



# A Playbook for University Leaders Seeking AUN-IQA

A brief guide for university leaders and officials

# BUILD-IT Playbook Series

## Resources for a sustainable world class model in STEM Higher Education

Since 2015 the BUILD-IT Alliance, through strategic collaborative dialogue with industry and the Vietnamese Government (MOET), has focused on creating a world class model for innovative technology and engineering higher education. The BUILD-IT public-private ecosystem is designed to produce graduates who can solve problems and engineer solutions and value for Vietnam's social and economic development. BUILD-IT leverages the vast capabilities of the implementing partner, Arizona State University, America's largest and #1-ranked university for innovation, along with diverse government, industry, and academic partners linking T&E higher education to the needs and capabilities of industry partners, building strategic leadership skills to advance university autonomy, program and instructional quality, and formal lasting

partnerships. BUILD-IT supports female empowerment and has provided leadership forums, academic initiatives, and scholarships, and has laid groundwork strengthening the universities' capacity for building technical English and 21st century professional skills.

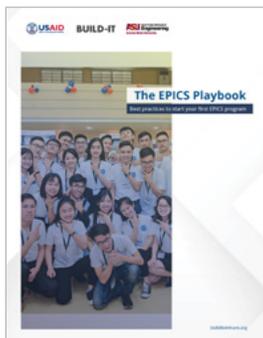
The BUILD-IT Playbook series has been developed with collaboration and input from BUILD-IT partners and is designed to provide a quick start guide and compilation of best practices that have been effectively implemented in Vietnam by our partner institutions. By leveraging these lessons learned and resources for implementation of tested and effective models, you will have resources that will help you develop a sustainable world class model in STEM Higher Education.

### Playbooks in our series include:



#### The Maker Innovation Space Playbook

Multifunctional spaces with workshops and tools to prototype innovations. Makerspaces provide critical learning spaces to the generation of problem solvers.



#### EPICS

EPICS is an internationally recognized engineering-based service learning and social innovation applied project program. Helping students build both hard and soft skills for success.



#### Women in Project-Based Learning

This playbook presents detailed instructions for creating gender-responsive programs that encourage and support women in engineering.



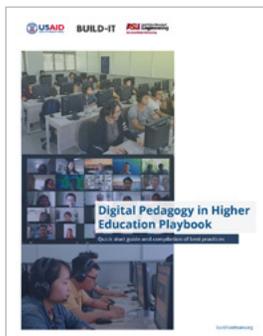
#### Certified Facilitator and Master Teacher Training

This playbook provides step-by-step strategies for creating a high yield of trained faculty in a short duration of time who can better drive students towards university success.



#### A Playbook for University Leaders Seeking AUN-IQA

This playbook presents recommended processes, best practices and key points of emphasis to facilitate the successful completion of AUN-IQA certification.



#### Digital Pedagogy in Higher Education

Through the digital pedagogy playbook, BUILD-IT university partners have access to proven best practices, methodologies, and approached for teaching and learning in a digital environment.



#### The Accreditation Playbook

This playbook serves as a quick start guide for leaders and officials of universities who are considering or have begun a journey to external international accreditation for programs.



#### The Industry Advisory Board Playbook

This quick start guide provides a foundation for setting up your IAB. Learn the basics of forming your board, finding participants, and setting expectations.



# Summary

This playbook serves as a quick-start guide for leaders and officials of universities who are responsible for AUN-IQA Certification. It is a collection of knowledge and experience that our BUILD-IT partners gained during the last five years as they worked to achieve AUN-IQA Certification and continuously improve both strategic and operational aspects of their institutions. This guide contains a brief introduction to AUN-IQA and key components, the pathway to the certification, and most importantly, the lessons learned and best practices based on our contributing partner's experience building quality throughout the institution.

Vietnamese universities are at a critical point in history, seeking to build and grow high quality educational institutions that can develop and implement strategy and function effectively in an autonomous educational environment. The AUN-IQA framework and related criteria

provide an effective mechanism for self-reflection and improvement across the institution in key areas that reflect the national values of Vietnamese institutional autonomous operations.

Links to existing documents relevant to AUN-IQA are provided; please see the AUN-IQA website and documentation for current criteria and process details.

# Our Contributors:



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# What is AUN-IQA?

## An Overview



AUN-IQA is the quality assessment conducted by ASEAN University Network (AUN) at the institutional level. Its main objectives are to holistically enhance the quality of education, research, and service of an institution and to assess the effectiveness of its internal quality assurance system. To be certified by AUN for successfully completing the AUN-IQA, an institution must satisfy 25 criteria comprising 111 sub-criteria specified by AUN. Before the on-campus site visit by AUN, the institution will need to submit to AUN a Self-Assessment Report (SAR) documenting its satisfaction of the above criteria. After a typical 5-day site visit at the institution, the AUN assessment team will rank the institutional quality assessment system on a 7-point rating scale with a minimum 4 points for the institution to receive the AUN-IQA Certification. In general, depending on the readiness of an institution, it will take the institution about 1-1.5 years to finish the SAR.

