

Integrated Quality Assurance: Breaking through the barriers The case of Tshwane University of Technology

**SAAIR Quality Forum : Hosted @ the University of the
Western Cape**

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SETTING THE SCENE: WHY ARE WE HERE TODAY?

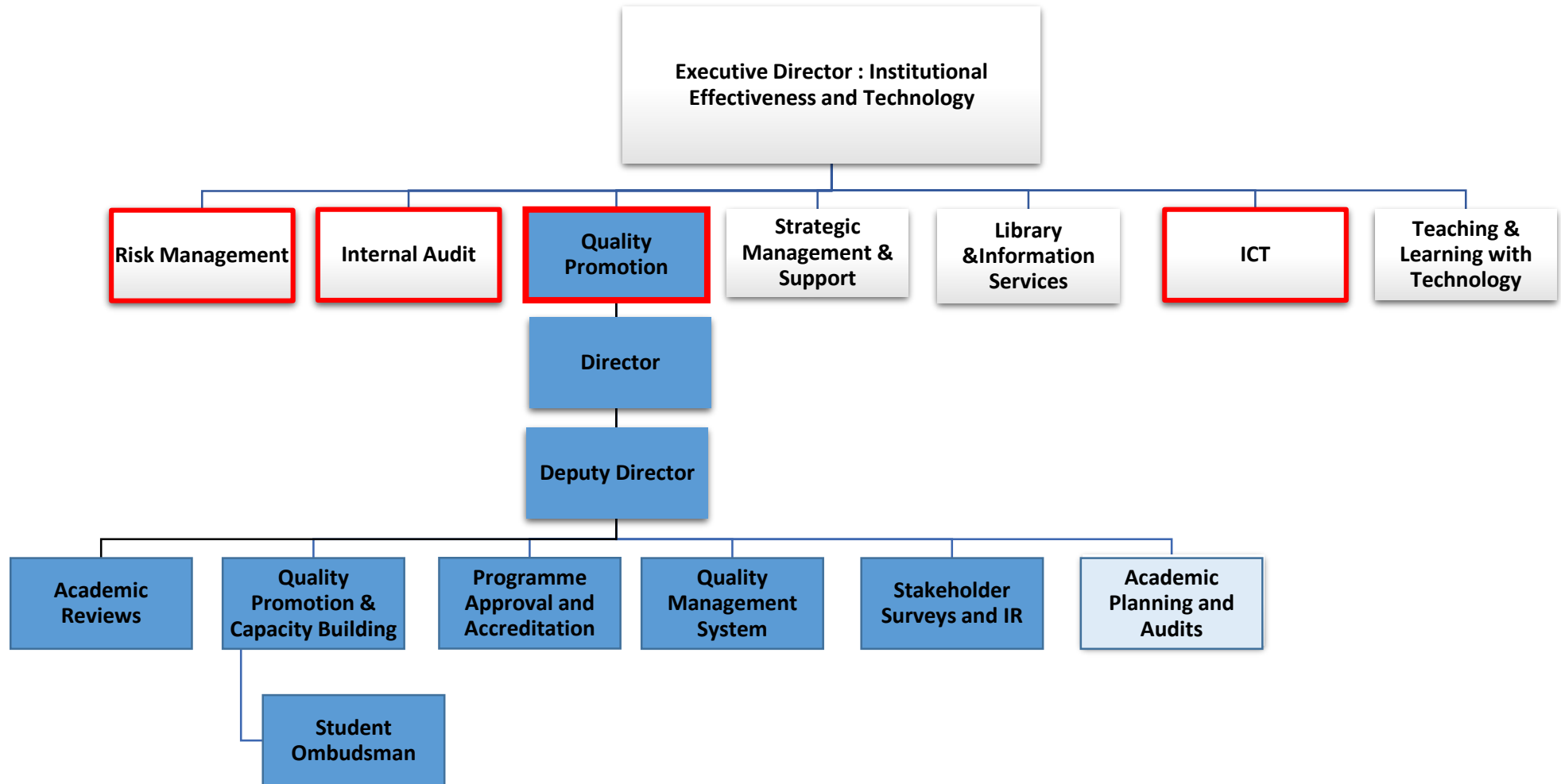
- **Integrated Quality Assurance , making it work for Higher Education**
- Quality assurance alone is no longer adequate to improve the quality of the academic project
- If integrated Quality Assurance is the future:
 - What do we integrate?
 - How do we integrate?
 - What is stopping us from integrating?
 - How do we break the silos to achieve integration?



INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND

- TUT has presence on 9 learning sites spread across three provinces (Gauteng, Limpopo and Mpumalanga) and 2 service centres in Cape Town and Durban for the distance education students.
- 95% undergraduate programmes and 5% postgraduate programmes
 - The majority of the TUT students are undergraduate students thus emphasising the need for quality T&L and academic support.
- Diverse student and staff profile
- Positioning TUT as “*The People’s university*”...

INSTITUTIONAL EFFECTIVENESS : ORGANOGRAM



NATIONAL CONTEXT OF QUALITY

1st Cycle: Quality Assurance

- Placed a strong emphasis on the assurance and promotion of quality.
- Largely characterized by Institutional Audits

2nd cycle: Quality Enhancement

- More attention to the improvement of quality of T&L
- The shift from predominantly QA towards QE presented the need for sector to explore and understand the concept of enhancement and its implications for quality systems, approaches and practice.

3rd cycle: Integrated Approach

- Overarching integrated approach to quality assurance: Emphasis on assessing the effectiveness and coherence of institutional quality assurance systems and how student success is affected.

INTEGRATED QUALITY ASSURANCE

- **TUT's understanding of Integrated Assurance encompasses the following:**
 - TUT Integrated Assurance Framework, 2016: Integrated assurance refers to the **focusing of all assurance processes** of the university in such a way that they **complement** each other in their efforts so that **assurance has the appropriate depth and reach**
 - CHE, 2017 (**No clear definition**) : better integration of different QA methodologies to ensure **greatest possible impact** on quality across the sector. Further unpacks principles underpinning Integrated QA (**Holism, Alignment, Complementarity, Simplicity, Consultation and Collaboration**)

WHAT CAN STOP US FROM ACHIEVING INTEGRATED APPROACH TO QUALITY ASSURANCE?

SILOS:

- A system, process, department , etc., that operates in isolation from others (oxford dictionary).
- It occurs when departments or management groups **do not** share information, goals, tools, priorities and processes with other departments. The **silos** mentality is believed to impact operations, reduce employee morale and may contribute to the overall failure of a company or its products and culture.

WHAT CREATES THE SILOS?

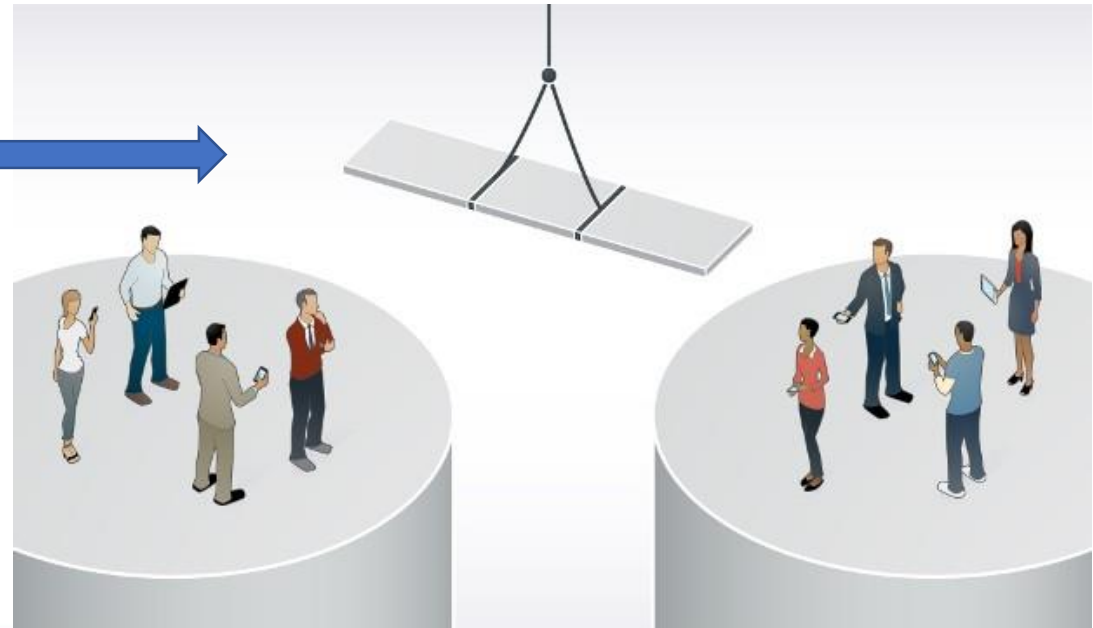
- Historical structures?
- Historical legacies?
- Lack of strategic leadership?
- Competition?
- Protecting the territory?
- Professional turf tensions?
- Organisational cultures?
- Professional independence?



