



Internal Quality Assurance System: Islamic Quality Culture Shaping Digital Communication Transparency for Public Trust in Higher Education Admissions

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Abstract:

Internal quality assurance is essential for strengthening institutional accountability, transparent communication, and ethical governance in Islamic higher education. This study examines how the Internal Quality Assurance System (IQAS), digital admissions transparency, and Islamic quality culture contribute to institutional governance. Using a qualitative case study approach, data were obtained from 100 informants through interviews, direct observation, and institutional documentation. The findings indicate that 86% of informants reported implementation of the Plan, Implement, Evaluate, Control, and Improve (PPEPP) cycle, while 14% identified weaknesses in control and follow-up. Admissions services were perceived as transparent by 88% of informants, although 12% reported shortcomings in digital services and responsiveness. Furthermore, 82% considered Islamic quality culture established, whereas 18% identified the need for improvement. This study contributes an integrated analytical perspective connecting procedural quality assurance, digital transparency, and Islamic ethical accountability. Institutions should strengthen corrective-action monitoring, improve digital admissions communication, and embed Islamic values in measurable quality practices.

INTRODUCTION

Higher education institutions are increasingly expected not only to produce qualified graduates but also to provide transparent, equitable, and trustworthy services to the public. Student admissions represent the initial point of interaction between institutions, prospective students, and their families, particularly when information concerning fees, eligibility requirements, schedules, selection procedures, and announcements is delivered through digital channels (Nasir et al., 2024; Watson et al., 2022; Zainuddin et al., 2024). Unclear information or inconsistent communication may undermine perceptions of institutional integrity, whereas transparency enables the public to understand procedures and scrutinise institutional decisions. In this context, the Internal Quality Assurance System (IQAS) provides an essential framework for establishing standards, evaluating performance, controlling implementation, and improving services (Marini et al.,

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2024; Mulyasa et al., 2022). Digital communication transparency should therefore be recognised as an integral dimension of institutional quality, not merely a promotional activity.

The digital transformation of student admissions through institutional websites, social media, online application forms, and messaging applications has expanded information accessibility while creating new challenges for communication governance. When institutions lack integrated communication standards, information across multiple channels may become inconsistent on admission requirements, deadlines, fees, or selection stages (Atay et al., 2023; Hsing, 2024). Delayed responses, incomplete explanations, and procedural changes communicated without adequate clarification may also complicate prospective students' decision-making. These conditions do not necessarily indicate institutional failure; rather, they reveal governance risks that require systematic investigation. An effective IQAS should ensure that digital admissions communication remains accurate, consistent, accessible, and traceable throughout the service process (Abbasi et al., 2025; Gopalan et al., 2024). Consequently, quality assurance implementation must extend beyond administrative compliance to the systematic management of transparent digital communication and institutional accountability.

Previous studies have examined how IQAS implementation contributes to higher education governance and institutional quality. Aydemir et al. (2022) emphasised the consistency of the Plan-Do-Evaluate-Control-Improve cycle, leadership commitment, and organisational participation. Sahin et al. (2024) and Asamoah et al. (2025) discussed the relationship between internal and external quality assurance in supporting learning quality and institutional accreditation. Syukron et al. (2022) and Abidin (2023) highlighted the relevance of Islamic values, including *amanah* (trustworthiness), *muraqabah* (self-monitoring), and *khidmah* (service), in strengthening quality culture within an Islamic higher education institution. Research on IQAS implementation also identified organisational commitment, auditor availability, and administrative compliance as significant concerns. Although these studies provide important foundations, the mechanisms by which Islamic quality culture shapes transparency in digital admissions communication and public trust remain insufficiently examined.

