Inter-University Council for East Africa

A ROAD MAP TO QUALITY

Handbook for Quality Assurance in Higher Education

Revised and Combined Volume 1 & 2:
Guidelines for Internal and External Programme Assessment

DAAD Deutscher Akademischer Austausch Dienst
German Academic Exchange Service

HRK German Rectors' Conference

Inter-University Council for East Africa

A Road Map to Quality

Handbook for Quality Assurance in Higher Education

Combined Volume 1& 2: Guidelines for Internal and External Programme Assessment

First Edition 2010

FOREWORD

Higher education is considered to play a unique role in East African regional co-operation. This is because of the history of university education in the three pioneer universities of Makerere in Uganda, Nairobi in Kenya and Dar es Salaam in Tanzania. Following the collapse of the former East African Community in 1977, these universities continued to cooperate in a number of ways under the umbrella of the Inter-University Council for East Africa. Recognized as one of the surviving institutions of the East African Community, the IUCEA has assumed a broader role as a building block for sustainable regional integration.

Many more universities have now been established, and IUCEA has registered an upward trend in its membership to the current number of over 110. The number is expected to increase significantly with the admission of Rwanda and Burundi as Partner States in the East African Community. Based on this growth, the effort to harmonize Quality Assurance in Higher Education in the region is paramount. This effort is being pursued in response to the realization of the importance of higher education to the economies of the East African countries on one hand and the ever evolving multiple stakeholder community on the other. It is, therefore, of great importance that the development of competent and adequate human resources through Quality Assurance in higher education in East Africa is harmonized.

Realizing the importance of regionally harmonized Quality Assurance Systems, the IUCEA in collaboration with development partners particularly the German Academic Exchange Services (DAAD) and the Germany Rectors' Conference (HRK) in the frame of their joint Higher Education Management support programme referred to as "Dialogue on Innovative Higher Education Strategies (DIES)" started to work on this matter through a consensus process involving representatives of the higher education commissions and councils in the region, namely; the then Commission for Higher Education (CHE) now Commission for University Education (CUE), Kenya, Tanzania Commission for Universities (TCU), Tanzania and National Council for Higher Education (NCHE), Uganda. Consequently, a number of Quality Assurance meetings and workshops took place at country and regional levels in a bid to map out a strategy on how to come up with a Quality Assurance Handbook that would be a guide towards developing quality assurance systems and culture in universities in the East African Partner States. The aim is to ensure that all performance indicators and quality benchmarks are agreed upon and owned by all end-user institutions.

I would like to express my firm support for this initiative. It is gratifying that this initiative has taken a firm root during my term of tenure. The pilot phase of implementing this Handbook has produced significant experience for IUCEA and its member institutions to entrench a culture of quality in higher education in the region. Based on the experiences of training of quality assurance officers and peer reviewers and the process of conducting self-assessments and peer assessment of selected programmes in the region, this handbook has been revised extensively.

I would like to acknowledge the role played by Drs Ton Vroeijenstijn, a former quality expert of the Dutch Association of Universities, former steering group member of the European Network for Quality Assurance (ENQA), former Secretary of the International Network for Quality Assurance Agencies in Higher Education (INQAAHE) and international consultant in more than 30 countries, for his leadership and guidance in the development of this handbook. I would like also to acknowledge the contribution of Prof. Michael Mawa, founding President of the East African Higher Education Quality Assurance Network (EAQAN),

the President of the Ugandan University Quality Assurance Forum (UUQAF) and one of IUCEA's regional Quality Assurance experts in leading the process of the Handbook revision. I am also highly indebted to Dr. Achim Hopbach, the former President of ENQA for his invaluable contribution in bringing the latest international dimensions in quality assurance in the review process and all the East African members of the review team for their efforts. These include Prof. Mike Kuria, Dr. Muruke Masoud, Dr. Rispa Odongo and Dr. Cosam Joseph. I also thank members of IUCEA Standing Committee on Quality Assurance and the IUCEA staff in the Quality Assurance Unit for administering and implementation the activities, which have contributed to the development and review of this Handbook.

IUCEA also acknowledges the opportunity to benefit from DAAD's support out of recognition of its effective framework with DAAD and HRK, where they have as an example, successfully supported the creation of a Quality Assurance system in Higher education in Central America and Asia.

Given the voluntary nature of the process and the strategy as presented in the framework for implementation of this process, IUCEA hopes for successful outputs from implementation method that builds on the existing capacities. The varied nature and level of development of structures and capacities is behind the approach of "harmonization of Quality Assurance systems" adapted for this initiative in East Africa.

Prof. Mayunga H.H. Nkunya,
EXECUTIVE SECRETARY

STATEMENT FROM DAAD

The German Academic Exchange Service (DAAD) is a joint organisation of higher education institutions in Germany devoted to internationalising the academic system through scholarships, the promotion of international university cooperation and transnational education projects. The DAAD is the agency responsible for raising the international profile of the German higher education institutions and simultaneously serves as a "mediating organisation" in the foreign, European, development and higher education policies of the Federal Republic of Germany.

The DAAD and the German Rectors´ Conference (HRK), jointly organise the Higher Education capacity development programme DIES (Dialogue on Innovative Higher Education Strategies). The German Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development (BMZ) funds this initiative. As one of the key components, DIES supports the establishment of regional quality assurance activities in higher education in different parts of the world. One important DIES project on quality assurance was realised in the East African region, from 2007 to 2015. DAAD and HRK, together with IUCEA, the national commissions of the EAC member states and the higher education institutions of the region worked closely together to enhance quality assurance of study programmes, and, subsequently, the quality of the students' learning experience.

The development and particularly the use of the East African Quality Assurance Handbook, the "Road Map to Quality", were crucial for the success of the QA Initiative. The handbook has been disseminated and found appraisal well beyond East Africa, serving as an example and guideline. Jointly developed by an East African – European expert group, the handbook was revised and updated after five years of use. The revised and updated version of the East African Quality Assurance Handbook will surely prove to be valuable, and will continue to be an example of good practice.

We are convinced that this handbook truly reflects the spirit of our joint initiative. Its approach has gained the formal endorsement of the relevant official bodies. We are confident that the Road Map to Quality will continue to be the basis for your successful efforts for building the East African Higher Education Area.

Dr. Anette Pieper
Director
DAAD, Department for Projects

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INTRODUCTION TO THE HANDBOOK

Overview on the Handbook

The Handbook "A Road Map to Quality", is one of the outcomes of a Regional Quality Assurance Initiative in East Africa which begun in June 2006 by the Inter-University University Council for East Africa (UCEA) in collaboration with the German Academic Exchange Programme (DAAD). This quality assurance Handbook has been developed to provide guidelines for the establishment of Internal Quality Assurance (IQA) systems in higher education institutions in East Africa. The Handbook constitutes an important component of the East African Quality Assurance System.

In this framework of Regional Quality Assurance Initiative, IUCEA with the support of DAAD, organized a capacity building training programme on Internal Quality Assurance for Quality Assurance Coordinators (QAC) and Peers from higher education institutions and from National Commissions/Councils in East Africa. These trainings were followed by programme self-assessment and peer assessment exercises using the Handbook in selected universities in Burundi, Kenya, Rwanda, Tanzania and Uganda.

The Handbook "A Road Map to Quality" was originally published in 4 volumes. Each of the volumes aimed at a specific topic and a specific target group although they all form an integral part of the Handbook. The original Handbook had the following volumes:

Volume 1: Guidelines for Self- assessment at programme level, aims at the faculty/ department, to learn more about the quality of the programmes by means of an effective self-assessment.

Volume 2: Guidelines for external assessment, explains the procedures and processes for an external assessment at programme level. The specific target group is the external expert team, but also the faculty/department to be assessed.

Volume 3: Guidelines for Self-assessment at institutional level, aims especially at the central management of an institution and offers an instrument to discover more about the quality of the institution

Volume 4: The implementation of a Quality Assurance system, aims at all levels of an institution, but is especially useful for the Quality Assurance coordinators for the development and installation of an Internal Quality Assurance system.

The Handbook aims at supporting universities and other higher education institutions in East Africa in:

- Implementing good practices for quality assurance
- Applying the standards and criteria, as formulated by competent authorities
- Developing an adequate Internal Quality Assurance (IQA) system that fits international developments
- Discovering the quality of their own programmes by offering self-assessment instruments for IQA, the teaching/learning process, and for institutional aspects

Scope of the Current Volume

This current volume 1 combines the original volumes 1 and 2. The volume provides guidelines for both self-assessment and peer assessment at programme level. The volume is structured into four major sections:

Section 1, gives a general introduction to quality and quality assurance in higher education and the criteria and standards for determining the quality of programmes.

Section 2, provides guidelines for the organization and management of self-assessment at programme level.

Section 3, provides guidelines for the conduct of external or peer assessment of programmes.

Section 4, provides the assessment Tool for use in self-assessments and external assessment of programmes.

This current volume 1 on *Guidelines for Programme Assessment* offers the institution, faculties/departments and peer reviewers the tool to carry out self-assessment and external peer assessment of programmes respectively. The volume provides the criteria and standards for assessing the quality of programmes. In this context, a programme is defined as below:

> A programme is a **coherent set of courses** leading to the attainment of a certain award (bachelor degree or masters degree, etc). We may also call the programme a curriculum since it is an organised syllabus of study that students must be taught for a given award.
>
> A programme therefore, is a curriculum incorporating all matters such as academic staff requirement, duration of academic programmes, admission requirements, programme content requirements and assessment process requirements;
>
> In a programme, there are several courses or subjects that must be taken to fulfil the requirements of the programme.

The volume is written in a broad and general approach for discovering the quality of a programme. However, the tool can be adapted to the specific situation of a university and faculty/department as well as to the specific situation of the programme and its mode of delivery (classroom based or online). The content of the Handbook is based on experiences and good practices from all over the world and with specific consideration to developments in the region and in the different countries of East Africa.

From the East African region, the most important materials taken into account are the documents prepared by the National Councils and Commissions for Higher Education. They include, but not limited to the following:

- The "Handbook on processes, standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance" from the Commission for University Education (CUE), Kenya;
- "Quality Assurance and Accreditation System for Institutions and Programmes of Higher Education" from Tanzania Commission for Universities (TCU), Tanzania;

- "The Quality Assurance Framework for Uganda Universities" from the National Council for Higher Education (NCHE), Uganda;
- "Handbook for Academic Quality Assurance and Enhancement and the Maintenance of Standards in Higher Education" from the Higher Education Council (HEC) of Rwanda, 2007; and Burundi ?

Rationale for the Handbook Review

In May 2014, during a meeting of partners in Arusha, it was agreed that the process to review the Handbook for Quality Assurance in East Africa Volumes 1 and 2 be started. The review of this Handbook was deemed necessary to reflect changes in the East African Community, to capture experiences and lessons learnt during the pilot programme assessment in some higher education institutions in East Africa and to highlight new global dimensions in quality assurance.

It is important to note that the implementation of the Handbook "Road Map to Quality" had begun in 2007 as a pilot in selected institutions in the three original East African Countries of Kenya, Tanzania and Uganda. At that time, Burundi and Rwanda had not joined the East African Community. During the second and third phases of the pilot process, institutions from Burundi and Rwanda were too selected to implement the Handbook. These realities of regional expansion and integration of the higher education area in East Africa have occasioned the need for the Handbook revision.

Moreover, the experiences gained from the pilot phase of the Handbook implementation have motivated the revision. It was, for instance, observed that although the structure and content of Quality Assurance Handbook is cohesive, relevant and clear about the guidelines for self-assessment and external assessment at programme level, "*Volumes One and Two could be merged to produce one volume. They all deal with programme assessment. They share the introductory parts in every aspect. It is therefore, convenient to read them as one package for easy referencing*."

As a result of this major observation, the current volume of the Handbook has been structured to provide a comprehensive guide to programme assessment. The volume opens up with a general understanding about quality and quality assurance in order to have a shared idea about quality and quality assurance and to speak the same language. Therefore, Section 1 provides the reader with some ideas about quality and quality assurance, while Section 2 contains guidelines for a successful self-assessment process. Section 3 provides the guidelines for conducting external programme assessment and Section 4 gives the tool for programme assessment.

SECTION 1:

QUALITY AND QUALITY ASSURANCE IN HIGHER EDUCATION

1.1 Introduction

The word quality is often used without explaining what it is. However, everybody who thinks about quality and quality assurance is faced with the question: "What is quality?" When talking about quality and quality assurance, it is important to speak the same language. We must understand each other and we must have a shared idea about quality and quality assurance. In this section, some general ideas about quality and quality assurance will be explained.

1.2 What is quality?

Many discussions on quality start with a quote from the book Zen and the Art of Motorcycle Maintenance[1]:

> *"Quality...you know what it is, yet you don't know what it is. But that's self-contradictory. But some things are better than others, that is, they have more quality. But when you try to say what the quality is, apart from the things that have it, it all goes poof! There's nothing to talk about. But if you can't say what Quality is, how do we know what it is, or how do you know that it even exists? If no one knows what it is, then for all practical purposes it doesn't exist at all. But for practical purposes it really does exist. What else are the grades based on? Why else would people pay fortunes for some things and throw others in the trash pile? Obviously some things are better than others... but what's the 'betterness'? So round and round you go, spinning mental wheels and nowhere finding any place to get traction. What the hell is Quality? What is it?"*

In spite of these reflections by Pirsig, many books and articles have been written to try to describe the nature of quality. But quality is like love. Everybody talks about it and everybody knows what he/she is talking about. Everybody knows and feels when there is love. Everybody recognizes it; when we try to define it we are left standing empty-handed. The same counts for the concept of quality. There is no general consensus on the concept of quality. An absolute definition of quality does not exist because just like beauty, quality is in the eyes of the beholder.

While the general concept of quality is a difficult concept in itself, quality in higher education is much more complex, because it is not always clear what the "product" is and who the "client" is. Is the "graduate" the "product" that we offer society and the labour market? Or is the graduate-to-be, the student, our "client" and the programme that we offer the "product"? We can only say that a university has a multiple product system and a multi-client system.

In the discussion on quality in higher education, an article by Green (1994)[2] is often quoted in which he makes a distinction between:

- *Quality as excellence:* In this concept, the emphasis is on high-level standards. Being the best, being excellent. We may say that something has quality and something has more quality. People talking about promoting quality frequently mean promoting excellence. However, quality is not the same as being excellent. Of course, everybody likes to do his/her best to deliver quality, but not every institution can be a Yale or MIT.

1 Pirsig, *Zen and the Art of Motorcycle Maintenance, 1974.*

2 Green, D (1994), *What is quality in Higher Education? Concepts, Policy and Practice. In: Green (ed) (1994) What is Quality in Higher Education?* London: SRHE/Open University Press

A country with only excellent institutions does not exist. An institution can choose not to aim for excellence, because it likes to educate a broad range of graduates and not only the brightest ones. A typical regional institution with a mission to develop its country will choose to focus differently from an institution outside that region.

- *Quality as fitness for purpose:* With this concept of quality, the basic question is if the institution is able to achieve its formulated goals. It concerns the quality of the processes. This quality concept is improvement oriented. But, will this quality approach assure achievement of the threshold quality because goals and aims are not the issue? An institution might have set its goals too low, through which it can easily achieve them. This means that we not only have to discuss the fitness for purpose, but also the fitness of purpose. *Fitness of purpose* tries to evaluate whether the quality-related intentions/objectives of an institution are adequate and relevant.
- *Quality as a threshold: In this* view, quality is seen as meeting threshold requirements. This quality concept often forms the basis for accreditation decisions. The problem is that it is not always clear what basic quality is. Setting threshold standards might also hinder innovations. Compliance with the threshold standards does not stimulate innovations.
- *Quality as added value:* This concept emphasizes what happens to the students. Education is about doing something to the student. Quality means the value added to the student during education and training processes. It is the method of formulating learning outcomes and realizing the outcomes in the graduates. The basic *quality questio*n is: "What has he/she learnt?
- *Quality as value for money:* This quality concept has its focus on efficiency. It measures outputs against inputs. It is often a concept supported by governments. The concept is connected with accountability.
- *Satisfaction of the client:* With the rise of the concept of the "student as a consumer", quality is described as: "something has quality when it meets the expectations of the consumer; quality is the satisfaction of the client".

Figure 1 below provides an illustration of the different perspectives of quality by the diverse stakeholders of higher education:

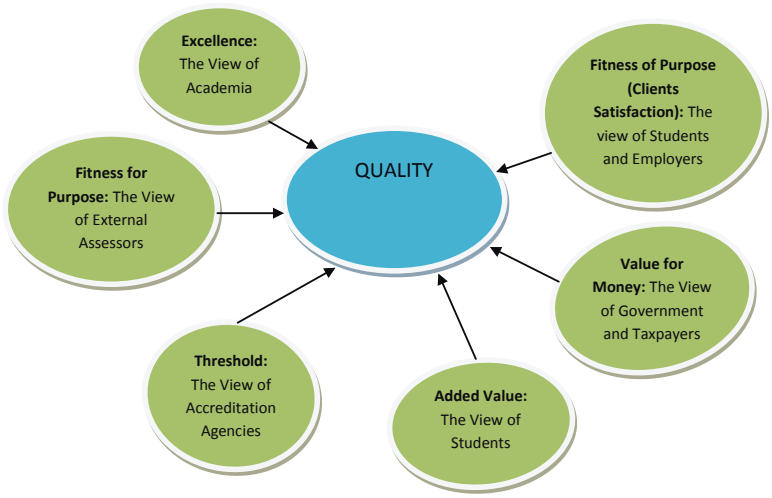

Figure 1: Stakeholders' perspectives of Quality in Higher Education

Quality in Higher Education is more complicated than quality in industry because there are so many players in the field. Higher Education has many stakeholders and all stakeholders have their own ideas of quality. We can distinguish the following stakeholders in Higher Education:

- The government or the state
- The employers
- The academic world
- The students
- The parents
- The Society at large

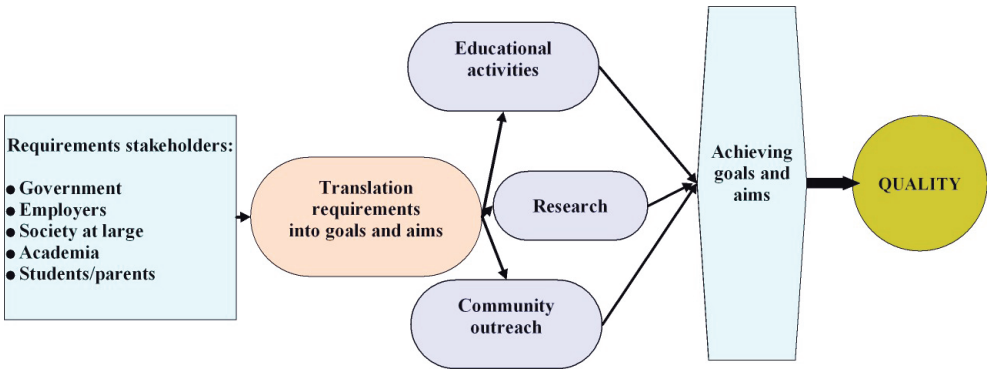

Figure 2: Stakeholders and Quality in Higher Education

It is now clear that the concept of Quality in Higher Education is complex to define. On the one hand, we have to make a distinction between quality requirements set by the different stakeholders: by the student, academic world, labour market (employers) the society, and the government. Each stakeholder will appreciate different aspects of quality. On the other hand, quality is not a simple one-dimensional notion. Quality is multi-dimensional. So there is quality of input, quality of process and quality of output of the core educational activities: teaching and learning, research and community engagement. All these dimensions have to be taken into account when discussing quality and judging quality of higher education.

