FOREWORD

The Quality Assurance Committee (QAC) was established in 2012 as a delegate of Senate. The principal remit of QAC is to safeguard and promote the quality of the University’s activities. The QAC aims to assist the University in assuring the quality of its programmes in the three cycles of higher education (Bachelor’s, Master’s and Doctoral degrees). The University has a Quality Assurance Framework that enunciates the processes and procedures for quality assurance and enhancement. At the core of the framework is an emphasis on students and their learning.

Internal Academic Audit is an important element in the University’s strategy for assuring the quality of learning provided to students and the standards of programmes and awards. It is an explicit provision of the University’s quality assurance strategy that Schools and their Departments take responsibility for assuring quality of their teaching, research and service. This handbook has been developed in order to set out the Academic Audit processes and parameters at Chinhoyi University of Technology.

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1. INTRODUCTION

1.1 Rationale of Academic Audit

Academic departments are the backbone of the University’s core business and most activities in the University are affiliated with them. The trifocal functions of the University (teaching, research and service) are carried out in academic departments. An academic audit reviews the processes and procedures used by Departments to enhance the quality of their programmes and awards. Departments are required to have processes that guarantee quality in teaching and learning they provide to students. Standards for student achievement must be set and attendant processes must be in vogue to implement University policies directed to these ends.

Academic audits focus on strategies that a department uses to assure quality education, how these are organised and how well they perform. Good strategies are not sufficient on their own and need to be complemented by an enabling environment. Resources and efficiency of their utilisation are fundamental issues in provision of quality education.

1.2 Objectives of Academic Audit

The main objective of an academic audit is to ascertain the presence and adequacy of quality assurance procedures, their applicability and effectiveness in guaranteeing quality of inputs, processes and outputs. Specific objectives are:

1. Define the main areas of focus central to quality assurance and enhancement in teaching and learning
2. Identify the processes and procedures used by departments for quality assurance and enhancement in each of the focus areas
3. Appraise the adequacy and effectiveness of the quality assurance processes and procedures
4. Make appropriate recommendations for continuous improvement of the processes and procedures used for quality assurance and enhancement
2. AUDIT PROCEDURES

2.1 Unit of Audit

The primary unit of academic audit is the Department.

2.2 Focus Areas

There are five basic areas that will be examined in an academic audit. These areas are:

(a) Defining intended learning outcomes
(b) Designing programme curricula
(c) Designing teaching and learning
(d) Developing and using student assessment
(e) Implementing quality education

The founding idea and practice of conducting academic audit was directed on teaching and learning processes. However, other significant activities of Departments such as research and service are equally important and need to be covered in academic audits. These two key functions will be covered separately in a different handbook.

2.3 Methodology

2.3.1 Approach

The Quality Assurance Committee appoints an Academic Audit Team (hereinafter auditors) which will audit the Department (hereinafter auditee) using a participatory approach. Stakeholders in an academic Department that are involved include:

- Chairperson
- Lecturers
- Students
- Support staff
- Cognate School committees

The stakeholders are engaged through interviews and discussions. The Dean of the School will also be consulted.

2.3.2 The process

The Directorate of Quality Assurance (QAGS) initiates the process by inviting the auditee to submit a Self-Evaluation Document (SED) prior to the audit. The format of the SED will be provided to
Departments by QAGS. In addition to the SED, the auditee may be requested to submit additional documents such as:

- Department action plan
- Minutes of Departmental meetings
- Record of lecturer and course evaluations
- Annual reports
- External examiners reports
- Any other evidential material

Upon receipt of the required documents, the auditors will do the following:

(a) Scrutinise the SED and other documents – collating the evidence, analysing and evaluating the documents;

(b) Formulate specific lines of enquiry from the above;

(c) Meet with the Department leadership, lecturers, students and other stakeholders; and

(d) Prepare a report which will make commendations of good practice, affirmations which recognise improvements the auditee is already making, and recommendations for improvement.

2.3.3 Reporting

The purpose of academic audit is not judgemental but to cause development to happen. The auditors will produce a report that describes the strengths and weaknesses of the auditee’s efforts to improve academic quality of their programmes and identify plans for improvements. The main components of the report shall be:

- **Commendations** of good practice
- **Affirmations** which recognise improvements the auditee is already making
- **Recommendations** for improvement

The audit report is made available to the auditee who shall respond to the issues raised in the report. The response of the auditee shall be part of the final audit report.

The audit report shall be presented to Senate.
3. FOCUS AREAS

3.1 Defining Intended Learning Outcomes

3.1.1 Articulation of learning outcomes

The University embraces the outcome-based approach to curriculum planning. In brief, intended learning outcomes (ILOs) represent achievements attained by students in terms of skills, knowledge, attitudes and values after going through a learning process. It is common that when lecturers plan their curricula they outline the relevant topics to teach. This is referred to as defining the syllabus. Defining the syllabus is related to but not by itself specifying learning outcomes. The distinction between outcomes and contents is important. An outcome-based approach represents a change in perspective from ‘content’ to ‘skills, knowledge and attitudes’ achieved by students.

