



Wayamba University of Sri Lanka

# Academic Quality Enhancement Framework



Internal Quality Assurance Unit 2018

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# Academic Quality Enhancement Framework

## Wayamba University of Sri Lanka

### Introduction

Wayamba University of Sri Lanka aims to be internationally recognised for the quality of teaching, learning facilities and educational experience offered to students. Our Education Strategy places students at the centre and engaging them in proactive learning in a supportive and well-resourced learning environment. We aim to enhance the quality of student learning through investment in professionalism and creativity of staff and learning environment.

The Internal Quality Assurance Unit (IQAU) has formulated Academic Quality Enhancement Framework (AQEF) to reflect the work on enhancement which is already taking place within the University. This document describes in detail the main policies, procedures and guidance relating to quality assurance and academic standards.

The board purpose of Academic Quality Enhancement Framework (AQEF) is to;

1. Enable the effective and efficient monitoring of academic standards and the quality of the student experience in relation to internal and external requirements (such as those stated in the University Grants Commission Quality Assurance and Accreditation Council's Quality Framework and from accrediting professional, statutory and regulatory bodies);
2. Ensure consistency whilst enabling and acknowledging diverse practices in different disciplines;
3. Provide a mechanism for critical review and, highlight and promote good practice across the institution.

The AQEF provides an overview of our quality processes and their inter-relationships, brief summary information about the processes and further links to full statements of the processes and procedures.

### Principles

The AQEF is underpinned by the following general principles.

1. The continuous improvement of the student experience is at the core of the quality assurance and enhancement activity.
2. Engagement of staff in Quality Assurance: The quality and commitment of staff are critical to maintaining and enhancing the high quality of learning & teaching. The University fully recognises that all staff, both academic and support, take a personal responsibility for the quality of their contribution to the student learning experience, research and outreach in their disciplines.
3. Engagement of students in Quality Assurance: The University is committed to providing a high quality learning experience. The direct contribution that students make to this, through providing feedback, advice and suggestions, is critical. Input

from students is a key feature of all our quality enhancement and assurance processes. Therefore, we need students to give us the students' perspective.

### **Policy Status of the AQEF**

Information that make up the AQEF constitute formal University Policies and Procedures relevant to Teaching and Learning.

### **Objectives**

The policies and processes described within the AQEF aim to:

1. support regular reflective practice on the part of staff, teaching teams and academic managers
2. promote active involvement of students and their representatives
3. support a culture of continuous improvement and enhancement
4. encompass the requirements of professional, statutory and regulatory bodies where appropriate
5. facilitate communication of needs and priorities of higher education policies, regulatory bodies and the stakeholders
6. connect strategic and operational planning at the level of the University, faculties departments/units and Student and Academic Support Services Divisions to the planning and delivery of academic programmes.

Within the overarching structure of the quality framework there is flexibility to accommodate variation at the level of the faculty, department, centre or unit as long as the required outcomes are not compromised.

### **Responsibility**

University is responsible for the quality and academic standards of all awards of the Wayamba University of Sri Lanka.

We are also answerable to a number of external bodies for the quality of the learning experience we provide for our students. Our Quality Assurance Framework is informed by:

- Expectations set out in the Quality Assurance & Accreditation Council's Quality Enhancement Framework
- Expectations of Professional, Statutory and Regulatory bodies where applicable.

In addition to addressing these requirements, the University believes that it is good practice for any organisation to reflect on its own performance (quality assurance) and consider ways of doing things better (quality enhancement). Therefore, University has developed several approaches to maintaining academic standards and enhancing quality of its provision.

## Implementation of the AQEF

The implementation of the AQEF is managed at Senate, Faculty and Department level.

- The highest level of academic quality management is the **University's Senate**.

**Academic Development, Planning, Scholarship & Ethics Committee (ADPSEC)** of the Senate is responsible to Senate for the development and recommendation for approval by Senate of the University's Education Strategy and for oversight and monitoring of the strategy's effective implementation. The committee has a number of key responsibilities in relation to the University's commitment to excellence in Education, including consideration of issues related to all aspects of Education policy and practice across all University awards and oversight of the quality of the student experience in the broadest sense.

**Senate Research & Higher Degrees Committee (SHDRC)** is responsible to the Senate in recommending matters related to all aspects of postgraduate teaching and learning policy and practice across all University awards and oversight of the quality of the postgraduate student experience. SHDRC works closely with respective Boards of Studies of Higher Degrees

- Beneath Senate academic quality is managed by the **Faculty Board**.

Each faculty has a **Faculty Teaching and Learning Committee (TLC)**, which is responsible for oversight and delivery of all aspects of the University's Education Strategy within the Faculty. Reporting to the Faculty Board, the Faculty TLCs provide a forum for discussion of student and education-related matters in the Faculty and strengthen academic links between Departments, Units, and Centres within the Faculty, across the University and with collaborative partners. The committees also ensure the effective implementation within the Faculty of the University's policies and procedures for assuring the academic quality and standards and enhancing academic quality and the student experience.

- Departments, centres and other teaching units are responsible directly for the quality of the student experience.

Deans of the Faculties form a key role in liaison between the different tiers of the decision-making process. Dean chairs the Faculty Education Committee. Deans maintain an overview of the quality of teaching and learning within teaching units (Departments), and take forward action arising from this. Both within and outside the formal committee structure, Deans encourage the dissemination of good practice and consult Faculties, departments and collaborative partners (if any) on proposed University level policy developments. Deans also play a central role in quality assurance procedures and are responsible for overseeing the annual and periodic process of course review, departmental response to external examiners and the outcomes of student feedback mechanisms.

- The **Internal Quality Assurance Unit (IQAU)** acts as an advisory group to the Senate, Faculties (facilitated by Faculty Quality Assurance Cell) and Departments/Units on quality enhancement and assurance matters.

### **Sri Lankan Quality Assurance System**

During the last ten years the QAAC under the aegis of the UGC has set up a robust and comprehensive Quality Assurance System within the state sector. The main components of this system are;

- Sri Lanka Qualification Framework.
- Subject Benchmarking.
- Codes of Practice.
- External Quality Assurance.
- Internal Quality Assurance.
- **Sri Lanka Qualification Framework (SLQF):** SLQF provides a structure within which all HEIs can position their awards at an appropriate level. The SLQF combines descriptors of qualifications/awards at each level with credit measures that indicate the levels and volume of learning that a student is expected to achieve for each type of qualification.

For more details: <http://www.eugc.ac.lk/gaa/index.php/slqf-2/>

- **Subject Benchmarking (SB):** SB is a policy device aimed at improving the capacity of subject communities to regulate their academic standards. It achieves this by creating subject based information that can be used by teaching teams as a prompt for self-critical reflection and further development. Subject Benchmark Statements (SBSs) provide a set of reference points to show how the key features of a programme, its intended learning outcomes and the standards that derive from these intended outcomes, relate to what is deemed appropriate by the subject community.

For more details: <http://www.eugc.ac.lk/gaa/index.php/subject-of-benchmarking/>

- **Codes of Practice:** Codes of practice are documents which lay down the standards that need to be met when conducting any academic procedure. They are meant to provide a reference point for Universities/HEIs on the main aspects of setting academic standards and safeguarding the quality of education. They are reflective of the key elements of good practice which support the student learning experience.

#### **Codes of practice developed by QAAC:**

1. Code of Practice on Assessment of Students;
2. Code of Practice on Career Guidance;
3. Code of Practice on External Assessors;
4. Code of Practice on Postgraduate Research Programmes;
5. Code of Practice on Programme Approval, Monitoring and Review;

6. Code of Practice on Student Support and Guidance;
7. Code of Practice on Staff Development;
8. Code of Practice on Student Feedback
9. Code of Practice on Peer Observation
10. Code of Practice on External Degrees
11. Code of Academic Accountability for Academic Staff in Sri Lankan University System

- **External Quality Assurance:** With both global and local expansion in higher education with greater intra and international competition, it has become essential to assure quality through a reliable national mechanism. External quality assurance by peer review has now gained worldwide acceptance as an effective method to ensure quality and standards of education.  
The unit of assessment for external review could be the Institution as a whole or individual Subjects/Programmes within the Institution.
- **Internal Quality Assurance:** While periodic external review by a peer group provides an impetus for reflective behaviour and self-appraisal which are essential pre-requisites in the quest for excellence, the responsibility for quality and standards lies effectively where the power to control or change practices exist, and that is with the institution itself, and not with an external agency. Quality Assurance is a continuous process, not a one-time event or an event at specific intervals. The process has to be a part of the institution's continuous concern for maintaining and enhancing quality.

### **Internal Quality Assurance Unit (IQAU)**

WUSL has established an Internal Quality Assurance Unit (IQAU). It co-ordinates the quality assurance activities within the university. However the body with the responsibility for maintaining academic standards within the University is the Senate. As such, the IQAU reports its activities to the Senate and the Council. All faculties have a Faculty Quality Assurance Cell (FQAC), which coordinates all quality assurance activities within the faculty in liaison with the IQAU.

Functions and responsibilities of the IQAU are listed below.