HOW DO WE BREAK THE SILOS?

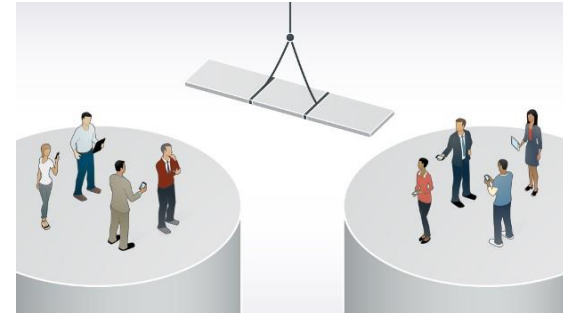


- Efficient companies promote the sharing of information to let the combination of groups function as a team.
- Create a sense of community between departments



BREAKING THE SILOS : LESSONS WORTH SHARING

- Leadership commitment
- Push through high level understanding of the role of assurance (quality) in the university
- Have a clear vision for integrated (quality) assurance
- Ensure that there is clear mandate for assurance providers
- The level of maturity of the quality assurance system plays a key role
- Ensure that the objective is clear and well conceptualised
- The assurance providers must show willingness to be part of the team
- Good working relations (e.g. Combined Assurance presentations – Quality is a key stakeholder)
- Reporting lines are key in ensuring achievement of the integrated vision
- Having well conceptualised institutional strategic assurance documents
- Trust among assurance providers
- Be willing to start somewhere with moving towards integrated quality assurance



