



# Agricultural University of Iceland

ANNUAL QUALITY REPORT



JANUARY 2026



Agricultural University  
of Iceland

# Introduction

This annual report presents the progress made in response to the recommendations from the 2022 Institution-Wide Review (IWR), and since the last Annual Quality Report from November 2024. The IWR was conducted from 1–4 November 2022, with the outcome released on 25 April 2023. The report also offers an overview of the main quality initiatives undertaken at the Agricultural University of Iceland from November 2024, as well as a timeline for the internal quality assurance (IQA) reviews planned for the next 12 months.

## I.

# Progress on any open recommendations

## Prioritize, document, and document development initiatives

Built on the strategy for AUI 2024-2028 a new organizational chart and a new regulation for AUI were approved by the University Council in December 2024. The three former faculties were merged into one and a new Head of Faculty and a Head of Academic Affairs were recruited.

In September 2024 the University Council decided to merge the sheep farm at Hestur that had been run within AUI to become part of the dairy farm at Hvanneyri, run as a company 100% owned by AUI, implemented from January 2025. The first year has been successful, and this change simplifies daily operations and improve efficiency.

Work has been ongoing improving policies and operational procedures, including new Code of Practice on Government and Management and Code of Practice on Roles and Responsibilities, both approved by the University Council in February 2025.

## Strengthen the framework of the quality system based on Plan-Do-Check-Act, document quality processes, and actively engage staff, students, and stakeholders

A revised quality policy introduced in 2024 ensures compliance with internal requirements under Chapter IV of the Law on Universities (63/2006) and forms the basis of AUI's quality system.

A new quality management handbook was created in 2024, alongside updates to the electronic quality handbook on SharePoint, outlining AUI's policies and operational guidelines. Faculty and units have been supported in refining their written procedures, improving the university's quality and records systems.

The implementation of electronic records management has progressed well, and electronic submissions to the National Archives will take place for the first time in the coming weeks.

## Align all quality processes across units and build on what is already working well

The centralized quality handbook provides best practices and procedures, encouraging employees to align processes, promote consistency, and simplify quality monitoring.

Combined with training and accountability of unit heads, this ensures consistent quality practices while accommodating faculty-specific needs.

## Strengthen shared ownership of and awareness of quality across all activities

The Policy and Quality Committee has replaced the Quality Committee. It is chaired by the rector, and includes executive management and a student representative, overseeing the implementation of quality policies, alignment with university goals, and identification of areas for improvement.

Staff, students, and stakeholders are engaged to foster shared responsibility for quality across the university. Student involvement in strategy and decision-making has grown significantly, with feedback being actively used to improve study programmes. Students participate in the University Council, Quality Committee, Teaching Council, and faculty and university meetings. Engagement with stakeholders from industry, associations, universities, and research institutes has also led to new projects and collaborative ideas.

## Foster a culture of bilingualism in connection with internationalization

Effort has also been made to strengthen bilingualism and internationalization. Foreign employees are offered beginner and advanced Icelandic courses, which have been well attended and fostered interaction among staff.

Communications are sent in both Icelandic and English, and translation software is used during meetings to support understanding. Furthermore, more staff members have taken English courses through Erasmus+.

In January 2025 a new policy on bilingualism was approved by the University Council.

## Increase balance in research activity between faculties

With the merger of the three former faculties in one unified faculty, research activity is now at the faculty level. The Research Council encourages staff across disciplines to apply for international funding, contributing to broader participation in research projects and more balanced research profile across academic fields.

## Develop a clear, institution-wide research strategy

Research, innovation and internationalisation are growing steadily. Large international projects have started funded by Horizon, Nordforsk and LIFE, and new collaboration agreements have been established with Land and Forest Iceland, The Icelandic Agricultural Advisory Center (RML) and ON Power.

The Research Council and the new Faculty are now developing the university's research agenda and implementing research groups in accordance with AUI rules. The work includes assessment of impact of research locally and internationally.

