

Mission Quality Assurance Virtual Training and Certification Using the NASA Academy of Aerospace Quality

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ABSTRACT

Many educational entities are involved in developing space bound payloads. These payloads are designed, constructed and tested under diverse conditions and by largely “amateur” teams. The Academy of Aerospace Quality (AAQ) is an open-access online resource that provides quality assurance training to students and faculty involved in payload projects. AAQ’s goal is to provide assistance in assuring that payloads are “successful” from a quality standpoint. The NASA AAQ is also being used by other, non-academic entities. This paper describes the resources and functions available on the AAQ website and how they can be used by project teams to support the training of their members on quality assurance topics.

INTRODUCTION

The number of small space payload projects by academic institutions has grown significantly over the past several years, and the trends seem to indicate that this growth will continue for the foreseeable future¹. This growth has also been fueled by the support provided by rideshare programs such as NASA’s ELaNa program². These academic projects have characteristics unique to them, such that Swartwout has proposed placing them in a category of their own: “University-class spacecraft.”³ He identifies the following features:

1. It is a functional spacecraft, rather than merely a payload instrument or component.
2. Untrained personnel such as students perform a significant amount of design decisions, integration and testing, and flight operations.
3. The training of students is as important (if not more) than the mission itself.

From these features it becomes quickly apparent that the teams involved in these types of projects are often composed mostly of “amateurs” with little, if any, quality assurance training. In addition, these payload projects are designed, constructed, and tested under very diverse conditions, many of which are not favorable to supporting quality assurance. And though the vast majority of such projects are developed in universities by undergraduate and graduate students, they are now being developed in high schools and even middle and elementary schools.⁴

Swartwout’s analyses about the success and failure rates of university-class spacecraft reveal a mission failure rate close to 40%⁵. He suggests that these failures are often due to underestimating the complexity of even “simple” spacecraft which leads to schedule slips in development and inadequate allocation of resources for testing. Additionally, there is a lack of knowledge of critical best-practices for design, assembly, integration and testing that are known to more seasoned spacecraft developers.⁶

In response to these issues, NASA proposed an open-access training platform developed and run by an academic team (namely, the authors of this paper at Auburn University) that facilitates and supports academic teams learning about quality assurance and the best-practices used in the aerospace industry. The result is the NASA Academy of Aerospace Quality (AAQ). This paper introduces the NASA AAQ and briefly describes the resources available through it.

WHAT IS THE NASA ACADEMY OF AEROSPACE QUALITY (AAQ)?

The NASA AAQ is an open-access internet-based academy providing quality assurance training aimed at students and faculty at all educational levels involved in planning, designing, building, launching and operating payload projects for space. These include Cube Sats, Small Sats, Nano Sats, International Space Station, high altitude balloons, rockets, and more. The NASA AAQ URL is <http://aaq.auburn.edu>.

The academy comprises 50+ interactive, multi-media educational courses for all aspects of quality assurance

necessary to ensure mission success. Furthermore, there is a comprehensive list of acronyms and terms, and a searchable list of relevant standards with their links.

NASA AAQ also provides a forum and community for networking and sharing of events, lessons-learned and case studies, and sponsors annual workshops.

The most recent development of the site adds a virtual training and certification system. Using this system, users of the site can obtain a certificate of completion for the courses and/or curricula they register for and successfully complete. Both the content and the passing criteria for the courses and curricula will be discussed in the section describing the Academy in greater detail.

THE NASA AAQ TEAM

The NASA AAQ is sponsored and led by NASA Headquarters Office of Safety and Mission Assurance (OSMA), with participation from the NASA Safety Center and from Marshall Space Flight Center. The project is directed from NASA headquarters by Jeannette Plante, from Glenn by Mike Kelly, and from Marshall by Julie Billbrey.

Auburn University leads development and deployment of the website. Dr. Alice E. Smith and Dr. Jeffrey S. Smith are the principal investigators from Auburn.

