MSM Quality Assurance Policy

Guiding principle:

All our degree programs are subject to the standards set by the following international accrediting bodies: AMBA, IACBE and ACBSP. All our degree and non-degree programs are subject to the standards set by the international accrediting body ATHEA. All MBA/MM programs offered and awarded in the Netherlands are subject to NVAO accreditation.

1.   Purpose of this document

1.1   *Aim of the QA process*

The Quality Enhancement and Accreditations Office is committed to create continuous quality improvement cycles at MSM, and it aims to guide the institution through the processes of national and international accreditation both at the institutional and programmatic level. The office serves as the body which performs tasks related to what could be considered as "external checks" such as degree checks (whether or not participants have fulfilled all requirements for graduation), and is responsible for pre-course audit checks and organizing quality checks (content level checks).

Quality assurance at MSM sets out to ensure the same high quality for all degree and non-degree programs. This is done by addressing a variety of fields, such as the academic content of programs, admission of participants, administrative and participant support, among others. The aim is to use efficient processes and services to support the quality assurance and enhancement culture at MSM.

MSM's Quality Assurance Policy is in line with the Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance in the European Higher Education Area (ESG). Please see **Appendix 1**.

1.2   *Responsibilities*

At MSM, the authority for monitoring the quality of programs resides with the Dean who delegates the responsibility to the Director of Academics / Academic Coordinator MBA Programs, Associate Dean Global Education Programs, Director of Doctoral Studies and Online Education, Director of Education and Executive Development, Director International Projects and Consultancies and the Examination Board.

The Quality Enhancement & Accreditations Office is led by the Associate Dean Global Education Programs and conformed by the Manager Quality Enhancement, three Quality Enhancement Officers and the Senior Secretary Examination Board.

One of the tasks of the Examination Board is to monitor and ensure the quality of the examinations, by checking the validity, reliability, transparency and efficiency of examinations and grading procedures by

taking a random sample from all written examinations before the examination is finally set (peer review) or after the examination has been graded. The objective of the quality checks is to encourage transparency in the grading process and to guarantee that examiners use proper materials and suitable examination questions.

2.   The implementation of quality assurance through the organization

The next chart illustrates the guiding forces of the quality assurance processes at MSM and it also shows how it is managed at the institution.
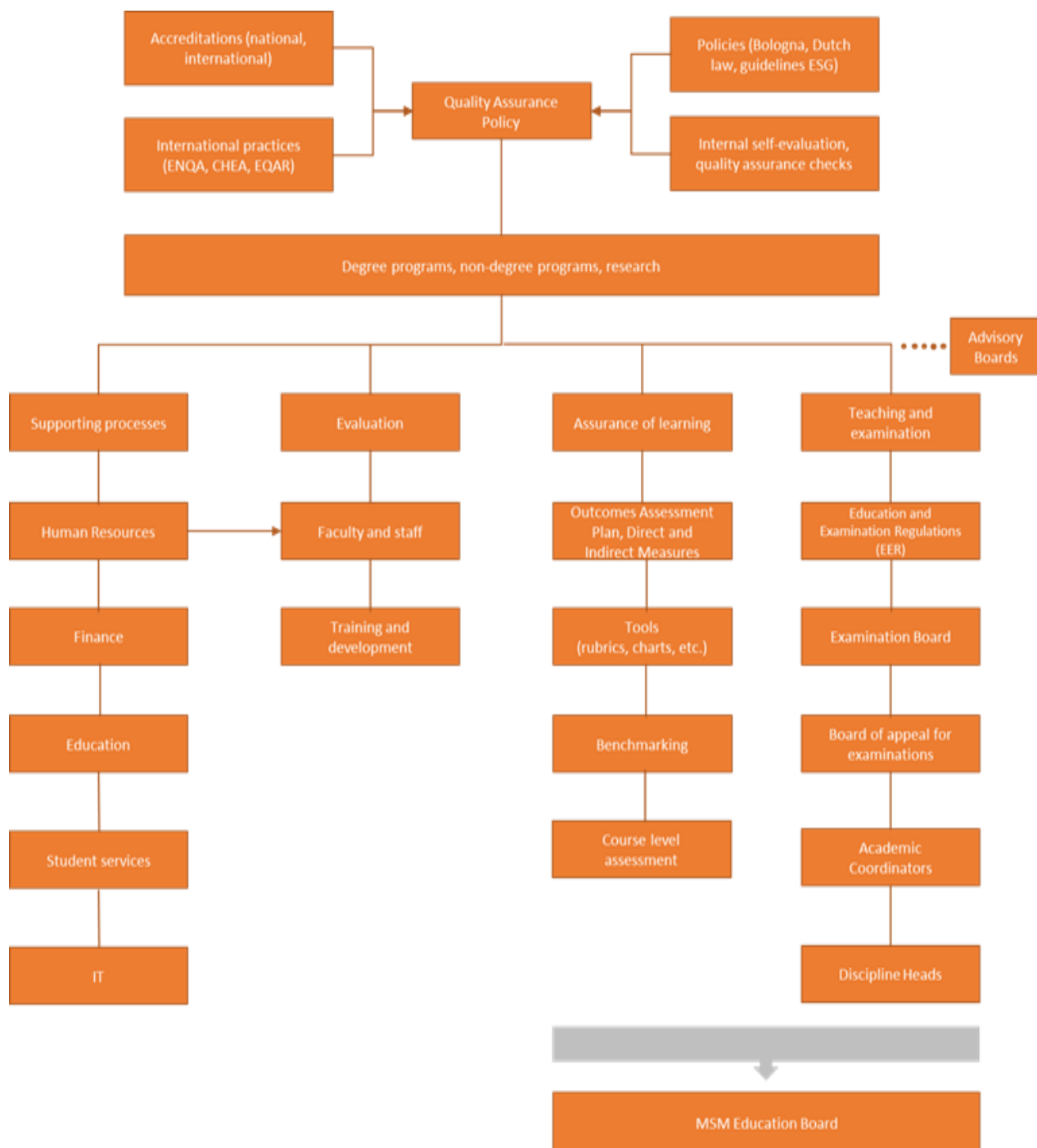
The details below illustrate how quality enhancement is embedded on an institutional and programmatic level.

