



QUALITY ASSURANCE AND MANAGEMENT POLICY

| | | |
|--|--|--|
| Custodian/Responsible Executive | Pro Vice-Chancellor: Academic Affairs and Research | |
| Responsible division | Center for Quality Assurance and Management (CEQUAM) | |
| Status | Approved | |
| Recommended by | DC, APC | |
| Date recommended | 19 June 2015, 29 September 2015 | |
| Approved by | Senate | |
| Date approved | 29 October 2015 | |
| Review date | 30 October 2020 | |
| Stakeholders affected by this Policy | All UNAM staff at all levels and students alike | |
| Related documents | | |
| UNAM documents | National documents | |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • University of Namibia Act No. 18 of 1992 • All UNAM policies, procedures, guidelines, rules and regulations | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Higher Education Act No. 26 of 2003 • Regulations governing the National Qualifications Framework for Namibia • Regulations Governing Accreditation of Institutions in Namibia • NCHE Framework for institutional audits • NCHE Framework for program accreditation • Education and Training Sector Improvement Program (ETSIP) • Namibia Training Authority (NTA) Act No. I of 2008 | |

TABLE OF CONTENTS

| | |
|--|----|
| ABBREVIATIONS AND ACRONYMS..... | 3 |
| 1. PREAMBLE | 4 |
| 2. AIM..... | 4 |
| 3. OBJECTIVES | 4 |
| 4. DEFINITIONS..... | 5 |
| 5. SCOPE | 6 |
| 6. POLICY STATEMENT | 6 |
| 7. THE APPROACH OF UNAM TO QUALITY ASSURANCE | 7 |
| 8. QUALITY ASSURANCE WITH REGARD TO CORE AND SUPPORT FUNCTIONS | 8 |
| 8.1 Teaching and learning | 8 |
| 8.2 Research | 10 |
| 8.4 Community engagement..... | 10 |
| 8.5 Support services | 10 |
| 8.6 Staff | 11 |
| 8.7 Institutional management and governance bodies | 12 |
| 9. QUALITY ASSURANCE ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES OF THE IMPLEMENTING DIVISIONS | 12 |
| 10. COMMENTS..... | 13 |
| 11. AMENDMENTS/REVIEW | 14 |
| 12. GLOSSARY | 14 |
| 13. VERSION CONTROL AND AMENDMENT HISTORY | 16 |

ABBREVIATIONS AND ACRONYMS

| | |
|----------|---|
| APC | Academic Planning Committee |
| CEQUAM | Centre for Quality Assurance and Management |
| DC | Deans Committee |
| ETSIP | Education and Training Sector Improvement Programme |
| IMEC | Implementation, Monitoring and Evaluation Committee |
| NCHE | National Council for Higher Education in Namibia |
| NTA | Namibia Training Authority |
| NQA | Namibia Qualifications Authority |
| NQF | National Qualifications Framework |
| PVC | Pro-Vice Chancellor |
| PVC: ACF | Pro-Vice Chancellor's Academic Forum |
| SRC | Student Representative Council |
| UNAM | University of Namibia |
| QA | Quality Assurance |
| QAC | Quality Assurance Committee |
| QAMS | Quality Assurance Management System |
| VC | Vice Chancellor |
| VCMC | Vice-Chancellor Management Committee |

I. PREAMBLE

The quality assurance policy takes into account;

- The **external context** within which the University of Namibia (UNAM) operates, namely, international and national higher education policy environments, and laws.
- The **internal context** of UNAM, which is grounded in the **vision, mission, values and objectives** of UNAM.
- The **historical context** and development of UNAM, and acknowledges the quality assurance practices institutionalised over time, e.g. admission requirements, external examination, moderation, module evaluation, peer evaluation, external evaluation of departments, audits.
- **other conventional contexts** that recognise QA tenets such as fitness for/of purpose, providing value for money, institutional audits, facilitation of benchmarks, accreditation activities (persons, programmes and institutional), etc.
- **Quality** should be perceived as an ongoing process rather than an anecdotal one which is measured in retrogression.