The different views on quality and the multi-dimensional notion of quality mean that it is a waste of time to try to precisely define quality. Absolute, objective quality does not exist. However, if higher education institutions are to take quality seriously and to seriously try to assure it, then we have to agree on a workable concept of quality. Taking into account that each player has his or her own ideas about quality, we can agree that we should try to find a definition of quality that fits most of the ideas and that covers most of the expectations of the higher education stakeholders.

With so many stakeholders and players in the field, we may say *"Quality is a matter of satisfying the stakeholders in an adequate way"*. In this process, each stakeholder needs to formulate, as clearly as possible, his/her requirements. The university or faculty, as the ultimate provider of the higher education output, must take a clear position as it tries to reconcile the different requirements of the stakeholders. As far as possible, the requirements of all stakeholders should be translated into the mission and goals of an institution and into the objectives of a faculty and of the educational and research programmes for the desired higher education outputs and outcomes.

Therefore, for the sake of a common understanding, the following description of quality in higher education has been adopted:

> *Quality is achieving our goals and aims in an efficient and effective way, assuming that the goals and aims reflect the requirements of our stakeholders in an adequate way.*

However, talking about quality, we have to take into account the following remarks:

- **Quality is not the same as efficiency!**

The discussion on quality assessment is often connected with the concept of "efficiency" (saving money, making more rational use of public resources). In assessing quality, an important question will be: "Do we achieve the required level of quality at an acceptable cost?" An efficiency-oriented approach as such is a good starting point, but the problem is that efficiency is not always defined as "at acceptable cost", but often as "at minimal cost", and this may threaten quality. It may be very efficient to have lectures for a thousand students, but it is not effective. It may be considered efficient to have a very structured degree programme with student assessments every four weeks, forcing students to work and to keep up with the programme. However, does this method lead to the creation of the "right", independent, and critically thinking graduate? It may be considered efficient to use only multiple-choice questions for student assessment, but does it enhance verbal and written communication skills?

- **Quality is context bound**

When striving for quality, the main question is: "Do we offer the stakeholders what we promise to offer?" This means that a starting point for judging higher education quality will be the promises (i.e. goals) and that the verdict "quality or no quality" will be based on these same promises. Therefore, we have to look at higher education quality in a given context. This means that we may never assess a new university in East Africa with the same criteria and standards that are applied to more sophisticated old universities in the UK. If a university claims excellence, other criteria must count as opposed to when a university's aspiration is to contribute to the development of the country and the region. Each level of quality has its price. The only important feature is: "Will we get what we expect?" "Will the university do what it promises to do?"

However, although Quality is context bound, all universities also like to play a role on the international stage. This means that an institution has to meet at least the basic standards that are applied to higher education institutions. There is at least a bottom line for the threshold quality, although it is not clear what that bottom line is. This is something that the international community has to decide.

1.3 Criteria and Standards for Quality

Having accepted a working definition of quality, there is another key topic: criteria and standards for quality. The questions to ask here are: how do we assess quality? How do we measure the quality of a programme or institution? What are the criteria for measuring quality? What are the standards against which quality is assessed? But what is a criterion and what is a standard in higher education?

A criterion can be defined as a specific aspect taken into consideration to make a judgment about quality. It is a specification of aspect or element against which judgment is made on the quality of something or which is essential for quality achievement. In a programme, for instance, learning outcomes or staffing are important criteria (programme elements) we can look for to judge the quality of the programme.

A standard as a noun "is a reference against which other items are made". It is the level that a criterion must reach. Standards are sets of characteristics or quantities that describe the features of a product, produces, service, interface or material. In higher education quality assurance, a standard denotes a principle (or measure) to which one conforms (or should conform), and by which one's quality (or fitness) is judged. In an example of programme learning outcomes, we may ask: Are there learning outcomes for the programme and if so, have they been formulated in an adequate way or more than adequate? Sometimes a criterion might be quantified. On staffing, we may measure the quality of staff on the standard of total number of academic staff, percentage of PhD holders among the staff, the ration of staff to student: 1:40.

Criteria are valid in all circumstances and in all places. In fact, all accrediting bodies all over the world look at more or less the same criteria for assessing the quality of a programme. These criteria include:

- Programme Goals and objectives; expected learning outcomes
- Programme content
- Programme specification or description
- Programme organization
- Didactic concept/teaching/learning strategy
- Student assessment
- Staff quality
- Quality of the support staff
- Student profile
- Student advice/support
- Facilities & infrastructure
- Student evaluation
- Curriculum design & evaluation
- Staff development activities
- Benchmarking
- Achievements /graduates
- Satisfaction stakeholders

To know if a criterion is adequate /satisfactory depends on the standard set for the criterion. Standards are context bound and may differ from situation to situation and from discipline to discipline. The criteria and standards adopted in this handbook are discussed in section 4 of the handbook.

In discovering our own quality, there are three basic questions to ask ourselves:

- Are we doing the right things? (Checking our goals and aims)
- Are we doing the right things in the right way? (Are we in control of the process to achieve our goals and aims?)
- Do we achieve our goals? (Checking our outcomes)

For assessing quality in higher education, we need a yardstick or benchmark. An absolute yardstick, ready for use does not exist. This means we have to look for criteria and standards that can be used. In some cases, the criteria and standards are formulated by one of the stakeholders. For example, governments often formulate criteria and standards in the framework of accreditation purposes. In other cases, employers or the professional bodies formulate standards in order to safe guard the quality in that respective profession. When there are no pre-formulated requirements, it is up to the institution to decide upon the standards, taking into account international developments (benchmarking).

Nevertheless, we expect higher education institutions to assure its quality, to demonstrate its quality and to have its quality assessed by outsiders. And this is happening all over the world. In East Africa, the National Councils and Commissions for Higher Education of Burundi, Kenya, Rwanda, Tanzanian and Uganda have formulated criteria and standards, for institutions, as well as for the core activities of the institutions: Teaching/learning, research and community outreach. Comparing the documents from these agencies, we see that those standards and criteria have a lot in common and are also in line with what is going on in other countries in the world. Sometimes the wording of the standards and criteria is different, but in most cases they cover the same aspect. The most common and important of the criteria for institutions when applying for accreditation are shown in Table 1.

Table 1: Criteria and Standards in the East African Countries

Burundi	Kenya	Rwanda	Tanzania	Uganda
Institution	**Institution**	**Institution**	**Institution**	**Institution**
Vision, missions &objectives	Philosophy, Mission and Vision	Vision and Specific Objectives	Vision and Mission	Objectives, mission and vision
Academic orientation	Academic character	Management of academic standards	Academic orientation	Academic orientation
Administrative & academic governance	Governance and Management	Governance, Senior Management and Leadership	Governance	Governance
Academic programmes	Academic programmes Quality of teaching	Academic Programmes	Programmes at offer	Quality teaching and learning
Research and publications	Research and Innovation / Anti-plagiarism	Relevancy of research and community outreach		Quality of research and publications
		Fit for purpose	Quality of graduates	Quality of output
Academic & technical staff	Human resources	Academic and administrative staff	Academic staff	Academic freedom
Library resources & Facilities	Library resources	Educational facilities	Support Facilities	Facilities
Infrastructures & development plan	Physical resources	Physical infrastructure and facilities	Physical Facilities	Land and Infrastructure
Financial resources & budgeting	Financial resources	Financial viability	Financial sustainability	Institutional financial management
Academic calendar	Planning schedule	Strategic and Operational plans	Strategic and master plans	Strategic plan

Service to the community	Community Service	Involvement of institution's stakeholders	Public information	Information on HE
	Programme and Institutional Audit	Academic quality and integrity	Integrity	
Programme/ curriculum	**Programme/ curriculum**	**Programme/ curriculum**	**Programme/ curriculum**	**Programme/ curriculum**
Qualified staff	Qualified staff	Academic leadership and academic Staff	Qualified staff	Qualified staff
Statute of the programme	Programme structure Academic organization	Programme structure	Duration of the programme	Duration of the programmes
Goals and aims requirements	Philosophy Goals and aims Expected Learning Outcomes	Programme aims and Rationale	Programme learning outcomes	Programme rationale and aims
Student Admission requirements	Admission of students/ Credit transfer	Specific admission criteria	Admission of students	Admission of students
Content of the programme	Content of the programme	Programme learning outcomes	Content of the programme	Content of the programme
Teaching & Assessment process	Mode of Delivery Academic regulations Assessment process	Teaching, learning and assessment strategy	Assessment process	Assessment process
Academic resources Quality control service	Academic resources Evaluation of teaching Functional IQA system and Self-Assessment	Programme specific resources	Academic resources Quality Assurance system	Academic resources Quality control system

1.4 What is Quality Assurance in Higher Education?

Quality assurance is an all-embracing term referring to a ***systematic, on-going*** and ***continuous process of*** evaluating (assessing, monitoring, guaranteeing, maintaining and improving) the quality of programmes, institutions, or a higher education system (*Vlasceanu et al, 2004 and* UNESCO, 2007).

Quality assurance (or quality management) may be described as the systematic, structured and continuous attention to quality in terms of maintaining and improving quality. Continuous quality care is a *sine qua non* for quality assurance (Vroeijenstijn, 1995)[3]

The National Council for Higher Education of Uganda defines Quality Assurance as "the mechanism put in place to guarantee that the education is 'fit for purpose,' i.e., is good. Every higher education institution must have appropriate and effective internal structures and mechanisms for monitoring its quality control procedures to ensure quality" (NCHE, 2014)[4]

The Commission for University Education of Kenya defines Quality Assurance as: "the means by which an institution can guarantee that the standards and quality of its educational provisions are being maintained and / or enhanced. It is the means through which an institution confirms that conditions are in place for students to achieve standards set by the institution" (CUE, 2009).[5]

- 3 Vroeijenstijn, A.I (1995), *Improvement and Accountability: Navigating between Scylla and Charybdis,* London, Jessica Kingsley Publishers

4 National Council for Higher Education (2014) *Quality Assurance Framework for Universities and the Licensing Process for Higher Education Institutions*, Kampala, 2014

5 Commission for University Education, *Handbook on Processes for Quality Assurance in Higher Education in Kenya*, Nairobi, 2009.

In essence, quality assurance in higher education means a planned and systematic review of an institution or programme to determine maintenance and enhancement of acceptable benchmarks (IUCEA Act, 2015).

1.5 The Quality Assurance System

The Quality Assurance system in Higher education has an internal and external element as illustrated in figure 3 below:

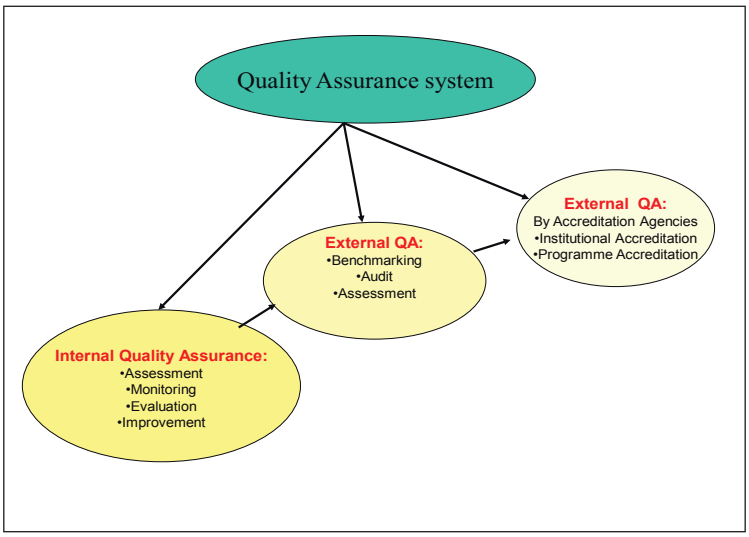

Figure 3: The Quality Assurance System in Higher Education

Internal quality assurance system

This refers to an institution's policies and mechanisms for ensuring that it is fulfilling its own purposes as well as standards in higher education in general, or the profession or discipline in particular. In principle, quality is the primary responsibility of higher education institutions.

External quality assurance

This refers to assessment of an institution's operations or that of its programmes by an external body in order to determine whether it is meeting the standards that have been agreed upon. A successful external quality assurance system is dependent on strong internal quality assurance system. External quality assurance process may lead to accreditation of the institution and or its programmes.

Quality assurance practices / mechanisms

Quality assurance involves a variety of practices, among which three (3) mechanisms can be identified in higher education: quality audit, quality assessment/review and accreditation. There is no general consensus on the exact meaning of each term. The terms relate to the responsibility of different actors in the higher education system, and to different foci of attention of quality evaluation.

One of the key mechanisms and tools in quality assurance, which is the focus of this Handbook, is **quality assessment**. By quality assessment, we mean every structured activity that leads to a verdict on the quality of the institution as a whole and or of its core activities: teaching and learning (programmes) research and community engagement.

It might be based on self-assessment or assessment by external experts. In this Volume of the Handbook, we focus on assessment of programmes by the institution (self-assessment) and by external experts (peer assessment). The sections that follow focus on this mechanism of ensuring the quality of programmes in East Africa.

SECTION 2:

PROGRAMME SELF-ASSESSMENT FOR DISCOVERING QUALITY

2.1 Introduction

If we agree upon a shared concept of quality and upon the criteria and standards to measure that quality, we can ask ourselves: what is the best way to discover quality? An important tool in the field of quality assurance is a critical self-assessment, also called, self- evaluation or self-review. In this handbook these words are used interchangeably. A starting point to understand this quality assurance mechanism is to ask and answer the question: What is self-assessment?

2.2 What is Self-assessment?

Self-assessment is generally understood as a process of self-review or self-evaluation. In social psychology, self-assessment is the process of looking at oneself in order to assess aspects that are important to one's identity. It is one of the important motives that drive self-evaluation, along with self-verification and self-enhancement. According to Sedikides (1993), self-assessment is a process by which people seek information about themselves to confirm their uncertain self-concept in order to enhance their certainty of their own self-knowledge.[6]

Indeed, the ancient Greek Philosopher, Socrates once said: "The unexamined life is not worth living". By this statement, Socrates strongly believed that the purpose of human life was personal and spiritual growth. To achieve this growth, one must subject oneself to a critical self-examination. Socrates found dialogue with oneself, friends or peers an essential method for self-examination.

Self-assessment in Higher Education Institutions (HEIs) is sometimes called self-study or self-evaluation. It is a process by which an institution makes a critical look of itself or of its programmes to discover the quality of the institution or of its programmes. Programme self-assessment therefore, is a critical look of an academic programme to determine its quality measured by acceptable criteria and standards.

2.3 Why Programme Self-assessment in HEIs?

Although the main purpose of programme self-assessment is to discover the quality of a programme, the self-assessment process is essential for many reasons. A critical self-assessment is important because we are sometimes too eager to accept that everything is good: "I have been teaching this way for years and my course has never caused problems. My students have always been content and employers have never complained about the graduates." This may be true, in general. Introducing a quality assurance system does not mean that quality is not good. The demand for self-evaluation is not inspired by lack of quality. What it means is that quality has to be examined in a structured manner, within a well-defined framework.

In many cases, a self-assessment serves as preparation for assessment or evaluation by external experts. The Self-Assessment Report (SAR) provides the external experts with basic information about a programme. However, a self-assessment process has specific value for the university itself too. It provides an opportunity for discovering the quality of its programmes.

6 Sedikides, C. (1993). Assessment, enhancement, and verification determinants of the self-evaluation process. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology, 65(2),* 317-338.

An effective self-assessment requires effort by staff and students. Often, it will require an investment of time that has to be taken away from other activities. However, the returns and the profit of good self-assessment are high. The self-assessment will provide information not known to everyone: The information often exists, but only a small group knows it; or the facts will have another dimension when they are connected to one another.

Programme self-assessment involves both staff and students in the discussion on the quality of education; the discussion is often raised beyond the level of the individual who is active in the curriculum committee or administration; and the views on quality of individual staff and students are examined together in order to establish a policy for the institution. It shows on which points choices need to be made (choices are often made implicitly or explicitly) and the information gathered is brought to bear on earlier formulated principles. A decision is reached as to whether a policy should remain unchanged or an explicit choice made.

2.4 The Process and Management of Programme Self-Assessment

Self-assessment is a step-by-step process marked by preparatory or planning activities, data collection and analysis and report writing. The process and management of self-assessment of academic programmes may vary to some extent in terms of structure and organization due to institutional cultures and country specific requirements but, by and large, it is a process, which comprises the following key steps:

a) Preparation for the Self-Assessment

A solid preparation of the self-assessment process is one of the most important preconditions for a successful realization of this activity. The university determines how self-assessment is carried out. However, it is good to make use of experiences gained elsewhere. Some of the useful hints on what to consider in the preparation for self-assessment include the following:

(i) Self-assessment should never be the work of a single person.

(ii) Make a group responsible for the self-assessment.

(iii) This group should consist of some three to five people, chaired by a senior member of staff appointed by the faculty Dean. Students should be involved in the self-assessment.

(iv) A clear timetable should be made, assuming a total amount of time available of about five to six months between the commencement of the assessment process and the visit by external peers.

(v) The activities that have to be considered in the self-evaluation should be distributed among the committee members and each member made responsible for collecting information, and for analyzing and evaluating the data.

(vi) The draft results should be discussed on the largest scale possible. It is not necessary to have consensus concerning the report; it is, however, necessary for as many people as possible to be aware of its contents.

Principles for Effective Self-Assessment

In organizing self-assessments, the following basic principles are important for an effective self-assessment process:

(i) Primarily, a self-assessment should never be felt as threatening. A self-assessment should not be used to assess an individual, should never be used for punishment or reward and should never be used to blame someone;

(ii) A programme self-assessment aims at improvement and enhancement of the quality of the programme;

(iii) It is necessary to create a broad basis for the self-assessment and to sensitize staff and students. The whole institution or at least the faculty has to prepare itself for it;

(iv) Looking at quality is more than testing the performance. It also means organizational development and shaping the institution. Everybody has to be responsible and involved for real self-assessment;

(v) The management of the institution must support fully the self-assessment. Relevant information is needed for an effective policy and good management. The self-assessment serves to acquire structural insight into the performance of the university;

(vi) Carrying out a critical self-evaluation demands a good organization. Primarily someone has to coordinate the self-assessment process. It would be good to charge someone specifically with the self-evaluation project. The coordinator has to meet some requirements.

In order to obtain the required information, it is important that the chair of the self-assessment exercise has good entry at all levels of the institution. Therefore, it is very important that the coordinator has good contacts within the university, with the central management as well as with the faculties and the staff members.

It is desirable to establish a working group or a committee in-charge of the self-assessment. It is important that the group is structured in such a way that the involvement of all sections is assured. The working group is in charge of the self-assessment, gathering data, analyzing material and drawing conclusions.

