THEQC
ICQAA 2026

2nd INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE ON QUALITY ASSURANCE AND ACCREDITATION

Conference Abstracts and Full Proceedings Book

ISBN: 978-625-91232-0-2

SEPTEMBER 14-15, 2026, İSTANBUL, TÜRKİYE

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PUBLISHER
Turkish Higher Education Quality Council

SEPTEMBER 14–15, 2026

ISTANBUL-TURKIYE

THEQC • ICQAA 2026

FOREWORD

Quality assurance in higher education is one of the fundamental elements of institutional development, sustainable success, and international competitiveness. Today, as digital transformation and artificial intelligence technologies reshape all processes of higher education, developing quality assurance systems with an approach that guides this change, supports innovation, and bases itself on continuous improvement carries strategic importance.

The Turkish Higher Education Quality Council (THEQC) regards the internalisation of a quality culture in the Turkish higher education system, the strengthening of institutional quality assurance mechanisms, and the dissemination of information and experience sharing at the international level as among its key priorities. In line with this, we held the 2nd THEQC International Conference on Quality Assurance and Accreditation (ICQAA'26), hosted by Yıldız Technical University, in İstanbul on 14-15 September 2026, under the theme "Quality Assurance Systems and Artificial Intelligence in the Process of Digital Transformation."

Our conference, which attracted considerable national and international attention, brought together approximately 1,200 participants. A total of 313 paper applications were submitted to our conference, and following scientific evaluations, 247 papers were accepted for oral presentation. The 4 keynote speeches, 9 panels, and scientific sessions conducted simultaneously in 6 different halls within the scope of the conference provided a foundation for addressing the future of quality assurance in higher education, the opportunities offered by digital transformation, and the prospects and responsibilities brought by artificial intelligence in a multidimensional manner.

The international keynote speakers, Prof. Bjørn Stensaker, Prof. Daniela Cristina Ghițulică, Dr Nasser H. Paydar, and Prof. Jamil Salmi, made valuable contributions to the scientific and international quality of our conference with their evaluations on the future of quality assurance, digital transformation, artificial intelligence, and evolving approaches in higher education.

This book of proceedings includes a total of 193 scientific studies, comprising 74 paper abstracts and 119 full-text papers. I believe that this work, which transforms the scientific accumulation generated at our conference into lasting academic value, will make significant contributions to the development of quality assurance policies in higher education, the improvement of institutional practices, and the strengthening of international academic collaborations.

I would like to extend my gratitude to all our stakeholder institutions and organisations, particularly Yıldız Technical University for their valuable contributions to the success of our conference, as well as to our Organizing and Scientific Committees, invited speakers, panellists, researchers, reviewers, and colleagues who served with dedication.

I hope that this book of proceedings contributes to the reinforcement of quality culture in higher education, the advancement of scientific knowledge, and the future of our higher education, and I wish it to be beneficial to the academic community and all stakeholders.

Prof. Ümit KOCABIÇAK
President of the Turkish Higher Education Quality Council

FOREWORD

Universities are not merely institutions where knowledge is produced and transmitted; they are also centres of science where different ideas meet, new concepts develop, and the future is shaped together. International scientific meetings, on the other hand, offer significant opportunities for universities to share their academic experience, benefit from diverse perspectives, and develop lasting collaborations.

Drawing strength from its deep-rooted history exceeding a century, Yıldız Technical University attaches great importance to pioneering in the fields of science, technology, and innovation, and to contributing to the future of higher education through the knowledge we produce and the collaborations we build. With this understanding, we were honoured to host the 2nd THEQC International Conference on Quality Assurance and Accreditation (ICQAA'26), organised by the Turkish Higher Education Quality Council on 14-15 September 2026, on the historic Davutpaşa Campus.

The conference, conducted under the theme “Quality Assurance Systems and Artificial Intelligence in the Process of Digital Transformation,” enabled issues closely concerning the future of higher education to be addressed from an international perspective. Bringing together academics, researchers, and higher education representatives from different universities across Türkiye and various countries around the world in İstanbul was extremely valuable in terms of strengthening scientific interaction and developing a shared understanding.

The speeches, panels, and scientific sessions conducted on our campus over two days laid the groundwork for discussing current developments from different perspectives and establishing the foundations for new institutional collaborations. This book of proceedings is a valuable work that immortalises the academic output of the scientific gathering at Davutpaşa Campus and serves as a reference for future studies.

I would like to express my gratitude to the Presidency of the Turkish Higher Education Quality Council for leading this meaningful organisation, to all academics and researchers who contributed to the scientific program, and to our colleagues involved in the organisation. I also extend my special thanks to our academic and administrative staff who fulfilled our university's hosting responsibility with great dedication.

