



Academic Quality Assurance Policy Framework

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Academic Quality Assurance Policy Framework

Finding Solutions for Africa



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1. Introduction

The development of this Academic Quality Assurance Policy is fundamentally based on and determined by a number of policy initiatives and frameworks in higher education in general and higher education quality assurance systems in particular. Policy initiatives and frameworks upon which it is based, amongst others include South African Qualifications Authority Act, Education White Paper 3: A Programme for the Transformation of Higher Education, Higher Education Act, The National Plan for Higher Education, 1997; 2001; Higher Education Quality Committee: Founding Document, 2001; Quality Assurance in South African Universities, 2002; Higher Education Quality Committee: Framework for Institutional Audits, 2004; Higher Education Quality Committee: Criteria for Institutional Audits, 2004; Higher Education Quality Committee: A Framework for Programme Accreditation, 2004; Higher Education Quality Committee: Criteria for Programme Accreditation, 2004.

Quality in the national policy for higher education is simultaneously regarded as an objective of, and a medium for, the transformation of higher education. As a medium, quality is expressed through a complex set of principles, methodologies and tools crystallised in a quality assurance system whose main responsibility is to reassure individuals, civil society and the government that higher education providers openly, actively and systematically check, monitor, and improve the quality and improve the quality of their academic provision through a variety of means.

University of Limpopo (UL) understands quality within the context of South African Higher Education as **mission-driven** effective and efficient delivery of academic and non-academic processes, which are:

- . contextually aligned with each other and key national imperatives,
- . embedded in a culture of continuous improvement and benchmarking,

With the aim of being **A world-class African University which responds to education, research and community development needs through partnership and knowledge generation –continuing the tradition of empowerment.**

It is important to realise that the above mentioned mission statement of UL can only be achieved through planning, allocation of resources and continuous improvement of quality. Continuous improvement of quality underpins all plans and position statements of UL. The aim of planning is simply to provide direction to implementation and the framework for monitoring and re-planning. The function of it all is to move to the best quality UL can deliver to the overall project of quality improvement. Integrated planning needs to be linked with the

improvement of quality and allocation of resources, and they need to be regarded as three parts of the same cycle. Then, individual staff and units need to align with institutional plans.

This policy framework should be read in conjunction with a policy document on Institutional Approach to Quality Management.

2. Purpose of the Quality Assurance Policy Framework

This Quality Assurance Policy Framework has been formulated to provide guidelines on the development and implementation of an institutional Quality Assurance System within UL, based on a strategic commitment towards continuous quality enhancement and the fostering of a culture of on-going quality improvement.

The main purpose of this Quality Assurance Policy Framework is to define clear policies, procedures and structures for the quality assurance and management of academic activities at UL. The policy framework provides a generic set of policies and procedures, which academic units should adapt to meet their specific contexts and needs. The policies and procedures for the management of academic activities, the approval of academic programmes, and for academic review form basic aspects of UL quality assurance and management system with respect to its core academic activities, namely teaching and learning, research and community engagement. Academic review includes the review of academic programmes and modules, as well as the review of research and knowledge-based community programmes and projects, including service learning.

3. External and Internal Contexts for the Institutional Quality Assurance System.

This section discusses the requirements for UL's institutional quality assurance systems in the light of both external and internal contexts. UL recognises that the quality of its academic activities is essentially related to its continuous dialogue with the concerns, needs and expectations of the variety of stakeholders and role-players who constitute its external and internal contexts.

3.1. External context

The external context for the institutional quality assurance system is informed firstly by the fact that UL is part of a globalising, knowledge-based society, in which higher education is characterised by the mobility of graduates and staff, as well as increasing collaboration and competition in all spheres of academic activity – amongst higher education institutions, as well as between higher education and other institutions. Within this context, UL regards national and international benchmarks and standards as important reference points for its

activities in teaching and learning, research and community engagement. In particular, UL is committed to ensuring the international recognition and accreditation of its qualifications, so that its students are able to pursue further educational and career opportunities on an international basis. Furthermore, international recognition facilitates UL's recruitment strategy with respect to students from both the SADC region and a variety of other countries. In the interests of international accreditation UL will ensure that its academic programmes addresses relevant criteria as these are determined by international accreditation bodies and agreements. UL will also ensure that its academic review process makes use of appropriate international expertise.

Secondly, UL is committed to a process of on-going engagement in order to explore and define its role in the creation, application and dissemination of knowledge. In particular, UL recognises that the quality of its academic activities is integrally related to their contribution to the multi-faceted challenges of human and social development in its local, regional, national and international contexts. UL will therefore regularly consult with various constituencies, including employers, alumni and its own students, in order to reflect on the relevance of its learning programmes and activities to the practical demands of professional life and the working world. While strongly informed by local and regional concerns, the scope of such consultations will extend to include national and international perspectives. The university will also engage with civil society in order to explore how it should prepare its students to fulfil their role as responsible, resourceful and critical citizens. Furthermore, UL will cooperate with other knowledge producers and users in the conduct of research activities that address the challenges of human resources and social development.

Thirdly, the external context for UL's institutional quality assurance system is informed by the developing policy environment within the South African higher education sector. This policy environment embeds the requirements for a national quality assurance system within a comprehensive set of challenges with respect to the transformation, restructuring, efficiency and effectiveness of the higher education sector. A critical consequence of these challenges is that judgements with respect to quality, as well as performance at the institutional and sub-institutional level, are placed within a specific nexus of reference points relating to individual and social development as well as the production and application of knowledge. In addition, higher education policy stipulates a greater formalisation and systematisation of quality assurance arrangements that are geared to achieving the objectives of the National Qualifications Framework (NQF). In terms of these arrangements, the Higher Education Quality Committee (HEQC), which is a permanent sub-committee of the Council on Higher Education (CHE), is recognised as the Education and Training Quality Assurance (ETQA) body with the primary responsibility for quality assurance in the higher education sector. A variety of professional bodies and Sector Education and Training Authorities (SETAs) also enjoy recognition as Education and Training Quality Assurance bodies (ETQAs) for specific education and training areas at

various higher education levels on the NQF. Some of UL's programmes have traditionally been subject to the accreditation requirements of a variety of professional and statutory bodies, and will continue to address such criteria. However, it is incumbent upon the HEQC to negotiate memoranda of understanding with these professional bodies and ETQAs in order to determine acceptable procedures for the quality assurance of academic qualifications that fall under their joint responsibility.

In accordance with the Higher Education Act, 1997, and the ETQA responsibilities of the CHE, the HEQC's mandate includes:

- ❑ Accreditation of providers of higher education to offer programmes leading to particular NQF-registered qualifications by certifying that they have systems, processes and capacity to do so. In relevant cases, this will be done cooperatively with professional councils and SETAs.
- ❑ Audit of the quality assurance mechanisms of higher education institutions.
- ❑ Promote quality among constituent providers in higher education in order to facilitate the development of quality awareness and quality responsiveness in public and private provision.
- ❑ Co-ordinate and facilitate quality assurance activities in higher education within a partnership model with other ETQAs.

3.2. Internal context

While the challenges and accountability requirements of a rapidly changing higher education environment are clearly important, UL's commitment to a coherent process of continuous improvement constitutes the primary driver for its quality assurance and management systems. Policies, procedures and structural arrangements for quality assurance and management should therefore be commensurate with UL's organisational culture and core strategic objectives. UL's management philosophy describes the institution as a democratic, responsive and innovative, efficient and effective organisation, while its transformation vision commits it to participation, distributed ownership and leadership amongst all institutional role-players. In keeping with this philosophy, UL strives to achieve an appropriate balance between the centralisation and devolution of responsibility for quality assurance.

3.3. Desired features for UL's quality assurance framework in the light of its external and internal context

In order to address the challenges of its internal and external context, UL's quality assurance framework should demonstrate the following features:

- ❑ Clear policies, procedures and systems and appropriate resource allocation to support and enhance the quality of teaching and learning, research and community engagement.

- ☐ Responsiveness to the challenges of UL's local, regional and national context, including national higher education legislative and policy framework, and the international higher education environment.
- ☐ The provision of a framework for the development of quality plans at the level of faculties, schools, departments and institutes.
- ☐ The integration of quality assurance activities with institutional planning and resource allocation.
- ☐ Feedback systems that regularly monitor and act on stakeholder opinions on the quality of provision – with specific emphasis on student feedback concerning the quality of modules and programmes.
- ☐ Benchmarking standards, good practice and the establishment of performance targets, with respect to: the quality of academic activities; the effectiveness of quality systems; and staff and student achievement.
- ☐ Monitoring of student achievement in terms of throughput and graduation rates.

4. Relationship between the Quality Assurance Policy Framework and other Policy and Supporting Documents

This policy framework should be read in conjunction with the UL's Calendar, and the core strategic plan. In addition the policy framework relates to the following existing or developing policies and procedures:

- ☐ Teaching and learning
- ☐ Assessment for students learning
- ☐ Staff selection, development, appraisal and retention
- ☐ Student recruitment, access and development
- ☐ Research planning, management and review
- ☐ Postgraduate supervision
- ☐ Facilities management.

5. Approach to Quality Assurance

In line with the international debate on quality assurance and the Founding Document of the Higher Education Quality Committee (HEQC), this framework accepts that "quality" should be approached from the following perspectives - "fitness for purpose", "fitness of purpose", "value for money" and "transformation".

- ☐ "Fitness for purpose" implies that judgements on quality are mission-specific. At the institutional level, quality is assessed with specific reference to UL's mission, vision, goals and objectives. In an academic programme, quality is related to the achievement of its specific objectives and learning outcomes. The achievement of quality therefore entails the alignment of academic, research and community

programmes with specified strategic plans at the institutional and sub-institutional level;

- ❑ “Fitness of purpose” the extent to which UL relates to national policy framework, including Education White Paper 3: A programme for the Transformation of Higher Education, Higher Education Act, National Plan for Higher Education, SAQA, CHE/HEQC, and other DoE requirements which includes governance, planning (PQM), funding and resource allocation.
- ❑ “Value for money” entails the efficient use of resources, and a commitment to providing UL’s students with a learning experience that is commensurate with their investment in their academic career. “Value for money” recognises that judgements and recommendations on the quality of provision must be made in relation to the full range of higher education purposes as set out in the White Paper on Higher Education.
- ❑ “Transformation” has both social and individual dimensions. In the social sense, transformation refers to the contribution that UL’s academic activities make to national and regional development needs. In the individual sense, transformation refers to the extent to which students and staffs are able to develop their knowledge, skills and attitudes by means of their participation in teaching, learning and research activities. Transformation entails more than the acquisition of knowledge and skills. In essence it concerns the ability of learners – whether staff or students - to develop and refine the critical capacity that will allow them to relate knowledge and skills to different theoretical and practical contexts.

