



POLICY ON QUALITY PROMOTIONS AND ASSURANCE

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A: POLICY STATEMENT

1. Purpose statement

This policy provides a framework for the promotion and assurance of quality and standards at UKZN. Its purpose is to govern all processes and procedures used in the assurance and promotion of quality. This will include quality reviews, audits, teaching quality assessment, programme approval and accreditation and Institutional quality research.

This policy consolidates all existing quality promotion and assurance policy, procedures and guidelines at the University with a view to refining practice and aligning existing institutional quality arrangements to support the amended University Strategic Plan (2007-2016) and the achievement of institutional indicators and goals.

2. Introduction and background

UKZN has adopted the national definition of quality used by the Higher Education Quality Committee of the Council on Higher Education. Quality promotion and assurance endeavours are guided by fitness for purpose, fitness of purpose, value for money and transformation as key elements of the construct of quality at the University.

The academic and support staff who administer, manage and deliver modules, programmes and provide learning support services carry the responsibility for upholding academic standards and enhancing the quality of provision. Quality Promotion and Assurance (QPA) encourages all departments to plan, act, observe and reflect in order to improve their provisions.

3. Definition of terms

3.1 Benchmarking: is a means of measuring the quality of an organization's policies, products, programs, strategies, and practices, against internal and external peers for the purpose of reflection and improvement.

3.2 Evaluations: are assessments that are initiated managed and financed by the University for the purposes of assurance and promotion of quality.

3.3 Fitness for purpose: refers to the ability of the University to discharge its responsibilities in relation to its mission. This looks at the institutions aspirations, areas of specialisation, approach and focus in relation to core functions, available resources, location, regional and international relationships, as well as student and staff profiles and their fit for the institutional mission.

3.4 Fitness of purpose: refers to a closer fit between societal needs and goals and the work of the University with due regard to academic freedom and institutional autonomy. This includes how the University factors the national imperatives and goals and their specific manifestations at local and regional level into the core areas of focus.

- 3.5 Institutional Audit/ Institutional Reviews:** denotes a quality assurance process by the Higher Education Quality Committee of the Council on Higher Education geared at establishing the existence of sound internal quality management systems by validating the claims of the institution through a peer review process.
- 3.6 Institutional Audit Scope/ Review Scope:** denotes the range of areas to be covered by the evaluation during the institutional audits or reviews which are often reflected in the terms of reference for a review or audit.
- 3.7 Institutional quality management system:** refers to a range of activities which may include policies, systems, strategies and resources for assuring, developing and monitoring of quality across the university.
- 3.8 Improvement plan:** is a comprehensive plan developed following a review which indicates the specific activities or projects with designated responsibilities, time frames and resources (human, physical and financial) in order to address the requirements and recommendations of the panel.
- 3.9 New programme:** is a programme which has not existed before or a programme whose purpose, outcomes, field of study, mode or site of delivery has changed by more than fifty per cent.
- 3.10 Panel:** is a group of individuals usually selected from amongst peers on the basis of their knowledge and expertise to form part of a review commissioned by the University, an external quality assurance agency or professional body.
- 3.11 Professional programmes:** are programmes that have to meet the licensure and/or professional and work-based requirements of statutory councils.
- 3.12 Programme:** is a purposeful and well-structured set of learning experiences that leads to a qualification.
- 3.13 Programme review:** is an institutional quality assurance process undertaken to make an evaluation of all activities involved in curriculum renewal, management and outcomes of a selected programme. This could be conducted by an internal panel from the University, an external quality assurance agency or a professional accrediting body.
- 3.14 Quality Assurance:** is a process of ensuring that specified standards or requirements have been achieved through an appropriate quality management system at UKZN that is fit for purpose and acknowledges the transformation context and the University's mandate within a national and global system of higher education.
- 3.15 Quality management system:** covers all institutional arrangements for assuring, supporting, developing, enhancing, monitoring and evaluating the quality of provisions in the area of teaching and learning, research, community engagement and in support divisions. Institutional quality includes policies,

systems, strategies and resources for assuring, developing and monitoring of quality across the university.

- 3.16 Quality promotion:** involves all institutional endeavours geared at improving standards of service and provision across different functions in the University. These activities might include capacity and professional development initiatives.
- 3.17 Quality Review:** A quality assurance process where peers are engaged in order to establish claims made on quality management based on evidence against the terms of reference which may include specific quality criteria or evaluative questions.
- 3.18 Self-evaluation:** The process by which an institution, a programme, department or a unit assesses the effectiveness of its quality management system for assuring, supporting, developing and monitoring the quality of teaching and learning, research, community engagement and support functions of the University against a set of requirements of the licencing body or accrediting body's criteria and any other quality criteria that the institution deems relevant. The self-evaluation process results in the compilation of an audit or review portfolio (Self-Evaluation Report and Supporting Documents) to be reviewed by a panel that will make judgments on the quality of provisions.
- 3.19 Value for money:** The efficiency and effectiveness with which the University discharge its responsibility in relation to teaching and learning, research and community engagement taking into account state funding and other investments made by donors and families of students.

