



## Improving the quality of examination management and quality assurance in universities in the context of digital transformation

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### Abstract

This study aims to correctly assess the current situation, shortcomings, limitations and propose solutions to improve the quality of examination management and quality assurance in universities in the context of digital transformation. To achieve that purpose, this study examines the legal documents of the State on examination management and quality assurance in universities in the context of digital transformation; it surveys 55 people who work in the field of examination management and quality assurance in universities. The research results show that, in the past, examination management and quality assurance in universities in the context of digital transformation have achieved many important results. However, there are still some limitations that need to be overcome. Based on the assessment of the current situation, finding out the causes of the existence and limitations, this study proposes solutions to improve the quality of examination management and quality assurance in universities in the context of digital transformation.

**Keywords:** Improving quality, management of activities, examination and quality assurance, universities, context of digital transformation

### Introduction

Assessment plays a very important role in education, this is a measure to assess the quality of learners. Testing is understood as testing, assessing the quality and educational outcomes of learners. Through testing, assessing the quality of education is reflected through the knowledge, skills, capacity level and attitudes and awareness of learners. Examination work is always associated with quality assurance work in higher education institutions. Quality assurance will monitor and evaluate the entire education system of the university systematically and methodically. Thereby advising the principal on measures to ensure that the school's activities comply with the provisions of law and are accountable to society. For each higher education institution, in addition to ensuring the requirements on objectives following the Law on Higher Education, it is also necessary to meet the development goals of the school.

In education, activities are closely related to each other to form a closed circle (PCDA), the output of the previous activity is the input of the following activity. Therefore, quality previous educational activities are a necessary condition for quality subsequent educational activities and quality output; only one step that does not ensure quality will affect the entire training process. Thus, all activities in the school must ensure quality for graduates to have quality. Ensuring educational quality aims to ensure and improve the quality of education in universities. On that basis, confirm the level of university education or training program meeting the university education goals appropriate to each stage of the School. This is the basis for the university to explain to competent state management agencies and society about the current status of training quality, helping learners choose university education institutions, training programs and employers to select human resources.

Training quality assurance includes internal quality assurance and external quality assurance of the university. Internal quality assurance is undertaken by the school to

self-assess and is the most important factor, the school proactively creates quality. External quality assurance is conducted by an independent quality assessment agency to inform learners about the quality of education in the university. Thus, ensuring the quality of education in universities is a system of regulations, policies, measures, and planned activities conducted inside and outside the school that are proven to create trust and fully meet the requirements for educational quality according to the goals, missions, visions, and output standards of the training program of the educational institution.

### Literature Review

#### Testing

According to Thuan & AnLong (2023) [13]: Testing is the examination and evaluation of educational outcomes for learners, through a rigorous process to measure the level of achievement of learners in terms of knowledge, skills, attitudes or competencies.

According to Chinh (2002) [1]: Testing is understood as testing and evaluating the quality and educational outcomes of learners. To know the quality of education and evaluate learners, learners will have to go through a rigorous evaluation process of both knowledge, skills, competency level and also the conduct and awareness of learners.

According to Duchiep (2022): Testing is the process of evaluating and measuring the capacity, knowledge, and skills of individuals or groups of people through tests, exams, or other assessment methods.

The purpose of testing is: (i) Measuring the level of achievement of learners in terms of knowledge, skills, attitudes or competencies in a specific field; (ii) Providing information to learners, teachers, parents, schools and other stakeholders about the quality of education and learning effectiveness of learners; (iii) Identifying and encouraging capable students, while helping students who are still struggling; (iv) Evaluating the effectiveness of teaching

programs, textbooks, teaching methods and educational management.

Thus, testing is a set of activities carried out in a systematic, scientific and methodical manner to organize exams according to regulations. Including the steps of planning exams, organizing exams, grading exams, announcing exam results, handling appeals, etc.