Discussions and negotiations about standards and quality commitments should inevitably include an engagement with the implications of these perspectives on quality for the planning, implementation, monitoring, evaluation and improvement of teaching and learning, research and community engagement programmes.

6. Quality Assurance System

This policy framework uses the term *quality assurance system* to refer to a combination of activities that may be classified by means of the terms *quality planning*, *quality management* and *quality improvement*. It is recognised that the distinction between these terms is not clear-cut, and that the terms “quality assurance” and “quality management” are frequently used interchangeably or in combination with each other. Nevertheless, the term *quality assurance system* is used to express the fact that UL assures for quality by planning, managing and improving the quality of its academic activities. The quality assurance system and its constituent aspects can be defined in the following manner:

- ❑ *Quality assurance system*: The combination of policies, procedures, structures and resources which are used to ensure that educational activities meet and exceed specified performance levels and quality

commitments, in a process of continuing improvement which effectively engages with stakeholder needs.

- ❑ *Quality planning*: The process of external and internal environmental scanning which is used to identify goals and objectives with respect to quality and standards, as well as the critical success factors (i.e. actions, resources, policies) for their achievement.
- ❑ *Quality management*: The policies and procedures by which UL or a specific unit ensures that it strives to meet its specified quality commitments and performance standards. These policies and procedures include regular monitoring and review activities which consider the appropriateness, effectiveness and efficiency of educational provision.
- ❑ *Quality improvement*: A process of continuing improvement which builds on identified examples of good and best practice, while also addressing problem areas. Quality improvement or enhancement therefore seeks to translate the results of monitoring and review activities into systematic improvement strategies.

7. Principles of the Institutional Quality Assurance System

The Institutional Quality Assurance System with respect to academic activities is based on the following principles and values, which are closely related to UL's mission statement and strategic plan:

- 7.1 *A systematic approach*: UL approaches the quality assurance of its core academic activities by means of policies, procedures and structures which are clearly formulated and documented, and effectively implemented, monitored and reviewed. This systematic approach includes:
- ❑ The formulation, implementation, monitoring and evaluation of appropriate institutional and sub-institutional policies and processes with respect to the quality assurance of UL's academic activities. The purpose of institutional policies and procedures is to ensure consistency in terms of basic requirements for academic provision and quality assurance;
 - ❑ The creation of appropriate structures at both the institutional and sub-institutional level to assume responsibility for quality assurance policies and procedures with respect to UL's academic activities. Such structures will, inter alia, ensure that the results of quality assurance processes are reported to the appropriate management level, where action can be taken to address problems and implement improvement plans;
 - ❑ Effective linkage between quality assurance, planning and budgeting processes. There should be an effective alignment between quality assurance, budgeting and planning activities at the institutional and sub-institutional level.

- 7.2 *Engagement with stakeholders:* Staff, students, employers, government and the community – especially local and regional – are major stakeholders in the academic provision of the University. In the conduct of its academic activities UL will:
- ❑ Obtain and act on input and feedback from internal and external stakeholders on a regular basis;
 - ❑ Address the needs of staff and students with respect to their learning and working environment;
 - ❑ Engage with the priorities, concerns and proposals that are developed in national policy documents on the higher education system.
- 7.3 *Performance standards:* UL is committed to the maintenance of standards of performance in its educational, research and community programmes that are:
- ❑ Commensurate with its mission and strategic direction;
 - ❑ Sensitive and appropriate to the needs and requirements of its stakeholders – especially students, employers and the local and regional community;
 - ❑ Appropriate to the challenges facing higher education institutions in a changing national and global environment;
 - ❑ Informed by appropriate performance indicators at the institutional and sub-institutional level.
- 7.4 *A learning organisation:* UL approaches quality assurance as a learning organisation, and therefore subscribes to the following principles:
- ❑ *The devolution of responsibility for quality assurance:* Academic units have the primary responsibility for quality assurance with respect to the academic activities that fall under their aegis. This policy implies that faculties, schools and departments should adapt institutional policies and processes with respect to quality assurance to address their specific requirements. It also implies that the staff and students who are involved in a particular study programme have the primary responsibility for ensuring the quality and standards of teaching and learning within it;
 - ❑ *Quality assurance consists of a process of continuing improvement:* Assurance for quality is not a static process. UL promotes the discussion and dissemination of examples of good practice, as well as the honest engagement with problem areas, as part of a continuing process of organisational learning and improvement.
 - ❑ *The professional responsibility of staff:* All staff members are responsible for their contribution to the quality of UL's educational, research and community programmes. In particular, each staff member is responsible for his or her contribution to the enhancement of students' educational experience and learning environment.

7.5 *The empowerment of staff:* UL enables staff members to fulfil their professional responsibility for the quality of academic activities by means of an effective and appropriate performance management system in which:

- ☐ The expectations and standards that are required of staff members are negotiated and specified in an appropriate job profile;
- ☐ Policies and procedures for the appraisal and recognition of staff performance are clearly documented;
- ☐ Appropriate and effective staff development and training opportunities are available;
- ☐ Continuous improvement in staff performance is actively pursued;
- ☐ Scholarship and innovation in research, learning and teaching are promoted; and
- ☐ Decision-making and information sharing occur in an open and participatory manner.

8. The Quality Cycle

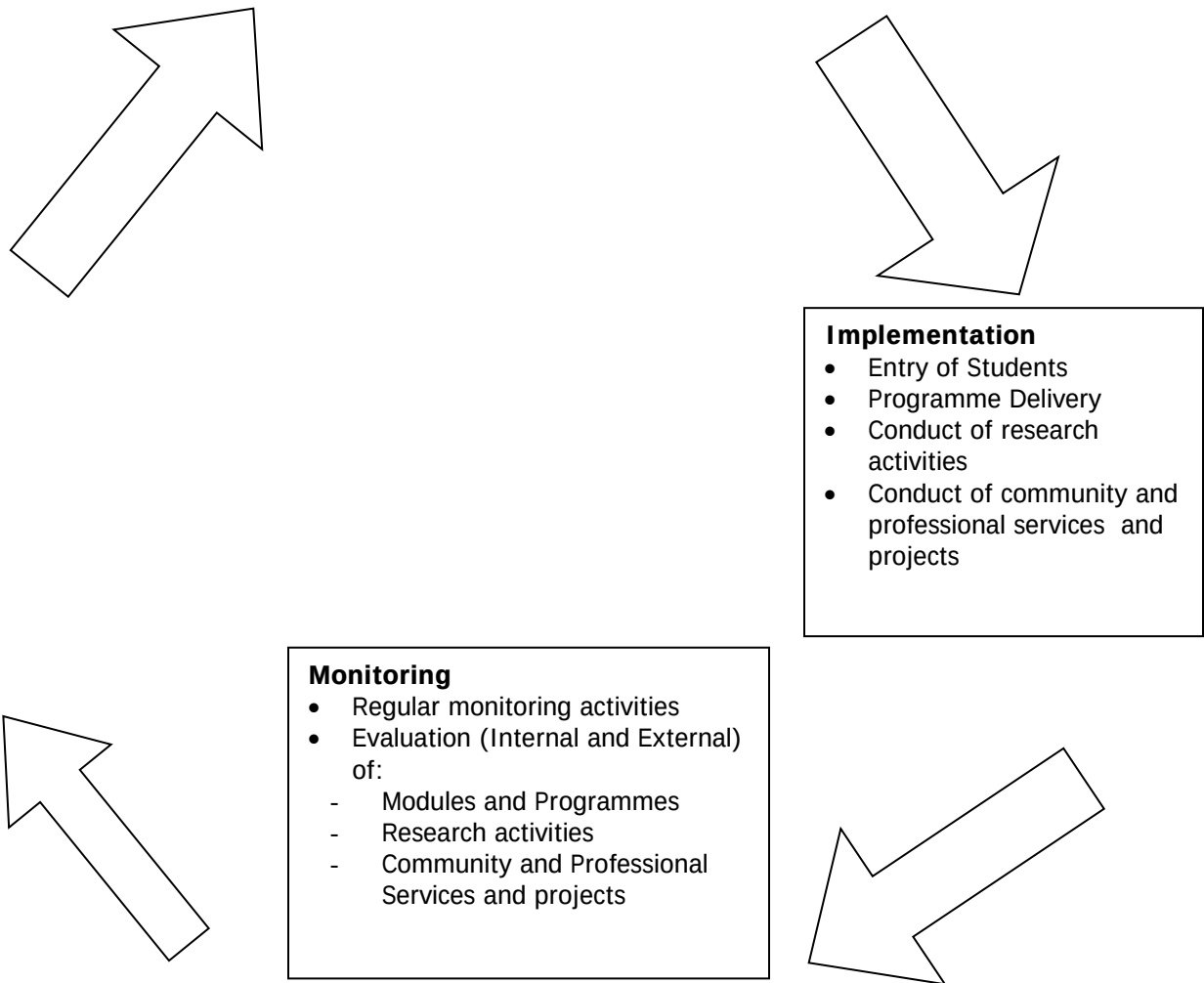
Quality management processes are frequently depicted in terms of an input-process-output model, or a quality cycle. The quality cycle presents a useful model for depicting the quality assurance of academic activities at UL as a dynamic process which develops into a spiral of continuing improvement. The following diagram depicts the quality assurance of academic activities in terms of a quality cycle consisting of the key processes of planning, implementation, monitoring and review, and improvement. Sections three to five of the framework provide more explicit details of the quality cycle.

Planning

- Programme planning
- Programme design
- Programme approval
- Research planning
- Planning of community and professional services and projects

Improvement

- Action plans
- Follow up



The quality cycle provides a basis for understanding the approval, assurance and review of academic programmes, as well as other academic activities, as a continuing process of design, delivery, monitoring and review, and improvement. By means of this process, and its associated policies, UL endeavours to ensure that its academic activities meet their specific outcomes and standards, while also providing students with a quality learning experience and environment. In terms of the quality cycle, academic units are encouraged to approach their academic activities in terms of the following questions:

- ❑ Planning
 - What are you trying to do?
 - Why are you trying to do it?
- ❑ Implementation

- How are you trying to do it?
- Why are you trying to do it this way?
- ❑ Monitoring and review
 - How do you know that it works?
- ❑ Improvement
 - How do you improve it?

