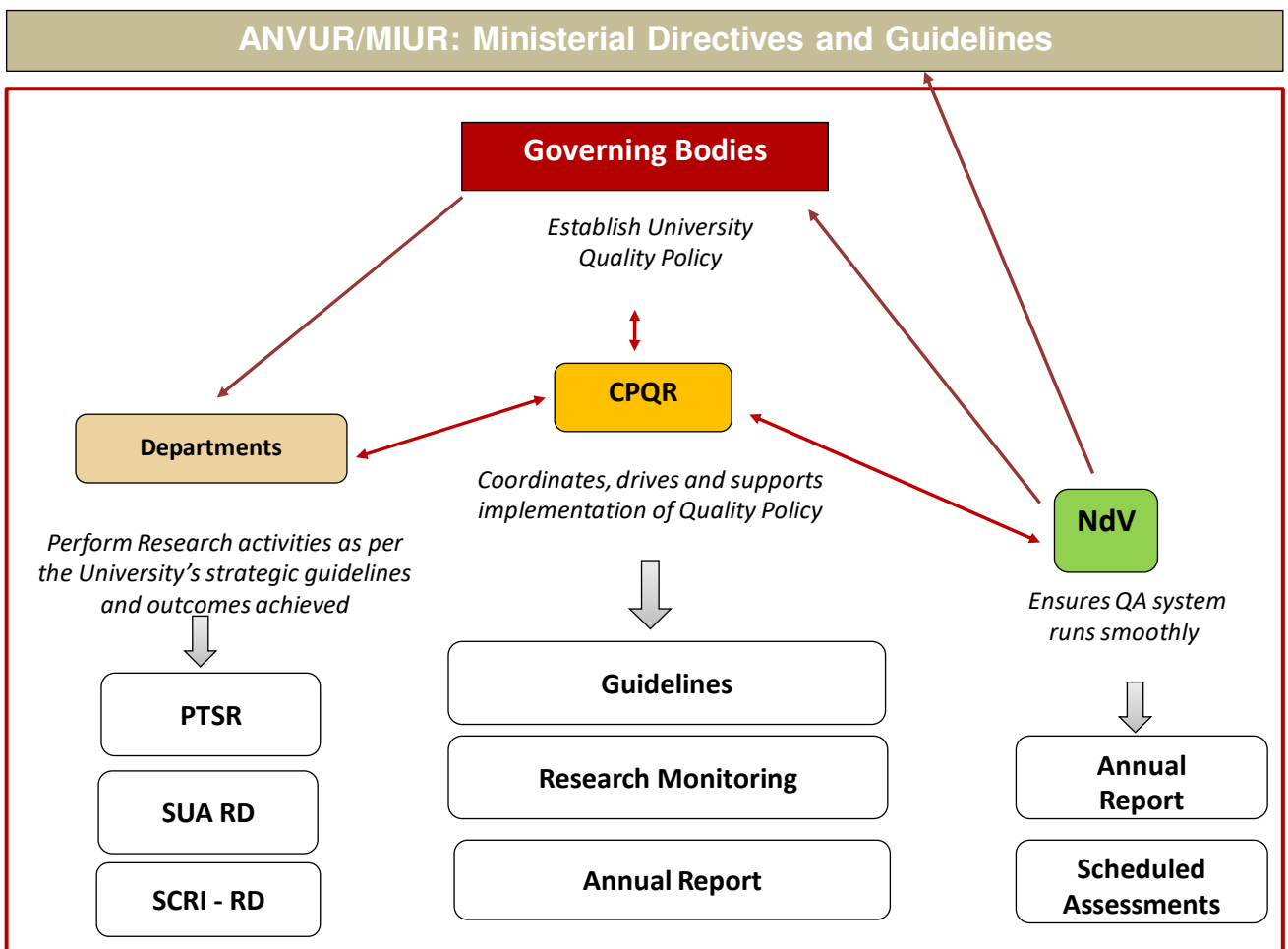
Commission for the Supervision of Research Quality (CPQR)

The University’s policy for incentivising and supporting scientific research seeks to strike a balance between University and Department policies, as it promotes the harmonisation of analysis, planning, decision-making and assessment.

The University’s Research QA strategies are inspired by transparency, access-to-all and standardisation. They ensure that these values are also part of the Departments’ QA processes and policies, which the CPQR coordinates and supports, and are shared with the University’s Scientific Commission in continual talks involving proposals from both sides.