It is assumed that self-assessment is an analysis supported by the whole faculty/department. Therefore, it is important that everyone should be at least acquainted with the contents of the self-assessment report and should recognize it as a document from his or her own institution. The working group may organize a workshop or seminar to discuss the draft SAR. Not everyone has to agree with all the points in the self-assessment report. There may be disagreement as to what are seen as weaknesses and strengths and what is to be considered as the cause of the weaknesses. Should there be very big differences of opinion between certain groups or bodies, then the SAR should report on it.

Establishing the Self-Assessment Committee

The first step in the preparatory phase of the self-assessment comprises primarily the selection of a committee, which will be in charge of conducting the subsequent steps. Naturally, the selection and formation of this committee is of great importance. Although other variations may be adequate the assessment committee would normally consist of:

(i) the person responsible for the programme,

(ii) about 2 members of the teaching staff in the programme,

(iii) one administrative staff member,

(iv) Student representative,

Since this committee is responsible for conducting the whole process, it is advisable to select the members who are thorough. Due to the workload, in addition to their "regular" obligations,

committee members need to be committed to the process. It is also highly recommended that persons chosen for the team have a high reputation and are, thus, accepted as peers (in its original sense) and experts by the respective groups they represent. This is important in order to guarantee that the different groups in the institution trust the committee in terms of professionalism and impartiality. It is advisable that one of the members functions as chairperson. Of course it would be of benefit for the work if the members had already experience in evaluation processes. The quality assurance unit should provide technical guidance and advice to the assessment committee during the assessment process.

Training for Self-Assessment

Training of the self-assessment committee members is a crucial feature of the self-assessment process. The quality assurance unit should facilitate in the training of the assessment committee. Two key aspects need to be explained thoroughly to the committee members in the training:

(i) The purpose and the remit of the review and the relevant standards, criteria, benchmarks should be clearly communicated to committee members. The members have to be familiar with the instruments and standards or criteria that shall be used during the process, in order to meet the expectations of the university and to have a shared understanding with the university. It is also important that the assessment committee reaches a shared understanding about the purpose, content and way of processing the self-assessment.

(ii) The committee members need to know the duties of an assessor and how to perform the role of an assessor, especially in case there are discussions with members of the department. It is crucial that every assessor accepts as reference basis the purpose of the assessment and the mission of the university. An assessment is not a playground for applying and pushing through personal preferences, which every assessor carries in his rucksack. (AfriQ'Units (2011)).

Developing a Plan for the Self-Assessment Process

The last step of the preparatory phase involves the development of a plan for the self-assessment process. To achieve maximum efficiency in the process, the Self-Assessment Committee must develop a work plan (action plan) that should include: a calendar of activities, the distribution and allocation of tasks and the necessary resources (human, material).

Table 2: The Process of organizing Programme Assessment

Phases	Timeframe	Activity	Resources
Phase 1: Preparatory	First month of the self-assessment process	• Appoint the leader of the assessment process • Establish the Self-assessment Committee • Train the Self-assessment Committee	• Training materials • Planning meeting facilitation
Phase 2: Data Collection	The second and third months of the assessment process	• Documentary analysis • Development and distribution of questionnaires • Carrying out interviews with staff, students, alumni, etc. • Assessment of relevant teaching and learning facilities	• Stationary • Transport costs • Meeting facilitation • Data collection materials & equipment
Phase 3: Data analysis and Report Writing	The fourth to the sixth months of the self-assessment process	• Analysis of data • Writing drafts of the SAR	• Meeting facilitation • Printing and binding costs
		• Discussion of the draft report with all faculty staff, students and management	• Printing & binding costs • Meeting facilitation
		• Review draft report • Present Final Report to Management for Approval	• Printing & binding costs
External Assessment	8 months after the start of the assessment process	• External assessment (see section 3of this Volume)	• Transport facilitation • Accommodation • Honorarium

b) Data and Information Collection

Once the preparatory phase is over and the assessment committee knows why they should do what, how and when, the second step of the process may start, and that is the phase of collecting information (AfriQ'Units, 2011). As it is with many evaluative researches, self-assessment can be undertaken through documentary review and other primary data collection instruments for both qualitative and quantitative data.

Documentary Review

Document analysis is one of the important methods for data collection for programme self-assessment. The method entails collection, review, interrogation, and analysis of various forms of text as a primary source of research data. The Self-assessment Committee can collect and analyze useful information from relevant programme documents such as the curriculum as well as faculty and university documents like prospectus, programme handbook, policy documents, among other.

Information on programmes can be obtained from other various types of documents including:

(i) Authoritative sources: documents that provide description on the programme including programme handbook, prospectus, etc.

(ii) Multi-media: newspaper or magazine columns/ articles, current affairs shows, news reports on the programme or graduates from this programme.

(iii) Historical documents: records, minutes, and policy documents, or any other materials that have been authored or produced within a particular historical period on the programme.

Development of Data Collection Instruments

The choice and development of data collection instruments will depend largely on the nature of the data to be collected on the different aspects of the programme under review. If the data to be collected is of statistical nature, such as pass rates, dropout rates, ratio of staff to students, then quantitative techniques will be required. If the data required is qualitative in nature, then qualitative methods such as Focus Group Discussion and interviews may be used to obtain information on the opinion of staff, students, alumni and employers of graduates of the programme under review.

Questionnaires and interview guides should be developed based on the criteria established for the assessment. All the key aspects of the programme should be covered in the data collection instrument in order to generate the desired information on the programme. As it is an accepted rule of research, data collection instruments should be pre-tested for accuracy, completeness and suitability of questions. Section 4 of this volume of the Quality Assurance Handbook provides a number of key questions on each aspect of the programme, which may be adopted for the development of questionnaires and interview guides.

Collection of Quantitative and Qualitative Data

The self-assessment process is based on an analysis of the teaching situation. To describe the teaching situation, it is necessary to collect some quantitative data to gather basic information and to draw a picture of the actual teaching situation.

These quantitative data may show the actual situation and latest development of some relevant indicators, such as completion rates, students per staff ratio, resources, etc. In order to facilitate the reading and analysis of this data and in order to facilitate future assessments, this can be organized and presented in tables or diagrams.

Although quantitative data is relevant for getting a clear picture, it is not enough for a full evaluation of a programme. The self-assessment process should be based on qualitative information as well. Information such as mission statement, programme description, or additional self-reflexive documents (e.g. former evaluation reports) is important for the contextualization of quantitative information.

There is one more basic recommendation to all assessment committees concerning the collection of date: Collect only relevant information! This may naturally be less than the information that may be available or could be made available. Based on the clear purpose and remit of the self-assessment the committee has to decide what information needs to be gathered in order to answer the relevant questions.

2.5 Programme Quality Assessment Model

An institution of Higher Education generally has three core activities: teaching/learning, research and community outreach. Of course, the last two activities are important too. However in the handbook the emphasis is on the quality of the educational task. To find out the quality of education, the instrument of self-assessment at programme level is used. The object of the self-assessment is the programme.

As mentioned in Section 1, quality is a concept with many aspects. There are many factors influencing quality. With regard to Teaching and Learning the following dimensions can be distinguished:

- Quality of the input
- Quality of the process
- Quality of the output

In order to map the quality of a programme in a self-assessment process, we need a clear model to guard against looking at some aspects and ignoring others. Figure 4 shows a model for the analysis of the educational activities. The Model provides a useful framework the analysis of a programme. The model is elaborated in section 4 in the Tool for programme assessment.

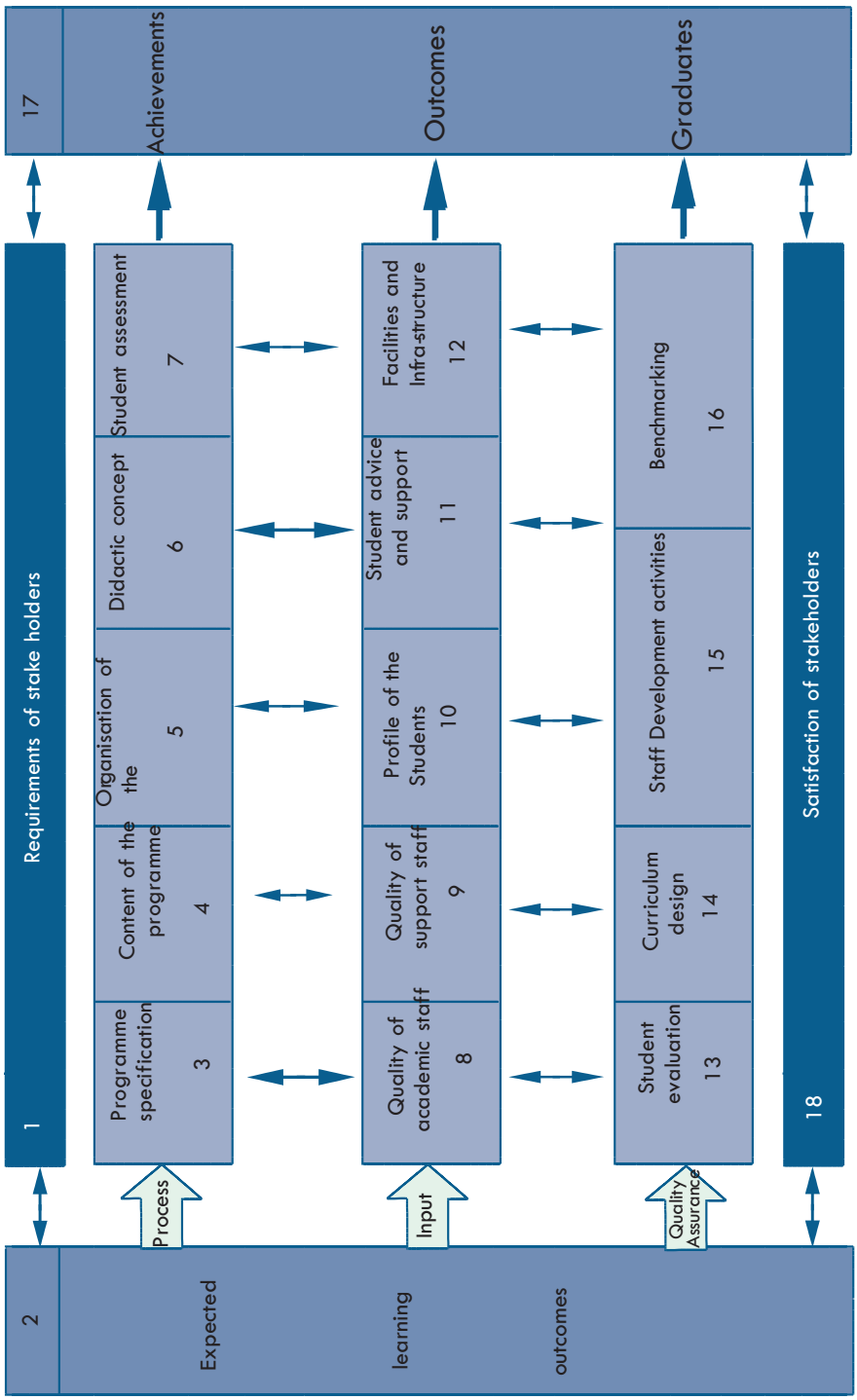

Figure 4: Programme Quality Assessment Model

How to use the model

A detailed analysis of each aspect of the model in figure 4 has been provided in Section 4 of this volume of the Handbook. For each of the aspects, (sub) criteria are formulated under the heading of the aspect. For example, the criterion for Expected Learning Outcomes is:

> *The programme/curriculum has clearly formulated learning outcomes (knowledge, skills, attitude) reflecting the relevant demands and needs of all stakeholders.*

For Quality of support staff, the criterion is:

> *There is adequate support in terms of staffing at the libraries, laboratories, administration and student services*

It should be noted that there are no absolute and objective criteria and standards. The criteria for assessing the quality given in the Handbook are based on the criteria as formulated by the national councils and commissions from the region and external quality assessment agencies, e.g. European, American, Asian, Australian and South African accrediting bodies, among others.

For each aspect, the following format is used:

- The name of the cell in the model is given, just as the title of the aspect that will be treated, e.g. Learning Outcomes
- The Criterion concerning that aspect is given in a box. The criterion shows what is commonly expected from an institution.
- If the national commissions and councils have not mentioned a specific criterion, but the criterion is seen internationally as important, the criterion is mentioned.

Looking for evidence

A set of questions and/or statements is drawn up to help the faculty/department to find evidence if the criteria are being met. Please be aware of the following as far as these questions are concerned:

- The questions-set are not meant as a compulsory list that has to be completed. It is not a questionnaire to be answered point by point. It must be seen as a tool to collect information and evidence. The questions are to be seen as reminders.
- The questions under the heading "looking for evidence" in the Tool (Section 4) should not be answered by "Yes", "no" or "I do not know". The questions are meant as a guide for discussion in order to formulate the prose text on the criteria. They are not comprehensive and universities can ask more questions where necessary.
- The statements will help you to demonstrate that you are meeting the criterion.

The basic rules to apply in self-assessment are:

1. All aspects (segments of the model) need to be discussed. It is not possible to make a selection.
2. For each aspect the following steps are to be taken:
    - give a description of the state-of-the-art of the aspect

- make a critical analysis of the state-of-the-art. (Is one satisfied with it or not?)
- describe the strengths and weaknesses concerning the mentioned aspect
- what evidence is there that you are meeting the criteria?
- if there are problems or if you are not satisfied, what actions are planned to overcome the shortcomings?

If it is the first time the faculty/department is involved in a structured self-assessment, there will be a lot of blank spots. It will not always be possible to fill all segments. So a number of aspects will be left unanswered this time, but will force the faculty to take action in the future.

2.6 The Self-Assessment Report (SAR)

After completing the self-assessment, the outcomes of the assessment will be written down in a Self-Assessment Report (SAR). The SAR is an important document. On one hand it contains the basic information for the external expert team that will assess the quality of the programme. On the other hand it is the basic document for the faculty/department for the formulation of an improvement plan or quality plan for the coming years.

Writing the SAR

The content of the SAR follows the lines of the cells given in Figure 4, discussed during the self-assessment process. For each cell, one should:

i. Describe clearly the state-of-the art. An outsider must understand the situation.

ii. Analyze the situation. What is your opinion about it? Satisfied or not? If not, why not?

iii. Evaluate whether the formulated criteria have been met and evidence provided?

iv. Describe the weakness and strengths concerning the cells.

The Self-Assessment Report (SAR) should contain a clear description of the state-of-the-art; a critical analysis of the current situation on each aspect to see if one is satisfied with it or not; and an evaluation of whether the set standards and criteria are being met. If in the analysis and evaluation there are problems identified, the Committee should states clearly what actions will be taken to solve the problems in the programme.
Because the self-assessment is the input for an external assessment, it is important for the SAR to follow the specific format as given in the handbook. This means that all topics have to be discussed (described, analyzed and evaluated) and not only a selection. But what does it mean to describe, analyze and evaluate?

- **Description**

Once the relevant information is gathered, the committee can start analyzing the data by giving a clear and comprehensive description of the teaching and learning situation. Apart from the reflection that is carried out, the assessment committee should provide a description of how the teaching unit is situated with respect to each of the sub-criteria that are analyzed in the model. It is necessary that this description be based on consensus between the members of the assessment committee. In this way, each member of the Committee must explain to the other members the aspects and implications of the statements that they make so that the collection of statements made expresses the feelings of all those that participated in the Self-Assessment Process.

The importance of this description is often underestimated, but it is a precondition for the analysis that the assessment committee shares the view on the actual situation and, thus, has a common ground for the analysis.

Experience shows that unclear or even diverging views on the descriptive aspects of the programme lead to major problems in coming to a common analysis and evaluation of the programme.

- **Analysis of Information**

Based on the description, the analysis has to be comprehensive which means that the assessment committee must analyze in detail the data and information with respect to each and every criterion/ feature. The assessment committee will easily recognize that it is important to contextualize the quantitative data. Quantitative data may mean different things in different contexts! They always have to be analyzed against the mission and purpose of the programme. Figures only seem to provide us with "neutral" information. Actually we can't measure quality in teaching and learning by just counting figures! There is a famous say which explains this danger very well: "We tend to value what we measure rather than measure what we value."

There is therefore, no mono-causal link between the description and the evaluation. If this would be the case, there would be no need for experts in the sense of peers because every professional could make an independent analysis of each quality aspect. But, actually, the analysis takes into account quantitative data which then has to be contextualized and evaluated against the mission, objectives and standards of the institution.

This is a process of evaluation and interpretation and, in essence, it is a qualitative decision! And last but not least, the committee has to find a consensus, of course!

- **Information Evaluation**

Once a description and analysis of the current situation has been made, the assessment committee has to evaluate the programme. The basis for this evaluation is the set of criteria that are defined in the cells of the model for programme assessment. Programme Evaluation should also be based on the defined and published national standards or professional standards for programmes.

Review and Adoption of the SAR

No report is perfect, and definitely not on the first version. Well-written reports are those which have gone through multiple rounds of review. This process of review may be through self-reading and critical analysis, or more effectively through peer-feedback (or feedback from the QA Officer). It is good to take feedback from peer reviewers positively. The one reviewing the SAR has to critically, and methodically see if the "structure of the report" is complete and the sections are fully covered. The reviewer ought to check if the report is descriptive and analytical enough and provides a good evaluation of the situation of the programme.

Be sure to discuss the report within the department and faculty and ensure that everybody owns the process. The review gives opportunity to correct factual errors, clarify on certain issues and for proper report formatting. The completed SAR should be discussed by the faculty members and formally adopted for presentation to the management.

The SAR on a programme or institution should be owned by the university management. Management should discuss and adopt the SAR before submission to the National Council/Commission, IUCEA or any other external body.

Dissemination of the SAR

The manner in which self-assessments are carried out can vary; also the levels of who is to be involved in the discussion of the report will differ from one institution to the next. Nevertheless, responsibility for the self-assessment lies with the assessment team.

The SAR is the starting point for the discussions between the external experts and the faculty. This implies that everyone who will be involved in the discussion needs to be aware of the contents of the self-evaluation. It is quite embarrassing to the institution when staff members in the faculty or department are not aware of the self-assessment exercise and the results of the process when asked by external peers to comment on the programme.

The SAR is a basic tool for advocacy; it can be used by the Dean or Heads of Department to advance key recommendations for the improvement of the programme. Therefore, sharing the SAR with key stakeholders in the institution is an important strategy for advocating for the adoption of the recommendations.

Content of the Self-assessment Report

Table 3 defines the content of the self-assessment report. Be sure to discuss the report within the faculty and ensure that everybody owns the process.