The ultimate outcome of Chinhoyi University of Technology is holistic development of students with professional competences. Holistic development refers to generic skills (attributes for all-roundedness) that are important for professional development, for example, critical and creative thinking, lifelong learning, effective communication, ability to select and manage information, etc. Professional competences entail the development of students as professionals with the requisite attributes required on the job market.

Professional competences as learning outcomes encompass academic knowledge, procedural knowledge and overarching functional abilities. Academic knowledge includes theories, information, etc., acquired by students. Procedural knowledge indicates the skills acquired by students to perform specific tasks. Functional abilities are high end abilities which reflect the students’ abilities to discern when and what knowledge/skill to apply under specific conditions.

Good ILOs have the following attributes:

- Use appropriate action verbs which indicate what students are able to perform and with what knowledge
- Focus on abilities and attributes that are valued by the discipline concerned
- Are written to reflect the appropriate level of sophistication (memory of facts, seeing relationships among ideas, creating and extending beyond what is taught)

In the academic audit exercise, Departments are required to organise their outcome statements into two categories:

(a) Holistic development of students (all-roundedness)

(b) Achievement of professional competences

Departments are expected to distinguish clearly between programme outcomes and course outcomes. Programme outcomes express the major performances in broad terms and subject outcomes transform programme outcomes into more specific outcomes. Programme outcomes and course outcomes should be aligned.
3.1.2 Audit Questions

The auditors will generally be guided by the questions given below in evaluating the articulation of the learning outcomes of an academic programme. These questions guide the formulation of the SED.

(a) Define education quality in terms of learning outcomes

– What should a student who successfully completes the programme know and be able to do?
– Can the statements of learning outcomes be delineated into two categories of generic and professional skills in alignment with the University mission?
– How do the learning outcomes relate to external reference points, for example, relevant discipline benchmarks, requirements of employers and professional bodies?
– How do you ensure that the learning outcomes meet future employment needs of students and assist them acquire meaningful values and social skills?
– How are the learning outcomes communicated to staff, students, and external examiners?

(b) Base decisions on facts

– Do you seek external input in the formulation of the learning outcomes?
– If yes, how do you do it? For example, do you use surveys or focus group interviews with employers and alumni?
– Are data from such surveys analysed so that you can establish a priori case?

(c) Identify and learn from best practice

– Do you evaluate learning outcomes of cognate departments in other institutions?

3.2 Designing Programme Curriculum

3.2.1 Curriculum issues

This section assesses the effectiveness with which curricula are planned, designed and approved to facilitate achievement of the intended learning outcomes. Dimensions of quality in curriculum include:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Dimension</th>
<th>Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Reliability</td>
<td>Extent to which knowledge learnt is correct, accurate and up-to-date</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Conformance</td>
<td>Extent to which the curriculum meets established standards and benchmarks</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Durability</td>
<td>Depth of learning</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Efficiency</td>
<td>Extent to which the curriculum is applicable to the future careers of students</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
3.2.2 Audit questions

(a) Define education quality in terms of curriculum
   – How does the Department ensure that the curriculum content enables students to achieve the ILOs?
   – How does the Department ensure that the design and organisation of the curriculum is effective in promoting student learning and achievement of ILOs?
   – Is there any evidence that the curriculum content and design is adequately informed by recent developments in pedagogy, research and changes in relevant occupational or professional requirements?

(b) Co-curriculum development
   – Who do you collaborate with in curriculum design?
   – What have you learnt from former students and employers?
   – How do you ensure that there is convergence or agreement on the essential elements of the curriculum?

(c) Identify and learn from best practice
   – Do you evaluate curricula of cognate departments in other institutions?

(d) Make continuous improvement a priority
   – How do you ensure that curriculum continuously remains up-to-date?
   – What are the recent changes in your curriculum?
   – What facts were used to make the decisions on curriculum changes?

3.3 Design Teaching and Learning Processes

3.3.1 Quality of teaching and learning

The quality of teaching and learning is central to achievement of ILOs. Teaching and learning are separate processes. Learning takes place during student’s time and teaching facilitates student learning. Dimensions of quality in teaching and learning include:

- Responsiveness
  - Willingness and readiness of staff to help students
- Understanding customers
  - Understanding students and their needs
- Access
  - Extent to which staff are available to help students
- Competence and delivery
  - Theoretical and practical knowledge of staff as well as other presentation skills
- Courtesy
  - Emotive and positive attitude towards students
Communication
– How well lecturers and students communicate in the classroom

Tangibles
– State, sufficiency and availability of equipment and facilities

Performance
– Primary knowledge skills required for students

Completeness
– Supplementary knowledge and skills, use of computers

3.3.2 Audit questions

(a) Design teaching and learning strategy
– How are courses managed?
– Is there an appropriate and up-to-date teaching and learning strategy in the Department?
– How are teaching and learning organised for students?
– What pedagogical approaches are used?
– What strategies are used to stimulate student participation in the classroom and enhance student learning?
– What resources are used in teaching and learning?
– How is the quality of teaching maintained and enhanced? How do you ensure that strategies such as effective staff development, peer review, induction and mentoring are used?
– How effectively do lecturers draw upon their research, scholarship or professional activity to inform their teaching?
– Is there any academic support including handbooks and other written documents?