Furthermore, bespoke training courses are run to ensure that Department quality policies are standardised across the board and that they are also consistent with University policies, with the CPQR being responsible for overall coordination (Fig.3).

Fig. 3 University action towards Research Quality Assurance

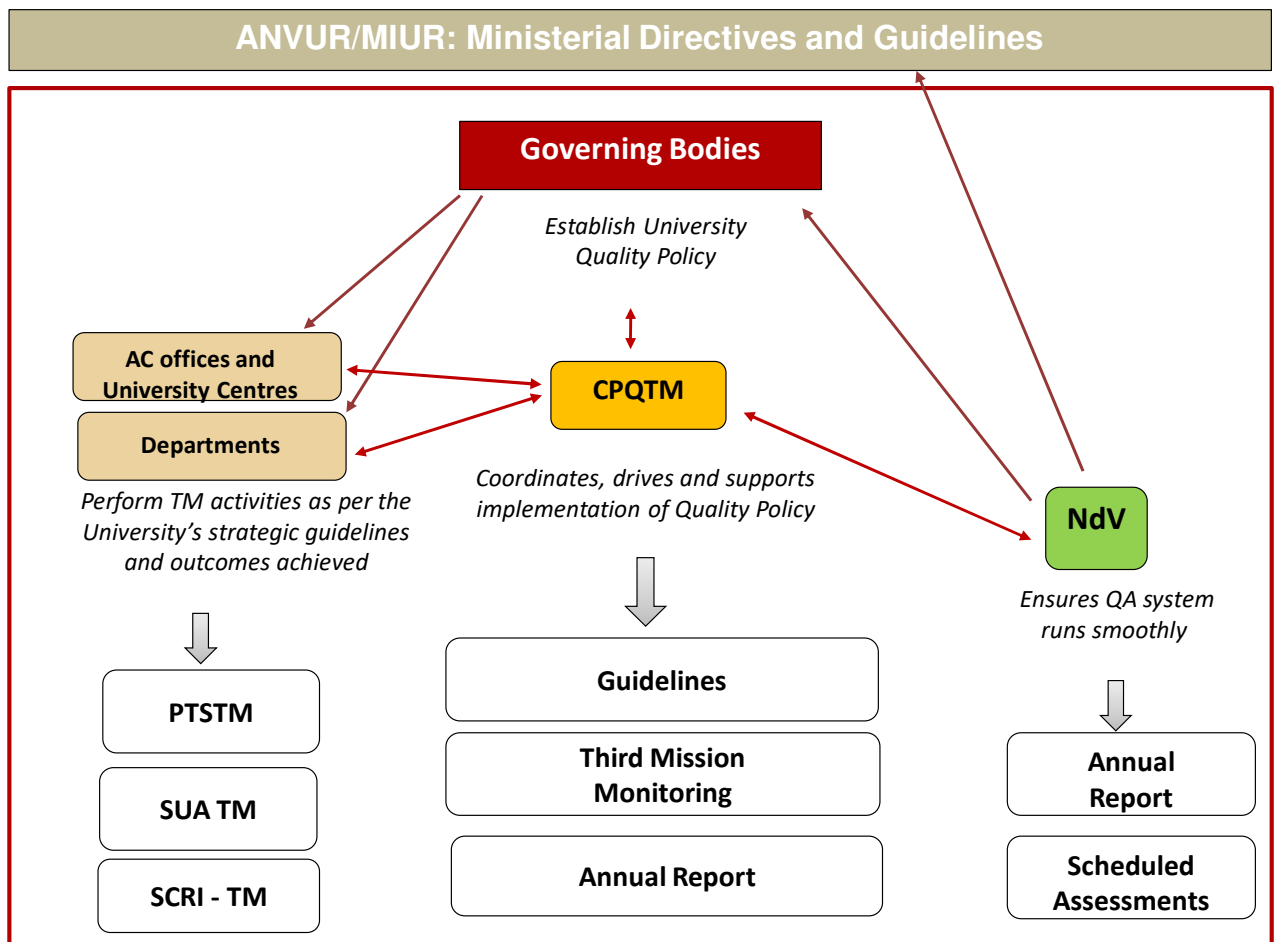


Commission for the Supervision of Third Mission Quality (CPQTM)

The University’s Third Mission (TM) is conducted by its Central Administration (AC) and by its Departments, with both parties having a high degree of autonomy. A range of TM activities is also conducted by external University-controlled entities (e.g. Unismart Padova Enterprise and University of Padova Alumni Association).