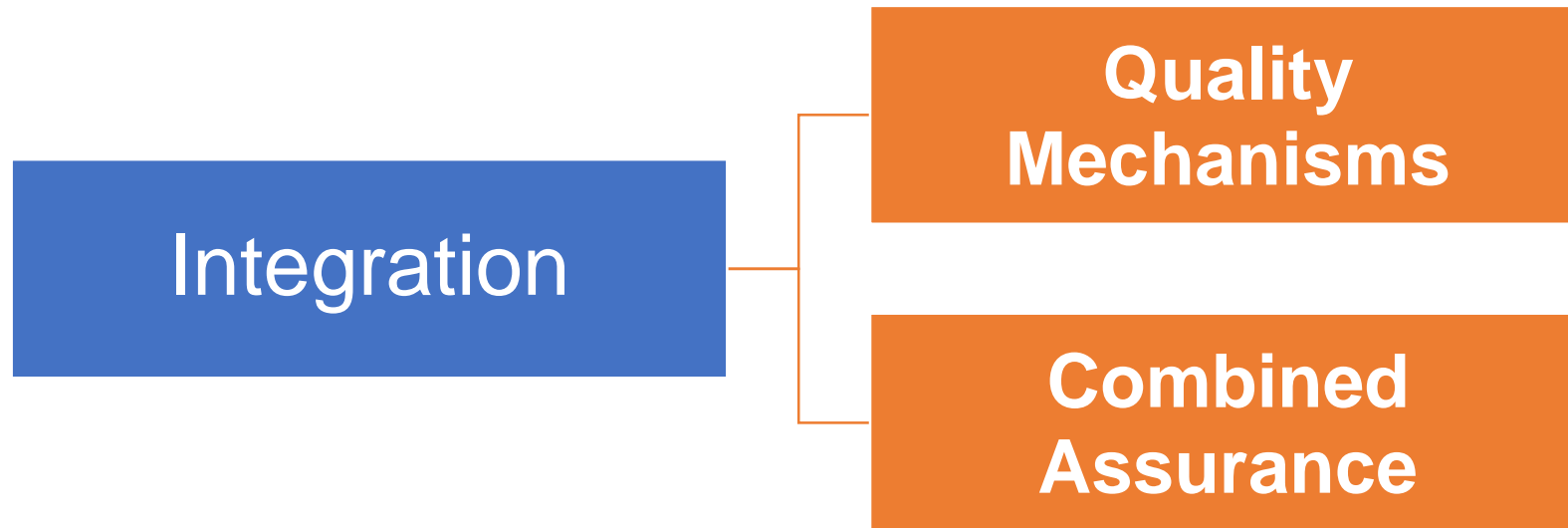
BEYOND BREAKING THE BARRIERS : INTEGRATED QUALITY ASSURANCE

THE CASE OF TSHWANE UNIVERSITY OF TECHNOLOGY

TUT'S JOURNEY TOWARDS INTEGRATED QUALITY ASSURANCE

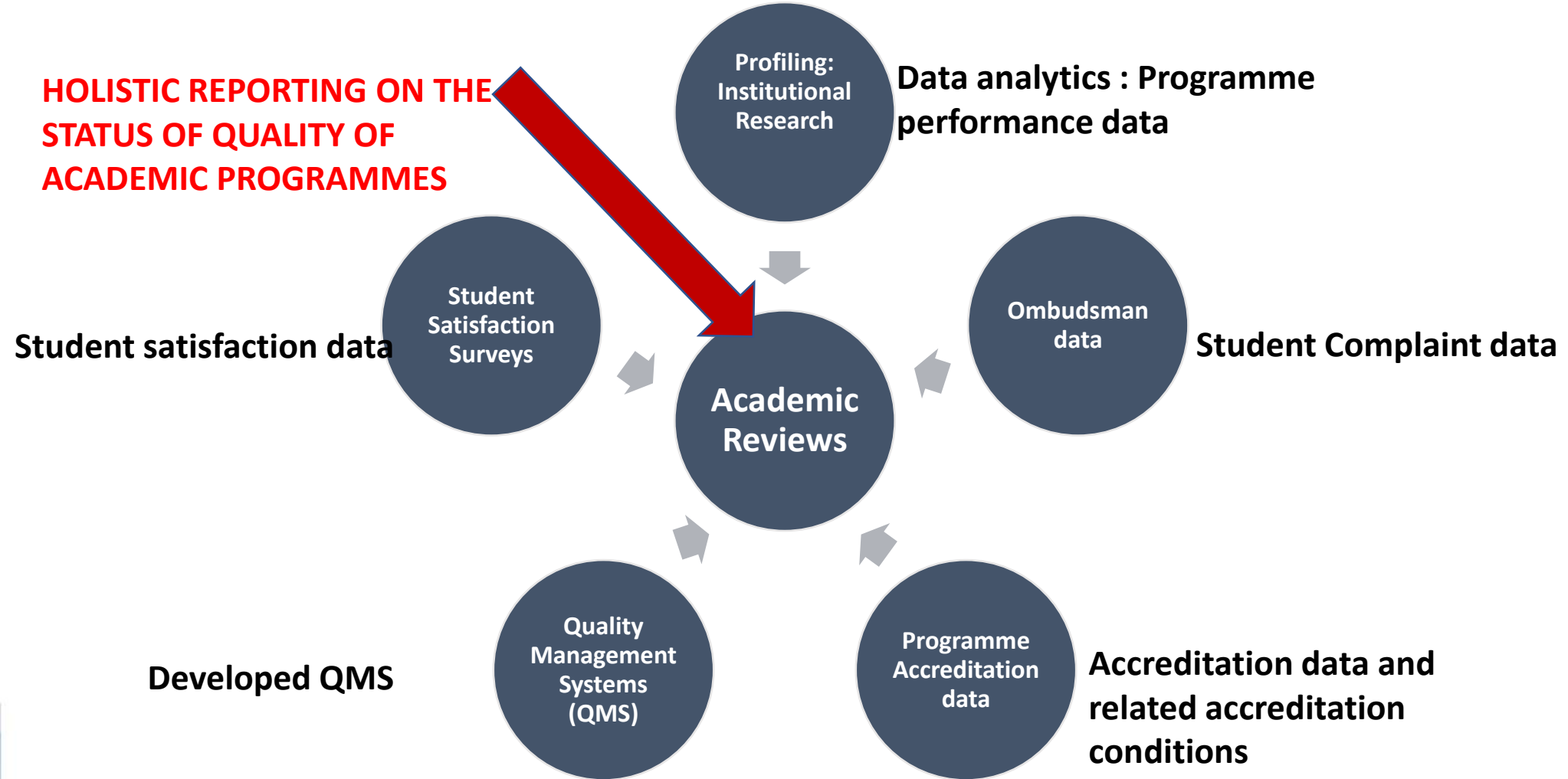
- **Meta evaluation of the 1st cycle of QA at TUT (2005 – 2013)**
 - Revealed the need for synergy of QA functions at different levels across the university in order to strengthen QA at TUT.
 - For QA to be robust : need to take account of HE trends and developments as well as current discourses in QA
- **2nd cycle of QA at TUT: Next Generation Quality Assurance (2018 – 2022)**
 - Institutional strategy that will guide and direct QA and QE activities in the University
 - Built on the strong quality culture of the 1st cycle
 - Advances QA at TUT by creating **an integrated and risk based quality assurance approach** which ensures that there is adequate , efficient and effective QA controls and well aligned QA mechanisms to optimise QA.
 - Ensures **alignment and integration between external and internal QA mechanisms** which is driven by an **effective QMS**
- **Combined Assurance**
 - Combined Assurance Framework, ToR, and Annual CA Plan : Ensures harmonisation and coordination of assurance functions to ensure a combined effort
 - **Combined Assurance Forum**