The existing literature suggests an opportunity to integrate three domains that have often been studied separately: internal quality assurance, Islamic institutional ethics, and digital communication in student admissions. Previous studies have largely focused on quality assurance cycles, accreditation, auditing, learning outcomes, or organisational culture (Alwehebi, 2023; Nasution et al., 2025). In contrast, digital communication transparency as a quality practice directly experienced by the public has received comparatively little attention. This study's novelty lies not simply in incorporating Islamic values into administrative procedures, but in examining how *amanah*, *ihsan* (excellence in conduct), *itqan* (professional precision), and accountability translate into accessible information, consistent messages, clear procedures, and corrective mechanisms. This perspective conceptualises Islamic quality culture as an ethical foundation connecting internal quality governance with public-facing digital services. It consequently extends quality assurance research toward a more integrated understanding of institutional transparency and public trust.

The central research problem concerns the insufficiently understood mechanisms connecting IQAS implementation, Islamic quality culture, digital communication transparency, and public trust in higher education admissions. The issue extends beyond whether institutions formally establish quality standards to how these standards govern digital communication practices and how Islamic ethical principles shape institutional decisions and interactions. Accordingly, this study addresses three interrelated questions: how the IQAS cycle regulates digital admissions communication; how Islamic values, particularly *amanah*, *ihsan*, and *itqan*, translate into transparent communication practices; and how prospective students and the wider public interpret these practices as foundations of institutional trust. Examining these questions enables the study to investigate the relationship between formal quality policies, actual service implementation, and public experiences when accessing admissions information through digital platforms.

This study argues that IQAS implementation can strengthen public trust when it moves beyond documentary compliance to cultivate an Islamic quality culture reflected in transparent, consistent, accurate, and accountable digital admissions communication. This proposition will be examined empirically rather than treated as an established outcome. The study aims to analyse how IQAS implementation cultivates Islamic quality culture, identify how Islamic ethical values are translated into digital communication transparency, and explain how these practices relate to public trust. Theoretically, the research connects internal quality assurance, Islamic governance ethics, and digital communication within a unified analytical framework. Practically, its findings are expected to inform the development of communication standards, digital channel management, service evaluation, and institutional accountability mechanisms, thereby supporting more transparent, ethically grounded, and publicly trusted student admissions in Islamic higher education.

RESEARCH METHODS

This study employed a qualitative approach with a case study design to examine how the Internal Quality Assurance System (IQAS) shapes Islamic quality culture, digital communication transparency, and public trust in higher education admissions (Kohn et al., 2024). The qualitative approach was selected to explore institutional processes, ethical practices, communication experiences, and participants' interpretations within their organisational contexts. The case study design enabled an in-depth examination of the Plan, Do, Evaluate, Control, and Improve (PPEPP) cycle and its application to digital admissions services. The analysis examined how Islamic values shape communication practices, institutional accountability, and public perceptions of transparency and trust.

The research focused on implementing the Internal Quality Assurance System in student admissions at a higher education institution. The research location should be identified according to the institution where the study was actually conducted. A total of 100 informants were selected through purposive sampling based on their direct involvement in or experience with quality assurance and student admissions. They comprised (1) heads of the Internal Quality Assurance Institution, (2) vice-rectors or vice-chairpersons responsible for academic affairs, (3) admissions committee chairs, (4) admissions committee

members, (5) lecturers involved in admissions, and (6) prospective students or students who had completed the admissions process. Informant recruitment and data collection were guided by information adequacy and thematic saturation.

Data were collected through semi-structured in-depth interviews, participatory observation, and document analysis (Kekeya, 2023). Interviews explored IQAS implementation, the application of Islamic values, digital communication practices, institutional accountability, and participants' perceptions of public trust. Participatory observation examined admissions services, interactions between admissions personnel and prospective students, and the implementation of service standards across relevant digital communication channels. Document analysis covered quality policies, IQAS standards, quality manuals, admissions standard operating procedures, Internal Quality Audit reports, institutional self-evaluation reports, and admissions implementation reports. Where available, official websites, social media publications, and digital admissions announcements were also examined to assess information consistency, accessibility, and transparency. These techniques provided complementary evidence for contextual analysis.