Implementing quality assurance at institutional level:

- Clear organization's mission and strategy;
- Clear organizational structure with responsible areas for assessing, feedback loops and necessary improvements (with action points);

- Faculty: clear classification of faculty; faculty disciplines and their tasks for contributing to the program and course development and to the quality cycles; scholarly activities including desirable academic contribution (publication, research);
- Admissions and emphasis on external relationships;
- Participant and stakeholder focus.

Implementing quality assurance at programmatic level:

- Careful attention to curriculum, program design and different modes of delivery;
- Admissions, external and internal relations;
- Regular periodic reviews of programs (including external panels);
- Regular feedback from employers and the labor market;
- Participation of students in quality assurance activities;
- Defined measures to improve the quality of the programs.

MSM tools for feedback and information:

- End-of-program satisfaction questionnaire;
- Mid-term survey;
- Alumni survey;
- Employer survey;
- Data about applications / accepted participants / graduates;
- Outcomes Assessment Plan(s) and its result(s);
- Inbound and Outbound Test;
- Leveling courses;
- Final Assessment;
- Faculty evaluation;
- Pre-course audit checks & quality assessment checks;
- Course evaluations.

The institution continues to explore the best systems and tools to make the process more effective.

2. Standard Operating Procedures (SOP)

At administrative level, MSM applies a Standard Operating Procedures (SOP) for the graduate programs, which is available for staff, faculty and partners in Moodle, the online academic learning platform used by MSM.

The SOP is a helpful tool in improving the communication between the different stakeholders and strengthening collaborative work. It is formatted as a "handbook" and users are guided through the whole

set of necessary activities and procedures related to the administration of the programs, complemented with specific templates and documents. The information resulting is important not only in terms of day to day management, but also fundamental for the periodic reviews and reports.

Since the quality assurance processes involve various users with different responsibilities, the handbook is divided in different sections and following a program time cycle. The sections are: 1. Learning (Students); 2. Teaching & Research (Faculty); 3. Evaluation of the results (Assessment) 4. Quality Enhancement & Accreditations; 5. Governance.

The goal by implementing the SOP in both the Maastricht programs and our global programs is to give all participants the same high quality experience, regardless of the location at which they study.

3.   Mechanisms of quality enhancement

3.1   Regular evaluation on program level

Regular evaluation of the program takes place at several levels:

- The intended learning outcomes focusing on higher-level competences (in terms of the Dublin Descriptors) are measured at program level by direct and indirect measures. Course evaluations are taking place after each course throughout the program;
- The curriculum is evaluated regularly by alumni, participants, faculty, stakeholders, MSM's partners, the Faculty Advisory Board, Business Advisory Board and the Education Board;
- Faculty and staff are evaluated per course and annually against set standards.