# Why AUN-IQA?

## Benefits of AUN-IQA Certification

- **Increased Reputation:** AUN-IQA-certified institutions are more visible, and as a result, their reputation may be enhanced.
- **Facilitating Transfer Students:** Certified institutions are recognized for their quality, facilitating easier transfer of students between universities.
- **Continued Improvement:** Certified institutions are obligated to maintain the Certification resulting in enhancement and improvement of all units within the institution.
- **Enhanced Effectiveness:** Processes required by AUN-IQA continually enhance the institution's effectiveness in both strategy and operations.
- **Facilitating National and Global Ranking:** While not directly related to ranking, achievement of AUN-QA enhances the universities reputation for quality which in turn facilitates the ranking of the institution nationally, regionally, and globally.
- **Facilitating International Students:** Certified institutions may more easily attract international students due to the regional and global recognition.
- **Competent & Skillful Graduates:** Certification requires the institution to constantly improve their curricula resulting in competent and skilled graduates prepared to meet the needs of the national, regional and global workforce.



# Recommended Process



## A step-by-step process

To ensure a successful outcome of the preparation for AUN-IQA Certification, BUILD-IT partners found success employing the following step-by-step process:

- **Step 1:** Designate a coordinator. The coordinator should have knowledge of the overall operations of the institution and understand all the units involved in the operation. The coordinator will be responsible for overseeing and coordinating all involved committees for the writing and completion of the SAR. The coordinator should thoroughly understand the Guide to AUN-QA Assessment at Institutional Level (see Link 1 in Useful Links below).
- **Step 2:** Establish committees to handle the 25 AUN-IQA criteria. Members of committees dealing with specific criteria should be individuals working in units involved with those criteria. Each committee should have a leader who is responsible for writing the response to the assigned criteria and submitting the committee's report to the coordinator. The coordinator works with the leaders to establish deadlines and enforce them.
- **Step 3:** Use a SAR-based and rubrics-based assessment such as the one provided by BUILD-IT (March 2019 Workshop, Link 3 in Useful Links below) to assess the institution's readiness for AUN-IQA Certification. Do not start writing the SAR until the assessment score is acceptable to avoid unnecessary reworking. This will save time in the long run!
- **Step 4:** Collect the reports from all committee leaders, the coordinator starts drafting the SAR using the recommended approach SSWER (see Link 4 in Useful Links below).
- **Step 5:** Conduct Self-Assessment of IQA to identify strengths and weaknesses of the institution. These findings will help you identify and correct issues early and incorporate your solutions into the SAR.
- **Step 6:** Work with the committee leaders, the coordinator finalizes the SAR and submits it to relevant university authorities to approve.
- **Step 7:** Submit the finalized SAR to AUN and schedule an oncampus site visit.

# Key Elements for Success



To achieve a successful AUN-IQA, keep in mind the following:

- **Leadership Buy-in:** Make sure to secure leadership buy-in at the early stage of the preparation for AUN-IQA. The leadership buy-in must be reflected in the leader's actions and established policies throughout the preparation. Leadership support includes a strong message of ongoing positive communication, but most of all a commitment of time and resources necessary to complete the process.
- **Faculty and Staff Buy-in:** Since the faculty and staff play a very important role in the success of the AUN-IQA in terms of doing the groundwork, buy-in from faculty is a must. Faculty and staff buy-in are motivated by leader's explanation of the importance and impact of the AUN-IQA Certification on the institution as a whole, from which they benefit and the allocation of resources necessary to achieve the goal.
- **Avoid Overwhelming Processes:** Faculty and staff are busy with their regular jobs. To motivate their support the AUN-IQA preparation, avoid processes that are overwhelming and unnecessarily time-consuming. Processes should be developed that are easily sustainable and sufficient to meet the criteria.
- **Clear and Consistent Communication:** To obtain full cooperation from people, communication from leaders or within peers must be clear and consistent. Otherwise it may cause confusion or encourage passive behaviors.
- **Be Organized and Start early:** Due to the complexity and long-term nature of the AUN-IQA preparation, efficient organization and starting early in the process are prudent.
- **Develop Certification Handbook and Project Plan:** To put all involved people on the same page, it is a good idea for the institution to develop a Certification Handbook which states what to be done and when.
- **Start writing SAR Early:** The earlier an institution starts writing the SAR, the earlier it can identify weaknesses and rectify them.
- **Recognize the Importance of the SAR:** The SAR is a critical factor for the AUN Evaluation Team to determine whether to grant the Certification. Since the assessor team members do not know about the institution, they fully rely on the SAR which is the only instrument for them to assess the institution. Thus, an institution must provide the BEST SAR possible to AUN before the site visit. Based on the contents of the SAR, evaluation members will have a strong picture of the institution before they arrive for the site visit. The site visit will help them to verify what they learned from the SAR and close any gaps; thus, do not take the SAR lightly.

