

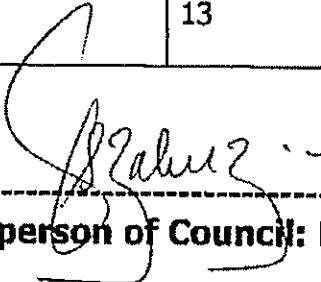


WALTER SISULU UNIVERSITY ACADEMIC REVIEW POLICY

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ACADEMIC REVIEW POLICY

Sponsor Division	Quality Assurance
Responsible Department	Quality Assurance
Related WSU Policies	
Policy name	Policy Name
Academic Review Policy	
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 ----- Chairperson of Council: Mr T Zakuza	

1. PREAMBLE

WSU as stated in its vision and mission, strives to be a leading African comprehensive university focusing on innovative educational, research and community partnership programmes that are responsive to local, regional, national development priorities, and cognisant of continental and international imperatives. This policy is therefore designed to ensure that Walter Sisulu University programmes are quality assured to the highest level in order to ensure the achievement of this vision at all times.

2. PURPOSE

The purpose of the **Academic Review Policy** is to:

- a) Contribute to the assurance and enhancement of the quality of programmes offered at Walter Sisulu University (WSU). This includes ensuring the highest standards that are responsive to the needs of students, the needs of the specific discipline and those of the community.
- b) Provide a regular formal opportunity for departments to reflect on and critically evaluate and update their offerings without compromising their autonomy, yet be truly accountable to students, parents and society at large. All this while benefitting from a constructive dialogue with other senior academics and external subject specialists.
- c) Keep WSU programmes aligned to the constantly shifting educational and social circumstances, always taking into account the national higher education policies and frameworks.
- d) Provide positive and constructive support to departments in the enhancement of the service to the students and the community at large.

3. SCOPE

The major focus of an Academic Review exercise is to follow an integrated approach that will include:

- Institutional Audits;
- National Reviews;
- Accreditation by Professional Bodies;
- Internal Programme Reviews;
- Comprehensive Academic Reviews.

Furthermore, the reviews will cover the following aspects of the work of a department/faculty:

- a) Learning and teaching, research, assessment and community engagement;
- b) Academic management, and resource allocation as they relate to learning and teaching, research and assessment;
- c) Quality assurance and enhancement procedures that are being applied by the departments;
- d) The student experience being central to the review.

4. DEFINITIONS

"Academic Reviews": It is a process of assessing and evaluating academic departments in an endeavour to ascertain whether or not their quality arrangements and academic programmes are aligned with the strategic objectives of the institution and are relevant to the local and international imperatives.

"National Reviews": Refers to an exercise undertaken by a group of peer assessors that are nominated in terms of the legislation to examine the overall quality arrangements; management and resource allocation of an institution to check if it complies with the set standards.

"Curriculum": The term "curriculum" refers to the major elements of teaching and learning that include:

- ✓ Disciplinary knowledge, i.e. the list of subject topics and texts included in a course of study;
- ✓ Disciplinary ways of knowing, skills and practices;
- ✓ Teaching methodologies;
- ✓ Assessment practices.

"Academic staff": Means the fulltime academic employees appointed to facilitate learning (teach), do research, community development and any other related work at the institution and any other employee designated as such by the council.

"Integration": The grouping of specific learning outcomes from different module / courses in terms of skills attitudes and values

"Progression": Refers to the movement of learners through different levels of the education and training system in different fields of learning building up national qualification.

"Learning Outcome": A learning outcome describes what students should be able to do by the time they have completed the module, course OR programme leading to a qualification. Outcomes are complex and embody knowledge, skills, practices, values and attitudes

5. GUIDING PRINCIPLES FOR ACADEMIC REVIEWS

5.1 The guiding principles for Academic Reviews fit within the principles outlined in the:

- a) WSU's Quality Management and Assurance Policy;
- b) CHE programme accreditation framework document (2004);
- c) Higher Education Act 101 of 1997;

ACADEMIC REVIEW POLICY

- d) SAQA, HEQSF and NQF;
- e) Education White Paper 3;
- f) A programme for the Transformation of Higher Education (1997);
- g) WSU Academic Review document 2018;
- h) Draft CHE Institutional Quality Reviews Framework document 2017.