More details about these interlocking control cycles can be found below, each following the basic *"Plan, Do, Check, Act"* logic:

Plan

The program is defined in terms of:

- Program level intended learning outcomes, focusing on higher-level competences (in terms of the Dublin descriptors);
- Program structure, course outlines and allocation of credits;
- Definition of didactical philosophy.

Do

- The changes and improvements of the program are discussed in the Education Board;
- The Academic Coordinator of the program revises the content of the course outlines and communicates necessary arrangements with staff involved in the delivery of the program;

- The Academic Coordinator discusses the course outlines with the course teams and assigned lecturers.

Check

- A number of instruments are used to assess the program. An overall satisfaction questionnaire is carried out at the end of the academic cycle. Also course evaluations are conducted after each course. The education department keeps record of participant's grades, as well as of any possible cases taken to the Examination Board for academic misconduct, in line with the Education and Examination Regulations (EER);
- The education department keeps record of participant's final assessment performance. This data, with the course grades, is compared with the intended learning outcomes and the results are analyzed and discussed in the Education Board, as part of the direct measures to assess the entire intake performance;
- MSM applies programmatic knowledge tests at the beginning and end of the program (Inbound and Outbound Test). This makes it possible to check the knowledge retained by participants and to compare their performance with other similar programs inside and outside Europe. MSM uses the online resources and support from Peregrine Academic Services.
- Every intake of the degree programs elects the class representative. These representatives are the main contact for the Academic Coordinator and the educations department, and he/she has an important role in providing feedback on both the content and form of the program delivery. This system ensures clear communication between the participants, faculty and staff, as well as for immediate responses on the part of MSM;
- Participant governance is also embedded through the Education Board. For every intake, the class representative will elect a representative for the Education Board. The representative is invited to actively participate and address relevant topics on academic quality improvement on content, operations and strategy. This is also a very important mechanism to allow clear and immediate communication between the participants, faculty and staff.
- MSM applies alumni and employer surveys. This information is mainly related to the learning achievements and how are they applied in the professional field.
- Executive reports and any action plans as a result of the evaluations in terms of academic and/or operational issues are discussed in the Education Board.

Act

- The information from the satisfaction surveys is analyzed and discussed with the Academic Coordinators.

- The information measuring the intended learning outcomes assessments is discussed in the Education Board.
- Action items are discussed in the Faculty Meetings and Education Board meetings and are ultimately ratified by the Dean.
- The input from employers and Advisory Boards (Faculty and Business Advisory Boards) on program content and learning goals are discussed in the Education Board. Changes in the curriculum and new specializations are evaluated.
- As a result, the program can be adjusted both on content and operational levels. This requires coordinated actions from the Academic Coordinator, faculty and the staff involved on operational level.
- The improvements in the program are implemented by the Academic Coordinator