- Coordinating all QA related activities within the institution.
- Liaising with UGC/QAA Council and other external QA agencies.
- Implementing reviews/audit recommendations and follow up action.
- Preparing institutional self-evaluation report.
- Providing advice on QA to faculties and departments.
- Monitoring and guidance in QA activities at faculty level.
- Reporting all these activities to the Senate.
- Quality and QA aspects in Institutions' Corporate Plan
- Facilitation of identification and sharing of good practices between academic departments



- Preparation off QA-related guidelines and manuals for use within the institution
- Ensure the necessary Academic Regulations/By-Laws are in place, and if not, make recommendations for remedial actions
- Conduct, with the support of the Staff Development Centre of the University, faculty level awareness programmes for staff members
- Establishment of Faculty QA Cells and defining their duties and responsibilities.

*Source: UGC Circular No 04/2015 & IQA Manual for Sri Lankan Universities (2013)*

### **Governing Structure of IQAU**

The IQAU is placed directly under the purview of the Vice Chancellor and managed by a Director. Its administrative and financial control will be managed through a Management Committee, which is comprised of the following composition.

- Director – IQAU
- Deans of all Faculties
- Co-ordinators of Faculty QA Cells
- Registrar (or his nominee)
- Bursar (or his nominee)
- Librarian (or his nominee)
- Director – Staff Development Centre
- Convenor/Secretary to the IQAU (a Senior Assistant Registrar)

The Director – IQAU acts as the Chairman of the Mangement Committee of the IQAU.

### **Reporting Procedure**

- The Director – IQAU reports directly to the Vice Chancellor.
- IQAU prepares an Annual Work Plan and submit it to the University Senate and the Council for approval before commencing each calender year.
- Director – IQAU reports ts activities and progress of the Unit to the University Senate on aa monthly basis.

Internal quality assurance is supported by periodic external review. The two processes harmonize for maximum benefit. The interaction between the Internal Quality Assurance and the External Quality Assurance is depicted in Figure 1.

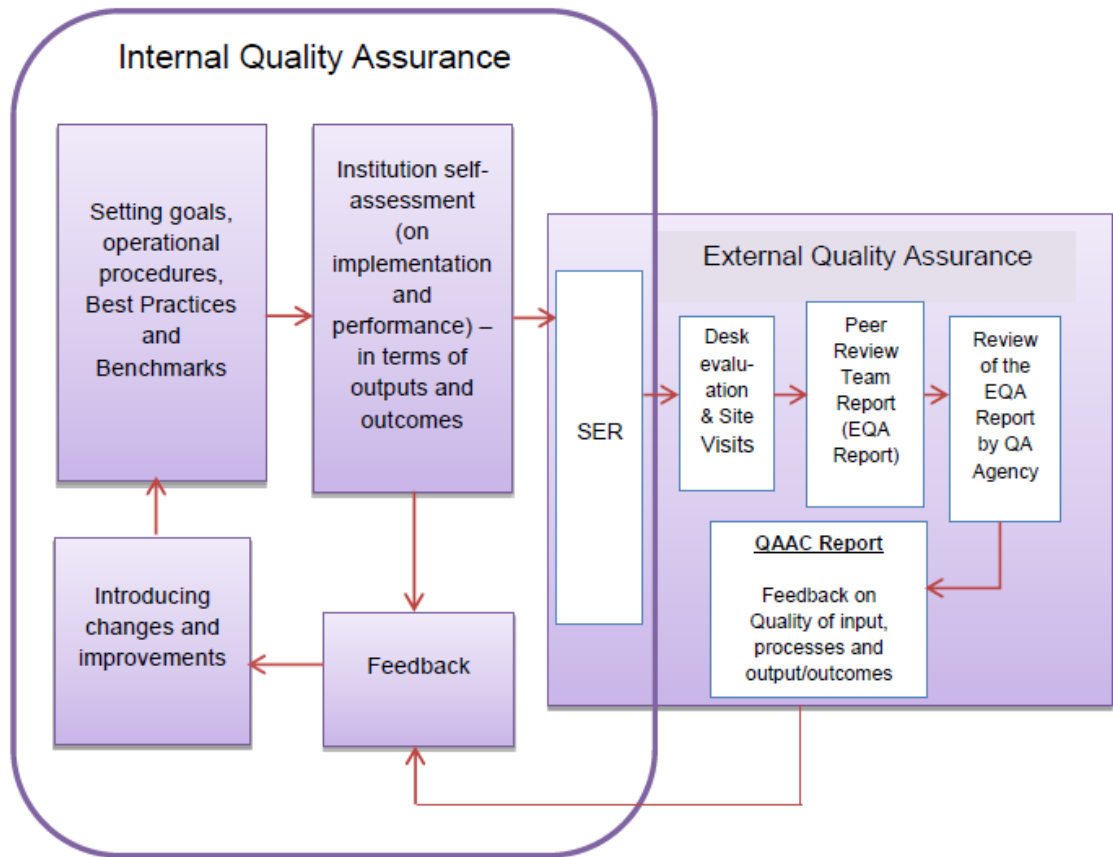


Figure 1: Functional link between the Internal Quality Assurance and the External Quality Assurance.

*(Adapted from “Manual for Internal Quality Assurance for Higher Education Institutions, Ministry of Education (2008): Thailand)*

## Components of AQEF

AQEF consists of five key components:

1. Course and Programme design and approval;
2. Student assessment
3. Student representation and feedback;
4. External examiners;
5. Annual review of study programmes;
6. Periodic review (External) of study programmes;
7. External review of Institution
8. Accreditation.

The components of AQEF are illustrated in the Figure 2. The processes themselves are described briefly below. Further details are provided in the full process guidance.

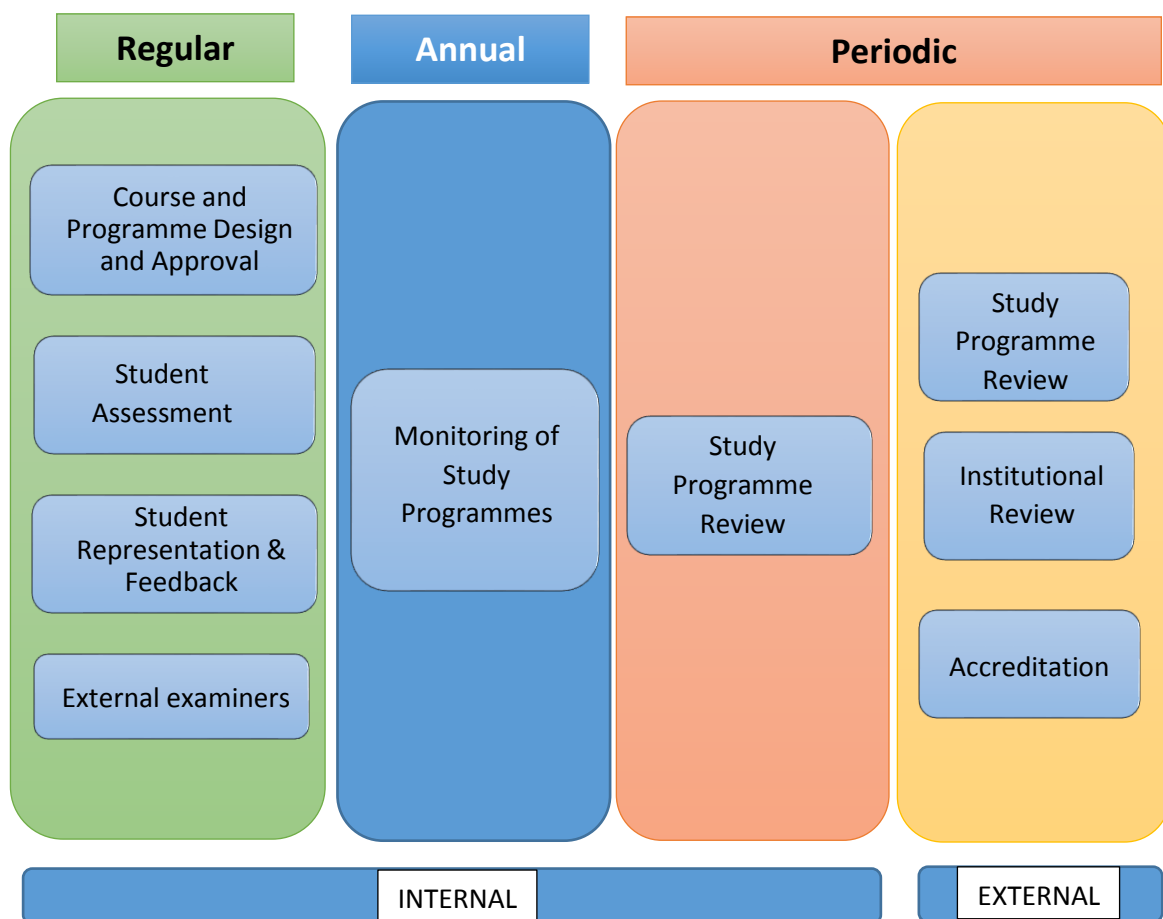


Figure 2: Academic Quality Framework of Wayamba University of Sri Lanka

## 1. Course and Programme Design and Approval

1.1 The objective of University's procedures for the design and approval of new courses and study programmes is to ensure academic standards are set at the appropriate level. This will ensure that the students will receive high quality learning & teaching experience fulfilling their personal goals as well as the national expectations of higher education. Therefore, it is essential that these procedures are both robust and effective.

