

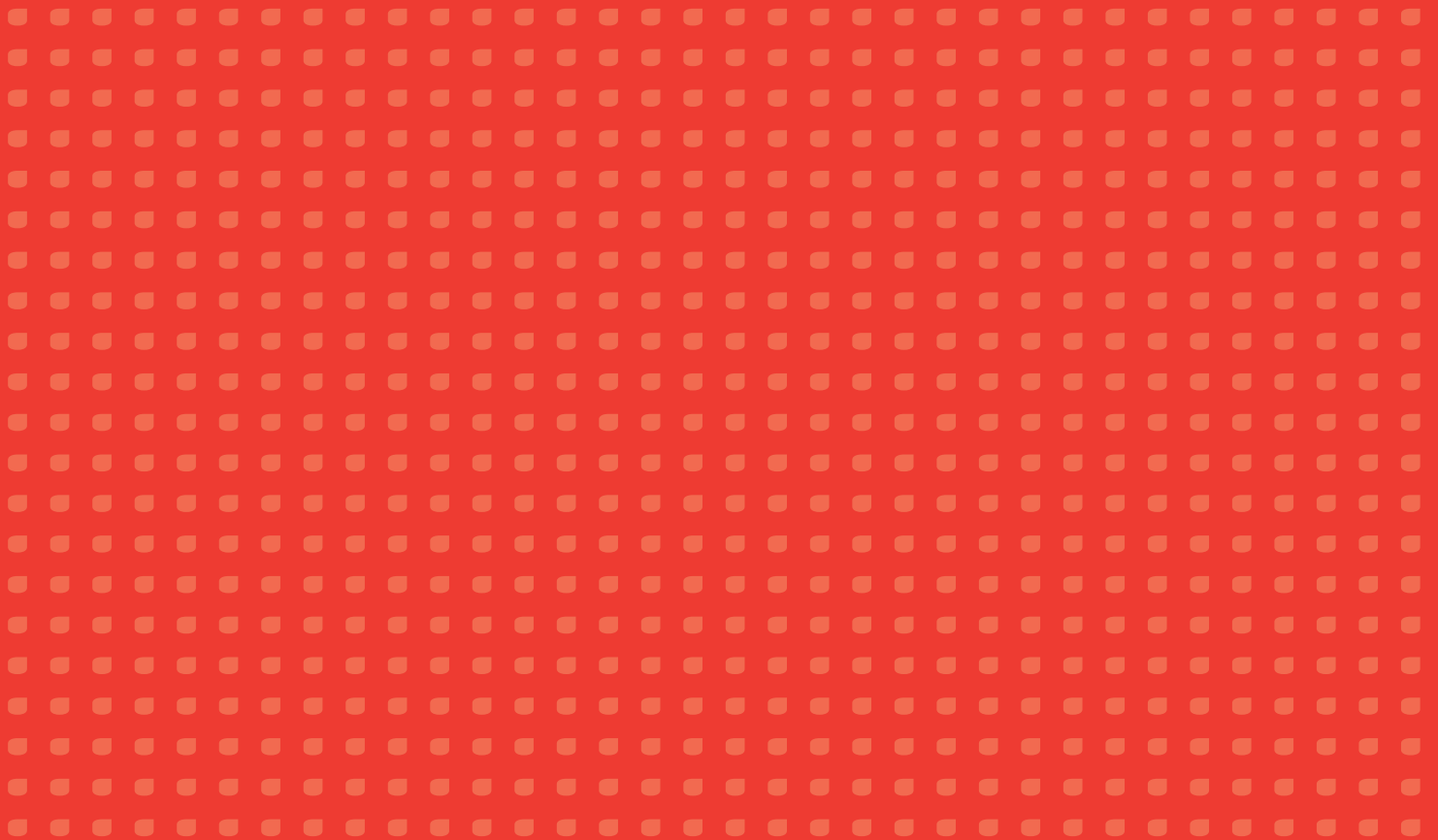


schweizerische agentur
für akkreditierung
und qualitätssicherung

agence suisse
d'accréditation et
d'assurance qualité

agenzia svizzera di
accreditamento e
garanzia della qualità

swiss agency of
accreditation and
quality assurance



Institutional accreditation, Franklin University Institute Switzerland, verification of the fulfil- ment of conditions

Report | 10.6.2025



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Part A

Decision of the Swiss Accreditation Council

19.9.2025





The Swiss Accreditation Council publishes its accreditation decisions:

<https://akkreditierungsrat.ch/en/decisions/>



Part B

Verification report

22 May 2025



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1 Verification procedure

1.1 General information

Decision/means of verification

On 17th of September 2021 the Swiss Accreditation Council accredited Franklin University Switzerland as university institute subject to four conditions.

In its decision, the Accreditation Council specified the following deadline and means of verification¹:

Deadline: 36 months. Franklin University Switzerland must submit a report on the fulfilment of the conditions to the Accreditation Council by 16th of December 2024.

Means of verification: Verification will be performed 'sur dossier' with three experts.

The Accreditation Council has commissioned the Swiss Agency of Accreditation and Quality Assurance (AAQ) to verify the fulfilment of the conditions.

1.2 The procedure

Experts appointed by AAQ to review the fulfilment of the conditions:

Prof. Dr. Patricia Pol, University Paris-Est Créteil

Prof. Isabelle Perroteau, University of Turin

Prof. Ph.D. Federico Luisetti, University of St. Gallen

2 Verification report

2.1 Analysis of the fulfilment of conditions

Condition 1:

La Franklin University Switzerland deve sistematizzare l'articolazione tra i suoi strumenti, ruoli e strategie di gestione della qualità e rendere pubblici i documenti.

Franklin University Switzerland must systematize the articulation among its quality assurance management tools, roles and strategies and make the documents public.