AAQ Expert User group

A group of experts from a variety of academic and non-academic institutions, all of whom work in space payload projects, offers guidance and expertise to NASA AAQ. They are expert users who evaluate and give feedback on the content of the site. The current NASA AAQ expert users are listed in Table 1:

Table 1: AAQ Expert Users

Name	Institution
Alex "Sandy" Antunes	Capitol Technology University
Luke Becker	Johns Hopkins University
Jonathan Black	Virginia Tech
Paul Darby	University of Louisiana – Lafayette
Derek Garcia	Jet Propulsion Lab
Andy Hollerman	University of Louisiana - Lafayette
Iqbal Shareef	Bradley University
Bob Vermillion	RMV Technology Group LLC

The group also meets about once a year to discuss future directions for the project.

THE ACADEMY

The AAQ is built around *courses* and *curricula*. A course corresponds to a quality assurance topic, while a curriculum encompasses multiple related courses.

The courses covered in the academy are listed in Table 2.

Table 2: AAQ Courses

Acceptance Data Package (ADP)
Additive Manufacturing
Commercial Off-the-Shelf (COTS)
Configuration Management
Connectors
Continuous Improvement
Control Charts and Process Capability
Corrective Action and Root Cause Analysis
Counterfeit Parts
Design of Experiments (DOE)
Documentation Management
Electrostatic Discharge (ESD)
Failure Mode and Effects Analysis (FMEA)
Fasteners
Fiber Optics
Flammability
Foreign Object Debris (FOD)
Fracture Critical
IEEE Parts
Inferential Statistics
Inspection Control
International Traffic in Arms Regulations (ITAR)
Introduction to the NASA Quality Program
Mechanical Joint Assembly
Mechanical Parts
Metrology
Micro-Electrical-Mechanical Parts (MEMs)
Non-Destructive Evaluation (NDE)
Offgassing
Packaging and Delivery
Parts Reuse
Plastic Encapsulated Microcircuits (PEMs)
Preloading
Problem Solving
Process Control
Quality Planning
Records Management
Regression Analysis
Risk Management for Quality Assurance

Robust Design
Shelf-Life Control
Software Assurance
Soldering
Staking, Bonding, and Conformal Coating
Standards
Statistics with Excel
Supplier Audit
Systems Engineering
Welding
Wire Crimping and Harness
Workmanship

There are currently two test curricula that were developed by the expert user group. These are listed in Table 3.

Table 3: AAQ Curricula

Curriculum	Courses Included
Project Management	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Configuration Management • Continuous Improvement • Inspection Control • International Traffic in Arms Regulations (ITAR) • Risk Management for Quality Assurance • Standards
Technical	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Additive Manufacturing • Commercial Off-the-Shelf (COTS) • Electrostatic Discharge (ESD) • Software Assurance • Soldering • Workmanship

WEBSITE OVERVIEW

Site Structure

The basic content structure of the site is as follows: for each quality assurance topic there is a course. A course contains different training resources. A curriculum groups multiple courses.

A course is comprised of different types of training resources. The course is completed when the student works through these resources. Courses are publicly available for any visitor to the AAQ site, though only those signed up for the course can receive a certificate of completion.

The available training resources include tutorials, quizzes, and other relevant materials such as standards and lessons learned.

Tutorials form the backbone of a course. They expose students to the topic and can be consulted as needed. Tutorials have been developed by the NASA AAQ team using information from NASA, from other subject matter experts and gathered from the public domain. References are included at the end of each tutorial, in case the student wishes to learn more about the topic.

Quizzes are used to test a user’s mastery of the topic. Quizzes include a variety of types of questions, including multiple choice questions, true and false, fill in the blank, among others. These are also developed by the NASA AAQ team in conjunction with the expert users and other subject matter experts.

A course can include other types of materials that are optional for the completion of the course. These include lessons learned, case studies, and relevant NASA standards.

A curriculum consists of a group of courses. Curricula can be developed by the NASA AAQ team and offered to the general public, or (in the future) they can be created by a team leader and offered only to his or her students. Visitors can access the publicly available curricula but only students can sign up for them and receive a certificate of completion.

