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Predictors and implications of responding to international quality assurance standards in higher education from the teachers' perspective

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Predictors and implications of responding to international quality assurance standards in higher education from the teachers' perspective

Khaled Saleh Al-Omoush & Saad G. Yaseen

Abstract. This empirical work explores the drives of responding to international education quality standards (IEQSs). It also explores the expected performance of applying these standards. Data were collected from 205 teachers at universities that have engaged in implementing AACSB standards. Smart PLS conducted data analysis. The results found that leadership support, student engagement, digital transformation, and staff training and development are significantly associated with the level of responding to IEQSs. This study also revealed that IEQSs are significantly associated with improvements in the reputation of committed universities and students' academic performance. These findings present several implications that contribute to the development of theoretical frameworks for the applications of IEQSs in universities. It contributes to expanding the theoretical understanding of the institutional and academic environment for enhancing the response to IEQSs. The results also provide important insights and valuable guidelines for academic institutions, education quality assurance units, providers of IEQSs, and policymakers in the field of developing accreditation standards that motivate universities to apply these standards.

Keywords: international education quality standards, leadership support, student engagement, digital transformation, academic reputation, students' academic performance

1. Introduction

Increasing international quality assurance expectations and rapid technological developments are encouraging universities to adopt accreditation-oriented quality frameworks to enhance academic quality, institutional effectiveness, and continuous improvement (Chien, 2023). International education quality standards (IEQSs) are understood in this study as internationally recognized quality assurance and accreditation-oriented frameworks that guide higher education institutions in enhancing academic quality, continuous improvement, and institutional effectiveness (Harvey & Green, 1993; Elassy, 2015). Among the most widely adopted examples is AACSB accreditation, which guides curriculum design, assessment processes, faculty development, and stakeholder engagement (Gašpar & Mabić, 2015; Meng, 2023). The compliance with these standards has become a major goal of educational organizations in the global context, and the revision of their strategies to attain sustainable education of quality (Shanxiliani et al., 2021). The anticipated implications of the use of IEQSs extend beyond the enhancement of teaching and education in general (Stribbell and Duangekanong, 2022). They also improve the academic reputation, institutional credibility, and international recognition of the university, and the opportunities of collaborative academic and research activities with foreign organizations (Dumitriu, 2018; Romiani et al., 2024). Also, IEQSs contribute to local education to become internationally attractive so that students can reach important professional and personal objectives (Chien, 2023). In this regard, IEQSs help in overhauling education systems that enable the educational institutions to be adaptive to evolving accreditation and quality assurance requirements. In this connection, there is a need to explore the setting of the response to IEQSS through examining the determinants of its implementation that differ depending on the organizational capacity of academic institutions, the existing attitude of the leadership, and the readiness of the stakeholders to implement these standards (Meng, 2023).

Even though there are a plentiful number of studies concerning the standards of educational quality, there are still gaps in the literature on the importance of leadership support, student engagement, digital transformation, and training and development when it comes to the way in which universities respond to IEQSs. These variables overlap and interact in complex ways, thus requiring an analysis of their influence on the achievement of educational quality in higher education institutions. Most current studies focus on singular issues like how digital transformation impacts the educational process or focus on institutions' leadership, and lack a holistic approach to consider the interaction between these elements and their impact on responding to IEQSs. In addition, there are not enough studies that fo-

cus on the impact of these factors in different educational contexts, such as universities in developing countries that usually follow IEQSs as recipients rather than contributors to these standards, and how each of these factors can contribute to raising quality standards under the specific circumstances of each environment.

Improving universities' response to IEQSs requires examining the role of leadership in fostering an appropriate learning environment, taking into account the digital transformation that impacts curricula, teaching methods, and assessment methods (Ahmad & Ahmed, 2023; Matsieli & Mutula, 2024). Student engagement and active interaction with them is also a fundamental pillar of improving the quality of education (Wang et al., 2022), but its impact has not been comprehensively researched in the literature. Moreover, although many studies have addressed the impact of applying IEQSs on universities, there is a gap in the literature on how these standards affect a university, students, and research. Most studies that have been conducted focus on the administrative or structural dimensions of applying the standards, while the literature lacks in-depth research on how this application affects more specific aspects such as university reputation, student academic performance, and research innovation.

To fill the literature gaps, this study asks the following questions: Q1: Are leadership support, student engagement, digital transformation, and staff training and development significantly associated with the level of responding to IEQSs? Q2: Are IEQSs significantly associated with improvements in the university's reputation, student academic performance, and research innovation? Addressing and analyzing the extent to which these determinants affect the response to IEQSs and the impact of this strategy on educational institutions' performance, this study seeks to reach important implications that contribute to providing an educational environment consistent with global trends. Providing an educational environment with IEQSs will help in facing the challenges and complexities of the contemporary educational environment, adapting to global learning trends, and creating a better educational environment for students.

2. Literature review and theoretical foundation

This study is grounded primarily in Institutional Theory and Organizational Change Theory to explain how universities respond to IEQSs and how such responses influence institutional outcomes. These theories provide a comprehensive analytical lens for understanding why higher education institutions adopt international quality standards and how organizational capabilities facilitate compliance with these standards.

2.1 Institutional Theory and the Adoption of IEQSs

Institutional Theory provides an explanation of how organizations adjust their structures, strategies, and practices in response to institutional pressures they face to achieve legitimacy, stability, and survival (DiMaggio & Powell, 1983; Scott, 2014). In the higher education sector, universities are striving to obtain internationally recognized accreditation and quality assurance systems, such as AACSB, ABET, and EQUIS, to augment international recognition and competitiveness (Chien, 2023). Institutional pressures can be categorized into coercive, normative, and mimetic from governments, accreditation agencies, professional networks, and successful peer institutions (DiMaggio & Powell, 1983). In this context, IEQSs can be conceptualized as institutional responses to legitimize and align with international educational standards and expectations (Tsiligiris & Hill, 2021).