A revised research policy scheduled for discussion in February 2026 and approval in the fall of 2026.

## Define qualitative performance indicators and systematically evaluate research impact

Research activity has expanded, with the Research Council encouraging staff to apply for international funding, leading to larger projects and increased output. Project managers oversee individual projects, while the Research and International Office ensure deliverables, budgets, and contract requirements are met.

As part of the development of the new research agenda, work is underway to assess the impact of research both locally and internationally, building on international developments in this field and complementing existing indicators with qualitative performance measures.

## 2.

# Internal monitoring and reviews completed since the last annual quality dialogue

## Agricultural Sciences

The curriculum for Agricultural Sciences went through changes in 2024 and the implementation has been ongoing during 2025. The main change was a revision of the Agricultural Science curriculum to improve the flow of course material between classes, ensuring that students gain a strong foundation in the natural sciences on which progressively more specialized agricultural subjects are built as they advance through the program. It is evident that these changes have been successful. This is reflected in the feedback from both students and teachers. At the end of each semester, meetings are held with student representatives from each year, and then with the teachers, where we review the aspects that went well and the areas that need improvement. This is a new initiative that has proven to work well in Agricultural Sciences.

## Forestry

Since the last annual quality dialogue, the Forestry program has introduced and reviewed several updates to improve teaching and course offerings. Short courses (2 ECTS) were added to give students deeper insight into specialized topics and align the program with industry needs. The 2024 syllabus was revised, restructuring co-taught courses (mainly chemistry and statistics) and updating course content. Specialized courses were split or adjusted to enhance depth and practical focus. Feedback from students, staff, and industry partners indicates these changes are working well. New guest lecturers have joined, further strengthening the program and professional collaboration.

## Landscape Architecture

Since the last annual quality dialogue, the Bachelor's thesis in Landscape Architecture has been reviewed and updated with a refined grading rubric emphasizing design aspects. The rubric evaluates research framework, methodology and structure, use of sources, research significance, and the overall quality of writing and design. Student theses are systematically assessed using this rubric, and detailed written feedback is provided by supervisors to highlight strengths and areas for improvement. The review process ensures consistency, transparency, and alignment with programme learning outcomes,

while supporting students in developing critical, analytical, and creative skills. These measures contribute to ongoing quality improvement and strengthen academic standards within the programme.

## Ecosystem Restoration (Master's Programme)

Since the last annual quality dialogue, the master's programme in Ecosystem Restoration has undergone a comprehensive internal review. The programme, offered for the second time in autumn 2025 after initially running from autumn 2023 to spring 2025, was evaluated in collaboration with both students and staff involved in its development and teaching. The review aimed to assess the first full cycle of delivery, identify strengths, and determine areas for improvement. As a result, a compulsory course in research methodology and research plan development was added, and core courses were consolidated and revised to improve coherence across the programme, leading to fewer but more extensive ecosystem restoration courses. In addition, a blended on-campus and distance-learning pathway was introduced to increase accessibility, replacing the previous exclusively on-campus model at Hvanneyri. These changes were implemented directly in response to the findings of the internal review and are intended to strengthen programme structure, pedagogical alignment, and student accessibility.

## Planning (Master's Programme)

In 2025, the Planning programme continued implementing the restructuring under review since 2022, merging and revising key courses and improving course administration, which has enhanced student collaboration and overall learning outcomes. Student feedback is systematically collected through evaluation forms and direct consultations with programme staff and student representatives. A centralized Canvas page ensures that all programme information is readily accessible. Master's project procedures were also reviewed: the preparatory course was expanded, submission monitoring strengthened, and external supervision better coordinated. Submission deadlines were reduced to two per year, and open defences were introduced to improve learning and transparency. These measures collectively support ongoing quality improvement and alignment with programme goals.