I wish that the scientific bonds established on the occasion of the conference continue to grow stronger, and I hope that this work contributes to new research, original ideas, and international academic collaborations.

Prof. Eyüp DEBİK
Rector of Yıldız Technical University

PREFACE

Quality assurance in higher education is one of the essential pillars of institutional development, sustainable success, and international cooperation. Today, as digital transformation and artificial intelligence technologies reshape higher education processes, developing quality assurance systems with innovative approaches and sharing best practices are of great importance.

With this understanding, the International Conference on Quality Assurance and Accreditation (ICQAA'26), organised by the Turkish Higher Education Quality Council (THEQC) on 14-15 September 2026 and hosted by Yıldız Technical University under the theme “Quality Assurance Systems and Artificial Intelligence in the Process of Digital Transformation,” hosted an important scientific gathering at both national and international levels.

At our conference, which gathered approximately 1,200 participants, the future of quality assurance in higher education, digital transformation, artificial intelligence, micro-credentials, and international accreditation approaches were addressed in various dimensions through 4 keynote speeches and 9 panels. The contributions of representatives from international quality assurance agencies strengthened the scientific quality and international interaction of our conference.

A total of 313 paper applications were submitted to our conference, and following scientific evaluations, 247 papers were accepted for oral presentation. The book of conference proceedings includes 193 scientific studies, consisting of 74 paper abstracts and 119 full-text papers. I believe these studies will provide significant contributions to the scientific knowledge and future research in the field of quality assurance in higher education.

I sincerely thank the THEQC President for leading the successful organisation of our conference, the Rector of Yıldız Technical University for hosting the event and their support, our keynote speakers, panellists, Scientific and Organizing Committees, reviewers, all participants, and our dedicated organisation team for their valuable contributions.

I hope that ICQAA'26 reinforces international collaborations, contributes to the dissemination of a quality culture, and that this book of proceedings sheds light on future scientific endeavours.

Prof. Ramazan BAYINDIR
Chair of the ICQAA'26 Conference Organizing Committee

THE 2ND THEQC INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE ON QUALITY ASSURANCE AND ACCREDITATION

"Quality Assurance Systems and Artificial Intelligence in the Digital Transformation Process"

THE BOOK OF FULL-TEXT PAPERS AND ABSTRACTS

September 14–15, 2026, Istanbul, Türkiye

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ID: 179 - ICQAA-II - Oral Presentation

Development of A Student Centered Questionnaire to Assess Quality Assurance in Postgraduate Higher Education

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Abstract

Background: Quality assurance in higher education is viewed not as an administrative protocol, but as an institutional culture driven by stakeholder engagement generally. During institutional transformations, postgraduate experiences—encompassing academic development, transparency, societal impact, and digitalization—are considered critical for sustaining quality management. This study aimed to develop an assistant instrument to evaluate institutional memory and continuous improvement mechanisms by analyzing quality culture from the perspective of the student.
Methods: Following ethical approval of the Dokuz Eylül University Non-Interventional Research Ethics Committee, a 26-item questionnaire (21 core, 5 demographic) was designed. The questionnaire addresses primary quality indicators, including Turkish Higher Education Quality Council (THEQC) accreditation awareness, academic mentorship, ethical guidance, and AI-assisted inclusive program design. To assess internal consistency, a pilot study was conducted with 30 representative participants, and the data were analyzed via SPSS Statistics 30.
Results: Following the reliability analysis, the Cronbach's alpha coefficient was calculated as 0.838. This high level of internal consistency indicates that the recommended measurement tool can be considered a scientifically reliable instrument for determining the quality perceptions of postgraduate students.
Discussion: The developed questionnaire potentially offers a framework to analyze key indicators, such as student awareness of THEQC standards, the societal value of graduate theses, and the efficacy of ethical supervision. By evaluating student-centric strategies through ECTS alignment, the instrument might help elucidate the strategic role of AI-supported digital systems in institutional transformation.
Conclusion: This study introduces a new, reliable questionnaire designed to assess postgraduate students' perceptions of quality assurance. By prioritizing student input, the instrument supports institutions in fostering a more transparent and responsive quality culture.

Keywords: Institutional culture, Quality assurance, Turkish Higher Education Quality Council (THEQC), Artificial intelligence, Postgraduate student.

INTRODUCTION

Higher education institutions serve as the primary resources for the high-level production, advancement, and intergenerational transmission of knowledge. This mission is fundamentally anchored in their focus on education, scientific inquiry, and societal engagement (Power, 2015, as cited in Yeşilbaş Özenç, 2024). To assist institutional sustainability within an increasingly competitive global landscape, higher education institutions find it necessary to implement quality management systems. Quality Management Systems (QMSs) coordinate with international accreditation standards. Quality Management Systems's effect on the academic cultural environment reflects a broader administrative paradigm rooted in principles of responsibility and accountability toward a diverse range of stakeholders, including public authorities, industry partners, students, and families (Kleijnen et al., 2017).