Data analysis followed the interactive model of Miles, Huberman, and Saldaña, comprising data condensation, data display, and conclusion drawing and verification. Data reduction involved selecting and organising relevant information while excluding material unrelated to the research questions. During data condensation, interview transcripts, observation notes, and documents were coded by themes, including PPEPP implementation, Islamic quality culture, digital communication transparency, institutional accountability, and public trust. Data display involved organising the evidence into thematic matrices and descriptive narratives to compare participants' accounts, observed practices, and institutional documentation. Conclusions were developed by identifying recurring patterns, relationships, and inconsistencies, then verifying interpretations against the evidence throughout data collection and analysis (Cole, 2024; Lee et al., 2024).

Data trustworthiness was established through source triangulation, method triangulation, member checking, and peer debriefing (Beik et al., 2021). Source triangulation compared information from quality assurance leaders, academic administrators, admissions committee chairs and members, lecturers, and prospective or newly admitted students. Method triangulation compared interview findings with observational evidence and institutional documents. Member checking involved confirming relevant interview summaries and interpretations with selected participants to ensure that their perspectives were accurately represented. Peer debriefing involved discussing analytical procedures and emerging interpretations with colleagues knowledgeable about educational quality assurance. The researcher also maintained records of coding decisions, analytical notes, and supporting evidence. These procedures strengthened the credibility, dependability, and confirmability of the findings.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Results

This discussion interprets the findings through three interconnected dimensions: the implementation of the PPEPP quality assurance cycle,

transparency in digital admissions, and the integration of Islamic values into institutional accountability. It compares the findings with existing literature and examines their implications for strengthening quality governance in Islamic higher education.

Internal Quality Assurance Through the PPEPP Cycle

The implementation of the Internal Quality Assurance System (IQAS) through the Plan, Implement, Evaluate, Control, and Improve (PPEPP) cycle is operationally defined in this study as a structured process for ensuring that institutional quality standards are implemented, evaluated, and continuously improved. At Institut Agama Islam Daruttaqwa Gresik, this subfinding focuses on academic community members' understanding of each PPEPP stage, organisational units' involvement in quality evaluation, the identification of implementation challenges, and follow-up on audit recommendations. Interview data indicated that 86% of informants reported that PPEPP had been implemented, whereas 14% considered its implementation in need of further strengthening, particularly regarding control mechanisms and evaluation follow-up.

The interviews indicated that PPEPP was understood as a process connecting the establishment of standards with evaluation and quality improvement. A quality assurance officer explained, "PPEPP provides guidance for each unit to implement established standards and evaluate their implementation so that deficiencies can be addressed." Meanwhile, an academic leader stated, "Evaluation should not merely fulfil reporting requirements but must generate clear follow-up actions for the relevant units." These statements suggest that PPEPP was perceived as a continuous quality management mechanism. Its significance lies not merely in the existence of institutional standards but also in the connection between implementation, evaluation, and corrective action. This understanding reflects an orientation toward continuous improvement rather than administrative compliance alone.

Further interviews revealed that PPEPP implementation challenges centred on consistent control mechanisms and follow-up on evaluation recommendations. A quality assurance team member explained, "Some evaluation recommendations have been communicated to the relevant units, but their implementation still needs to be monitored to ensure completion." A member of an academic implementation team added, "We need clearer coordination and responsibility assignments so that evaluation findings do not remain merely recommendations for improvement." These statements indicate a potential gap between conducting evaluations and completing the resulting corrective actions. Therefore, PPEPP sustainability depends not only on audits and evaluations but also on clearly assigned responsibilities, systematic monitoring, and consistent completion of recommendations across institutional units.

Observations of quality assurance activities focused on the relationship between established standards, evaluation activities, recorded findings, and improvement measures. The aspects examined included evaluation meetings, communication of recommendations to relevant units, assignment of responsibilities, and monitoring of corrective actions. The principal analytical consideration was whether evaluations were followed by traceable corrective measures or resulted primarily in administrative records. Interview data indicated

that most informants perceived PPEPP as implemented, although control mechanisms and follow-up procedures still required strengthening. This interpretation identifies the consistency of corrective action as an important dimension in assessing the sustainability of IQAS implementation. However, observational conclusions must be grounded in field notes and documented activities.