In designing and approving new courses and study programmes, consideration is given to:

- availability of resources
- coherence and academic standard of constituent courses
- standard and appropriateness of awards offered on completion of proposed programmes according to SLQF
- relevance and appeal of programmes and courses for potential students
- compatibility with other programmes and courses offered and the strategic objectives of the Faculty concerned as well as the University as a whole
- the external context including Subject Benchmark Statements

1.2 Proposals for the new study programmes should be initiated considering the consultation of key stakeholders (Students, External Examiners and Employers, Professional /Statutory/ Regulatory Bodies and industrial / professional partners) to provide externality and objectivity. Marketability and marketing of new programmes shall be considered before proposing programmes. The Faculty then confirms that the proposal fits with existing provision and resources are available or propose new resources required.

1.3 Responsibility for the approval of programmes and courses at the university level is with the Senate and the Council. University Grants Commission (UGC) will have to finally approve all undergraduate and postgraduate programmes.

1.4 The extensive range of information to be provided in relation to the proposed new course including:

- Mandate availability
- Details of the Degree Programme (Background, Justification, Objectives of the Degree Programme/Programme Outcomes/Graduate Profile, Entry Qualifications, Admission process, Proposed Student Intake, Programme duration and credit load, Programme Structure, Targeted Sri Lanka Qualification Framework (SLQF) Level, Programme Content)

- Programme Delivery and Learner Support System
- Programme Assessment Procedure/Rules
- Resources Requirement
- Panel of Teachers
- Fee structure and total estimated budget (for postgraduate programmes)
- Comments on the proposal from independent external experts

*The application template for the new undergraduate/postgraduate degree/diploma course approval set out by UGC can be found:*

Undergraduate

[http://www.ugc.ac.lk/attachments/1808\\_Final%20Application%20%20for%20new%20UG%20Degree%20Program.doc](http://www.ugc.ac.lk/attachments/1808_Final%20Application%20%20for%20new%20UG%20Degree%20Program.doc)

Postgraduate

[http://www.ugc.ac.lk/attachments/1808\\_Final%20Application%20%20for%20new%20PG%20Degree%20Program.doc](http://www.ugc.ac.lk/attachments/1808_Final%20Application%20%20for%20new%20PG%20Degree%20Program.doc)

1.5 Undergraduate and postgraduate study programme proposals should be submitted for the approval of the Senate and subsequently to the UGC following the procedure given below.

- (a) Proposals shall be developed by Faculty Curriculum Development Committee in consultation of key stakeholders including Students, External Examiners and Employers, Professional /Statutory/ Regulatory Bodies and industrial / professional partners.
- (i) These proposals are then considered and recommended by the Faculty Board and are then submitted to Academic Development, Planning, Scholarship & Ethics Committee (ADPSEC) of the Senate for the consideration.

Proposals for the Postgraduate programmes shall be approved by the respective Board of Study before submitting them to the Faculty Board and then follow the procedure explained above.

- (ii) ADPSEC having considered all the requirements, if accepted, will forward it to the Director, IQAU. Otherwise, it will be referred back to the respective academic body which submitted the proposal with comments.
- (iii) Director, IQAU will scrutinize the accepted application for the adherence to the prescribed format and quality assurance aspects before recommending the proposal to the Senate.
- (iv) Senate is the final authority for the approval.

- (v) Vice Chancellor will forward the approved proposal to the Chairman, UGC.
- (vi) The proposal will be evaluated by the Quality Assurance & Accreditation Council of UGC followed by the respective Standing Committee of the subject discipline before the approval of the UGC.
- (vii) Faculties/departments are reminded that a new course does not come into effect until the relevant courses have been approved (as in (1.5) above) and in addition, for undergraduate programmes, have been published in the UGC Handbook.

1.6 Revisions or amendments to the existing courses shall be done considering factors specified in 1.1 above and in consultation with stakeholders (as in (1.2) above). Unless there are major revisions, the revised curricular with minor revisions shall be approved by the Senate following the procedure given in 1.5 (a) to (e) above.

Information on academic regulations and Course and Programme Approval procedures is provided by the Senate Office (Senior Assistant Registrar / Senate).

## 2. Student Assessment

2.1 Faculties/departments need to be in a position to demonstrate that their student assessment processes comply with all the relevant regulations, policy and guidance. Those items identified below are key elements in the overall management of assessment processes, and should be monitored closely.

### 2.2 Appointment of Internal Examiners

- (1) The process for nominating examiners, as set out in the *Examination Regulations and Guidelines for Conducting Examination*
- (2) The mechanism used to ensure a fair distribution of examining duties.
- (3) The mechanisms used to identify and agree suitable individuals to be nominated as external examiners and the adequacy of information on those nominated.
- (4) The information to be provided for external examiners at the time of their appointment, and ensuring that it is sufficient for the purpose.
- (5) An indication of the role which external examiners are expected to play, in line with the University's expectations as set out in the guidance on examinations

### 2.3 Examination conventions

- (1) The responsibility for approving examination conventions, and the means of ensuring that these are in keeping with University policy, and approved at the appropriate stage of the year.
- (2) The adequacy of arrangements within the faculty/department to ensure that University policies regarding examinations are implemented.
- (3) The arrangements within the faculty/department, to ensure that students are made aware of the examining conventions to be applied to the examination of their course both via handbooks/websites and via examiners' circulars.
- (4) Appropriate guidance to candidates on the nature and quality of the work associated with the award of First class, Second class upper second, Second class lower division, and Pass degrees; and in the case of examinations which are not classified, the nature and quality of work required for a Pass, Credit Pass and a Distinction.
- (5) The faculty/department should keep under regular review the balance of assessment methods used within the courses ensuring it is responsible, and promote effective learning.

### 2.4 Examiners' reports

- (1) The faculty/department should have clear procedure as to which body (or bodies) is responsible for considering the reports of examiners and of external examiners, the reporting lines and the indicative timeline for their consideration.
- (2) The faculty/department is responsible for ensuring that appropriate and timely feedback is provided to and from external examiners, and action to ensure that the system works effectively.

- (3) Availability of procedure within the faculty/department for ensuring that changes agreed as a result of examiners' reports are implemented. This will normally rest with the relevant teaching committee, reporting to the faculty board and to subsequent years' examiners. Students' interests must be respected, and steps taken to inform them of changes.

## 2.5 Examination of research degrees

- (1) Faculties and departments should take particular care to ensure that the arrangements for approving the recommendations of the examiners of research degrees are robust and transparent, and, in all cases, ensure the independence of the approval process.
- (2) Faculties/departments should have arrangements for considering and approving examiners' reports on individual candidates, and mechanisms to identify and report on any general points arising out of the reports.
- (3) Faculties/departments should consider ways to monitor the overall standards achieved by candidates for research degrees.



### 3. Student Representation & Feedback

3.1 WUSL is committed to the principle of student engagement in quality matters at all levels.

Our main purposes in gathering student feedback are:

- to enhance the students' experience of learning and teaching
- to contribute to monitoring and review of quality and standards

Other objectives includes:

- measuring student satisfaction with course design and delivery in terms of coherence and workload
- finding out what worked and what did not and ways in which it might be improved next time
- helping students to reflect upon their experiences
- identifying good practice.

We rely on the feedback from our students to guide us and to confirm that the enhancements we make to our teaching learning provision translate to enhancement of the student learning experience. Effective student feedback relies on engagement of both staff and students. University places a number of expectations on the two groups.

Staff are expected to:

- explain the purpose of collecting feedback, the methods that will be utilised, how the feedback will be analysed, how and when the findings will be considered and how actions taken as a result of the findings will be communicated back
- encourage students to reflect on their learning experience
- communicate responses to students and staff

Students are expected to:

- reflect on their learning experience
- provide feedback on their learning experience and other relevant/associated matters
- engage with representatives of the Students' Unions and communicate in responsible manner.

#### 3.2 Levels of students' feedback

Different users require feedback at different levels, such as:

- Individual lecturer or class
- Module or unit
- Programme of study
- Department
- Faculty
- University

### 3.3 Mechanisms

University use a combination of mechanisms to collect student feedback. Any single mechanism has its drawbacks. Quantitative feedback (for example, through questionnaires) can be used to provide 'evidence' that something is going well or not so well and such evidence will normally be required for quality assurance purposes. Qualitative information (for example, through open-ended response sections of questionnaires and from student representatives) can help explain why something is going well or not so well.

Different mechanisms are needed for different purposes, levels and contexts.

Our mechanisms are:

- (i) Student representation in Faculty Boards
- (ii) Student feedback of Course, Course units or Modules and Teaching
- (iii) Students' satisfaction surveys
- (iv) Student-Staff Liaison Committees (SSLC)
- (v) Informal feedback to lecturers/tutors via lectures/seminars/tutorials, discussion groups, and other informal mechanisms

#### (i) **Student representation:**

The University's processes for securing effective student engagement in quality assurance and enhancement include the gathering of individual and collective feedback from students, the deployment of elected students, Faculty and programme representatives on relevant Faculty/University committees, an ongoing programme of induction (See Annexure 1) and support for students and staff appropriate to their quality assurance roles, and a commitment to the monitoring, review and enhancement the effectiveness of these policies and processes for engaging students. The University maintains a Student Charter in partnership with Wayamba University Students Union, which presents the mutual expectations and obligations of staff and students for supporting and improving the educational experience of the student body.