User Categories

The NASA AAQ website has two broad categories of users: Non-registered and registered users. Non-registered users are casual visitors to the site. These have access to most of the content of the site, including the tutorials and quizzes that form part of a course, but they cannot sign up for courses and curricula and, hence, cannot receive certificates of completion. Registered users are further divided into two categories: students and team leaders. Students can sign up for courses and curricula and receive certificates. Team leaders can administer groups of students and consult their students’ performances in the courses and curricula they are signed up for. In a future iteration of the project, team leaders will also be able to create and administer their own curricula.

Website walkthrough

The main page for the NASA AAQ website is shown in Figure 1. From this page, users access all the publicly available content of the site. Registered users can sign into the NASA AAQ system to gain access to additional functionality.

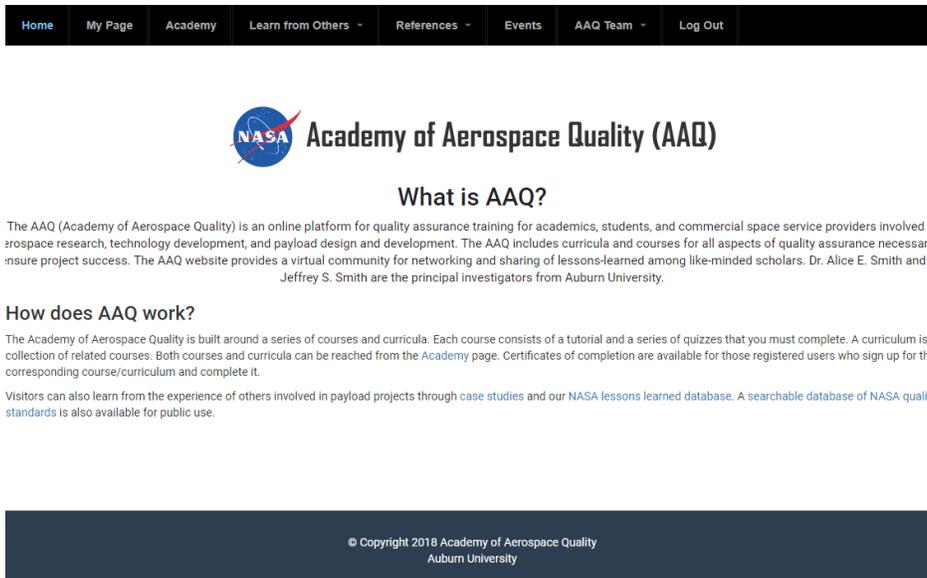


Figure 1: NASA AAQ Main Page

Signed in users also have access to a personalized “My Page” where they can view the courses and curricula they have signed up for, as well as consult their current

progress and results. Team leaders, in addition to their own progress and results, can also view their students’ results from this page.

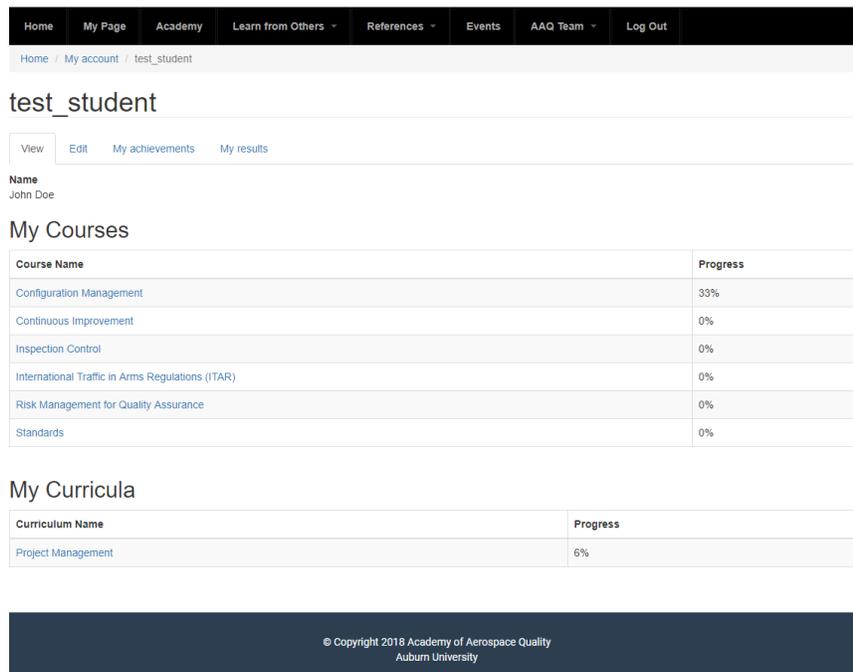


Figure 2: Personalized My Page

The Academy page (shown in Figure 3) lists all the courses and curricula available on the NASA AAQ website. Clicking on the name of a course or curriculum

will take the user to the corresponding course/curriculum’s main page.