2. AIM

The purpose of the UNAM Quality Assurance and Management Policy is to ensure the delivery and maintenance of excellence in instruction, learning, acquisition, research, academic and administrative/support services, student welfare, governance and community service. These functions are supported by excellence in service delivery by management, academic and administrative/support services with quality infrastructure and physical facilities to ensure the realisation of the vision, mission and strategic priorities of UNAM.

3. OBJECTIVES

More specifically, the UNAM Quality Assurance and Management Policy aims to provide a framework for an efficient quality assurance system through the:

- 3.1 Establishment and development of a quality assurance culture and across all UNAM's operations.

- 3.2 Establishment and development of an overarching and functional institutional quality assurance management system (QAMS) for UNAM.
- 3.3 Promotion of quality assurance, enhancement and improvement actions at institutional level.
- 3.4 Empowerment of staff in the execution and implementation of quality assurance management systems, processes and mechanisms.
- 3.5 Co-ordination and monitoring of quality assurance activities within various functional units of UNAM (faculties, schools, departments, directorates, centres, units, divisions, support services as well as staff and student welfare in general).
- 3.6 Co-ordination of feedback received from the different role players and stakeholders regarding academic, social, service and quality experiences at UNAM.
- 3.7 Institutional quality assurance accountability required of UNAM at the national and statutory levels.

4. DEFINITIONS

4.1 Quality – There are many different understandings of the term, quality, often reflecting the interests of different constituencies or stakeholders in a number of fields that aspire to be the best they can be. Thus, quality in higher education is a multidimensional concept that can be defined as:

- *Excellence* - exceptional or reaching high standards.
- *Fitness for purpose* - meeting stated purpose.
- *Fitness of purpose* - adequacy of quality-related intentions of a higher education institution as aligned to the national goals of higher education.
- *Enhancement or improvement* - continuous improvement.
- *Transformation* - enhancing the performance of students, regardless of their initial level of competence.
- *Value for money* - return on investment in high education.

4.2 Quality Assurance - An all-embracing term referring to an ongoing, continuous *process* of evaluating (assessing, monitoring, guaranteeing, maintaining, and improving) the quality of a higher education system, institutions, or programs.

4.3 Quality Management - An aggregate of measures taken regularly at system or institutional level in order to assure the quality of higher education with an emphasis on improving quality as a whole. As a generic term, it covers all activities that ensure fulfillment of the quality policy and the quality objectives and responsibilities and implements them through quality planning, quality control, quality assurance, and quality improvement mechanisms.

5. SCOPE

5.1 This policy provides a general guide to the process of implementing, monitoring and evaluating quality in all aspects of UNAM operations. It applies to:

- all schools, faculties, academic/administrative departments and other institutional structures operating under the umbrella of UNAM;
- all staff, temporary and permanent, who are active in teaching, research and providing any form of support service to the core functions of the University;
- all students registered with UNAM;
- All infrastructure, learning resources, governance/institutional set up, information dissemination structures and social amenities belonging to UNAM.

6. POLICY STATEMENT

6.1 In the effort to realize its vision, mission, values and objectives, UNAM shall constantly monitor and systematically evaluate the implementation of all its mandated activities to ensure *continuous quality improvement*. UNAM shall also ensure that all its governance and/or management processes are in line with standard Quality Assured best practices.

As a starting point, each unit, in concurrence with propositions of CEQUAM, shall review all its existing policies, regulations and procedures and, where such instruments are lacking, develop appropriate ones, so as to ensure that all these guidelines are in line with the unit's vision, mission, values and overall objectives. In addition, CEQUAM shall ensure that at all times each unit has in place well stipulated and widely understood criteria for judging performance standards in all its core activities. This entails compilation and distribution of a comprehensive Quality Assurance Manual. In line with these guidelines, each unit shall constantly monitor and evaluate all its day-to-day activities in the core mission areas of teaching/learning, research, community service and support services to students and staff.

