

POST-EVENT REPORT

Progress Review Meeting (PRM)

Leadership Engagement for Transforming QA Systems in Pakistan

Together for Quality Excellence



CECOS
UNIVERSITY

Hosted by

CECOS University of IT and Emerging Sciences

Peshawar, PAKISTAN

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Organized by

Quality Assurance Agency (QAA)

Higher Education Commission (HEC)

Islamabad, Pakistan

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Executive Summary

The Progress Review Meeting (PRM) held at **CECOS University of IT and Emerging Sciences, Peshawar**, from **December 29–31, 2025**, marked the launch of the regional engagement series under the national initiative titled **“Together for Quality Excellence — Leadership Engagement for Transforming QA Systems in Pakistan**. The program was conducted under the auspices of the Higher Education Commission through its Quality Assurance Agency to support **DAIs of KPK Region** in operationalizing the core components of PSG-2023—Review of Institutional Performance and Enhancement (RIPE) and Program Review for Effectiveness and Enhancement (PREE)—while preparing the sector for the rollout of the revised Internal Quality Assurance Framework from FY 2026–27.

Designed as a system-level intervention, the PRM advanced a strategic shift from compliance-oriented monitoring toward leadership-driven governance, institutional ownership, and continuous quality improvement. The program functioned simultaneously as a capacity-building platform, a policy alignment forum, and a structured mid-year review mechanism for institutional QA targets for 2025–26. Participation from **44** Degree Awarding Institutions and **305** stakeholders across leadership, governance, academic, and student groups demonstrated broad-based institutional readiness to engage in governance-led quality reform across Pakistan.

The program’s three-day structure provided a comprehensive implementation support environment. Day 1 established leadership ownership of quality assurance and strengthened institutional readiness for PSG-2023 implementation through technical orientation and governance engagement. Day 2 enhanced policy coherence by facilitating direct engagement between institutions and relevant divisions of the Higher Education Commission, thereby clarifying regulatory expectations and strengthening alignment between institutional practices and national policy architecture. Day 3 provided a structured platform for institutional reflection, peer learning, and evidence-based progress assessment, enabling institutions to collectively identify implementation challenges and develop actionable improvement pathways.

Institutional presentations highlighted systemic governance, operational, and resource-related constraints affecting PSG-2023 implementation. In response, a structured Strategic Support Framework was articulated to strengthen leadership ownership, enhance national QA capacity, enable digital QA systems, and ensure sustainable institutional implementation mechanisms. These coordinated measures are expected to reduce systemic barriers, strengthen institutional systems, and promote consistent implementation across the higher education sector.

Overall, the PRM represents a transformative intervention that strengthens governance integration, enhances institutional capacity, and establishes a sustainable foundation for

effective implementation of PSG-2023 and the evolving national quality assurance framework.

1. Strategic Context, Purpose, and Institutional Rationale

The initiative was conceived as a strategic intervention to strengthen institutional capacity for the effective implementation of the revamped quality assurance framework, PSG-2023, across Degree Awarding Institutions (DAIs). It marks a system-level shift from periodic compliance monitoring to leadership-driven engagement, institutional ownership, and continuous quality improvement within the higher education sector.