The Planning Studies programme is also preparing an application for accreditation with AESOP, the umbrella organisation of European Planning schools. AESOP defines guidelines for the content of planning education, and Icelandic legislation specifies that programme curricula should comply with European standards. The title "Planning Specialist" is, moreover, a legally protected professional designation in Iceland.

## Academic Governance and Teaching Structure

As mentioned above, AUI reduced its academic faculties from three to one, streamlining operations and improving continuity in research and education. A new academic Head of faculty was appointed to oversee academic work, staff, finances, and policy, and a new Head of Academic Affairs was appointed to coordinate educational offerings, monitor teaching quality, and handle student-related matters. A new Teaching Council replaced the Graduate, Undergraduate, and Vocational Education Committees.

## 3.

# Internal reviews planned for the next 12 months

During the next 12 months, AUI will continue its regular annual internal programme review, which applies to all programmes at AUI. These reviews involve academic staff responsible for programme design and delivery, as well as student representatives. They are based on key performance indicators such as enrolment, completion and retention rates, and student satisfaction, and are used to identify minor adjustments and continuous improvement measures where needed. At present, no major changes or corrective actions are planned beyond ongoing development and routine quality monitoring.

With regard to the internal review of administrative and support units, this work has not yet commenced. However, substantial preparatory work has been undertaken in the development and documentation of procedures for these units. This work provides a structured foundation for future internal reviews and supports the systematic implementation of quality assurance across administrative and support functions.

In connection with the planned veterinary education developed in collaboration with the University of Iceland, Hólar University, and Warsaw University of Life Sciences (SGGW), a targeted internal review is planned to ensure alignment of curriculum design, admissions criteria, staffing, and facilities with partner requirements and international standards. Course descriptions for the first two years at AUI are being adapted and reviewed to ensure academic equivalence with SGGW. Facilities for practical training, particularly in anatomy at Hvanneyri, are undergoing planned upgrades and will be reviewed as part of regular quality assurance.

## 4.

# If applicable, an outline of any significant quality enhancement initiatives the institution wishes to discuss.

AUI is undertaking several significant quality enhancement initiatives aimed at strengthening academic quality, flexibility in learning pathways, staff development, and institutional capacity.

A key focus is the development of stackable micro-credentials across multiple academic areas. Planned initiatives include a new programme in Landscape Engineering, a stackable BSc-level programme in Entrepreneurship in Food Production developed in collaboration with AUI Continuing Education, and an MSc-level micro-credential in GIS. These initiatives integrate new and existing courses and are designed to enhance flexibility, support lifelong learning, and strengthen alignment with professional and industry needs, including potential delivery through the UNIgreen network. A project manager will be appointed to support the development and organization of the GIS programme.

At the institutional level, the research agenda will be revised, and interdisciplinary research groups will be formally established during spring 2026. All faculty members will be required to participate in at least one research group. This initiative is intended to strengthen research quality, promote collaboration, enhance staff and student involvement, and improve the integration of research, teaching, and infrastructure development.

Quality enhancement also includes strengthening staff capacity and organizational culture. A revised Staff Development Policy was approved by the University Council in February 2025, and in autumn 2025 targeted training in communication and organizational culture was delivered to staff and management. In addition, revised Rules of Procedure of the Safety Committee were approved in November 2024, supporting a structured and safe working environment.

Furthermore, several initiatives support digital and governance-related quality development. An institutional AI policy is under development and will be finalized in spring 2026, addressing responsible use in research, teaching, and learning. An AI training workshop for staff is planned for January 2026, and the Teaching Office is exploring AI-supported solutions as part of internal quality enhancement. Work is also underway on a new intellectual property policy in collaboration with Auðna Technology Transfer Office. Finally, a new institutional website, to be finalized by February 2026, is being developed

to improve accessibility, transparency, and communication with students, staff, and external stakeholders.

Another staff member was admitted to the Teaching Academy of the Public Universities in 2025, bringing the total number from AUI to two.