The institutional theory explains how and why universities are organized to respond to IEQSs. Leadership is a key internal governance mechanism that translates external institutional pressures into organizational strategies and practices that focus on quality. Moreover, educational leaders are crucial in legitimizing quality initiatives and facilitating institutional resources (Alsmadi & Oudat, 2019; Rehman & Iqbal, 2020). Likewise, digital transformation improves universities' capacity to institutionalize quality assurance through transparency, data management, and continuous monitoring systems linked to accreditation requirements (Matsieli & Mutula, 2024). The training and development of staff further enhance institutional capacity and faculty skills needed to effectively implement quality standards (Scott, 2014). Moreover, student engagement is related to institutional legitimacy as contemporary accreditation processes increasingly emphasize the engagement of stakeholders, student-centered learning, and participatory governance as key elements of educational quality (Isaeva et al., 2020).

2.2 Organizational Change Theory and Institutional Readiness

While the institutional rationale for implementing IEQSs in universities is explained according to Institutional Theory, organizational change processes and how they can be managed to achieve successful implementation are conceptualized by Organizational Change Theory (Kotter, 1996). Organizational change theory suggests that organizational change is a result of shifts in structure, culture, technology, and HR, which helps the organization respond more effectively to the environment (Burnes, 2020). In higher education, the implementation of IEQSs is a complex transformation process since it may encompass changes in governance structures, curriculum design, assessment systems, teaching methods, technological infrastructure, and relationships with stakeholders (Sarrico, 2022; Tsiligiris & Hill, 2021). Therefore, universities face the challenge of developing their organizational

readiness and adaptability to environmental changes and continuously improving to meet international standards.

The mechanisms of the organization that facilitate the stage for successful responses to IEQSs are elements of leadership support, digital transformation, staff training and development, and student engagement. There is an emerging consensus that leadership support is a key factor in establishing strategic direction, lowering resistance to change, and fostering organizational dedication to quality assurance efforts and continuous improvement (Tran & Nghia, 2020). Likewise, digital transformation reshapes the way education is delivered, communications are handled, quality monitoring systems are implemented, and student engagement is promoted, enhancing institutions' capacity to meet the changing international expectations of quality in education (Sych et al., 2021). Staff training and development fosters organizational adaptation by improving employee capabilities, decreasing uncertainty, and increasing knowledge acquisition from international-oriented quality systems (Sarrico, 2022). Moreover, student involvement is linked to organizational flexibility and ongoing improvement of the quality of education through participatory decision-making, feedback, and collaborative learning (Isaeva et al., 2020; Kuh, 2009).

2.3 Theoretical Integration and Research Model

Theoretically, the combination of Institutional Theory and Organizational Change Theory offers a comprehensive framework of how universities can respond to IEQSs. Institutional Theory explains why external pressures and legitimacy concerns lead to the implementation of internationally recognized quality standards by universities, and Organizational Change Theory addresses the internal organizational mechanisms needed to achieve successful implementation and institutional adaptation. In this integrative framework, the elements of leadership support, institutional digital transformation, staff training and development, and engagement of students are conceptualized as organizational readiness and institutional capability factors that facilitate alignment with international quality expectations. Responses to IEQSs are expected to lead to increased institutional legitimacy, improved academic reputation, and better academic performance for students as a result of alignment with internationally accepted educational standards and practices. However, the relationship between IEQSs and research innovation may be more complex because innovation outcomes are influenced not only by quality systems, but also by broader research ecosystems, funding availability, academic autonomy, and institutional research culture. Accordingly, the proposed theoretical model is presented in Figure 1.

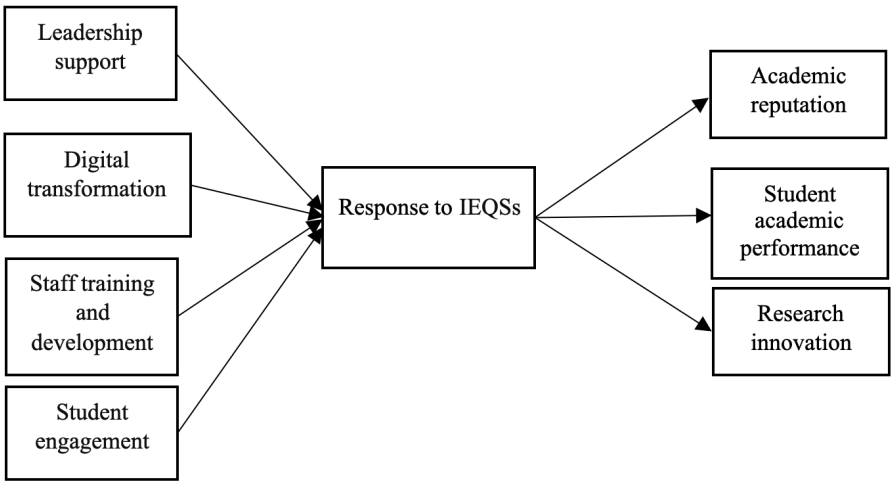


Figure 1. Research model

2.4 Literature review

This study conceptually delimits IEQSs to formal international quality assurance and accreditation frameworks adopted by higher education institutions, particularly those associated with AACSB-oriented quality systems. Therefore, IEQSs in this research do not refer to global university rankings, broader internationalization strategies, or general modernization initiatives, except where these activities directly support compliance with internationally recognized quality assurance standards. Furthermore, although related, organizational commitment to quality, modernization processes, and IEQS implementation are conceptually distinct constructs. This study focuses specifically on behavioral and structural responses to IEQSs, rather than on general modernization efforts or quality orientation.

IEQSs have become central governance mechanisms through which universities seek legitimacy, accountability, and global competitiveness within contemporary higher education systems. It is generally one of the most basic indicators to which educational institutions attach their achievement of academic and developmental objectives (Chien, 2023). IEQSs is a collection of standards that seeks to achieve high-quality education in accordance with international best practices (El-Qirem et al., 2022, Chien 2023). These standards aim to ensure high-quality education by enhancing learning opportunities for all, fostering competitiveness, and promoting innovation within the global higher education system (Tsiligiris & Hill, 2021).

