

**UNIVERSITY OF DURBAN WESTVILLE**  
**THE OFFICE OF QUALITY ASSURANCE**

**POSITION PAPER : APRIL 2002**

**1. INTRODUCTION**

The institutionalization of quality management systems is firmly on the agenda of higher education around the world. The demand for greater accountability and efficiency in respect of public financing, shrinking resources, and greater stakeholder scrutiny of education and training have led to increasing implementation of formal quality assurance arrangements within higher education institutions and systems. A quality assurance system is intended to ensure that the programmes at undergraduate and post graduate levels are relevant and responsive to the needs of learners, employers and other stakeholders within the context of social, intellectual and economic requirements of societal development.

The new regulatory framework governing South African Education and Training makes the quality of provision central to the achievement of the goals of the National Qualifications Framework (NQF). Within the context of higher education, the construction of a national quality assurance system is a critical component of the restructuring of higher education currently underway. The quality assurance system is intended to support the purposes and goals for higher education as identified in the Education White Paper 3: a programme for the transformation of higher education. Quality is one of the principles that is expected to guide the transformation of higher education, together with equity and redress, development, effectiveness and efficiency, academic freedom and public accountability.

**2 . RATIONALE**

Driven by the imperatives of its own mission statement and increasingly exacting legislative requirements, there is a strong commitment by the University of Durban-Westville to institutionalize Quality Assurance (QA) in all sectors and at all levels within the institution. The importance of ensuring the quality of teaching and learning across all programs is particularly relevant in the current climate of accountability to stakeholders and the growing competition between institutions for resources and students. The institution is accountable to a series of stakeholders including council, students, funders, employers and to the community - and hence, must establish a range of internal control and monitoring mechanisms to assure quality, relevance and excellence. In addition, it is required to reassure external stakeholders that the educational provision for which it takes responsibility meets established standards. The need for a

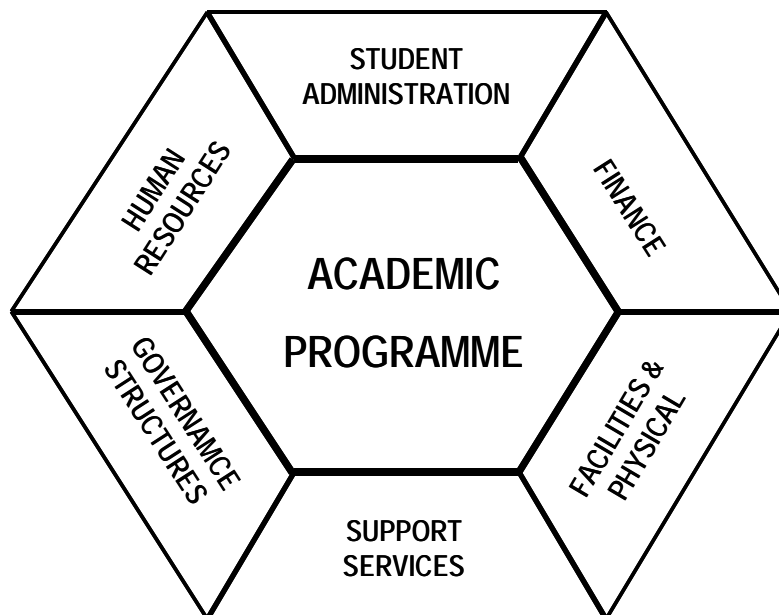
comprehensive quality assurance and monitoring system is critical in achieving these goals.

Whilst there currently exists a range of QA mechanisms, procedures and practices within the institution, there is now a dedicated office to ensure systematic, structured and continuous attention to quality monitoring, maintenance and improvement. There are powerful operational conceptions of quality and quality assurance embedded within the matrix of policies, programmes and practices of the institution. As in the case of all South African higher education institutions, the University of Durban-Westville must develop explicit policies regarding quality assessment.

This document provides a framework for implementation of a comprehensive Total Quality Assurance Management System (TQMS)) at UDW. The TQMS would ideally cover the following :

- Functions of the institutions, namely, **teaching/learning, research and community service**
- Services of the institutions, namely resources services, the **students administration and support services, information technology and library services.**
- Aspects of the institution such as **governance, access, strategic planning, human resource planning and administration, finance management and physical/facilities administration.**
- **Management/Governance structures at the different levels of the institution** (institutional - Senior Management, intermediate - Faculties/Schools and operational - departments/units )

**FIGURE 1 : TOTAL QUALITY MANAGEMENT SYSTEM**



In addition to the above, the position paper sets out the goals of the QA system, key principles that would underpin such a system, the planning and management context, and the specific projects to be prioritized within a number of key areas.