Table 3: Content of a Programme Self-assessment Report

Introduction • How was the self-assessment carried out? • The composition of the Assessment Committee • Short description of the university and the department responsible for the curriculum • Short description of the programme (in such a way that an outsider has a good idea about the content of the programme)
Chapter 1: Requirements stakeholders and expected learning outcomes
Chapter 2: The Process 2.1 Programme specification 2.2 Programme content 2.3 Programme organization 2.4 Didactic concept 2.5 Student assessment
Chapter 3: The Input 3.1Quality of the academic staff 3.2 Quality of the support staff 3.3 The students 3.4 Student advice/support 3.5 Facilities and infrastructure
Chapter 4: Quality assurance 4.1 Student evaluation 4.2 Curriculum design 4.3 Staff development activities 4.4 Benchmarking
Chapter 5: achievements and graduates 5.1Achieved outcomes (graduates)/graduate profile 5.2 Pass rate and dropout rate 5.3 Average time to degree 5.4 Employability of graduates
Chapter 6: Stakeholder satisfaction 6.1Opinion - Students 6.2 Opinion - Alumni (graduates) 6.3 Opinion - Labour market 6.4 Opinion – Society
Chapter 7: Strengths-weaknesses analysis 7.1 Summary of strengths 7.2 Summary of weaknesses 7.3 Quality plan for the coming years

2.7 Strengths/Weaknesses Analysis

The self-assessment is followed by a strengths-weaknesses analysis. At the same time, this serves as a check to see how far the department, faculty or university is in compliance with the given criteria. This is best done using Table 4 and the checklist (Appendix I). There are 18 specific aspects for assessment, and 68 sub-criteria in total. The checklist in the appendix shows all the criteria and sub-criteria.

Table 4: Analysis of strength/ weaknesses

		1	2	3	4	5	6	7
1	Requirements stakeholders							
2	Expected learning outcomes							
3	Specification of the programme (programme description)							
4	Content of the Programme							
5	Programme organization							
6	Didactic concept/teaching/learning strategy							
7	Student assessment							
8	Quality of academic staff							
9	Quality of the support staff							
10	The students							
11	Student advice/support							
12	Facilities & infrastructure							
13	Student evaluation							
14	Curriculum design							
15	Staff development activities							
16	Benchmarking							
17	Achievements/graduates							
18	Satisfaction stakeholders							

The quality of the different aspects of the programme will be assessed on a scale of 1-7. The scores on the scale have the following meaning:

1 = absolutely inadequate; overhaul the programme

2 = inadequate, major improvements necessary

3 = inadequate, but minor improvements will make it adequate

4 = adequate as expected

5 = better than adequate

6 = example of good practice

7 = excellent

The overall assessment of the different aspects is based on the scores given to each sub-aspect in the category. But of course not all sub-aspects have the same weight. This means that you cannot mathematically calculate an average. You have to balance the various sub-aspects and to judge the weighting of each of them. Positive aspects may compensate for some negative ones. Marking each aspect leads to a verdict on each aspect of the model. Filling in the total score in Table 4 produces a good overview of the strengths and weaknesses.

Do not start to complete the checklist, before you have finished the text of the SAR; first develop the text and then do the marking. By doing so, the marks may help you to see if there is any discrepancy between the marks and the wording.

Summary of strengths

Summaries the points that the department considers to be its strengths and mark the points that you are proud of.

Summary of weaknesses

Indicate which points the department considers to be weak and in need of improvement. Also indicate what you are going to do about this.

The follow up after the self-assessment

The self-assessment report will lead to many follow-up activities:

- if connected with an external assessment, the expert team will visit the faculty/department and discuss the SAR. The assessment might lead to recommendations for improvement.
- if not connected with any formal external assessment, the university may decide to invite some colleagues from other universities to carry out an inter-collegial assessment and ask for the formulation of recommendations (you may use section 3 External programme assessment).
- In all cases, the outcomes of the self-assessment must be translated into a quality plan that shows what activities the university will undertake in the near future. Only with a clear follow up, and quality action plan, will the investment in the self-assessment and the SAR make sense.

2.8 Development of Improvement Plans/Quality Plan

What is Improvement or Quality Plan?

The purpose of self-assessment of programmes is to improve the quality of the programme. This is achieved through careful planning or development of strategies for improvement. Improvement plans are therefore the strategic actions identified and chosen to improve the quality of a programme or institution.

The improvement plan is one of the tasks to be carried out in this process of self-assessment. It includes the strategic decision & actions that need to be considered to improve on the quality of the programme based on clear strategic objectives. Quality improvement is a continuous process and so improvement plans must be flexible enough to allow for modification.

Steps in Developing Improvement Plans

The development of improvement plans is a step-by-step process marked by six stages as discussed below:

(i) Identifying the Improvement Areas

Programme self-assessment is a process of identifying strengths and weaknesses on each aspect of the programme. This process is important in identifying the areas for improvement.

(ii) Assessing the Problems

The key issues or areas to be addressed in the improvement plan must be analyzed to understand their root causes and nature. There are many problem analysis tools that can be employed including problem tree method which looks at the root causes of a problem and identifies the solution. There is also the triangle problem analyses and solution mapping technique which looks at a problem from three angles: policy, institutional and social value. Is the problem due to lack of a clear policy framework? Is the institutional framework the cause of the problem? Or is it the problem with the culture of the institution? Diagnosing the right cause of the problem will help in mapping the right strategies and actions to address it.

(iii) Formulating the Objectives

Once the main improvement areas have been detected and the causes of the problem are known, the objectives must be formulated and a period fixed for them to be achieved. As such, the intended result must be clearly expressed and the objectives need to be very specific, measurable, achievable and time bound (AfriQ'units, 2011).

(iv) Selecting the Improvement Actions

From the many actions identified to address the weaknesses in the programme, key strategic actions must be selected to improve on the quality of the programme. In selecting the strategic actions, one must consider the appropriateness of the action, costs in implementing the action and the capacity of the chosen action to address a number of other related problems in the short, medium and long term.

(v) Carrying out the Planning and Monitoring

Once the areas for improvements, the problems and actions have all been identify, the improvements plan can now be developed. It is important to develop a quality plan that focuses on priority areas and actions. Implementation of the improvements plan has to me monitored to ensure that the improvement objectives are being achieved by the key players using the resources identified. Below is a sample frame of an Improvement Plan:

	AN IMPROVEMENTS PLAN MATRIX						
AREAS OF IMPROVEMENT	**OBJECTIVES**	**IMPROVEMENT ACTIONS**	**TASKS**	**TASK MANAGER**	**TIME FRAME**	**RESOURCES**	**PROGRESS INDICATORS**
Learning Outcomes	1. To reformulate the expected programme outcomes	1.1 Review of the Programme Outcomes 1.2 Approval of the programme outcomes	Review	Head of Department Dean	3 Months	Meeting resources	Programme learning outcomes clearly formulated.
	2.	2.1 2.2 2.3					
	3.	3.1 3.2					
	4.	4.1 4.2					
	5.	5.1					

SECTION 3:

EXTERNAL PROGRAMME ASSESSMENT

3.1 Introduction

To assure the quality of a programme, an external quality assessment or evaluation plays an important role. After conducting a self assessment, the faculty/department should be visited by a group of external experts to see how far the programme meets the criteria set by an external body (an accreditation agency or professional body) or set by the university itself. If the external assessment is organized by the IUCEA, it is not for accreditation but to promote harmonization of programmes in the disciplines under consideration. However, the positive outcomes of the assessment also can be seen as a regional quality hallmark.

An external assessment is based on the self-assessment conducted by the faculty/department. A self-assessment is a strong instrument in the hands of a university when it comes to seeing what quality it offers. However, a self-assessment is not enough. We all have blind spots and take things for granted. Therefore, an outsider's view of the quality of the programme is needed. An external assessment is important because it gives authority to the findings of the self-assessments.

External assessment also delivers confidence to stakeholders; provides evidence of programme quality to the public; and shows that the standards agreed upon by the competent authorities are being implemented. At the same time, it provides mechanisms for continuous quality improvement in the sustainability and development of the programme and buffers against pressures to lower quality standards.

External quality assessment contributes to the recognition and acceptance of programmes that have demonstrated their competence and quality according to standards set by the field or profession leading towards harmonization of higher education in the region. Graduates of these programmes are likewise recognized for their competent training and employability. An external assessment also provides opportunities for accessing funding for research and instruction.

3.2 The External Expert Team

The external assessment is conducted by a team of experts. The quality of the external assessment is, on the one hand decided by the quality of the self-assessment, on the other hand by the quality of the expert team. Much attention has to be paid to the nomination of the expert team.

Composition of the Expert Team

An effective expert team, commissioned to carry out an external assessment, should have at least 5 members which should include:

- A chairperson who needs to be an expert in the field and should have the confidence of those who are in the team. If possible, the chair should have experience with management structures in higher education institutions. He/she must be a senior person with experience.
- At least one other expert on the subject area/discipline in question who must have authority and is recognized by the academic world as leading experts.
- An expert from the labour market area taking up graduates or a representative of the professional association
- A quality assurance expert or an expert in education/learning processes.

- An expert on students affairs

If the external assessment is organized by the IUCEA, the expert teams should have an international composition and regional character as far as possible. National Commissions and Councils within the region should involve regional experts as much as possible in external programme assessments.

One can invite retired academics to participate because they are more independent and have more time available. However, it is also important to have members still working in the field and with a good knowledge of recent developments in the field.

Selection and Appointment of the Expert Team

When selecting external experts, care should be taken that the following competences are covered by the review panel, taking into account the requirements on a case-by-case basis:

1. proven qualification in the relevant discipline;
2. knowledge of the field based on pertinent activities;
3. research in the relevant discipline and familiarity with the research environment at higher education institutions;
4. verifiable international experience;
5. experience in quality management and quality assurance in higher education;
6. experience in management and organizational structures at higher education institutions;
7. teaching experience as well as experience in the development, implementation and evaluation of curricula.

To get a good team, the IUCEA or the national commissions/councils will have to establish a pool of experts drawn nationally and regionally. This can be achieved by extending invitations to senior staff members of the universities to apply for the position of experts. The best external experts should be selected based on the competencies listed above.

From the pool of experts, IUCEA or the national quality assurance agency (commission or council) can compose the expert team. The proposed composition of the expert team has to be sent to the faculties to be assessed to see if there is any serious objection against anyone of the candidates. If there is an objection, the reasons for the objection have to be provided in writing by the institution whose programme is to be assessed. The appointing authority will have to review the reasons for objection and if necessary, appoint another person to the expert team.

3.3 The Task of the External Expert Team

The task of the expert team can be described as follows:

- *To form an opinion about the quality of the programme and the quality of the educational process, including the organization of education and the standard of the graduates on the basis of information supplied by the faculty (the self-assessment report (SAR) and additional information) and by means of discussions held on site. In assessing quality, the team must look at the requirements and expectations of the student, the faculty/discipline and society, and, in particular, prospective employers.*
- *To make suggestions on quality improvement.*

The task of the expert team is not an easy one. The team is expected to combine two missions:

- The team members should listen to the faculty and act as colleagues, using their expertise and experience to offer advice and recommendations.

- At the same time, the team has to write a report that might be made public or remain confidential. However, the team will give its independent verdict on the quality of the programme in that report.

In one way, the team of experts has to act collegially and in the other way, it has to remain independent. It will not always be easy to combine the divergent views of members of the team, but the team should make sure that a common understanding and verdict is reached in writing the report.

In striving to reach a common understanding and verdict, the expert team should be guided by a common definition of quality and of programme. As mentioned in Section 1 of this volume of the Handbook, there are different views on quality:

- Quality as excellence.
- Quality as fitness for purpose or fitness of purpose.
- Quality as a threshold.
- Quality as added value.
- Quality as value for money.
- Satisfaction of the client.

However for the assessment of the quality of a programme, the following definition of quality will be used:

> *Quality is achieving the goals and aims in an efficient and effective way (fitness for purpose), assuming that the goals and aims reflect the requirements of all our stakeholders in an adequate way (fitness of purpose).*

As a framework for assessing the quality of a programme, the external team has to look into how far the faculty/department is fulfilling the criteria, as formulated in the model for the programme assessment given in Section 2. The expert team should use the programme analysis model in figure 4 to conduct a detailed external programme assessment.

3.4 Leadership in the External Assessment Process

Leadership and management in the process of external assessment is crucial. For external teams to be more successful in this process, there is need to assign leadership roles to some of the experienced team members. The team needs to have an effective Chairperson and a Secretary for effective assessment process.

The Chairperson

The Chairperson is a key member of the external assessment team. He or she should be an expert in the discipline and must have sufficient experience in programme assessments and must possess good leadership skills. The task of the Chairperson will normally include:

- Chairing all meetings of the expert team members;
- Leading the expert team in all the activities of the assessment process;
- Assigning to members tasks in the assessment;
- Coordinating the members in the drafting of the assessment report;
- etc.

The Secretary

Because all assessments should be done in equivalent similar way, it is important that the IUCEA provides the secretary of each expert team. Normally the secretary will come from one of the national councils/commissions. The secretary acts as project leader during the assessment. He or she:

- checks the self-evaluation report for completeness and compliance with the requirements made on it;
- maintains contact with the faculty/department about the planning of the assessment;
- performs various preparatory activities for the team, including a comparative analysis of a number of aspects of the self-evaluation reports;
- makes preparations for the team's field visit;
- files the documents referring to the assessment process.

The secretary has the following specific tasks:

- To monitor the team's working procedure and compliance with the assessment protocol
- The secretary is the connecting link between the Institution and the team. His or her primary responsibility is to monitor the assessment process. Is the panel following the guidelines laid down for it? Is it maintaining its independence? Are agreed procedures followed? Are all facets of quality considered?
- To support the team with specific expertise
- The secretary supports the team in the fulfillment of its duties. As the chairperson's right-hand person, he or she plays an active role in the drafting of the assessment reports. Although not formally a member of the team, the secretary does contribute specific skills in the fields of quality assessment and policy development in higher education.
- To archive the audit trail. The secretary is responsible for keeping the documents relating to each assessment at least until the end of the assessment process.

3.5 The Training of the External Expert Team Members

Assessing quality is a specific skill. Normally, experts in a team are specialists in a discipline and may not have much experience in evaluation or quality assessment. Therefore, the experts must be trained on programme assessment beforehand. The training may be organized in a separate workshop or might be connected with the start of the site visits. The training of peer reviewers may take about 4 days.

All members should have knowledge of the basic ideas of quality and quality assessment; they all need to be aware of the dos and don'ts. The basic elements of the training are:

- What is quality?
- How can quality be measured?
- How to use the quality model?
- How to cope with criteria and standards set by competent authorities?
- How to formulate a frame of reference for the assessment?

- How to read the self-assessment report?
- How to formulate questions?
- How to organize the interviews?
- How to behave during the assessment?
- How to write the external assessment report?

3.6 Independence and Confidentiality

The expert teams are expected to assess the quality of the programs in an authoritative, critical and independent way. Therefore, the teams must conform to high standards of quality. Safeguards are necessary to make sure that these standards can be met and to demonstrate that they are actually fulfilled.

The team and the team members have to act independently. The independence of the team and its members means that their judgment is not influenced by the institution or programme under review or by any other interested parties. An important safeguard in this respect is the disclosure procedure, which means that any potential conflict of interest, bias or undue influence is reported and undesirable effects are minimized through clear agreements. This is not only aimed at finding and preventing actual undesirable influences, but also to detect what could give the impression of undue influence. A number of evidently undesirable situations (such as financial interests) are explicitly forbidden. The rules of conduct describe how to deal with such situations.

General safeguards

General safeguards regarding the independence of panels are:

- Team members who are (or were) committed to institution or programs under review, do not participate in the assessment thereof
- The team as a whole is responsible for the definitive assessments
- The definitive assessment reports are presented in draft form to the participating institutes for factual correction and to check whether adequate use was made of all relevant information
- There is a procedure for appeal against the assessments.

Specific measures

- The faculty/department under review must report any potential conflict of interest, bias or undue influence regarding candidates for panels.
- The members of the expert team should sign a declaration of independence form. The members commit themselves to maintain an independent position during the assessment and not to allow undue influence to affect their judgement. Completing and signing the independence form is a requirement for installation as a team member
- potential conflicts or tensions that are reported in the declaration of independence form (or by other means) are discussed in the committee and an assessment is made to what extent these could unduly affect the judgment (or appear to do so). Measures are then taken to avoid undesirable effects. Such measures range from completely or partially excluding an expert from the assessment, to carefully counterbalancing or otherwise neutralizing undesirable effects. The report should states how potential tensions were detected and how these were dealt with in order to warrant the independence of the judgement.

- The team members must reconfirm or update their declaration during the final committee meeting and state that they have actually fulfilled the requirements.

Rules of conduct for the expert team

- A team member must avoid any influence in the assessment from persons or parties committed to the programme or institution under review, or from other interested parties.
- A team member must maintain sufficient distance from personal ideas, convictions or preferences about the academic programme under review.
- A team member uses the following information for the assessment:
  - The self-assessment report and annexed documentation provided by the faculty/ department
  - Any additional data provided at the request of the expert team
  - The interviews held in the course of the assessment
  - Observations made during site visits.
  - The assessment made by a team member must conform to quality standards that prevail in the scientific world in general and in the relevant academic disciplines in particular.

Relevant aspects in this respect are:

- expertise and professionalism;
- independence and objectivity;
- carefulness and consistency;
- transparency and absence of bias.

  - A team member does not use information gathered in the course of the review for personal purposes. Confidential information is treated appropriately.
  - A team member who is (or was) closely involved with the institution or programme under review, does not participate in that particular assessment or in the interviews concerned.
  - A team member does not accept presents or remunerations from the programme or institution under review.
  - A team member does not have financial or commercial stakes in the programme or institution under review, nor in any associated companies or organizations.

Therefore, it is important that the expert team and each member individually, act independently and without any conflict of interest. If a member has any connection with the programme to be assessed, he or she should not participate in the peer review process of the programme concerned. To assure independence and eliminate conflict of interest, all members of the team will sign the *declaration of independence Form* (Appendix 2)

The team members are also bound to confidentiality about everything they will hear or read about the quality of the programme under assessment. The Self-assessment report and all interviews are confidential.

3.7 Preparation for the site visit

Before the expert team visits the faculty/department, it has to prepare itself for the site visit. This might be done in connection to the training or in a separate meeting. The basic elements of the preparation are:

- Formulation of the frame of reference for the specific programme
- Discussion of the SAR(s)
- Discussion of the programme of the site visit

Formulation of the frame of reference for the specific programme

Every expert has implicit ideas about the quality of a programme or the qualities of the graduates. However, individual frames of reference will differ, due to different backgrounds and different experiences. Therefore, the first tasks of the expert team will be to make the implicit opinions explicit and to formulate a frame of reference acceptable to all team members. It is against this background that the team will assess the faculties.

The frame of reference to be formulated by the expert team is not a sketch of an ideal curriculum, but should be considered as a set of minimum requirements for a programme as seen by the team. It contains the minimum requirements for graduates to meet in a special field. What makes a biologist a biologist? What makes an electrical engineer an electrical engineer?

Topics to be treated in the frame of reference	
Expected Learning outcomes	What are, according to the expert team, the expected learning outcomes for this programme?
Content of the programme	What are, according to the team, the core courses of this programme? What electives should be available?
Role of the internship	What role does internship play in the programme? Should it be compulsory or optional?
Role of project work/thesis	Should the programme include project work? Should the programme include research? What form should these take?
Student assessments	How are students' achievements of learning outcomes assessed?

Using the frame of reference, the expert team should always bear in mind that the learning outcomes as formulated by the faculty have to be the starting point for the external assessment. The intention is not to impose criteria and standards from outside. However, the learning outcomes formulated by the faculty should be discussed to see how far they are comprehensive and explicit at the academic level. And, of course, there will be a benchmark to see how far the faculty meets the criteria and standards, set by the competent authorities.