Figure 1: Assurance of Learning on Program Level

Assurance of Learning – Program level
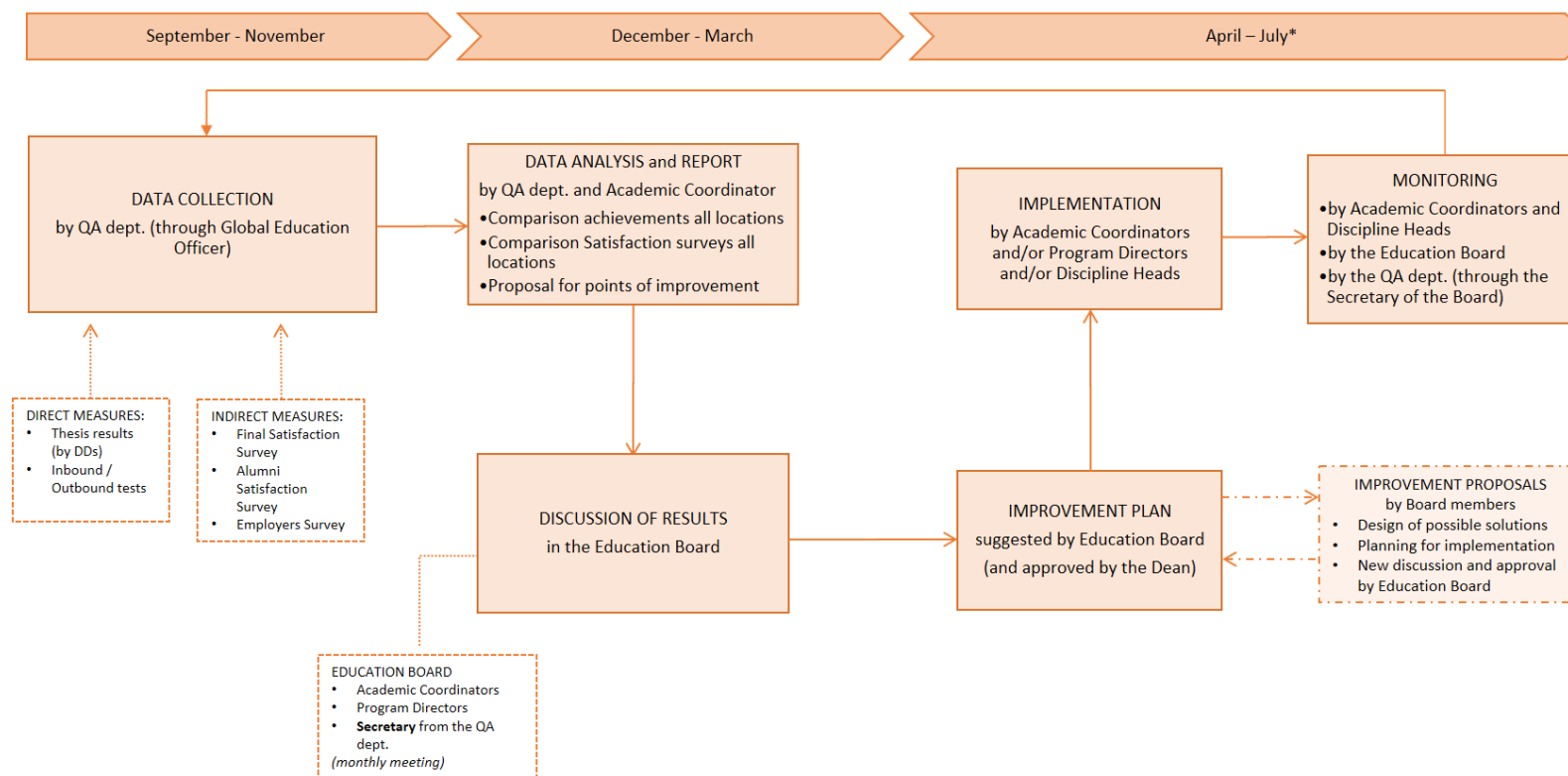
*Timeline for the residential programs. It may differ for outreach programs.

3.2 *Regular evaluation on course level modules and executive short programs*

Plan

- A course outline, according to a prescribed format, is drawn up on the basis of the profile of that course contained in the overall program;
- The course is scheduled in the program according to its function in the curriculum and its logical relations with other courses;
- A lecturer is assigned to the course on the basis of general (program dependent) and specific (subject dependent) qualifications required;
- The lecturer is either given an existing course outline or asked to draw up a new one on the basis of course evaluations of the previous academic year;
- The Academic Coordinator has a pre-course briefing with the lecturer and makes agreements with the lecturer and/or the course team supplementing the course plan.
- Pre-course audit checks are carried out in order to check the consistency of the content with academic level and curriculum and guarantee that lecturers use proper materials and suitable assessments.

Do

- The lecturer communicates all relevant information, including the course outline to the participants;
- The course is taught according to the plan, additional agreements and the schedule;
- Participants of degree programs execute their required assessments (according to EER);
- Participants of Executive Education Programs execute their required assessment according to description of the Executive Course.

Check

- The assessments are graded as described in the course outline and reported in agreed upon formats, to provide transparent feedback to the participants;
- Participant evaluations of the course show their opinions on a broad range of course related issues, including the perceived degree to which the learning goals have been attained;
- Quality assessment checks are carried out in order to ensure the transparency in the grading process and to guarantee that lecturers use proper materials and suitable assessments.
- The lecturer is required to fill in a rubric in which he/she evaluates the course in general, the degree to which learning goals have been achieved, the grades and other relevant aspects of the course;
- With the grades, the participant evaluation and the teacher evaluation as inputs, debriefing interview between the Academic Coordinator and the lecturer is held, if deemed necessary. Conclusions of this interview, including necessary improvements for the cycle, are recorded to be used in the next course, module or short course.