Description (Interim Report and website)

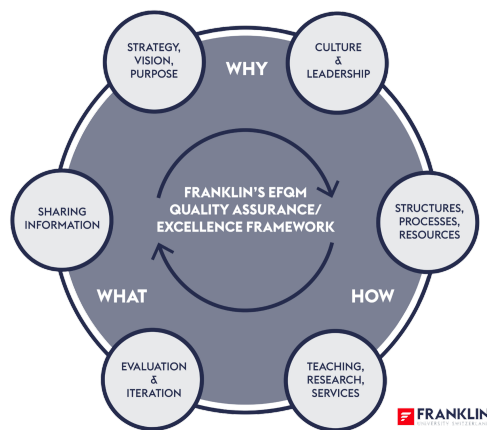
In recent years, Franklin has taken steps to formalize and coordinate its institutional processes related to strategy and quality assurance. A new university-wide strategic plan was developed, including defined KPIs, timelines, and responsibilities. An overarching quality management system was introduced to integrate processes across all institutional areas. Committee structures were streamlined to clarify roles and reduce administrative burdens. The university also defined the components and responsibilities within its quality management processes, improved communication channels for stakeholders, and launched a dedicated quality management section

¹ HEdA Accreditation Ordinance, Article 15(3)

on its website. By implementing these steps, Franklin has recognized the need to systematize and simplify the articulation of its quality assurance tools, roles, and strategies. Franklin aligns its quality management with the EFQM model to ensure coherence between institutional processes and strategic priorities. The principles of stakeholder balance, innovation, and social responsibility are reflected in the university's efforts to harmonize the needs of students, faculty, staff, and external partners, while promoting continuous improvement and sustainability in teaching and research.

A shared institutional vision – shaped through broad stakeholder engagement, is implemented under the leadership of the executive team. Decision-making processes are transparent and aligned with regulatory requirements in both Switzerland and the U.S. The EFQM model also guides the ongoing evaluation and refinement of strategies and processes, enabling the university to remain responsive to changing conditions.

Figure: Quality management graphic of FUS (website):



Following the EFQM model, Franklin's quality assurance system ensures that all members of the university clearly understand the institution's purpose – its strategy, vision, and culture – and how it operates through its structures, processes, and resources. It also ensures awareness of what the institution has achieved or aims to achieve through continuous evaluation and improvement.

The following table summarizes the formal governance structure:

Role	Responsibility	Tasks
US Board of Trustees	Overall Fiduciary responsibility of the institution	Preservation of the university charter; institutional performance evaluations; fundraising; liaison with external agencies and political bodies; budget approval; oversight of campus policies and investment strategies; and hiring and evaluating the ongoing performance of the President
Swiss Fondazione	Fiduciary responsibility	Administers the assets of the institution according to Swiss law

President	Serve as Chief Executive Officer and spokesperson of the institution	Management, development, and promotion of the institution
President's Cabinet	Functional areas of the institution: finance and administration, academics, student life, admissions, marketing, advancement	Reinforce the mission and vision of the institution and create, implement, monitor, and revise the strategic plan
Accreditation Task Force	Ensure compliance with CH and US accreditation standards	Writing reports, maintaining communication with accrediting agencies, supporting quality assurance
Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion Committee	Ensure equity and inclusion for all identities at Franklin in faculty/staff hiring, evaluation, and promotion; in the student experience	Reviewing policies and procedures, supporting equitable recruitment and hiring processes, advocating for inclusive practices, providing training and resources for development
Dean of Academic Affairs	Serves as Chief Academic Officer	Oversight of academic curricula and faculty
Division Chairs & Department Heads	Maintain curriculum alignment framework consistent with departmental vision and goals and Franklin's strategic plan	Course design, curriculum mapping, faculty research and teaching inventory, learning outcomes
Faculty QA Committees	Ensure quality assurance of academics	Quality assurance of teaching (course development, learning outcomes, student advising), personnel (promotion recommendations, research), standards (admissions and dropout rate)
Faculty Assembly	Ensure quality assurance of academics	Final faculty approval of recommendations from Faculty QA Committees; represent faculty decisions, feedback, and priorities to Cabinet and Board

Franklin has updated its website to include sections on Quality Management and on the 2030 Strategic Plan. This publicly shared information supports feedback opportunities for both external and internal stakeholders – including alumni, external experts, prospective and current students, faculty and staff. These groups are invited to provide input not only on FUS's progress toward its stated priorities, but also on the priorities themselves and on the methods and processes used to pursue them.

Analysis

The experts conclude that Franklin has established a quality assurance system based on the principles of the EFQM model, as represented in the Figure. The system addresses key institutional areas as Strategy, Processes, Resources, Teaching & Research and Services and Evaluation.

The Strategic Plan 2030 plays a central role in this framework, as it is designed to ensure institutional stability and long-term sustainability through clearly defined planning priorities, Key Performance Indicators (KPIs), and Objectives and Key Results (OKRs) for each area of the plan. Each pillar of the Strategic Plan is led by a designated campus leader, who collaborates closely with relevant colleagues across the university and with the broader community to develop sub-strategies that align with and support overarching institutional goals.

To develop the Strategic Plan, the university leadership involved all relevant stakeholder groups – including students, board members, alumni, staff and faculty – in this process. Finally, the Strategic Plan was formally approved by the Board of Trustees in May 2024.

Franklin has made noticeable efforts to systematize its quality management (QM) by strengthening the articulation among its quality assurance tools, roles, and strategies. Although no comprehensive standalone document outlining the full QM system was identified, the interim report annexes – particularly those related to education – demonstrate that key elements of the QA system are in place. These documents require thorough reading by the experts, but based on their content, the approach appears acceptable.

Franklin has taken meaningful steps to ensure that its quality assurance strategy is publicly accessible. Communications about the Strategic Plan are visible and include video content that presents key elements of the university's vision and approach. While the communication framework is not yet highly structured, the existing efforts contribute to transparency. Overall, the improvements in the communication and documentation of QA processes represent a significant improvement.

The expert panel finds that the condition is fulfilled.