### **3. GOALS OF A QUALITY ASSESSMENT AND IMPROVEMENT SYSTEM**

- To fulfil the statutory obligations under the relevant legislation as developed and amended from time to time
- To promote and develop the quality of provision of all services and academic activities
- To put in place a comprehensive system to monitor the quality of provision of all services and activities
- To ensure the implementation and ongoing review of systems and mechanisms to assess quality of provision
- To document QA procedures and activities
- To develop and implement formal QA systems, policies and procedures
- To communicate/liaise with the relevant statutory, accreditation and professional boards and bodies
- To ensure dissemination of information relevant on QA to all sectors and levels within the institution
- To ensure representation of QA matters including representation on all relevant internal and external structures.

#### **4. GUIDING PRINCIPLES**

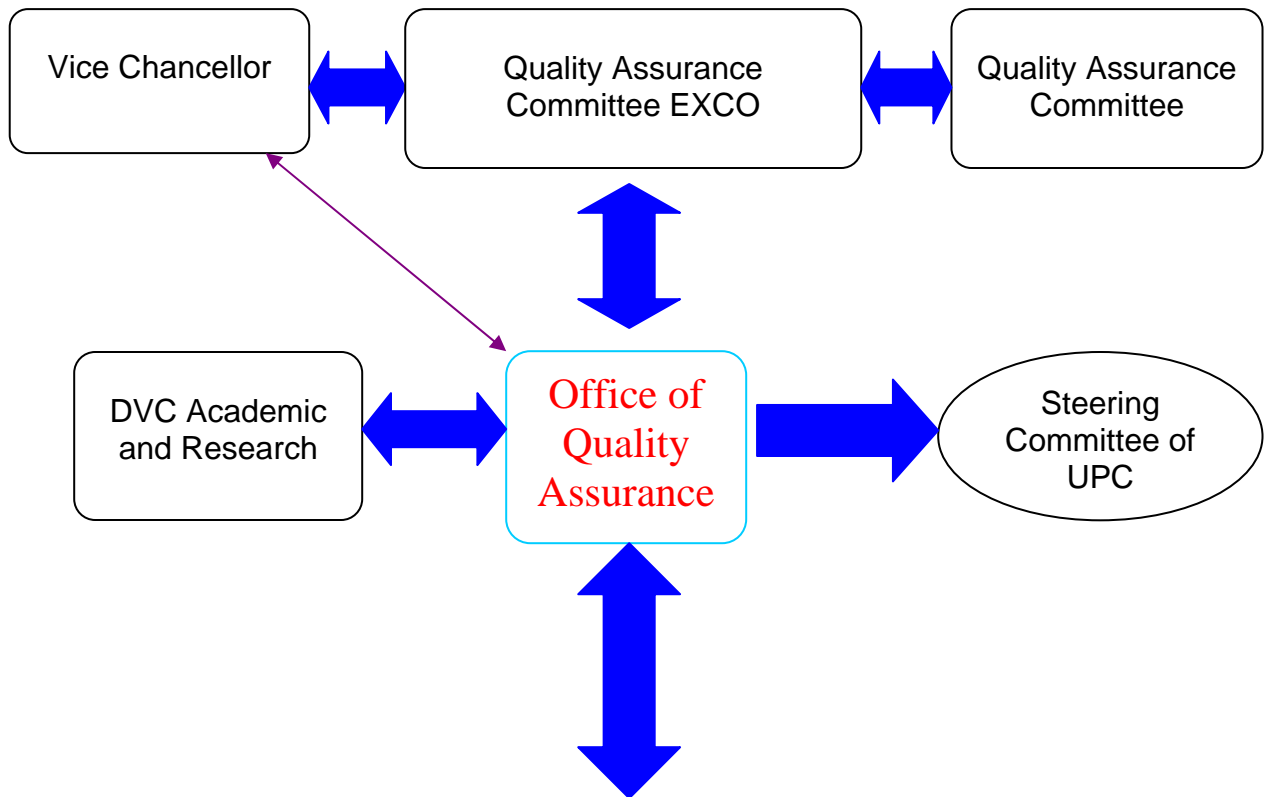
- A clear cycle of planning, development, documentation, reporting, action and review of policy and procedures will be evident.
- "Quality" has many meanings (there are many ways of expressing "goodness") and will be developed and defined within the context of the institutional mission and goals.
- Everyone will understand, use and feel ownership of QA within the institution.
- QA activities will foster critical self-reflection to ensure self-regulated, assessment, monitoring and enhancement.
- The diversity in the mission, programmes and approaches within the institution will be recognised in implementing a university-wide strategy for exercising its responsibility for quality and standards.
- All QA activities will provide maximum opportunities to demonstrate competence, to identify best practice and to promote excellence, innovation and development.
- QA policies and activities will be centrally driven by the QA Office to ensure commitment to an institution-wide process of quality enhancement.
- The responsibility for QA implementation will be located within the relevant portfolios and structures within the institution.
- There will be a clear articulation between internal QA processes and external processes such as those generated by the HEQC, professional boards and bodies.
- The activities of the QA office will be prioritised in response to the rapidly changing internal and external environment.