- The specific information from the overall satisfaction survey regarding the courses and the different segments of the curriculum is analyzed and discussed.

<u>Act</u>

- Decisions on program level changes, if relevant to the specific course, combined with conclusions from the debriefing interview are translated into necessary course changes. The course outlines and descriptions are evaluated and adapted to include the necessary changes.

Figure 2: Assurance of Learning on Course Level

Assurance of Learning – Course level
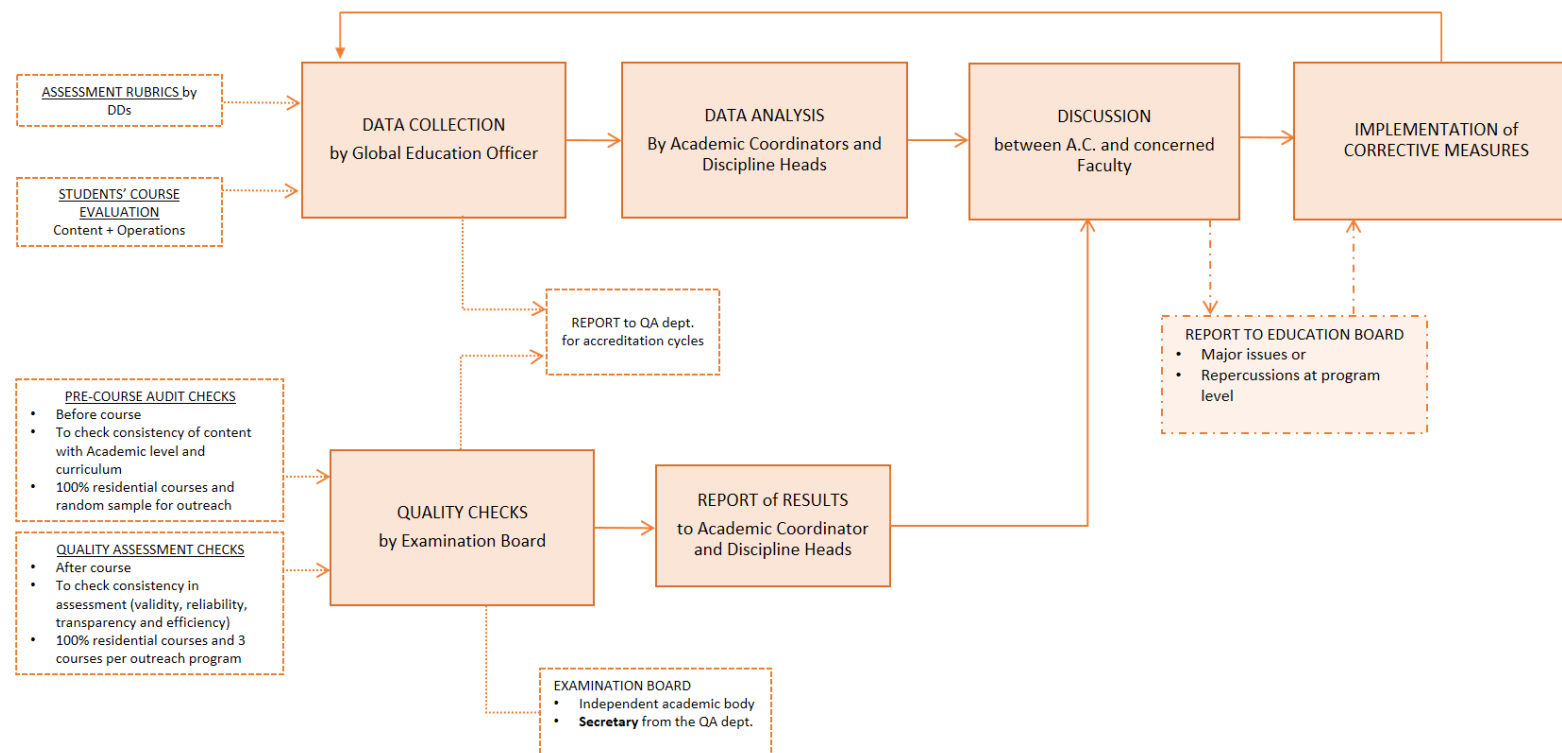
3.3 DBA: evaluation on program level