Prior research has directed its attention to assessing the quality of management processes within educational institutions, including governance and management tasks and responsibilities, such as the roles of academic

leadership (Rehman & Iqbal, 2020; Amtu et al., 2021). The related studies in this category have concentrated on analyzing the educational policy and governance practices that are deemed supportive or restrictive to the quality of education, including international support and its contribution towards achieving the educational standards in developing countries. In the fifth line of studies, the focus was on the barriers to the realization of these standards by educational institutions, like insufficient resources, sticking to the traditional educational style, and lack of effective evaluation (Zhou & Zhou, 2022; Chien, 2023). Scholars have also been interested in analyzing what benefits may be gained by conforming to these standards (Chankseliani et al., 2021; Aprilianti et al., 2023).

Across categories of IEQSs studies, several studies have looked into drivers of responses to international standards for the quality of education. Roopa et al. (2021) studied the dimensions of quality internationalization strategies of higher education. They discovered many internationalization enabling factors, which included international partnership, funding, applied technology, the culture of internationalization, knowledge transfer mechanisms, student/faculty participation, and staff competence. Latif et al. (2019) designed an instrument for evaluating education service quality. The research revealed that the quality of teaching, leadership, support services, continuous improvement, and knowledge are important predictors of educational service quality. Akareem and Hossain (2016) also looked at the factors that affect the quality of higher education from the student's perspective. The results indicate that participation in extracurricular activities, parental education, age, and reputation of the university affect students' perceptions of quality standards of higher education. Additionally, Ming & Goldenberg (2021) developed a conceptual model of quality standards for the improvement of educational quality based on a systematic literature review, identifying purposes, people, and processes as determinants.

There are considerable research efforts that examine the outcomes of responding to IEQSs. These studies have their own approaches and focus. For example, scholars have shown that quality standards can positively influence the academic performance of the students and their general abilities and satisfaction (Tian et al., 2022). Research has also examined the contribution of IEQSs implementation to the enhancement of technology use in learning and the transition towards student-centered education (Salam and Farooq, 2020; Isaeva et al., 2020). The compatibility of educational results with international labor market requirements is one of the most crucial impacts that have been studied (Livanos and Nunez, 2016; Sych et al., 2023). Moreover, researchers have paid attention to how the response of academic institutions to such frameworks can enhance their reputation in the local and international environment and their position in the world rating (Col-

lins and Park, 2016; Alsmadi, 2025). While these studies provide important insights into the outcomes of IEQSs, they remain largely descriptive and outcome-oriented, with limited engagement with broader critical and governance-related perspectives that shape higher education quality systems. However, the existing literature reveals a significant gap in comprehending the influence of IEQSs on the university, the student, and the research activity in a unified framework. Not much attention has been paid to the role of IEQSs in improving research innovation, which restricts the development of a full picture of how compliance with these standards and these three outcomes are interconnected.

In addition to dominant institutional and organizational explanations, the higher education literature provides critical insights that enhance understanding of IEQSs and their broader implications. From an audit culture perspective, quality assurance can be seen as a system of heightened surveillance and constant assessment that can influence the institutional behavior through performance indicators and accountability frameworks (Power, 1997). Institutional isomorphism also accounts for the tendency of universities to become more similar to one another under coercive, normative, and mimetic pressures, but the process can lead to symbolic rather than substantive change (DiMaggio & Powell, 1983). Performativity theory argues that higher education institutions are increasingly operating under performance logics: rankings, indicators, and audit results influence academic priorities and behaviors (Ball, 2003). A global governance perspective argues that higher education is governed globally by transnational actors and accreditation systems that spread standardized concepts of quality and accountability across higher education systems (Marginson 2011). Taken together, these views demonstrate that IEQSs are not only technical quality tools but socio-political tools that are part of broader processes of control, legitimacy, and global standardization in higher education.

3. Hypotheses Development

Building on the theoretical framework, this section develops and discusses the study hypotheses by examining how leadership support, student engagement, training and development, and digital transformation shape institutional responses to IEQSs. The hypotheses are derived from the proposed model and supported by relevant literature.

3.1 Organizational drivers of universities' responses to IEQSs

The educational leader must have a clear vision of global standards and internalize and incorporate educational practices that meet the standards (Ahmad & Ahmed, 2023). Leadership support is a critical determinant in fos-

tering institutional adaptation to international quality standards, which is reflected in the reinforcement of strategic direction, organizational commitment, and quality-oriented governance practices based on previous studies (Rehman & Iqbal, 2020; Asiedu et al., 2020). Based on the integrated theoretical framework in this study, leadership can be considered as the internalization of external quality pressures through institutional and organizational processes that eventually lead to the emergence of internal strategic and operational processes in the university, which help the university respond to external quality pressures (Rehman & Iqbal, 2020; Tran & Nghia, 2020).

H1: Leadership support positively influences universities' responses to IEQSs.

Previous studies indicate that digital transformation increases the flexibility and transparency of institutions across quality monitoring systems and decision-making in higher education institutions (Sych et al., 2021; Matsieli & Mutula, 2024). Digital transformation enhances access to education and educational content anytime, anywhere, enhancing the ability to adhere to quality standards that focus on equity in access to education (Salam & Farooq, 2020; Wang et al., 2022). Digital transformation can empower higher education institutions to embed quality assurance in their core operations by making the process more transparent, standardized, and data-informed. Organizational change is enabled by digital technologies that drive continuous quality improvement (Livanos & Núñez, 2016; Sych et al., 2023). These technologies also enable compliance with accreditation requirements using better systems for monitoring and learning.

H2: Digital transformation positively influences universities' responses to IEQSs.

Staff training and development strengthen institutional readiness by improving faculty competencies, absorptive capacity, and adaptability to international accreditation requirements (Sarrico, 2022; Asiedu et al., 2020). Support of these specialized courses also helps the staff to periodically enhance their skills, which enables them to adapt to the changes in the international standards of education (Hoai et al., 2023). This ongoing improvement, taking into consideration new educational and technological innovations, aids in achieving the quality aimed at in the long term (Livanos & Núñez, 2016; Rao & Huang, 2023). Organizational change literature emphasizes that human capital development is essential for successful institutional transformation. Staff training enhances absorptive capacity, enabling academic staff to understand and implement international quality requirements effectively (Sarrico, 2022; Asiedu et al., 2020). Continuous professional development ensures alignment between individual competencies and institutional quality goals.