4. Scope

- 4.1 This policy applies to all staff and students of UKZN.
- 4.2 This policy covers all areas of the University, especially those core activities that pertain to the provision of teaching and learning, research and community engagement including work of the support divisions.
- 4.3 This policy must be read in conjunction with all the UKZN policies that govern and regulate teaching and learning, research and community engagement; the Principles and Procedures for the quality management of short courses; the Teaching and Learning Innovation and Policy and Procedures for the Quality Enhancement Grant and the Competitive Teaching and Learning Research Grant; and the amended University Strategic Plan (2007-2016).
- 4.4 Quality will be defined within the context of transformation as also outlined in the transformation charter.
- 4.5 This policy is further elaborated on in the ensuing principles, procedures and guidelines and will be supported by relevant manuals to guide implementation.

5. The Policy

- 5.1 The University's quality management system must respond to the transformation context of the institution and its mandate within the national system of higher education.
- 5.2 Quality promotion and assurance is integral in supporting the goals set out in the strategic plan. Quality and standards must be preserved in a manner that allows the University to fulfil its vision, mission and mandate to continue to strive for excellence.
- 5.3 There must be internal processes of ensuring that specified standards or requirements are achieved and maintained through an appropriate quality management system.
- 5.4 Reviews must be undertaken at least every five years to evaluate schools and support departments, programmes or processes (admissions). Systems, structures or functions must be reviewed when identified as posing any risks for the institution.
- 5.5 All programmes offered by the University must be aligned to the Higher Education Qualifications Framework, must be approved and accredited, and must meet the licensure and any other professional and work-based requirements of statutory councils.
- 5.6 All modules must be subjected routinely to a comprehensive evaluation involving student, peer, self, and external examiner/moderator evaluations.
- 5.7 Independent peers and expert panels must be utilised and enabled to conduct reviews or evaluations of academic and administrative departments, selected programmes or services/functions (e.g. admissions).
- 5.8 Quality must be monitored through a set of institutionally agreed indicators as reflected in the strategic plan to contribute to local and international competitiveness.
- 5.9 Institutional research and benchmarking exercises must be conducted to provide feedback and improve systems and quality of provisions at the University.
- 5.10 The institution must ensure that it makes evidence based decisions and strategies.

6. Internal quality arrangements in various spheres of the University.

6.1 In Teaching and Learning the University will:

- 6.1.1 Provide students and staff with opportunities to participate in promoting and evaluating quality.
- 6.1.2 Enable staff and students to know and understand University policies that assure and enhance the quality of teaching and learning.
- 6.1.3 Ensure that quality is maintained in the provision of services and standards are consistently applied across various academic departments in support of the quality of teaching and learning at the University.
- 6.1.4 Facilitate the institutionalisation of quality mechanisms to ensure that student access with success is assured.
- 6.1.5 Support academics and students to achieve high quality standards that the University has set for itself.

6.2 In Research and Innovation the University will:

- 6.2.1 Acquaint academics and researchers with quality management tools in the area of research.
- 6.2.2 Create systems and procedures that enable the University to produce high quality research that has national and international acclaim and relevance.
- 6.2.3 Ensure that the improvements needed when it comes to research output should not be achieved at the expense of quality in research.
- 6.2.4 Ensure that the University continues to benchmark its performance and quality against the best in the country and internationally in the research and innovation area.
- 6.2.5 Ensure that the quality of training of future researchers through postgraduate education is monitored and is sufficiently supported to increase the student throughput and quality of research products.
- 6.2.6 Ensure that the University continues to attract a high calibre of post-graduate research students locally and internationally to study at UKZN.

6.3 In Community Engagement the University will:

- 6.3.1 Ensure that all community engagement activities are of acceptable quality and regulated by the approved framework and are registered and monitored periodically.
- 6.3.2 Ensure that, as part of its quality assurance, the University manages risks inherent in engaging with communities by training students and staff on good practices, ethical and responsible conduct in serving communities.
- 6.3.3 Ensure that staff and students are provided with opportunities for education and training in community engagement and continuously improve the quality in their engagements and interactions with communities.
- 6.3.4 Ensure that staff and students are apprised of and vigilant to any acts that could jeopardise quality of the engagements with communities and could result in reputational risk on the part of the University.

6.4 In the Support Sector the University will:

- 6.4.1 Provide staff with opportunities to reflect on their practices in order to continuously offer quality professional services to the University community.
- 6.4.2 Familiarise staff with the University's understanding of quality and strive for service excellence in their areas of operation.
- 6.4.3 Develop a culture of reflection and continuous improvement that is underpinned by regular alignment to the University strategy and periodic quality reviews.
- 6.4.4 Continuously conduct satisfaction and other surveys on quality of services.
- 6.4.5 Ensure that service level agreements are developed by each unit where relevant and produce periodic reports on adhering to set targets and performance levels.
- 6.4.6 Conduct benchmarking exercises to assess quality and practice against the best in the university, the country and abroad against similar educational institutions and industry partners.
- 6.4.7 Provide academics and students with opportunities to participate in promoting and evaluating quality of the support sector.

7. GOVERNANCE AND IMPLEMENTATION OF QUALITY

- 7.1 The policy will be implemented by staff members in colleges and support divisions and monitored by the University Senate.
- 7.2 The primary responsibility for the quality of provision and appropriate mechanisms to assure quality rests with each member of the University community
- 7.3 QPA's approach to quality is developmental and geared at strengthening the capacity within UKZN.
- 7.4 The Quality agenda of the University will be determined and set by respective Executive Management Committee members within each portfolio.
- 7.5 The responsibility for quality assurance implementation and its monitoring will be located within the relevant University structures.
- 7.6 QPA is responsible for instituting a comprehensive system to monitor the quality of academic provision and the services offered by the support sector.