Election of student representatives to the Faculty Board is organised by the Students' Union of the Faculty. At lower levels, classes or other groupings of students are invited to elect representatives, with the process being prompted and facilitated by staff at the beginning of each semester or year.

As part of the University's commitment to enabling student engagement with quality assurance Faculties must ensure that they have adequate formal student representation on the Faculty Board. These meetings shall, as far as possible, be scheduled for times and dates when the student representatives are able to attend. Each Faculty will have a mechanism in place to ensure that the student representatives are able to effectively disseminate discussions from the Faculty Board to the student cohort. It is required that all matters raised by student representatives at the relevant

committee must be given proper consideration and duly minuted. Where an action cannot be implemented, the grounds should be explained and minuted.

**(ii) Student feedback of Course units and Teaching (SACT)**

The University encourages staff to use a variety of mechanisms to obtain student feedback to promote ongoing dialogue between students and staff. All faculties must use course evaluation questionnaire as a method of gathering student feedback. To ensure practice is consistent, the University sets out guidelines for gathering course evaluation data from students. These guidelines covers the means of collecting, presenting, and responding to questionnaire data.

Student assessment of course units/module and teaching (SACT) carried out every semester, and all registered students have the opportunity to take part in the survey. The outcomes of SACT are summarised and reviewed by SSLCs, and inform Annual Review of Course reports. Departments also let students know what action was taken in response to previous surveys before they complete their own.

***Scope and timing of SACT:***

- (a) Each course unit/module must be assessed every year during the semester in which the course unit is offered.
- (b) All registered students should have the opportunity to respond to the paper-based or online survey
- (c) Departments should undertake the survey in the last three weeks of the course unit/module

The key elements of the Guidelines on course evaluation are:

- All courses must use a course questionnaire as one of the methods to obtain feedback from students. Feedback must be collected by Faculties from students returning from work-based learning (In-Plant) or a placement.
- The minimum requirement for the questionnaire is the inclusion of five core questions (See Annexure 2). If desired, the questionnaire may be extended by adding further questions.
- Students should be given clear instructions on how to complete the questionnaire and advised when it will be circulated.
- For each course, the data from the completed questionnaires should be summarised in a 'Summary and Response' document which is made readily available to students during the first 3 weeks of the following semester to demonstrate to students that their feedback is valued.
- All individual data will be treated confidentially. Aggregated data will be more widely distributed and used for institutional purposes.
- In completing Summary and Response documents, staff are encouraged to reflect on the feedback provided and to follow up on issues identified in more detail and greater depth, if necessary, to ensure their responses are targeted and result in a real improvement to the learning experience. Some of the different options for

doing this are described in the QAAC's Code of Practice on Obtaining and Responding to Student Feedback. Summary and Response documents should be used in Staff Student Liaison Committees but staff and student representatives also have a responsibility to communicate the responses to matters raised more widely to all students and other relevant members of staff.

### **Method**

- (a) All faculties must conduct course evaluation using paper based questionnaires. There is a central questionnaire (See Annexure 2) that all course units /modules should use. University expects to introduce on-line surveys in due course. Paper based surveys should be conducted centrally by the Dean's office of the respective faculties in the last three (3) weeks of the semester. Dean, in consultation with Heads of Departments and/or Teaching-Learning Committee of the Faculty should assign an officer (preferably the Assistant Registrar) for this purpose. She/he co-ordinate with all course in-charges and conduct the survey.
- (b) This questionnaire contains 5 core questions and additional questions can be added if the teaching team wants to gain more specific information.
- (c) Questions can be added at the discretion of the Dean in liaison with TLC of the faculty, and on recommendation by the Head of Department; however, the maximum number of questions on a survey is 20 (not including repetition of questions one to five).
- (d) The threshold for including staff members in SACT is 25% of teaching time on the module. Should a staff member who delivers less than 25% wish to be evaluated, they could nonetheless be included. The Head of Department can decide whether the department specifies a minimum number of teaching sessions that a staff member has to contribute to in a module before being part of the SACT questionnaire as long as all staff teaching more than 25% are included.
- (e) Data analysis will be performed by the Dean's Office and feedback will be given to respective course in-charges individually with the authorization of the Dean (or Assistant Registrar of the Faculty).

### **Reporting**

- (a) Processed results (see under 'Confidentiality' below) should be discussed at a departmental meeting to look at themes and trends and to consider any changes that might be appropriate in the light of the survey outcomes.
- (b) The Student Staff Liaison Committee should receive a summary report on the student assessment of course units/modules, in order to inform students of the action resulting from each individual module survey. After discussion at Student Staff Liaison Committee, the summary report should be published on the web and accessible to all students.
- (c) The Head of Department must ensure that the outcomes of SACT are considered as part of Annual Review of Courses.
- (d) All students should be informed of the outcomes of the previous SACT results. Course Unit / Module Coordinators should inform students at the start of teaching

of any changes to the structure, content and/or assessment of the course unit / module made as a result of the previous year's SACT.

### **Confidentiality**

- (a) Responses will be anonymous and results will be treated confidentially.
- (b) Evaluation is carried out within departments or by a central unit attached to the Dean's Office. SACT reports can nonetheless be used as individual evidence for staff promotion.
- (c) SACT generates raw and processed data and different levels of confidentiality apply to these forms of data.
- (d) SACT questionnaires include questions about the quality of the module, teaching, assessment and feedback. Particular attention should be given to maintaining the confidentiality of data relating to the quality of teaching by individuals.
- (e) The Dean / Head of Department should ensure teaching staff are aware of how the data will be reviewed.
- (f) Raw data - Students' responses to SACT questionnaires represent raw data which should be confidential between the individual member(s) of staff teaching on a course unit/module or course in-charge.
- (g) Processed data - Processed data, such as reports written about the outcomes of SACT, will form part of the Annual Review of Courses process. Such reports are not need to be confidential and should be disseminated in a timeframe which aligns with the requirements set out in the reporting section above.

### **Monitoring**

- (a) The primary responsibility for ensuring that department-based SACT is being carried out in accordance with Senate policy rests with Dean / Heads of Department or other teaching units. Faculty TLC will receive reports on the annual SACT exercise as part of its review of Annual Review of Courses reports.
  - (b) The questionnaire is reviewed annually by TLC to consider the optional questions used by departments in order to remove unused questions and include new questions relating to new modes of study.
- (iii) **Students' satisfaction surveys:** Students' satisfaction surveys are institutional wide surveys that the University uses to measure overall satisfaction amongst students. Students' satisfaction surveys are conducted annually via the questionnaires administered by IQAU. Once the results have been reviewed and analysed, the University / Faculty can then enhance the student experience.
- (iv) **Student-Staff Liaison Committees (SSLC):** SSLC are an opportunity for course representatives to feedback on behalf of their fellow peers on areas of good practice and areas that need to be improved. Students have an opportunity to raise issues via their SSLC. This feedback is considered by the Faculty as part of the annual monitoring process. Each Faculty should have at least two SSLCs, one for undergraduates and one for postgraduate students.

### ***Key Principles of Student Staff Liaison Committees***

All SSLCs are guided by the following principles, which aim to ensure that SSLCs:

- provide an accessible forum to enable students to discuss teaching, learning and student support issues with staff in an open manner, within the framework of the formal structures. The academic department should consult with SSLC on new proposals, including changes to courses.
- encourage the resolution of issues and improvements at a departmental level. Issues raised through the SSLC should be discussed regularly and promptly at staff meetings.
- ensure that discussions and resulting actions are documented and disseminated to the student body represented through the SSLC.
- ensure that issues which remain unresolved are escalated where necessary to the relevant Faculty Committees. This is to ensure that such issues can be escalated within the University and discussed more widely.
- operate with transparency through the publication of SSLC minutes to all current students and the Students' Union.

SSLCs are not the place for students to air their personal grievances.

### ***Aims and objectives of Student Staff Liaison Committees***

- To facilitate greater communication between students and academic staff.
- To identify areas of concern to students and/or staff.
- To assist student input at all levels of decision making.
- To disseminate examples of good practice within the department.
- To promote engagement of student participation in quality assurance and enhancement.

### ***Faculty Student Staff Liaison Committee membership***

- Faculties or Departments areas are responsible for operating SSLCs according to the structure that works best for them and their students, with a minimum requirement of a Faculty level SSLC. Each study programme or each level can have SSLCs or have a combined SSLC for all levels of study within a particular programme. The frequency of meetings can also vary depending on the duration of the course/programme, but a minimum of at least one meeting in each semester is expected.
- The Dean and Heads of Departments shall be members of SSLC ex-officio. Relevant Directors of Postgraduate courses / Chairpersons of Board of Studies are included in case of the postgraduate SSLC. One senior academic staff member from each department shall be nominated by the Faculty Board.

- Student membership of SSLCs should be drawn from the nominated Year Representatives as determined by respective student groups of each degree programme. They should represent programmes and each year. It is recommended that students should be in the majority present at all SSLC meetings.
- President of the Faculty Students' Union (only for undergraduate SSLC)
- SSLCs shall be chaired by the Dean (or his/her nominee). The Dean and Heads of Departments are responsible for any decisions reached by the committee and that specific action points from the meetings are fulfilled.
- The secretary to the SSLC shall be the Assistant Registrar of the Faculty.
- Observers shall be invited to attend the SSLC at the discretion of the Chair.