9. Structural Arrangements and Responsibilities for Quality Assurance

This section deals with organisational arrangements and responsibilities for quality assurance at UL. It deals primarily with the responsibility of the Academic Planning Committee (APC), which oversees UL's quality assurance system of its academic activities. Sub-section 10.3 provides an organogram which outlines the structure of the quality assurance system at different organisational levels. The various parts of the policy framework that deal with programme planning and approval, programme management and academic review contain organisational charts which delineate responsibilities for the respective processes within UL.

9.1. Roles of the Academic Planning Committee, Executive Management Committee, Senate and Council

The Senate of UL has the ultimate responsibility for all matters that pertain to the quality of UL's academic activities. As a committee of Senate, the Academic Planning Committee assumes the responsibility for the development, implementation and oversight of the University's quality assurance policies and procedures for its academic activities. The Executive Management Committee of UL supports the quality assurance of academic affairs by integrating it into an overarching institutional quality assurance system which spans all the functional responsibilities of the institution. In particular Executive Management Committee provides an enabling environment for the quality assurance of UL's academic affairs, through the provision of leadership and strategic direction, as well as the overall co-ordination and planning of institutional support which is provided by various support units.

The APC makes recommendations to Senate on all matters pertaining to the quality and standards of academic programmes and other academic activities at UL. The APC also refers matters concerning quality assurance that have implications for resources or the provision of support services to Executive Management Committee. The APC may co-opt members, especially from support and administrative units whenever the need arises, in order to ensure that quality assurance issues are dealt with effectively across the institution.

9.2. Terms of reference of the Academic Planning Committee with respect to academic quality

The APC is responsible for a number of specific functions with respect to the quality management of academic activities at UL:

- ❑ The APC considers and evaluates proposals for new modules and academic programmes that are received from Faculty Boards, taking into account requirements for the registration, funding and accreditation of academic programmes as these are specified by SAQA, the DoE and the HEQC.
- ❑ The APC considers and evaluates proposals for changes to modules and programmes that are received from Faculty Boards. Such changes include: substantive changes to modules and programmes and changes in the delivery mode of programmes
- ❑ The APC reviews and proposes modifications to the regulations that govern the provision of UL's academic programmes, with particular reference to policies that relate to the design, content and delivery of educational programmes.
- ❑ The APC monitors and reviews the effectiveness of faculties' procedures and structures for assuring the quality of their academic activities.
- ❑ The APC reviews student achievement as this is reflected in annual monitoring data with respect to learner performance in academic programmes and their constituent modules.
- ❑ The APC oversees the academic review process by:
 - Reviewing the requirements for academic review. In fulfilling this function, the APC liaises with ETQAs such as the HEQC, SETAs and professional bodies, as well as other external bodies that are responsible for monitoring the quality of academic programmes at UL.
 - Ensuring that where professional bodies or SETAs undertake review activities for accreditation or other purposes, such activities meet UL's internal requirements for academic review. Where review activities by professional bodies or SETAs do not cover all the academic programmes in a specific academic unit, or only address specific aspects of the academic programmes that are offered by that unit, the APC determines additional review activities and negotiates their conduct with the relevant unit and professional body or SETA.
 - Determining the cycle for academic review in the case of programmes that are not subject to a regular review process by professional bodies or SETAs, with the proviso that all academic programmes at UL must be reviewed at least every five years.
- ❑ The APC receives consolidated reports on academic review from Faculty Boards and makes recommendations to Senate on their approval. Where academic programmes do not fall under the jurisdiction of professional bodies, the APC makes recommendations to Senate on their re-accreditation as a result of the academic review process.
- ❑ The APC receives consolidated reports on progress review from Faculty Boards and makes resolutions on their approval.
- ❑ The APC monitors and contributes to the effective interrelation between planning quality assurance and budgeting planning activities. In order to facilitate the linkage between these processes, the APC:

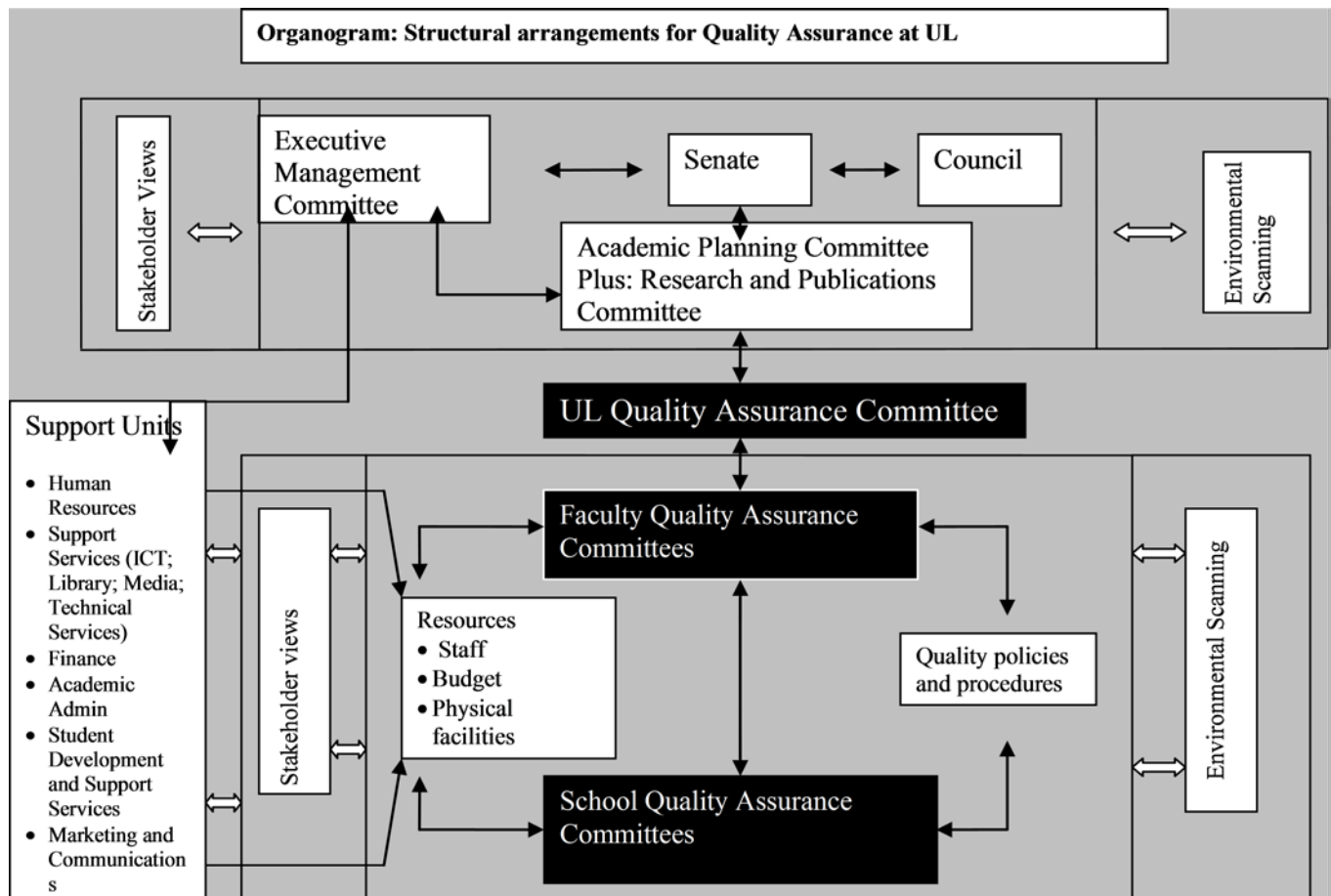
- Reviews institutional strategic plans and the three year rolling plan, to ensure that such plans adequately reflect the results of quality assurance activities. The APC makes recommendations on academic planning as this is reflected in the three year rolling plan before it is submitted to the DoE;
- Makes formal recommendations to Executive Management on the results of quality assurance activities that have budgetary implications, records the responses that are received, and monitors adaptations to the budget in the light of such recommendations.

9.3. Responsibilities of faculties

Faculties must determine the appropriate policies, procedures and structures for the quality management of their educational programmes, research and knowledge-based community activities. While faculty arrangements must be commensurate with institutional policy, they should also be appropriate to the specific context and requirements of each faculty. Faculties are required to provide the Quality Management Unit with a description of their structural arrangements for quality management, and to update such information as necessary. Faculties are required to develop quality plans which specify their approach to quality management.

9.4. Organogram – structural arrangements for quality assurance at UL.

The following organogram depicts the key structures that constitute UL's quality assurance system.



10. Academic Quality Assurance Management System

The management of the University' quality assurance system at institutional level is the responsibility of the Quality Assurance Director who reports to the Deputy Vice-Chancellor Academic.

Amongst others, the Quality Assurance Committee will be responsible for the following activities:

- Overall co-ordination of all academic quality assurance activities at an institutional level;
- Overall co-ordination of the external institutional audit of the University (this includes the process of institutional self-evaluation);
- Interpret all Quality Assurance reports (self-evaluation reports, reports by peer reviewers, etc.) and to identify the issues arising from these for the attention of the Executive Management Committee; and

- Advise the Director of Quality Assurance in order to ensure that the University complies with its national statutory obligations with regard to Quality assurance.

The management of the Quality Assurance at Faculty level is the responsibility of the Executive Dean. Each Faculty has a committee system that makes provision in its activities for the quality assurance activities of the Faculty.

11. Programme and Module Planning and Approval

This section of the policy framework deals with policies and procedures pertaining to the planning and approval of programmes and modules. In the most part, the introduction of new programmes and modules, or changes to existing programmes and modules will result from strategic planning processes at the institutional, faculty or school/department level. A specific academic unit assumes the primary responsibility for the planning of each programme and module at UL.