Adopting a QMS vision may require more than continuing traditional instruction. Instead, it may necessitate a strategic restructuring of academic units for ensuring quality-centric processes remain responsive to the evolving expectations of these stakeholders (Yıldırım et al., 2025). Such integration might better position institutions to achieve their broader societal mandates.

Quality within higher education surpasses the narrow borders of academic excellence. Instead, the concept has evolved into a multifaceted framework that encompasses the caliber of instructional processes, the professional growth of faculty, student contentment, and the eventual employability of graduates (Yeşilbaş Özenç, 2024; Cheng, 2010; Yıldırım et al., 2025). While accreditation serves to certify that an institution meets established benchmarks, such recognition arguably signifies the deeper adoption of a strategic quality management vision aimed at guiding institutional progress (Sanyal & Martin, 2007; Aktan et al., 2010; Can, 2021).

Quality culture may represent a convergence of structural mechanisms and cultural dimensions. By the perspective of the European University Association, quality assurance is rarely a purely technical adherence to predefined standards; instead, it may require fostering shared values, trust, transparent communication, and the active participation of stakeholders (Akkoyunlu, 2020; Hildesheim & Sonntag, 2020). Quality assurance might be best conceptualized as a holistic administrative philosophy dedicated to continuous improvement.

Quality assurance in higher education functions as a systematic framework designed to sustain institutional objectives on instruction, research, and societal engagement. Historically, the institutionalization of this system in Türkiye gained considerable momentum following the 2015 establishment of the Turkish Higher Education Quality Council (THEQC) as an independent entity (THEQC, 2019; Yeşilbaş Özenç, 2024; Yıldırım et al., 2025). Enhancing postgraduate quality relies on active stakeholder participation. Digital infrastructure seems crucial. Faculty and students must internalize these basic principles (THEQC, 2025). By utilizing the Plan-Do-Check-Act (PDCA) cycle format, THEQC appears to evaluate institutional performance while simultaneously fostering a broader philosophy of continuous improvement ((a-c).Uludağ et al., 2021; THEQC, 2021; THEQC, 2025).

Beyond these administrative frameworks, the internalization of quality culture exceeds regulatory compliance. Long-term sustainability of quality culture appears to rest on the pillars of leadership,

transparent communication, and the collective engagement of all institutional members (Hildesheim & Sonntag, 2020). Correspondingly, current scholarship highlights the critical role of students as active participants. Their involvement in decision-making processes tends to be a vital catalyst for the organic growth of a robust institutional quality culture ((a-c)Uludağ et al., 2021; Korkmaz et al., 2023; Can, 2021; Cevher, 2015; Yıldırım et al., 2025).

Seeking to examine the operational dynamics of quality assurance and institutional change, this study focuses on the development of an original questionnaire designed for students at the Dokuz Eylül University Institute of Health Sciences. In doing so, the research endeavors to provide an empirical basis for assessing how student quality perceptions might drive the ongoing transformation of higher education frameworks.

METHODOLOGY

Methodologically framed, this inquiry centers on the construction of a novel measurement tool designed to capture institutional quality perceptions within postgraduate higher education. The development of the survey items was informed by an integration of national quality assurance standards, institutional accreditation criteria, and the pertinent scholarly literature. The questions reflect the THEQC Institutional External Evaluation Criteria and the corresponding Institutional Rubric, adapted to align with the unique objectives of this study. For measurement purposes, the instrument utilizes a five-point Likert scale, ranging from "1: Strongly Disagree" to "5: Strongly Agree."

Administrative and ethical protocols were strictly followed throughout the preparatory phase. Institutional permission was secured from the Dokuz Eylül University Institute of Health Sciences on April 6, 2026, followed by formal ethical approval from the university's Non-Interventional Research Ethics Committee on April 20, 2026 (Decision No: DEU 10849-GOA 2026/16-10).

Designed specifically for students enrolled in the Dokuz Eylül University Institute of Health Sciences, the 26-item survey includes five demographic inquiries concerning age, gender, degree program, academic period, and employment status. The remaining 21 items are structured around several thematic dimensions:

- Institutional Quality Awareness and Governance
- Teaching, Learning, and Assessment Processes
- Academic Development and Advising Services
- Research, Ethics, and Societal Contribution
- Student Engagement and Feedback Mechanisms
- Digital Infrastructure and Institutional Information Systems

The target study group comprises postgraduate students currently engaged in either coursework or the thesis phase. Participation in the survey administration will be conducted on a strictly voluntary basis.