H3: Staff training and development positively influence universities' responses to IEQSs.

Student engagement is increasingly recognized as a central component of higher education quality assurance systems because active student participation strengthens feedback mechanisms, institutional responsiveness, and continuous improvement processes (Zhou & Zhou, 2022; Tsiligiris & Hill, 2021). Students' involvement in educational evaluation and improvement increases awareness of their educational needs, and enables them to engage in curriculum and teaching development (Gašpar & Mabić, 2015). Moreover, in the process of enhancing the quality of education, students have the opportunity to participate in the localization of international standards in terms of cultural and economic features of the local environment. (Akareem & Hossain, 2016; Isaeva et al., 2020). Student engagement is increasingly recognized as a core component of quality assurance systems in higher education. Institutional Theory suggests that stakeholder participation enhances organizational legitimacy and improves responsiveness to quality standards (Isaeva et al., 2020; Tsiligiris & Hill, 2021). Active student involvement provides feedback loops that support continuous improvement in teaching and learning processes.

H4: Student engagement is significantly associated with universities' responses to IEQSs.

3.2 Outcomes of universities' responses to IEQSs

IEQSs adoption assists colleges and universities in enhancing their educational processes and aligning their outputs with international standards and best practices (Romiani et al, 2024). The academic reputation may take the form of accreditation certificates or academic awards from around the world (Dumitriu, 2018; Romiani et al., 2024). From an institutional legitimacy perspective, compliance with IEQSs enhances universities' reputational capital by signaling credibility, accountability, and global competitiveness. Accreditation and adherence to IEQSs serve as symbolic and functional mechanisms that improve institutional positioning in the global higher education market (Aprilianti et al., 2023). Such improvements in institutional reputation are reflected in enhanced academic visibility, stronger stakeholder trust, and improved positioning within global higher education rankings and networks (Kaushal et al., 2023; Collins & Park, 2016).

H5: Responding to IEQSs is significantly associated with academic reputation.

Adhering to the international standards, educational institutions are able to make the curricula readily scalable, comprehensive, and market-need-relevant, which will improve the academic preparation of students and add to

the formation of their academic skills (Stribbell and Duangekanong, 2022). The adoption of these standards also gives educational institutions the opportunity to offer more interactive and flexible learning opportunities and, as a result, enables students to be beneficiaries of multiple learning resources, thereby improving their understanding and increasing their academic efficiency (Chankseliani et al., 2021; Cruwys et al., 2021). IEQSs contribute to improving curriculum design, assessment quality, and learning resources, which directly enhance student learning outcomes. From an organizational change perspective, IEQSs function as structured quality governance mechanisms that align teaching processes, assessment systems, and learning resources with institutional improvement objectives (Akareem & Hossain, 2016; Stribbell & Duangekanong, 2022). These governance mechanisms reflect institutional alignment processes that enhance the effectiveness and coherence of teaching and learning systems.

H6: Responding to IEQSs is significantly associated with student academic performance.

By responding to IEQSs, academic institutions open the doors to cooperation with universities and research institutions around the world (Ming & Goldenberg, 2021). In addition, compliance with IEQSs may indirectly strengthen research capacity by facilitating access to collaborative networks and research-supportive academic environments (Zhou & Zhou, 2022; Asiedu et al., 2023). Furthermore, quality assurance frameworks may enhance the systematic organization and dissemination of research activities, contributing to more structured and collaborative research practices (Sarrico, 2022). However, although IEQSs are primarily designed to enhance teaching and learning processes, their impact on research innovation remains contested in the literature, as prior studies emphasize the dominant role of research ecosystems, funding availability, and academic autonomy in driving innovation outcomes (Rao & Huang, 2023; Tight, 2016). From an organizational learning and knowledge diffusion perspective, IEQSs may nonetheless contribute indirectly to research innovation by fostering academic collaboration, strengthening research-related competencies, and enhancing institutional absorptive capacity.

H7: Responding to IEQSs is significantly associated with research innovation.

4. Data and methods

4.1 Research design

The study employed a quantitative cross-sectional survey design to examine the determinants and outcomes of responding to IEQSs within Jordanian AACSB-engaged business schools. A survey-based approach was considered appropriate because the study investigates perceptions and institutional practices related to educational quality standards across multiple latent constructs.

Partial Least Squares Structural Equation Modeling (PLS-SEM) using SmartPLS was employed to test the proposed research model and hypotheses. PLS-SEM was selected because the study aims to examine predictive relationships among several constructs simultaneously and extend the theoretical understanding of the determinants and outcomes of responding to IEQSs. In addition, PLS-SEM is appropriate for exploratory and prediction-oriented research models involving complex relationships among latent variables and relatively moderate sample sizes (Hair et al., 2022; Henseler et al., 2009).

4.2 Instrument development and measures

The measurement items were adapted from previous studies, as shown in Table 1. All constructs were operationalized to reflect the perceived institutional response to IEQSs rather than general quality perceptions. All measurement items were adapted from previously validated studies to ensure content validity and conceptual consistency. Minor wording modifications were introduced to align the items with the higher education and AACSB-oriented accreditation context of the study. All constructs were measured reflectively using a five-point Likert scale ranging from 1 ("strongly disagree") to 5 ("strongly agree").

Table 1. Sources of measurement

Construct	References
Leadership support	Rehman & Iqbal, 2020; Ahmad & Ahmed, 2023.
Digital transformation	Isaeva et al., 2020; Matsieli & Mutula, 2024.
Staff training and development	Gašpar & Mabić, 2015; Meng, 2023.
Student engagement	Gašpar & Mabić, 2015; Isaeva et al., 2020.
IEQSs	Hou, 2014; Hoai et al., 2023.
Academic reputation	Kaushal et al., 2023; Romiani et al., 2024.
Student academic performance	Cruwys et al., 2021; Tian et al., 2022.
Research innovation	Tight, 2016; Zhou & Zhou, 2022.

Three experts in educational quality assurance, quality management, and educational digital transformation have revised the thirty-two items based on their clarity, consistency, relevance, and coherence. Table 2 presents the items of the survey. The expert review process aimed to ensure face validity and content adequacy of the measurement instrument before data collection. Based on the experts' feedback, minor linguistic and contextual revisions were incorporated to improve item clarity and contextual relevance.

