University of Venda
Creating Future Leaders

QUALITY ASSURANCE POLICY

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University Registrar

Vice Chancellor and Principal

University of Venda
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TABLE OF CONTENTS

1. PREAMBLE 3
2. INTRODUCTION 3
3. PURPOSE 4
4. DEFINITIONS 4
5. POLICY STATEMENT 6
6. OBJECTIVES 6
7. THE APPROACH OF THE UNIVERSITY TO QUALITY ASSURANCE 7
8. REGULATORY FRAMEWORK 9
9. LINKS TO OTHER UNIVERSITY OF VENDA POLICIES 10
10. SCOPE 10
11. APPROVAL 11
12. IMPLEMENTATION 11
13. REVIEW DATE 12

1. PREAMBLE

As one of our institutional values states "we are driven by quality and excellence in all we do and passionate about learning, innovation and creativity" – clear reference is made to an embedded "quality focus". Therefore, the University strives to be an academic institution of high quality.

Quality Assurance and continuous quality promotion are fundamental to the realisation of the vision and mission of University of Venda (UNIVEN). The University of Venda accepts self-driven quality assurance and quality promotion in all academic and support functions as a core value and thus implements a system of this nature.

2. INTRODUCTION

Quality Assurance is a systematic process of assessing whether a service or product meets the specified and expected requirements. The University of Venda is committed to a proactive planning and quality culture that continuously improves outputs to meet the expectations of its students, staff and society in general. Quality Assurance at the University is concerned with the extent to which goals are met on an ongoing basis.

The quality assurance policy takes into account the following:

- The internal context of the University of Venda, including the vision, mission, values and the University Strategic Plan;
- The external context within which the University of Venda operates, that is, national, international, statutory and national higher education policy environments; and
- The development and historical context of the University of Venda, and the quality assurance practices institutionalized over time, for example, teaching and learning, research, community engagement, internationalization, admission requirements, external moderation and examination, etc.

3. PURPOSE

This Quality Assurance Policy has been formulated and revised to guide the ongoing development and implementation of an Institutional Quality Management System towards ongoing quality enhancement and the fostering of a culture of continuous improvement. This is in support of the mission, namely a university leading in engaged scholarship. The development of a Quality Management System at UNIVEN is therefore not regarded as an event but rather as an ongoing process.

To serve this purpose, this Quality Assurance Policy is aligned with the following UNIVEN strategic thrusts:

- Student Centeredness and Engaged Scholarship;
- Entrepreneurial University;
- Governance for Outstanding Scholarship; and
- Linkages, Partnerships and Internationalization.

4. DEFINITIONS

"Quality Assurance" is the measure of the value of what we do, and the processes that we use to make sure that we maintain and improve standards on a continual basis. Quality Assurance in higher education is the planned and systematic review process of an institution or programme to determine that acceptable standards of education, scholarship, teaching, administration and infrastructure are maintained and enhanced.

Quality as a concept has been variously recognised to mean:

- Fitness for purpose – it equates quality with the fulfillment of a specification or stated outcomes. The purpose is summarized in the university's vision and mission statement;
- Transformation from one state to another, that is, on-going improvement through critical self-review and other quality promotion measures;
- Excellence – quality is concerned with the extent to which goals are met on an on-going basis and with the effectiveness of processes of planning, monitoring, adapting, innovating and evaluating;
- Fitness of purpose – evaluates whether the quality related intentions of an organization are adequate; and Improvement – Quality means reviewing systems in order to improve effectiveness.

"Quality" can be defined in terms of value for money from a student and community perspective (HEQC, June 2004: Framework for institutional audits).

"Quality as transformation" defines quality in terms of change from one state to another and refers to individual and social transformation.

"Critical self-evaluation" self-evaluation is regarded as a cornerstone of quality improvement. Formal quality evaluation/assessment forms part of a cyclical process on the various levels of academic and support activities.

"Quality Management System" (QMS) is a system that outlines the policies and procedures necessary to improve and control the various processes that will ultimately lead to improved business performance.

"Quality Enhancement" is an ongoing process of augmentation or improvement.

5. POLICY STATEMENT

The University of Venda is committed to excellence and assuring quality in its activities as it strives to maintain its position as a leading university in engaged scholarship.

6. OBJECTIVES

Specifically, the objectives of the University of Venda Quality Assurance Policy are to:

6.1. Provide a framework for an efficient quality assurance system with enforceable requirements and norms.

6.2. Coordinate and monitor the quality assurance actions within sections of the university, that is, faculty, administration departments, and support services.

6.3. Describe the quality assurance system and strategies in place at the university in order to achieve high quality activities and to monitor the effectiveness thereof.

6.4. Ensure that all members of the university community are aware of and support the institution's approach to quality.

6.5. Put structures in place in order to monitor, evaluate and review processes and procedures in the institution.

6.6. Ensure that there is institutional quality assurance accountability required of the university on a national and statutory level.

6.7. Ensure that the quality of the core business of teaching, learning, research, and community engagement, as well as that the supporting processes are maintained and improved through critical self-evaluation, followed by peer evaluation.

