



**UNIVERSITY
OF ICELAND**

Annual Quality Report

February 2026



Contents

1	Progress on recommendations from previous IWR	4
2	Internal monitoring and reviews	8
3	Significant quality enhancement initiatives	11
4	Conclusion	11

List of tables

Table 1	Periodic reviews completed	8
Table 2	Ongoing monitoring completed	8
Table 3	Periodic reviews scheduled for 2026	9
Table 4	Periodic reviews of programmes scheduled for 2026	10

Summary

This Annual Quality Report provides an update on the internal quality assurance (QA) activities at the University of Iceland (UI) as of February 2026. It reviews the progress in responding to recommendations from the previous institution-wide review (IWR) since the previous annual report and outlines ongoing internal quality reviews and enhancement initiatives. The report also highlights key organisational developments and measures to strengthen the University's academic and administrative practices.

Preparation of the report has been aligned with internal work led by the new Rector, including an analysis of the University's formal quality assurance system (UI QA system) and the renewal of the University's strategy which is due in 2026. In spring 2025, all faculties reported on their ongoing monitoring for the academic year 2024–2025 and in February 2026 all schools and central administrative units completed periodic reviews.

Findings from this work will be documented in the self-evaluation report (SER) to be submitted to the Icelandic Agency for Quality Assurance (IAQA) as a part of the 2026 institution-wide review.

Recent quality enhancement actions include the following:

- » **Strengthened QA governance and system implementation:** A renewed QA Policy and Handbook for the UI QA System were confirmed by the University Council in March 2025, marking the formal commencement of a strengthened UI QA system, based on a continuous improvements approach.
- » **Revision of University rules:** At the end of 2025, the Rector initiated revision of the Regulation for the University of Iceland, no. 569/2009 (UI Regulation) to address known systemic issues and provide a better alignment with the UI QA system.
- » **AI-assisted programme review:** The University is implementing a Learning Outcomes (LOs) analysis tool using large language models (LLMs) alongside periodic programme reviews to improve consistency and administrative efficiency, identify discrepancies, and highlight cross-faculty synergies. Periodic review is planned to cover all programmes by the end of 2029.

Introduction

This Annual Quality Report has been prepared in the context of the Annual Quality Dialogue between the University of Iceland (UI) and Icelandic Agency for Quality Assurance (IAQA) and is intended for publication on the UI and the IAQA websites.

The report provides an update on internal quality assurance (QA) activities at UI. It evaluates the progress on recommendations from the previous institution-wide review (IWR) and outlines ongoing internal quality reviews and enhancement initiatives.

Since last year's report, significant changes have taken place at UI. In 2025, the University renewed its QA Policy and QA Handbook and initiated a revision of UI Regulation no. 569/2009. A new rector took office in July 2025, two pro-rectors were appointed thereafter, and a Director of Strategy and Quality joined in October 2025.

In autumn 2025, work began on developing a renewed University strategy, as the current strategic period (UI26) concludes in 2026. At the same time, the University launched a reflective analysis to support the preparation of the self-evaluation report (SER) for the institutional-wide review (IWR) scheduled for autumn 2026.

1 Progress on recommendations from previous IWR

Main actions taken in response to the 2021 IWR comments have been implemented through the University's strategy for 2021–2026 (UI26) and its implementation framework. These actions are embedded in multiple projects, many of which are interlinked across the ten UI26 work programmes. This chapter outlines progress on the 2021 IWR recommendations since the previous annual report.

UI26 has provided an effective framework for responding to many of the issues raised. However, senior management notes that follow-up should become more formalised and embedded more consistently within the continuous improvement approach of the University's QA system.

Recent progress

Across the recommendations, the most significant cross-cutting measures relate to governance and structural reform, regulatory reform, and the ongoing consolidation of shared procedures across schools and central services, including the systematic use of the University's QA system. Beyond these measures, the most significant challenge remains the University's high reliance on sessional staff and the associated workload pressures on academic staff.

Implementation of the relevant recommendations is ongoing. The impact of many actions is currently under evaluation through the current SER process and the renewal of the University's strategy.

Listed below is an overview of the University's response to the 2021 IWR comments, summarising recent actions undertaken, status, and ownership.

1. *There is a need for general high-level strategic dialogue on the University's current state and future direction, including an analysis of the challenges imposed by the present University structure that results in significant compartmentalisation, impedes productivity and limits capacity for wide-reaching enhancements in research, teaching, and societal impact.*

Actions have been taken to analyse and address the challenges imposed by the University structure, in addition to previous changes made in this regard such as strengthening the Strategy and Quality Council created in 2023, and other structural changes in Central Support Services and the Rector's Office. In addition to this the Rector initiated a revision of UI Regulation no. 569/2009 at the end of 2025.