11.1 Definition of Programmes and Qualification

The following definitions of an academic programme and a qualification are drawn from the DoE's New Academic Policy Discussion Document (2002):

- A *programme* is a purposeful and structured set of learning experiences that leads to one or more qualifications; and in an outcomes-based system, a programme is designed to enable learners to achieve pre-specified exit level outcomes. It is the purpose of the programme which gives rise to its learning outcomes and structure. In an outcomes-based system, a programme can be defined as a purposeful and coherent combination of units of learning (modules or unit standards) expressed in an outcomes-based format that lead to one or more qualifications.
- A *qualification* is the formal recognition and certification of learning achievement awarded by an accredited provider. In the outcomes-based approach intrinsic to the NQF, a qualification signifies and formally certifies the demonstrated achievement by a learner of a planned and purposeful combination of learning outcomes, at a specified level of performance.

Academic programmes at UL include:

- Foundation programmes
- Undergraduate programmes
- Postgraduate programmes
- Short courses
- Programmes offered in terms of agreements for collaborative provision

11.2 External Requirements for the Approval and Accreditation of Qualifications

and Programmes

UL's policies with respect to programme planning and approval take into account the requirements for the accreditation, registration and funding of academic programmes that are determined by the HEQC, SAQA and the DoE respectively. In addition, programme planning and approval is informed by the accreditation requirements of professional bodies and SETAs. At present, the requirements for the approval of new programmes consist of the following aspects:

- ❑ The HEQC's programme accreditation process. In terms of this process, programmes will only be finally accredited once the first group of cohorts has graduated, and the institution has provided the HEQC with a prescribed set of information including a self-evaluation portfolio highlighting its strengths and weaknesses in the programme; the success rates at the different programme levels; the overall throughput rates for the programme; and an improvement plan. Until the programme receives full accreditation, it will be designated as having "provisional accreditation". The HEQC's accreditation process consists of three phases, though the HEQC will not necessarily require all programmes to go through all of the accreditation phases:
 - Candidacy phase – decision on whether the programme may be offered, based on its ability to meet minimum standards of provision as determined by the HEQC accreditation criteria.
 - Mid-term Progress Report – submission of institutional progress report on programme for evaluation by HEQC secretariat detailing progress made in meeting all requirements that are determined in the candidacy phase
 - Accreditation – final and full accreditation of the programme when conditions set out during candidacy phase have been met.
- ❑ In addition, institutions will be required to include in their submissions for programme accreditation to the HEQC:
 - Confirmation from the SAQA that the qualification has been registered with it
 - A letter from the DoE authorising the institution to offer the programme in terms of its accepted programme and qualification mix (PQM).

11.3 Organisational Chart: Responsibilities for the Planning and Approval of Programmes and Modules

Note: The organisational chart in this section as well as in other sections of the policy framework refers to responsibilities at the level of departments or schools as well as at faculty level. The allocation of these responsibilities will depend on the context of each specific faculty.

Structure/ Committee	Responsibilities/Functions
Council	• Approves institutional policy on programme and module planning and approval • Ratifies all proposals for new and significantly changed programmes for submission to the HEQC, SAQA and the DoE.

Senate

- Resolutions on institutional policies, procedures and structures for programme and module planning and approval (for submission to Council)
- Approves all proposals for new and significantly changed programmes for submission to Council
- Final approval of:
 - Changes to the delivery mode of a programme
 - New modules
 - Modules which replace existing modules
 - Modules that form part of a new or significantly changed programme

Academic Planning Committee

- Recommendations to Senate and faculties on institutional policies, procedures and structures for programme and module planning and approval in the light of:
 - The accreditation requirements of the HEQC, SETAs and professional bodies
 - The registration requirements of SAQA
 - Requirements for the design of programmes and qualifications as determined by the DoE/ SAQA/ CHE – e.g. the New Academic Policy
 - The DoE's requirements for funding approval
- Considers and makes recommendations to Senate concerning the approval of:
 - New and significantly changed programmes
 - Changes to the delivery mode of programmes
 - New modules and modules that replace existing modules
- Final approval of changes to the registration details of modules
- Notes minor changes to programmes and modules

Faculties

- Approves the following proposals for submission to the APC:
 - New and significantly changed programmes
 - Programmes with changes to their delivery mode
 - New modules and modules which replace existing modules
 - Changes to the registration details of modules
- Final approval of minor changes to programmes and modules
- Approves arrangements for the planning and approval of programmes and modules within the organisational structure of the faculty
- Decisions on recommended institutional policies, procedures and structures for the planning and approval of programmes and modules – for resolution by Senate

Departments/ Schools

- Planning of academic programmes and modules
- Design and development of new programmes/modules, and adaptations to existing programmes/modules
- Preparation of formal documentation for various categories of programme and module approval

In the fulfilment of its responsibilities with respect to programme approval, the APC may make use of a sub-committee which it tasks with the specific responsibility of screening applications for completeness and accuracy of the information that is necessary for programme approval. The meeting of such a sub-committee should be attended as appropriate by persons who are responsible for the development of the programmes or modules that have been submitted for approval.

11.4 Programme Planning and Development

Faculties and academic units determine their own procedures for programme planning and development. The programme planning and development process takes account of national and institutional policy guidelines for the development and registration of academic programmes and qualifications, such as the New

Academic Policy, qualification and level descriptors, and qualification and unit standards that are developed by SAQA. In addition, the process must ensure that programmes are able to meet all the requirements for their accreditation as specified by UL's internal policies, as well as the policies of the HEQC, professional bodies and SETAs.

In terms of the quality cycle as delineated in Section 8 of this policy framework, programme planning and development requires that academic units should pay specific attention to two general areas, namely the conduct of a feasibility study and the design and organisation of the programme. Information on both these areas forms the basis for UL's programme approval process. These two areas can be grouped into a number of specific aspects:

11.5 The design and organisation of the programme

Programme design and organisation includes the following aspects:

- ❑ The specification of admission requirements, including arrangements and criteria for the recognition of prior learning (RPL)
- ❑ The specification of learning outcomes in terms of the desired knowledge, skills and attitudes of programme graduates
- ❑ The selection and organisation of the programme content, including the sequencing of the learning components (modules) and the determination of fundamental, core and elective modules as well as other possible programme elements
- ❑ The design of the learning experience. This activity entails the selection of teaching and learning approaches, educational technologies and strategies for learner support, in accordance with the programme's specified learning outcomes
- ❑ The planned arrangements for experiential learning, including work-placed learning, field-trips and internships
- ❑ The selection of assessment methods and the stipulation of the assessment criteria as a means of establishing the extent to which learners achieve the specified learning outcomes
- ❑ The specification of performance indicators for the programme, including module pass rates, throughput rates, and graduation rates

11.6 Programme feasibility study

The conduct of a programme feasibility study must form part of the programme planning and development process. A feasibility study allows staff to assess the educational needs of potential students and to plan for the provision of an optimal learning environment. UL's approval procedures of new and significantly changed programmes, requires that information should be provided on the various aspects of the programme feasibility study. These aspects include:

- ❑ A needs assessment which considers the relevance of the programme in terms of:

- 11.6.1 Inputs from current students, graduates, employers and the profession concerning the educational and training opportunities that should be offered by the programme
 - 11.6.2 The requirements of the local, regional, national and international environment in terms of human resource development needs
 - 11.6.3 The institution's educational priorities
 - 11.6.4 The requirements of the field of knowledge
- ❑ Recruitment and enrolment planning, indicating the anticipated student numbers and the profile of the students who will enrol for the programme
 - ❑ An appraisal of UL's expertise and experience in the broad field of study. Particular reference should be paid to the qualifications and experience of academic staff who will offer the programme
 - ❑ Planning of the staffing requirements for the programme in the light of existing capacity
 - ❑ Planning of the infrastructural requirements for the programme taking into consideration the existing physical and information resources (i.e. venues, equipment, the library and IT facilities)
 - ❑ A provisional financial plan for the programme
 - ❑ Information on similar programmes that are offered by other higher education institutions within the region.

12. Classification of Programme and Module Approval Procedures

Programme and module approval procedures at UL can be classified into four categories:

- ❑ New and significantly changed programmes
- ❑ Changes to programmes and modules that are subject to final approval by Senate
- ❑ Changes to the registration details of modules
- ❑ Minor changes to programmes and modules

The subsequent sections deal with the approval procedures that apply to each of these categories sequentially.

12.1 The approval of new and significantly changed programmes

12.2 Definition of new and significantly changed programmes

The HEQC's programme accreditation framework indicates that "a new programme is one which has not existed before or is a programme that has been significantly changed, i.e. when its purpose, outcomes, field of study and mode of delivery have been changed to such an extent that they result in a change of 50% or more to the credits of the programme". New and significantly changed programmes that conform to this definition are subject to:

- ❑ Approval by both the Senate and the Council of UL
- ❑ Approval by FOTIM to ensure that the programme does not constitute an unnecessary duplication of existing programmes at higher education institutions within the region
- ❑ External accreditation and approval by the HEQC's Accreditation Committee linked to funding approval from the DoE and confirmation of the registration of the qualification to which the programme leads by SAQA.

12.3 Procedures for minor changes to Programmes and Modules

Minor changes to programmes and modules are dealt with at the faculty level, and submitted to the APC for noting. Minor changes to programmes consist of various types of changes that do not amount to a change of 50% or more to the credits of the programme. Such changes include:

- ❑ Changes to the regulations pertaining to progression to a subsequent level of study
- ❑ Changes in the composition of the programme – i.e. the addition or dropping of modules or other learning components
- ❑ Changes to the learning outcomes and purpose of the programme
- ❑ Changes to the assessment methods and criteria that are used in one or more of the programme's constituent modules.

Where changes to existing modules do not amount to the replacement of an existing module, such changes are regarded as minor changes. The relevant academic unit that is primarily responsible for the programme or module undertakes minor changes and submits them for final approval to the Faculty Board. Details of minor changes to programmes and modules should be sent to the APC for noting before the academic year preceding the commencement of the modified programme or module.

The effect of a number of minor changes to a programme may amount to a significant change. It is the responsibility of the programme management to bring such cumulative cases to the attention of the APC, so that the APC can make a decision on whether the programme should be subject to the requisite approval process for significantly changed programmes. The APC also reserves the right to negotiate with the relevant faculty concerning the nature and effects of its approved minor changes to a programme.

Where minor changes are made to a module, it is incumbent on the relevant academic unit to consult with all other academic programmes and units that make use of the module concerning the proposed changes. Confirmation that such consultation has taken place must be submitted to the faculty board as part of the documentation relating to the approval of the module changes.

