

HERP- CURRICULUM TEACHING AND LEARNING
QUALITY ASSURANCE (QA) FOR CURRICULUM: A CHECKLIST
BY
AMARZAYA AMARTURSHIN AND JEAN-GUY VIENNEAU
CONSULTANTS

INTRODUCTION

The establishment of quality assurance systems has become a necessity, not only for monitoring quality in higher education delivered within the country, but also for engaging in delivery of higher education internationally. The concept of Quality Assurance is a major component of Higher Education Institutions to ensure that there have safeguards and accountability measures that sustain the success of the educational experiences of students. HEI's in Mongolia are also concerned for the quality of their programs and for the success for students. QA is also important to provide the highest quality and standards of higher education. Curricula and programs of study are essential an important ingredient that contribute to the overall success of HEI's.

There are two forms of institutional Quality Assurance, namely internal and external. The external QA guidelines are ordinarily part of the accreditation process and are governed by international standards, while the internal one falls under the jurisdiction of the institutions. Our focus in this document is to provide advice and guidance to HEI's as part of our mandate of the HERP project.

Measuring success in curriculum and programs will also include an examination of the structures and mechanisms and their effectiveness to provide the framework into which these programs of study are offered. Overall, Quality Assurance in curriculum will guide the institution in terms of accountability and the return of investments (outputs) that educational institutions must demonstrate and provide to their financial partners and stakeholders. It also includes all the activities and initiatives that leads to continuous institutional improvements.

In the following pages, we have outlines key principles and guidelines that HEI's must adhere to in order to enhance the quality of the curriculum and the content

offered to students and learners. These principles and guidelines can be used by institutions to evaluate and assess their educational achievement through the curriculum that they have developed and implemented.

Principles and Guidelines of Quality Assurance

Four **principles** should guide Higher Education Institutions in their quest for excellence:

- Higher education institutions have primary responsibility for the quality of their provision and its assurance;
- Quality assurance responds to the diversity of higher education systems, institutions, programs and students;
- Quality assurance supports the development of a quality culture;
- Quality assurance takes into account the needs and expectations of students, all other stakeholders and society.

Guidelines should be steered by policies and processes. They are the main pillars of a coherent institutional quality assurance system that forms a cycle for continuous improvement and contributes to the accountability of the institution. It supports the development of quality culture in which all internal stakeholders assume responsibility for quality and engage in quality assurance at all levels of the institution. In order to facilitate this, the policy has a formal status and is publicly available.

Quality assurance policies are most effective when they reflect the relationship between research and learning & teaching and take account of both the national context in which the institution operates, the institutional context and its strategic approach. Such a policy supports

- The organisation of the quality assurance system;
- Departments, schools, faculties and other organisational units as well as those of institutional leadership, individual staff members and students to take on their responsibilities in quality assurance;

- Academic integrity and freedom and is vigilant against academic fraud;
- Guarding against intolerance of any kind or discrimination against the students or staff;
- The involvement of external stakeholders in quality assurance.

The policy translates into practice through a variety of internal quality assurance processes that allow participation across the institution. How the policy is implemented, monitored and revised is the institution's decision.

Design and Approval of Curriculum

Higher Education Institutions have processes for the design and approval of their programs of study. The programs should be outcome-based and designed so that they meet the objectives set for them, including the intended learning outcomes. The qualification resulting from a program should be clearly specified and communicated, and refer to the correct level of the national qualifications framework for higher education.

Programs of study are at the core of the higher education institutions' teaching mission. They provide students with both academic knowledge, competencies and skills including those that are transferable, which may influence their personal development and may be applied in their future careers.

Here are a list of requirements that the institution has to take into account as it related to curriculum:

- Designed with overall program's objectives that are in line with the institutional strategy and have explicit intended learning outcomes;
- Designed by involving students and other stakeholders in the work;
- Benefit from external expertise and reference points;
- Designed so that they enable smooth student progression;
- Define the expected student workload;
- Include well-structured placement opportunities where appropriate;
- Subject to a formal institutional approval process.

Student-centred learning, teaching and assessment

Institutions should ensure that the programmes are delivered in a way that encourages students to take an active role in creating the learning process, and that the assessment of students reflects this approach.

Student-centred learning and teaching plays an important role in stimulating students' motivation, self-reflection and engagement in the learning process. This means careful consideration of the design and delivery of study programmes and the assessment of outcomes.

The implementation of student-centred learning and teaching:

- Respects and attends to the diversity of students and their needs, enabling flexible learning paths;
- Considers and uses different modes of delivery, where appropriate;
- Uses a variety of pedagogical methods;
- Regularly evaluates and adjusts the modes of delivery and pedagogical methods;
- Encourages a sense of autonomy in the learner, while ensuring adequate guidance and support from the teacher;
- Promotes mutual respect within the learner-teacher relationship;
- Has appropriate procedures for dealing with students' complaints.