### Education Quality

Education quality is always a top concern of society (Hang, 2020; Hong, 2022a) <sup>[5, 6]</sup>. In addition to the pressure of increasing numbers of learners leading to a decline in quality, the pressure of a competitive labor market makes employers always demand higher and higher quality of educational output to increase productivity and reduce training and retraining costs (Duchiep, 2022). Training quality is also always an issue for the government and agencies, which plan educational policies, conduct educational research and carry out state management tasks on education and training (Hong, 2022b) <sup>[7]</sup>. In essence, the concept of quality is a relative concept. For each subject, the concept of quality is also very different and so we often ask the question “whose quality”. In each position, people perceive quality from different aspects. Students, employers, teachers, lecturers, government and regulatory agencies, accreditation bodies, researchers (Duchiep, 2022; Thuan&AnLong, 2023) <sup>[13]</sup>, etc. all have their own definitions for the concept of quality.

There are several definitions of “quality” that are widely used in quality management such as: “quality is the degree of conformity of a product to the requirements of consumers” (European Organization for Quality Control – EOQC); “Quality is the degree of conformity to the requirements of a set of inherent characteristics, where requirements are understood as needs or expectations that have been announced, implied or mandatory” (ISO 9000-2000); “Quality is the response to the set objectives” (British Quality Management Standards). According to this definition, training institutions are allowed to operate to achieve the objectives set out in their mission statement. It is worth noting here that this concept has diversified the types of educational and vocational training organizations to further satisfy the lifelong learning needs of all subjects and members of society.

Quality is always the most important issue of all training institutions in general and vocational training in particular striving to improve training quality is always considered the top priority task of any training institution. Despite its importance, training quality is still a difficult concept to define, difficult to determine, difficult to measure, and one person's understanding is different from another's. Training quality has a series of conflicting definitions and many debates around this issue have taken place in different forums, the cause of which is the lack of a unified understanding of the nature of the problem.

### Education Quality Accreditation

“Accreditation” is an activity that is evaluated according to the teaching work and of a certain educational institution, a curriculum according to clearly defined standards (Thuan & AnLong, 2023) <sup>[13]</sup>. Quality assurance, with the English name “Quality Assurance”, is understood as reviewing and re-evaluating the system on the activities of different departments in the educational institution (Thuy, 2023) <sup>[14]</sup>.

That is understood in a narrow sense, but in a broad sense, quality assurance will be understood as a large, widely disseminated program to evaluate and monitor in the most systematic and specific way many different factors of a project, an educational program of a school and other educational institutions.

All of this work will aim to ensure that it fully meets the quality requirements. If understood in this sense, re-accreditation is considered a method and measure to ensure the quality of education. With the quality of an education system like Vietnam today, testing, quality assurance and educational quality accreditation are extremely important. Education will be one of the most solid foundations to help our country develop strongly in the future. As President Ho Chi Minh once said, whether our country can stand shoulder to shoulder with the world's great powers or not depends largely on the students' learning. This proves that education is extremely important; the quality of education speaks to the development of a prosperous country.

Especially when our country's education from the past to the present has always focused on teaching dry theory first. With this teaching method, most of the students will feel burdened with studying, and the quality of education may decline. More specifically, when placed in the context of more open development and exchange with countries in the region and the world, our country is gradually accepting a greater level of autonomy from universities. Although each school has different purposes and methods, in general, they are all indispensable activities if we want a healthier and more sustainable university education. This will also be the decisive factor for the output of students in the context of widespread employment and unemployment. So, with the brief information above, you have a better understanding of testing, right? So what are the tasks and functions of the testing department in the process of improving quality in schools today?

### Ensuring the Quality of Education

Quality control - the most basic quality management mechanism, is implemented, mainly, through inspection and examination activities. However, inspection and examination by central agencies to each educational institution is not feasible. Therefore, our country, like many other countries, has decentralized quality control work to the Department of Education and Training, the Department of Education and Training and the school level. However, quality control work at the school level has not been thoroughly implemented, so the quality of teaching and learning has not yet achieved the desired level. For large-scale schools, quality control work can only be carried out at the faculty level. However, quality control at the teaching and learning stage is not enough because teaching and learning not only need to comply with regulations but also need to be creative and have quality. Moreover, in addition to teaching and learning, it is necessary to pay attention to training goals, program development, and innovation in teaching methods. Therefore, it is necessary to innovate the management of educational quality.