Status: In Progress **Responsibility:** Rector

2. *The high level of autonomy afforded to the faculties leads to inconsistencies in treatment of staff and students. Common academic standards and policies must be created and enforced across the University to address issues such as inconsistent treatment of doctoral students, inconsistent utilisation of Learning Outcomes and the lack of transparency regarding changes made in response to course evaluations.*

The autonomy of the faculties persists, but several actions have been taken to address inconsistencies in treatment of staff and students, e.g. treatment of PhD students. Others, such as actions to improve the consistency in the use of Learning Outcomes, are ongoing and will be completed as a part of the revision of all study programmes by the end of 2029. Finally, a complete revision of the course evaluation system is pending, including an integration to the Canvas platform, revision of questions, and documentation of changes made in response to course evaluations.

Status: In Progress **Responsibility:** Pro-Rector for Education

- 3. It is highly unlikely that the goals of “agility” and “quality” in the new UI26 strategy will be realised without comprehensively revising the University rules (no. 569/2009), investing more authority centrally in the University, for example at the school-level, and engaging in the accompanying cultural change.*

At the end of 2025 a revision of UI Regulation no. 569/2009 was initiated by the Rector. The first step, analysis of the University’s regulatory framework, including policies, and quality documents, is to be completed in March 2026.

Status: In Progress **Responsibility:** Rector

- 4. As numerous items identified as recommendations in the IWR in the previous cycle are largely unchanged despite development of multiple plans and action items, it is incumbent on the University to create an implementation plan with strict timelines to address a limited number of its most pressing issues.*

UI26 and its implementation process provided an effective framework for responding to many of the issues raised. However, the follow-up of such recommendations as well as findings from internal reviews are formalised within the ongoing review approach of the University’s QA system.

Status: Under evaluation **Responsibility:** Director of Strategy and Quality

- 5. The Pro-Rector for Academic Affairs and Development and the Director of Quality Management need to be further empowered to effect change across the University in conjunction with the relevant committees. This would aid the University in learning from and implementing change in response to SLRs and other reviews, for example.*

In addition to previous changes, such as replacing the Quality Council with the Strategy and Quality Council to ensure a tighter coupling between strategic and quality management, the roles and responsibilities as well as information flow within the ongoing review cycle have been defined and support systematic information reporting within the ongoing review approach of the University’s QA system. The process and its effectiveness will be evaluated and enhanced through the QA system.

Status: Under evaluation **Responsibility:** Director of Strategy and Quality

- 6. The UI should streamline its portfolio of over 350 programmes in order to reduce teaching demands, and in turn the high dependence on sessional staff.*

The revision of the Procedure for the design and approval of programmes and micro-credentials was completed in 2025. The aim was to improve the clarity of the requirements for establishing new programmes and, subsequently, for continuing and reviewing existing programmes.

Current measures include the Enhancement Topic (see Chapter 3), which aims to review and restructure the University’s operations to enable a more cost-effective delivery of a diverse programme portfolio. In addition, the periodic review of all programmes, launched in 2025 and scheduled for completion by the end of 2029, is intended to assess progress against the same objectives.

Despite various efforts, only limited improvement has been made. The University continues to rely heavily on sessional staff and reducing this reliance while alleviating workload pressures on academic staff remains a significant challenge.

Status: In Progress **Responsibility:** Pro-Rector for Education

- 7. Significant issues exist with regards to the management of doctoral programmes. The University needs to establish comprehensive policies that provide basic rights and standards and are uniformly applied and enforced across the institution. Particular attention must be paid to provisions addressing supervision irregularities and the processes for providing feedback or filing a complaint given the inherent power imbalance.*

Many measures have been made in this regard as a part of UI26, such as the establishment of an ombudsman for PhD students (2021), training on the relationship between students and supervisors added to the PhD student toolbox. The effectiveness of these changes has been evaluated through student evaluations, student surveys, and the FEDON (PhD Student Union) report (2025), with improvements noted.

However, some challenges remain, especially for students with insufficient financial support.

Status: Under evaluation **Responsibility:** Pro-Rector for Science

8. *The University should take immediate steps to clarify the profile, roles and functions of master's programmes across the University. Included in this effort should be an analysis of the role of the Graduate School and the development of general policies and procedures which would frame the operation of every programme.*

The University's policies and requirements for master's programmes were revised in 2024. Amendments to the University rules on the distinction between master's and PhD programmes are underway.

Status: In Progress **Responsibility:** Pro-Rector for Science

9. *The Evaluation System for Public Higher Education Institutions in Iceland does not provide a holistic review of academic staff. The University has made strides to rectify this to the extent it can and is encouraged to maintain that focus and at the same time disseminate information on system changes as they are made.*

Following a general review in 2023–2024, the evaluation system was substantively revised to more comprehensively capture teaching quality and societal outreach. The revisions prioritised greater transparency and a more predictable assessment of individual contributions. A dedicated societal engagement fund was also established, responding to earlier criticism that societal engagement was insufficiently recognised within the system.