Home	Academy	Learn from Others	References	Events	AAQ Team	Login
Home / Academy						
<h2>Academy</h2>						
The AAQ consists of courses and curricula. Curricula group several related courses. To register to a course or a curriculum, go to its main page and click on "Register to this Course" or "Register to this Curriculum".						
<h3>Available Courses</h3>						
Acceptance Data Package (ADP)						
Additive Manufacturing						
Commercial Off-the-Shelf (COTS)						
Configuration Management						
Connectors						
Continuous Improvement						
Control Charts and Process Capability						
Corrective Action and Root Cause Analysis						
Counterfeit Parts						
Design of Experiments (DOE)						
Documentation Management						
Electrostatic Discharge (ESD)						
Failure Mode and Effects Analysis (FMEA)						
Fasteners						
Fiber Optics						
Flammability						
Foreign Object Debris (FOD)						
Fracture Critical						
IEEE Parts						

Figure 3: Course and Curricula Listing

An example of a course’s main page is shown in Figure 4 (for the Additive Manufacturing course). Each course’s main page introduces the course and lists the learning materials (usually tutorials and quizzes) that are available for it. Registered users have the additional

option of signing up for the course. Users that have signed up for the course are also shown their current status in the course. Registered users who have completed the course, can access and download their certificate of completion.

Home	Academy	Learn from Others	References	Events	AAQ Team	Login
Home / Additive Manufacturing						
<h2>Learning materials</h2>		<h1>Additive Manufacturing</h1>				
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Additive Manufacturing Tutorial Additive Manufacturing Quiz 1 		<p>Register for this course</p> <h2>Objective</h2> <p>The purpose of this module is to provide the reader with an overview of the fundamentals of Additive Manufacturing, implications on industry and also the applications on the Aerospace field. During the content of this module, an introductory overview of what the most important aspects of Additive Manufacturing are presented as well as a comparison with traditional manufacturing methods. A brief evolution of AM (<i>Additive Manufacturing</i>) technologies, with special focus on 3D Printing, is also described with the methods and materials used in today’s industry and Aerospace applications.</p> <p>After completion of the module, the reader should be aware of the main advantage and difficulties of Additive Manufacturing, especially 3D Printing, in today’s industry and aerospace applications. The reader should also have an understanding of some of the most important AM methods and materials that are commonly used. Also the reader will have a grasp on the great potentials that this technology holds for the future.</p> <p>Required to complete this course</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Additive Manufacturing Tutorial Additive Manufacturing Quiz 1 				
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Figure 4: Course Main Page

As mentioned previously, a course consists of a series of learning materials that need to be completed. The learning materials include tutorials and quizzes. Tutorials provide visitors with the required background

on the topic and include technical information as well as interactive and multimedia contents. The figures below show screenshots of an NASA AAQ tutorial and an example of the interactive content available in a tutorial.

Home Academy Learn from Others References Events AAQ Team Login

Home / FMEA Tutorial / Take

FMEA Tutorial

View Take

Step 4 of 6
Log in to post comments

Summary

Failures of any kind are not tolerated in today's global economy. Identifying and eliminating - or reducing - them as early as possible saves money and time, besides improving the quality and reliability of a product.

Failure Modes and Effects Analysis (FMEA) is a methodology for analyzing potential reliability problems early in the development cycle where it is easier to take actions to overcome these issues.

This methodology is used to identify potential failure modes, determine their effect on the operation of the product, and identify actions to mitigate the failures. A crucial step is anticipating what might go wrong with a product.

There are several benefits of using FMEA, such as:

- Improves product/process reliability and quality;
- Increases customer satisfaction;
- Early identification and elimination of potential product/process failure modes;
- Emphasizes problem prevention;
- Minimizes late changes and associated cost.