### ***Student-Staff Liaison committee meetings***

- SSLCs should normally meet at least once per semester.
- SSLCs must be publicised to the wider student body so that they may inform the student representatives of any issues.
- It is recommended that the agenda for the SSLC should include the following as a minimum for the standard items:
  - Chair's report on developments or updates from any actions points from the previous meeting
  - consultation with students on Annual Review of Courses reports, External Examiner reports, Satisfaction survey outcomes and Student assessment of course units/module and teaching
  - new and revised programme developments (if any)
  - review of the relevant handbook (annually)
- The unconfirmed minutes of an SSLC meeting, as approved by the Chair, should normally be posted on the relevant department/school/centre webpage/LMS, or any other appropriate places, normally within 10 working days of the meeting. The minutes should include actions agreed by the SSLC in response to issues raised, who will take it and by when.
- Approved minutes should be made available to all members of the relevant student group (may be via LMS) and to all members of staff.
- SSLC should receive updated reports on actions at the next meeting. It is also important to report back where it has not been possible to progress an issue along with the reasons why. In doing so, Faculties/Departments can demonstrate that they are committed to the process and take students' issues seriously. Representatives can also take responsibility for reporting back to the wider student body.
- If a concern cannot be resolved at the SSLC, it should be referred onwards to the Faculty Teaching & Learning Committee or Academic & Curriculum Development Committee. If no progress is made, unresolved issues which require the attention of the Faculty Board or the Senate should be highlighted

in the Annual Monitoring process. Student representatives can access additional support from the appropriate Faculty Students Union if they feel that an issue is not being dealt with appropriately or quickly enough or with issues that cannot be resolved at the SSLC.

- (v) **Informal feedback to lecturers/tutors via lectures/seminars/tutorials, discussion groups, and other informal mechanisms:** These can be obtained by lecturers or tutors verbally or in writing and recorded for teaching-learning enhancement process.



## 4. External examiners

- 4.1 External examining provides a crucial means for maintaining academic standards. External examiners provide informed, independent and comparative views of academic standards, of assessment processes and programme structures, and of good practice and innovation. All taught programmes and subject components (disciplines) require an external examiner.
- 4.2 The External Examining of Taught Programmes Policy sets out information for Faculties and external examiners on nomination, appointment, reporting processes, and on roles and responsibilities.
- 4.3 The purposes of the external examiner system are to ensure that:
- the degrees awarded by the University are in accordance with the qualifications prescribed by Sri Lanka Quality Framework and applicable subject benchmark statements, and that the standards of student performance are properly judged against this;
  - the assessment process measures student achievement against the intended learning outcomes, and is rigorous, fairly operated, and in line with University policies and regulations;
  - that the assessment process is fair and is fairly operated in the marking, grading and classification of student performance, and that decisions are made in accordance with University regulations;
  - the University is able to compare the standard of awards with those in other higher education institutions;
  - programmes and units are well structured and balanced with appropriate content;
  - good practice and innovation relating to learning, teaching and assessment is identified and shared.

External Examiners also advise on the quality and enhancement of learning, teaching and assessment.

- 4.4 In order to achieve these purposes, External Examiners need to be able to:
- (a) participate in assessment procedures; and
  - (b) comment and give advice on assessment procedures and standards and jointly agree, as members of the Board of Examiners, the detailed assessment, award and final degree results.
- 4.5 The University operates a two-tier assessment board structure and therefore appoints external examiners at course unit/course module or subject discipline and award level.

### 4.5.1 Course Unit/Module or Subject discipline external examiner responsibilities

Course Unit/Module or Subject discipline external examiners are responsible for confirming academic standards at unit/module level on the basis of a sample of student work and should be confident that:

- (i) the marking carried out by internal examiners is accurate, consistent and fair to students;
- (ii) assessment is conducted in accordance with the regulations of the University and any requirements of professional and statutory bodies;
- (iii) students are fairly placed in relation to the rest of the cohort;
- (iv) assessment will enable students to demonstrate the achievement of the unit learning outcomes;
- (v) assessments are set at an appropriate level; and
- (vi) board decisions are reached in accordance with University policy.

#### 4.5.2 Award external examiner responsibilities

Award external examiners are responsible for confirming the standards of the University's awards on the basis of attending progression and award boards and should be confident that:

- (i) board decisions are reached in accordance with University policies; and
- (ii) students are considered equitably and objectively.

*The operational procedure of appointing external examiners, termination of appointments, reporting and reflection is give in Annexure 3.*

## 5. Annual Study Programme Monitoring

- 5.1 Annual Monitoring is the building block of the University's Academic Quality Enhancement processes and the process whereby Faculties and the University check that courses and programmes meet the expectations of staff and students.
- 5.2 Annual monitoring has a key role in:
- maintaining academic standards
  - monitoring and enhancing the management of student assessment and of feedback to students
  - monitoring student performance and progression
  - evaluating the quality of the student experience and identifying enhancements
  - evaluating the effectiveness of learning and teaching resources and identifying matters requiring attention
  - identifying, promoting and disseminating good practice
  - gathering evidence of local initiatives and progress in relation to the Faculty Learning and Teaching Plan and the University Learning and Teaching Strategy
  - informing the Faculties and University of matters requiring their attention
- 5.3 Programme monitoring should be carried out in every year by the respective FQAC. Course in-charges or Programme Co-ordinators conduct a review of the course unit/module following the completion of teaching and assessment.
- 5.4 Faculties/departments will need to consider what measures of their procedures best capture the concept of 'programme monitoring'. Examples include formal consideration of:
- external examiners' reports; any reports from accrediting or other external bodies
  - staff and student feedback; feedback from former students and their employers;
  - student progress and other relevant data; material available to students such as programme specifications, student handbooks and websites.
- 5.5 Good and innovative practices are highlighted for sharing and enhancing teaching learning process. There must be reflection on the information gathered and plans proposed for improvement to respond to any issues or aspects of the provision that can be developed.
- 5.6 The outcomes of this review are reported to the Faculty Board or in an Annual Monitoring Report. The reports are important for documenting that quality and standards are being assured and enhanced and that good practice is promoted.
- 5.7 Responses are also provided ensuring that actions and outcomes are reported back to staff and students at the relevant committees as given below.
- Staff-Student Liaison Committees: To gather input from Students and confirm that the Annual Monitoring Report reflects their experience

- Faculty Teaching & Learning Committee: To review and direct action at Faculty level teaching and learning aspects.
- Faculty Curriculum & Academic Development Committee: To review and direct action related to curriculum.

5.8 Annual Monitoring Reports are considered by the Senate ADPSEC. ADPSEC reviews the Annual Monitoring Reports to: identify trends and common issues across the Faculties; identify good practice with potential application across the wider university; and ensure a timely response and action, where appropriate, to issues raised for resolution at University level.

5.9 IQAU also monitors the effectiveness of Annual Monitoring on behalf of the University and recommends potential enhancements.

5.10 The Annual Monitoring Process is supported by the IQAU who can provide guidance and advice.

## 6. Periodic External / Internal Review of Study Programmes

### Internal Reviews

- 6.1 We believe that the responsibility for quality and standards lies effectively where the power to control or change practices exist, and that is with the institution itself. Quality Assurance is a continuous process, not a one-time event or an event at specific intervals. Therefore, this process has been incorporated as a part of the institution's continuous concern for maintaining and enhancing quality.
- 6.2 The University operates two (2) periodic internal review processes:
1. Periodic Programme Review looking at undergraduate programmes;
  2. Periodic Graduate Programme Review looking at the learning experience of postgraduate taught and research students
- 6.3 Process 1 is carried out to verify compliance with minimum standards in respect of eight (8) quality criteria in the Programme Review Manual published by the QAAC. The eight (8) criteria that encompass the key aspects of the programme operations including inputs, the processes that facilitate achievement of outputs and outcomes are listed below.
1. Programme Management
  2. Programme Design and Development
  3. Human and Physical Resources
  4. Course/Module Design and Development
  5. Teaching and Learning
  6. Learning Environment, Student Support and Progression
  7. Student Assessment and Awards
  8. Innovative and Healthy Practices

Under each criterion, the recommended/ proven procedures and practices that contribute to enhance the quality of the programs of study listed as 'best practices' in the Programme Review manual of QAAC are taken into account. Faculties are expected to adopt and internalize the best practices into their programmes.

This internal review should mimic the External Programme Review Process of QAAC. Each review is carried out by a Panel that includes at least one academic external member, who is a subject specialist. Other panel members comprise senior academic staff members of the faculty (preferably Professors) as decided by the Faculty Board. The Panel also includes a member of staff from the Senate ADPSEC, who has expertise in the process and is responsible for preparing the report. The panel will review the programme taking into account the marking scheme given in the Programme Review Manual.

- 6.4 Process 2 will be carried out using a set of Criteria developed for postgraduate research degrees. (Note: Criteria *and standards have to be formulated by IQAU/QAAC of UGC*)
- 6.5 These two processes are conducted in every two (2) years starting from 2018.
- 6.6 The outcome of the Periodic Review is a detailed report that highlights strengths and achievements and includes recommendations for change that are aimed at strengthening provision and further enhancing learning and teaching provision and the student experience. The report is submitted first to the Faculty Board which endorses or amends the report and the recommendations and forwards them to the Senate and IQAU for information and necessary action.
- 6.7 It is expected to provide feedback to students on the outcomes of the review and on the actions taken.
- 6.8 IQAU provides support, briefings and guidance for faculties at all stages of the process and co-ordinates training for Panel members.