13 Management of Modules, Programmes and other Academic Affairs

This part of the policy framework focuses on policies and procedures with respect to the management of academic programmes and their constituent modules at UL. Attention is also paid to research management.

13.1 Aspects of programme and module management

In terms of the quality cycle (section 8), programme and module management consists of all the aspects that form part of the implementation of the planned academic activities. The implementation of the programme or module consists of the following aspects:

- ❑ The actual recruitment and enrolment profile, which flows from enrolment planning and the policies and requirements for admission to the programme
- ❑ The application of policies and procedures relating to the recognition of prior learning (RPL) in the selection of students for admission to the programme
- ❑ The content and organisation of the programme or module
- ❑ Regular consultation with internal and external stakeholders in order to assess the relevance of the programme or module
- ❑ The teaching and learning strategies that are employed in the programme or module
- ❑ The provision of experiential learning opportunities, including work-placed learning, internships and fieldwork
- ❑ The application of the assessment methods and criteria
- ❑ The provision of learner support and guidance
- ❑ The development and deployment of staff in order to meet the requirements of the programme or module
- ❑ The provision of adequate institutional resources and facilities to meet the needs of the programme or module

13.2 Organisational chart: Responsibilities for the Management of Programmes, Modules and other Academic activities

Structure/ Committee	Responsibilities/Functions
Council	• Approves institutional policy on programme and module management, research management and other relevant academic activities at UL • Approves the institutional budget for the conduct of its academic functions and their support
Senate	• Resolutions on institutional policies, procedures and structures for programme and module management, research management and other relevant academic activities at UL
Executive Management Committee	• Compiles institutional budget for the conduct of academic activities and their support • Coordinates the provision of support services for academic activities • Oversees the design and implementation of the performance management system for staff at UL

Academic
Planning
Committee

- Recommendations on institutional policies, procedures and structures for programme and module management, as well as other academic activities at UL, for approval by Faculties and Senate
- Institutional liaison through the Quality Assurance Unit with the HEQC, other ETQAs and professional bodies, SAQA and the DoE concerning all matters pertaining to the quality assurance of programmes and requirements for their provision

Research
and
Publications
Committee

- Recommendations on institutional policies, procedures and structures for research management, for consideration by the APC (where relevant) and approval by Faculties and Senate
- Manages UL research budget
- Institutional liaison with Research Funding Councils and other research associations

Faculties

- Approves arrangements for the management of academic programmes and modules, research and other academic activities within the organisational structure of the faculty
- Decisions on recommended institutional policies, procedures and structures for the management of programmes and modules, research and other academic activities at UL – for resolution by Senate
- Manages faculty budget and resource planning for the conduct of its academic activities
- Develops protocol for the supervision of postgraduate research students

Departments/ Schools

- Design of appropriate structures and processes for the management of programmes and modules, research and other academic activities
- Manages educational provision, including management of supervision for research students
- Develops programme and module guides for use by students
- Establishes processes and structures for consultation with students and other stakeholders
- Liaison activities, including:
 - Intra-institutional liaison (other academic units; support services)
 - Inter-institutional liaison (collaborative activities in academic programmes, research and community projects)
- Manages budget and resource planning for the conduct of academic activities

13.3 Module Management

13.3.1 Responsible academic units and module coordinators

Modules may form part of a variety of academic programmes, which are presented by various academic units. Nevertheless, each module at UL falls under the primary responsibility of a specific academic unit – which will normally be a department, school, institute or faculty. In many cases, a specific academic programme will, by nature of its content and focus, provide an appropriate primary location for a certain module. In such cases, the module falls under the aegis of the academic unit which is responsible for that programme.

It is required that a specific staff member, whom policy framework refers to as a module coordinator, should be responsible for each module at UL. The module coordinator makes appropriate arrangements for the management of the module, in liaison with the staff who presents the module and the responsible academic unit. Module management includes requisite activities relating to the approval, presentation and review of the module, as well as other quality assurance activities that are prescribed by institutional policy. UL's Teaching and Learning Policy delineates the responsibilities of lecturing staff with respect to module presentation. In addition the module coordinator is responsible for:

- ❑ Ensuring that the necessary documentation is prepared for the approval of new modules and changes to existing modules, as specified in UL's policies and procedures for programme and module approval.
- ❑ Ensuring that the review of the module is undertaken in conformity with institutional policies and procedures.

13.4 Module guide

The module coordinator is responsible for ensuring that students receive a module guide, which meets the requirements for module guides that are delineated in UL's Teaching and Learning Policy.

13.5 Programme Management

13.5.1 Units of primary responsibility and programme leaders

All programmes and modules at UL, no matter what their mode of delivery, fall under the primary responsibility of a specific academic unit – whether a department, school, institute or faculty.

Faculties, in liaison with their constituent and other relevant intra-institutional academic units, are responsible for the development and maintenance of all relevant policies, processes and structures with respect to the operational management of the academic programmes that fall under their aegis. Such policies may include aspects such as criteria for the allocation of staffing and other resources to academic programmes; and policies and procedures with respect to curriculum design, teaching, learning, assessment and student support. In all cases, faculty policies must conform to the requirements that are set out in UL's Quality Assurance Policy Framework on Academic activities, and in other applicable institutional policy documents.

UL's quality policy framework requires that a specific member of the academic staff, whom this policy framework refers to as a programme leader, should be responsible for the overall management and co-ordination of an academic programme. Within specific faculties, the responsibilities of the programme leader may be fulfilled by staff members who are referred to as programme directors or coordinators, or by academic managers. Faculties must provide the Quality Assurance Unit with details of their specific arrangements for programme management, and ensure that such information is updated on an annual basis. Programme leaders, in liaison with the staff who are responsible for the programme's constituent modules, must ensure its effective management. They are therefore responsible for overseeing all the processes that this and other institutional policy documents specifically allocate to them with respect to the

approval, management and review of academic programmes. Programme management amongst others includes the following aspects:

- ❑ The conduct of programme planning, as described in the delineation of the quality cycle in this policy framework.
- ❑ The preparation of the necessary documentation for programme approval.
- ❑ The coordination of monitoring and review activities for the programme and the modules that fall under its primary responsibility in accordance with the policies and procedures that are specified in this policy framework.

13.5.2 Delegation of authority for aspects of programme management

Depending on the programme structures within specific faculties or at the inter-faculty level, a unit of primary responsibility may choose to delegate the responsibility for certain aspects of programme approval, management and review to another academic unit. In all such cases, the unit of primary responsibility remains responsible for ensuring the effective conduct of processes pertaining to programme approval, management and review.

13.5.3 Programme guide

All students are provided with a UL calendar, which sets out the general rules and regulations with respect to study and educational programmes at UL. In addition the programme leader for each programme must ensure that students are provided with a programme guide for their specific programme.

13.6 Consultations with students with respect to academic programmes

In addition to regular consultations between staff and students on an individual basis, academic units must provide students with adequate formal opportunities for collective consultation on all matters pertaining to the programme in which they are enrolled, with staff members who are attached to the programme. The formal arrangements for such consultation will depend on the particular programme, including factors such as its level and delivery mode. Thus, in the case of full-time programmes which are taught on campus, the academic unit may decide to establish a staff/student consultative committee, to make use of existing structures for student representation on faculty boards, or to arrange a special meeting of the unit to which student representatives are invited in order to discuss matters pertaining to their learning experience and environment. In the case of programmes which are offered off-campus, academic units should make appropriate arrangements for consultations with students at each learning centre or regional site in order to discuss the quality of the programme. Whatever the specific arrangements that are made with respect to collective consultation between staff and students on the programme, it is required that such consultation should take place at least once per semester.

Academic units should ensure that their arrangements for staff/student consultation make provision for representation by students from all programmes that fall under their aegis, at both the undergraduate and postgraduate level. Academic units should document their specific arrangements for staff/student consultations, and make this information available to their students in the programme guide, and where appropriate in other formats. Academic units should keep records of such consultations and actions that may arise from them, and draw on such information in the processes of module and programme review.

14. Responsibilities of Students

Students are critical partners in assuring the quality of academic programmes at UL. They are active participants in the achievement of the learning outcomes of their academic programmes, by means of the development of knowledge, skills and attitudes that will equip them for the demands of professional practice, and responsible citizenship. In particular, students should ensure that they understand and cooperate in meeting all the requirements for student conduct and performance that are specified in their programme guides. UL expects that its students will play an active role in the effective management of their learning activities, inter alia by making use of opportunities for academic and career development, consultation with academic staff, and the range of theoretical, practical and experiential learning opportunities that are made available to them. UL should encourage its students to contribute to the development, implementation and improvement of their learning plans by means of feedback processes and other opportunities for engagement with lecturing staff.

15. Research Management

Research management consists mainly of two components, namely postgraduate studies undertaken by research students, and the conduct of research programmes and projects. The UL Research and Publications Committee is responsible for the management of research at the institutional level, and has representation from all faculties. The Research and Publications Committee develops appropriate policies and procedures with respect to both the supervision of postgraduate research students, and the conduct of research projects. Faculties should create appropriate structures, policies and procedures for the planning, management and coordination of research in liaison with their constituent academic units.

15.1 Postgraduate studies

Faculties are required to have formal policies and procedures with respect to a number of matters that relate to postgraduate research degrees. The Faculty Board is responsible for all these matters, though it may delegate certain responsibilities to appropriate intra-faculty structures.

- 15.1.1 The approval of applications for postgraduate study towards a research degree in the light of the candidate's suitability to undertake the study.
- 15.1.2 The approval of research proposals.
- 15.1.3 The appointment of supervisors/promoters and co-supervisors/co-promoters.
- 15.1.4 The development and maintenance of a code of conduct with respect to research supervision in the faculty. The code of conduct should spell out the roles and responsibilities of the various participants that are involved in the research project. It should also make provision for the handling of disputes that emanate from the research supervision process.
- 15.1.5 The appointment of internal and external examiners.
- 15.1.6 Decisions on the awarding of postgraduate degrees in consultation with senate.

This delineation of faculty responsibilities for postgraduate studies should be read in conjunction with the specification of the *general responsibilities of research supervisors* in UL's Teaching and Learning Policy.

15.2 Conduct of research programmes and projects

Faculties and their constituent academic units should develop and implement appropriate policies and structures for the planning and management of research projects. Research planning and management includes decisions on focal areas for faculty research, as well as collaboration with other higher education institutions, research and professional associations, industry, NGO's and other appropriate organisations.