(b) Evaluating teaching and learning
– How does the Department review and calibrate its standards?
– What are your key performance indicators?
– How do you evaluate teaching and learning processes on a regular basis?
– How is it done?
– How are the data analysed and used for development?

(c) Identify and learn from best practice
– Do you evaluate teaching and learning strategies used by cognate departments in other institutions?
3.4 Developing and Using Student Assessment

3.4.1 Quality dimensions in assessment

Student assessment is integral to demonstration of achievement of ILOs. Evaluation of the assessment process and standards of achievement of the ILOs determines the appropriateness and effectiveness of the system in vogue. Quality dimensions in student assessment include:

- Reliability and validity — Extent to which the assessment processes measure the attainment of ILOs
- Integrity — Extent to which assessment materials and information are secure from unauthorised access
- Testability — How fair assessment represents a subject of study
- Redress — How well the assessment process handles students’ complaints and solves attendant problems

3.4.2 Audit questions

(a) Define quality of assessment in terms of learning outcomes

- Have you defined key quality indicators of student performance based on the ILOs?
- How do you ensure that the assessment processes overall and particular assessment instruments used enable students to demonstrate achievement of ILOs?
- How is assessment moderated?
- Are there criteria that enable internal and external examiners to distinguish between different categories of student achievement?
- How do you ensure full confidence in the security and integrity of assessment procedures?
- Does the assessment have an adequate formative function in developing student abilities?
- How effectively is learning facilitated by formative and summative feedback and supervisory arrangements?
- How do you monitor student progress and use the information?

(b) Base decisions on facts

- Are your assessment processes grounded in any conceptual framework?
- Can you defend your assessment measures by some appropriate theory, experience or empirical evidence?

(c) Identify and learn from best practice

- Do you evaluate the teaching and learning strategies used by cognate departments in other institutions?
3.5 Implementing Quality Education

3.5.1 Performance indicators

This section illustrates how each Department should mainstream quality assurance and enhancement measures in its academic activities. A self-critical attitude is highly indicative of a mature institution in the quality assurance sense.

Each Department is required to draw up performance indicators used for steering quality assurance. The format below should be used.

*Example*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Indicator</th>
<th>What it indicates</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>(a) Student performance</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(i) Retention rate in first year</td>
<td>Quality of programme and tuition the Department offers students</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(ii) Graduation rate</td>
<td>Measures productivity of the Department’s programmes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(iii) Average time to graduation</td>
<td>Good indicator of teaching support students receive (mainly for graduate research degrees)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

3.5.2 Audit questions

(a) Design quality assurance mechanisms
- How are you organised to carry out your teaching and learning effectively?
- How do you assure stakeholders that content is delivered as intended and that teaching and learning processes are implemented consistently?
- How do you ensure that assessments are performed as planned and their results used effectively?

(b) Work collaboratively to achieve inclusive involvement
- Do you collaborate effectively on the design of quality assurance methods?
- Do you work together to interpret the results and take appropriate actions based on quality assurance results?

(c) Identify and learn from best practice
- Do you evaluate the quality assurance practices of cognate departments in other institutions?
(d) Make continuous quality improvement a top priority

– Do you continuously and systematically evaluate your quality assurance mechanisms and align them with contemporary developments?

4. KEY PRINCIPLES TO USE TO IMPROVE QUALITY OF ACADEMIC PROGRAMMES

Continuous improvement of the quality of academic programmes is the hallmark for attainment of fitness-for-purpose. The value of an academic audit is to install audit systems to ensure quality education and not control systems. The principles given in the next section should guide continuous improvement of academic programmes in the University.

4.1 Key Principles

(i) Define education quality in terms of clearly formulated learning outcomes

(ii) Focus on the actual processes of teaching, i.e. teaching methods, teaching strategy, use of technology

(iii) Ensure coherence in curriculum and the educational activities used - logical flow of courses, depth and breadth of courses, class sizes and pedagogical approaches used

(iv) Work collaboratively to achieve mutual involvement and support – demonstrate collegiality in teaching as in research, encourage team work. Collegiality and team work make a Department a learning organisation with respect to quality processes

(v) Base decisions and policies on facts and empirical evidence where possible – base decisions on data rather than simply adopting traditional practices.

(vi) Identify and learn from best practices

(vii) Make continuous improvement of the Department’s programmes a high priority – use tracer studies and reputation surveys with employers

4.2 Quality Assurance Instruments

The University uses multiple instruments for quality assurance. Departments are encouraged to innovative more efficient instruments in addition to the instruments in vogue. The quality assurance instruments currently in use include:

- Rigorous academic staff recruitment
- Professionalism of staff
- Peer evaluation
- Student evaluation
- Annual performance appraisal
• External examiners
• Competitive student admission criteria
• Annual Department performance reports
• Tracer studies
• Reputation surveys