Condition 2:

La Franklin University Switzerland deve estendere il suo sistema di garanzia qualità affinché sostenga tutti i programmi di insegnamento e ricerca.

Franklin must extend its quality assurance system, so it extends to all teaching and research programs

Description (interim report)

To ensure alignment between teaching, research, and service, Franklin has streamlined its quality management structure into four central committees: (1) Teaching, Learning and Assessment; (2) Personnel; (3) Curriculum; and (4) Admissions and Academic Standards. Each committee operates under a clearly defined one-page mandate that outlines its roles, responsibilities, communication channels, and reporting pathways. These committees meet weekly and are directly linked to the Strategic Plan. Each is chaired by an accountable leader and includes regular participation from the Dean of Academic Affairs and student representatives. Collectively, they form the foundation of the university's academic quality management system, guiding decision-making at the policy, program, and course levels across undergraduate and graduate education. Reports are presented to the faculty and the Dean at Faculty Assemblies, which convene several times each semester.

At the program level, Franklin differentiates between the revision of existing programs with an established portfolio and the development of new programs. Ideas for new programs are typically proposed by individual faculty members or faculty groups to the Dean of Academic Affairs. These proposals are then reviewed collaboratively by members of Academic Affairs, Marketing and Admissions, and the Finance Department to assess strategic alignment, consistency with Franklin's mission and vision, market potential, and the availability of existing resources. The decision to invest in a new program is made only after a positive evaluation of all these factors. Following initial vetting, a new or revised program is formally presented to the Curriculum Committee for its first official review. The committee evaluates the rationale for launching the

program, its curricular coherence – including content, learning outcomes and credit structure – and its alignment with Franklin’s liberal arts mission.

If the program proposal is deemed sound, the Curriculum Committee forwards it to the Faculty Assembly for an initial discussion. This allows all faculty members the opportunity to ask questions, offer input, express concerns and suggest improvements.

In a second round of review, the proposal is amended based on faculty feedback and returned to the Faculty Assembly for a vote. At this stage the program may be approved, rejected, or sent back for further revision before a final vote.

Once approved by the Faculty Assembly, the program is recommended first to the Dean of Academic Affairs, then to the President for endorsement. If the President supports the proposal, it proceeds to the Board of Trustees for final approbation.

According to the Faculty Manual the Board may only question, challenge, or override approved proposals if they are deemed “inconsistent with the mission, integrity or financial position of the institution.”

At the course level, a new program cannot be approved until all the proposed courses have been individually vetted by Curriculum Committee. This requirement also applies to any new standalone courses proposed by the faculty.

In the context of new program or course proposals, the Personnel Committee plays a QA role by vetting any new faculty – both ranked or adjunct - who applies to deliver courses. Once a course has been taught for the first time, faculty complete Course Assessment Plans (CAPs) to evaluate the course’s design, learning outcomes, delivery, and assignments. Student evaluations provide formative feedback for course improvements, which are integrated into the next iteration. CAPs are incorporated into annual faculty self-assessments and reviewed by Division Chairs. Program Review ensures that every academic program is comprehensively evaluated at least once every five years. The new Program Review cycle has now begun and will run through the end of this academic year, with any approved program changes included in the following year’s Academic Catalog. Each major, minor, and graduate program will be reviewed within the next 5 years, beginning with programs as identified as most in need of attention.

As a result, Franklin has undertaken a review of its Executive Education offerings and of the Master of Science in International Management (MSIM) in the context of its mission and institutional identity. Through this review, it was determined that elements of the MSIM could be integrated in the Master of Arts in Sustainability and Transformation (MAST), a program more closely aligned with the university’s liberal arts identity, strategic priorities, financial sustainability, and market relevance.

Looking ahead, and as part of its strategic expansion in graduate education and research, Franklin is preparing to launch a PhD program in 2025. The program’s regulations are scheduled for approval by the Board of Trustees. This initiative builds on the momentum generated by recent project grants from the SNSF which will support the inclusion of doctoral students. The program represents a significant step in strengthening Franklin’s research profile and further aligning its graduate offerings and long-term strategic goals.

Franklin has taken steps to strengthen its research infrastructure and institutional commitment to research excellence. In the 2023/24 academic year, the university created the position of Research Coordinator and appointed an experienced researcher to lead efforts in developing external collaborations, increasing faculty access to national funding opportunities, and supporting grant applications, research networking, and postdoctoral recruitment. In partnership with the Dean of Academic Affairs, the Research Coordinator has implemented a range of measures to formalize and support research activities at Franklin. These include the establishment of an Ethics Review Board in cooperation with two other Swiss private higher education institutions—

currently HWZ in Zurich, and soon also Kalaidos University of Applied Sciences—as well as the development and approval of institutional policies for grant applications, commissioned research, and research quality management.

In parallel, Franklin has introduced a structured system of Faculty Development Funding that prioritizes support for conference presentations, publications, and research, while also providing funding for conference participation, professional enrichment, teaching materials, and the hosting of international conferences on campus. Furthermore, a sabbatical policy allows faculty to take up to one year of research leave at 90% salary for externally funded or professionally valuable teaching or research projects, with reduced teaching and administrative responsibilities. To incentivize externally funded research, Franklin has also adopted a grant holder policy that includes teaching load reductions, overhead allocation, and a CHF 5,000 salary bonus for principal investigators. These coordinated efforts reflect the university's clear and growing commitment to fostering a sustainable and supportive research environment.

Analysis

Franklin has undertaken a review and enhancement of its quality assurance (QA) processes for undergraduate programs. The existing QA system effectively covers these programs and ensures educational quality. For undergraduate studies, QA mechanisms are both functional and formalized, with structured procedures in place for monitoring, decision-making, and incorporating stakeholder feedback. A recent reduction of course load – from seven to six courses per semester – has created additional capacity for faculty to engage in research and enhance teaching quality, an adjustment supported by the QA system. Alumni surveys have provided valuable insights, particularly concerning student post-graduation mobility, as many graduates pursue master's degrees at other institutions. In response, Franklin is actively strengthening alumni engagement and utilizing these findings to contribute to institutional planning and drive continuous improvement.