To address the potential issue of common method bias, both procedural and statistical remedies were considered. From a procedural perspective, respondents were assured of anonymity and confidentiality to reduce evaluation apprehension and social desirability bias. In addition, questionnaire items were carefully refined and reviewed by experts to minimize ambiguity and improve clarity and consistency of measurement. The analysis technique proposed by Kock (2015) was applied to assess the potential impact of common method bias (CMB). The full collinearity assessment indicated that the variance inflation factor (VIF) values for all constructs were below the threshold of 3.3, suggesting that CMB was unlikely to pose a serious threat to the validity of the findings.

Nevertheless, given that data were collected using a single cross-sectional questionnaire from the same respondents, the possibility of perceptual inflation cannot be completely ruled out.

Table 2. Questionnaire items

Construct	Code	Items
Leadership support	LS1	Leadership within the university actively supports initiatives to improve education quality.
	LS2	Leadership within the institution provides adequate resources for quality education programs.
	LS3	Leadership fosters a culture of continuous improvement aligned with IEQSs requirements within the educational system.
	LS4	University leadership regularly communicates the importance of quality education to faculty and staff.
Student engagement	SE1	Students are aware of the institution's commitment to educational quality and student success.
	SE2	Students are actively involved in university initiatives to improve the quality of education.
	SE3	Students actively respond to surveys and feedback mechanisms related to academic programs and quality improvements.
	SE4	Students feel empowered to voice their opinions on educational quality through various channels.
Digital transf.	DT1	The university's digital infrastructure is robust and reliable for both students and faculty.
	DT2	The university is proactive in adopting new technologies to enhance the education process.
	DT3	The university has implemented modern digital tools to support the learning environment.
	DT4	Digital transformation has enabled the university to better align with international accreditation requirements.

Staff training and development	ST1	The university offers regular professional development programs for staff to enhance teaching effectiveness.
	ST2	Staff training initiatives focus on incorporating global best practices in education.
	ST3	Staff members are equipped with the necessary skills to respond to emerging educational trends.
	ST4	Ongoing professional development ensures that staff maintain high standards of academic excellence.
IEQSS	IEQS1	The university has a clear framework for implementing international quality assurance standards.
	IEQS2	The university is committed to continuous improvement in line with evolving international quality assurance requirements.
	IEQS3	Academic programs are regularly reviewed according to international accreditation standards.
	IEQS4	The university actively seeks external accreditation to meet international quality assurance standards.
Academic reputation	AR1	The university is recognized for its high standards in academic programs and student outcomes.
	AR2	The university is known for its commitment to academic excellence.
	AR3	The university's reputation for offering quality education is widely recognized.
	AR4	The university is respected for its leadership in student development and support services.
Student academic performance	SAP1	The academic performance of students at our university meets international standards.
	SAP2	Students consistently demonstrate high academic performance due to the rigorous curriculum provided by the university.
	SAP3	Employers prefer graduates from our university.
	SAP4	Students are well-prepared to apply their academic knowledge in practical or professional settings.
Research innovation	RI1	The university fosters an environment conducive to innovative research.
	RI2	The university provides adequate funding and resources for cutting-edge research projects.
	RI3	Research at the university is focused on addressing global challenges and advancing knowledge.
	RI4	The university supports interdisciplinary research to foster innovation.

4.3 Sampling strategy and data collection

A purposive sampling strategy was employed because the study specifically targeted universities actively engaged in international accreditation-oriented quality assurance processes. AACSB-engaged business schools were selected because they represent institutions formally involved in implementing internationally recognized accreditation and quality assurance standards in higher education. Faculty members were considered appropriate respondents because of their direct involvement in teaching, curriculum development, quality assurance practices, and accreditation-related activities.

Since this empirical work examines the drivers and results of *response to IEQSs in universities*, it is reasonable to select the population from universities involved in responding to international programmes subject to evaluation by international bodies. Thus, data were collected from a sample of business faculty members in Jordanian universities. Many universities in Jordan have joined the Association to Advance Collegiate Schools of Business (AACSB) Program. Accordingly, this study operationalizes IEQSs within the context of AACSB-oriented international quality assurance and accreditation practices in higher education institutions. This program lasts for several years, during which the universities are committed to meeting the requirements for obtaining AACSB accreditation in business education. The universities participating in this program have been formally contacted to facilitate data collection. Five universities responded and agreed to participate in this study.

Data collection was conducted over a period of 37 days, from 15 January to 20 February 2026, using both electronic and printed questionnaires. The participating universities were formally contacted to facilitate access to faculty members. In addition to institutional coordination, a professional data collection team assisted in distributing the survey to increase participation rates and improve accessibility to respondents.

Participation in the study was voluntary, and respondents were informed about the purpose of the research and assured of anonymity and confidentiality before completing the questionnaire. A total of 205 valid responses were obtained and retained for the final analysis. Table 3 presents the demographic characteristics of the respondents.

Table 3. Participants information

Respondents	**No**	**%**	**Respondents**	**No**	**%**
Gender			*Teaching experience (years)*		
Male	143	70	< 10	049	24
Female	062	30	10-20	101	49
Age (years)			> 20	055	27
< 30	028	14	*Research output (number of publications)*		
30-50	120	58	< 20	062	30
> 50	057	28	20-50	098	48
University type			> 50	045	22
Public	110	54	*Academic rank*		
Private	095	46	Assistant professor	082	40
Academic qualifications			Associate professor	078	38
PhD	167	81	Professor	045	22
Master	038	19	*Total*	205	100

4.4 Data analysis technique

Data analysis was conducted using Smar tPLS software. The analysis followed the two-stage PLS-SEM approach recommended by Hair et al. (2022), involving assessment of both the measurement model and the structural model. The measurement model assessment included examining factor loadings, internal consistency reliability, convergent validity, and discriminant validity. Subsequently, the structural model was evaluated by examining path coefficients, t-values, p-values, and explained variances (R^2 values).

Bootstrapping procedures with 5,000 resamples were employed to assess the statistical significance of the hypothesized relationships. In addition, collinearity diagnostics were examined using VIF values to ensure the absence of multicollinearity issues.