Discussion of the SAR (S)

As soon as the faculty has sent the self-assessment report to the expert team, each member will study the report carefully before the team comes together in a preliminary meeting. As a starting point for the discussions during the preliminary meeting, each member will be invited to answer the following questions with regard to the self-assessment report:

- Is the report sufficiently critical and analytical?
- Have the problems that face the faculty been clearly formulated? Has the faculty indicated clearly how it will cope with the problems?

- Are you able to form a picture of the content of the curriculum, given the description in the report?
- Have the expected learning outcomes been satisfactorily operationalized?
- Do you think the objectives and goals have been satisfactorily translated into the programme?
- Do you think the curriculum reflects sufficient academic content?
- Is the curriculum well balanced?
- Can the programme, as described in the report, be done in the set time?
- Do you think it is possible to produce good graduates with this curriculum?
- Is there additional information needed

The members will submit the answers to these questions to the secretary of the team, who will compare the information and see if the SAR was adequate for the site visit. If needed, the secretary will ask for additional information.

During the first meeting, the team will discuss the Self-assessment reports and formulate questions to be asked during the site visit. The secretary put the questions together and makes a list of the questions according to the interviews during the site visit.

Discussion of the site visit programme

A programme for site is necessary tool to structure and guide the entire process. This programme needs to be developed and discussed by the External Expert Team. Such a programme should highlight the key activities (interviews, group discussions, documentary review, visit to facilities) to be undertaken during the visit. The chairperson of the team will confirm the programme for the site visit in consultation with the faculty according to a given format (see Table 5). Before hand, appointments will have been made with earmarked staff members and students by the team for interviews.

Table 5: Template of a Programme for site visit

Time	Activity
15:00 on the day before the official visit	Team members meet in the hotel for information about their task and discussion on the SAR, any specific questions, and the programme of the site visit.
18:00	Reception by the Rector/VC and other officials
Day 1 9:00	Courtesy call to the Head of the Institution
9:00 - 17:00	interviews with: - the writers of the self-assessment report - students - staff members - curriculum committee/examination - committee student advisers
19:00-20:00 20:00	Dinner for the expert team Short meeting for discussion on the findings of the day and for setting the programme for the next day
Day 2 9:00 - 11:00	interviews with the faculty board additional interviews, if needed visit to facilities
11:00 - 12:00	Meeting with the management of the institution
12:00 - 13:00	Lunch for the expert team
13:00 - 16:00	Formulation of the findings
16:00 - 16:30	Feedback to the faculty board

3.8 The Actual Site Visit

Once the programme for the site visit has been discussed and agreed upon by the institution and the external team, the actual visit can be confirmed. It is a common practice that on the first day of the visit, the team should pay a courtesy call to the head of the institution to introduce the team and the purpose of the visit and to receive an official welcome to the institution. Once these formalities have been concluded, the team can proceed to collect the information on the programme under assessment.

Collection of Information

The main task of the External Expert Team is to collect information on the programme to validate the information provided in the SAR. The Team needs to consider the fact that a lot of information about a programme and its delivery is contained in existing documents. A good starting point in understanding the programme is to review documents.

Interviews with the key stakeholders including students, staff, management and the Self-assessment committee members are an important activity in programme assessment. The interviews may start with a discussion involving the writers of the self-assessment report. In this interview, the team can ask for clarification of any obscurities and explanation of any topics that are not totally clear.

The interviews with the students are purposely planned to take place before the interviews with the staff members. The students are a very rich source of information, but the information needs to be checked and tested against the opinion of the staff members. Student interviews are important to get an insight into the study load, the teaching competences of the staff, and the coherency of the programme, to find out if they are acquainted with the learning outcomes/objectives, the organization of the curricula and the facilities. These student interviews should be held in the absence of staff members, so that they can speak freely. The size of the student groups is ideally about ten each time. It's best to talk to about 10 students from the first year, 10 from say the second and third years, and 10 who are nearly at the end of their studies. The composition of the student panels requires special attention. It is important that the group is as far as possible representative of the whole student population in that programme. It is better not to leave the invitation of students to the faculty or the staff. The best way is to ask a student organization (if there is any) to nominate the students. If there is no such organization, the expert team should invite students at random.

Interviews with staff members should be used for discussion on the content of the curriculum, the goals and objectives/expected learning outcomes. "Why and how did you choose this pro- gram?". Other topics to be discussed include the examinations, the final paper (if any), the final year research projects, etc. It is advisable to talk with groups of about 10 staff members and with the plenary team. Only form subcommittees when it is absolutely necessary.

Other interviews may be held with members of a curriculum committee and with members of the committee responsible for examinations. This will depend on the national context. During the interview with the curriculum development committee, the question of how the curriculum is kept up to date should be discussed as well as the question on how innovations are planned and realized, etc. The interview with the examination committee must clearly show how the quality of the examinations and degrees is assured.

One other key activity of site visits is the actual tour of the facilities: Lecture halls, working group rooms, laboratories, practical rooms, libraries, etc. During this tour, it will be possible to feel the atmosphere in a lecture hall with students. The team can split up into small groups when visiting the facilities

It is advisable to organize an open hour where individual staff members and individual students can talk with the experts. The secretary should ensure that this open hour is made well known to the faculty. A staff member or student who wishes to talk with the team should go directly to the chairperson of the team. The faculty does not need to know who is talking to the team.

An important question is: "Should a team attend lectures?" The quality of education depends foremost on the interaction between staff and students. It is logical that the experts should attend lectures, tutorials and seminar or research groups. However, given the short time for the site visit it is quite impossible to do so. To get an impression of how things are going in the lecture halls, a team can agree to walk into a lecture hall "in action" to feel the atmosphere. However, it must be stressed that it is not a responsibility of the team to assess an individual staff member.

Formulating the findings

The afternoon of the second day is used for drawing up the findings. There are about three hours available for this difficult task. The best method is as follows:

- Completion of the checklist by the individual members
- Discussion of topics to be treated in the oral report
- Formulation of the oral report by chairman and secretary.

Members will use the first hour to complete the checklist (see Appendix 1). It is very important to fill out the list on the spot. Do not take the list home for completion. Of course, a mature verdict is important, but so is a first impression. Another reason for doing it at the end of the visit is that the chairperson needs the list in order to prepare the draft report.

The committee members are requested to give a mark between 1 and 7 for the various aspects. The reason for this is twofold: on one hand, it confronts the team with possible discrepancies between the verbal verdicts and the graded verdicts after processing the information. "We all say that a certain aspect may be assessed as good; however, when looking at the marks we are only going to award an 'adequate'. How is that possible?" On the other hand, this grading is necessary for the final report.

To have some idea of the value of the figures, bear the following ideas in mind:

- Score 1-2 when you believe this aspect should be considered as critical. The university senate or faculty board has to act directly. Something has to be done immediately and cannot wait
- Score 3 when you believe this aspect is unsatisfactory. It must be improved, but does not directly threaten the quality of the graduate.
- Score 4 when you believe the situation is satisfactory. The faculty may be satisfied, but there is no reason to be proud.
- Score 5 when you believe this topic can be assessed as more than satisfactory, but not excellent.
- Score 6 when you believe this topic can be assessed as more than satisfactory and can be seen as an example of good practice.
- Score 7 when you believe this topic can be assessed as excellent. The faculty can be proud of it and it is certainly a strong point.

After completing the checklist, the chairperson will draw up an inventory of the topics to be treated in the oral presentation. Therefore, it will be handy to mark the topics in the checklist. Based on experience, it seems that about 45 minutes is needed to discuss the topics. The chair will formulate the content of the oral presentation, based on the discussions with all members. In these 45 minutes, the other members can use the time to visit facilities, if this is still needed.

The oral presentation or Exit Reporting

The oral presentation to the management of the institution and to the faculty board at the end of the visit holds a special position in the process. Sometimes, findings and conclusions are not really suitable for the report, but the team would like to make a critical statement about them. In that case, the oral presentation can be used to formulate strongly worded recommendations. In order to do justice to this principle, the oral presentation is not public; the team reports to top management and key members of the faculty board. The chairperson should stress that this is an interim exit report; some conclusions may change during the final discussion on the report. It is advisable not only to mention the faculty's weaknesses, but also its strengths. Give the major recommendations for enhancing the quality of the programme.

3.9 The Expert Team's Report

After a visit to the faculty, the chairperson will write a first draft of the report, using the completed checklists and the minutes of the oral presentation. Table 3 gives an outline of the content of the assessment report. The report must make a presentation of the expert team composition and its mandate.

When the expert team assesses similar programme in other universities, the expert team should try to give in a general chapter a comparison of the programmes, the state-of-the-art of the discipline and the view of the expert team on the developments. The team should not spend too much time describing its ideas about desired developments in their field. Of course, the experts should make use of the opportunity to reflect on them, but these reflections should not delay a rapid feedback to the faculties, who will wish to take immediate action based on the findings of the expert team.

The 1st draft of report of the expert should be discussed by the team members. The 2nd draft should be sent to the faculty for comments. The comments should concern only factual errors and inaccuracies, not the differences in opinion. The expert team will decide what to do with the comments. After the feedback from the faculty, the chairperson of the expert team should send the final report both to the Vice-Chancellor and to the Dean of the faculty responsible for the programme.

If the faculty disagrees with the way the assessment is done or disagree with the findings of the expert team, it may contact the organizers of the assessment (IUCEA or the Commissions/Councils for Higher Education). The commissioning body should establish an independent committee to assess the merits of the complaints.

In most cases, the reports of the external assessment are confidential. The university will decide if it will make the report public or not. At least the university will use the report for improvement and for formulating the quality plan.

Concluding Remarks

The guidelines given in this Section are intended to help the expert team, not to make external quality assessment a bureaucratic process. Each team of experts will tend to look for its own

approach; every discipline is different. The guidelines should not be a straitjacket. However, it should take very weighty arguments to deviate from the process described. The approach given here will save the experts time and offer faculties a fair assessment based on the tool presented in Section 4 of this volume of the Handbook.

SECTION 4:

PROGRAMME ASSESSMENT TOOL

4.0 Introduction

In Section two of this volume, we introduced the Model for programme assessment. The Model was developed to provide a framework for analyzing quality of programmes in East Africa. The Model looks at key aspects of a programme. For each of the aspects, (sub) criteria are formulated under the heading of the aspect. The Criterion concerning that aspect is given in a box. The criterion shows what is commonly expected from an institution as defined by the national commissions and councils in East Africa. If the national commissions and councils have not mentioned a specific criterion, but the criterion is recognized internationally as important, the criterion is mentioned.
A set of questions and/or statements is drawn up to help the faculty/department to find evidence if the criteria are being met. The questions-set are not meant as a compulsory list that has to be completed. It is not a questionnaire to be answered point by point. It must be seen as a tool to collect information and evidence. The questions are not exhaustive and the assessment team can ask other relevant questions on the programme.

For us to discover the quality of the programme, all aspects of the programme defined in the model and as presented in this tool must be assessed. In assessing each aspect, the following steps are to be taken:

- Give a description of the state-of-the-art of the aspect of the programme;
- Make a critical analysis of the state-of-the-art. (Is one satisfied with it or not?)
- Evaluate the strengths and weaknesses concerning the mentioned aspect in relation to defined quality and capacity indicators;
- What evidence is there that the programme is meeting the criteria?
- If there are problems or if you are not satisfied, what actions should be taken to overcome the shortcomings?

4.1 The Quality Aspects to be Assessed

The following are the key aspect of a programme that needs to be assessed to determine the quality of the programme:

1. Requirements of stakeholders

The faculty/department, responsible for the programme has a clear idea about the relevant demands and needs of all stakeholders.

Explanation

Higher Education has many stakeholders and all stakeholders have their own idea and explanations about quality. These stakeholders include:

- The government or the state
- The employers
- The academic world

- The students
- The parents
- The Society at large

Each stakeholder will appreciate different aspects of quality and because all stakeholders have their own ideas and expectations, it can be said that Quality is a matter of negotiation between the academic world and the stakeholders. In this negotiation process, each stakeholder needs to formulate, as clearly as possible, its requirements. The institution (faculty or department) as supplier of the academic training must try to reconcile all these different wishes and requirements. As far as possible, the requirements of all stakeholders should be translated into the expected learning outcomes of the programme.

Looking for evidence

- Does the institution have a clear idea about the requirements set by the government?
- How does the institution know the needs and requirements of the labour market?
- How does the institution analyze the needs and requirements of the students/parents
- How does the institution analyze the needs and requirements of the society?
- How does the institution balance the requirements of the different stakeholders?

2. Expected learning outcomes

The programme/curriculum has clearly formulated learning outcomes (knowledge, skills, attitude) reflecting the relevant demands and needs of all stakeholders.

Explanation

Before the quality can be assessed, there is a need to know clearly what students are expected to learn. Learning outcomes must therefore be clearly formulated. Students come to the university to learn something. Therefore, we have to formulate very clearly what we expect the student to learn and what we expect our graduates have learned in terms of knowledge, skills and attitude. The expected learning outcomes form the starting point for the self-assessment. There should be a distinction between generic academic skills and discipline specific skills. Looking at this aspect, one have to make a clear distinction between ELO's and programme objectives:

A learning outcome is the specification of what a student should learn as the result of a period of specified and supported study (*The graduate will be able to…..*).

An objective is a specific statement about what is expected from the programme (*the programme will contribute to a better understanding…*)

Looking for Evidence

- What are the expected learning outcomes (ELO) of the programme?
- How does the ELO fit into the mission of the institution as a whole?
- Does the labour market express specific requirements for graduates to meet? Is there a well-defined job profile for the graduates of this programme?
- How do you try to tune the programme to the labour market?
- To what extent do we think the learning outcomes have been achieved?
- Do we have any plans to adjust the learning outcomes? Why?

THE PROCESS CELL 3 – 7 OF THE MODEL)

3. The Programme specifications (or programme description should ask what is this programme)

Universities are recommended to publish, for each programme they offer, a programme specification/description, which gives the intended learning outcomes of the programme in terms of:

- Knowledge and understanding that the students will have acquired upon completion of the programme
- Cognitive skills, such as an understanding of methodologies or ability in critical analysis
- Subject specific skills, such as laboratory skills, clinical skills, etc.

Explanation

The formulated learning outcomes must be translated into the programme. It is important that the objectives are well known to everybody. Therefore, universities are recommended to publish a programme specification or description for each programme they offer. The programme specification is a source of information for:

- Students
- Employers, particularly about the skills and other transferable intellectual abilities developed by the programme.
- Professional and statutory regulatory bodies that accredit higher education programmes, leading into a profession or other regulated occupations.

Looking for evidence

- Does the department has a clear programme specification/description
- Does the programme cover the following elements:
    - Name of the programme
    - Programme objectives
    - Expected learning outcomes
    - Organization of the programme (which courses in which semester?)
    - The teaching/learning methods
    - The assessment methods
- Is the description know to staff and students

4. The content of the programme/ curriculum (Should ask and answer the question: what is in the programme?)

- The programme shows a balance between specialist contents and general knowledge and skills.
- The programme takes into account and reflects the vision, mission, aims and objectives of the institution.
- The objectives and expected learning outcomes of the programme are explicit and are known to staff and students.

- The programme shows the expected learning outcomes of the graduate. Each course should clearly be designed to show the expected learning outcomes of the course. To obtain this, a curriculum map/programme map must be constructed and made.

Explanation

The content of a programme is closely linked to the translated goals and aims. The formulated learning outcomes determine the content of the programme. Furthermore, the programme must be coherent and up-to-date. For each course, it should be clear how it contributes to the achievement of the overall learning outcomes.

Looking for evidence

- Do the contents of the programme reflect the expected learning outcomes?
- Can the programme be considered as adequate for achieving the expected learning outcomes?
- Are the courses in the programme interrelated?
- Is the programme coherent?
- Is there a balance between specific and general courses in the programme?
- Do the courses demonstrate advancement over the years?
- Is the programme content up-to-date?

5. The Organization of the Programme

- The programme is sequenced in such a way that the lower level courses complement higher level courses in the programme
- The programme shows range, depth and coherence of the courses
- The programme structure shows a clear sequence of the basic courses, the intermediate courses, the specialist courses and the final thesis or dissertation.

Looking for evidence

- Why is this programme structure chosen?
- Has the programme structure been changed over the recent years? If so, why?
- Were there any requirements specified on the internal coherence of the courses? Who set these requirements?
- Is the first year of the programme a good introduction into the subsequent parts of the programme?
- Is the relation between basic, intermediate and specialist courses and the optional courses in the programme satisfactory?
- Is the link between the general programme contents and the specializations adequate?
- Is the organization of the various specializations satisfactory?
- Is the chosen academic year structure (trimester or semester or term) adequate/appropriate?
- What is the opinion of those involved?

Study load

- Does the department use a credit points system? How are credits calculated?
- Does the programme's actual study load correspond with the prescribed study load?
- Is the study load divided equally over and within academic years?
- What measures are taken in the field of programme development and/or student advice when parts of the programme deviate from the prescribed study load (too difficult/heavy or too easy)? Are these measures effective?
- Can an average student complete the programme in the planned time?

6. Didactic concept and teaching/learning strategy

- The faculty has a clear didactic concept
- The didactic concept is student oriented. Hence, the conception of teaching is the facilitation of learning.
- In promoting responsibility in learning, teachers:
  a. create a teaching-learning environment that enables individuals to participate responsibly in the learning process
  b. provide curricula that are flexible and enable learners to make meaningful choices in terms of subject content, programme routes, approaches to assessment and modes and duration of study.

Explanation

Didactic concept means the strategy developed by the faculty with regard to the didactic and pedagogical approach in the programme. What didactic and pedagogic approaches are practiced? Of course there is no single didactic concept that is valid for all. However, at least one has to think about the didactic model behind the programme.

Looking for evidence

- Is there an explicit didactic concept and teaching and learning strategy shared by all staff members? Is this adequate?
- Are the instructional methods used (organization of self-instruction for students, size of classes, organization of seminars, practical courses/internships etc.) satisfactory?
- What is the role of the computer in the programme?
- Is there sufficient variety in the teaching/learning methods?
- What circumstances prevent the use of desired instructional methods (number of students, material infrastructure, lecturer skills)?

If research is a core activity for the university:

- When do students come into contact with research for the first time?
- How is the interrelationship between education and research expressed in the programme?
- How are the research findings included into the programme?

The Practical Training:

The practical training of students (trainees) is a specific aspect in the didactic concept. Describe the position given to practical training in the programme by responding to the following questions:

- Is practical training a compulsory part of the programme? What is the size in credit points is given for the practical training?
- Have any criteria been formulated for the practical training to comply with?
- What is the level of preparation for practical training in the programme (concerning content, method and skills).
- Is the level of the practical training satisfactory?
- Are there any bottlenecks in the practical training? If so, what causes them?

If community attachment/internship or industrial attachment is part of the practical teaching and learning strategies for this programme:

- Is community attachment a compulsory part of the programme? What credit points are given for this activity?
- Is there a clear policy for students and staff engaged in the community attachment?
- Is the management (supervision) of the attachment satisfactory?
- Are there any bottlenecks in the community-training component?
- How are students prepared for community attachments?
- How is the assessment for community attachment done?