LEVELS OF INTEGRATED ASSURANCE

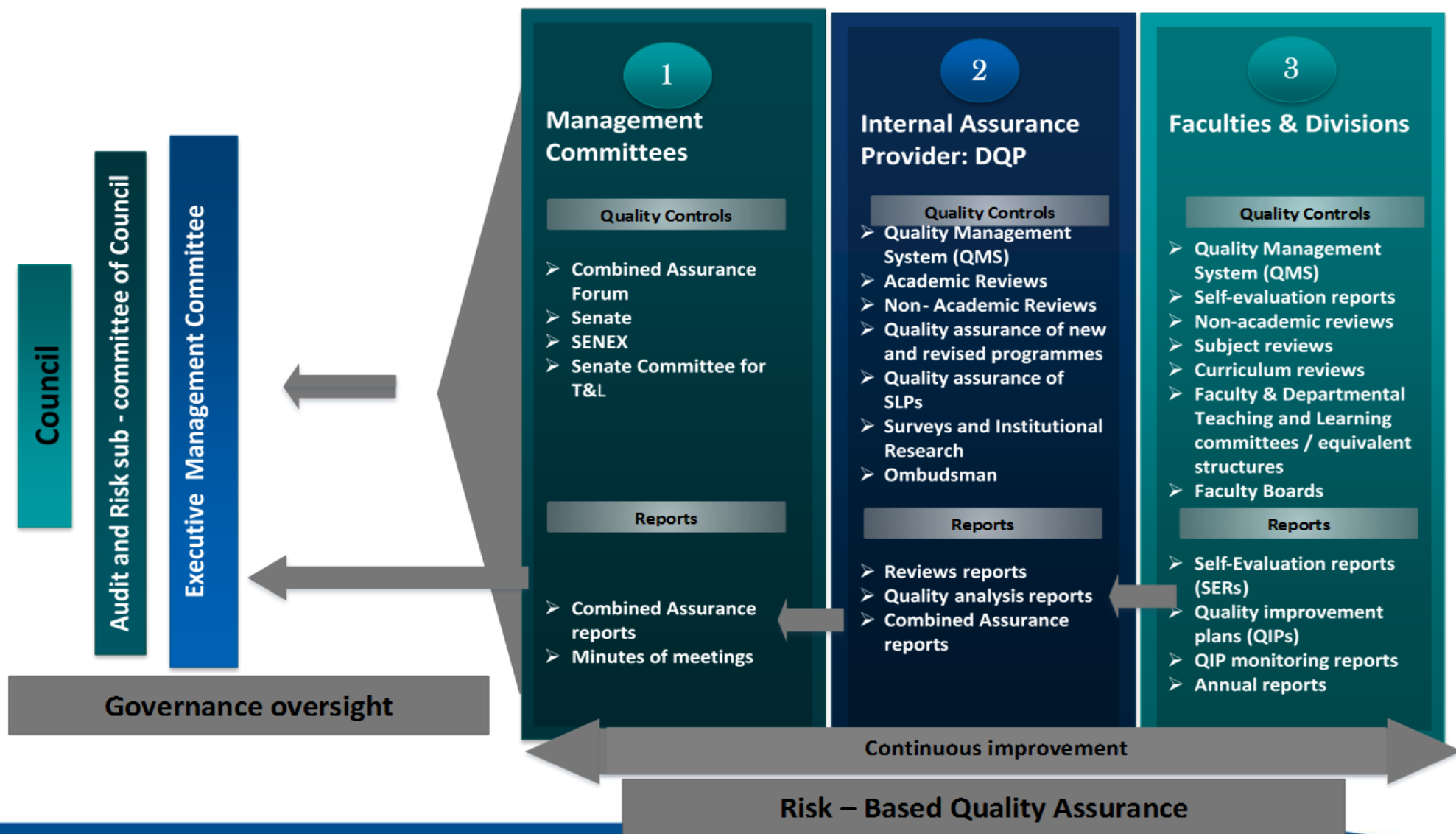


Example of Integrated Quality Assurance : Quality Mechanisms

HOLISTIC REPORTING ON THE STATUS OF QUALITY OF ACADEMIC PROGRAMMES

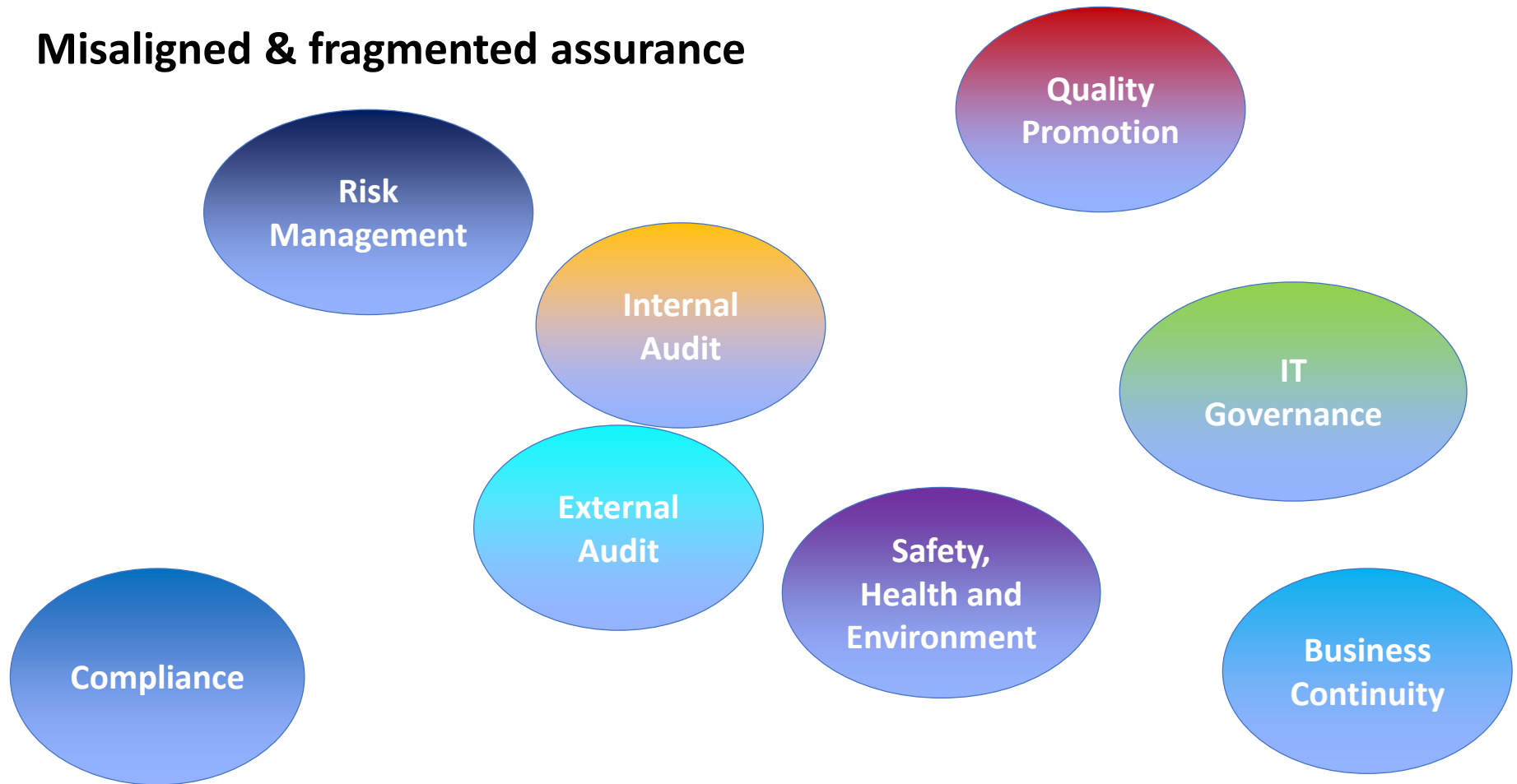


RISK BASED INTEGRATED QUALITY ASSURANCE FRAMEWORK



COMBINED ASSURANCE?

Misaligned & fragmented assurance



THE ROLE OF INTERNAL ASSURANCE PROVIDERS



The role of Internal Assurance Providers

Provide :

- Oversight role in the University (e.g. through QA mechanisms)
- Provide assurance that processes are in place and are working (through QMS)
- Ongoing monitoring and assessment of activities (through academic and non-academic reviews)
- Evaluate controls and processes (through QMS and reviews)
- Focus on improving processes (through QMS, reviews)

Benefits of Combined / Integrated quality Assurance

- Provide a common view of assurance within the university
- Minimises duplication of services by assurance providers
- Reduces risks of assurance fatigue
- Improves reliability of information thereby maximising governance oversight and control efficiencies
- Reduces fragmented reporting= improve integrity of reporting

COMBINED ASSURANCE FORUM

- Chaired by the ED: Institutional Effectiveness & Tech (delegated to DD : Quality)
- Meet quarterly
- Produce an annual CA Plan [TUT Combined Assurance Plan May 2017.pdf](#)
- Assurance providers submit quarterly reports [Example 1 TUT Assurance Provider Report Template Final DQP updated 09May2017.docx](#)
- Submit Integrated Assurance report to EMC and Audit and Risk Committee of Council [Example 3 Combined Assurance Progress Report DQP 17102017.docx](#)



Successes : Integrated (Quality) Assurance

- Combined Assurance Forum
- Annual Combined Assurance Plan
- Combined Assurance quarterly reports
- Next Generation Quality Assurance Strategy

CONCLUDING REMARKS

- **Reporting of assurance activities:**
 - Senate and SCTL : high level quality analysis reports (informed by data from the different QA mechanisms)
 - Combined Assurance : analysis of risks as informed by the different assurance mechanisms
 - Audit and Risk Committee of Council: high level combined assurance reports

REFERENCES

- TUT Integrated Assurance Framework (2016)
- TUT Integrated Assurance Forum : Terms of reference (2016)
- CHE Integrated Approach to Quality Assurance in HE (discussion document - Sep 2017)
- Combined Assurance documents
- TUT Next Generation Quality Assurance Strategy (2018)

THANK YOU