5.2 In addition, there are a number of important considerations relating specifically to academic reviews which are as follows:

- a) **Reviewing processes:** This should be the major part of the programme plan in order to accommodate new ideas and knowledge in different disciplines. Such changes should also be informed by the legitimate learning needs of particular cohorts of students taking into account the affordances of digital technologies for enhancing learning and teaching.
- b) **Consultation:** consultation with key stakeholders in the programme design and review process will be the paramount. Moreover, stakeholders should include current students and alumni, academics, professional bodies and where appropriate employers in both the private and public sector.
- c) **Equity and redress:** Programmes will be designed in the way that will accommodate all students that are admitted at WSU. Moreover, the way in which the gap between the University and High Schools in our catchment area can be bridged need to be clearly discussed and addressed.
- d) **Diversity:** The programmes will be responsive to the different backgrounds and outlooks of all engaged in teaching and learning processes. Programmes will also reflect a sense of Africanism, Decolonisation and Moral Re-generation as a new paradigm shift.

6. THE AIMS AND OBJECTIVES

ACADEMIC REVIEW POLICY

- a) To assess the extent to which the Institution's academic activities are aligned with the Institutional Strategic Plan 2015 – 2019 and with all WSU strategic goals;
- b) To respond and contribute to the national imperatives by the CHE and Professional Bodies;
- c) To evaluate the relevance of programme outcomes to the overall objectives of the University's provision and the relevance of the intended learning outcomes for each programme;
- d) To evaluate the continuing effectiveness of learning and teaching as well as assessment in meeting the intended learning outcomes for each programme;
- e) To ensure that the intended learning outcomes and curricula remain current and valid in the light of developing knowledge within the discipline, and the application of that knowledge in practice;
- f) To benchmark against national key performance indicators as stated in the National Development Plan 2030 (2012) see page 9 & 10 of WSU's ISP 2015 - 2019 dated 5 December 2015;
- g) To obtain feedback from staff, students and other stakeholders through meetings and documentation on the quality of learning and teaching as well as assessment, the student learning experience and learning resources;
- h) To evaluate the effectiveness of the measures taken to assure and enhance the quality of provision and maintain standards;
- i) To explore with the Department/Faculty, its approach to and plans for the enhancement of the programme offering;
- j) To provide support to the Department/Faculty for its teaching provision and explore ways of promoting effective learning;
- k) To identify good practice for dissemination across the Institution;
- l) To generate written report(s) with recommendations for action to address any identified weaknesses and to further strengthen provision.

7. DESIGNATED STRUCTURE(S) TO APPROVE POLICIES

ACADEMIC REVIEW POLICY

The WSU Council and Senate fulfil a governance role with regard to the Institutional approval of policies. On the other hand, the Institutional Management Committee remains responsible for the resourcing, coordination, implementation and monitoring of the policy across all business units of the University.

8. POLICY ADMINISTRATION

It is envisaged that the Institutional Quality Management Directorate in conjunction with the Office of the DVC: AAR will act as the Institutional facilitating structure that will enable WSU to conduct policy review management in a pragmatic, systematic and sustainable way.

8.1 Internal Programme Reviews

Internal Programme Reviews will be conducted on a five year cycle with some being ongoing. Faculties will from time to time identify programmes to be reviewed. It is the duty of the Quality Assurance Task Team (QATT) to conduct the review of a programme.

The Quality Assurance Task Team (QATT) undertakes the internal programme reviews and the membership will comprise at a minimum of the following:

- a) The Director: Quality Assurance (Convenor);
- b) DVC Academic Affairs and Research (Ex-officio);
- c) Campus Rector (Ex-Officio);
- d) Dean (Ex-Officio);
- e) QA Managers;
- f) Transformation Manager;
- g) At least one external subject specialist from other higher education institutions in South Africa;

- h) One Senior academic from another department within the same Faculty (CESM category, against the ESS);
- i) A representative from the Centre for Learning & Teaching Development (preferably the Curriculum Development Specialist);
- j) Two student representatives from the relevant internal student bodies.
- k) The Secretary from QMD.

8.2 Academic Reviews

The main purpose of Academic Reviews will be to identify achievements and constraints, and make recommendations on how the University can achieve its strategic objectives. These Academic Reviews will provide data that will enable the University to determine the appropriate academic direction for each department, to provide an opportunity for curriculum renewal and to allocate resources to appropriate areas of need on an ongoing basis.