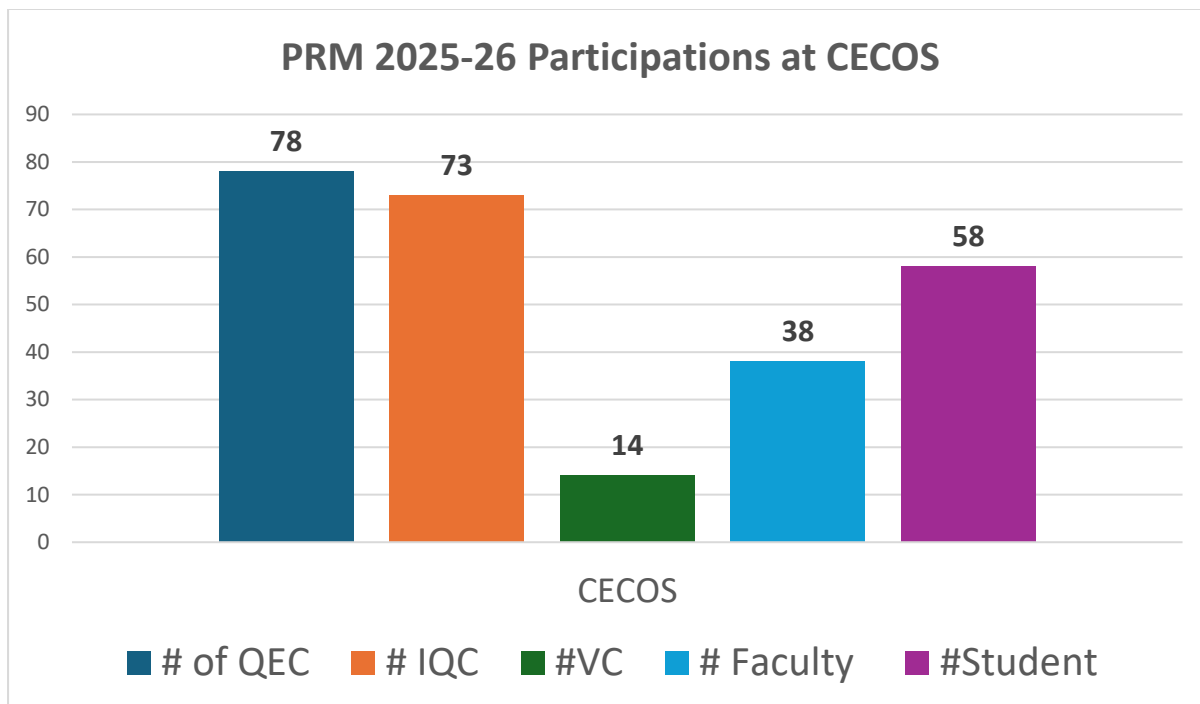
The program supported institutions in adopting the core components of PSG-2023, namely Review of Institutional Performance and Enhancement (RIPE) and Program Review for Effectiveness and Enhancement (PREE), while preparing the sector for the rollout of the revised Internal Quality Assurance Framework from FY 2026–27.

The activity served as a **regional capacity-building platform**, a policy alignment forum, and a structured mid-year progress review mechanism for institutional QA targets for 2025–26. Its design and execution aimed to facilitate a sector-wide transition from compliance-oriented practices to evidence-based continuous quality improvement by strengthening institutional systems, governance ownership, and stakeholder engagement in quality assurance processes

2. Target Audience and Stakeholder Engagement

The program adopted an institution-wide engagement framework premised on the recognition that sustainable quality assurance requires coordinated participation across governance, academic, and operational domains. Accordingly, participation extended beyond Quality Enhancement Cells to include institutional leadership and primary academic stakeholders directly responsible for institutional performance, policy alignment, and quality outcomes.

The PRM engaged Vice Chancellors/ Rectors, Directors Quality Enhancement Cells, Institutional Quality Circle members, faculty involved in QA processes, academic administrators, and student representatives. The scale and diversity of participation reflected strong national commitment toward strengthening quality assurance systems and advancing PSG-2023 implementation across Degree Awarding Institutions. Representation from **44** institutions and participation of **305** stakeholders collectively demonstrated broad-based institutional readiness to engage in governance-led quality reform, as under: -



The table shows that the target audience was engaged in collaboration with host institution to ensure sector-wide outreach and institutional ownership. A total of 305 participants were engaged in CECOS University of IT and Emerging Sciences Peshawar.

The significant presence of institutional leadership and Institutional Quality Circle members indicates a progressive transition toward distributed ownership of quality assurance responsibilities across governance, academic, and operational structures.

3. Program Proceedings

The day-wise proceedings and strategic significance of each activity are presented below: -

DAY 1 — Leadership Engagement & Capacity Building on PSG-2023: [Proceedings and Strategic Significance](#)

Day 1 constituted the strategic foundation of the Progress Review Meeting by formally situating quality assurance within the domain of institutional leadership and governance. The proceedings were designed to reinforce institutional ownership of PSG-2023 implementation while strengthening technical clarity regarding its core operational components. Through the active engagement of Vice Chancellors, Rectors, Directors Quality Enhancement Cells, Institutional Quality Circle members, academic administrators, faculty involved in QA processes, and student representatives, the platform established a high-level governance forum that positioned quality assurance as a strategic institutional priority rather than a procedural compliance requirement.