7. Student assessment

- The system of assessment and examination provides an effective indication of whether the students have reached the expected learning outcomes of the programme or its components.
- The tests, evaluations and examinations are in line with the content and learning objectives of the various parts of the programme.
- The programme provides individual students with adequate feedback concerning the extent to which the various learning objectives have been achieved.
- The assessment system ensures adequate consistency of the student assessments.
- The assessment is adequately organized (as regards e.g. announcement of the results, opportunities to re-sit tests or examinations, compensation arrangements etc.).
- The examination committee functions adequately and performs its statutory tasks fully.

Explanation

Student assessment is one of the most important elements of higher education. The outcomes of such assessments have a profound effect on students' future careers. It is therefore important that assessment is carried out professionally at all times and takes into account the extensive knowledge that exists on testing and examination processes. Assessment also provides valuable information for institutions about the efficiency of teaching and learner support.

Student assessment procedures are expected to:

- Be designed to measure the achievement of the intended learning outcomes and other programme objectives;
- Be fit for purpose, whether diagnostic, formative or summative;
- Have clear and published grading/marking criteria;
- Be undertaken by people who understand the role of assessment in the students' Progression towards achieving the knowledge and skills associated with their intended Qualification; where possible, not relying on the verdicts of single examiners;
- Take into account all the possible consequences of examination regulations;
- Have clear regulations covering student absence, illness and other mitigating Circumstances;
- Ensure that assessments are conducted securely in accordance with the institution's stated procedures;
- Be subject to administrative verification checks to ensure the accuracy of the Procedures;
- Inform students clearly about the assessment strategy being used for their programme, what examinations or other assessment methods they will be subjected to, what will be expected of them, and the criteria that will be applied to the assessment of their Performance.
- Informs the teaching and learning process

Looking for evidence

- To what extent do the assessments and examinations cover the content of the courses and programme? To what extent do the assessments and examinations cover the objectives and learning outcomes of the courses and of the programme as a whole?
- Do the assessments have clear and published grading/marking criteria? Are the pass/fail criteria clear?
- Are a variety of assessment methods used? What are they?
- Are the assessment/examination regulations clear?
- Are the procedures clear? Are they well known? Well followed?
- Are there any safeguards in place to ensure objectivity in the assessment process?
- Are students satisfied with the procedures? What about complaints from students?
- Do clear rules exist for re-assessments and are students satisfied with these?
- Is there a special form of student assessment is the final project (essay, thesis or assignment)?
- Do clear regulations exist for the final project/final essay?
- Are the criteria for the final project clear?
- Is the level of the final project/final essay satisfactory?
- Do any bottlenecks exist for producing the final project? If so, why?

INPUT VARIABLES (CELL 8-12)

A department's quality not only depends on the programme itself. There are a number of input variables that also do determine the quality of the programme and its delivery. Therefore, in assessing the quality of a programme,

we have to look at the preconditions set for delivering the programme:

- The quality of the programme will be nearly impossible to achieve without qualified and competent academic and support staff
- The quality of the entering students will influence the quality of our process and the quality of the output.
- Besides human resources, financial resources are equally important for delivery of a quality programme. Financial resources are important for the programme's funding and financing for the facilities.

8. Quality of Academic Staff

- The staff are competent and qualified
- The size of the teaching staff is sufficient to deliver the curriculum and suitable in terms of the mix of qualifications, experience, aptitudes, age, etc.
- Recruitment and promotion of academic staff are based on merit system, which includes teaching, research and services
- Duties allocated are appropriate to qualifications, experience, and aptitude.
- Time management and incentive system are directed to support quality of teaching and learning.
- There are provisions for review, consultation, and redeployment.
- Termination, retirement and social benefits are planned and well implemented.
- There is a well-planned staff appraisal system based on fair and objective measures in the spirit of enhancement which are carried out regularly

Explanation

The quality of a programme depends on the interaction between the academic staff and the students. We expect that the academic staff are competent and qualified. Competent teaching staff are able to:

- Design and deliver a coherent teaching and learning programme
- Apply a range of teaching and learning methods and select methods most appropriate to desired learning outcomes
- Employ a range of techniques to assess students' work and match these to intended learning outcomes
- Monitor and evaluate their own teaching performance and evaluate programmes they deliver
- Reflect upon their own teaching practices

Qualified staff means the persons engaged in the delivery of the programme have the relevant qualifications in that discipline. There will be no quality without qualified and competent staff. Looking at the criteria, we have to look at:

- The size of the staff and their qualifications
- The staff/HR management

Size of the staff and their qualifications

Use Table 3 to specify the number of staff. The term staff covers full-time and part-time teaching staff and visiting lecturers/professors. Mention possible vacancies separately, and specify the reference date for the data. Specify the staff/student ratio and the staff/graduate ratio as per Table 4.

Table 6: Size of staff and their qualification

Category	M	F	Total		Percentage of PhDs
			People	FTEs *	
Professors					
Full-time teachers					
Part-time teachers					
Visiting lecturers					
Support staff					
Total					

** FTE stands for Full Time Equivalent. This is a unit to calculate the investment of time. 1 FTE is equal to about 40 hours per week (full-time employment). A staff member with a weekly appointment of 8 hours is 0.2 FTE.*

Table 7: Staff/student ratio and staff/graduate ratio (please specify the year)

Total FTE for the training*	Number of Students	Number of graduates Year:	Number of students per FTE-training	Number of graduates per FTE-graduates

*Realistically estimate of the number of FTEs used for the training. The number of students enrolled in the programme at the beginning of the academic year. If this number is not considered to be representative, please specify what it should be made in the text.

Looking for evidence

- Is the academic staff competent and qualified for their job?
- From which institutions have the greatest percentage of the academic staff obtained their qualifications from?
- Are the competencies and expertise of the staff adequate for delivering this programme?
- Are there any problems with the human resources? Age profile? Vacancies difficult to fill? What difficulties are there in attracting qualified staff?
- What policy is pursued with regard to the employment of staff, both in teaching and research?
- What about teaching load? The staff/student ratio? The staff/graduate ratio?
- How many contact hours of service-instruction are given in other programmes and departments?

Staff management

- Does the department have a clearly formulated staff management structure?
- Is staff recruitment based on experience in teaching and research?

- Is there a system of staff appraisal?
- What role do teaching qualifications and teaching activities play in the career of the staff members?
- Is there any human resource policy to guide human resources management?
- What does the department think of its HR policy so far?
- What future developments are there?
- How are teachers prepared for the teaching task?
- Is the teaching delivered by the staff supervised and assessed? By who?

9. Quality of support staff

There is adequate support in terms of staffing at the libraries, laboratories, administration and student services.

Explanation

Programme quality depends mostly on interaction between staff and students. However, academic staff cannot perform well without the quality of the support staff. These might be staff members who support the library, laboratories, computer facilities etc.

Looking for evidence

- Are the library support staff members competent and sufficient?
- Are the laboratories support staff members competent and sufficient?
- Are the computer facilities support staff members competent and sufficient?
- Are the administrative support staff members competent and sufficient?

10. The Profile of the Student

- There are clearly formulated admission criteria for undergraduate and graduate programmes
- If students admission involves selection, the procedure and criteria are clear, adequate and transparent

Explanation

The quality of the output depends a lot on the quality of the input. This also concerns the students admitted for the programme.

The intake

- Give a summary of the intake of first year students using Table 8
- Give a summary of the total number of students enrolled in the programme using Table 6.

Table 8: Intake of first-year students (last 5 academic years)

	Full-time			Part-time		
Academic year	**M**	**F**	**Total**	**M**	**F**	**Total**

Table 9: Total number of students (last 5 academic years)

	Full-time			Part-time		
Academic year	**M**	**F**	**Total**	**M**	**F**	**Total**

Looking for evidence

- How do you analyze the development of the student intake? Reasons to worry? Causes of problems? Prospects for the future?
- What are the admission procedures? Are students selected? If so, how are they selected?
- What are the requirements?
- What policy is pursued with regard to the intake of students? Does the department aim to increase the intake or to stabilize it? Why?
- What measures are taken to effect the quality and size of the intake? What effect do these measures have?

11. Student Advice and Support

- Student progress is systematically recorded and monitored, feed back to students and corrective actions are made where necessary.
- In establishing a learning environment to support the achievement of quality student learning, teachers do all in their power to provide not only a physical and material environment which is supportive of learning and which is appropriate for the activities involved, but also a social or psychological one.

Explanation

How students are monitored and supported by staff is essential to a good student career. A university must ensure that a good physical, material, social and psychological environment is in place.

Looking for evidence

- What role do staff members play in informing and coaching students?
- What role do they play in integrating students into the department?
- How is the information flow to potential students organized? Is sufficient attention paid to the requirements of their educational background?
- Does the future student get a good impression of the education offered? Is the information evaluated? If so, what happens with the results?
- How are students informed about the study programme?
- Is attention paid to study progress? Is student progress recorded? Does the recording lead to problems being pointed out in time? When is first contact made with problem cases? Does this result in remedial and/or preventive actions being introduced for the individual student or programme development?

- Is special attention paid to coaching first-year students? If so, how does it work?
- Are there specific facilities to provide study skills for students with problems? Are these available within the department, the faculty or centrally? How is information on these matters organized?
- Is separate attention paid to coaching advanced students?
- Is assistance given in completing the final project? Where can students who get stuck with their practical training or final project get help?
- How are students advised on problems concerning course options, change of options, interruption or termination of studies?
- Is information provided on career prospects? Do students have the opportunity to familiarize themselves with the labour market by means of practical training, application courses and the like?
- If students wish to extend their course of study, are the reasons considered? If yes, what are usually the findings and what measures do they result in?
- To what extent do the structure and organization of the programme contribute to students taking on an active study approach?
- To what extent does the programme challenge student to make a satisfactory investment in their studies/programme?
- Are you satisfied with the tools available to improve study progress?

12. Facilities and infrastructure

- The physical resources to deliver the programme, including equipment, materials and information technology are sufficient
- Equipment is up-to-date, readily available and effectively deployed
- Information technology systems are set up or upgraded
- University computer centres continuously provide a highly accessible computer and network infrastructure that enables the campus community to fully exploit information technology for teaching, research and development, services and administration.

Explanation

Facilities and resources should be in line with the formulated goals and aims and with the designed programme. Facilities are also connected to the teaching/learning strategy. For example, if the philosophy is to teach in small working groups, small rooms must be available. Computer-aided instruction can only be realized with enough computers for the students. The main learning resources consist of books, brochures, magazines, journals, posters, information sheets, internet and intranet, CD-ROMs, maps, aerial photographs, satellite imagery and others.

Looking for evidence

Teaching rooms

- Are there enough lecture halls, seminar rooms, laboratories, reading rooms, and computer rooms available? Do these meet the relevant requirements?
- Is the library sufficiently equipped for education?
- Is the library within easy reach (location, opening hours)?

- Are laboratory facilities and support staff sufficient?
- Do the laboratories meet the relevant requirements?

Didactic aids and tools

- Are sufficient audio-visual aids available?
- Are there enough computers? Appropriate and enough computer programmes (computer-aided education, mathematics programmes, design programmes, etc.)?
- To what extent do the facilities/infrastructure promote or obstruct delivery of the programme?
- Is the total budget for aids and tools sufficient?

QUALITY ASSURANCE (CELL 13 – 16)

The confidence of students and other stakeholders in higher education is more likely to be established and maintained through effective and efficient quality assurance activities which ensure that programmes are well-designed, regularly monitored and periodically reviewed, thereby securing their continuing relevance and currency. A well functioning quality assurance system has at least the following elements

- Student evaluation (13)
- Curriculum design (14)
- Staff development activities (15)
- Benchmarking (16)

13. Student evaluation

- The department makes use of student evaluation on a regular basis
- The outcomes of the student evaluation are used for quality improvement
- The department provides the students with feedback on what is done with the outcomes of the evaluation.

Explanation

Students are the first to judge the quality of teaching and learning. They experience the delivery method. They have an opinion about the facilities. Of course, the information given by students has to be counterbalanced by other opinions. Nevertheless, the university is expected to carry out student evaluations and to use the outcomes for improvement.

Looking for evidence

- Does the university use student evaluations in a structured manner?
- Who is responsible for the evaluations?
- What is done with the outcome of the evaluations? Are there any examples of this contributing to improvements?
- What is the input of the students who sit on the committees involved in the internal quality assurance process?

14. Curriculum design and evaluation

- The curriculum design (or redesign) is done in a structured way, involving all stake- holders.
- There is a well functioning programme or curriculum committee
- The curriculum is regularly evaluated
- Revision of the curriculum takes place at reasonable time periods

Explanation

Developing or designing a curriculum is a special activity. Too often, a curriculum is seen as a number of courses provided by the present professors. They sometimes act like small shopkeepers, selling their own product, but not knowing what others offer. Curriculum design should start with the formulation of the expected learning outcomes. The next question will be what courses are needed to achieve the objectives and finally who will teach the courses? It is important that a curriculum is seen as a joint enterprise.

Looking for evidence

- Who is responsible for designing the curriculum?
- How is the labour market involved in the curriculum design?
- How do curriculum innovations come about? Who takes the initiative? On the basis of what signals?
- Who is responsible for implementation?
- When designing curricula, is there any benchmarking with other institutions?
- In which international networks does the department participate?
- With which institution abroad does exchange take place?
- Has the programme been recognized abroad?

Course and curriculum evaluation

- How is the programme (curriculum) evaluated? At course level? At curriculum level?
- Is the evaluation done systematically?
- How are the students involved in evaluating the education and training?
- How and to whom are the results made known?
- Is anything done with the results? How is this made transparent?

15. Staff development activities

- Staff development needs are systematically identified, in relation to individual aspirations, the curriculum and institutional requirements.
- Academic and supporting staff undertake appropriate staff development programmes related to identified needs

Explanation

It is important that the teaching staff have full knowledge and understanding of the subject they are teaching: have the necessary skills and experience to effectively communicate their knowledge and understanding to students in a range of teaching contexts; and be able to access feedback on their own performance.

Institutions should ensure that their staff recruitment and appointment procedures include a means of making certain that all new staff have at least the minimum necessary level of competence. Teaching staff should be given opportunities to develop and extend their teaching ability and should be encouraged to value their skills. Institutions should provide poor teachers with opportunities to improve their skills to an acceptable level and should have the means to remove them from their teaching duties if they continue to be demonstrably ineffective.

Looking for evidence

- Does the university have a training programme for the academic staff about:
    - Curriculum design
    - Test development and construction
    - Teaching skills
    - Computers in the class room
- Does the university offer the academic staff possibilities to develop and extend their teaching abilities by participation in conferences etc.?
- Does the university provide opportunities and support to staff for further studies?

16. Benchmarking

The faculty/department uses the instrument of benchmarking for analyzing the quality of its programme and its performance.

Explanation

UNESCO's definition of benchmark is: A standard, a reference point, or a criterion against which the quality of something can be measured, judged, and evaluated, and against which outcomes of a specified activity can be measured. The term, benchmark, means a measure of best practice performance. The existence of a benchmark is one necessary step in the overall process of benchmarking.

Benchmarking is a process that enables comparison of inputs, processes or outputs between institutions (or parts of institutions) or within a single institution over time. It is important for a faculty to compare its programmes with equivalent programmes in the country, the region and internationally. Also the performance can be compared.

Looking for evidence

- Is the university using the instrument of benchmarking? How is it using the instrument?
- Does the executive management use the collected information for decision making?
- What is done with the benchmarking?

17. The achievements: the graduates

The proof of the pudding is in the eating. In assessing our quality we have to look not only at our quality of our process, but also have to take into account the output. First of all, we must look at our graduates. Did they achieve the expected standards? Are the achieved outcomes equal to the expected outcomes? Have the graduates acquired the expected knowledge, skills and attitudes? How far the programme has achieved its expected learning outcomes can be measured against several criteria as stipulated below:

a. The profile of the graduates

- The final qualifications achieved by the graduates are in line with the formulated expected learning outcomes of the programme.
- The content and level of the graduation projects are in line with the degree (bachelor's or master's) awarded.
- Graduates are able to operate adequately in the field for which they have been trained.

Explanation

Quality has been formulated as achieving our objectives in an efficient and effective way, assuming that the goals and aims reflect the requirements of our stakeholders in an adequate way. The final test of our quality is the graduate. Did he or she really achieve the expected learning outcomes? This is not easy to measure and can only be known by means of feedback from the labour market and feedback from alumni.

Looking for evidence

- Is the average standard of our graduate satisfactory?
- Do the achieved standards match the expected standards?
- Do our graduates easily get jobs?
- Are the jobs that the graduates get in accordance with the level of graduation?
- Have any changes been signaled in the labour market prospects of graduates over the last few years? What are the prospects?

b. Pass rates and drop out rates

- The department responsible for the programme is aware the student success rate (i.e. number of graduates per year) and the duration of studies
- The department has a system for documenting the pass rate in the programme.
- The department uses the information obtained from the analysis of pass rate to improve the programme organization.

Explanation

Because the output quality has to be evaluated within the framework of the process, we have also to look at the efficiency of our provisions, among others we have to look at the pass rates and the dropout rate; the average time to complete a degree programme (graduation time); and the employability of graduates.

Pass rates or success rate: number of students, successfully finishing the programme
Dropout rate: number of students that do not finish the programme. The dropout may be enrolled in another academic programme in or outside of the department, but for the programme he or she left, it is counted as drop out.

Provide information on the pass rate and dropout rates of the various years (cohort) according to Table 10.

Table 10: Student performance (last 8 to 10 cohorts)

Academic year	Size cohort *	% first degree after			% dropout after			
		3 year	4 years	>4years	1 years	2 years	3 years	> 3 years
			**			**		

* numbers must be the same as in the intake Table 9

** percentages are cumulative.

Looking for evidence

- What is the opinion of the department about the pass rate? If not satisfactory, what measures have been taken to improve the pass rate?
- Have any fluctuations in the success rate been seen over the last five years?
- How high is the dropout rate? Are there explanations for the dropout rate?
- Does the department know where the dropout students are going?

c. Average time to graduation

- The average time for graduation is in line with the planned time (programme duration) for finishing the programme.
- The department has a system for tracking students' progress from the start to the end of the programme duration.
- The department uses the information from its tracking system to provide guidance to students and to improve on the completion rate.

Indicate the average number of years a student spends on a programme. If necessary, categorize the students in groups.

Looking for evidence

- What does the department think of the average time to graduation?
- What measures have been taken to promote graduation and to shorten the average time to graduation?
- What effect have these measures had?

d. Employability of the graduates

- The department responsible for the programme is aware the employment/unemployment rate of the graduate
- The department has a system for tracing the graduates of the programme in the labour market.
- The department uses the information obtained from the tracer studies to improve the programme.

Looking for evidence

- Does the department or faculty conduct tracer studies to assess the employability of its graduates?
- Does the department or faculty use the findings of the graduate studies to improve the programme?
- What percentage of graduates found a job within six months of graduation over the past five years? How many within a year?
- What percentage of graduates are still unemployed 2 years after graduation?

18. Stakeholders satisfaction

- The faculty/department must have a structured method to obtain feedback from all stakeholders for the measurement of their satisfaction.