Considering the importance of assessment for the students' progression and their future careers, quality assurance processes for assessment take into account the following:

- Assessors are familiar with existing testing and examination methods and receive support in developing their own skills in this field;
- The criteria for and method of assessment as well as criteria for marking are published in advance;
- The assessment allows students to demonstrate the extent to which the intended learning outcomes have been achieved. Students are given feedback, which, if necessary, is linked to advice on the learning process;

- If possible, assessment is carried out by more than one examiner;
- The regulations for assessment take into account mitigating circumstances;
- Assessment is consistent, fairly applied to all students and carried out in accordance with the stated procedures;
- A formal procedure for student appeals is in place.
- Placements include traineeships, internships and other periods of the program that are not spent in the institution but that allow the student to gain experience in an area related to their studies.

On-going Monitoring and Periodic Review of programs

Institutions need to monitor and periodically review their programs to ensure that they achieve the objectives set for them and respond to the needs and expectations of students and society. These reviews should lead to continuous improvement of the program. Any action planned or taken as a result should be communicated to all those concerned.

Regular monitoring, review and revision of study programmes aim to ensure that the provision remains appropriate and to create a supportive and effective learning environment for students.

They include the evaluation of:

- The content of the program in the light of the latest research in the given discipline thus ensuring that the program is current and up to date;
- The evolution and the changing needs of society;
- The students' workload, progression and completion plan;
- The effectiveness of procedures for assessment of students;
- The student expectations, needs and satisfaction in relation to the program and the educational strategies and methodologies that are utilized;
- The learning environment and support services and their fitness for purpose for the program.

Programs are reviewed and revised regularly involving students and other stakeholders. The information collected is analysed and the program is adapted to ensure that it is up-to-date.

The curriculum should meet the following requirements and characteristics:

- It is a design of the whole learning activities of students as the reference for the study program in planning, implementing, monitoring and evaluating all activities to achieve the goals of the program.
- An in-depth study of the nature of the science developed in the program of study and the stakeholder needs by considering the quality standards, vision, and mission of the university or the study program.
- The curriculum is always periodically updated by the study program together with the stakeholders to meet the required competence and the development of science and technology.
- The curriculum is a basic reference for the formation and assurance of the competence achieved by the graduates in each program at the level of the study program.
- The curriculum is evaluated for its relevance against its objectives, scope and depth of the material, and organization that encourage the acquirement of hard skills and soft skills (personality and behaviors) that can be applied in various situations.

The curriculum should include:

- A structured competency standard of graduates in the core and supporting competencies and others to achieve the goals, mission, and vision of the program and curriculum.
- The courses that support the attainment of graduate competency and provide flexibility to the learners to broaden their knowledge and improve expertise according to their interests, and it should be equipped with a course descriptions, syllabi and lesson plans.

- Evaluated for its relevance to its objectives, scope and depth of the material, and organization that encourage the acquisition of hard skills and soft skills (personality and behaviors) that can be applied in various situations.
- Reviewed within a certain period by the study program together with related parties (social and epistemological relevancy) to adapt to the development of science and technology as well as stakeholder needs.

Internal Quality Assurance Check List

Institutions should examine their curricula and their learning system every three years. The following is a **check list** that HEI's need to be established in order to assess and insure that the quality culture is present in the institution:

- Development of programs will adhere to the quality cycle;
- All new programs will be developed within the existing institutional framework and the external framework for funding approval, registration and accreditation of new programs;
- Programs' design and development will conform to the general qualification standards that are internationally recognized;
- Programs will be developed in consultation with relevant stakeholders (current and past students, other academics, professional bodies and employers in both the private and public sector);
- Outcomes and assessment criteria will be explicitly stated for each course and will be integrated by the outcomes of the program as a whole, forming the basis for development and review;
- Programs will have clearly stated learning outcomes which include the corresponding knowledge, values and skills required;
- Outcomes will be linked to related assessment criteria and will inform the assessment of competencies at the end of the learning experience;
- Teaching and learning activities and assessment methods will support the specified learning outcomes;
- Qualifications, programs and courses/modules will be listed on the institutional quality management information system;

- Outcomes are expressed in terms of competencies;
- Outcomes include critical cross-field outcomes where appropriate;
- Outcomes correlate with assessment criteria;
- Sssessment and outcomes are aligned for validity of assessment processes.
- Assessment criteria indicate clearly how the learner will demonstrate competence.
- Assessment plan and timetable are possible to implement and rational;
- Sssessment is used to develop as well to measure learning, though inclusion of opportunities for formative assessment, as well as the usual continuous and summative assessments.

Conclusion

Finally, we outline documentation that is required by institutions in their search for excellence through the Internal Quality Assurance process that has been established:

- Formulated competence of graduates.
- Curriculum Matrix/mapping.
- Curriculum Documents of the programs of study of the institution.
- Supporting documents of curriculum review (for example, minutes of workshops on curriculum evaluation).
- Course syllabus (Course Outlines and Lesson Plans).
- Standard operation and structure of assessment and curriculum evaluation.
- Guide of Final Assignment Supervision.
- Supporting documents to obtain data on the students' average length of study.
- Samples of evaluation tools (exam items, assignments, homework, etc).

REFERENCES

EHEA (2015) Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance in the European Higher Education Area (ESG); Brussels, Belgium.

UNESCO (2005) Guidelines for Quality Provision in Cross-border Higher Education; Paris, France