Research QA management processes are used to oversee the TM activities generally carried out by the Departments. A specific quality system, however, is being designed for the TM activities carried out by the Central Administration and University Centres, a first stage of which was the establishment of the CPQTM (Fig. 4).

Fig. 4 University action towards Third Mission Quality Assurance



Nucleo di Valutazione (NdV), an independent university performance watchdog, comprises nine members, the majority of whom work outside the University. At least two of its members are assessment experts, and at least one student will always be involved. The role of the NdV is to inspect and assess the quality and efficiency of the University's educational offer and research, as well as to evaluate the University's facilities and staff, to promote merit and the improvement of organisational and individual performance. It also ensures the correct management of public resources, impartiality and efficient administration. The NdV publishes an annual assessment report, in accordance with ANVUR guidelines, which states whether the University has complied with QA requirements. It also details University action to deal with 'non-compliant' degree courses and suggests any quality improvement action. The NdV provides the University with a binding opinion on whether it possesses the requisites for initial accreditation so that it can introduce new Degree Courses. It also supports ANVUR and Italy's Ministry for Education, University and Research (MIUR) in monitoring that the requisites for the initial and periodic accreditation of Degree Courses and facilities are being maintained. Furthermore, it alternates between assessing the efficiency of Degree Courses and Departments by analysing results and, where necessary, setting up interviews.

Joint Commissions (CPDS) have been introduced at all the University Schools and include both academic staff and students. In conjunction with the *Nucleo di Valutazione*, Joint Commissions monitor the University's educational offer, teaching quality and student services. They also provide opinions on whether Degree Courses should be established, introduced or cancelled. Another task is to submit an annual report on each Degree Course that takes an overview of the University's entire educational offer, with a special focus on the results of student-opinion questionnaires. The individual Degree Courses are then informed should there be any issues. The CPDS report is based on both independent analyses and the review reports on each Degree Course. It is then sent to the *Nucleo di Valutazione*, University Quality Committee and Degree Courses, which acknowledge it and begin work on their quality improvement proposals.

Degree Courses (CdS) are a key part of Padova's QA system, as the University has to gear its efforts continuously towards improving quality and monitoring educational demand, with action also including periodic discussion with social partners and stakeholders. A Contact Department is established for each CdS, with this Department bearing the responsibility and costs for the financial and administrative management of the QA system. The CdS are coordinated by the University's Schools.

Assessment and Accreditation Groups (GAV) are part of each Degree Course and comprise the Degree Course President, at least three professors, two student representatives and at least one stakeholder. The role of the GAV is to draw up and implement improvement and innovation action plans, as well as assessing their effect on the quality of Degree Course training, teaching and service. They draw up documentation for MIUR; analyse and comment on ANVUR indicators that are used to draft an annual Monitoring Form; analyse official data (e.g. numbers of incoming students and their origin, pathways for cohort students, number of graduates, internationalisation figures, student opinions, graduate opinions, and their occupations); student-opinion questionnaire results are also discussed, as is the outcome of talks with social partners. All of this information is then compiled into a Cyclical Review Report.

Departments are responsible for conducting scientific research, teaching and training, as well as providing services to third-parties. Under the QA system, Departments promote and coordinate both training and research; they also organise the related facilities. These actions are conducted without impinging on the professors' autonomy, or their entitlement to direct access to research funding. Departments are also required to manage the economic and financial sustainability of their Degree

Courses; to ensure their teaching and research are sustainable; to monitor the quality of teaching, research and Third Mission activities; and to put forward action plans to improve them.

Schools liaise between the University's Degree Courses, Departments and Governing Bodies. In support of its QA functions, each School has its own "Charter for the Organisation of Teaching Services", which is drawn up in conjunction with the Departments. The charter also establishes Department competences and is approved by each Department board.