16. Monitoring and Review of Academic Activities

In terms of the quality cycle as indicated above, monitoring, review and improvement with respect to academic activities includes the following aspects:

- ❑ The use of assessment results to monitor students' achievement of specified learning outcomes
- ❑ The use of student feedback to monitor the quality of the student learning experience and environment, in terms of strategies for teaching and learning, student support, the quality of programme staff, and the programme infrastructure
- ❑ The use of feedback from students, graduates, staff and other stakeholders to monitor and review the relevance of educational programmes and modules in terms of their content and organisation, their delivery, and the clarity and appropriateness of their learning outcomes
- ❑ The use of feedback from staff and other stakeholders to monitor and review the relevance of research programmes and programmes for community engagement
- ❑ The use of peer review (internal and external) to validate:

- Standards of student achievement and the quality of educational provision
- The quality of research
- The quality of programmes for community engagement
- ❑ Evaluation of the extent to which the academic programme has achieved its specified performance standards in terms of student achievement and progression, and other performance targets
- ❑ Evaluation of the extent to which research programmes or programmes for community engagement meet their specified objectives
- ❑ Determination of whether the academic programme meets the standards of professional and other accreditation bodies
- ❑ The development and implementation of action plans that lead to the enhancement of:
 - The design and delivery of the educational programme
 - The design and conduct of research programmes
 - The design and conduct of the programmes for community engagement

16.1 Classification of monitoring and review activities

The academic quality assurance policy framework classifies monitoring and review activities into four processes:

- ❑ Module Review
- ❑ Annual monitoring of academic programmes and research
- ❑ Academic review relating to academic programmes, research and other academic activities
- ❑ Progress review relating to academic programmes, research and other academic activities

Decisions on the re-accreditation of existing academic programmes are based on the results of the academic review process.

16.2 Organisational chart: Responsibilities for the monitoring and review of academic activities at UL



Council

- Approves institutional policies, processes and structures for the monitoring and review of academic activities
- Ratifies all reports from the academic review process

Senate

- Resolutions on institutional policies, processes and structures for the monitoring and review of academic activities (for submission to Council)
- Resolutions on the approval of final reports from academic review, taking into consideration comments and proposals from the APC and EMC (for submission to Council)
- Resolutions on the re-accreditation of academic programmes that are not subject to re-accreditation by professional bodies or SETAs (for submission to Council)

Academic
Planning
Committee

- Recommendations on institutional policies, procedures and structures for the monitoring and review of academic activities, in the light of the accreditation requirements of the HEQC, SETAs and professional bodies (recommendations to Senate, usually after consideration by faculty boards)
- Plans and maintains the institutional schedule for academic review in consultation with faculties, schools and departments
- Appraisal of reports from academic review, including:
 - Recommendations on their approval and on further follow-up actions to Senate
 - Referral of relevant issues to Executive Management Committee for consideration and action
- Approves progress review reports received from faculty boards
- Internal audit: Makes recommendations on academic matters for internal institutional audits
- HEQC institutional audits:
 - Co-operates with Executive Management Committee in the development of self-evaluation reports for HEQC audits
 - Ensures that appropriate information and evidence is maintained for institutional audits

Research
and
Publications
Committee

- Develops criteria for monitoring research productivity on an annual basis
- Recommendations on institutional policies, procedures and structures for monitoring and reviewing research performance (for consideration by APC, Faculties and Senate)

Faculties

- Approves progress review reports
- Approves reports from academic review
- Consolidates reports from academic and progress review at faculty level (where appropriate)
- Approves reports from external moderators and examiners
- Regular discussion of consolidated data on student progress and achievement – as provided by annual programme monitoring and module review processes
- Decisions on recommended institutional policies, procedures and structures for the monitoring and review of academic activities at UL – for resolution by Senate

Departments/ Schools

- Appoints external moderators and examiners
- Regular engagement with external moderators and examiners on the quality and standards of modules and academic programmes
- Regular interaction with professional bodies and SETAs on matters concerning the quality and standards of academic programmes
- Monitors student progress and achievement in modules and academic programmes
- Obtains and acts on feedback from students and other stakeholders on the quality and standards of modules and academic programmes
- Monitors the implementation of decisions that flow from regular module reviews
- Monitors research performance on an annual basis
- Compiles progress review reports
- Compiles self-evaluation documentation and supporting information for use in academic review
- Maintains information and evidence related to the quality management of academic activities

17. Standards and Criteria

17.1 Criteria and standards for academic programmes

Monitoring and review activities require the determination of standards and criteria against which performance can be assessed. Standards include minimum or threshold standards, as well as good or best practice. Minimum standards refer to essential aspects which UL requires to be in place before a certain educational activity, such as the presentation of an academic programme, is engaged in. Good practice describes standards which UL identifies as representative of a desirable and attainable state of affairs with respect to a specific educational activity. This quality assurance policy framework already describes a number of the requirements that academic units should meet in the planning, management, monitoring and review of academic activities in an attempt to achieve the level of good practice should amongst others be based on a code that include the following activities:

- ❑ Arrangements for programme management
- ❑ The design, content and organisation of academic programmes
- ❑ Staff policies and procedures
- ❑ Teaching, learning and assessment
- ❑ Student recruitment, support, guidance and achievement
- ❑ The provision of human, financial, and physical resources.

Academic units will be required to use and adapt the code of good practice in the determination of standards and criteria for the provision of the academic programmes for which they are responsible.

17.2 Quantitative performance indicators

Quantitative performance indicators represent performance targets that may be established for any process or activity at UL. Performance targets should be established at various institutional levels, and should be based on a reliable and valid system for the collection and processing of information. UL and its various academic units will assess their progress against specified performance indicators by means of the monitoring and review activities that are discussed in this quality assurance policy framework. Performance indicators should be used with caution. The development and use of performance indicators necessarily implies a balance between various, sometimes conflicting, priorities. Furthermore a performance indicator merely provides a basis for reflection on quality. Performance indicators must be interpreted within the context of the institution, the relevant programme or the specific module. Thus a high pass rate in a module for example, may indicate that standards have been lowered, that only students of high academic calibre were admitted to the module, or that the staff provided students with effective forms of learning support. A performance

indicator should therefore not assume the status of a criterion for quality. Instead it should be used with circumspection as a basis for reflection on educational quality within the institution, a programme or a module. On the other hand, the considered use of performance indicators provides an important source of information and evidence in monitoring and review activities.

With respect to academic activities, the DoE's National Plan for Higher Education identifies a number of areas in which higher education institutions will be required to establish performance targets. The following list of indicators sets out various aspects for which UL will develop performance targets with respect to student participation and achievement at the institutional, programme and module level. In the development of performance indicators, attention will be paid to benchmarking activities with comparable units of analysis both within and outside the institution. UL will in due course develop a more comprehensive set of performance indicators that includes aspects such as staff equity, staff qualifications and research productivity. Faculties and other academic units will also be required to develop performance indicators relating to the conduct of their academic activities.

□ Institutional level

- The distribution of student enrolments amongst the various racial and gender groups
- Ratio of headcount student enrolments between the broad fields of the humanities, management sciences and commerce, and science, engineering and technology – with breakdowns for racial and gender groups
- The proportion of total headcount enrolments in masters and doctoral programmes – with breakdowns for racial and gender groups
- Overall retention rates: The proportion of total enrolments in a given year who re-register in the following academic year. The calculation of the overall retention rate excludes students who leave the institution after qualifying
- Overall drop-out rate: The percentage of students who are enrolled in a given year, who drop out of UL without completing a qualification
- Overall graduation rate: The proportion of headcount graduates as a percentage of the number of headcount enrolments in a given year
 - o Graduation rates in general and professional undergraduate programmes
 - o Graduation rates in Honours, Masters and Doctoral programmes

□ Programme level

- The distribution of student enrolments amongst the various racial and gender groups
- Throughput (retention) rates: The ratio of the number of students who continue with successive years of study to the number of enrolments in the base year

- Survival or programme completion rates: The proportion of students who complete a programme in the minimum number of years for full-time study compared to the total enrolments in the base year
- Graduation rates: The number of headcount graduates in a programme in a given year as a percentage of the number of headcount enrolments in the programme in that year
- Dropout rates: The percentage of students entering the programme for the first time and leaving the institution without obtaining a formal qualification
- Average time to graduation: The average number of years taken to graduate from a programme by the graduate group of a given year
- Module level
 - Pass rates in modules: The ratio of total passes to the students registering for the final assessment in the module
 - Drop-out rates: The ratio of students registering for the final assessment in the module to the number of enrolments in the module
 - Student performance according to various categories of performance (e.g. 75% and over; 60-75%; 50-60%; 40-49%; below 40%)

18. Module Review

18.1 Relationship between module review and the requirements of UL's Teaching and Learning Policy

Module review as required by UL's academic quality assurance policy framework consists of a complementary but distinct process from the procedures that UL's Teaching and Learning Policy associates with the presentation of academic modules. The development of a teaching portfolio constitutes evidence concerning the teaching activity of an individual staff member, while the student feedback that is referred to in the Teaching and Learning Policy also relates specifically to the teaching performance of the individual staff member. By contrast, the quality assurance policy focuses on the various quality aspects as they contribute to the module as a whole, including the possible contributions of various lecturers. Furthermore, a teaching portfolio is a confidential document which is used for developmental purposes, while a module review report constitutes formal evidence with respect to the quality assurance of the module.

It is important to avoid duplication in the collection of evidence concerning the quality of modules. Thus, where only one staff member is responsible for the presentation of the module, the module review report can be taken up into the evidence that forms part of the teaching portfolio. Where more than one staff member presents the module, the module review report can provide staff with a basis for the development of their teaching portfolios with respect to that module.

18.2 Scope of module review

Module review includes the following aspects:

- ❑ The information that is provided to students (the module guide)
- ❑ Module content and organisation
- ❑ Teaching and learning
- ❑ Facilities and learning resources
- ❑ Assessment

18.3 Conduct of module review

The following requirements for module review, by means of the completion of a module review report, present a formalised process for the development of a module review after its presentation. These requirements do not imply that review should only take place after a module has been presented. Module review should be an on-going process, and should enable lecturing staff to respond effectively to the needs of students during the presentation of the module.

18.3.1 Regularity of module review

An evaluation of the module should be undertaken each time that it is delivered. Where the presentation of modules is repeated during one or both semesters of an academic year, a consolidated report should be developed on the basis of all the module presentations.