6.8. Ensure that academic and administrative departments adhere to the policies that they have developed.

7. THE APPROACH OF THE UNIVERSITY TO QUALITY ASSURANCE

7.1. The "Shewchart Cycle" defines quality improvement according to four key activities, namely:

- Plan: Design or revise business process components to improve results (planning)
- Do: Implement the plan and measure its performance (action)
- Check: Assess the measurements and report the results to decision makers (evaluation) and
- Act: Decide on changes needed to improve the process (improvement).

7.2. Quality Assurance comprises the policies, procedures and mechanisms according to which the University of Venda, or a specific unit or function, ensures that specified quality processes and standards are maintained.

7.3. Quality Assurance at the university is a shared responsibility in that it is both centralized and decentralized. While the IPQA directorate will play a facilitating and coordinating function, it is critical to note that all departments are responsible for quality.

7.4. Self-evaluation is accepted as the primary mechanism for quality assurance. It is the responsibility of each functional unit at the university to establish and apply effective procedures for regular self-

evaluation. (i.e., Individuals/departments are encouraged to set their own targets (within the broader mission of the University) against which they are evaluated by internal and external peers).

7.5. External evaluation takes place according to a specific cycle for the academic and support functions at the University of Venda.

7.6. The responsibility for establishing and applying effective procedures for regular critical self-evaluation and for performing external evaluation for the academic and support service according to a specific cycle, rests with the Executive Deans, Directors, Heads of departments and Heads of divisions.

7.7. Quality Assurance at UNIVEN is a combination of compliance, performance and development.

7.8. Quality Assurance at UNIVEN seeks to oversee the operations, performance and discharge of services by staff in both academic and non-academic departments in accordance with clearly defined policies, procedures and regulations in pursuance of the mission, vision and goals of the University.

7.9. Quality Assurance at the University will monitor and conduct periodic review of performance of departments and sections in the University.

7.10. Quality improvement takes place through processes of continuous monitoring and evaluation of academic, administrative, support service and other activities aimed at promoting excellence at the University.

7.11. Ad hoc evaluation of the University of Venda services, activities, systems, projects and service levels is done from time to time at the request of and in cooperation with line managers.

8. REGULATORY FRAMEWORK

The following documents form part of the regulatory framework of this policy:

8.1. An integrated approach to Quality Assurance in Higher Education by the Council on Higher Education;

8.2. CHE (HEQC): A good practice guide and self-evaluation instruments for management for the quality of service-learning

8.3. Education White Paper 3: A programme for the transformation of Higher Education;

8.4. Framework for Institutional Quality Review draft 17b;

8.5. National Qualifications Framework;

8.6. The Higher Education Act 101 of 1997;

8.7. The Higher Education Quality Committee (2004) Criteria for programme accreditation;

8.8. The Higher Education Quality Committee (2004) Improving Teaching and Learning Resources;

9. LINKS TO OTHER UNIVERSITY OF VENDA POLICIES

9.1. Assessment Policy;

9.2. Finance Policies;

9.3. Human Resources Policies;

9.4. Plagiarism Policy;

9.5. Relevant UNIVEN Policies approved by Council;

9.6. Teaching and Learning Policy;

9.7. Teaching and Learning Policy;

9.8. Termination of Academic Programme Policy;

9.9. The University of Venda Statute;

9.10. UNIVEN Strategic Plan; and

10. SCOPE

The policy applies to all students and staff members at the University of Venda.

11. APPROVAL

This policy must be:

12.1 . Considered by SENEX

12.2 . Recommended by Senate

12.3. Approved by the University Council

12. IMPLEMENTATION

This policy will be implemented in accordance with the following procedural guidelines:

12.1. **SENEX,** consisting of representatives from academic and support divisions, will monitor the quality measures of the university and the implementation thereof.

12.2. **Policies, rules, regulations and procedures**. Different sections in the university have relevant policies, rules, regulations and procedures and the Quality Assurance section will monitor adherence to such policies, rules and regulations through reviews and evaluations.

12.3. **Self-evaluation.** Departments/sections will evaluate themselves by reflecting on their current operations and identify their strengths and weaknesses, and together with a review panel look at the way forward for purposes of improvement and development.

12.4. **Academic programme reviews and re-curriculation.** Academic programmes will be reviewed periodically according to pre-determined set of criteria and if necessary be re-curriculated.

12.5. **Departmental reviews.** Departments in the university will be reviewed once in a cycle of five years according to pre-stated processes and procedures.

12.6. **Compliance with national and statutory bodies.** The university, being a Public Institution will be required to comply with national policies and requirements of statutory bodies, for example, Policies from the Department of Higher Education and Training, Professional bodies, CHE, SAQA etc. and the Quality Assurance section will ensure compliance.

12.7. **Institutional Research.** Data gathered through Institutional Research will serve as one of the instruments to improve quality.

12.8. **Capacity development.** Workshops will be run to develop the capacity of staff members in quality measures and rules and regulations of the university.

13. REVIEW DATE

The policy will be reviewed after every three years or as and when the need arises.