Quality assurance is a more advanced quality management mechanism than quality control that is being used by many countries to manage educational quality. According to Seameo (2002) <sup>[12]</sup>, educational quality assurance can be the viewpoints, guidelines, policies, objectives, actions, tools, processes and procedures, which, through their presence and

use, can ensure that the educational mission and goals are being realized, and standards are being maintained and improved. Educational quality assurance is a general term referring to a series of measures and approaches used to improve the quality of education. Educational quality assurance can be educational quality assessment, quality audit and educational quality accreditation.

There are more than 150 countries in the world with national systems for education quality assurance and accreditation. Countries with long-standing education quality assurance and accreditation systems such as the US and UK. Countries in the Asia-Pacific region (for example, Thailand, Malaysia, Indonesia, etc.) also have national quality assurance organizations and a network of branches in each educational institution. These organizations are very different. A common trend is that countries are increasingly paying more attention to the education quality assurance system and establishing national quality assurance organizations.

Education quality accreditation originated in the United States and North America more than 100 years ago, and is currently used by many countries. The principle of education quality accreditation is that decisions must be made independently, not influenced by other agencies. The subjects of education quality accreditation are educational institutions (in general), universities and vocational secondary education programs.

Education quality accreditation aims to contribute to ensuring and improving the quality of education; confirm the level of educational institutions meeting the set objectives in each specific period; serve as a basis for educational institutions to explain to competent state management agencies and society about the current status of training quality; serve as a basis for learners to choose educational institutions and employers to select human resources.

**Research Method**

Research legal documents: Law on Higher Education amended in 2018; Decree 99/2019/ND-CP guiding the implementation of the Law on Higher Education amended; Circular 08/2021/TT-BGDĐT on the Regulations on university level training issued by the Ministry of Education and Training; Circular 17/2021/TT-BGDĐT regulating training program standards; development, appraisal and training programs for university levels issued by the Ministry of Education and Training; Circular 23/2021/TT-BGDĐT on the Regulations on admission and training for master's degrees issued by the Minister of Education and Training; etc.

Survey method: This study surveyed 55 people who are managers and lecturers working and teaching at several universities in Hanoi with questions focusing on the following contents: (i) The importance of improving the quality of examination management and quality assurance at universities in the context of digital transformation; (ii) The current status of examination management and quality assurance at universities in the context of digital transformation; (iii) Limitations and causes of examination management and quality assurance at universities in the context of digital transformation. In this topic, the author uses a 5-level Likert scale with the distance value = (Maximum GT – Minimum GT)/n=(5-1)/5=0.8.

**Research Results and Discussion**

**The importance of improving the quality of examination management and quality assurance in universities in the context of digital transformation**

To assess the importance of improving the quality of examination management and quality assurance in universities in the context of digital transformation, this study surveyed 55 people who are managers and lecturers working and teaching at many universities in Hanoi, with the following regulations: (1) Not important; (2) Less important; (3) Rather important; (4) Important; (5) Very important. The results are shown in Table 1.

**Table 1:** The importance of improving the quality of examination management and quality assurance in universities in the context of digital transformation

Order	Rating Level	Number (people)	Percentage (%)	Valid Number (people)	Percentage (%)
1	Not important	2	3.64	2	3.64
2	Less important	5	9.09	5	9.09
3	Rather important	10	18.18	10	18.18
4	Important	27	49.09	27	49.09
5	Very important	11	20.00	11	20.00
	Total	55	100	55	100

The survey results in Table 1 show that the assessment is focused and “Important” with 27/55 assessors (49.09%); followed by “Very important” with 11/55 assessors (20.00%); “Rather important” ranked 3rd with 10/55 assessors (18.18%). No one assessed it as unimportant, but there was still 02 person who assessed it as “Not important” (3.64%). This survey result is similar to some previous studies. Thus, improving the quality of examination management and quality assurance in universities in the context of digital transformation has now been focused on and assessed as “Important”. However, there are still people who rate it as “Not important” and “Less important”. This shows that there is a need for solutions to raise awareness of improving the quality of examination management and

quality assurance in universities in the context of digital transformation.