The sessions on the Program Review for Effectiveness and Enhancement (PREE) approach provided institutions with a structured and practice-oriented understanding of implementation expectations, evidence requirements, documentation standards, and

program-level review processes. These deliberations enhanced institutional preparedness to operationalize PSG-2023 through systematic evidence generation, structured evaluation practices, and strengthened program oversight mechanisms.

The briefing on the revised Internal Quality Assurance Framework 2026 further enabled participating institutions to anticipate forthcoming national QA reforms and initiate early alignment of institutional policies, governance arrangements, and internal systems with emerging national expectations. This forward-looking engagement contributed to strengthening institutional readiness for the next phase of quality assurance reform by promoting proactive planning, governance integration, and system-level preparedness.

Collectively, Day 1 significantly advanced the strategic objective of embedding quality assurance within institutional governance structures, strengthening leadership accountability, and building technical capacity necessary for effective and sustainable implementation of PSG-2023.

DAY 2 — HEC Policy Awareness and Institutional Alignment Sessions: [Proceedings and Strategic Significance](#)

Day 2 functioned as a policy-integration platform designed to strengthen coherence between institutional quality assurance practices and the national higher education regulatory environment. Through structured engagement with the relevant Divisions of the Higher Education Commission, participating Degree Awarding Institutions received consolidated guidance on cross-cutting policy frameworks, implementation mechanisms, and institutional responsibilities within the national quality assurance ecosystem.

The integrated sessions enabled a comprehensive understanding of how academic standards, research governance, planning processes, financial frameworks, and quality assurance regulations operate as interdependent components of national higher education governance. By clarifying institutional expectations, procedural linkages, and coordination mechanisms across regulatory domains, the platform addressed long-standing issues of policy fragmentation and interpretive ambiguity that have historically constrained effective and consistent implementation.

The proceedings substantially enhanced institutional capacity to align internal governance arrangements, strategic planning processes, and quality assurance practices with national priorities and regulatory requirements. Direct engagement between institutional representatives and policy divisions strengthened communication channels, improved institutional confidence in navigating regulatory processes, and fostered a more coordinated implementation environment across the higher education sector of Pakistan. Collectively, Day 2 advanced the strategic objective of establishing an integrated governance framework in which institutional quality assurance operates in systematic alignment with the national policy architecture.

DAY 3 — Institutional Reflection, Peer Learning & Progress Review: [Proceedings and Strategic Significance](#)

Day 3 constituted the reflective and evaluative component of the Progress Review Meeting, providing a structured forum for institutions to assess implementation progress, articulate operational realities, and engage in collaborative learning. Through thematic group presentations led by Directors Quality Enhancement Cells, institutions presented evidence of progress in PSG-2023 implementation while identifying governance, operational, and resource-related barriers affecting effective execution.

The proceedings enabled institutions to collectively examine the functionality of Institutional Quality Circles, the status of QA policy development, the integration of student participation mechanisms, and the alignment of institutional practices with national QA expectations. This evidence-based exchange generated a sector-wide perspective on institutional readiness and provided a realistic mapping of implementation trajectories across diverse institutional contexts.

The collaborative format fostered peer learning by allowing institutions to benchmark their practices against sector experiences and identify practical, context-sensitive strategies for addressing implementation challenges. The subsequent technical guidance session translated institutional reflections into actionable directions for strengthening governance integration, improving evidence management practices, and enhancing follow-up implementation mechanisms.

Day 3 therefore strengthened institutional commitment, reinforced evidence-based planning, and promoted a culture of shared responsibility for quality assurance across the higher education sector. By transforming institutional experiences into collective knowledge and strategic guidance, the proceedings contributed to building a collaborative national ecosystem supportive of sustainable PSG-2023 implementation

4. Institutional Challenges and Strategic Support Framework for PSG-2023 Implementation

Building upon the institutional reflections and evidence-based discussions presented during Day 3, this section consolidates the key challenges faced by Degree Awarding Institutions in the implementation of PSG-2023 and outlines the corresponding strategic support mechanisms designed to address these barriers..