Although Franklin currently does not offer any active master's program – confirmed by the university website – the QA system has been designed to accommodate such programs. According to the expert panel, the master's level is structurally encompassed within the undergraduate QA framework, providing a foundation for seamless future integration. However, Franklin's plans for master's-level education remain somewhat unclear at this stage.

Franklin is preparing to launch a doctoral program in collaboration with partner universities. While initial agreements are in place, the arrangements are still evolving. As a result, the QA system for doctoral studies is at this stage only partially defined and the relevant regulations are still under revision and have not yet been approved. The experts expressed some reservations, emphasizing that doctoral education presents distinct challenges and requirements that differ significantly from those at the undergraduate and master's levels and that the quality assurance framework, although present, is not yet fully adapted to the specific requirements of doctoral education. Key questions remain, regarding Franklin's institutional capacity to effectively host and support doctoral students, particularly in terms of infrastructure, supervisory capacity, and the development of a robust research culture. Nonetheless, the existing QA framework for research appears sufficiently flexible to be adapted and expanded to meet the demand of doctoral education expand in this direction.

Annex 33 provides additional insight into how the QA system supports research-active faculty. It emphasizes that full professors who are engaged in research benefit from the QA structure, which sustains and encourages their scholarly activity. The experts also highlighted that the QA system is responsive and allows the institution to manage transitions—such as the phasing out of the previous master's program—while preparing new academic offerings, including at the

doctoral level. Overall, the QA mechanisms demonstrate adaptability and continuity across academic developments.

In conclusion, the QA system at Franklin functions reliably at the undergraduate level and is conceptually prepared to accommodate master's and doctoral programs. While the operationalization of QA in graduate education – especially in doctoral studies – requires further development, the expert panel considers that the foundational structures are in place. Continued attention to implementation, transparency, and institutional capacity will be essential as Franklin moves forward with its academic expansion.

The expert panel finds that the condition is fulfilled.

Condition 3:

La Franklin University Switzerland deve includere nel sistema di garanzia qualità i traguardi attesi con rispettive metriche e KPI che permettano di misurare i progressi verso il raggiungimento degli obiettivi strategici, fornendo report annuali.

Franklin must include in the quality assurance system expected goals with respective metrics and KPIs to measure progress towards achieving strategic goals through providing annual reports

Description (interim report)

Franklin has developed a comprehensive quality assurance (QA) system within the framework of its 2030 Strategic Plan, designed to monitor institutional effectiveness in relation to its mission, strategic goals, educational quality, and operational processes. This system is based on a Plan-Do-Check-Act cycle and is integrated into the EFQM model.

To support implementation, a Strategic Plan Coordinator was appointed, based in the Department of Finance and Administration, who is involved in both the development and the continuous evaluation of the plan. This role also supports institutional research activities and internal reporting.

Progress is measured using a combination of Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) and Objectives and Key Results (OKRs). While KPIs allow for the quantitative measurement of clearly defined variables, OKRs provide a more flexible structure for new or exploratory initiatives. The KPIs were developed in spring 2024 in close collaboration with the initiative owners and submitted to the Board of Trustees for approval in May 2024. The Strategic Plan includes seven strategic pillars and defines ten critical milestones to be reached by 2030.

The evaluation system follows an annual cycle consisting of five defined points in time, aligned with the fiscal year (July 1 to June 30). In the summer, initiative owners submit action plans for the upcoming academic year, outlining milestones and tasks for achieving the KPIs. These plans serve as a basis for the administrative retreat of the leadership team, which takes place in August and focuses on strategic alignment and cross-departmental collaboration.

At the start of the semester (September–October), the Strategic Plan Coordinator meets with the initiative owners to check the status of projects, ensure appropriate resource allocation, and discuss potential adjustments. Two progress reports, submitted in October and February, provide insight into the status, help determine whether targets are being met, and identify which actions are effective or require revision. These reporting dates are strategically aligned with the scheduled meetings of the Board of Trustees.

Finally, Franklin conducts an annual strategic review through an Annual Progress Report, complemented by strategic meetings between the President and initiative owners. Each unit submits

a report that includes the current KPI data, a reflective evaluation of successes and challenges, and recommendations for adjusting goals in the coming years. The outcomes of these meetings are documented and serve as the foundation for the planning cycle of the following year.

In addition to strategic refinement, the assessment cycle also supports reflection on the QA process itself. As part of the June strategy meetings, initiative owners are invited to provide feedback on the structure of the cycle to the President and the Strategic Plan Coordinator. Adjustments—for example, to meeting frequency or data collection tools—can be implemented directly in the next cycle. A brief evaluation of the cycle’s effectiveness takes place every two years, drawing on insights gathered from the review of short-term priorities (2026) and mid-term priorities (2028).

To support ongoing monitoring, Franklin uses a digital dashboard (hosted on monday.com), which is divided into two sections: one tracks project progress (status options include “in progress,” “complete,” “not started,” “deferred,” and “under revision”), while the second captures quantitative indicators in comparison to projected targets. The “under revision” status is typically used during the Annual Progress Report meetings in June to indicate that a KPI may need to be adjusted based on current data.

The Strategic Plan Coordinator also meets regularly with the President to discuss progress and flag initiatives that may be at risk due to delays, limited results, or other factors. Each strategic action can be assigned a health status (“good,” “warning,” or “alert”). A “warning” may trigger closer supervision by the coordinator, while an “alert” leads to in-depth discussions about root causes—ranging from staffing issues to unrealistic goal setting. All flagged actions are reviewed during the Annual Report meetings.