7. THE APPROACH OF UNAM TO QUALITY ASSURANCE

- 7.1 **Quality assurance comprises** the policies, procedures and mechanisms according to which UNAM, or a specific unit or function, within UNAM, ensures that specified quality specifications and standards are maintained. These policies, procedures and mechanisms include continuous revision and monitoring activities to evaluate aspects such as suitability, efficiency, applicability, currency and efficacy of all activities with a view to ensure continuous quality improvement and enhancement.
- 7.2 Quality assurance is aimed at the identification and addressing areas of concern that could affect quality provision in the continuous cycle of planning, action, evaluation and improvement with a view to effecting quality improvement.
- 7.3 Quality improvement takes place through processes of continuous review of academic and support-service functions and activities aimed at promoting excellence at UNAM.
- 7.4 Within the framework of the quality assurance system of UNAM, self-evaluation is accepted as the primary mechanism for quality assurance. It is the responsibility of each unit at UNAM to have a process of self-introspection by establishing and applying effective procedures for regular self-evaluation.
- 7.5 Self-evaluation is complemented and validated by external peer professionals in the field. External evaluation takes place according to a specific cycle for the academic and support functions at UNAM.
- 7.6 Heads of units are responsible for establishing and applying effective procedures for regular critical self-evaluation and for preparing for external evaluation for the academic and support service in their divisions, according to a specific cycle. This is done in concurrence with the prescripts and policies for which CEQUAM is a custodian.
- 7.7 Each unit shall, in all areas of its operations, and in concurrence with CEQUAM, consistently and systematically solicit feedback from its stakeholders (i.e. students, academics, alumni, employers, community), through questionnaires and other means and use the outcome of this feedback to continuously improve quality.
- 7.8 CEQUAM shall regularly arrange and coordinate external and institutional audits/reviews to be conducted by reputable quality assurance agencies such as the National Council for Higher Education (NCHE) and/or Namibia Qualifications Authority (NQA). The audit/review cycles shall take place every six years

or sooner should a need arise. External institutional audits/reviews shall complement the self-evaluation process, adding credibility to it by encompassing the judgement of independent experts from the national, regional and international academic community. CEQUAM shall disseminate the results of institutional audits/reviews and monitor the implementation of the resultant recommendations.

- 7.9 CEQUAM shall regularly conduct internal audits/reviews of all academic divisions such as faculties, centres, schools, departments, units; and academic programmes and courses/modules as well as support service divisions in order to help the divisions and programmes under review to have a holistic view of how they are performing, resourced and how they can best be supported to perform to the best of their ability. Just like external reviews, internal audit/review cycles shall also take place every six (6) years or sooner should a need arise.
- 7.10 Recommendations emanating from internal and external audits/reviews and other quality related platforms such as Student Quality Days; as well as assessment by professional bodies shall be transformed into Self-Improvement Plans (SIPs) for implementation by divisions under review. Implementation of SIPs shall be monitored and evaluated by the Monitoring, Evaluation and Implementation Committee (IMEC) established by the Vice-Chancellor Management Committee (VCMC) to ensure the closure of the Quality Loop.
- 7.11 All UNAM academic programmes shall be accredited by qualified and legally competent accrediting agencies and all qualifications shall be registered on the National Qualifications Framework (NQF). Short courses shall be quality assured in line with internal quality assurance system for short courses and NQA and NCHE requirements.

8. QUALITY ASSURANCE WITH REGARD TO CORE AND SUPPORT FUNCTIONS

8.1 Teaching and learning

- 8.1.1 In ensuring quality in the area of teaching and learning, UNAM is committed to continually seek to attain the highest possible standard in respect of input resources, implementation processes, throughputs and the final outputs.
- 8.1.2 The internal development, approval and modification/termination of formal and non-formal academic programmes are aligned to the prescribed policy and procedures. External approval, accreditation,

registration, recording and termination of formal programmes of UNAM take place in accordance with the national policy requirements.