A. Institutional Challenges (Governance, Culture, Ownership)

Leadership & ownership gaps

- QA perceived as QEC-driven instead of institutional responsibility
- Weak ownership at VC, Deans, HoDs, and private DAI owners level
- Fragmented responsibility for KPIs and quality outcomes

Understanding & policy alignment

- Limited understanding of PSG-2023, RIPE, PREE frameworks at IQC level
- Lack of institutional policies aligned with QA standards
- Transition from compliance culture to CQI culture is slow

Structural & system alignment

- QA processes not embedded in statutory bodies and governance structures
- Misalignment between framework expectations and institutional realities (large universities, ODL institutions)

- Resistance to OBE and evidence-based QA

Stakeholder engagement

- Weak engagement of employers, alumni, and students
- Difficulty integrating student representatives and SCALE

B. Operational Challenges (Processes, Systems, Implementation Capacity)

Evidence & data management

- Lack of centralized QA database or ERP system
- Manual evidence collection and fragmented data sources
- Weak tracking of IQC decisions and CQI actions

Implementation complexity

- Heavy administrative burden of documentation and SARs
- Large number of programs making PREE implementation difficult
- Difficulty securing external reviewers and subject experts

Coordination & process clarity

- Overlapping roles of QA bodies and committees
- Ambiguity in EOIs, reporting formats and evaluation criteria
- Weak departmental follow-up capacity

Workload & time pressure

- Faculty overloaded with teaching, research and QA tasks
- Limited capacity of QECs to manage multiple reviews simultaneously

C. Resource-Related Challenges (Human, Financial, Technological)

Human resources

- Shortage of trained QA professionals and master trainers
- Need for dedicated focal persons across administrative offices

Financial resources

- Insufficient budgets for QA implementation and external reviews
- Public universities particularly constrained financially

Technological infrastructure

- Lack of ERP/CRM systems for QA data and evidence management
- Limited digital tools for collaborative review and tracking

D. Strategic Support Framework for Effective Implementation of PSG-2023 in DAIs

To support DAIs in overcoming institutional, operational, and resource-related barriers in implementing PSG-2023, the following table outlines immediate, system-level actions are proposed.

Strategic Action by QAA HEC	Institutional Challenges Addressed	Operational Challenges Addressed	Resource-Related Challenges Addressed	Expected Impact
Mandatory leadership ownership framework with phased engagement of IQC members in all RIPE & PREE processes	Weak leadership ownership; QA treated as QEC responsibility; fragmented accountability; resistance to CQI	Poor coordination across departments; weak follow-up on QA findings; fragmented KPI	Under-prioritization of QA staffing and funding; inefficient deployment of	Foundational system reform enabling all other PSG-2023 interventions. Establishes

	culture; weak institutional commitment	ownership; QA implementation seen as compliance exercise	QA human resources	ownership, accountability, and sustainability of quality assurance across DAIs.
National pool of certified master trainers (train-the-trainer model)	Institutional capacity gaps; uneven QA maturity across DAIs	Limited training reach; weak internal capacity for implementation	Limited access to expert QA support	Sustainable national QA capacity-building ecosystem
National pool of external reviewers and subject experts	Weak credibility and consistency in QA reviews	Difficulty securing qualified reviewers; delays in RIPE/PREE reviews	Shortage of expert human resources; logistical burden on DAIs	Standardized, timely and credible external evaluation
HEC-hosted QA digital platform for RIPE, PREE and IQA (Under process)	Weak institutional data culture; limited evidence-based decision making	Manual evidence collection; lack of centralized database; documentation burden; weak monitoring of CQI	Limited technological infrastructure; duplication of effort	System-based QA implementation and real-time monitoring
Issuance of national QA staffing instructions	Limited institutional commitment to QA staffing	Overburdened QECs; weak departmental support systems	Shortage of dedicated QA human resources	Adequate institutional QA capacity across DAIs
Directive for minimum QA budget allocation in DAIs	Weak institutional prioritization of QA	Inability to implement QA improvements and reviews	Financial constraints; delayed QA activities	Financial sustainability of PSG implementation
Guidelines for institutional automation of QA workflows	Weak institutional systems for QA management	Fragmented processes; poor documentation tracking; coordination challenges	Limited technological adoption	Digitally enabled quality assurance ecosystem

Collectively, the identification of institutional challenges and the articulation of corresponding strategic support measures provide a coherent pathway for strengthening the implementation architecture of PSG-2023 across Degree Awarding Institutions. The alignment of governance reforms, capacity-building initiatives, digital enablement, and resource support mechanisms is expected to reduce systemic implementation barriers and reinforce institutional ownership of quality assurance processes. Through sustained technical guidance, policy integration, and coordinated sector-level support led by the Higher

Education Commission, these measures are anticipated to foster a more coherent, evidence-driven, and sustainable quality assurance ecosystem, thereby advancing the long-term objective of institutional excellence and continuous quality improvement within the higher education sector.