#### External Review

- 6.9 External Review of Undergraduate Study Programmes are carried out by an external panel appointed by the QAAC of UGC to verify compliance with minimum standards in respect of eight (8) quality criteria in the Programme Review Manual published by the QAAC. The eight (8) criteria that encompass the key aspects of the programme operations including inputs, the processes that facilitate achievement of outputs and outcomes are listed below.
  - 1. Programme Management
  - 2. Programme Design and Development
  - 3. Human and Physical Resources
  - 4. Course/Module Design and Development
  - 5. Teaching and Learning
  - 6. Learning Environment, Student Support and Progression
  - 7. Student Assessment and Awards
  - 8. Innovative and Healthy Practices

Guidelines given in the *Manual for Review of Undergraduate Study Programmes of Sri Lankan Universities and Higher Education Institutions* are followed in this process.

## 7. External Review of Institution

- 7.1 QAAC of UGC has established a peer review process to review the Institution as a whole. Its main objectives are to safeguard standards of awards and quality of delivery in higher education; to identify good practices; to facilitate continuous quality improvement; and to inculcate the quality culture into the higher education system.
- 7.2 The University underwent its first Institutional Review in 2009 and achieved the highest possible outcome. The Review Report concluded that the University has effective arrangements for managing academic standards and the student learning experience and that these arrangements are likely to continue to be effective in the future. The second cycle of Institutional Review will take place in 2018.
- 7.3 University will prepare a Self-Evaluation Report (SER) according to the *Manual for Institutional Review of Sri Lankan Universities and Higher Education Institutions* based on the ten criteria given in the manual in every five (5) years.

The ten criteria which will be looked at are the following:

1. Governance and Management.
  2. Curriculum Design and Development.
  3. Teaching and Learning.
  4. Learning Resources, Student Support and Progression.
  5. Student Assessment and Awards.
  6. Strength and Quality of Staff.
  7. Postgraduate Studies, Research, Innovation and Commercialization.
  8. Community Engagement, Consultancy and Outreach.
  9. Distance Education.
  10. Quality Assurance.
- 7.4 External panel of peers will evaluate the University based upon the SER submitted and a final report carrying an overall grade will be submitted. The final report of the Institutional Review will enter the public domain through the QAAC website so that all stakeholders including students, graduates, prospective employers, grant providing agencies, educationists and policymakers have access to it.
- 7.5 The University / IQAU ensures that all faculties, departments and support units have access to the report. After all concerned academics, administrators and support staff have read at least the sections relevant to them, their reactions will be obtained in a formal manner and discussed in special meetings of the ADPSEC, Faculty boards, Senate and Council. A comprehensive follow up action plan will be drawn up and integrated into the current action plan. The IQAU and other relevant committees will continue to monitor the progress in redressing defects and enhancing quality. The Institutional Review report will be made available for public scrutiny through the University's/HEI's website.

## 8. Accreditation

- 8.1 Accreditation is the process whereby a professional association or non-governmental agency gives recognition to an institution for its demonstrated ability to meet predetermined criteria for established Professional, Statutory or Regulatory standards. The academic content and other aspects of taught programmes can often be influenced by the requirements of accrediting bodies and professional associations. Accreditation Bodies are concerned to ensure that graduates entering the professions they oversee have the skills and knowledge that enable them to practise their profession safely and appropriately. Accordingly, PSRBs are particularly interested in the content of degree programmes, the staff and physical resources available to support students' learning, and assessment standards and thresholds for professional entry. Accreditation provides potential benefits for students, e.g. recognised fast-track route for graduates seeking professional status, exemption from certain professional examinations. It also provides benefits to the University being a further way of assuring and enhancing the quality of teaching and learning provision in Subjects and providing a further source of information for Annual Monitoring and Periodic Subject Review by means of accreditation reports.
- 8.2 Wayamba University has the confidence to submit themselves or their programmes for accreditation in future.
- 8.3 Such reviews normally take the form of visits by a panel of members of the relevant body, who prepare a report on their findings. The format and organisation of these reviews and what is required of subject areas in preparation are defined by the Professional or Salutatory Board concerned. Summary reports from the faculties on accreditation reviews are received by ADPSEC and submitted to the Senate. An annual summary of accreditation review reports summarises learning and teaching issues identified in the accreditation process.



## Terminology

We use the definitions of the following key terms based on those set out by the Quality Assurance and Accreditation Council (QAAC) of University Grants Commission.

- **Academic standards** are the level of achievement a student has to reach to gain an academic award (for example, a degree).

It is normally said that standards are ‘maintained’ or ‘secured’.

- **Academic quality** is the overall level of performance of the academic unit in the context of its mission as measured by the extent of accomplishment of the unit's intended learning outcomes, operational outcomes and broad-based goals; describes how well the study programme is designed and administered, and learning opportunities available help students to achieve the intended learning outcomes and awards. It encompasses provision of relevant curricula, effective teaching, learning support, assessment and learning opportunities is a way of describing how well the learning opportunities.

Quality can be assured and it can also be enhanced.

- **Quality enhancement** is continuous deliberate institutional effort to achieve higher level of performance and quality that is understood to be reasonably better than which prevailed earlier. It is also defined as enhancing performance efficiency of a Higher Education Institute (HEI) or system.

It means that we are committed to reviewing our activities systematically and periodically to see whether we can identify features of current practice that can be improved. It also means that we systematically plan, considering ‘where we want to be’ and taking the necessary steps to ensure we get there.

- **Academic year** - the period, during which courses are taught and assessed.
- **Course** - a planned series of learning experiences in a particular subject/discipline offered by an institution; a self-contained, formally structured unit of a programme of study with defined level, credit value, aims, intended learning outcomes, mode(s) of delivery, scheme of assessment, and possibly also pre- and co-requisites
- **Programme of study** is a stand- alone approved curriculum followed by a student, which contributes to a qualification of a degree awarding body. It has a set of compulsory and elective courses leading to a defined award, with defined aims, intended learning outcomes, mode(s) of delivery, and scheme of assessment
- **Award** - a certificate or title conferred by an academic institution signifying that the recipient has successfully completed a prescribed programme of study that leads to a qualification such as a degree, diploma or certificate or other formal recognition.

## **Annexure 1 – Guidance for Induction Programme**

### **Induction**

The Faculties / Department of Studies shall provide a well-targeted and effective induction programmes for the undergraduate and postgraduate students at the beginning of the study programme. It is the responsibility of the Faculties to provide a programme of induction for its students before starting the week 1 of their study programme and it may extend over the course of the first semester. The programme of induction should enable students to begin their studies with an understanding of the academic and social environment within which they will be working and must include (but is not confined to) all essential aspects of induction as listed in the detailed guidance of the Induction programme (Annexure A - Guidance for Induction).

Faculties/departments should make arrangements for the Induction Programme well in advance of the beginning of the academic year with a clear understanding of the main aims and objectives of the induction process.

Provisions (if any) made by a Faculty/department for students having any special educational needs should be informed and made available at application and admission stage, for induction purposes and on an ongoing basis to applicants, to new entrants and to existing students. Faculties/departments will need to be able to demonstrate that they are able both to respond appropriately to the particular needs of individual students and to plan ahead to make their provision as accessible as possible.

Faculties/departments should make all new students aware of sources of support for learning development within the faculty/department and the University. Specific attention should be drawn to the University guidance on academic good practice, avoidance of plagiarism and code of disciplinary conduct.

### **Guidance for Induction**

The programme of induction should enable students to begin their studies with an understanding of the academic and social environment within which they will be working and must include (but is not confined to) all essential aspects of induction as listed in section 2 below.

#### **1. Responsibility of Induction**

It is the responsibility of the Faculty / department to provide a programme of induction for its students. The responsible body should determine who delivers each element of induction, e.g. the Head of Department or course co-ordinator. The responsible body should also ensure that the induction programme takes into account the diverse backgrounds of a typical student cohort, and the multiple adjustments that students are making at this time.

## **2. Content of induction**

The responsible body should ensure that the programme of induction includes (but is not confined to) the following:

- i. facilities available for students within the faculty/department;
- ii. relevant health and safety practices within the group and department;
- iii. guidance on good academic practice and the avoidance of plagiarism;
- iv. introduction to staff and their roles and an opportunity to meet socially and informally with other students and staff in the department.
- v. orientation to the course, i.e. methods of assessment and examination, regulations and other requirements, as well as general processes such as annual registration;
- vi. for the postgraduate students - dissertation supervision arrangements, including establishing appropriate working patterns, the minimum frequency of supervision meetings and the purpose of such meetings, evaluation, monitoring and reporting procedures;
- vii. wider academic opportunities (seminars, journal clubs, research networks) including opportunities for meeting other students and staff and opportunities to present research to peers;
- viii. student welfare;
- ix. academic expectations of students and responsibilities of students;
- x. typical challenges which may be face by student and sources of support and guidance including support for developing study skills;
- xi. English language provision available via the English Language Teaching Unit;
- xii. how to raise concerns and/or make a complaint, and opportunities to provide feedback (e.g. through a Student-Staff Consultative Committee).