18.3.2 Student feedback

Staff responsible for module management should obtain feedback from students concerning the module. The aim of student feedback is to help lecturers to effect meaningful improvements to the modules for which they are responsible. It is recognised that students' comments on modules should be triangulated with other opinions, such as those of moderators, external examiners, other peers and the staff who teach on the module. Module presenters should therefore determine the weighting that is given to student feedback in the overall evaluation of the module. Students' opinions are particularly relevant in terms of aspects such as the organisation and structure of the module, the relevance of the module to their needs, module delivery, the module workload, and the assessment methods and criteria.

The staff who present the module are required to obtain student feedback by means of a module questionnaire at least once during the five year period between academic reviews. It is their responsibility to schedule the questionnaire feedback at an appropriate time. However, it is recommended that the staff responsible for programme management undertake a formal questionnaire review of all the programme's constituent modules in the year before a scheduled academic review process.

The Quality Assurance Unit will consult with academic units in the development of a databank of questions that can be used in obtaining students feedback.

Academic units will be able to construct questionnaires that are relevant and valid in terms of the characteristics of the module, and that allow for feedback on aspects that are particularly important to the presentation of the module. The Quality Assurance Unit will undertake the statistical processing of the questionnaire, and provide the module presenters with an outline of the results of the statistical analysis. It is the responsibility of the module presenters to undertake the interpretation of the statistical results. Academic units should keep the reports that are generated through the processing of student questionnaires on academic modules as evidence for use in academic review processes.

Questionnaire feedback constitutes an important source of evidence concerning students' experience of their modules. However, the repetitive use of feedback questionnaires may not contribute appreciably to the clarification of aspects of modules that need attention. Besides the requirement for using questionnaire feedback at least once in a five year period, module presenters are therefore free to use other feedback instruments that are appropriate to their needs. The Quality Assurance Unit will assist module presenters in designing effective feedback systems. For example, use may be made of class discussion groups or staff-student consultations to obtain feedback on the aspects of the module that students found most helpful as well as those where they would appreciate improvement.

18.3.3 External examiners

Where modules are evaluated by external examiners, their comments should be collated with the module review report.

18.3.4 Module review report

The staff responsible for module management are required to complete a module review report on the basis of the feedback that is received from students, and where appropriate external examiners. The module review report should amongst others include the following information:

- ❑ Total enrolments in the module (headcounts)
- ❑ Total headcounts registering for the final assessment
- ❑ Total number of passes and pass rates
- ❑ The classification of the final module marks.

This information will be prepared by Management Information System Unit, and be made available to the relevant academic unit.

18.3.5 Submission of module reviews

Module reviews form the basis for the more extensive programme reviews that take place on a periodic basis. As such they constitute key evidence concerning

the design and delivery of the programme, as well as student performance in the programme. By means of the regular review of the programme's constituent modules, staff responsible for programme management is able to monitor the academic standards of the programme as well as the quality of the learning experience that it offers. Programme leaders collate the reviews for modules that fall within the primary responsibility of their programme, and submit the reviews for discussion at meetings of the academic unit which is responsible for the programme. It is the responsibility of the relevant academic unit to monitor the implementation of decisions and recommendations that flow from module reviews. Academic units are required to maintain records of module reviews, so as to be accessible in academic review processes. Furthermore it is recommended that academic units should maintain records of their regular discussion and monitoring of the results of module review processes.

19 Annual monitoring

Annual monitoring refers to key student performance data in academic programmes, as well as to performance in terms of the research productivity of academic units and individual members of the academic staff. Faculties should make appropriate arrangements for considering annual monitoring data at faculty level, in order to regularly assess the faculty's performance against the context of its strategic plans and objectives.

19.1 Annual programme monitoring

Annual programme monitoring consists of the review of trends with respect to student progress and achievement. Similar to the statistical information on student performance in modules, Management Information System Unit will supply each programme leader and the relevant faculty dean, with the following information on an annual basis:

- ❑ Profile of total student enrolments (headcounts) in the programme according to year of study, race and gender
- ❑ Enrolment profile of first-year students in the programme, according to race, gender, and admission route (normal or alternative admission)
- ❑ Throughput and drop-out rates
- ❑ Survival or programme completion rates
- ❑ Graduation rates
- ❑ Average time to graduation.

In addition, Management Information System Unit will supply programme co-ordinators with a consolidated log of student performance in all modules that form part of the programme. This log forms part of the statistical information sheet for programme monitoring at UL. The Management Information System

Unit is thus responsible for the maintenance of a statistical digest with respect to student performance on all academic programmes at UL over a five year period.

With respect to research students, annual programme monitoring should consider progress reports from supervisors in addition to statistical trends on survival (completion) rates, graduation rates, average time to graduation and drop-out rates.

Academic units consider the statistical information on student progression and achievement as part of their regular monitoring activities with respect to academic programmes. Where trends with respect to student performance give rise for concern, deans should take the matter up with the relevant unit.

19.2 Annual monitoring of research

UL's Research Office produces data on research productivity at the level of individual staff members and academic units on an annual basis. The Research Committee establishes and monitors the criteria that are used in the classification and weighting of research outputs, and makes appropriate recommendations to Senate in this regard. Evidence concerning research productivity constitutes an important aspect of progress review and academic review.

19.3 Relationship between annual monitoring and the institutional planning process

The APC consults with faculties and their academic units in considering the implications of trends from annual monitoring data for academic planning processes at UL. In particular, the APC makes recommendations to Senate and Executive Management Committee on the implications of trends from annual monitoring for UL's strategic plan and the three year rolling plan that is submitted to the DoE.

20 Academic review

The policies and procedures for academic review apply to all academic units and the academic programmes for which they assume primary responsibility at UL. Special consideration is given to the review process with respect to programmes that are accredited by professional bodies or SETAs in various sub-sections.

20.1 Purpose of academic review

The purpose of academic review is to undertake an in-depth evaluation of the academic activities that fall under a specific academic unit, against its stated objectives and criteria for the standards of its educational provision and the educational attainment of its students. Programme review takes its cue from the programme's specified learning outcomes, and evaluates the extent to which the

programme has achieved those outcomes by means of its planning, implementation, review and improvement strategies. Similarly the review of research and, where relevant, community projects and professional service is guided by the unit's plans and objectives for these activities. Academic review takes full account of current planning agreements and priorities as they are formulated in strategic and operational plans at departmental, school, faculty and University level. It also takes account of key performance indicators as these are developed at various operational levels within the institution. Academic review forms the basis for the development of future strategies, objectives and actions in terms of educational provision and research and community programmes.

20.2 Scope of academic review

20.2.1 Programme review as an aspect of academic review

Programme review is limited to the teaching and learning activities of an academic unit in terms of its educational programmes. UL's quality policy framework incorporates programme review into a more comprehensive evaluation of an academic unit's academic activities, including research, community and professional service. Academic review must include the review of all academic programmes on five-yearly basis. However, there are cases where an academic review process will decide to focus only or primarily on academic programmes, or to include a particular focus on another aspect such as research. The decision on the scope of the review must be taken by the academic unit in liaison with the dean, and reported for final approval to the APC. The APC may discuss the appropriateness of the defined scope for the review with the relevant unit, and where necessary refer the matter back to that unit. The clarification of the scope of the review should take place by at least six months before the review is scheduled to take place. As already discussed above, the main facets of the review process include:

- ❑ Management of the academic unit or programme: Management approach; Liaison; Staff; Financial, physical and information resources
- ❑ The student learning experience and academic standards: Programme design, content and organisation; Teaching, learning and assessment; Student enrolment, progression and achievement; Student guidance and support
- ❑ Research
- ❑ Community and professional service
- ❑ Quality assurance and enhancement.

Where academic units decide to conduct a more limited review, the scope and aspects of the review process will be adjusted accordingly. As the institution's quality assurance system develops, it would for instance be plausible that the evaluation of the educational process should focus on specific aspects that are

particularly relevant to the requirements and needs of the particular programme and unit.

20.2.2 Accreditation activities by professional bodies

Professional bodies determine the requirements for the accreditation process with respect to the educational programmes that fall under their jurisdiction. The APC will establish whether the accreditation requirements satisfy all of UL's requirements for the quality assurance of its educational programmes. The APC may determine whether units that are reviewed by professional bodies should engage in additional review activities in order to meet internal review requirements. Such activities will be undertaken concurrently with the preparation for and conduct of the accreditation process.

20.3 Schedule for academic review

The HEQC's programme accreditation framework requires that all academic programmes should be reviewed at least every six years. UL operates on a review cycle of five years for all academic programmes.

The APC is responsible for developing and maintaining a review schedule, which is approved by both Senate and Council. In the determination of the review schedule a distinction is made between programmes that fall under the accreditation policy of professional bodies and SETAs and other programmes.

- ❑ Professional bodies and SETAs determine the schedule for the accreditation of programmes that fall under their auspices. However, where such organisations do not review a programme within five years, the APC will take appropriate steps to ensure that a programme review is conducted. The APC may request the professional body or SETA to conduct the review, or make internal arrangements for the review of the programme.
- ❑ In the case of all other programmes, the APC determines the schedule of programme reviews in consultation with faculties and academic units

Where programmes wish to be reviewed on a cycle that is shorter than five years, the responsible academic unit should present a motivation to that effect to the APC.

As already stated the review of academic programmes forms part of a larger process of academic review which includes all the academic activities of a specific academic unit, including research and community service. For this reason, all the academic programmes that fall under the primary responsibility of a specific academic unit - such as a department, school or institute - should normally be reviewed concurrently as part of one review process. A faculty may also decide to engage in a review of all the programmes that fall under its auspices during a specific year. Such an approach is particularly suited to a

faculty that offers a generic programme such as a BSc or a BA which falls under the primary responsibility of the faculty rather than a specific school.

20.4 Conduct of academic review

Academic review consists of three main processes, namely:

- ❑ Self-evaluation
- ❑ External evaluation
- ❑ Follow-up

20.4.2 Self-evaluation

20.4.2.1 Planning of the review process

The relevant academic unit is responsible for the internal arrangements with respect to the organisation and conduct of the self-evaluation process. It is advisable to establish a review committee for this purpose, and to include student representation in this committee. The unit should ensure that all staff members are informed as to the review process, and are able to make an appropriate contribution to it. It is required that the unit must appoint a review coordinator who acts as a link between the unit and the Quality Assurance Unit in the planning and conduct of the review.