8.1.3 Continuous assurance and improvement of the quality of teaching and learning in programmes at UNAM take place on a cyclic basis through the application of self- evaluation mechanisms and procedures on macro-, meso- and micro levels, in the following ways:

- i. All new undergraduate and postgraduate programmes are handled according to the cycle for programme accreditation.
- ii. Existing non-professional undergraduate and postgraduate programmes are evaluated every five years in line with the UNAM programme self-evaluation guidelines.
- iii. Professional programmes (undergraduate and postgraduate programmes) are evaluated by external professional boards or bodies according to the time schedule, criteria, standards and procedures of the relevant board or body in collaboration with UNAM's normal process. Where no professional body is available, professional undergraduate programmes are evaluated in accordance with the normal UNAM processes.
- iv. In cases where specific programmes have already been evaluated by relevant accreditation boards or bodies during the general programme evaluation cycle, the Programme Director or Coordinator may apply for exemption from the UNAM process.

8.1.4 Critical internal self-evaluation of academic departments, followed by external peer or peer-group evaluation, takes place every five years.

8.1.5 Internal moderation of all final assessment takes place during each round of examination and is the responsibility of each faculty.

8.1.6 External moderation of examination papers must take place according to the institutional rules and regulations.

8.1.7 External assessment of scripts, master's theses and doctor's dissertations must be done according to the institutional rules and regulations.

8.1.8 The execution of and arrangements for the abovementioned processes take place in accordance with the institutional guidelines for: teaching/learning, assessment, postgraduate studies and supervision.

8.2 Research

- 8.2.1 In order for UNAM to keep an outstanding international reputation in research, the university must be committed to maintaining and expanding its research capacity at Faculty/School/departmental and individual levels.
- 8.2.2 Criteria for the quality assurance and evaluation of research development, research activities and research planning at UNAM are developed and implemented in co-operation with the Research and Publications Office and School of Postgraduate Studies, as described in the Research Policy, Research Ethics Policy, Intellectual Property Policy, Scholarly Communications Policy and their relevant guidelines.
- 8.2.3 The assurance of the quality of postgraduate research (dissertations and theses) is the responsibility of the faculties in concurrence with the School of Postgraduate Studies as stipulated in the institutional guidelines for postgraduate education and supervision, assessment, as well as the General Regulations for Advanced and Postgraduate Qualifications.
- 8.2.4 Research outputs are subjected to external or internal peer evaluation as well as peer input in accordance with Scholarly Communications Policy.

8.3 Community engagement

- 8.3.1 The assurance of quality and the improvement of teaching, learning and research components of community engagement form part of UNAM procedures for of a Community Engagement.
- 8.3.2 Each division must constantly monitor and frequently evaluate the quantity and quality of community services rendered by its staff and students, with a view to assuring the highest possible quality in terms of: relevance of the priorities set; adequacy and quality of outputs in community service provision; and overall impact of UNAM services to the community.

8.4 Support services

- 8.4.1 In discharging its responsibility to ensure quality in the provision of support services, CEQUAM on behalf of UNAM shall continually monitor and regularly assess the appropriateness and adequacy of support services provided to students and staff, especially in respect of adequacy and quality of academic and social counselling services; study materials, space and teaching/learning infrastructure; social amenities, including health, catering, recreational and other services.

- 8.4.2 The University's internal quality assurance system under the umbrella of CEQUAM shall be subjected to the same internal quality assurance processes and regular external quality reviews by NCHE and/or any other reputable quality assurance body.
- 8.4.3 periodically, institutional functions and services rendered by the academic and support services must go through a self-evaluation process in order to ensure the integrity of UNAM processes. The process should take place at least every six years, followed by external peer review. If necessary, this process must be followed by an improvement plan with actions to address the results or weaknesses identified during the evaluation process.
- 8.4.4 *Ad hoc* quality audits/reviews of UNAM academic and administrative services, activities, systems, projects and service levels is done from time to time at the request of and in co-operation with line managers.
- 8.4.5 The VC, PVCs or any other member of senior management may institute a quality audit/review any time on any UNAM division, programme or service should it be deemed necessary.
- 8.4.6 Information with regard to finances, human resources and student related issues are audited internally and externally on an annual basis and reports are forwarded to respective internal management structures.

8.5 Staff

- 8.5.1 Recruiting and employment of qualified staff are done in accordance with the relevant policies and procedures.
- 8.5.2 It is the responsibility of each staff member of UNAM to evaluate his/her performance continuously by means of self-reflection and to take the necessary steps that will ensure improvement.
- 8.5.3 The development and implementation of staff orientation sessions for new staff members and other relevant staff development programmes identified as critical and in accordance with the Staff Development Policy may be considered.
- 8.5.4 Continuous development of staff takes place in terms of the Staff Development Policy and Procedure of UNAM.