Explanation

After analyzing the input, the process and the output, we have to analyze the satisfaction of all stakeholders. What do they think about our performance? How do we know that? This part may cause difficulties for the department, because it may not have any tools to measure the "satisfaction rate" yet. It does not make sense to first develop tools to collect information within the framework of the ongoing analysis. It is sufficient to see that tools are missing and to describe how the problems might be solved in the near future.

Looking for evidence

Opinion - Students

- Does the department know what students think about the courses, the programme? The teaching? The examinations?
- Is student evaluation carried out regularly? Is it done adequately?
- What is done with the outcomes of student evaluations?
- How does the department cope with complaints by students?

Opinion - Alumni (graduates)

- Does the department interview graduates on a regular basis?
- What is the opinion and feedback of graduates when they are employed?
- Is the feedback of the alumni used to adjust the programme?

Opinion-Labour market

- Do structured contacts exist with employers and the labour market for getting feedback on graduates?
- How do employers appreciate the graduates? Are there any specific complaints?
- Do the employers appreciate specific strengths?
- How do we cope with complaints from the labour market?

4.3 Additional Guidelines for Assessing Distance and Online Education

The assessment of programmes delivered through Open, Distance and e-Learning (ODeL) requires additional guidelines. This is because there are specific aspects in ODEL that requires to be evaluated to determine the quality of a programme and its delivery. In assessing ODEL programme, there are key aspects that need to be described and analyzed:

- The didactic goals (e.g. enhancing the ability to learn independently, supplementary exercises, supporting working students, etc.) as well as the teaching and learning methods (e.g. e-learning only, blended learning, traditional courses with e-learning support, virtual classroom) should be described and analyzed.
- The relationship between e-learning, compulsory attendance periods and the individual tutoring of students should be described and analyzed.
- Methods of verifying whether the students have acquired knowledge and skills upon completion of a learning activity should be described and analyzed.
- Steps for the integration of e-learning into the study programme and the development of the contents should be described, taking into account didactic principles such as interactivity, visualization, simulation, and exercises with automatic verification and feedback.
- The tools, technologies, platforms and teaching and learning environments should be specified, taking into account the necessary system requirements.
- How teachers and students are prepared for ODeL with respect to technical software and didactic elements should be described and analyzed.
- How quality of ODeL programme can be assessed and assured should be described and analyzed.

Looking for Evidence

- Are there any documents providing clear descriptions of the component units or modules of an ODeL programme or element of study, to show the intended learning outcomes and teaching, learning and assessment methods of the unit or module;
- Is the delivery system of an ODeL programme fit for its purpose, and has an appropriate availability and life expectancy?
- Is the delivery of study materials to students through, for example, emailing methods or correspondence, secure and reliable enough? Are there any means of confirming safe receipt of the study materials?
- Are the requirements and schedules for face-to-face sessions or practical training clearly published and known by students and staff?
- How are the teachers and students prepared for ODeL with respect to technical software and didactic elements for the programme?
- Does the department employ appropriate technology to deliver the programme? What ICT technology is used to support the delivery of the programme?
- Are the staff involved in ODeL carefully selected, appropriately trained and are frequently evaluated?
- Do the staff who provide support to learners in ODeL programmes have appropriate skills, and receive appropriate training and development for the tasks?

- Does the institution have a training programme for staff involved in online and distance learning? Is the programme conducted periodically? Does it incorporates tested good practices in online learning pedagogy, and ensures competency with the range of software products used by the institution?
- Are the mechanisms and system for student assessment and awarding credits for units, courses or modules adequate and reliable? Are there mechanisms to check the originality of students' works?
- Are there any mechanisms to receive formal feedback of the distance learners on their experiences in the programme?
- How is the quality of ODeL programme assessed and assured?

Appendix 1: Checklist on the quality of a programme

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
1. Requirements stakeholders. The faculty/department has a clear idea							
• about the relevant needs and requirements of the government							
• about the relevant needs and requirements of the labour market							
• about the relevant needs and requirements of the students/parents							
• about the relevant needs and requirements of the academic world							
• about the relevant needs and requirements of the society							
Overall opinion							
2. Expected learning outcomes (objectives)							
• The programme has clearly formulated learning outcomes							
• The programme promotes learning to learn and life-long learning							
• The expected learning outcomes cover generic skills and knowledge as well as specific skills and knowledge							
• The expected learning outcomes clearly reflect the requirements of the stakeholders							
Overall opinion							
3. Programme specification							
• The university uses programme specifications/programme description							
• The programme specification shows the expected learning outcomes							
• The programme specification is informative for the stakeholders							
Overall opinion							
4. Programme content							
• The programme content shows a good balance between general and specific skills and knowledge							
• The programme reflects the vision and mission of the university							
• The expected learning outcomes have been adequately translated into the programme							
• The contribution made by each course to achieving the learning outcomes is clear							
Overall opinion							
5. The organisation of the programme							
• The curriculum is coherent and all subjects and courses have been integrated							
• The curriculum shows breadth and depth							
• The curriculum clearly shows the basic courses, intermediate courses, specialist courses and the final project (thesis, etc.) activities							
• The curriculum is up-to-date							
Overall opinion							
6. Didactic concept/teaching/learning strategy							
• The staff have a clear teaching/learning strategy							
• The teaching/learning strategy enables students to acquire and manipulate knowledge academically							
• The teaching/learning strategy is student oriented and stimulates quality learning							
• The curriculum stimulates active learning and facilitates learning to learn							
Overall opinion							
7. Student assessment							
• The assessments reflect the expected learning outcomes and the content of the programme							
• Student assessment uses a variety of methods							
• The criteria for assessment are explicit and well-known							
• The standards applied in the assessment are explicit and consistent							
• The assessment schemes, the assessment methods and the assessment itself are always subject							
Overall opinion							
8. Quality of the academic staff							
• The staff is qualified and competent for the task							
• The staff are sufficient to deliver the curriculum adequately							
• Recruitment and promotion are based on academic merits							
• Duties allocated are appropriate to qualifications, experience, and skills							
• Time management and incentive systems are designed to support the quality of teaching and learning							
• Accountability of the staff members is well regulated							
• There are provisions for review, consultation, and redeployment							
• Termination, retirement and social benefits are planned and well implemented.							
• There is an efficient appraisal system							
Overall opinion							

9. Quality of the support staff								
☐ There are adequate support staff for the libraries								
☐ There are adequate support staff for the laboratories								
☐ There are adequate support staff for computer facilities								
☐ There are adequate support staff for the student services								
Overall opinion								
10 . The student								
☐ The selection of entering students (if there is selection) is adequate								
☐ There is an adequate intake policy								
☐ There is an adequate credit points system								
☐ The actual study load is in line with the calculated load								
Overall opinion								
11. Student advice and support								
☐ There is an adequate student progress system								
☐ Students get adequate feedback on their performance								
☐ Coaching for first-year students is adequate								
☐ The physical and material environment for the student is satisfactory								
☐ The social and psychological environment for the student is satisfactory								
Overall opinion								
12. Facilities and infrastructure								
☐ The lecture facilities (lecture halls, small course rooms) are adequate								
☐ The library is adequate and up-to-date								
☐ The laboratories are adequate and up-to-date								
☐ The computer facilities are adequate and up-to-date								
☐ Environmental Health and Safety Standards should meet the local requirements in all respects								
Overall opinion								
13. Student evaluation								
☐ Courses and curriculum are subject to structured student evaluation								
☐ Student feedback is used for improvement								
☐ The department provides the students with feedback on what is done with the outcomes								
Overall opinion								
14. Curriculum design & evaluation								
☐ The curriculum was developed as a joint enterprise by all the staff members								
☐ Students are involved in the curriculum design								
☐ The labour market is involved in the curriculum design								
☐ The curriculum is regularly evaluated								
☐ Revision of the curriculum takes place at reasonable time periods								
☐ Quality assurance of the curriculum is adequate								
Overall opinion								
15. Staff development activities								
☐ There is a clear vision on the needs for staff development								
☐ The staff development activities are adequate to the needs								
Overall opinion								
16. Benchmarking								
• The faculty/department uses the instrument of benchmarking to get a better view on its performance								
• The faculty/department uses the instrument of benchmarking for curriculum design								
Overall opinion								
17 Achievements/the graduates								
☐ The level of the graduates is satisfactory								
☐ The pass rate is satisfactory								
☐ The drop out rate is acceptable								
• The average time for graduation is in line with the planned time								
• The graduates can find easily a job. The unemployment rate is at acceptable level								
Overall opinion								
18 Feedback stakeholders								
☐ There is adequate structural feedback from the labour market (employers)								
☐ There is adequate structural feedback from the alumni								
Overall opinion								
Overall verdict								

Appendix 2: Disclosure of Independence and No Conflict of Interest form for members of the expert teams

1. Conflict of interest assessment

Do you perceive any risk of conflict of interest or serious appearance of such conflict in your participation in the external assessment?
No ( ) Yes ( )

If the answer is yes, please provide a brief description and analysis of the potential for conflict.

2. Declaration about financial interests

"I declare that I have no financial links with any of the persons, programmes or institutes under review and that I have not accepted and will not accept any financial or other remunerations from outside sources for my participation in the external assessment. I declare that I will report any offers of such remuneration to the chairman of the review committee."

3. Declaration of independence

"I have read the principles and rules applying to this assessment and I declare that I will follow these to the best of my ability and that I ill judge without influence from the institute, program or other stakeholders, and without bias, personal preference or personal benefit."

4. Declaration about confidentiality

"I declare that I will keep all information, gathered during the assessment will treat confidentially."

Name: Date:

Signature:

Note: If your situation with respect to potential conflict of interest changes in the course of the review, you are obligated to submit an updated disclosure statement. Information provided in this disclosure form will be restricted to authorized persons.

Appendix 3: List of Abbreviations and Acronyms

CUE	Commission for University Education – Kenya
DAAD	Deutscher Akademischer Austausch Dienst (German Academic Exchange Service)
ECA	European Consortium for Accreditation
ECTS	European Credit transfer System
EDIA	Evaluation, Development, Implementation, Audit/Assessment
ENQA	European Association of Quality Assurance
EQA	External Quality Assessment
FTE	Full-Time Equivalent
HEC	Higher Education Council – Rwanda
HEI	Higher Education Institution
HR	Human resource
HRK	German Rectors' Conference
INQAAHE	International Network for Quality Assurance Agencies in Higher Education
IQA	Internal Quality Assurance
ISO	International Organization for Standardization
IUCEA	Inter-University Council of East Africa
JQI	Joint Quality Initiative
NACTE	National Council for Technical Education
NAO	Netherlands Accreditation Organization. Nowadays NVAO
NCHE	National Commission for Higher Education – Burundi
NCHE	National Council for Higher Education – Uganda
NVAO	Netherlands/Flemish Accreditation Organization
PDCA	Plan-Do-Check-Act
PI	Performance indicator
QA	Quality Assurance
QAA	Quality Assurance Agency
QAD	Quality Assurance Directorate
SAR	Self-Assessment Report
SWOT	Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities and Threats analysis
TCU	Tanzanian Commission for Universities
UOTA	Universities and Other Tertiary Institutions Act

Appendix 4: Glossary

This is an international analytic glossary of issues related to quality in higher education
Each item is listed below with a core definition synthesized from various sources.

This is a dynamic glossary and the author would welcome any e-mail suggestions for amendments or additions.

The information in this Glossary may be used and circulated without permission provided the source is acknowledged.

Citation reference: Harvey, L., 2004–6, Analytic Quality Glossary, Quality Research International, http://www.qualityresearchinternational.com/glossary/
last updated December 2006.

A

Academic infrastructure: Academic infrastructure is the name given to the array of quality-related processes and practices in the United Kingdom.

Academic recognition: Academic recognition is a set of procedures and processes for the acknowledgement and acceptance (subject to conditions), between institutions and countries, of higher education qualifications.

Academic year: The academic year is:

1. The duration of a specific programme of study (which may not last a complete 12 months and is divided into terms, semesters or quarters).

2. The start and finish dates of the annual cycle of a university or national higher education system.

Access: Access is the process of enabling entry to higher education. Access has two linked but distinct meanings.

1. The general concept that relates to making higher education accessible.
2. A shorthand for programmes that provide preparation for entry to higher education, such as the UK Access to HE courses.

Access courses: Access courses are preparatory programmes for students to gain entry to higher education.

Access fund: Access fund is money specially earmarked to support non-traditional students in gaining access to higher education.

Accessibility: See access

Accountability: Accountability is the requirement, when undertaking an activity, to expressly address the concerns, requirements or perspectives of others.

Accreditation: Accreditation is the establishment or of the status, legitimacy or appropriate- ness of an institution, programme or module of study.

Accreditation body: An accreditation body is an organization delegated to make decisions, on behalf of the higher education sector, about the status, legitimacy or appropriateness of an institution, or programme.

Accreditation duration: Accreditation decisions are usually limited to a fixed and stated period of time, after which the institution or programme is required to engage in a more or less rigorous re-accreditation process.

Accreditation portfolio: An accreditation portfolio is the accumulated evidence germane to establishing accredited status.

Accreditation status: Accreditation status is the embodiment of the decision made by the accreditation body.

Accreditors: Accreditors are agencies that provide recognition to institutions as part of an accreditation process (see also accreditation body).

Additional learning opportunities: Additional learning opportunities are elements of the programme of study that augment the usual classroom teaching of the syllabus content.

Adverse action: Adverse action is a term used in the US to refer to failure to achieve/retain accreditation.(see also action)

Agency: Agency is, in the context of quality in higher education, shorthand for any organization that undertakes any kind of monitoring, evaluation or review of the quality of higher education.

Aim: An aim is an overall specification of the intention or purpose of a programme of study or institutional mission or policy.

Alumnus: An alumnus (plural alumni) is a graduate of an institution.

Approval: Approval is an overarching term to cover various forms of academic recognition of a programme or institution.

Appraisal of student learning: Appraisal of student learning is the process of providing formative and summative feedback to students on the development of their learning.

Assessment: A general term that embraces all methods used to judge the performance of an individual, group or organization.

Assessment of student learning: Assessment of student learning is the process of evaluating the extent to which participants in education have developed their knowledge, understanding and abilities.

Assessment of teaching and learning: Assessment of teaching and learning is the process of evaluating the quality and appropriateness of the learning process, including teacher performance and pedagogic approach.

Assurance: Assurance of quality in higher education is a process of establishing stakeholder confidence that provision (input, process and outcomes) fulfills expectations or measures up to threshold minimum requirements.

Audit: Audit, in the context of quality in higher education, is a process for checking that procedures are in place to assure quality, integrity or standards of provision and outcomes.

Audit panel: See review team

Audit report: An audit report is a codification of the process, findings and outcomes of the audit process, usually prepared by the auditors and project team.

Autonomy: Autonomy is being able to undertake activities without seeking permission from a controlling body.

B

Bachelor degree: A bachelor degree is the first-level higher education award, usually requiring three or four years' study but more in some medical subjects.

Benchmark: A benchmark is a point of reference against which something may be measured.

Benchmark statement: A benchmark statement, in higher education, provides a reference point against which outcomes can be measured and refers to a particular specification of programme characteristics and indicative standards.

Benchmarking: Benchmarking is a process that enables comparison of inputs, processes or outputs between institutions (or parts of institutions) or within a single institution over time.

Best practice: Best practice refers to effective, ideal or paradigmatic practice within an organization that others would benefit from adopting or adapting.

Binary system: A binary system is one that has higher education taught in two different type of institution, traditional (academic) universities alongside more vocationally-oriented institutions.

Blended learning: Blended learning is a flexible approach that combines face-to-face teaching/ learning with remote (usually internet-based) learning.

Block grant: Block grant is a term used to refer to the core funding provided by a national government (via a funding council) to a higher education institution.

Bologna process: The Bologna Process is an ongoing process of integration and harmonization of higher education systems within Europe.

C

Certification: Certification is the process of formally acknowledging achievement or compliance: it can be used to signify the achievement of an individual, such as a student, or of an institution.

Classification: Classification is the process of identifying types of institution based on their core functions or economic status.

Code of Practice: A code of practice is a documented set of recommended or preferred processes, actions or organizational structures to be applied in a given setting.

Community-based education: Community-based education (CBE) is learning that takes place in a setting external to the higher education institution.

Comparability: Comparability is the formal acceptance between two or more parties that two or more qualifications are equivalent.

Competence: Competence is the acquisition of knowledge skills and abilities at a level of expertise sufficient to be able to perform in an appropriate work setting (within or outside academia).

Compliance: Compliance is undertaking activities or establishing practices or policies in accordance with the requirements or expectations of an external authority.

Consistency (as a definition of quality): See perfection

Continuing education: Continuing education is:

1. A generic term for any programme of study (award-bearing or not) beyond compulsory education.
2. Post-compulsory education of a short-term nature that does not lead directly to a major higher education qualification.

Continuing professional development (CPD): Continuing professional development (CPD) refers to study (that may accumulate to whole programmes with awards) designed to upgrade knowledge and skills of practitioners in the professions.

Control: Control is the process of regulating or otherwise keeping a check on developments in higher education.

Co-operative education: Co-operative education includes work experience as part of the learning experience.

Corrective action: Corrective action is process of rectifying problems.

Correspondence course: A correspondence course is a study unit undertaken by the student remotely from campus via written communication with teachers.

Course: See programme

Credit: Recognition of a unit of learning, usually measured in hours of study or achievement of threshold standard or both.

Credit accumulation: Credit accumulation is the process of collecting credit for learning towards a qualification.

Credit transfer: Credit transfer is the ability to transport credits (for learning) from one setting to another.

Criteria: Criteria are the specification of elements against which a judgment is made.

Criteria-referenced assessment: Criteria-referenced assessment is the process of evaluating(and grading) the learning of students against a set of pre-specified criteria.

Curriculum: Curriculum is the embodiment of a programme of learning and includes philosophy, content, approach and assessment.

D

Degree: Degree is the core higher education award, which may be offered at various levels from foundation, through bachelors, masters to doctoral.

Degree cycle: See bachelor-master's

Delegated accountability: Delegated accountability refer to the process of allowing institutions and higher education systems to take control of ensuring quality providing they are ac- countable to principle stakeholders, not least government.

Departmental audit: See internal sub-institutional audit

Diploma: Diploma is:

1. a generic term for a formal document (corticate) that acknowledges that a named individual has achieved a stated higher education award.
2. an award for a specific level of qualification (diploma level) which in some countries is between a bachelor and a masters-level award.
3. a term for any award beyond bachelors level up to but excluding doctoral level awards, including continuing education certification.

Diploma mill: A diploma mill is an organization or institution that issues certified qualifications for an appropriate payment, with little or no requirements for the individual to demonstrate full competence at the relevant degree level in the discipline area.

Diploma recognition: See academic recognition

Diploma supplement: A diploma supplement is a detailed transcript of student attainment that is appended to the certificate of attainment of the qualification.

Dissertation: A dissertation is an extended (usually written) project involving research by the student, which contributes significantly towards a final assessment for a (higher) degree.

Distance education: Distance education is higher education undertaken by students in a set- ting remote from the physical campus of the higher education institution.

Distributed education: Distributed education occurs when the teacher and student are situated in separate locations and learning occurs through the use of technologies (such as video and internet), which may be part of a wholly distance education programme or supplementary to traditional instruction.

Doctoral degree: The doctoral degree is the highest level of award in most higher education systems.

