GUIDELINES FOR ESTABLISHMENT OF QUALITY ASSURANCE SYSTEMS

1. Purpose of the Guidelines

The purpose of the guidelines is to provide an overview of a quality assurance system responsive to the needs of stakeholders. It addresses the elements making up the system. As per the Education and Training (Miscellaneous Provisions Bill), April 2005, institutions endeavouring to offer post-secondary education and training should subject themselves to quality control measures administered by the Tertiary Education Commission. Providers of education have the responsibility to assure stakeholders and the public at large that the education and training they are providing are of a respectable quality which is accepted and recognised by employers and other educational institutions nationally, regionally and internationally. In this respect, it is their foremost duty to consult all the parties concerned and affected by their operations towards ensuring that their programmes meet international norms and standards. They will be called upon to provide tangible evidence to demonstrate that they have taken necessary steps to meet the above requirements. To be able to undertake such activities, the institutions must put in place credible and reliable quality assurance systems.

2. Quality Assurance System

The quality assurance system should be designed to look into the quality of the institution's educational provision and to inform stakeholders on the effectiveness of the system put in place towards ensuring and improving quality. Such a system should be developed collectively through the participation of key players of the institution. Ideally they should work towards identifying the relevant areas that need addressing by the system as the needs would vary with size and complexity of the institution in consideration.

The backbone of a sound quality assurance system is the institution's mission statement. The institution should articulate the direction it should take, but at the same time ensure that the mission is in keeping with the socio-economic needs of Mauritius . Following form that, the goals and objectives also should be compatible with the mission. In practice it means that institutions have to demonstrate that the programmes they intend to offer are needed by employers and that they add value to the tertiary education system. Thus, while it can be very tempting to offer programmes in specific fields, the institution should consider whether their graduates are employable and if not, then find out the reasons and reconsider offering the programme proposed.

Most private institutions would be more concerned with assuring quality in teaching and learning and in this respect the system should focus on ways and means of maintaining and enhancing quality in this domain. For a comprehensive list of requirements for purposes of quality assurance, institutions are referred to the criteria applicable for accreditation.

The basic structure for setting up a quality assurance system consists of an office/unit of quality assurance which should be serviced by someone who has overall responsibility for quality assurance in the institution. He/She is someone at senior level of management and should be conversant with quality assurance procedures. He/She should set up a co-ordinating committee in which the key players are present. In this committee, all matters concerning the quality issues should be discussed and a systematic approach of addressing them should be developed. As an example, taking the case of

library, the person responsible for this resource facility should have a good understanding of how to support teaching and learning through providing the necessary resources. He should identify the resources and plan appropriately such that lecturers and students have ready access to the broad range of resources required. They could include books, reference materials, journals, IT facilities such as access to internet. Books should be in sufficient quantity to serve the needs of the learners. Needless to mention that they should be up to date and reflect the texts recommended for specific courses/programmes. Thus, it is clear that a librarian should be aware of the needs of all the courses/programmes on offer and respond appropriately. Resources should be present before commencement of a programme. The accreditation panel should satisfy itself that the requisite resources are present and access to them is of a reasonable quality deemed appropriate to meet the needs of learners and lecturers alike.

A good way of proceeding with the identification of needs is through the following questions:

- What are you trying to do?
- Why are you trying to do it?
- How are you trying to do it?
- Why are you doing it that way?
- Why do you think that is the best way of doing it?
- How do you know it works
- How do you improve it?

By systematically going through these questions, one can fine tune the quality assurance system.

It should be borne in mind that a systematic approach requires all processes to be accurately documented. This means that all meetings should be minuted and they should be made available for verification purposes at the time of an external audit/assessment or accreditation.

3. **Ownership and Accessibility of the Quality Assurance System**

The quality assurance system is designed to guide staff and students alike of the way quality is managed at the institution. Therefore is necessary to involve as many staff as possible as well as student representatives. All staff should be conversant with the procedures and they should own the system. The document should be available at all times and should be accessible by all stakeholders. In the interest of transparency, it is recommended that it is put on the institution's web site.

4. **What should the Quality Assurance System Cover?**

Where the institution is subject to accreditation of programmes, the system should aim to cover the following:

4.1 **Mission**

4.1.1 Institution has articulated its mission which seeks to respond positively to socio-economic needs of Mauritius

4.1.2 Aims and Objectives are realistic and time bound

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4.1.3 A strategic plan with short term and long term goals is in evidence

4.2 Quality Management System

4.2.1 A document describing the quality assurance system, policy and responsibility

4.2.2 Quality assurance in the provision/delivery of programmes of study

4.2.3 Review of courses/programmes

4.2.4 Quality assurance in teaching, learning and communications

4.2.5 Quality assurance in relation to academic staff – staff appointment procedures, staff development and training, staff appraisal, promotion, evaluation of teaching quality by staff, analysis and responding to evaluation of teaching quality, etc

4.2.6 Quality assurance in assessments: internal and external moderation, external examiners, appointment of external examiners, feedback of external examiners on student performance and on programmes.

4.2.7 Student evaluation of teaching programmes etc. Views of professional bodies and student and staff liaison committees

4.2.8 Strengths and weaknesses identified and plans for dealing with the problems

4.2.9 Future developments

4.3 Resources

4.3.1 Physical and financial: policy and quantitative and qualitative data

4.3.2 Human: numbers, qualifications, experiences, age, equal opportunities. Links with employers and professions. Support staff numbers, qualifications and roles

4.3.3 Library/learning resource centre: qualitative and qualitative data, policy, responsibilities and links between library, subject specialist and teaching staff

4.3.4 Welfare: facilities and policy

4.4 Students

4.4.1 Enrolment, registration, admissions, entry qualifications, etc

4.4.2 Equal opportunities, access, mature students, etc

4.4.3 Numbers on full time and part time/ flexible mode or distance education by gender, age programme and cohort

4.4.4 Attendance, dropout rates per programme per cohort and their reasons, and completion

4.4.5 Pass rate, awards, value added

4.5 Feedback from Students

4.5.1 Views and feedback from students on the quality of programmes and their delivery, including effectiveness of teaching

4.5.2 Recommendations from staff/students meetings, course/programme committees etc

4.5.3 Tracer studies, including employment within six months of qualifying, etc.

Once the quality assurance system is in place the institution's Quality Assurance Officer should see to it that it is implemented on an ongoing basis. Institutions are expected to carry out periodic internal audits to assess the effectiveness of the system and seek ways to improve on it to better meet the needs of learners. Continuous improvement should be built into the system. The processes and outcome of the internal audits should be documented and made available when required by the appointed quality assurance agency.