The system is currently under review, taking into account UI's ongoing participation in the Coalition for Advancing Research Assessment (CoARA), which the University joined during the 2024 revision phase. Furthermore, the 2025 collective agreements, aligned with Iceland's wider adoption of job evaluation for public employees, include a commitment by the academic unions and the Government to implement a simpler, more holistic evaluation system for academic staff at public universities by the end of 2028.

Status: In Progress **Responsibility:** Pro-rector for Education

10. *Robust and systematic quality processes and procedures must be developed to ensure the consistent integration of the significant number of sessional staff and to ensure the quality and continuous enhancement of the important teaching delivered by sessional staff.*

A project addressing the requirements and conditions for sessional staff formed part of the UI26 action plan. A substantial component focused on classifying different categories of sessional staff and defining the competencies required for each category. In addition, formal hiring procedures were strengthened to ensure appropriate induction and training.

Further improvements are still needed, particularly to harmonise practices across schools and to establish procedures that ensure the quality and continuous enhancement of teaching delivered by sessional staff.

Status: In Progress **Responsibility:** Pro-Rector for Education

11. *The Equality Plan needs to address the inability of part-time students to enrol in courses if not provided through eLearning, and the difficulties faced by international students for whom Icelandic is a second language, for example in accessing mental health services.*

The University has addressed barriers related to part-time student enrolment and access to services. Efforts to increase course availability through eLearning are currently being evaluated to ensure that part-time students are not disadvantaged.

Action 1.2.2 of the Equality Action Plan (2024–2026) aims to improve the flow of information to international students. The impact of these efforts is monitored through student surveys and through systematic follow-up within the University's QA system.

Improving access to mental health services for students whose first language is not Icelandic remains a priority; however, this work is currently addressed outside the scope of the Equality Action Plan.

Status: Under evaluation **Responsibility:** Pro-Rector for Education

12. *The Equality Committee should have representation from more non-majority groups in order to increase its credibility. This appears particularly pressing for members of the University community who do not have Icelandic as a first language.*

The University's committee structure is such that the committees of the University Council are generally composed of the chairs of the corresponding committees within each of the University's five schools. As a result, the committees of the University Council do not fully reflect the diversity of the University community. The University recognises the need for a broader representation of non-majority groups in all committees and decision-making forums across the University, not only in those that address non-majority issues.

Status: Closed

2 Internal monitoring and reviews

Periodic reviews and ongoing monitoring are implemented as complementary elements of the UI QA system. Periodic reviews provide structured analysis at unit level, while ongoing monitoring supports systematic follow-up, including tracking of actions and reporting within the annual review cycle.

Reviews completed

The schools and central administration divisions completed periodic reviews, in accordance with UI's QA system, in February 2026. In addition to the procedure's requirements, the University of Iceland Graduate School was added in the internal review cycle.

The results of the recently completed reviews are being reviewed.

Table 1: Periodic reviews completed

Schools	School of Education (SOE) School of Engineering and Natural Sciences (SENS) School of Health Sciences (SOHS) School of Humanities (SOH) School of Social Sciences (SOSS)
Central Support Services (CSS)	Division of Academic Affairs Division of Development Division of Finance Division of Human Resources Division of Information Technology Division of Marketing and Public Relations Division of Operations and Resources Division of Science and Innovation International Division
Other Units	University of Iceland Graduate School

All faculties reported on their ongoing monitoring in accordance with the UI's QA system for the academic year 2024–2025. Reflections on key outcomes and resulting actions are reported in the schools' periodic review reports.

Table 2: Ongoing monitoring completed

SOE	Faculty of Education and Pedagogy Faculty of Subject Teacher Education Faculty of Education and Diversity Faculty of Health Promotion, Sports and Leisure Studies
SENS	Faculty of Industrial, Mechanical Engineering and Computer Science Faculty of Electrical and Computer Engineering Faculty of Civil and Environmental Engineering Faculty of Earth Sciences Faculty of Life and Environmental Sciences Faculty of Physical Sciences
SOHS	Faculty of Food Science and Nutrition Faculty of Psychology Faculty of Pharmaceutical Sciences Faculty of Medicine

	Faculty of Odontology Faculty of Nursing and Midwifery
SOH	Faculty of Languages and Cultures Faculty of Philosophy, History and Archaeology Faculty of Theology and Religious Studies Faculty of Icelandic and Comparative Cultural Studies
SOSS	Faculty of Economics Faculty of Law Faculty of Political Science Faculty of Social Work Faculty of Sociology, Anthropology and Folkloristics School of Business Administration

External reviews and certifications

The UI operates two certified quality management systems in central services. These are the IST 85:2012 Equal Pay Standard (re-certified in February 2025) and the ISO 27001 Information Management Standard, re-certified in October 2025.