The unit – possibly on the advice of the review committee, and in liaison with the faculty dean – decides on the planning of the review in terms of its schedule, purposes and scope, and forwards this information to the APC.

20.4.2.2 Information and evidence

The HEQC accreditation criteria contain generic information and evidence that should be used to develop evaluation criteria that are relevant to a specific academic programme for review purpose. Programme review must include evidence concerning student feedback on their educational programmes. This evidence should be collected from students before the end of the year preceding the review. Feedback can be gathered by a variety of methods, including questionnaires, class discussions, and focus or nominal groups. As is the case with the development of module questionnaires, the Quality Assurance Unit will cooperate with academic units in the development of a databank of questions that address various aspects of programme quality.

Besides feedback from students, units should make use of feedback from other stakeholders, including lecturing, administrative and support staff, graduates, employers, and external examiners.

Another major source of information for the development of self-evaluation reports consists of statistical information from Management Information System Unit. The regular annual updates which academic units receive on student performance should fulfil the necessary requirements in this regard. Requirements for other statistical information, and other types of information from institutional committees and sections will be determined as part of the planning for the review.

20.4.2.3 Compilation of self-evaluation report

Self-evaluation reports should contain an appropriate mix of descriptive information and critical analysis, and focus on the areas that are specified for inclusion in the scope of the evaluation process. They should be based on a clearly defined set of evidence, which should be outlined in the report. The completed report, together with appropriate supporting information, should be made available to the external panel eight weeks in advance of the panel visit. The panel may request such additional information as it requires in order preparing for the panel visit.

20.4.3 External evaluation

20.4.3.1 Appointment of external panel

In the case of programmes that are accredited by professional bodies or SETAs that body appoints the external panel members. The same principle applies in cases where an external body which has no formal accreditation status is asked to coordinate the external review. In other cases, the final responsibility for the appointment of the panel rests with the APC, acting in consultation with the relevant academic unit and faculty dean. The APC is specifically responsible for ensuring the integrity of the appointment process, while the academic unit and the dean exercise their professional judgement in the selection of appropriate panel members. The number of panel members will depend on the nature of the unit and programme(s) under review, but panels should have at least two members, one of whom acts as the convenor of the panel. External panels should be appointed at two months before the scheduled external review visits. The criteria for the appointment of panel members are as follows:

- ❑ Panel members should be eminent scholars/practitioners in the discipline or academic area
- ❑ Where appropriate, panel members should be members of a professional body or association relating to the area
- ❑ Panel members should preferably have experience as external examiners
- ❑ Where appropriate a panel member may be appointed from industry or the profession
- ❑ Panel members should not come from units which are in close collaboration with the unit(s) under review

- ❑ Panel members should not have been in the employ of the University during the last ten years
- ❑ The panel convenor should preferably have experience of university management.

In addition, consideration may be given to the appointment of a panel member who is an expert in teaching and learning, but not necessarily an expert in the particular discipline. UL encourages the appointment of suitable reputable panel members, and – as far as possible - will take appropriate steps to enable academic units to make use of reputable scholars as external reviewers.

20.4.3.2 Conduct of panel visit

The panel convenor determines the schedule for the panel visit, in consultation with the panel members and the review co-ordinator and provides the Quality Assurance Unit with the relevant information. The duration of the visit should normally be two to three days, and should include sufficient opportunity for the panel to meet with staff and students from the academic unit, as well as other relevant academic and support units. The Quality Assurance Unit undertakes all the logistical arrangements for the panel visit.

The unit's self-evaluation report provides the basis for the panel's enquiry into the quality and standard of educational provision and other academic activities. However, panels are free to request that the academic unit provides them with all the additional evidence and information that is necessary in order to assist them in making their judgements. External review processes should identify both strengths and weaknesses, and should provide academic units and the institution with realistic recommendations on approaches for addressing problem areas.

20.4.3.3 Panel report

The panel convenor is responsible for the compilation of the panel report, in consultation with the panel members.

The panel develops a draft report which is sent to the academic manager/programme director as soon as possible, but not longer than six weeks after the visit, and copied to the Director of Quality Assurance Unit. The academic unit receives the opportunity to comment on factual errors in the report within two weeks of its receipt. At this stage, comments on the draft report by the unit should be limited to factual errors only. The report is then returned to the panel convenor for finalisation within two weeks. The final report is lodged with the academic unit and the dean, and copied to the Director of Quality Assurance Unit. This policy also applies to reports on accreditation visits by professional bodies and HEQC.

20.4.4 Institutional finalisation of the review process

The academic unit receives two months to prepare a response to the report, which includes an action plan to address problems that have been identified in the review process. The unit's response includes a motivated discussion of substantive issues on which it may disagree with the panel report. The final panel report, together with the unit's response and its action plan, then serve before a meeting of the Faculty Board. Subsequently the review reports, together with any comments from the Faculty Board, are sent to the APC. The faculty should draw particular attention to matters which require action at an institutional level, and should request a response from the appropriate committee/unit within a specified period of time. In the case of professional programmes the APC considers the recommendations of the accrediting body, and reserves the right to pursue any matters that flow from the accreditation visit with that body. The APC then forwards external review reports from accreditation visits by professional bodies and SETAs to Senate and Council for discussion.

20.4.5 Follow-up

Where an academic review has identified serious problems with respect to educational provision, the APC – acting on the resolution of Senate and Council - may require that the relevant academic unit should address such problems within a specified time period, and provide the APC with a full report in this regard. The APC will then reconsider the review reports in the light of the documented action steps and strategies.

In cases where the APC is satisfied with the review reports, progress review serves as the normal method for monitoring the implementation of action plans.

21 Programme re-accreditation

The HEQC's programme accreditation policy states that higher education institutions will eventually be allowed to apply for self-accreditation status, which will allow them to re-accredit all existing academic programmes that are not accredited by professional bodies or SETAs. Should UL gain self-accreditation status, it will base decisions on the re-accreditation of its existing "non-professional" programmes on the outcomes of the academic review process. The APC will therefore consult with the relevant academic unit to ensure that the academic review process includes all the aspects that the HEQC deems necessary for obtaining re-accreditation. The APC will make recommendations on the re-accreditation of existing non-professional programmes to Senate and Council.

22 Progress review

22.1 Purpose of progress review

Academic units should undertake a progress review with respect to all the academic programmes, research and other academic activities for which they are responsible within three years of an academic review. Progress review fulfils two purposes. Firstly, it allows the academic unit to review the implementation of follow-up strategies pursuant to the previous academic review process. While progress review need not be limited to specific issues that were signalled in the full academic review, such matters should form the focal point of the review. Secondly, progress review provides academic units with the opportunity to address any aspects of their educational programmes and other academic activities that they consider relevant in the light of stakeholder feedback, trends from annual monitoring data, developments in the academic field, other research activities, and strategic initiatives at the institutional or faculty level.

The requirement that a progress review should be conducted applies to all programmes, including those that are accredited by professional bodies. The scheduling of progress reviews should also take the needs and requirements of Professional Bodies and SETAs into account. Programme co-ordinators may decide to undertake a progress review on a more regular basis, but this is not a requirement of UL's quality assurance policy framework.

22.2 Scope of progress review

The scope of progress review will be determined by considerations such as the findings and recommendations of the previous academic review, and resultant action plans. Progress review will therefore focus on selected aspects of programme quality as already indicated above. Progress review also refers to the quality of research activities and community engagement programmes.

22.3 Information and evidence used in progress review

Progress review makes use of a variety of information and evidence that should be readily available to the programme management and academic unit. Examples of such information and evidence are:

- ❑ Students' evaluations of their learning experience, as contained in module reports and other feedback and monitoring activities
- ❑ External Examiners' reports
- ❑ Reports from the most recent academic review process
- ❑ Reports from professional and statutory bodies and the HEQC
- ❑ Information and reports from the UL Graduate and Student Placement office, as well as from employers and practitioners (job market trends and requirements)
- ❑ Information on the employment trends of recent graduates (where available)

- ❑ Minutes of meetings that address aspects of programme quality, including staff/student consultations
- ❑ Data on the overall student profile – in terms of educational and professional background, and racial and gender distribution
- ❑ Data on student progression and achievement
- ❑ Commentaries from staff and students on the availability and adequacy of learning resources.

22.4 Conduct of and reporting on progress review

The programme co-ordinator is responsible for overseeing the conduct the progress review in consultation with the academic staff that are attached to the programme. . Academic units with the assistance of the Quality Assurance Unit are encouraged to design their own instruments for conducting the progress review.

Where possible, the conduct of the progress review should take place during the visit of an external examiner to the relevant academic unit. The completed progress review report is considered by the academic unit, and then submitted to a meeting of the Faculty Board – usually in the first term of the new academic year.

The Faculty Board should prepare a consolidated report on the basis of all the progress review reports which it receives, and submit this report to the APC – usually during the second term of the new academic year. In particular, the consolidated report should draw attention to:

- ❑ Issues of significant achievement in the Faculty
- ❑ Examples of good practice that the Faculty wants to bring to the attention of the APC, Senate and the entire institution
- ❑ Plans for the development of new programmes or the (significant) modification of existing programmes in the light of progress review
- ❑ Issues which require consideration and action at Faculty level
- ❑ Issues that the Faculty wishes to draw to the attention of the institution or which require action at the institutional level, with a clear indication of the responsible people or sections from whom a response is required.

Academic units should keep the progress review reports and the information and evidence referred to under this section of policy framework with a view to the conduct of full academic reviews.

23. Links between Progress and Academic review and Planning and Budgeting

Faculties and their constituent academic units should take the recommendations and findings of progress and academic review processes into account in their

budgeting and planning processes. Similarly, the APC makes recommendations to Executive Management Committee, Senate and Council on the implications of progress and academic review for institutional planning and budgeting processes. The APC and faculties may request specific feedback from institutional management committees on the extent to which budgeting and planning processes have taken review results into account.

24. Conclusion

This document has attempted to provide an explicit framework on quality assurance of the university in relation to its core business. It is only a first step towards ensuring that quality assurance becomes a continuous process and an inextricable part of the way work is approached at UL. In order to move beyond the elementary statements in this document, there needs to be an acceptance of the need to make a commitment to assure quality, and there needs to be a systematic and long-term adoption and incorporation of quality assurance processes in our different responsibilities and duties in the university.

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