5. Results

5.1 Research model assessment

The measurement model was assessed by examining indicator reliability, internal consistency reliability, convergent validity, and discriminant validity following established PLS-SEM guidelines (Hair et al., 2022). Factor loadings above 0.70 are generally considered acceptable, although loadings above 0.60 may be retained in exploratory research contexts.

Table 4. Validity and reliability

Construct	α	CR	AVE
Academic reputation	0.769	0.810	0.677
Digital transformation	0.761	0.774	0.677
Leadership support	0.847	0.861	0.686
Research innovation	0.837	0.811	0.656
Responding to IEQSs	0.751	0.751	0.573
Staff training and development	0.747	0.764	0.573
Student engagement	0.755	0.790	0.655
Student academic performance	0.763	0.773	0.582

The results of the measurement model assessment are presented in Table 4. The findings indicate that all constructs demonstrate satisfactory reliability and validity. Specifically, Cronbach's alpha and composite reliability (CR) values exceed the recommended threshold of 0.70, confirming internal

consistency reliability. In addition, the average variance extracted (AVE) values are above 0.50, supporting convergent validity according to Fornell and Larcker (1981).

Regarding indicator reliability, all factor loadings exceeded the acceptable threshold of 0.60, except for three items (DT2, SE1, and AR3), which were therefore excluded to improve measurement reliability and construct validity (Gefen et al., 2000).

Furthermore, Table 5 shows that AVE is greater than the square of the correlations, suggesting satisfied discriminant validity according to Fornell & Larcker's (1981) principle.

Table 5. Discriminant validity

No.	Construct	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
1	Academic reputation	0.823							
2	Digital transformation	0.631	0.823						
3	Leadership support	0.536	0.578	0.828					
4	Research innovation	0.038	-0.034	0.098	0.810				
5	Responding to IEQSs	0.472	0.574	0.660	0.106	0.757			
6	Staff training and development	0.580	0.583	0.567	0.148	0.640	0.757		
7	Student engagement	0.466	0.511	0.617	0.200	0.643	0.681	0.809	
8	Student academic performance	0.633	0.526	0.503	0.150	0.487	0.569	0.516	0.763

5.2 The structural model

The Smart PLS output is presented in Figure 2 and Table 6. As shown in Figure 2, leadership support, student engagement, digital transformation, and staff training and development jointly explain 57.7% of the variance in responding to IEQSs, indicating a substantial level of explanatory power.

The structural model was assessed by examining the significance and strength of the hypothesized relationships using bootstrapping procedures. In addition, the coefficient of determination (R^2) was used to evaluate the predictive power of the model.

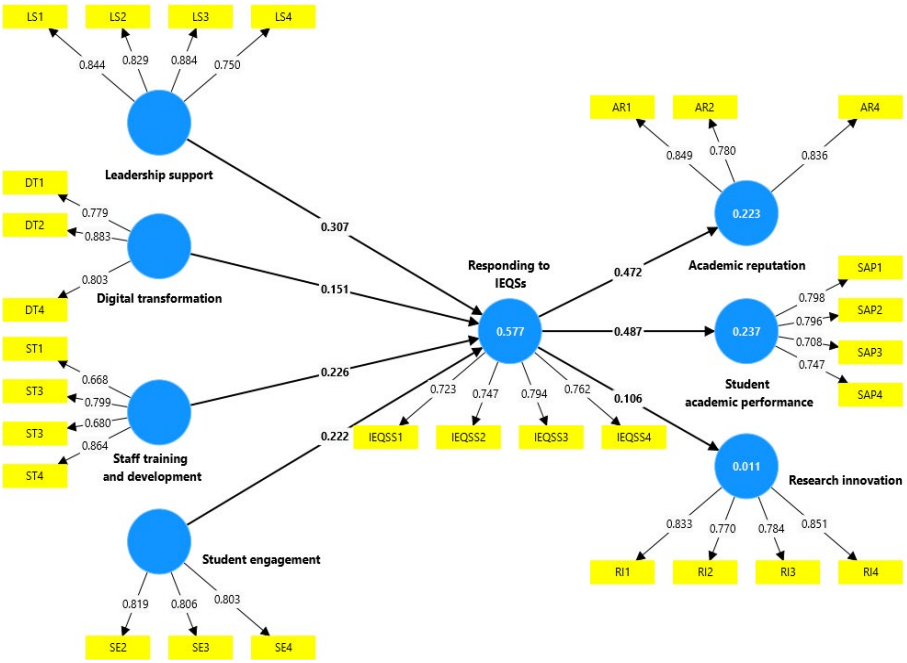


Figure 2. Path analysis

Table 6. Path analysis results

H	Path	β value	T value	P-value	Results
1	Leadership support -> Responding to IEQSs	0.307	4.990	0.000	Accepted
2	Digital transformation -> Responding to IEQSs	0.151	2.152	0.031	Accepted
3	Staff training and development -> Responding to IEQSs	0.226	3.185	0.001	Accepted
4	Student engagement -> Responding to IEQSs	0.222	3.240	0.001	Accepted
5	Responding to IEQSs -> Academic reputation	0.472	8.572	0.000	Accepted
6	Responding to IEQSs -> Student academic performance	0.487	8.602	0.000	Accepted
7	Responding to IEQSs -> Research innovation	0.106	0.971	0.331	Non-significant

It also shows that the level of responding to IEQSs explains 22.3% and 22.7% of variances in academic reputation and student academic performance, respectively. Hypothesis testing was performed using the bootstrapping procedure in PLS-SEM. Statistical significance was assessed based on both t-values and p-values generated by the bootstrapping analysis. The table reports path coefficients (β), t-values, and corresponding p-values for completeness and ease of interpretation. However, Table 6 reveals that leadership support (H1), digital transformation (H2), staff training and development (H3), and student engagement (H4) are significantly associated with the level of responding to IEQSs.

The results also show that the level of responding to IEQSS is significantly associated with both academic reputation (H5) and student academic performance (H6). Unexpectedly, the results indicated no significant impact of responding to IEQSS (H7) on research innovation.