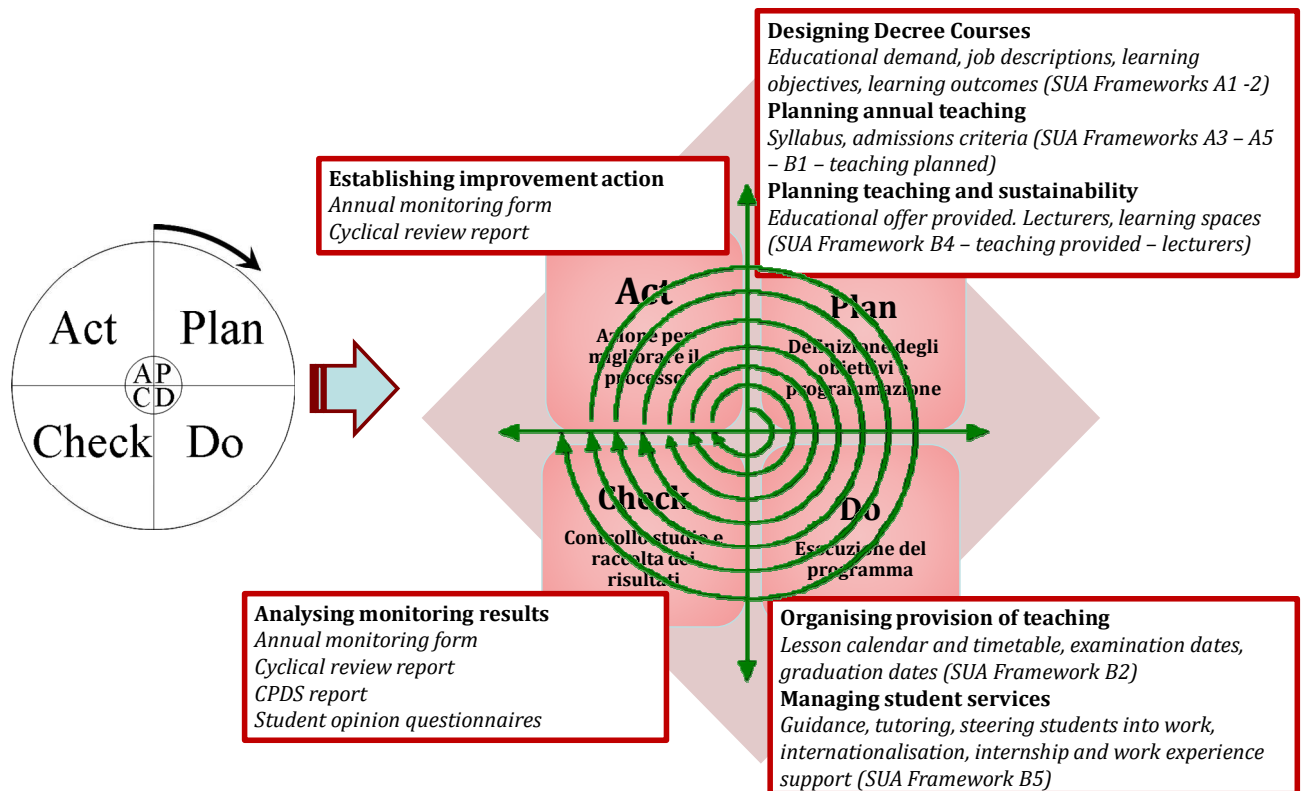
The role of the Schools within the QA system is to instruct the Departments on how best to assign both institutional and extra teaching duties to each of the units of the Degree Courses. After liaising with the Departments concerned and having heard the recommendations of the Degree Course board, Schools present the course structure and teaching regulations for each Degree Course, i.e. the course syllabus and the related credits for each unit. Each Degree Course, and thus each student study plan, must comply with the course structure. Schools coordinate and rationalise teaching activity, being responsible for establishing, introducing, revising, suspending and cancelling Degree Courses; they are also responsible for managing inter-Department services.

4. Quality Assurance Cycles

The QA cycle for a Degree Course is divided into four stages:

- PLAN: designing the Degree Course, planning the teaching year, ensuring teaching is economically and financially sustainable;
- DO: organising the provision of teaching (e.g. calendar and times of lessons, examinations and graduations), managing student services (guidance, tutoring, internationalisation, internships, steering students into work);
- CHECK: analysing results of monitoring (e.g. annual monitoring form, cyclical review report, CPDS report, student-opinion questionnaires);
- ACT: drawing up improvement-action plans.