8.6 Institutional management and governance bodies

- 8.6.1 Quality assurance also covers all aspects of the institution such as governance, access, strategic planning, human resource planning and administration, financial management and estate services.
- 8.6.2 The functioning of the different institutional management and governance bodies, such as, but not limited to, Council, Senate, Deans Committee (DC), PVC: Administration Forum, Academic Planning Committee (APC), Faculty Boards, Student Representative Council (SRC) and the institutional advisory bodies are subject to the same quality assurance principles and points of departure that apply to the academic and support service environments of UNAM. These bodies must therefore also perform self-evaluation (on the basis of agreed-upon relevant criteria) at least once every six years, followed by an external peer review process and, if necessary, the development and implementation of improvement plans in respect of the results and shortcomings identified during the evaluation.
- 8.6.3 The above-mentioned are also subject to annual reporting according to the directives contained in mandatory regulations.

9. QUALITY ASSURANCE ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES OF THE IMPLEMENTING DIVISIONS

- 9.1 For the purpose of this policy the caption term 'implementing divisions' refers to a school, faculty, department (academic or administrative) or any other basic segment of the UNAM establishment, with a primary responsibility for planning and carrying out activities aimed at meeting a set of established institutional objectives. Implementing divisions shall have the primary responsibility not only to achieve and maintain high quality standards in carrying out their mandate roles in the UNAM QA system.
- 9.2 Responsibility and accountability for quality and quality assurance is vested in the Vice-Chancellor.
- 9.3 The institutional responsibility for the management of the quality assurance system resides in the line function of the Pro-Vice Chancellor: Academic Affairs and Research.
- 9.4 Senate has formal responsibility for the oversight of all matters pertaining to the quality of learning and its provision. This responsibility is discharged, in part, by consideration of reports generated through various processes and by the regular monitoring of the effectiveness of these processes.

- 9.5 The Council of UNAM has formal responsibility for final approval of all policies.
- 9.6 **The Centre for Quality Assurance and Management (CEQUAM)** has overall responsibility for the promotion of a culture of quality and co-ordination of quality assurance activities at UNAM (i.e. academic, administrative, and support services), assisted by a University-wide Quality Assurance Committee (QAC) for the implementation of this policy. The composition and terms of reference of the committee are set out in the rules of this Committee. Part of the functions of CEQUAM and QAC shall include inspection (client climate assessments, professional practice evaluations). Each division should establish its own specialist Quality Assurance Committee by taking its context, size, etc., into consideration to manage and implement the QA policy at divisional level.
- 9.7 The Directors of academic and administrative/support divisions, Deans and Heads of Departments, and senior staff members and programme team leaders are responsible and accountable for monitoring quality and quality assurance within their areas of jurisdiction in concurrence with propositions of CEQUAM.
- 9.8 The Faculty Boards have quality assurance oversight with regard to maintaining and enhancing the academic standards and the quality of provision within the faculty.
- 9.9 All staff members of UNAM at all levels have a professional commitment for ensuring quality implementation in their areas of jurisdiction and they are accountable to their line Managers.
- 9.10 All UNAM students should embrace a culture of quality assurance in their academic activities and community engagements. Students will participate in quality assurance by adhering to all UNAM policies and regulations and they shall express their Quality related concerns through the SRC representation on the Quality Assurance Committee and other quality assurance-related structures.

10. COMMENTS

- 10.1 Any member of staff or student at UNAM may, without fear or prejudice, submit any comment, complaint, objection, questions or evidence with respect to the application and implementation of this quality assurance policy to the CEQUAM or the Pro-Vice Chancellor: Academic Affairs and Research.

II. AMENDMENTS/REVIEW

II.1 In the event that any statement in the policy provision is outdated or there is a need to introduce new statements brought about by developments in the higher education environment, or as a result of market forces, etc. such statements may be changed or modified at the recommendation of APC and approval of Senate.