6. Discussion and implications

According to the findings of this study, leadership is significantly associated with responding to IEQSs within the context of Jordanian AACSB-engaged business schools. The literature that stressed the importance of the leadership having a vision that is consistent with IEQSs to develop education and raise the educational institution to a global level (Rehman & Iqbal, 2020; Ahmad & Ahmed, 2023). However, prior research has emphasized the role of leaders in providing human and financial resources to build the appropriate environment that is consistent with the requirements of global education quality (Amtu et al., 2021; Rehman & Iqbal, 2020). The results also indicated a significant relationship between digital transformation and responding to IEQSs within the studied institutional context. This accords with what earlier research underlined on the importance of educational digital solutions in enhancing commitment to IEQSs related to equality in the right to access education (Wang et al., 2019; Salam & Farooq, 2020). Scholars have investigated how digital solutions enable students to obtain continuous and renewable education, supporting academic institutions' commitment to one of the important IEQSs (Livanos & Núñez, 2016; Sych et al., 2023). Furthermore, the results confirmed that staff training is significantly associated with responding to IEQSs in the examined Jordanian higher education context. Scholars have declared the need for educational staff training and development, providing academic knowledge and skills, and qualifying leadership that has the potential to improve the quality of education in the context of IEQSs (Livanos & Núñez, 2016; Rao & Huang, 2023). They have also explored the importance of constant training in enhancing the competencies of the teaching and support staff to cope with changes and revisions of IEQSs (Asiedu

et al., 2020; Sarrico, 2022). These findings collectively suggest that institutional readiness for IEQSs is driven by a combination of structural (digital infrastructure), human (training), and cultural (leadership and engagement) factors, indicating that IEQSs adoption is a multidimensional transformation rather than isolated managerial practices.

The findings confirm a significant relationship between student engagement and responding to IEQSs within the sampled AACSB-related university environment. This result aligns with other research regarding the role of student engagement in enhancing education quality (Gašpar & Mabić, 2015; Tsiligiris & Hill, 2021). Studies have shown that student participation allows them to assess the teaching and learning processes, methods, and offered educational programs, which helps to meet the IEQSs (Tsiligiris & Hill, 2021; Zhou & Zhou, 2022). This outcome complements previously studied matters on how student engagement in educational quality enhancement helps in localizing international standards which leads to better utilization of IEQSs (Akareem & Hossain, 2016; Isaeva et al., 2020). Furthermore, this study shows that responding to IEQSs is significantly associated with improvements in the academic reputation of the studied academic institutions (Jordanian AACSB-engaged business schools). Previous research has confirmed the role of engagement with international standards in education and its impact on the reputation of academic institutions (Collins & Park, 2016; Kaushal et al., 2023). This is also consistent with other studies that have supported the role of commitment to IEQSs in fostering the inflow of international students and strengthening the international collaboration of educational institutions, which boosts their standing internationally (Collins & Park, 2016; Tsiligiris & Hill, 2021). The results also showed that responding to IEQSs is significantly associated with student academic performance within the studied context. This finding agrees with the role of quality standards in developing curricula that form the backbone of education, which contributes to improving the academic performance of all stakeholders, as researchers have emphasized (Akareem & Hossain, 2016). It is also consistent with the role of these standards in developing tools for assessing students' abilities and academic levels and establishing mechanisms to improve their performance (Stribbell & Duangekanong, 2022; Meng, 2023).

Finally, the results did not find evidence of the relationship between IEQSs and research innovation within the studied sample of Jordanian AACSB-engaged business schools. This finding contradicts the scholars' view that adherence to IEQSs inevitably contributes to improving innovation in research (Asiedu et al., 2020; Rao & Huang, 2023). This result can be justified by the fact that quality standards focus mainly on the educational process, its mechanisms, and outputs, rather than on scientific research. Also, applying IEQSs may take a lot of time and effort, which exhausts faculty members

and puts more pressure on their orientation toward research. These justifications suggest that while IEQSs significantly improve the education system, they may not necessarily promote innovation in scientific research.

A more critical interpretation of this finding can be linked to institutional and organizational explanations. From an institutional theory perspective, universities may adopt IEQSs largely to gain legitimacy and ensure accreditation compliance rather than to fundamentally transform their research capacity. This reflects processes of institutional isomorphism, where conformity to external standards becomes symbolic rather than substantive. In addition, IEQSs and accreditation frameworks such as AACSB often emphasize teaching quality, learning outcomes, and governance frameworks, while research innovation is less directly addressed. This may create a form of decoupling between formal compliance with international standards and actual research productivity. Moreover, managerial pressures associated with IEQS implementation may redirect faculty efforts toward administrative and teaching responsibilities, limiting time and resources for research. Consequently, the non-significant relationship does not indicate irrelevance of IEQSs to research, but rather contextual and structural constraints shaping this relationship. Overall, the findings suggest that IEQSs effects are not uniformly distributed across academic performance dimensions and should be understood as institutional arrangements shaped by contextual constraints, resource allocation priorities, and organizational logics privileging certain outcomes over others.

Theoretical and practical implications are derived from the study findings and discussed in relation to the existing literature. This study contributes to adding multidimensional value to the literature on educational quality standards, especially those related to the development of the IEQSs theory based on empirical evidence from Jordanian AACSB-engaged business schools. Although the quality of education and its international standards were studied early, there are many issues that still need to be explored, especially in the area of the influencing factors and expected results of applying these standards. The ongoing global transformations, especially in digitalization and economic openness, and the demand to unify global efforts to confront shared challenges through knowledge and bridging the education gap between different societies, reinforce the need for continuous research to enhance these efforts. Based on a review of previous studies that dealt with international standards, this study aimed to address the gaps in the literature related to the need to expand the exploration of the determinants of response to international standards in a more comprehensive manner. In the same direction, it also sought to study the performance of response to these standards.