**Current status of examination management and quality assurance in universities in the context of digital transformation**

To determine the specific status of examination management and quality assurance in universities in the context of digital transformation, the author surveyed 55 people who are managers and lecturers working and teaching at some universities in Hanoi, with specific regulations: (1). Weak, (2). Poor, (3). Average, (4). Fair, (5). Good. The results are shown specifically in Table 2.

**Table 2:** Current status of examination management and quality assurance in universities in the context of digital transformation

Oder	Survey content	Frequency (people)	Degree evaluation					$\bar{X}$
			1	2	3	4	5	
1	Develop policies on testing activities, manage training programs and ensure the quality of education of the university following regulations, following the characteristics of the school to ensure and improve the quality of training	55	1	6	9	28	11	3.76
2	Develop quality training programs, effective training methods following the mission and vision of the school and meet social requirements	55	3	7	9	26	10	3.60
3	Implement testing work in the school through the software system, connecting functional units in the school	55	3	8	10	25	9	3.53
4	Implement education quality assurance work in the school based on digital platforms	55	2	7	11	26	9	3.60
5	Manage, review and improve the school's training programs in the direction of e-School	55	4	8	11	24	8	3.44
6	Propose to the Faculties (Institutes) on continuing or stopping signing contracts with guest lecturers; continue to invite or stop inviting permanent lecturers and guest lecturers to participate in teaching courses	55	4	8	12	23	8	3.42
7	Perform other tasks as directed and assigned by the Principal and Vice Principals	55	5	9	14	23	4	3.22
Total average		55	3.14	7.57	10.86	25.00	8.43	3.51

The survey results in Table 2 show that: XTB is in the range of 3.51, reaching the level of “Important”, no XTB surveyed subjects rated as “not important”, “less important” and “quite important”. However, when examining the survey results in detail, it shows that most of the surveyed subjects rated as “not important”, “less important” and “quite important”. In which, factor 1 “Building policies on testing activities, managing training programs and ensuring the quality of education of the School according to regulations, suitable to the characteristics of the School to ensure and improve the quality of training” was rated the highest with XTB = 3.76; Factor 7 “Perform other tasks as directed and assigned by the Principal and Vice Principals” was rated the lowest with XTB=3.22 and factor 6 “Propose to the Faculties (Institutes) to continue or stop signing contracts with guest lecturers; continue to invite or stop inviting permanent lecturers and guest lecturers to teach courses” was rated the second lowest with XTB=3.42, at the lower end of the “important” rating. The survey results show that the awareness of some respondents about the management of examination activities and quality assurance in

universities in the context of digital transformation is still inadequate, and the basic contents of examination management and quality assurance in universities in the context of digital transformation have not been clearly defined. This is also the reason why the management of examination activities and quality assurance in universities in the context of digital transformation has not yet achieved good results.

**Some limitations of examination management and quality assurance in universities in the context of digital transformation**

To clearly identify the limitations of examination management and quality assurance in universities in the context of digital transformation, the author surveyed 55 people who are managers and lecturers working and teaching at several universities in Hanoi, with specific regulations: (1). Very limited, (2). Limited, (3). Quite limited, (4). Little limited, (5). No limited. The results are shown specifically in Table 3.