In 2025, the School of Health Sciences, Faculty of Medicine (Medical Programme) underwent an external review by AQU Catalunya, appointed by the World Federation for Medical Education (WFME) resulting in WFME accreditation in February 2026.

Internal reviews planned this year (2026)

The schools and central administration divisions will follow up on their recent periodic reviews through the ongoing monitoring procedure in September - October this year and going forward, in line with the internal annual review cycle currently being implemented through the UI QA system. The procedure complements existing ongoing monitoring and formalises follow-up through systematic reporting by faculties.

Table 3: Ongoing reviews scheduled for 2026

Schools
School of Education (SOE)
School of Engineering and Natural Sciences (SENS)
School of Health Sciences (SOHS)
School of Humanities (SOH)
School of Social Sciences (SOSS)
Central Support Services (CSS)
Division of Academic Affairs
Division of Development
Division of Finance
Division of Human Resources
Division of Information Technology
Division of marketing and Public Relations
Division of Operations and Resources
Division of Science and Innovation
International Division
Other Units
University of Iceland Graduate School
The Rector's Office

Ongoing monitoring of faculties is already established (see Table 2) and will be reported by the end of the current academic year. In accordance with the UI QA system the schools have outlined their review plans, where they are required to organise periodic review of all study programmes by the end of 2029, and encouraged to plan for additional unit reviews where needed. Table 4 consolidates the schools' internal review plans and presents Periodic reviews of programmes scheduled within the University for 2026.

Table 4: Periodic reviews of programmes scheduled for 2026

SOE	Programmes (17): The Educational Research Institute	Periodic Review Periodic Review
SOHS	All programmes (40) reviewed simultaneously during academic year 2026–2027	Periodic Review
SOSS	All Programmes in Business Administration	Periodic Review

3 Significant quality enhancement initiatives

Recent principal actions to enhance quality, undertaken in response to previously identified challenges and to address recommendations still in progress, have focused on reinforcing the University's QA system and initiating revision of UI Regulation no 569/2009.

In parallel, pilot initiatives are examining the application of AI and analytical methods to strengthen programme review and to identify opportunities for synergies in teaching and operational processes, with the overarching objective of safeguarding the quality of the University's core activities.

A new QA Policy and Handbook for the formal quality assurance system at the University of Iceland were confirmed by the University Council in March 2025, marking the formal commencement of a strengthened QA system. Implementation is supported by a continuous improvement approach. The Handbook describes the function and structure of the UI QA system, defines accountability and roles, and explains how the system complies with external requirements for quality assurance in higher education.

In addition, at the end of 2025, the Rector initiated a formal revision of UI Regulation no 569/2009. The revision aims to address known systemic issues and provide a better alignment with the quality system.

The University is initiating a pilot phase for an AI-Assisted Programme Review, a Learning Outcomes (LOs) analysis tool that uses large language models (LLMs), to be implemented alongside the periodic programme reviews. The analysis tool aims to improve consistency and administrative efficiency while maintaining academic oversight. Building on earlier collaboration between the Faculty of Education and Pedagogy and the Faculty of Industrial, Mechanical Engineering and Computer Science, the tool has been further developed for broader LO analysis. It is expected to support the revision of learning outcomes, help identify and address discrepancies, and highlight opportunities for cross-faculty course sharing, consolidation and efficiency gains.

University management is further exploring measures to review and restructure the University's operations in order to **more cost-effectively deliver a diverse range of programmes** built on a strong research foundation and aligned with the needs of students and society. This work is intended to reduce workload pressures on University staff without compromising the diversity of course offerings, the strength of research-based education, or the University's ability to adapt to changing student and societal needs.

This last topic will be included as an enhancement topic during the 2026 IWR.

4 Conclusion

Over the past year, the University of Iceland has strengthened the governance and delivery of its QA system. The QA Policy and Handbook have clarified institutional structures for systematic follow-up and continuous enhancement. In February 2026, schools and central service divisions completed periodic reviews and ongoing monitoring is being embedded as an annual cycle to support action tracking and reporting.

In parallel, the University has initiated revision of UI Regulation no. 569/2209, aimed at reducing barriers to coordination across schools and faculties and providing better alignment with the QA system.

Looking ahead to the 2026 IWR, the University will use the self-evaluation process to consolidate evidence on the effectiveness of implemented measures, clarify remaining gaps, and formalise follow-up actions through the UI QA system.



UNIVERSITY OF ICELAND