- The DBA dissertation, based on research carried out throughout the DBA program, is the primary piece of work that will be assessed for the award of the DBA degree.
- The research on which the dissertation is based should meet the following requirements: (1) The participant performs research independently, and (2) the research is conducted in accordance with the behavioral and professional principles which are relevant to the particular field of science.
- The 'DBA Supervision Manual' provides involved faculty with constructive guidelines on the Supervision process and their responsibilities.
- During the process the Supervisory Team (Supervisor and Co-Supervisor) and participant submit "progress reports" biannually jointly. This allows to signal any case that needs to be revised by the Research Board.
- As soon as the participant receives formal approval from the Supervisory Team and an additional approval from a Senior Faculty member and submits the final version of the dissertation, with the additional approval from a Senior Faculty member, the Director of Doctoral Studies and Online Education appoints the DBA Dissertation Defense Committee. The committee will assess the performance of the participant. The DBA Dissertation Defense Committee consists of the Director Doctoral Studies and Online Education (Chairperson), the Supervisory Team, the Reader and two External Evaluators.
- The assessment of the dissertation takes place in front of before the public defense. A DBA degree will only be awarded in case all committee members approve the dissertation. Every committee member formulates its assessment in writing through the evaluation form.

3.4 DBA: evaluation on course level

- The required coursework for every DBA participant is in the fields of Research Methods and Skills (RMS).
- Course assignments are evaluated by the respective professors and in some cases also by peers. Each final assignment is assessed by the professor who gives written and/or verbal feedback to the individual participant.
- A DBA participant is awarded the MPhil diploma upon successful completion of the required RMS course within a year and a successful defense of the research proposal in front of a committee of scholars
- Continuation in the DBA Program after obtaining the MPhil depends on:
  - The written advice from the DBA admissions committee.
  - The time required by the participant to complete the MPhil phase.

- If the participant's performance is poor, only the Examination Board can decide that the participant will be discontinued from the program. The Director of Doctoral Studies and Online Education decides on study extensions with a maximum period of 7 years.

3.5 *Regular evaluations at institutional level*

Regular evaluation at institutional level take place at several levels:

- On institutional level, MSM has a strategic vision set out and sets goals to achieve those.
- The Management Team, in support of the Dean, facilitates the overview of the academic, budgetary and operational issues, including the strategy and the planning and assessment of the Outcomes Assessment Plan (at programmatic and operational level).
- Continuous review of the faculty portfolio in order to ensure that the capacity is enabling MSM to carry out its mission.
- In 2017, two new advisory boards have been established (Faculty Advisory Board and Business Advisory Board) in an effort to increase stakeholder input at MSM. As such, the two boards will be serving in an advisory capacity to the Dean and the Management Team. The boards will consider and provide input on important strategic choices facing the school globally, and will work to broaden and enhance the school's reputation in key markets around the world.

4. Maintaining relevance

The following boards and committees are involved in the quality assurance process:

The **Management Team** consists of the Chief Executive Officer and Dean a.i., Chief Financial Officer, Director of Academics / Academic Coordinator MBA Programs, Associate Dean Global Education Programs, Director of Education and Executive Development, Director International Projects and Consultancies, Director of Doctoral Studies and Online Education, and the Director Human Resources and Legal Affairs. This team has monthly meetings and they report on the strategy progress.

The **Education Board** meets monthly and oversees all education related activities and issues; it gives recommendations for quality improvement on operational and strategic levels to the Director of Academics / Academic Coordinator MBA Programs, who chairs the Board. The Director of Academics / Academic Coordinator MBA Programs proposes the advises to the Dean, who makes the final decisions. The Education Board is composed of the Academic Coordinators, Director of Education and Executive Development, and a Secretary of the Education Board.

The **Research Board**

- Reviews participants' progression throughout the program, with responsibility for advising whether students can progress to the next stage.
- Determines the impact of mitigating circumstances affecting participants, with the authority to agree on the extent of the impact and to advise on the action to be taken.
- Oversees the quality and performance of the program, including the quality of supervision and RMS courses, as well as the quality and performance of the joint DBA programs with MSM Partner Institutions.
- Serves as an advisory board for all aspects related to the strategy, content, quality and operational matters of the program.

The **Examination Board** is an independent academic body installed by the Dean. It supervises and regulates the examinations with the ultimate objective of evaluating, in an appropriate manner, whether participants have fulfilled the examination requirements in order to obtain a degree, diploma or certificate. The Examination Board plays a major role in the design and implementation of exam related rules and regulations.