Analysis

Franklin has taken notable steps to address the condition by developing a Strategic Plan 2030 which outlines institutional goals, performance metrics, and a structured process for monitoring progress. A comprehensive assessment framework has been implemented, including Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) and Objectives and Key Results (OKRs). These were developed collaboratively with initiative owners and formally approved by the Board of Trustees in May 2024. The metrics span all seven strategic pillars and are connected to ten critical milestones targeted for achievement by 2030. To support this framework, Franklin has introduced a Strategic Plan Assessment Cycle with five key touchpoints throughout the academic year. Action plans are submitted, reviewed, and tracked via a digital dashboard (monday.com), which enables real-time updates and the operationalization of a Plan-Do-Check-Act (PDCA) cycle in alignment with EFQM standards.

Annual and biannual progress reports – alongside a comprehensive Annual Progress Report (first due in June 2025) – consolidate institutional learning and support continuous strategic refinement. Together, these reporting mechanisms establish a goal-oriented, metric-based system that is fully integrated into institutional planning. This approach fulfills the core requirements of the condition, to define expected goals, link them to measurable indicators, and report on progress in a structured and transparent manner.

However, the strategic action plan places comparatively limited emphasis on research. Most research-related objectives are framed as broad intentions to “increase” activity, without specifying measurable outcomes or timelines—especially regarding the 2030 milestones. Only one explicit action in the strategic plan is dedicated to research, outlining steps such as the establishment of ethics review protocols, improved communication of funding opportunities, and enhanced support for faculty grant applications. While these actions are positive and reflect

positive institutional commitment, they are largely procedural and do not yet constitute a fully developed, metric-driven research strategy.

The expert panel acknowledges that Franklin has made substantial progress in implementing data-driven quality management, particularly in areas of teaching and individual faculty-level activities, supported by robust annual reporting mechanisms. However, at the institutional level, the formulation of expected goals, indicators, and formal monitoring procedures for research remains comparatively less developed. Based on the number and specificity of actions outlined, it is also difficult to assess the strategic weight assigned to research relative to teaching. Nonetheless, the QA system is viewed as sufficiently flexible to support future expansion in this area.

In conclusion, Franklin has formally addressed the condition by embedding measurable objectives and structured reporting into its strategic planning process. While teaching is currently the more fully developed pillar within the QA system, the framework is capable of being extended to research. The institution is therefore encouraged to further enhance its strategic monitoring of research activities. The condition is considered fulfilled, with the expectation that Franklin will continue to consolidate and integrate these elements into a broader, institution-wide quality assurance strategy.

The expert panel finds that the condition is fulfilled.

Condition 4:

La Franklin University Switzerland deve sviluppare iniziative di sostenibilità coerentemente con quanto richiesto dallo standard di qualità ed integrarle nel sistema di garanzia qualità, fissando obiettivi e monitorandone il progresso e il raggiungimento.

Franklin must develop sustainability initiatives consistent with the requirements of the quality standard and integrate them into the quality assurance system, setting goals and monitoring their progress and achievement.

Description (interim report, detailed explanation)

Economic Sustainability

Franklin follows a strategic and adaptive financial management approach aimed at long-term economic sustainability. A central element is the introduction of zero-based budgeting, requiring departments to justify expenditures annually in alignment with institutional priorities and key performance indicators. From the 2025/26 cycle onward, departments must also report on implemented and planned resource optimizations. In parallel, Franklin invests in initiatives that support its Strategic Plan, including academic development, recruitment, student retention, and alumni engagement. The appointment of a Director of Advancement and Alumni in Fall 2023 reflects efforts to strengthen external relations and long-term institutional positioning

- Increase annual Undergraduate FTE to 500 and Increase freshmen abroad students by 100% and study abroad students by 150%

Franklin aims to gradually increase its undergraduate student body to 500, supporting financial sustainability. To achieve this, the university is expanding international partnerships, strengthening existing collaborations, and growing its summer programs. A new Chief Marketing Officer, starting in January 2025, will support recruitment efforts as part of the Franklin Voice strategy.

- Improve student outcomes graduation rate

Franklin aims to increase its graduation rate both in support of student employability and academic excellence. An increase in graduation rate further implies a better student retention rate. Furthermore, the reorganization in Academic Affairs and the planned creation of a new

position of Assistant Dean of Student Success will allow to better centralize and direct retention efforts. Strengthening the co- curricular offering through initiatives in Career Readiness aims to increase student satisfaction and incentives to remain enrolled until graduation.

- Increase the student:faculty ratio to 14:1

As part of its resource optimization efforts, Finance and Administration and Academic Affairs are collaborating through the course scheduling process to ensure students have complete paths to graduation with required courses, while restricting the number of courses with low enrollment. An optimized ratio allows Franklin to focus its instruction on its full-time faculty and reduces part-time teaching costs, thus decreasing overall instruction costs in the projections.

- Increase the percentage of alumni giving to 10%

Under the Development pillar Franklin is strengthening its institutional capacity by optimizing resource management and leveraging the community networks. The giving percentage increase to 10% constitutes an important goal, increasing immediate direct contributions, while also strengthening prospects for major gifts in the future.

- Hiring an Associate Professor to serve as Research Coordinator.

The creation of the position of a research coordinator allows Franklin further support of faculty development and discover new sources of funding through third-party grants.