Duration of accreditation: see accreditation duration

E

Effectiveness: Effectiveness is the extent to which an activity fulfills its intended purpose or function.

Efficiency: Efficiency is the extent to which an activity achieves its goal whilst minimizing resource usage.

Employability: Employability is the acquisition of attributes (knowledge, skills, and abilities) that make graduates more likely to be successful in their chosen occupations (whether paid employment or not).

Empowerment: Empowerment is the development of knowledge, skills and abilities in the learner to enable them to control and develop their own learning.

Enhancement: Enhancement is a process of augmentation or improvement. Equivalency examination: See accreditation of prior learning

European Credit Transfer System (ECTS): ECTS is a system for recognizing credit for learning and facilitating the movement of the recognized credits between institutions and across national borders.

Evaluation: Evaluation (of quality or standards) is the process of examining and passing a judgment on the appropriateness or level of quality or standards.

Evaluation of institutions: See external evaluation; external institutional audit

Evaluations of quality assurance mechanisms: See audit

Ex-ante assessment: Ex-ante assessment involves undertaking an evaluation of the conditions for the launch of a programme or institution.

Excellence: Excellence means exhibiting characteristics that are very good and, implicitly, not achievable by all.

Exceptional: (as a definition of quality): see excellence

Ex-post assessment: Ex-post assessment involves undertaking a review of an operational programme or institution.

External evaluation: External evaluation is:
1. a generic term for most forms of quality review, enquiry or exploration.
2. a process that uses people external to the programme or institution to evaluate quality or standards.

External evaluation team: External evaluation team is the group of people, including persons external to the programme or institution being reviewed, who undertake the quality evaluation.

External examiner: An external examiner is a person from another institution or organization who monitors the assessment process of an institution for fairness and academic standards.

External expert: External expert is someone with appropriate knowledge who undertakes a quality or standards review (of any kind) as part of a team or alone and who is external to the programme or institution being reviewed.

External institutional audit: An external institutional audit is a process by which an external person or team check that procedures are in place across an institution to assure quality, integrity or standards of provision and outcomes.

External quality assurance agency (EQA-agency): See Agency

External quality evaluation: See external evaluation

External quality monitoring (EQM): External quality monitoring (EQM) is an all-encompassing term that covers a variety of quality-related evaluations undertaken by bodies or individuals external to higher education institutions.

External review indicator: An external review indicator is a measurable characteristic pertinent to an external quality evaluation.

External sub-institutional audit: An external sub-institutional audit is a process by which an external person or team check that procedures are in place to assure quality, integrity or standards of provision and outcomes in part of an institution or relating to specific aspect of institutional provision or outcomes.

F

Faculty: Faculty is:
1. the organisational unit into which cognate disciplines are located in a higher education institution
2. a shorthand term for the academic (teaching and research) staff in a higher education institution.

Faculty audit: See internal sub-institutional audit

Faculty review: Faculty review has two different meanings, the first based on faculty as a term for academic staff, the second based on faculty as an organisational unit:
1. Faculty review is a process of reviewing the inputs, process or outputs of a faculty as an organisational unit; its structure, mode of operation, mission, aims and objectives.
2. Faculty review, (meaning review of academic staff) evaluates the performance of research- ers and teachers. (See also assesment of teaching and learning)

Fees: Fees are the financial contribution made by students to their higher education

Fitness of purpose: Fitness of purpose evaluates whether the quality-related intentions of an organization are adequate.

Fitness for purpose: Fitness for purpose equates quality with the fulfilment of a specification or stated outcomes.

Follow up: Follow up is shorthand for procedures to ensure that outcomes of review processes have been, or are being, addressed.

Formal learning: Formal learning is planned learning that derives from activities within a structured learning setting.

Formative assessment: Formative assessment is evaluation of student learning that aids understanding and development of knowledge, skills and abilities without passing any final judgment (via recorded grade) on the level of learning.

Foundation degree: A foundation degree is an intermediary (sub-degree) qualification in the UK designed in conjunction with employers to meet skills shortages at the higher technician level.

Foundation programme: A foundation programme provides an introduction to degree-level study.

Framework for Qualifications: See qualifications framework

Franchise programmes: Franchise programmes are study units of one higher education institution adopted by and taught at another institution, although the students formally obtain their qualification from the originating institution.

Full-time equivalent (FTE): Full-time equivalent is the proportion of a nominal full-time student in higher education that a non-full-time student is judged to constitute.

Further education: Further education is post-compulsory education at pre-degree level, which may include (the opportunity to take) qualifications also available at the level of compulsory schooling.

G

Grading: Grading is the process of scoring or ranking student academic work as part of assessing student learning.

Graduate: A graduate is someone who has successfully completed a higher education programme at least at bachelor degree level.

Guidelines:

H

Higher degree: A higher degree is an award beyond the basic-level higher education qualification.

Higher education: Higher education is usually viewed as education leading to at least a bachelor's degree or equivalent.

Higher Education Institution (HEI): See institution

I

Impact: Impact in the context of quality in higher education refers to the consequences that the establishment of quality processes (both internal and external) has on the culture, policy, organisational framework, documentation, infrastructure, learning and teaching practices, assessment/grading of students, learning outcomes, student experience, student support, resources, learning and research environment, research outcomes and community involvement of an institution or department.

Improvement: Improvement is the process of enhancing, upgrading or enriching the quality of provision or standard of outcomes.

Informal learning: Informal learning is:
1. learning that derives from activities external to a structured learning context.
2. unstructured learning within a structured learning environment.

Inspection: Inspection is the direct, independent observation and evaluation of activities and resources by a trained professional.

Institution: Institution is shorthand for institution of higher education, which is an educational institution that has students graduating at bachelor degree level or above.

Institutional accreditation: Institutional accreditation provides a licence for a university or college to operate.

Institutional audit: See external institutional audit; internal institutional audit.

Institution for higher education: See institution

Institutional outcomes: See outcomes

Institutional review: See external institutional audit; review

Interdisciplinary: Interdisciplinary refers to research or study that integrates concepts from different disciplines resulting in a synthesised or co-ordinated coherent whole.

Internal audit: See internal institutional audit, internal sub-institutional audit

Internal evaluation: Internal evaluation is a process of quality review undertaken within an institution for its own ends (with or without the involvement of external peers).

Internal institutional audit: Internal institutional audit is a process that institutions undertake for themselves to check that they have procedures in place to assure quality, integrity or standards of provision and outcomes across the institution.

Internal sub-institutional audit: Internal sub-institutional audit is a process that an institution has for checking that procedures are in place to assure quality, integrity or standards of provision and outcomes within a department, faculty or other operational unit or that specific issues are being complied with across the institution.

Internal quality monitoring: Internal quality monitoring (IQM) is a generic term to refer to procedures within institutions to review, evaluate, assess, audit or otherwise check, examine or ensure the quality of the education provided and/or research undertaken.

Internship: See sandwich

J

Joint degree: A degree awarded by more than one higher education institution.

K

Kitemark: Kitemark is a generic term, derived from a British symbol, for a process of ap- proval of a product or service.

L

Learning objective: see objective.

Learning outcome: A learning outcome is the specification of what a student should learn as the result of a period of specified and supported study.

League tables: League tables is a term used to refer to ranking of higher education institu- tions or programmes of study.

Level:

1. Level refers to the complexity and depth of learning.
2. Level refers to the formally designated location of a part of a study programme within the whole.

Level descriptor: A level descriptor is a statement that provides an indication of appropriate depth and extent of learning at a specific stage in the programme of study.

Licensing: Licensing is the formal granting of permission to (a) operate a new institution (b) a new programme of study (c) practice a profession.

Lifelong learning: Lifelong learning is all learning activity undertaken throughout life, whether formal or informal.

M

Management audit: Management audit, in higher education, is a process for checking that management structures and abilities are appropriate for assuring quality, integrity or standards of provision and outcomes.

Master's degree: Master's degree is an award higher than a bachelor's degree.

Mobility: Mobility is shorthand for students and academics studying and working in other institutions, whether in the same country or abroad.

Mode: Mode of study refers to whether the programme is taken on a part-time or full-time basis, or through some form of work-linked learning and may include whether taken on-campus or through distance education.

Module: A module is a formal learning experience encapsulated into a unit of study, usually linked to other modules to create a programme of study.

Module specification: Module specification is statement of the aims, objectives/learning out- comes, content, learning and teaching processes, mode of assessment of students and learning resources applicable to a unit of study.

Monitoring: Monitoring has two meanings:

1. The specific process of keeping quality activities under review;
2. A generic term covering all forms of internal and external quality assurance and improve- ment processes including audit, assessment, accreditation and external examination.

Mutual recognition: Agreement between two organisations to recognise each other's pro- cesses or programmes.

N

New collegialism:

Non-formal learning: See informal learning

Non-traditional students: Non-traditional students are those entrants to higher education who have population characteristics not normally associated with entrants to higher education, that is, they come from social classes, ethnic groups or age groups that are underrepresented.

Norm-referenced assessment: Norm-referenced assessment is the process of evaluating (and grading) the learning of students by judging (and ranking) them against the performance of their peers.

O

Objective: An objective is:

(a) a specific statement about what students are expected to learn or to be able to do as a result of studying a programme: more specifically this is a learning objective;
(b) a measurable operationalisation of a policy, strategy or mission: this is an implementation objective.

Off-shore provision: Off-shore provision is the export of higher education programmes from one country to another.

One-level degree structure: One-level degree structure is where a single programme of study results in a final (masters-level) award.

Outcomes: Outcome is:

1. Shorthand for the product or endeavours of a higher education institution (or sector), including student learning and skills development, research outputs and contributions to the wider society locally or internationally (institutional outcomes).
2. Shorthand for learning outcome (discussed elsewhere).

Outcomes-based approach: An outcomes-based approach to learning and teaching specifies in advance what the student should be able to do at the culmination of a programme of study.

Outputs: Outputs refers to the products of higher education institutions: including, graduates, research outcomes, community/business activities and the social critical function of academia.

Oversight: Oversight, in the quality context, refers to the process of keeping a quality process or initiative under observation, such that a person or organization has a watching brief on developments.

P

Peer: Peer, in the context of quality in higher education, is a person who understands the context in which a quality review is being undertaken and is able to contribute to the process.

Peer Review: Peer review is the process of evaluating the provision, work process, or output of an individual or collective who operating in the same milieu as the reviewer(s).

Perfection:

Performance indicators: Performance indicators are data, usually quantitative in form, that provide a measure of some aspect of an individual's or organisation's performance against which changes in performance or the performance of others can be compared.

Performance audit: Performance audit is a check on the competence of someone to undertake a task.

Periodic review:

Personal Development Planning (PDP): Personal development planning is a structured and supported process to assist students in arranging their own personal educational and career progression.

Ph.D. (Doctor of Philosophy): See Doctoral degree

Polytechnic: A polytechnic is a non-university higher education institution usually focusing on vocational education.

Postgraduate: A postgraduate is someone who is undertaking study at post-first degree level.

Preliminary study: Preliminary study is an initial exploration of issues related to a proposed quality review.

Primary degree: A primary degree is the first-level, higher education qualification (often synonymous with a bachelor's degree).

Prior learning: Prior learning is previous learning from informal and formal learning situations.

Process: Process, in the context of quality, is the set of activities, structures and guidelines that:
1. constitute the organization's or individual's procedures for ensuring their own quality or standards.
2. constitute the mechanism for reviewing or monitoring the quality or standards of another entity.

Profession: A profession is a group of people in a learned occupation, the members of which agree to abide by specified rules of conduct when practicing the occupation.

Professional accreditation: See programme accreditation; specialized accreditation

Professional body: A professional body is a group of people in a learned occupation who are entrusted with maintaining control or oversight of the legitimate practice of the occupation.

Professional development: See continuing professional development.

Professional programme: A professional programme is shorthand for a co-ordinated set of study elements that lead to a recognized professional qualification.

Professional recognition: Professional recognition is the formal acknowledgement of an individual's professional status and right to practice the profession in accordance with professional standards and subject to professional or regulatory controls.

Programme: Programme (or programme in US/Australian English) is shorthand for a study curriculum undertaken by a student that has co-ordinated elements, which constitute a coherent named award.

Programme accreditation: Programmes accreditation establishes the academic standing of the programme or the ability of the programme to produce graduates with professional competence to practice.

Programme aims: see aim

Programme evaluation: Programme evaluation is a process of reviewing the quality or standards of a coherent set of study modules.

Programme specification: A programme (programme) specification documents the aims, objectives or learning outcomes, programme content, learning and teaching methods, process and criteria for assessment, usually with indicative reading or other reference material as well as identifying the modules or subunits of the programme, setting out core and optional elements, precursors and levels.

Progress file: A progress file is an explicit record of achievement, an aid to reflecting on the achievement and a mechanism to enable future planning.

Project team: The project team is the group of people, within a quality monitoring agency, who organize and arrange the external quality process.

Provision: Provision is an all-encompassing term that refers to the learning opportunities, research and community activity offered/undertaken by an institution of higher education.

Q

Qualification: Qualification is the award to which a formal programme of study contributes.

Qualifications framework: An instrument for the development and classification of qualifications according to a set of criteria for levels of learning and skills achieved by a learner, regardless of a mode of learning

Qualities: Qualities are the characteristics, attributes or properties of a person, collective, object, action, process or organization.

Quality: Quality is

1. (n) the embodiment of the essential nature of a person, collective, object, action, process or organization.
2. (adj) means high grade or high status (as in a quality performance).
3. a shorthand, in higher education, for quality evaluation processes.

Quality assessment: See assessment

Quality assurance: See assurance

Quality audit: See audit

Quality control: Quality control is a mechanism for ensuring that an output (product or service) conforms to a predetermined specification.

Quality culture: is a set of group values that guide how improvements are made to everyday working practices and consequent outputs, embedded in the ideology of the group or organization.

Quality evaluation: See evaluation

Quality guidelines: See guidelines

Quality monitoring: See external quality monitoring

Quality review: See review

Quality validation: See accreditation; validation

R

Ranking: Ranking is a term used to refer to the rating and ordering of higher education institutions or programmes of study based on various criteria.

Rationale:

Re-accreditation: Re-accreditation is the re-establishment or re-statement (usually on a fixed periodic cycle) of the status, legitimacy or appropriateness of an institution, programme (i.e. composite of modules) or module of study or of the professional recognition of an individual.

Reciprocity: Reciprocity is the acceptance by one agency of the outcomes of a quality process conducted by another agency.

Recognised bodies:

Recognition: Recognition is the formal acknowledgement of the status of an organization, institution or programme.

Recognition of prior learning: Recognition of prior learning is formal acknowledgement of previous learning, from informal as well as formal learning situations.

Regional accreditation: Regional accreditation is recognition of an institution within a regional context: it is much the same as national accreditation but is not restricted to national boundaries.

Registration:

Regulatory body: A regulatory body, in the context of higher education, is an external organisation that has been empowered by legislation to oversee and control the educational process and outputs germane to it.

Report: Report (n.) is the documented outcome or results of an evaluation process.

Research assessment exercise (RAE): The RAE is a process, in the UK and Hong Kong, that assesses the quality of research to enable the higher education funding bodies to distribute public funds on the basis of research quality ratings.

Review:

1. Review is generic term for any process that explores the quality of higher education.
2. Review refers to explorations of quality that do not result in judgements or decisions. Review team: The review team is the group of people undertaking a quality monitoring or evaluation process.

S

Sandwich: A sandwich programme is one that has a significant period of work experience built into it such that the programme is extended beyond the normal length of similar programmes without the sandwich element.

Self-assessment: Self-assessment is the process of critically reviewing the quality of ones own performance and provision.

Self-evaluation: See self-assessment

Self-study: See self-assessment

Semester: A semester is a division of the academic year; usually two semesters in a year.

Seminar: A seminar is, ideally, a small-group teaching situation in which a subject is discussed, in depth, by the participants.

Site visit: A site visit is is when an external evaluation team goes to an institution to evaluate verbal, written and visual evidence.

Skill:

Sophister: Sophister refers to undergraduates on their penultimate (junior) or final (senior) year of study.

Specialized accreditation: Specialized accreditation refers to any accreditation process that relates to specific discipline areas.

Staff:

Stakeholder: A stakeholder is a person (or group) that has an interest in the activities of an institution or organization.

Standards:

Standards monitoring: Student evaluation: Student experience:

Sub-institutional audit: See external sub-institutional audit; internal sub-institutional audit

Summative assessment: Summative assessment is the process of evaluating (and grading) the learning of students at a point in time.

Subject assessment:

Substantial equivalency: Substantial equivalency is a term used in the US to indicate that an overseas programme is essentially the same as a US programme of study.

T

Technikon: A technikon is a non-university higher education institution, in South Africa, focusing on vocational education.

Tertiary education: Tertiary education is formal, non-compulsory, education that follows secondary education.

Thematic evaluation: A thematic evaluation is a review of a particular aspect of quality or standards focusing on an experience, practice or resource that cuts across programmes or institutions.

Thesis: Thesis is:
1. short hand for doctoral thesis, the outcome of a student research at doctoral level.
2. an argument proposing and developing a theory about a substantive or conceptual issue.
3. an intellectual proposition.

Threshold:

Total student experience: Total student experience refers to all aspects of the engagement of students with higher education.

Transcript: A transcript is a printed or electronic record of student achievement while in higher education.

Transferable skills:

Transferability: See credit transfer

Transparency:

Transformation: Transformation is the process of changing from one qualitative state to another.

Transnational education: Transnational education is higher education provision that is avail- able in more than one country.

Tuning: Tuning, in the context of quality in higher education, refers to the process in Europe of adjusting degree provision so that there are points of similarity across the European Higher Education Area.

U

Undergraduate: Undergraduate is a student who is undertaking a first-level degree programme of study, normally a bachelor's degree or equivalent.

Unit: Unit has two meanings in the context of quality in higher education, one as subject and one as object of quality review.

1. unit is the generic name for a quality monitoring department internal to an institution.
2. unit is any element that is the subject of quality review: institution, subject area, faculty, department or programme of study.

Unitary system: Unitary system is one that has higher education located in a single type of institution.

University: University is an institution of higher education that grants its own degrees including the award of Ph.D. and normally undertakes leading-edge research, as well as having a social critical role.

V

Validation: Validation is a process of confirming that an existing programme of study or a newly designed one can continue or commence operation.

Value added: Value added is the enhancement that students achieve (to knowledge, skills abilities and other attributes) as a result of their higher education experience.

Value for money: Value for money is one definition of quality that judges the quality of pro- vision, processes or outcomes against the monetary cost of making the provision, undertaking the process or achieving the outcomes.

Vocational education and training (VET): Vocational education and training is any formal, post-compulsory education that develops knowledge, skills and attributes linked to particular forms of employment, although in some interpretations this would exclude professional education.

Virtual education:

W

Widening access: See access

Work-based learning: Work-based learning refers to any formal higher education learning that is based wholly or predominantly in a work setting.

Work experience: Work experience is the linking of a period of activity in a work setting (whether paid or voluntary) to the programme of study, irrespective of whether the work experience is an integral part of the programme of study.

Work-related learning: Work-related learning refers to any formal higher education learning that includes a period of learning that takes place in a work setting or involves activities linked to a work setting.

X

Y

Z

Zero defects: see perfection

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