**Table 3:** Some limitations of examination management and quality assurance in universities in the context of digital transformation

Oder	Survey content	Frequency (people)	Degree evaluation					$\bar{X}$
			1	2	3	4	5	
1	The specification of documents and regulations of the Ministry of Education and Training and related sectors has not been specified and is not consistent in the testing work. The professional qualifications of the staff are still uneven, confused in building implementation plans and specifying testing tasks. In the process of implementing testing work, it still relies heavily on experience and habits inherited during the work process, leading to a lack of creativity in the work. The school has not yet established regulations on compiling, managing and using the test bank: the test bank, questions are a collection of many test papers, test questions of one or more subjects and must ensure that there is enough quantity to randomly select test papers, test question combinations to serve the organization of the exam for at least 03 exams to ensure objectivity in the exam	55	2	5	8	28	12	3.78
2	The exam supervisors are not uniform: The force is thin, some exam supervisors are not yet proficient, are too lenient, so they cannot control the exam room, others are too strict, causing stress for candidates	55	4	7	9	26	10	3.62
3	The modern facilities and equipment in the exam printing room, exam rooms have not met the actual situation, and have not been resolved in time	55	2	8	9	26	10	3.62
4	The application of the digital system in the organization of exams is always passive because the exam supervisors forget the schedule, there is a shortage of lecturers and exam supervisors, so the exam organization is not professional	55	4	7	10	26	8	3.49
5	The exam marking work is always behind schedule compared to the exam plan and training regulations; software has not been widely applied in the process of making exam questions, organizing exams, and entering scores.	55	5	9	11	23	7	3.33
6	The specification of documents and regulations of the Ministry of Education and Training and related sectors has not been specified and is not consistent in the	55	4	8	12	23	8	3.42

	testing work. The professional qualifications of the staff are still uneven, confused in building implementation plans and specifying testing tasks. In the process of implementing testing work, it still relies heavily on experience and habits inherited during the work process, leading to a lack of creativity in the work. The school has not yet established regulations on compiling, managing and using the test bank: the test bank, questions are a collection of many test papers, test questions of one or more subjects and must ensure that there is enough quantity to randomly select test papers, test question combinations to serve the organization of the exam for at least 03 exams to ensure objectivity in the exam							
Total average		55	3.50	7.33	9.83	25.3 3	9.17	3.54

The survey results in Table 3 show that, with XTB = 3.54, it is in the range of “Less restrictive”. This shows that the management of examination activities and quality assurance in universities in the context of digital transformation has been of interest to universities and has achieved many good results. In which, content 1 “The specification of documents and regulations of the Ministry of Education and Training and related sectors has not been specified and is not consistent in examination work. The professional qualifications of the staff are still uneven, confused in building implementation plans and specifying examination tasks. In the process of carrying out examination work, it still relies heavily on experience, following habits inherited during the work process, leading to a lack of creativity in work” is rated highest with XTB = 3.78, in the range of “Unrestricted”; Content 5 “The application of the digital system in the organization of exams is always passive because the exam supervisors forget the schedule, there is a shortage of lecturers and exam supervisors, so the exam organization is not professional” was rated the lowest with XTB = 3.33. With these survey results, it shows that there is a need for solutions to overcome the limitations in managing examination activities and ensuring quality at universities in the context of digital transformation.

**Recommended solutions**

**Improve the quality of receiving, storing, preserving, and printing exam papers:**

After receiving the exam papers, the staff of the Examination Department (Division, Center) ensures the quality of training, management, and confidentiality according to the provisions of law. The original exam papers and answers are sealed and signed for confidentiality; each exam paper and answer is sealed in a separate envelope. In addition to taking 01 official exam, the staff participating in drawing 01 backup exam must draw 01 backup exam in case the official exam cannot be used for an objective reason.

The faculties should use the exam template provided by the Board, Center of examination and training quality assurance, to unify the exam format: information about exam date, semester, exam time, unnecessary information or information not allowed to be shown on the exam should not be recorded on the exam.

Improve the practice of writing a test diary or basic information about the exam process: date and time of exam, test taker, and exam drawing results.

Increase the use of receiving and storing software to specify the time of receiving and drawing exams to ensure objectivity. At the same time, the application of information technology to receiving and storing exam papers also ensures savings in office supplies, space, and storage locations. In addition, through the application of information

technology, the director of the center, department, division, and principal can better manage, control, and inspect the quality of work of units, officers, and employees.