5. Expected Impact of the Overall Activity

The Progress Review Meeting is expected to generate sustained institutional and sector-level transformation in quality assurance implementation by strengthening governance ownership, institutional systems, and national QA coherence.

At the institutional level, the program is expected to enhance leadership engagement in quality assurance governance and embed QA processes within institutional decision-making structures. Increased conceptual clarity regarding PSG-2023 standards and evidence requirements will enable institutions to develop structured implementation plans, strengthen IQC functionality, and align internal policies with national QA frameworks. Institutions are also expected to improve evidence-based planning, documentation practices, and program-level evaluation processes, thereby enhancing accountability and institutional performance.

At the system level, the PRM is expected to promote consistency and standardization in QA implementation across DAIs by strengthening policy alignment and institutional capacity. The engagement of multiple HEC divisions alongside institutional leadership establishes an integrated governance environment that reduces fragmentation, improves coordination, and supports unified implementation of national QA reforms.

The program is also expected to contribute to the long-term institutionalization of continuous quality improvement culture by shifting institutional orientation from compliance-driven reporting toward performance-driven evaluation and improvement. Through peer learning and shared institutional experiences, the initiative strengthens national QA capacity, promotes dissemination of good practices, and supports the development of a collaborative higher education quality ecosystem.

Furthermore, the PRM is anticipated to accelerate institutional readiness for the implementation of the revised Internal Quality Assurance Framework 2026 by enabling early alignment of governance structures, policies, and operational systems. The strengthened engagement of students and academic leadership is expected to enhance stakeholder participation, improve transparency in academic processes, and reinforce quality assurance as a shared institutional responsibility.

Overall, the activity represents a strategic intervention with long-term implications for strengthening institutional governance, enhancing system-wide quality assurance capacity, and ensuring sustainable implementation of PSG-2023 across Pakistan's higher education sector.

6. Conclusion

The Progress Review Meeting has established a robust platform for strengthening institutional readiness, governance ownership, and system-wide coherence in quality

assurance implementation. By integrating leadership engagement, technical capacity building, policy alignment, and institutional reflection within a unified implementation framework, the initiative has reinforced quality assurance as a strategic institutional function embedded within governance and academic decision-making processes.

The program has demonstrated that sustainable implementation of PSG-2023 requires coordinated institutional ownership, strengthened technical capacity, integrated policy guidance, and sustained sector-level support. The strong participation of institutional leadership and Institutional Quality Circles signifies a meaningful transition toward distributed and institutionalized quality governance across Degree Awarding Institutions. The identification of systemic implementation challenges, coupled with the articulation of a structured Strategic Support Framework, provides a clear and actionable pathway for strengthening implementation architecture across the sector.

Through continued technical guidance and coordinated policy support led by the Higher Education Commission and its Quality Assurance Agency, the outcomes of the PRM are expected to contribute to the long-term institutionalization of continuous quality improvement, enhanced accountability, and strengthened academic standards across Pakistan's higher education system. The initiative therefore represents a significant milestone in advancing institutional excellence, strengthening national QA capacity, and ensuring the effective and sustainable implementation of PSG-2023.

7. Acknowledgements

The Quality Assurance Agency, Higher Education Commission, expresses sincere appreciation to **CECOS University of IT and Emerging Sciences, Peshawar**, for hosting the first regional Progress Review Meeting and for providing excellent logistical and institutional support.

The QAA also acknowledges the valuable contributions of Vice Chancellors, Directors Quality Enhancement Cells, Institutional Quality Circle members, faculty representatives, and students whose active participation enriched the discussions and strengthened the collective commitment toward quality assurance reform in Pakistan's higher education sector

8. Photographic Highlights



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