## **3. Students need special requirements**

Students who have disclosed disability are admitted to the faculty, the responsible body should ensure that any special requirements to support the student on course are understood, put in place and communicated as necessary as early as possible. The responsible body should discuss these requirements with the student and take advice from the Medical Officer of the University or any other relevant sources. Additionally, induction will provide a good opportunity to inform students who have not yet disclosed a disability to inform it by their own to get better support.

## **4. Examples of good practices in an Induction Programme:**

1. Department facilities
  - Topics covered might include: building layout, access to buildings and areas and facilities available to student use etc.

2. Health and safety (where relevant)

- Topics covered might include: laboratory safety, risk assessments, control of substances hazardous to health, chemical safety, emergency first aid.

3. Introduction to staff and their roles

Policy requires Faculties/ departments to provide the following information for students:

- An introduction to, and explanation of the role of
  - The Dean and Assistant Registrar and the support staff at Den’s office
  - The Heads of Departments /course director/co-ordinator (in the case of postgraduate taught courses)
  - Other academic staff involved in the course
  - Proctor, academic counsellors (mentors) and student councillors
- An overview of supervision arrangements, and the role of the supervisor (in the case of postgraduate research students)
- An explanation of who to go to with a concern or a complaint

4. Orientation to programme

For undergraduate and postgraduate taught students this might comprise:

- Components of the programme, core and options / electives, and the curriculum plan
- Teaching types (lectures, seminars, small-group discussion, lab-work etc)
- Teaching timetable
- Components of assessment
- Assessment timetable
- Handbook and online information

For postgraduate research students this might comprise:

- Key milestones and requirements to reach completion (transfer and confirmation of status, submission of the thesis deadlines)
- Starting work with the supervisor
- Pattern of independent work
- Expected attendance (e.g. lab hours where relevant, compulsory seminars or meetings)
- Handbook and online information

## 5. IT and library resources

An introduction to IT facilities might include:

- IT policies
- Faculty / Departmental support and help
- University IT Services

For example ICT Center may provide IT induction booklet for new students which covers: privacy and information security; facilities access (accounts); University network; passwords; data storage; email; web; support and help; personal machines; mailing lists; safety.

Topics covered in library induction might include:

- An overview of the library resources
- A library tour
- An introduction to finding sources in the library

## 6. English Language Course

Since many students who enter the University had followed their secondary school education in Sinhala or Tamil medium, attending a pre-sessional English course conducted by the ELTU is mandatory for students (except for those who are exempted by the ELTU). This programme shall be conducted before the commencement of the academic programme for several weeks as decided by the ELTU in consultation of the Dean of the Faculty, providing adequate time for the students to acquire language skills at a minimum level required to follow the study programme.

## 7. Academic expectations and academic skills support

An introduction to the standard expected, the kind of skills that students will need to have or acquire, and how support and guidance is provided by the department, is amongst the most valuable information that can be offered to new students.

### ***Skill level***

Many students will be anxious about the level of attainment expected of them. One approach to addressing this is to make arrangements to share the experience of current or recent students who can give an insight into their experiences of adjusting to the level of work required. In addition, an experienced member of staff might offer a session on the typical challenges which may face students, and sources of support and guidance in times of difficulty.

### ***Support with academic skill acquisition***

Students' needs will vary according to previous academic background but these are generic skills with which some students might need help early on in their studies:

- Time management
- Participating in tutorials/ seminars/ supervision – Postgraduate students
- Critical thinking and reasoning
- Academic writing
- Group and self-study strategies
- Revision and examination techniques

### ***Postgraduate research students***

Although the supervisor is responsible for supporting their supervisee, the department / higher degrees committee can conduct a programme for the postgraduate research students. Some of the topics that can be covered are;

- What is research? (induction programme)
- Presentation skills (induction programme)
- Working with your supervisor
- Planning to write a thesis
- Interview techniques
- Careers after the degree

#### 8. Academic good practice (research ethics, avoiding plagiarism)

Departmental induction sessions should always incorporate separate sessions on good academic practice and the avoidance of plagiarism. These should include advice on note-taking, referencing practice and study skills. Ideally, further sessions on plagiarism and academic practice should be organised as students prepare to undertake projects and dissertations.

Whilst supervisors should work through the research integrity of their students, departments should ensure that research students and master's students undertaking research projects are aware in general terms of their responsibilities and any restrictions, for example on the ownership and protection of data, or on the protocol for publication, at a time that is relevant for them to understand that information.

#### 9. Overview of wider academic opportunities (seminars, research presentations, etc)

Students should be made aware of other University or organization seminars or lectures that are taking place and that they might attend. Departments shall advertise talks and seminars open to the wider academic community through notice boards, emails and web.

## 10. Student representation

Students should be aware and advised of the arrangements for student representation in the Faculty/department, the duties of student representatives, and the procedure and timing for the election of representatives or the names of representatives if these have already been elected for the year.

## 11. University policies, regulations and procedures

Students should be aware about the policies, regulations and procedures relevant to them. Especially, well-arranged programmes shall be conducted on;

- Prevention of ragging
- Examination
- Registration and students services
- Codes of conduct

## 12. University-wide resources and facilities

Students should be aware and advised of the common facilities and resources available for them in the University. The topics shall be covered by the Heads or Officers are;

- University medical facility
- Counselling services
- Sports and recreational facilities
- Canteens, cafeterias etc
- Hostel and accommodation facilities
- Students' societies and clubs
- Access to religious and culturally important places
- Banking, shopping facilities etc

**Annexure 2: Course evaluation – Basic requirements**

1. All courses must use an anonymous course evaluation questionnaire as one of the methods used to enable students to evaluate their educational experience. If a course is taught in ‘units or sections’, in which there is a clear division of different topics being taught, then it may be appropriate to formally define these units or sections as ‘course-blocks’, and use a questionnaire at the end of each course-block.
2. All questionnaires must include all of the following five questions (the Core Question Set), at the top of the questionnaire, in this order, with no interspersed questions:

2.1 The lecturer / teaching staff explained things well      Strongly agree                   Strongly disagree

**Or**

My project/dissertation/placement supervisor/  
course coordinator was helpful      Strongly agree                   Strongly disagree

2.2 The course was intellectually stimulating      Strongly agree                   Strongly disagree

2.3 I am satisfied with the overall quality of the course      Strongly Agree                   Strongly disagree

2.4 What was good about the course?

2.5 How could this course be improved?

This core set has been devised to capture sufficient information to provide an overall assessment of the course, and to highlight any concerns.

3. **Extended questionnaires** to be created by the course in-charge. Faculty Teaching & Learning Committee should decide on an appropriate process for the creation of extended questionnaires based on requests from members of staff.
4. **Timing of survey distribution**  
The timing of surveys is not fixed; however, students must be informed at the start of the course (or course block) as to when surveys will be distributed. Best time to do the survey



is dependent on the type of course, and can be decided at faculty level. Most questionnaires would likely be distributed nearing the end of the course. However, it is recognised that some courses are taught in teaching blocks and for such courses the Faculty / Department might consider distributing the questionnaire after each block. Co-ordination between Faculty administrators and academic staff in advance of the start of semester is essential, and academic staff should be informed by the officer in-charge of course evaluation of the timing of surveys.

#### **5. Access and use to the data**

All individual data will be treated confidentially. Aggregated data will be more widely distributed and used for institutional purposes.

The results of a course questionnaire should only be made available to the lecturer/course team for the course, and the Head of Department and Dean (those in a position to affect change and to influence the individual's subsequent behaviour by offering additional support, praise, encouragement for promotion, etc.)

#### **6. Summary and Response document**

Members of staff are encouraged to write a narrative reflecting on the questionnaire results to ensure accurate contextual interpretation of data.

For each course, the data from the completed questionnaires should be summarised in a 'Summary and Response' document which is made readily available to students during the first 3 weeks of the following semester to demonstrate to students that their feedback is valued.

In completing Summary and Response documents, staff are encouraged to reflect on the feedback provided and to follow up on issues identified in more detail and greater depth, if necessary, to ensure their responses are targeted and result in a real improvement to the learning experience. Some of the different options for doing this are described in the QAAC's Code of Practice on Obtaining and Responding to Student Feedback.

Summary and Response documents should be used in Staff Student Liaison Committees. Staff and student representatives also have a responsibility to communicate the responses to matters raised more widely to all students and other relevant members of staff. Any issues to be addressed academically should be referred to Teaching-Learning or Curriculum development Committee by the Dean of the Faculty or Head of Department.

Faculties can decide on where their documents should best be placed so that they are accessible to all those students who completed the survey. Faculties can use Moodle, or email to all relevant students.

**Summary & Response Document**

**Course code and name:**

**Response rate:**

<b>Summary of Student comments</b>	<b>Date comment received</b>	<b>Response from Academic Staff</b>	<b>Expected completion date (if required)</b>	<b>Responsible person</b>

### **Annexure 3: Appointment of external examiners for taught courses (at SLQF Level 5 or above)**

#### **Authority**

1. The Senate has the authority for the appointment of external examiners nominated by the Faculty Board. Faculty Boards may decide need of external examiners for the unit/module or subject discipline at its discretion. However, an award level external examiner must be appointed for the programmes at SLQF Level 5 and above.