Economic Sustainability			
Goal		Intended Outcome	Timeline
Global Footprint			
1.1	Consolidating Institutional Relationships	• Increase number of direct enrollment study abroad / freshmen abroad partners with emphasis on spring and summer semesters • Increase number of freshmen abroad and study abroad students enrolled at Franklin	Mid Term
2.1	Alliances with educational entities, consortia and associations	• Reaching out to secondary school groups and professional associations, consortia and foundations • Expand FUS summer courses opportunities as well as external faculty-led programs	Short Term
Development			
1.1	Continue donor-funded scholarships	• Retain 100% of existing scholarships	Short Term
1.2	Expand donor-funded scholarships	• Obtain new scholarship with support of alumni and board	Long term
1.3	Increase direct enrollment student access	• Review Financial Aid model and assess the feasibility of performing a tuition reset • Assess the feasibility of shifting to a single currency model	Long term
2.1	Steward and engage existing donors	• Host alumni reunions/receptions. • Conduct two fundraising campaigns annually	Short term
2.2	Advance prospects	• Increase % of alumni giving from 3% to 10% by 2030. • # of contact reports with prioritized prospects. • Conduct one campaign coinciding with 55th Anniversary.	Long term

Academic Identity			
2.3	Implement new and Redeveloped programs. Implement coordinated student recruitment and faculty hiring strategies as appropriate.	• Franklin brings viable and valuable liberal arts and sciences programs to market	Long Term
3.4	Establish third-party funding as a reliable additional revenue stream	• Franklin faculty research is a predictable part of a strategic funding, staffing, and teaching ecosystem	Mid Term
Space			
1.1	Optimize our space	• Identify and work to reduce the social and environmental impacts of new builds, renovations, maintenance and operations	Long Term
Franklin Voice			
2.1	Mapping of the student journey	• Increase UG final enrollment yield by 2% annually	Short Term
2.2	Revamp current communication flow targeting prospects and prospective parents	• Increase in prospect to enquiry and conversion • Increase in key direct mailing metrics for undergraduates and graduates	Mid Term

Social Sustainability

Franklin pursues a broad and integrated approach to social sustainability, with a strong focus on staff and faculty well-being, as well as equity, diversity, and inclusion. Providing job security to employees has long been a key element of Franklin's budgeting strategy. A major milestone was reached in October 2024 with the successful completion of a formal equal pay analysis, which confirmed the absence of gender-based disparities in compensation.

Franklin has continued to implement annual salary adjustments for faculty in the academic years 2021/22, 2022/23, 2023/24, and 2024/25, based on seniority. In addition, private donations allowed the university to distribute approximately \$150,000 in employee bonuses in September 2023 and another \$20,000 in January 2024 specifically for adjunct faculty.

To strengthen its human resources capacity, Franklin hired an HR Manager in January 2024. The HR Manager has since initiated the revision of the employee handbook and performance evaluation criteria, while also promoting a culture of collaboration across units. In Spring 2024, a regional HR consultant was brought in to support an institutional analysis of departmental structures and to map key competencies required for leadership roles. The findings were presented in an extended leadership workshop in May 2024, which also included a timeline for follow-up actions.

Franklin has done a volumetric study (2023/2024) of its campus facilities to assess future needs related to learning, social, and workspaces. The findings will help inform potential construction and space planning efforts going forward.

Diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI) are actively supported by a dedicated committee made up of faculty, staff, and student representatives. The committee monitors diversity across staff and faculty composition, with particular attention to gender, race, nationality, religion, and sexual identity. Franklin's hiring processes now incorporate DEI input and include meetings between finalists and committee members.

At the governance level, the U.S. Board of Trustees conducted a comprehensive self-evaluation in Fall 2024. This review covered areas such as trustee responsibilities, institutional knowledge, fiduciary duties, committee service, and governance priorities. As a result, the board reaffirmed its commitment to gender equity and laid out strategies for the sustainable expansion and inclusive diversification of its membership.

Social Sustainability			
Goal		Intended Outcome	Timeline
Community Wellbeing			
1.1	Review, design, and implement collaborative and innovative communication strategies that develop awareness of services and improve understanding of health and wellness	• Develop and distribute informational materials on available resources • Promote healthy behaviors	Long Term
2.1	Promote Cultural Awareness and Inclusivity	• Highlight the importance of cultural inclusivity external faculty-led programs	Mid Term
3.1	Develop and implement a comprehensive mental health strategy that focuses on students, faculty, and staff	• Assessment of the current mental health needs and challenges. • Implement the comprehensive mental health strategy	Long Term
3.2	Introduce policies and procedures to enrich job design and ensure appropriate work/life balance for staff and faculty while encouraging high levels of workforce engagement	• Identified areas for policy enhancement	Long Term
Academic Identity			
3.3	Develop a research infrastructure that provides Franklin faculty with the ability to compete in terms of research output with the best universities in the Humanities and Social Sciences, while ensuring that research activities are	• Franklin faculty are fully supported to pursue high quality research projects that are strategically integrated with their liberal arts and sciences teaching	Short Term

	connected strategically to teaching		
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Environmental Sustainability

Franklin pursues a broad-based approach to environmental sustainability, as reflected in its Strategic Plan under the "Space" pillar. The university aims to optimize campus facilities while considering the social and environmental impact of its operations. In the area of waste management, Franklin collaborates with BioRecycling to divert food waste from dining halls toward renewable energy production and actively promotes recycling across campus. The McNeely Center of Ideas and Imagination, opened in recent years, features active solar panels integrated into its façade, contributing electricity back to the local grid.

As part of its efforts to promote a circular economy, the university's Green Office opened the Swap Shop in 2023—a space where community members can donate or acquire second-hand items at no cost. The initiative not only reduces waste but also supports students with limited financial resources. In its first year, the Swap Shop recorded nearly 800 donations and rehomed 244 items, with the support of 20 student volunteers. A summary of outcomes was published in a dedicated Green Office report.

In an effort to move closer to carbon neutrality, Franklin introduced the Academic Travel Carbon Trading Program. This internal system allows faculty to allocate part of their course budgets to carbon credits aimed at offsetting the environmental impact of academic travel. The program funds offsetting projects directly tied to the Franklin campus and its stakeholders, with the dual goal of reducing emissions and improving local quality of life. A separate impact report was issued by the Green Office.

In addition, Franklin is working to promote sustainable mobility. A transportation survey was launched in Fall 2023 to assess travel behaviors, and partnerships were initiated with mobility providers such as Publibike and Mobalt. The university also maintains a corporate agreement with Arcobaleno, subsidizing 30% of public transportation passes for employees.

Franklin's environmental efforts have gained external recognition. In 2023, the university ranked first in Switzerland in the UI Green Metric World University Rankings and continues to update its STARS (Sustainability Tracking, Assessment and Rating System) submission to document and enhance its sustainability performance.