**Improve the quality of exam organization:**

The plan determines the time to organize the end-of-term exam for classes and training courses. The exam plan is arranged for each subject to ensure that the number of exam sessions for 1 subject is the least. The exam plan must be announced at least 15 days before the exam for first exam and 7 days before the second exam. The Training Department needs to plan and send documents to the relevant departments regarding the exam organization to ensure the right time

Implement the exam Department (Division, Center), supervisors, inspectors, and strictly control the items that candidates are allowed to bring into the exam room: student cards (citizen identification cards). Candidates who violate the exam room: copying, arriving late, not coming to the exam, bringing phones into the exam area, etc., the exam supervisors need to seriously make a record, record all necessary information, and handle it according to the regulations to ensure fairness for all candidates in the exam room.

**Improve the organization and management of exam marking to limit negativity and errors in the exam marking process:**

Promote the sense of responsibility from departments related to exam marking, especially the Training Department in transferring the cut exam papers to the Department (Division, Center) to ensure the quality of training on time to ensure the correct exam marking schedule according to the exam plan and school regulations: organize the making of the test papers and hand over the cut exam papers to the Department (Division, Center) no later than 04 working days after the end of the semester exam. In addition, the delivery of exam papers must also be on time: maximum 01 day from the time the exam paper is completed to ensure the time to develop a marking plan and assign exam marking staff

Improve the spirit of self-awareness and seriousness in the marking process, ensuring absolute transparency and fairness in the marking process. All exam papers must be read, and the examiner must not know the work of any candidate. This requires close supervision to ensure fairness and seriousness. The exam marking organization has a plan to ensure that teaching is not interrupted or affected, while the examiners are highly focused on achieving the best results. Strictly and regularly implement the plan to regularly assess and evaluate exam papers on a large scale, for all exam subjects and training systems.

**Applying information technology in testing:**

Continue to improve facilities and classrooms to meet training and testing activities, build and deploy a synchronous training management software system, and test management, including: increasing the form of online multiple-choice tests for comprehensive assessment, computer-based multiple-choice tests; install surveillance camera systems in classrooms and testing rooms to support management and operation.

Complete and upgrade the school's website, creating favorable conditions for students to register for online study plans, register for exams, publicly announce exam results, check and promptly evaluate information on the school's electronic information portal and organize to receive feedback from students and trainees; promptly handle recommendations on test and evaluation results.

**Strengthening emulation, commendation, and promoting advanced models in examination work:**

Emulation and commendation work has an important position, meaning, and role, is the driving force for the development movement, is a measure to encourage and motivate everyone to enthusiastically achieve achievements in work and study. Timely and fair commendation will help motivate everyone to strive to complete assigned tasks well. It is necessary to pay special attention to discovering, nurturing, summarizing, and promoting typical models on the premise of having a form of commendation and replication, following examples throughout the school as "flags", "shining examples" that create the necessary spread in each unit in particular, the whole school in general.

**Conclusion**

In the context of digital transformation, improving the quality of examination management and quality assurance is necessary to create the most favorable conditions for learners and keep up with the modern training trends of the world today, which is necessary and has great practical significance. Credit-based training, "taking learners as the center," has not been effective. The assessment of students' learning outcomes needs to focus on the following basic points: Focus on perfecting the legal document system, which is considered the first tool to carry out the processes of innovation in testing and assessment activities; strongly apply software to training management, fundamentally change the management form from passive to active; high coordination among members, departments, units, and divisions in the school in testing work; strengthen facilities serving testing work, meeting new requirements to suit the purpose, content, and program according to the school's regulations; change the structure of personnel and functional departments to suit the new situation, link to form a unified entity, and create tight control with each other. The article has mentioned the highlights related to testing and quality assurance in the context of digital transformation in several universities. Based on the analysis and evaluation of the advantages and limitations of current testing work, new content is proposed to improve the quality of this work to suit the reality of the digital transformation context.

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