QUESTIONNAIRE DEVELOPMENT and PILOT TESTING

Postgraduate students at the Dokuz Eylül University Institute of Health Sciences generally comprise the target population. Initial ten-person testing seemingly evaluated clarity. This preliminary phase was designed to help identify potential biases or structural issues. After monitoring completion times to gauge practicality, researchers implemented necessary refinements to the questionnaire, which presumably optimized the overall efficacy of the subsequent data collection process.

A pilot application was then conducted with thirty individuals sharing somewhat similar demographic characteristics. This sample size appears quite standard psychometrically. Ethical considerations remained a priority, as engagement was treated as a strictly voluntary endeavor. Finally, the digitized data were analyzed using SPSS software to calculate the Cronbach's Alpha coefficient, a measure that generally provides a rigorous assessment of the instrument's internal consistency (Bujang et al., 2024).

RESULTS

This questionnaire seeks to examine institutional quality culture. By centering on the student perspective at the Dokuz Eylül University Institute of Health Sciences, the instrument appears to capture broad postgraduate awareness regarding governance, instructional assessment, and digital infrastructure efficacy. The questionnaire seems to assess educational planning, ethical protocols, accreditation awareness, and potential societal contributions. It also briefly evaluates perceived feedback mechanisms.

Initial testing with ten individuals seemingly ensured linguistic clarity. Following the linguistic refinement phase, researchers conducted a pilot study involving thirty representative participants to gather the necessary data for a comprehensive internal consistency analysis using SPSS Statistics software. The resulting Cronbach's Alpha coefficient of 0.838 suggests that the instrument is highly reliable. This provides a concentrated empirical foundation.

The thematic framework of the assessment is organized into four overarching pillars intended to measure core quality assurance indicators:

1. **Institutional Awareness:** Focused on THEQC processes, accreditation literacy, and the functionality of Quality Commissions.
2. **Educational Planning:** Encompassing ECTS alignment, advisory effectiveness, and the rigor of ethics committee and examination mechanisms.
3. **Academic Development and Transparency:** Assessing how quality processes assist academic growth and the operational success of positive and negative feedback systems.
4. **Digital Transformation and Societal Impact:** Evaluating the conversion of postgraduate research into societal benefits alongside the efficacy of institutional systems—including DEBİS, SAKAI, and AI-supported inclusive platforms.

DISCUSSION

The questionnaire demonstrates considerable internal consistency with a reliability coefficient of 0.838. These results suggest that the foundational dimensions of quality assurance can be measured quite accurately through the unique perspective of postgraduate students in higher education. Quality assurance seems highly dynamic. It typically functions as a driver for institutional learning rather than strict evaluation. Viewed from this angle, the instrument provides a seemingly reliable metric for an approach that prioritizes the active participation of diverse stakeholders in developing institutional standards (Kleijnen et al., 2017). A robust quality culture generally flourishes through shared values and transparent stakeholder communication.

The survey also addresses perceived grievance fairness and the representation of students in academic decision-making. This orientation seems broadly consistent with the European Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance and with the strategic, student-focused objectives promoted by the THEQC (ESG, 2015; Yeşilbaş Özenç, 2024). Student involvement goes beyond simple feedback. It could, in practice, act as a strategic catalyst for a sense of institutional belonging. Measuring the depth of student knowledge about quality-related processes may therefore be an important indicator of how mature an institution's overarching quality culture is. Such engagement might also help reduce institutional resistance to emerging quality initiatives.

The survey accordingly includes items that connect student inquiry with national development objectives. As Hildesheim and Sonntag note, quality culture may be best regarded as a shared institutional value that runs through university life, rather than something limited to administrative procedures. Digital infrastructure also remains relevant. The study examines student experiences with the digital applications used during the post-pandemic period (Hildesheim & Sonntag, 2020) . Gauging awareness of AI-driven platforms may support the cultivation of twenty-first-century competencies. It might also reinforce the long-term sustainability of the institutional quality culture. Such systems appear to strengthen the communication channels that underpin meaningful stakeholder engagement.

CONCLUSION

This study places the postgraduate student at the centre of quality assurance. It introduces a measurement tool for bringing student views into institutional evaluation.The reliability analysis produced high coefficients. These results suggest that the questionnaire can be considered a valid measure for several key indicators. They include THEQC awareness, ethical guidance, digitalisation, and contribution to society.

The findings point to a particular view of quality in postgraduate education. Quality here seems to depend not only on academic outputs. It also reflects an institution's capacity to gather student-centred data and to revise its practices.The instrument may offer a practical basis for building a quality culture around the Plan-Do-Check-Act cycle. In time, such a framework could encourage academic institutes to move away from a fixed, procedure-led model. It might, instead, support a more active and lived institutional culture.Future research could apply this tool across different disciplines. Comparative work in that direction would appear valuable. Tracking how student feedback shapes institutional performance over time also seems a worthwhile next step.

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