II.2 The entire policy will be reviewed after every 5 years.

12. GLOSSARY

Accreditation - Certification by a duly recognized body, certification of facilities, competencies, capabilities, integrity of higher education institution to offer a specified program.

Assessment - The process of the systematic gathering, quantifying, and using of information in view of judging the instructional effectiveness and the curricular adequacy of a higher education institution as a whole (institutional assessment) or of its educational programs (programs assessment).

Audit - The process of reviewing an institution or a program that is primarily focused on the accountability of the latter, evaluating/determining if the stated aims and objectives (in terms of curriculum, staff, infrastructure, etc.) are met.

Benchmark - A standard, a reference point, or a criterion against which the quality of something can be measured, judged, and evaluated, and against which outcomes of a specified activity can be measured. The term, benchmark, means a measure of best practice performance. The existence of a benchmark is one necessary step in the overall process of benchmarking.

Benchmarking - A standardized method for collecting and reporting critical operational data in a way that enables relevant comparisons among the performances of different organizations or programs, usually with a view to establishing good practice, diagnosing problems in performance, and identifying areas of strength. Benchmarking gives the organization (or the program) the external references and the best practices on which to base its evaluation and to design its working processes.

Continuous improvement - Means or refers to 'efforts by UNAM as the institution to improve quality'. Quality Reviews seek to address this concern.

Continual improvement - Refers to departmental efforts through department self-improvement plans to bring about change for improvement at the departmental level.

Evaluation - The general process of a systematic and critical analysis leading to judgment and/or recommendations regarding the quality of a higher education institution or a program.

External Evaluation - The process whereby a specialized agency collects data, information, and evidence about an institution, a particular unit of a given institution, or a core activity of an institution, in order to make a statement about its quality. External evaluation is carried out by a team of external experts, peers, or inspectors.

Internal Evaluation/Self-Evaluation - The process of self-evaluation consists of the systematic collection of administrative data, the questioning of students and graduates, and the holding of moderated interviews with academic and administrative staff, and students, resulting in a self-study report. Self-evaluation is basically a collective institutional reflection and an opportunity for quality enhancement. The resulting report further serves as a provider of information for the review team in charge of the external evaluation.

Peers Review/External Review - Assessment procedure regarding the quality and effectiveness of the academic programs of an institution, its staffing, and/or its structure, carried out by external experts (peers).

Quality - Quality in higher education is a multi-dimensional, multi-level, and dynamic concept that relates to the contextual settings of an educational model, to the institutional mission and objectives, as well as to specific standards within a given system, institution, program, or discipline. Quality in higher education can be defined as:

- Excellence (reaching higher standards)
- Fitness for purpose (meeting stated purpose)
- Fitness of purpose adequacy of quality-related intentions of a higher education institution as aligned to the national goals of high education)
- Enhancement or improvement (continuous improvement)
- Value for money (return on investment in high education).

Quality Assurance - An all-embracing term referring to an ongoing, continuous process of evaluating (assessing, monitoring, guaranteeing, maintaining, and improving) the quality of a higher education system, institutions, or programs.

Quality Control - A phrase that refers to the process of quality evaluation that focuses on the internal measurement of the quality of an institution or a program.

Quality Management - An aggregate of measures taken regularly at system or institutional level in order to assure the quality of higher education with an emphasis on improving quality as a whole. As a generic term, it covers all activities that ensure fulfillment of the quality policy and the quality objectives and responsibilities and implements them through quality planning, quality control, quality assurance, and quality improvement mechanisms.

Quality Audit - The process of quality assessment by which an external body ensures that (i) the institution or program quality assurance procedures or (ii) that the overall (internal and external) quality assurance procedures of the system are adequate and are actually being carried out.

Quality Culture - It refers to a set of shared, accepted, and integrated patterns of quality (often called principles of quality) to be found in the organizational cultures and the management systems of institutions.

13. VERSION CONTROL AND AMENDMENT HISTORY

| Version | Date Approved | Approved by | Amendments |
|---------|---------------|-------------|------------|
| 1 | 03/06/2010 | Senate | New policy |
| 2 | 29/10/2015 | Senate | Revised |