JOINT QUALITY REVIEW COMMITTEE

Preview Criteria

Preview of Institutional Academic Quality Assurance Processes for Self-financed Sub-degree Programmes: Suggested Basic Requirements

While each member institution may have its own model of internal academic quality assurance, it is expected that there are basic core elements which are common to most academic quality assurance systems and which are in line with international good practices. For the purpose of the Preview, the following sets out some of the basic core elements which are, under normal circumstances, expected of member institutions in their academic quality assurance of self-financed sub-degree programmes, within the context of the self-accrediting authority vested in the institutions proper.

The core elements are categorized into the following areas:

- **The authority and the institutional processes for the approval of self-financed sub-degree programmes,**

- **The existence of an academic quality assurance system and processes to ensure the quality of these programmes, and**

- **The application of appropriate academic quality assurance systems and processes for determining the level and standard of these programmes for placement on the Qualifications Framework (QF).**

(A) The authority and the institutional processes for the approval of self-financed sub-degree programmes

1. There should be clearly designated authorit(ies) for the approval of self-financed sub-degree programmes, these being the same as those for the approval of degree level programmes, or otherwise suitably constituted with proper report back channels to the latter.

2. The approval of self-financed sub-degree programmes, if not granted by the same authority as for degree programmes, should be granted at least by the highest authority within or governing the Self-financed Sub-degree Programmes Unit (SSPU)* responsible for the awards.

3. The institution’s central authority e.g. Senate, should ensure that the self-financed sub-degree programmes are subject to the same rigour of academic quality assurance as for degree programmes both in respect of approval and implementation.
4. Relevant information should be provided to the central authority (whether in the approval process or the report-back process) including details of the proposed programme(s), and reports from the lower level bodies.

5. There should be provision for the central authority to exercise powers of sanction/ non-approval over the proposed self-financed sub-degree programme(s), as necessary.

(B) The existence of an academic quality assurance system and processes to ensure the quality of self-financed sub-degree programmes

1. **Programme Design and Approval**
   
   (a) The programme design and approval process should involve a critical examination of different aspects of the programme including its objective, content, demand, entry and exit standard, staffing and resource support, and management and monitoring.

   (b) The approval process should be conducted by a body independent of the proposing unit, involving a peer review process and where possible, involving external experts in the process.

   (c) There should be benchmarking processes to ensure that the programmes are comparable in standard to those in other local or overseas institutions, such as through peer review, validation, or other benchmarking exercises.

2. **Academic Regulations/ Documentation**
   
   (a) There should be clearly drawn up academic regulations governing the self-financed sub-degree programmes and these should be made known to staff and students.

   (b) There should be clear regulations governing the appointment and duties and responsibilities of staff and these should be made known to staff members.

   (c) There should be properly kept records of students and their assessment.

3. **Award of qualifications**
   
   (a) There should be clearly designated authorities to oversee the assessment of students and award of qualifications.

   (b) Reports on the award of qualifications should be submitted to suitable authorities at the SSPU and the institution’s central authority.

4. **Programme monitoring**
   
   (a) There should be designated authorit(ies) responsible for the monitoring and review/ re-approval of programmes, either at the SSPU level or the institution level.

   (b) The monitoring process should include, amongst others, reviews of the programme and the teaching quality, and should take into account the views of a range of stakeholders including staff and students.
The application of appropriate academic quality assurance systems and processes for determining the level and standard of self-financed sub-degree programmes for placement on the QF

1. The classification of the self-financed sub-degree programmes for the QF should be considered by appropriate authorities within the SSPU or the institution proper.

2. Due consideration should have been given to various aspects pertaining to the QF, including the levels, the Generic Level Descriptors, the subject classifications, Common Descriptors for Associate Degree, and the format of the Qualifications Register (QR).

3. Appropriate discussion and consultation should take place within the institution and with external people and relevant organizations as appropriate (such as governmental bodies, other institutions, external advisors or employers, etc.), to ensure that the institution’s staff are suitably involved and/or informed in the establishment of the QF.

4. Efforts should be made to ensure that staff and students are aware of the proposed placement of the qualifications on the QF and the implications.

5. There should be processes and mechanisms in place for reviewing the classification and placement of self-financed sub-degrees on the QR in future.

(*Note: SSPU refers to the Continuing Education Unit or the Community College, or the department responsible for self-financed sub-degree programmes, as appropriate.)

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Joint Quality Review Committee