Environmental Sustainability			
Goal		Intended Outcome	Timeline
Space			
1.1	Optimize our space	• Identify and work to reduce the social and environmental impacts of new builds, renovations, maintenance and operations	Long Term
2.1	Alignment of all indoor and outdoor spaces in every single use	• Develop a plan to improve the capacity of and accessibility to existing spaces (ramps, lights, adhesive reflective strips) and/or design new ones to promote health and social connections	Long Term
Academic Identity			
1.2	Academic Travel as Franklin's signature program	• Academic Travel is financially sustainable and designed to meet the needs of 21st century students and faculty: develop a unified strategy for selecting locations and look for opportunities to create efficiencies, eliminate redundancies, and control costs.	Short Term

Global Footprint			
4.1	Service learning	• Value driven and field projects to expand human awareness, interest, feelings and qualities (personal and intellectual growth) of Franklin students. • Actively pursue service-learning projects that address sustainability challenges and the interconnectedness of people and planet.	Short-Term

Sustainability concerning teaching, research and service provision

Sustainability in Service

Franklin established its student-led Green Office in 2022 to coordinate sustainability initiatives across campus operations, events, education and research, external projects, and communications. As the only officially recognized Green Office at both a Swiss and a U.S.-accredited university, it publishes a monthly newsletter and engages in local and international outreach, including participation in the Ticino Greenday, Earth Day Summit, and WEF-related events. Students also lead clean-up efforts in the municipality of Sorengo.

Franklin is a member of several global sustainability networks, including AASHE—where the Green Office Director serves on the Advisory Council—as well as the UN Higher Education Sustainability Initiative and UNESCO's Greening Education Partnership.

To promote sustainability in teaching, Franklin launched the “FUS Green Office Grant Program,” supporting faculty in developing new sustainability-focused courses. The program was featured in the book *Sustainable Universities and Colleges*, with a chapter authored by the Green Office Director.

Sustainability in Teaching

Master of Sustainability and Transformation

In July 2024, Franklin University Switzerland began developing a 90 ECTS Master in Sustainability and Transformation (MAST). The program focuses on interdisciplinary approaches to social, environmental, and economic sustainability, with an emphasis on practical skills for organizational change. Anchored in the liberal arts and sciences, MAST aims to train students as responsible change agents capable of addressing complex sustainability challenges across sectors. The program aligns with Franklin's institutional vision and the EFQM model, ensuring coherence between curriculum design, professional outcomes, and sustainability values.

Sustainability in Outreach and Research

Franklin is also a member of the Environmental Humanities Switzerland, of the Schweizerische Akademische Gesellschaft für Umweltforschung und Ökologie (saguf), as well as the Swiss section of Scholars at Risk (see <https://environmentalhumanities.ch/>).

Sustainability concerning teaching, research and service provision			
Goal		Intended Outcome	Timeline
Space			
1.3	Review/Reimagine Core requirements and Student Learning Goals as unifying components of the Franklin liberal arts education	• Franklin offers a vibrant and cohesive Core curriculum that grounds students in global liberal arts and sciences in the 21st century: • Core requirements are constructively aligned to Student Learning Goals, which in turn are aligned to Franklin's liberal arts & sciences vision • Focus on UN Sustainable Development Goals as a potential organizing motif	Mid Term

1.4	Explore opportunities for new interdisciplinary programs and collaborations between existing programs	• In addition to traditional majors with a strong disciplinary focus, Franklin offers Bachelor's and Master's programs that draw from multiple areas of strength and are not limit to a single disciplinary focus: • A Master's in Sustainability is offered to incoming students no later than Fall 2025. • Interdisciplinary majors like Social Justice and Sustainability, and Comparative Literary and Cultural Studies are thoughtfully designed in collaboration with other programs and are well-marketed to incoming students.	Long Term
Career Readiness			
2.2	External Network Pillar	• Equip students with skills to think critically about and contribute solutions to global sustainability challenges	Mid-Term

Analysis

The expert panel acknowledges, that Franklin has made substantial efforts to develop and integrate sustainability initiatives into its institutional framework, in alignment with the expectations of the quality standard. The university addresses all three dimensions of sustainability—economic, social, and environmental—through defined strategies, measurable goals, and active monitoring mechanisms.

Economic sustainability appears to be well managed. Strategic financial planning, including the implementation of zero-based budgeting and active monitoring of expenditures and institutional targets, supports long-term viability. The institution aims to gradually increase undergraduate enrolment to 500 students - a target deemed essential for maintaining financial sustainability.

In the area of social sustainability, Franklin has conducted an external equal pay analysis under the Gender Equality Act, which yielded a positive result. Furthermore, the university promotes staff development and equity through structured HR processes and initiatives that support workplace well-being and inclusive hiring practices. These efforts are complemented by Governance-level attention to diversity, equity, and inclusion.

Environmental sustainability represents Franklin's most visible area of engagement, though it is also subject to critical reflection. The university was ranked 645th globally in the 2023 UI Green Metrics World University Rankings and maintains active participation in international sustainability networks. The student-led Green Office coordinates campus-wide initiatives, such as waste reduction, solar energy generation, and the Academic Travel Carbon Trading Program – a unique internal offset system targeting emissions generated by Franklin's signature Academic Travel component. However, the expert panel raised concerns about the environmental impact of frequent travel, questioning the coherence between this mobility model and Franklin's long-term sustainability goals. These concerns extend to how sustainability is accounted for in strategic planning and carbon footprint reporting.

Although the university operates within a specific regional context (Ticino), its efforts to integrate into the local environment are evident. Initiatives include partnerships, community engagement (e.g., clean-up days), and mobility programs that support public transportation. Nonetheless, the institution could further strengthen its monitoring and mitigation of its environmental impact, particularly in relation to travel and infrastructure.