# Best Practices and Lessons Learned

Below is a collection of additional best practices and lessons learned from Vietnamese institutions that have been certified by AUN for AUN-IQA.

## Best Practices

- Establish working groups addressing the criteria with clear responsibilities and tasks.
- Provide training opportunities to committee members to improve team capacity such as in writing self-assessment reports and documenting evidence. Sources for training include: 1) [AUN-QA Trainings](#); 2) Trainings materials on AUN-IQA conducted by BUILD-IT can be found in the “useful links” section below.
- Conduct periodic meetings to study and understand AUN-IQA criteria and sub-criteria and share ideas.
- Form an internal expert group comprising knowledgeable individuals to appraise the draft SAR and to finalize it.
- Study the guidelines of AUN-IQA thoroughly and determine early if your university can meet all the requirements or all the criteria based on a self-assessment.
- Carefully plan your institution’s activities to synchronize with the timeline of the AUN-IQA. Start preparing for AUN-IQA at least two years before the site visit.
- Invite reputable experts of QA and IQA to conduct training of people involved in AUN-IQA.
- Develop the best SAR you can to show how your university has satisfied all the 25 criteria of AUN-IQA. It is very important to ensure everything written in the SAR is clear, logical and supported with sufficient evidence.
- Seek external consultation with IQA experts to help in the writing and editing of the SAR.
- Prepare and organize all the evidence in advance to ensure it is easily accessible by the assessors.
- During the days of external assessment, have a clear agenda and organize well all the interviews and site visits by assessors. There are many different interviews and visits taking place in a short span of time.

## Lessons Learned

- Acquire full commitment to the AUN-IQA from the Board of Directors, department leaders and officers in charge from the beginning to the end.
- Collect relevant and sufficient evidence and document them in a scientific way using annotations for ease retrieval.
- Regarding the on-campus site visit, display posters introducing your institution and its achievements during the reception of the assessment team.
- Carry out evaluation and assessment of your institution regularly to identify corrective actions to improve the operation and effectiveness of your institution.
- Take full advantage of projects like BUILD-IT and encourage your QA officials to attend as many workshops as possible to enhance their knowledge of IQA.
- Encumber sufficient budget for the preparation of AUN-IQA.
- Assign the right people to accomplish required tasks.



*“AUN-IQA came at the right moment at HCMUT that just started to learn about institutional quality assurance. The AUN-IQA Certification has been a critical force behind the improvement of our university and has helped us to attract more qualified students. Thus, I think this playbook will be a valuable resource to IQA officials and leaders.”*

**- Dr. Tran Thien Phuc | Vice-Rector**  
Ho Chi Minh City University of Technology (HCMUT)

*“During the preparation for AUN-IQA, we had the opportunity to identify our weaknesses and consequently developed corrective actions to rectify them. I believe the AUN-IQA has really helped us to improve the quality of our university substantially.”*

**- Dr. Phan Tuan Nghia | Former Vice-Rector**  
Hanoi University of Science, VNU (VNU-HUS)

*“The AUN-IQA accreditation really helps HCMUT to improve not only the quality of training activities but also all aspects of the school. It helps all members to be more consistent in building a “culture of quality” and the internal quality assurance system. I think this is the most effective element in improving the quality of a university.”*

**- Dr. Vu Dinh Thanh | Former Rector**  
Ho Chi Minh City University of Technology (HCMUT)

## Useful Links:

The following provide readers with useful documents from AUN and past BUILD-IT workshops on AUN-IQA:

1. Guide to [AUNQA Assessment at Institutional Level Version2.0 Final for publishing 2016 \(1\).pdf](#) (aun-qa.org)
2. BUILD-IT Workshop-Journey to a Successful IQA Accreditation: Developing QA Systems for AUN-IQA Accreditation, September 2017, Hanoi
3. BUILD-IT Workshop-Assessment of Institution Preparedness for AUN-IQA Certification Based on Self-Assessment Report (SAR), March 2019, Vietnam
4. BUILD-IT Virtual Workshop- A Systematic Way to Prepare SAR for AUN-IQA Certification (SSWER), May 2020



## Let us know...

Thank you for your interest in the **BUILD-IT** playbooks, these useful guidelines will help you develop a sustainable world class model in STEM Higher Education. Make sure to share your input on implementing our playbooks and how you used them.

Additionally, we would like for you to share them with your colleagues, not only in your university but also in your network.

Reach out to [builditvietnam@asu.edu](mailto:builditvietnam@asu.edu) to let us know about your successes and any lessons or suggestions you would like to send as feedback.