#### **5. THE CONTEXT FOR PLANNING AND MANAGING QA**

- The authority for the assessment and monitoring of the quality of academic programmes resides in the Senate, which delegates areas of responsibility to key individuals and committees
- The Senate is responsible for the development and monitoring of the university strategy, policies and procedures for academic/research QA
- The responsibility for university-wide Quality Assurance is located within the Office of the Vice Chancellor.

- At Faculty level the Board is responsible to Senate for the quality and standards of academic work and Faculty EXCOs for the operation of faculty academic policy and practice
- The level of responsibility for quality assessment resides with the Dean, School Director and relevant Head of Department or Unit
- A central office is established to ensure the promotion of a culture of quality and continuous monitoring and improvement of all quality assessment activities within the institution.
- A University Quality Assessment Committee has been established. It consists of representatives from all departments, including student representatives. The QA Committee will be responsible for overseeing the quality and setting of standards for the academic work of the QA Office.
- The role of the QA Committee is advisory and will be expected to provide expertise, guidance etc.

**6. STRUCTURE OF THE QUALITY ASSURANCE OFFICE:**



Deans, School Directors and Line Managers
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## **7. STRATEGY FOR THE IMPLEMENTATION OF A TOTAL QUALITY MANAGEMENT SYSTEM**

### **7.1 General**

Self-evaluation, self assessment or self –study is regarded as the basis for internal and external quality assurance and management. It is important for the Quality Assurance Office to perform a through situation and SWOT analysis of all sectors of the university. While the primary function of the institution is teaching/learning, research and community service, there are the other support service sectors that play an important role in the success/failure of the academic activity. (Refer to page 2 of the comprehensive total quality management system) While this document focuses on the Academic programme and how the other support service units affect its operation, the Quality Assurance Office will set up sub-committees with the Student Administration, Finance and Human Management, Facilities and Physical plant, Library and Information Technology, and the Management Structures to design quality assessment and improvement system for the respective sectors.

However, the strategy for the implementation of a total quality management system would involve the following actions :

- To gather comprehensive documentation of existing QA mechanisms and procedures.
- To review existing quality assessment mechanisms for appropriateness, relevance and effectiveness.
- To develop an on-line up to date view of the state of QA at UDW
- To facilitate a process which will lead to a shared notion of quality across the institution
- To promote a co-ordinated approach to quality assessment and monitoring across the university.
- To facilitate the development and implementation of structures, policies and frameworks for quality assessment and improvement
- To develop a system for the review of the work of Senate, Boards, Faculty EXCO's, Committees, Senex, etc to ensure they are adequately discharging the responsibilities assigned to THEM. This would enable the streamlining of the committee system where necessary and the