Within its quality assurance system, Franklin has established clear goals related to sustainability and has implemented measures to monitor progress. The "FUS Green Office Grant Program"

supports faculty in embedding sustainability topics into teaching and research. Its structure—covering eligibility criteria, funding allocations, and selection processes – is well defined and reflects a systematized approach. While citation data related to sustainability of research remains heterogeneous and the institutional use of platforms such as Google Scholar is not yet fully established, the QA system includes mechanisms to support and track progress across various dimensions of sustainability.

The expert panel finds that the condition is fulfilled.

2.2 AAQ proposal

Considerazioni

Franklin ha presentato la relazione sul rispetto delle condizioni entro i termini previsti. L'AAQ ha nominato tre esperti incaricati di verificare il rispetto delle condizioni in conformità con la decisione del Consiglio svizzero di accreditamento. Nella loro analisi, gli esperti hanno concluso che le condizioni sono state soddisfatte.

L'AAQ conferma che, a seguito dell'accREDITamento iniziale, Franklin ha ulteriormente sviluppato il proprio sistema di gestione della qualità adottando le misure necessarie per colmare le lacune riscontrate. L'analisi degli esperti è completa e comprensibile. L'AAQ chiede perciò al Consiglio svizzero di accREDITamento di confermare che le condizioni sono state soddisfatte.

Considerations

Franklin submitted its report on fulfilment of the conditions within the specified time frame. AAQ appointed three experts to verify compliance with the conditions in accordance with the Swiss Accreditation Council's decision. In their analysis, the experts concluded that the conditions had been fulfilled.

AAQ confirms that, following its initial accreditation, Franklin has further developed its quality management system by taking the necessary measures to address the shortcomings identified. The experts' analysis is comprehensive and understandable. The AAQ therefore requests the Swiss Accreditation Council to confirm that the conditions have been fulfilled.

2.3 Statement by Franklin

Franklin expresses its satisfaction with the positive assessment provided by the group of experts, while also mentioning the positive collaboration established with AAQ.



Part C

Statement of Franklin

9 June 2025





FRANKLIN UNIVERSITY SWITZERLAND

OFFICE OF THE PRESIDENT

Ms. Petra Lauk Kwasnitza
Deputy Director and Head of Quality Assurance and Accreditation
Swiss Agency of Quality Assurance and Accreditation (AAQ)
Effingerstrasse 15
2001 Bern

Accreditation and Quality Assurance Report Position Statement
Franklin University Switzerland

9 June 2025

Dear Ms Kwasnitza,

On behalf of the Accreditation and Quality Assurance Task Force at Franklin University Switzerland, we acknowledge receipt of your accreditation report dated 26 May 2025. We are pleased that your review confirms the fulfillment of the conditions addressed in our December 2024 Accreditation Report. We sincerely appreciate the expert group's thoughtful evaluation and find the recommendations both insightful and actionable. These will guide our continued development in quality assurance and strategic planning, particularly as we expand our graduate education.

We are especially grateful to Ms. Christa Ramseyer, who served as our principal contact and project manager during this process, and to the members of the expert team: Professor Patricia Pol, Professor Isabelle Perroteau, and Professor Federico Luisetti. Their thorough analyses—both in this review and the previous accreditation round—have significantly contributed to our recent progress.

Our gratitude also extends to Dr. Christoph Grolimund for his guidance and leadership throughout this process. His expertise, thoughtful feedback, and dependable collegiality were instrumental in shaping our institutional reflection and learning.

Thanks to AAQ's guidance, we have implemented targeted improvements in our institutional quality assurance tools, applied QA measures across all teaching and research programs, introduced relevant metrics and KPIs to track our progress toward strategic goals, and strengthened our focus on sustainability. Our efforts in quality management continue to be driven by a strong commitment to academic integrity, a deep engagement with the liberal arts, and a desire to foster meaningful community involvement. These outcomes further affirm our commitment to continued progress in this direction.

Response to the Four Conditions:

1. Strategic Plan and QA System:

We appreciate the expert group's recognition of our Strategic Plan 2030 and our efforts to formalize our quality management system in alignment with the EFQM model. We agree with the recommendation to develop a standalone QA document and to enhance the structure of our communications to ensure transparency for all stakeholders.

2. Graduate-Level QA and Adaptability:

We acknowledge the emphasis we place on our undergraduate QA, and also confirm your assessment that our system is designed to encompass all programs and research, including graduate level initiatives. Since our interim report submission in Fall 2024, we have successfully pilot-tested the QA system during the approval process for our new Master of Arts in Sustainability and Transformation. This program, approved in Spring 2025 by the Curriculum Committee, Faculty Assembly, and Board of Trustees, is scheduled for launch in 2026. Although QA for graduate-level programs involves additional complexity, our system has proven sufficiently adaptable, providing valuable insights for future improvements.

3. Research and Doctoral Program Integration:

We value your encouragement to further integrate research activities into our strategic QA framework. As we plan for the launch of our PhD program, we recognize this as a distinct and significant initiative. We agree with the importance of sustained research support across the university and the need to foster a vibrant research culture grounded in clear goals, performance indicators, and effective monitoring. We are committed to elevating the role of research within our Strategic Plan and Quality Assurance framework.

4. Sustainability and Academic Travel:

We are grateful for your recognition of our sustainability efforts. You rightly noted concerns between our travel-based experiential learning and environmental impact. We are actively seeking ways to mitigate this, including prioritizing lower-emission travel methods and re-evaluating travel distances. While a final policy is still under discussion, we have made a strategic decision to reduce travel in our new master's program in Sustainability and Transformation, aligning our educational model with our sustainability goals.

With this final report, we understand the accreditation cycle may now be considered complete and welcome this confirmation. We reaffirm our commitment to continuous quality assurance in line with AAQ's professional standards and gratefully accept the outcome of this interim report.

We look forward to receiving the final decision of the Swiss Accreditation Council.

Sincerely,



Samuel Martín-Barbero, Ph.D
President



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