The most known and used types of FMEA are the Design FMEA (DFMEA) and the Process FMEA (PFMEA). The DFMEA focuses on components and subsystems. On the other hand, the PFMEA focuses on manufacturing and assembly processes.

The basic steps to perform a FMEA are:

- Assemble the team;
- Establish the ground rules;
- Gather and review relevant information;
- Identify the item(s) or process(es) to be analyzed;
- Identify the function(s), failure(s), effect(s), cause(s) and control(s) for each item or process to be analyzed;
- Evaluate the risk associated with the issues identified by the analysis;
- Prioritize and assign corrective actions;
- Perform corrective actions and re-evaluate risk;
- Distribute, review and update the analysis, as appropriate.

The most common method to evaluate the risk is the Risk Priority Number (RPN), calculated multiplying the severity, occurrence and detection.

Severity (SEV) is a rating of the severity of each potential failure effect. Occurrence (OCC) is a rating of the likelihood of occurrence for each potential failure cause. Detection (DET) is a rating of the likelihood of detecting the failure cause.

Figure 5: NASA AAQ Tutorial

It's up to you: Drag and drop the boxes in their correct places on FMEA matrix.

Drag and drop

Failure Mode and Effects Analysis (FMEA)

Item	Function	Failure	Effect	SEV	Cause	OCC	DET	RPN
Battery				8		5	1	40

Battery plates are shorted

System fails to operate

Fails to provide adequate power

Provide adequate relay voltage

Figure 6: Interactive Content inside a Tutorial

Quizzes allow visitors to test their knowledge of the subject. Passing these is a required step in completing a course. Results from quizzes taken by registered users are stored in the site's database and can be consulted by

team leaders. Quiz questions vary in type and include multiple choice, true or false, fill in the blanks, and other familiar types of questions. Figure 7 is a screenshot of a quiz question found on the NASA AAQ website.

Home Academy Learn from Others References Events AAQ Team Login

Home / Inferential Statistics Quiz 01 / Take

Inferential Statistics Quiz 01

View Take

Step 2 of 15
 Suppose you have dependent samples from two normal populations with known variances and want to see if their means are equal or not. What kind of interval would you use?

CI for the difference of two proportions.

CI for the ratio of two variances.

CI for the difference of two means.

CI for the difference of two means (paired observations).

Figure 7: NASA AAQ Quiz

Besides the courses and curricula, the AAQ website also includes other sources of useful information for those involved in small payload projects. Of particular significance is the NASA Standards Search App. This app allows users to search and filter through a list of over 350 NASA standards, and access the documents directly

from NASA's websites (see Figure 8). Another valuable tool is the lessons learned database, which contains over 120 lessons learned curated from NASA's databases which have particular relevance to the topics contained in NASA AAQ (see Figure 9).

Additive Manufacturing

[Additive Manufacturing - General Principles - Part 3: Main Characteristics and Corresponding test methods](#)

Document ID:
 ISO 17296-3:2014
 ISO 17296-3:2014 covers the principal requirements applied to testing of parts manufactured by additive manufacturing processes. It specifies main quality characteristics of parts, specifies appropriate test procedures, and recommends the scope and content of test and supply agreements. ISO 17296-3:2014 is aimed at machine manufacturers, feedstock suppliers, machine users, part providers, and customers to facilitate the communication on main quality characteristics. It applies wherever additive manufacturing processes are used.
http://www.iso.org/iso/catalogue_detail.htm?csnumber=61627
 Additive Manufacturing

[Additive Manufacturing - General Principles - Part 4: Overview of Data Processing](#)

Document ID:
 ISO 17296-4:2014
 ISO 17296-4:2014 covers the principal considerations which apply to data exchange for additive manufacturing. It specifies terms and definitions which enable information to be exchanged describing geometries or parts such that they can be additively manufactured. The data exchange method outlines file type, data enclosed formatting of such data and what this can be used for. ISO 17296-4:2014 enables a suitable format for data exchange to be specified, describes the existing developments for additive manufacturing of 3D geometries, outlines existing file formats used as part of the existing developments, and enables understanding of necessary features for data exchange for adopters of the International Standard. ISO 17296-4:2014 is aimed at users and producers of additive manufacturing processes and associated software systems. It applies wherever additive processes are used, and to the following fields in particular: production of additive manufacturing systems and equipment including software; software engineers involved in CAD/CAE systems; reverse engineering systems developers; test bodies wishing to compare requested and actual geometries.
http://www.iso.org/iso/catalogue_detail.htm?csnumber=61628
 Additive Manufacturing