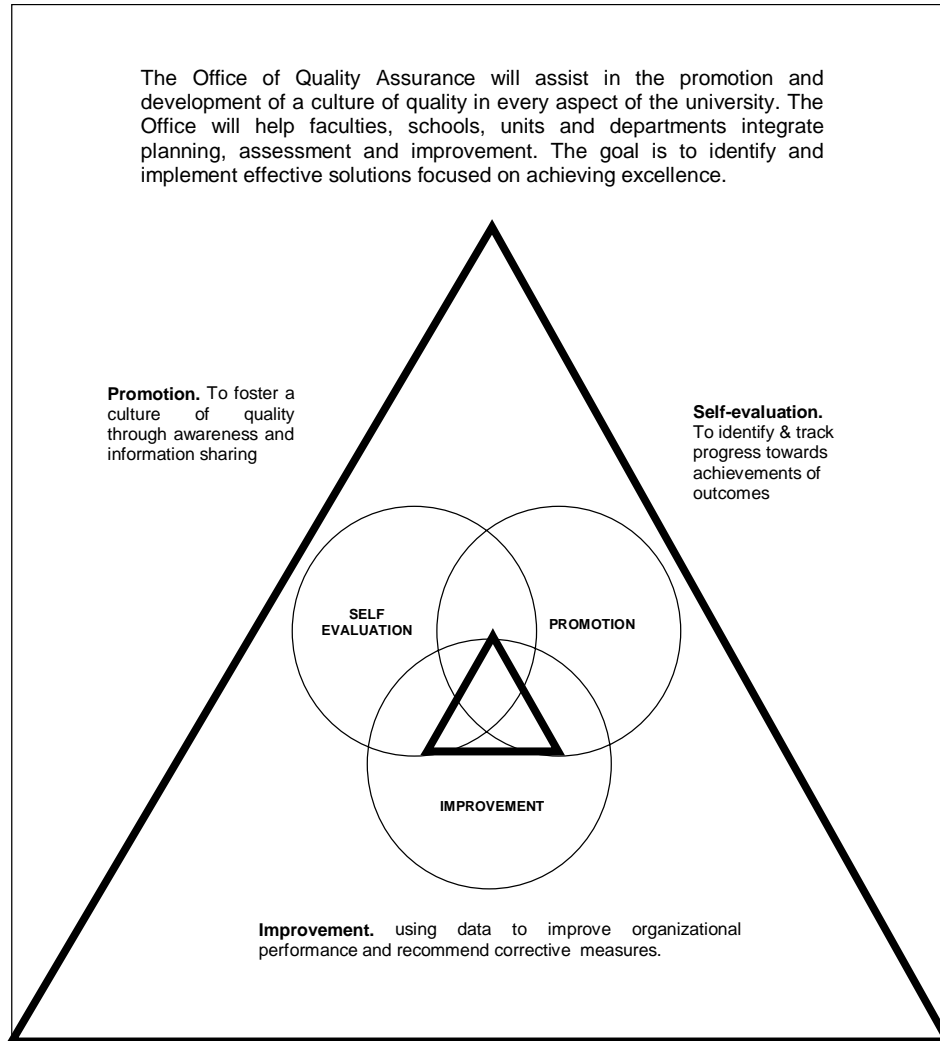
identification of those committees which would have a strengthened role in quality assessment and monitoring. This would also include the dissemination of good practice models.

## **7.2 Assessment of Academic Programmes**

### **7.2.1 Teaching, Learning and Assessment**

To facilitate the development of a Teaching, Learning and Assessment Strategy which will include the following:

- The preparation of a Teaching and Learning Handbook which will be a comprehensive university guide to the policies, procedures and regulatory framework on teaching and learning including the structures, processes and responsibilities.
- The identification and description of key characteristics of effective university teaching and learning and appropriate strategies for assessment, through a variety of strategies. This will include the implementation of the Student Course Evaluation Questionnaire, Peer observation and self – assessment.
- The implementation of Institutional procedures and criteria for the (1) registration of assessors (i.e. internal and external examiners and (2) moderation of assessment
- A comprehensive framework for reporting by external examiners which will include a system for recording and analysing the views of external examiners, professional bodies and other bodies
- A policy and programme for monitoring student performance, including a review of exclusions, dropouts etc and recommendations for corrective measures.
- A system for the standardisation of marks



### **7.2.2 The Design and Development of Curriculum**

- The development of a central mechanism that sets the framework and monitoring of course outlines with clearly identified learning outcomes and assessment strategies.
- To facilitate implementation of a system for tracer studies and the use of this data in the review and development of curriculum and research. This will include the feasibility of a baseline study of graduates.
- To develop a comprehensive framework for internal "programme-level" /"discipline-level" quality assurance including annual course reports, incorporation of external feedback in the review of existing and new courses.
- To develop a policy framework for regular and systematic formal programme reviews which would include monitoring of information and commissioning annual reports. This review will include assessment of the nature and frequency the reviews and their utility in quality improvement.