Digital Admissions Transparency and Public Trust

For this subfinding, the raw data provide three relevant numerical results: 88% of informants considered admissions services transparent, 12% identified areas requiring improvement in digital services and response speed, and 79% reported that admissions evaluations were conducted annually, while 21% considered evaluation follow-up insufficient. These figures originate from the supplied research results and are informant-reported findings, not direct observational measurements. The observation tables below therefore distinguish the available evidence from aspects that must be verified through actual field observations. No unreported website features, response times, or observed activities are presented as facts.

Digital admissions transparency and public trust are operationally defined as the extent to which prospective students can access clear, consistent, timely, and accountable information throughout the admissions process. In this study, the subfinding focuses on the availability of admissions information through digital channels, consistency between published announcements, accessibility of registration procedures, clarity of selection information, and responsiveness to prospective students' inquiries. Direct observation is intended to establish how these dimensions appear in actual institutional practices at Institut Agama Islam Daruttaqwa Gresik. Public trust is treated as a related perception that requires supporting evidence; transparency alone cannot establish that trust has increased without examining how prospective students interpret their experiences.

Table 1. Reported Transparency of Student Admissions Services

Finding	Number of Informants	Percentage
Admissions services considered transparent	88	88%
Digital services and response speed require improvement	12	12%
Total	100	100%

Table 2. Annual Evaluation of Student Admissions

Finding	Number of Informants	Percentage
Admissions evaluation conducted annually	79	79%
Evaluation or follow-up considered insufficient	21	21%
Total	100	100%

Table 3. Direct Observation Indicators for Digital Admissions Transparency

Observation Aspect	Indicator	Evidence to Examine
Information accessibility	Admissions information is accessible through official digital channels	Official website and social media publications

Information consistency	Requirements, fees, schedules, and announcements are consistent across channels.	Comparison of published information
Registration procedures	Instructions and registration stages are clearly presented	Online registration pages and procedural guidance
Selection transparency	Selection procedures and results are communicated clearly	Official selection announcements and published procedures
Responsiveness	Questions from prospective students receive appropriate responses	Observed interactions and available communication records
Accountability	Information updates and corrections can be traced	Publication dates, revised announcements, and documented updates

The reported findings indicate that 88% of informants perceived admissions services as transparent, whereas 12% identified shortcomings in digital services and response speed. In addition, 79% reported annual admissions evaluations, while 21% indicated that evaluation or follow-up remained insufficient. These results suggest generally favourable perceptions of admissions transparency alongside identifiable opportunities for improvement. Direct observation should examine whether official digital channels provide accessible information, whether announcements remain consistent across platforms, and whether communication practices support prospective students' understanding of admissions procedures. The figures describe informants' perceptions; they do not independently demonstrate that transparency has caused increased public trust.

Three patterns emerge from the available data. First, positive assessments predominate, with 88% of informants considering admissions services transparent. Second, digital responsiveness remains an area needing attention, as 12% identified service-related shortcomings. Third, 79% of informants said the annual evaluation process appears established, although 21% noted limitations in evaluation or follow-up. Together, these patterns suggest that favourable assessments coexist with potential implementation weaknesses. Direct observation can clarify whether these concerns correspond to inconsistencies in published information, accessibility barriers, delayed responses, or insufficiently documented updates. Such conclusions should be drawn only when supported by verified observational evidence.

Islamic Quality Culture and Institutional Accountability

In this study, Islamic quality culture and institutional accountability refer to the extent to which Islamic ethical values are reflected in institutional quality assurance practices. These values include *amanah* (trustworthiness), honesty, discipline, responsibility, service, and cooperation. Institutional accountability is understood through the implementation of quality standards, coordination among academic personnel, evaluation procedures, and follow-up actions. At Institut Agama Islam Daruttaqwa Gresik, the available data indicate that Islamic quality culture has been established, although further strengthening remains necessary. Photographic documentation of quality meetings, academic development activities, and coordination can illustrate these practices when supported by authentic institutional records.