#### **Protocols**

2. Newly appointed external examiners will normally commence on the Semester I of the academic year and cease at the end of the academic session of the stipulated duration of academic programme (eg four years later for SLQF Level 5, two years later for SLQF Level 10 programmes). External examiners shall remain available until the conclusion of all business relating to the final academic session of their tenure.
3. An external examiner shall not normally be associated with the University for more than four academic years consecutively. In exceptional circumstances, an appointment may be extended by one year to ensure continuity.
4. To ensure external examiners are able to carry out their role effectively they should not normally hold more than the equivalent of one appointment elsewhere.
5. External examiners must be able to command the respect of their academic and professional peers and therefore should:
  - (i) have appropriate standing, credibility, expertise and experience within the discipline to assess and advise the University regarding the maintenance and security of academic standards in the context of higher education as a whole;
  - (ii) have knowledge and understanding of Sri Lanka Higher Education sector agreed reference points for the maintenance of academic standards and assurance and enhancement of quality;
  - (iii) be able to judge students impartially without being influenced by previous association with the unit or award, the staff, or any of the students; and
  - (iv) be competent and have experience relating to the enhancement of the student learning experience, relevant higher education quality processes including assessment policies and assessment boards.
6. In order to maintain the integrity of the external examining role they must be independent and impartial to the University; therefore to avoid any potential conflicts of interest they must not;
  - (i) be personally associated with students and staff of the University.

- (ii) be in a position to influence significantly the future employment of students on the course;
  - (iii) be likely to be involved with student placements or training in the examiner's organisation.
  - (iv) be a near relative of a student or member of staff at the University or of a collaborative partner institution (for externals appointed to cover provision delivered by a partner institution);
  - (v) be part of a reciprocal external examining arrangement between their course/department and the academic school of the University being appointed to;
  - (vi) have been a member of staff, a governor or student of the University or of a collaborative partner institution in the last five years;
  - (vii) act concurrently as members of any panel set up to review established or new courses;
7. Exemptions may be permitted from the requirements stipulated in paragraphs 6 (vii) where the course is complex and involves a large number of discrete subject areas, or where a subject area is so specialised that the number of institutions, or professional bodies, from which appropriate examiners can be drawn is very limited. In such instances, good cause must be demonstrated to the satisfaction of the Senate.

**Unit/module or subject discipline external examiner appointment**

- 8. Unit/module or subject discipline external examiners must be appointed to all units at SLQF Level 5 and above.
- 9. It is the relevant Faculty Board's responsibility to decide whether external examiners are required for a broad subject disciplines or specialities (eg. Horticulture / Finance / Mathematics / Food Technology) or for each unit within their Faculty. This has to be decided before the unit is taught. Exceptionally a subject discipline / unit may have more than one external examiner.
- 10. Unit / subject external examiners must have relevant academic and/or professional qualifications and expertise appropriate to the units / subject being assessed, as evidenced by their:
  - (i) highest qualification being at least equivalent to the highest level of the units being appointed to;
  - (ii) present post and place of work (or recent if retired from employment);
  - (iii) range and scope of experience in higher education or in a professional capacity which includes assessing students' knowledge and skills at the appropriate level and of designing and marking assessments;
  - (iv) current or recent research or other scholarly activity in the field of study; and
  - (v) awareness of current developments in the design and delivery of relevant curricula.

11. Unit external examiners may be recruited from industry, provided that they meet the above criteria and are in a position to comment on the academic standards of the units in comparison to the wider higher education sector.
12. External examiners will be informed of their unit allocations at the start of each academic year.

### **Award external examiner appointment**

13. Award external examiners are appointed with responsibility for all awards above SLQF Level 5 or above.
14. It is the Faculty Board's and Senate's responsibility to ensure that sufficient award external examiners have been appointed to guarantee appropriate representation at all the University's progression and awards boards. Usually one Award external examiner shall be appointed for each qualification awarded.
15. Award external examiners must have academic or professional qualifications and expertise to effectively undertake the responsibilities of the role, as evidenced by:
  - (i) The present post or place of work (or recent if retired from employment). The position held must be an appropriately senior role such as Head of Department, Dean of Faculty, or above Senior Lecturer (Grade II) and other suitably senior posts which includes a substantial level of higher education quality assurance management; and
  - (ii) Preferably has experience of quality assurance in higher education specifically the application of assessment regulations and understanding of assessment board processes.

### **Briefing and induction**

16. New external examiners should be briefed on their task as soon as possible after appointment, preferably by attending the annual external examiners' briefing day. The briefing should cover the role and responsibility of external examiners and an introduction to relevant academic policies and regulations. External examiners should also be informed of any unit/course specific requirements that apply to the units they are appointed to, e.g. exemptions.
17. External examiners must be provided access to the necessary material information they need in order to undertake their roles effectively. This should include the University's assessment policy and regulations, relevant course specifications, unit descriptors and course handbooks. This information should be provided at the start of every academic year.

### **Role of unit external examiners**

18. Unit /Module or Subject external examiners should for their allocated units:
  - (i) be able to compare the performance of students with that of their peers on comparable units and awards elsewhere in higher education;

- (ii) be competent and experienced in the fields covered by the units they are to be appointed to;
  - (iii) provide advice and feedback on the form and content of all proposed examination papers, coursework and other assessments before they are given to students to help inform the University's practice as it occurs;
  - (iv) confirm unit assessment marks by providing a written statement to the Faculty Examination Board; and
  - (v) report to the Senate through Faculty Board on the appropriateness and effectiveness of assessment and make any recommendations for enhancement.
18. Having seen sufficient examples of student work, unit external examiners have the right to recommend moderation or standardization of the marks awarded by the internal examiners but not to change any individual mark in isolation.
19. Unit / Module or Subject external examiners may also be consulted by the Curriculum & Academic Development Committee of the Faculty on the development of new units or Unit and course modifications.
20. Unit / Module or Subject external examiners are required to report annually on the standards of their allocated provision and will also be asked to comment on:
- (i) that the threshold academic standards set for the provision is being maintained;
  - (ii) that the assessment process measures student achievement rigorously and fairly against intended learning outcomes;
  - (iii) that the academic standards and achievement of students are comparable to the sector;
  - (iv) the strengths and weaknesses of the students;
  - (v) the quality of knowledge and skills (both generic and subject specific) demonstrated by the students;
  - (vi) the structure, organisation, design and marking of all assessments;
  - (vii) the quality of student learning as indicated by student performance;
  - (viii) the implications to be drawn from the assessments for the curriculum, syllabus, teaching methods, and for the resources for the course;
  - (ix) the conduct of any unit assessment boards attended; and
  - (x) good practice and innovation relating to the learning, teaching and assessment and opportunities for enhancement.

### **Role of award external examiners**

21. Award external examiners should endorse the outcomes of the Examination Boards (Semester examination and final results boards) attended at the meeting and by submitting a report after every board attended.
22. The report submitted will invite comment on:
- (i) The application of assessment regulations; and
  - (ii) Course profiles and patterns of student attainment.

### **University monitoring**

23. The University (Senate / Faculty Board) will normally aim to respond to an external examiner's report within six weeks of submission.
24. The ADPSEC or Teaching & Learning Committees of the Faculties will receive a review of issues raised by external examiners' in their reports and the subsequent actions taken by the Senate/Faculty.
25. Senate will receive annually a report on: the appointment of new external examiners; the distribution of institutions appointed from. It will also receive separately an annual summary of emergent themes arising from external examiners' reports.
26. External examiner annual reports will be used during annual and periodic review of courses.

### **Raising concerns**

27. An external examiner has the authority to report directly to the Vice-Chancellor where there is a concern about standards and performance, particularly if it is considered that assessments are being conducted in ways which jeopardise either the fair treatment of individual students or the standards of the University's awards.
28. Where an external examiner has a serious concern relating to systemic failings with the academic standards of a course or courses and has exhausted all published applicable internal procedures, including the submission of a confidential report to the Vice-Chancellor. The scheme's focus is explicitly on systemic failings in the University's management of standards or quality. Therefore, the scheme must not be used for one-off cases of ineffective practice, or to raise a personal grievance or issues relating to an appointment.

### **Termination of and changes to agreement**

29. The University reserves the right to review the external examiner appointment annually. Changes to the agreement will be communicated to external examiners and a revised agreement will be issued.
30. The external examiner agreement makes provision for early termination where either the external examiner or the University wishes to terminate the appointment before the agreed termination date. A minimum of three months notice should normally be given by either party, together with an indication of the reason(s) for termination.
31. Termination by the University would normally be on the grounds of course suspension/closure, course reorganisation or breach of contract by the external examiner.
32. An external examiner will be considered to be in breach of contract and therefore the agreement considered for termination when any or all of the following criteria are met:
  - (i) They no longer meet the requirements of independence and impartiality as stipulated in this policy;

- (ii) They have been unable to carry out their external examining duties due to a period of absence;
- (iii) A unit/module or subject external examiner has failed to engage in the moderation and assessment board processes;
- (iv) They have failed to attend two Examination Boards, at which they were expected without due notice;
- (v) Unit/module or Subject external examiner has failed to submit an annual report six weeks after the relevant Faculty Examination Board, without the agreement of the University; and
- (vi) An award external examiner has failed to submit a report six weeks after a University Examination board that they have attended, without the agreement of the University.