### **7.2.3 Programme / Qualification Accreditation**

Factors contributing to the academic integrity of instructional programmes are wide-ranging. The following factors are considered to be essential hallmarks of academic integrity :

- Evidence of training and mentorship in the utilization of teaching and learning methods and techniques appropriate to the discipline, the learners and for achievement of intended outcomes.
- Evidence that curriculum development, teaching and learning activities undertaken by academic staff are underpinned by discipline-specific, interdisciplinary and educational research.
- Awareness and evidence of the application of current information technology in the educational process.
- Evidence that the use of a variety of integrated assessment methods can adequately assess exit level outcomes of the programme / module.
- Evidence of the internal and external quality assessment procedures for ongoing evaluation and improvement of the programme.

### **7.3 Scholarship and Research**

- Research Degree or Course work degrees. To review existing policies and regulatory framework and to ensure quality assessment of all requirements.
- To facilitate the development of a policy and regulatory framework covering the process from initial registration through to final examination and award which would include admissions procedures, roles and responsibilities of research students and supervisors, supervising and monitoring the progress of research students and assessment and appeals.

### **7.3 Resources and Facilities necessary for effective academic programme**

- To develop and monitor a system for the regular review of academic services and administrative support services.
- To develop and monitor a system for the regular review of the provision, maintenance and development of infra-structural resources and service facilities.
- To publish a regular newsletter to disseminate information to the university community about issues pertaining to quality assessment and monitoring.
- To set up a Resource Materials Centre to house information on latest QA management systems for ready reference for staff and students, including outcomes of studies done in this respect.
- To organize a staff development programme for quality improvement, including workshops , seminars and colloquia and to promote a culture of continuous assessment of every aspect of the university.

### **7.4 Enrolment Planning, Recruitment, Selection and Placement for successful academic programme**

QA will seek to address the extent to which

- The institutions admissions policies and procedures meet both the terms of its mission statement and requirements of its potential students;
- The standards by which the institution administers the process;
- The effectiveness of processes to monitor and review admission policies and procedures and

- Recommend appropriate action arising from the above.

## **7.5 Staff recruitment, Selection and Development for quality academic programme**

QA in staffing will seek to address the extent to which staffing policies and procedures are implemented effectively in the following areas:

- Staff Appointments;
- Induction, probation and confirmation of appointment;
- Staff appraisal and performance management.
- Staff Development and training
- Staff promotion and reward

## **8. SELF- EVALUATION**

Self-evaluation by the faculty/school or department is at the heart of all evaluation processes and is without doubt the most effective QA procedure in existence. Its effectiveness as a process reflects the inherent psychology of approach. Reviews often lead to decisions in respect of offering of academic programmes and the allocation of resources to faculties/schools which are integral to academic planning.

While internal self-evaluation is generally conducted with a self-improvement purpose, recommendations in respect of improvement may be related to issues other than quality. Regular (annual), cyclical reports are intended to highlight certain developments such as in meeting goals, outstanding problems areas, noticeable trends etc. Each Faculty/School/Department is required to identify the achievements (strengths), gaps (weaknesses), opportunities and threats (SWOT) that have arisen during the past 12 months)

The self - study exercise is designed to review outputs and productivity as part of quality assessment and assurance. Review can take place at various levels and stages:

1. At the qualification/programme/module level
2. At the school level
3. At the Faculty level
4. At the institutional level.

Individual members will be responsible for providing written reports regarding unit plans, external examiners, infrastructure, building space and equipment, student profile, conference and events hosted, staff development and research activities, international linkages, visiting lectures, programmes, modules, staff, curriculum, assessments, time-tabling, resources, pass/failure rate, examinations, marketing, recruitment, quality assurance etc.

The Review report will include four broad areas :

- Overview of the status quo
- Vision for the future
- SWOT analysis (strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, threats)
- Synthesis : the way forward

## **9. CONCLUSION**

The institutional total quality management system (ITQMS) involves co-ordination of all functions / operations within the university. This co-ordination, involving various key role players, is paramount in enhancing and improving quality and delivery through capacity building and other corrective measures.

It is critical for the Quality Assurance Office not only to audit existing quality assessment assurance mechanisms, but more importantly to produce the kind of real and measurable results that will strengthen and better position the university in what lies ahead.

*Prof Chandru Kistan*

The Office of Quality Assurance. UDW. June 2002