The **Board of Appeal for Examinations** renders a final judgment in case a participant does not agree with the Examination Board's decision and would like to appeal against it. The Board of Appeal for Examinations operates in accordance with the Regulations of the MSM Board of Appeal for Examinations. Its members (a chair, four faculty members and a secretary) are appointed by the Dean for a three year period.

The **Complaints Service Point** is the central contact point where participants can submit their objection, appeal or formal complaint, both for academic and non-academic complaints. Cases are dealt confidential.

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Appendix 1: MSM Quality Assurance Policy complies with the Standards from ESG

ESG Standards	MSM's QA policy
1.1 Policy for quality assurance	MSM's Quality Assurance policy is published in MSM's website. It is implemented throughout the organization and revised in periodic cycles.
1.2 Design and approval of programs	The Academic Disciplines and the Education Board participate and approve the programs according to MSM's mission and strategy. Each program has a comprehensive 'Outcomes Assessment Plan' with direct and indirect measures and determined goals. A 'Public Disclosure' about the participant's results is published after each academic year in MSM's website.
1.3 Student-centered learning, teaching and assessment	MSM's faculty is encourage to innovate in the classroom. Evaluations are made after each class and feedback is taken into account for improvements. MSM's Examination Board constantly revise the quality of assignments and course material, making sure there is transparency in the grading process and to guarantee that examiners use proper materials and suitable examination questions.
1.4 Student admission, progression, recognition and certification	MSM has a system in place to follow up on applications and from registered participant until alumni. Data about participant's progression is published in the website and reported annually to external international accreditors (AMBA, IACBE, ACBSP and ATHEA).
1.5 Teaching staff	MSM has clear processes for faculty recruitment and advertises in the website and through the network (accreditors and memberships). There is a clear procedure for assessment and for allocation of hours (dividing teaching, research and if it is the case managerial tasks for faculty). Additionally, MSM has a system of Academic Disciplines in place (7 in total) which allows coordination and team work according to the diverse areas of expertise. Training is planned and diverse faculty meetings take place during the year around diverse themes, such as assurance of learning and innovation in the classroom.
1.6 Learning resources and student support	The MSM Information Center is a sophisticated multi-functional resource center. Participants have access to a wealth of knowledge that can be applied to every aspect of their study. The Information Center features the most advanced online knowledge tools. It comprises a foundation for in-depth study in management education. MSM uses Moodle as an academic online platform facilitating the studying atmosphere. MSM provides support and mentorship programs.

1.7 Information management	Information is collected in cycles (as explained in "check" Item 4.1). The Education Board composed by the Academic Coordinators and the Director of Academics / Academic Coordinator MBA Programs, analyze it and take actions for improvements. Furthermore the Examination Board ensures quality of examinations across locations, testing the validity, reliability, transparency and efficiency of examinations and grading procedures by taking a random sample from all written examinations before the examination is finally set (peer review) or after the examination has been graded. To ensure proper communication among MSM's partners network a Standard Operating Procedures (SOP) has been implemented regarding the management of the degree programs with information relevant to administrative staff and faculty. This SOP and its required attachments is available in Moodle.
1.8 Public information	MSM publishes clear and specific information about the programs and the results of the academic cycles. This is done in compliance with the international accreditors, the Council for Higher Education Accreditation (CHEA) and the Dutch law.
1.9 On-going monitoring and periodic review of programs	The mechanism 'Plan-Do-Check-Act' at course and program level allows MSM to have a regular overview about the programs. Through the Education Board the academic delivery is monitored and the diverse sources of information (participant learning results, participants, alumni and employers surveys, among others) provide insight for constant review. The Education Board structure with the Academic Coordinators and the Director of Academics / Academic Coordinator MBA Programs allows prompt response to particular issues if necessary.
1.10 Cyclical external quality assurance	Besides internal evaluations and checks, MSM complies with the requisites from international accreditations and also submitting annual reports to the different institutions under specific formats and deadlines (Application and Enrolment report to AMBA in April; IACBE and ACBSP annual reports at the end of October, containing the results of every academic year). Accordingly, MSM is required to go through reaffirmation processes determined by the cycle of each one of the different accreditations (5 years for NVAO and AMBA, 7 years for IACBE and ATHEA and 10 years for ACBSP). Site visits are part of the reaffirmation process.