[Standard Terminology for Additive Manufacturing - Coordinate Systems and Test Methodologies](#)

Document ID:
 ISO/ASTM 52921:2013
 ISO/ASTM 52921:2013 includes terms, definitions of terms, descriptions of terms, nomenclature, and acronyms associated with coordinate systems and testing methodologies for additive manufacturing (AM) technologies in an effort to standardize terminology used by AM users, producers, researchers, educators, press/media, and others, particularly when reporting results from testing of parts made on AM systems. Terms included cover definitions for machines/systems and their coordinate systems plus the location and orientation of parts. It is intended, where possible, to be compliant with ISO 841 and to clarify the specific adaptation of those principles to additive manufacturing.
http://www.iso.org/iso/catalogue_detail.htm?csnumber=61944
 Additive Manufacturing

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 ... next >

Figure 8: NASA Standards Search App

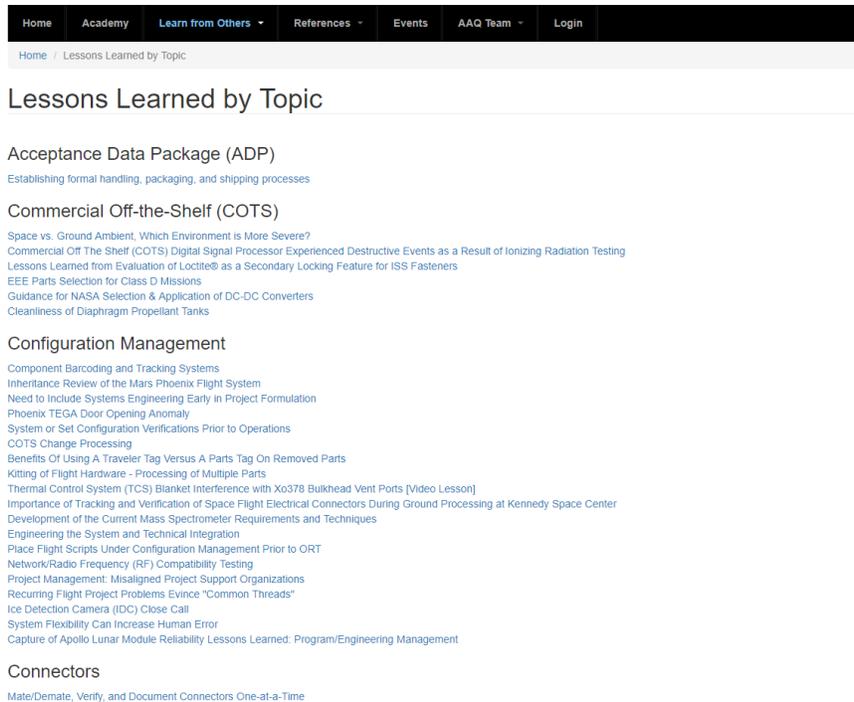


Figure 9: Lessons Learned Database

The NASA AAQ holds an annual (subject to available funding) workshop where those involved with academic space payload projects can meet and exchange experiences and best-practices. The oral and poster presentations from these workshops as well as photos are available on the “Events” page of the NASA AAQ site.

CONCLUSIONS

The NASA AAQ represents a valuable resource for all those involved in the development of academic space load projects. It can be used either as a simple tool for learning about some specific quality assurance topic, or as a comprehensive training platform where team members can complete certain required training curricula and team leaders can keep track of their student’s progress. In addition, NASA AAQ’s annual workshops offer a forum where those involved in these types of projects can meet and learn from others. This is an ongoing project so not all of the courses are fully developed but the NASA AAQ grows in content and functionality every year.

Acknowledgments

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