The available data show that 82 out of 100 respondents (82%) indicated that Islamic quality culture had been established within the institution. Meanwhile, 18 respondents (18%) indicated that it still required strengthening. The proposed documentation framework identifies four relevant forms of evidence: quality evaluation meetings, academic community development, institutional coordination, and follow-up on evaluation findings. These activities may demonstrate how quality assurance is organised and implemented in institutional practice. However, photographs should be interpreted according to what they visibly establish, such as participation, meeting activities, or documented procedures, rather than being treated as conclusive evidence of internalised ethical values.

The findings indicate a predominantly positive assessment of Islamic quality culture, with 82% of available responses indicating it is established and 18% identifying the need for further improvement. This distribution suggests that Islamic values and quality assurance practices are perceived as established by most respondents, although their implementation may not yet be consistent across all institutional activities. The main analytical pattern concerns the relationship between ethical commitments and organisational accountability. Quality meetings and coordination can provide evidence of institutional processes, while evaluation records and documented follow-up can clarify whether identified issues receive appropriate attention. Nevertheless, the photographs and records must be examined before conclusions about actual implementation or improvement can be confirmed.

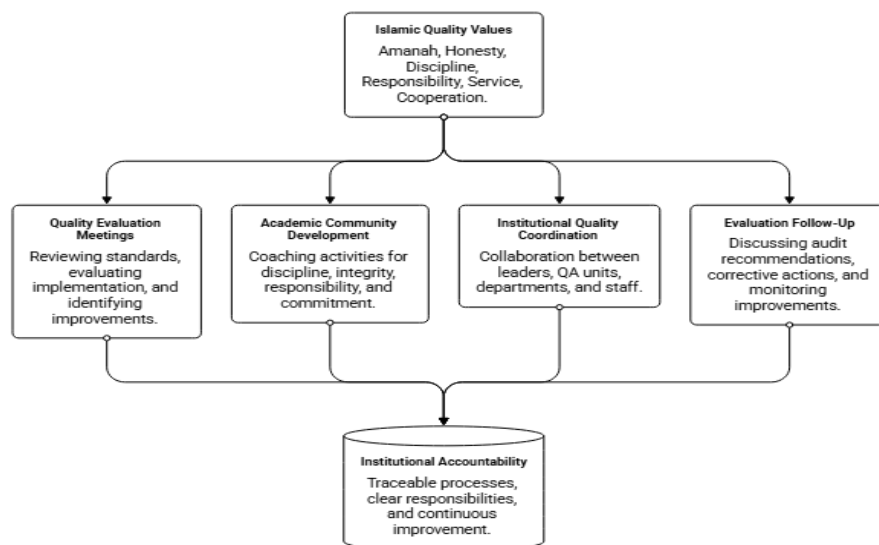


Figure 1. Islamic Quality Culture and Institutional Accountability Framework

The documentation can be organised into six analytical findings: the internalisation of Islamic values, the conduct of quality evaluation meetings, coordination among academic personnel, the clarification of institutional responsibilities, follow-up on internal quality audit recommendations, and the strengthening of continuous quality improvement. Together, these categories provide a structured basis for interpreting the relationship between Islamic quality

culture and institutional accountability. The available figures establish that 82% of responses assessed the culture positively, while 18% indicated that further strengthening was needed. The documented activities may help explain these assessments, provided that authentic photographs and supporting records are available. The analysis should distinguish clearly between documented activities and interpretations of their ethical or organisational significance.

Discussion

The discussion below connects the three research findings with relevant literature, then develops their theoretical and practical implications. The interpretation distinguishes reported perceptions from evidence that still requires confirmation through authentic interviews, direct observations, and institutional documentation. The first finding, concerning the PPEPP cycle, supports the view that internal quality assurance should operate as a continuous improvement mechanism rather than a collection of administrative procedures. Türkel (2023) and Sahin et al. (2024) discuss the role of internal quality assurance in Indonesian higher education, while Wassem et al. (2024) examine its implementation as an effort to improve institutional quality. The present findings align with this orientation: 86% of informants reported that PPEPP had been implemented, while 14% identified weaknesses, particularly in control and follow-up. This distinction is important because conducting evaluations does not automatically ensure corrective action. The findings therefore highlight implementation consistency as a key condition for translating quality standards into sustained institutional improvement.