The results found that leadership support, digital transformation, staff training and development, and student engagement significantly impact the level of responding to IEQSs within the study context. It also revealed that responding to IEQSs contributes to enhancing academic reputation and student academic performance. Findings contribute to expanding the theoretical understanding of the institutional and academic environment for enhancing the response to IEQSs. Studying the outcomes of responding to IEQSs can also contribute to developing a more innovative theoretical framework for quality performance indicators in the academic context. The research model also offers a deep theoretical reference, bridging the gap between theory and practice in understanding the drivers and outcomes of responding to IEQSs, so that new frameworks and theories can be developed to improve the effectiveness of responding to these standards. Furthermore, this study inspires scholars to direct their efforts for further research aiming to develop more comprehensive frameworks for the drivers and performance outcomes of responding to IEQSs. These theoretical contributions should be interpreted within the contextual boundaries of the study.

This study serves academic institutions, education quality assurance units, international bodies concerned with setting and developing international standards for quality education, and policy-makers in several ways in similar accreditation-oriented higher education contexts. Aligning with international accreditation-oriented quality standards is important for academic institutions seeking to enhance academic quality, institutional effectiveness, and international academic recognition. The results of this study prove to educational institutions the necessity of responding to these international standards in order to improve their reputation locally and internationally. This study provides evidence for academic leaders on the importance of interacting and aligning with international IEQSs to improve the academic performance of their institutions. To achieve these outcomes, educational leadership needs to provide a supportive institutional and academic environment and develop educational quality standards to be consistent with IEQSs.

Findings provide valuable guidelines for educational institutions operating in similar contexts to build their education quality strategies by providing the requirements to ensure their success. Attracting academic quality-driven leadership that seeks to apply and develop its standards and spread its culture serves the response to IEQSs. Providing the necessary resources to support digital transformation and enhance the use of technology in education contributes to the application of these standards and adherence to their conditions, which improves the academic performance of these institutions and enhances their outputs. Training teaching staff and support teams and providing them with the necessary skills and knowledge within organized development plans for academic human capital enhance awareness of

the principles and practices of IEQSs in academic institutions. Furthermore, these institutions need to facilitate the students' engagement in responding to IEQSs by involving them meaningfully in developing the academic process, evaluating performance, and making decisions.

This study provides important implications for international institutions operating in similar contexts concerned with providing and developing IEQSs by enhancing their knowledge of the factors affecting and expected performance of these standards from the teachers' perspective. Policy-makers in higher education institutions can benefit from the results of this study. The development of accreditation standards encourages educational organizations to provide quality-oriented leadership, digital transformation, develop training and qualification programs for staff on quality, and involve students in managing the educational process in all its functions. Such accreditation standards will bring educational institutions closer to IEQSs and encourage them to respond to them. The applicability of these implications is primarily limited to similar institutional settings.

7. Conclusions

The increasing emphasis on internationally recognized accreditation and quality assurance standards has made quality enhancement and continuous improvement essential priorities for higher education institutions. These accreditation-oriented standards support institutional quality enhancement and help universities align with internationally recognized academic quality expectations. These standards also contribute to strengthening continuous improvement practices and improving institutional effectiveness within higher education institutions. The constant progress and amendments of IEQSs to be consistent with economic, environmental, and social challenges requires a continuous flow of studies and research into the development of the determinants of response to these standards and the evaluation of their performance and their impact on the level of education in academic institutions around the world. Accordingly, this study sought to develop a framework to explore the factors influencing the response to these standards and indicators of their performance evaluation from the perspective of university teachers.

Based on the analysis of data collected from Jordanian AACSB-engaged business schools and analyzed using Smart PLS, the study found that the response to IEQSs requires academic leadership that has a clear strategic vision about the quality of education and supports its implementation in its institutions. It also found that digital transformation is an important factor associated with responding to these standards. The study revealed that training academics and support teams and developing their knowledge and

competencies are important factors in supporting the implementation of the standards. Furthermore, the findings support the importance of involving students and promoting their engagement in responding to IEQSs to achieve the desired outcomes. On the other hand, the findings of the study imply that providing these requirements will support the goals of responding to IEQSs in improving the reputation of committed universities and leverage students' academic performance.

This study presents several implications that contribute to the development of theoretical frameworks for the applications of IEQSs in universities. It contributes to expanding the theoretical understanding of the institutional and academic environment for enhancing the response to IEQSs and providing quality performance indicators in the academic context, opening new horizons for further studies on its determinants and performance. The results also provide important insights and valuable guidelines for academic institutions, education quality assurance units, providers of IEQSs, and policy-makers in the field of developing accreditation standards that motivate universities to apply these standards. The findings are context-bound and should not be interpreted as universally generalizable.

This study has limitations related to the generalizability of its findings due to its specific empirical context. Although the sample size is adequate to produce reliable results, the study's restriction to AACSB-engaged business schools within Jordanian universities and its focus on business faculty members poses limitations to the generalizability of the findings beyond this specific context. The disparity between the cultural, social, and technological environment of Jordanian universities and other universities around the world should be taken into consideration when discussing the possibility of generalizing the results. The diversity of the real universities' objectives of responding to IEQSs and their organizational, human, financial, and technical capabilities should also be taken into consideration. These issues motivate scholars to conduct comparative studies and use the research model in other educational environments to verify the extent of agreement or divergence of the results on the determinants and outcomes of the response to international standards.

This study relied on a single quantitative method using a questionnaire to collect data from teachers involved in responding to IEQSs. In addition, the study measured both independent and dependent variables using faculty members' self-reported perceptions. Although perceptual measures are widely used in higher education research to capture institutional evaluations and practices, constructs such as academic reputation, student academic performance, and research innovation were not assessed using objective institutional indicators. Therefore, the findings should be interpreted with caution, as respondents' perceptions may not fully reflect actual institutional perfor-

mance outcomes. Future studies are encouraged to employ longitudinal and multi-source research designs and incorporate objective indicators such as university rankings, student achievement records, graduate employability statistics, publication outputs, research funding, and innovation-related measures to provide stronger empirical validation of the proposed relationships.

Although no CMB issues were detected based on the VIF test results, future research could benefit from integrating multiple quantitative and qualitative data collection methods to enhance the generalizability of the findings. Responding to IEQSs, such as AACSB, requires implementing its requirements over several years, ending with obtaining a certificate of commitment to implementing these standards. The level of commitment to implementing these standards, providing the necessary requirements, and developing performance varies between universities. This calls for conducting longitudinal research to follow the determinants and performance dynamics of universities in response to IEQSs.

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