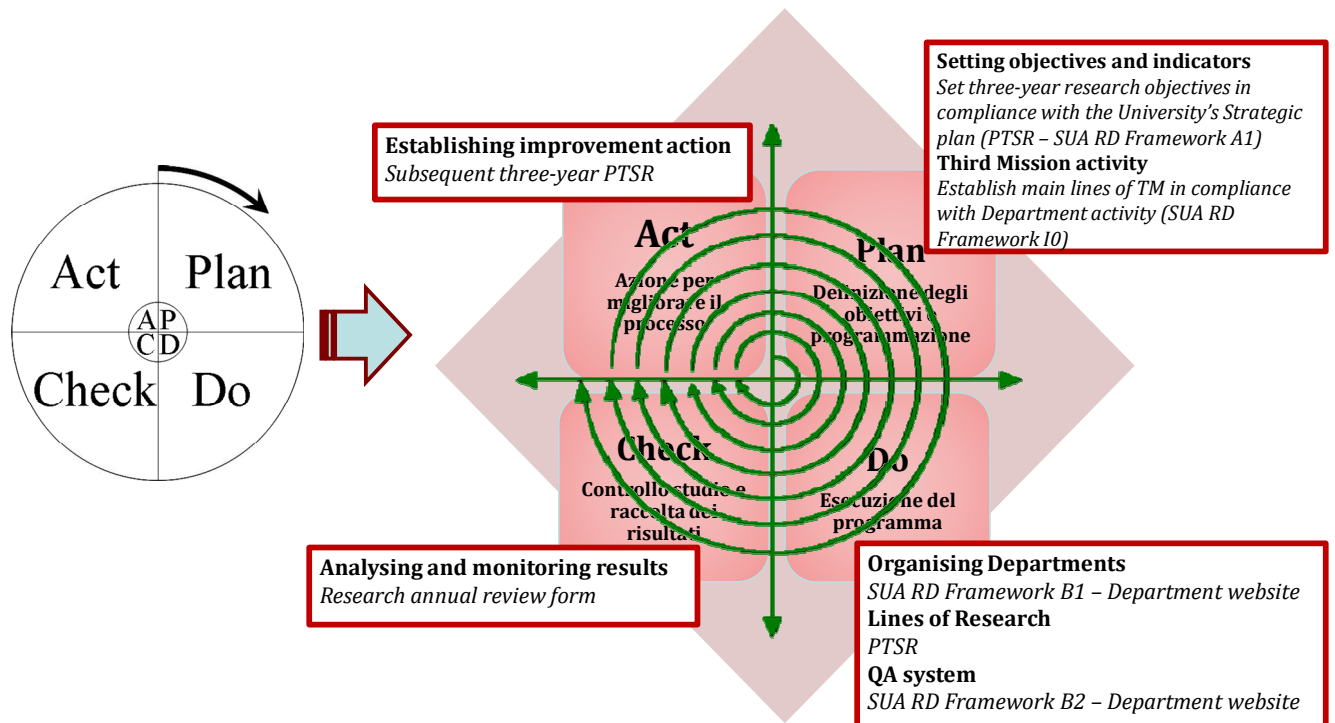
The QA cycle for each Degree Course



The Departmental QA cycle for Research and Third Mission activities is divided into four stages:

- PLAN: establishing three-year research objectives and indicators, establishing Third Mission activity;
- DO: organising the Departments, lines of research, QA system;
- CHECK: analysing results of monitoring (research cyclical review form);
- ACT: drawing up improvement-action plans.

The Departmental QA cycle for Research and Third Mission activities



Abbreviation Key

ANVUR: National Agency for the Assessment of the University System and Research

AQ: Quality Assurance

AVA: Self-assessment, Assessment and Accreditation

CdS: Degree Course

CPDS: Joint Student-Professor Commissions

CPQD: Commission for the Supervision of Teaching Quality

CPQR: Commission for the Supervision of Research Quality

CPQTM: Commission for the Supervision of Third Mission Quality

GAV: Accreditation and Assessment Groups

NdV: *Nucleo di Valutazione*

OdR: Research Observatory

PAQD: University Teaching Quality Committee

PQA: University Quality Committee

PTSR: Three-Year Research Development Plan

RRC: Cyclical Review Report

SCRI-RD: Departmental Research Annual Review Form

SMA: Annual Monitoring Form

SUA-CdS: Degree Course Annual Single Form

PTSTM: Third Mission Three-Year Development Plan

SCRI-TM: Third Mission Cyclical Review Form