The second finding concerns transparency in digital admissions and public trust. The reported 88% positive assessment suggests that most informants regarded admissions services as transparent, although 12% identified shortcomings in digital services and response speed. This finding also supports examination of transparency on Indonesian higher education websites, which emphasises the role of institutional digital communication in providing information to stakeholders (Herlina, 2024; Widiyari et al., 2024). Research on communication channels for prospective students also highlights the importance of accessible admissions information across different platforms. However, the present findings add a relevant qualification: perceived transparency does not, on its own, demonstrate public trust. The 79% reporting annual evaluations, alongside 21% identifying insufficient follow-up, further suggests that transparent communication requires regular evaluation and responsive corrective measures.

The third finding links Islamic quality culture with institutional accountability. The reported 82% positive assessment indicates that most respondents perceived Islamic quality values as established, while 18% considered further strengthening necessary. This pattern aligns with emerging scholarship linking *amanah*, *itqan*, and ethical responsibility to quality management in Islamic education (Nisa' et al., 2024; Putri et al., 2026). This finding contributes by treating Islamic values not merely as institutional ideals but as principles that should inform everyday quality assurance practices. Nevertheless, the numerical distribution establishes respondents' assessments rather than independently proving ethical internalisation. Photographs of evaluation meetings, coordination

activities, and follow-up procedures can substantiate the existence of institutional processes, while supporting records are needed to determine whether these processes demonstrate consistent accountability (Egarter et al., 2021; Tempesta et al., 2022).

Theoretically, these findings suggest that internal quality assurance, digital transparency, and Islamic quality culture are best understood as interdependent dimensions of institutional governance. PPEPP provides the procedural structure, digital communication supports information accessibility, and Islamic ethical values establish the normative orientation for responsible implementation. Their integration offers a framework for examining quality beyond administrative compliance, while recognising that the relationships among these dimensions require further empirical testing. The study contributes by bringing these three dimensions together within one institutional context, highlighting the connection between formal quality mechanisms, public-facing communication, and ethical responsibility. This integrated perspective provides a basis for developing a more context-sensitive understanding of quality governance in Islamic higher education.

Practically, the findings indicate that Institut Agama Islam Daruttaqwa Gresik could strengthen quality governance by clarifying responsibility for audit recommendations, documenting corrective actions, improving the consistency of digital admissions information, and evaluating the responsiveness of admissions services. Institutional leaders and quality assurance teams could establish follow-up records that identify each recommendation, its responsible unit, completion status, and review date. Admissions administrators could periodically check the accuracy and accessibility of published requirements, schedules, and selection announcements. Meanwhile, authentic documentation of meetings and coordination should be retained as evidence of institutional processes. These measures would help connect evaluation with action and ethical commitments with observable practice, without assuming that reported positive assessments alone establish effectiveness or increased public trust.

CONCLUSION

The study demonstrates that internal quality assurance, digital admissions transparency, and Islamic quality culture are interconnected dimensions of institutional governance at Institut Agama Islam Daruttaqwa Gresik. The findings indicate that 86% of informants reported PPEPP implementation, 88% perceived admissions services as transparent, and 82% considered Islamic quality culture established. However, weaknesses in corrective-action follow-up, digital responsiveness, and consistent quality practices remain. The study contributes an integrated perspective connecting procedural quality assurance, public-facing communication, and Islamic ethical accountability. Its limitations include reliance on reported assessments and the need to verify observational and documentary evidence. Future research should examine multiple institutions and empirically test relationships between transparency, accountability, and public trust.

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CONFLICTS OF INTEREST

The author declares no conflict of interest related to this study.

USE OF ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE (AI)-ASSISTED TECHNOLOGY

During the preparation of this manuscript, AI-assisted technology was used to support language refinement, structural organisation, and academic writing improvement. The author critically reviewed, revised, and validated all AI-assisted outputs. The author takes full responsibility for the manuscript's accuracy, originality, integrity, and final content.

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