Composition of the Review Panel

Members of the review panel will be divided into two sections: A core section consisting of members who will be invited to attend all sessions, and additional members whose attendance rotates.

Core members will be comprised of:

- The Deputy Vice Chancellor: Academic Administration and Research,
- Director: Quality Assurance
- Director: Research,
- Director: Community Engagement,
- Director: Library and Information Systems,
- Executive Director: Student Development and Support Services,
- Deans of Faculties,
- Director: Centre for Learning and Teaching Development,
- Quality Assurance Managers,

- Director: Institutional Research and Planning,
- SRC President and SRC Secretary-General.
- Members whose attendance rotated were and Senate representatives.

8.3 Institutional Audits

An Institutional Audit is a form of quality assurance which is practiced in many countries and is usually associated with purposes of quality improvement and enhancement. It is common with higher education systems in many parts of the world, South African Higher Education faces multiple stakeholder demands for greater responsiveness to societal needs through enhanced student access and mobility; through research and innovation that address social and economic development; and through engagement with local, regional and international communities of interest. Stakeholders also require that higher education institutions are able to provide the public with comprehensive information on the manner in which they maintain the quality and standards of their core academic activities, and to demonstrate sustained improvement in this regard. Institutional audits serve to address both sets of issues.

The first quality assurance Institutional Audit cycle was introduced by the CHE in 2004. The next cycle was the Quality Enhancement Project, which was aimed at replacing the traditional institutional audits. It was designed to address the challenge of the low throughput **rate** in the higher education sector by enhancing all aspects of teaching and learning, including student participation in decision making.

The third cycle will be the Institutional Quality Reviews (IQR). The aim of the IQR is to assess the coherence and effectiveness of an institution's quality assurance system in the provision of a learning experience that promotes student access and success. Two broad questions to be answered are:

1. What is the design of the overarching institutional quality assurance system and how well does it function?
2. How is the effectiveness of the overarching QA system in assuring quality demonstrated in selected focus areas?

8.4 National Reviews

The Higher Education Quality Committee (HEQC) of the Council on Higher Education (CHE) has the mandate in terms of the Higher Education Act (Act No. 101 of 1997 as amended) to:

- Promote quality in higher education;
- Audit quality assurance mechanisms of higher education institutions;
- Accredit programmes of higher education;
- National reviews constitute a particular form of accreditation that focuses on the re-accreditation of existing programmes in a specific discipline. National reviews are conducted within the context of the general HEQC accreditation criteria but they also include criteria specific to the programmes /or disciplinary area focused on. They take into account providers' as well as stakeholders' concerns and interests in the training of students or professionals in a particular area including the articulation between the learning programme and the skills required from graduates in the actual work situation.
- National reviews have three main components: the re-accreditation of programmes; the follow-up process on the re-accreditation results; and the production of a report on the state of provision in a particular programme/or disciplinary area.

8.5 Accreditation by Professional Bodies

Professional bodies are delegated by HEQC to conduct accreditation of programme, mainly undergraduate. These are also responsible for the registration of graduates as professionals. Such organisations have their

own policies and rules that WSU has to comply with in order for programmes to be accredited.

9. CUSTODIANSHIP OF THIS POLICY

The Deputy Vice-Chancellor will be a custodian of this policy.

10. REFERENCES

1. Birkbeck (University of London): Guidance Notes on the Process for Internal Review of Taught and Research Programmes 2005/06.
2. James Cook University: Course Review Guidelines for Undergraduate Course Review (including Honours).
3. University of Glasgow: Guidelines for Programme and Course Approval (2005-06).
4. University of Sterling: Departmental Review - Administrative Guidelines
5. Higher Education Quality Committee (2004). *Criteria for Programme Accreditation*. Pretoria: Council on Higher Education.
6. Higher Education Quality Committee (2006). *Criteria and Minimum Standards for Bachelor of Education (Honours)*. Pretoria: Council on Higher Education.
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8. Higher Education Quality Committee (2006). *ACE Criteria and Minimum Standards*. Pretoria: Council on Higher Education.
9. Higher Education Quality Committee (2017). *The draft framework for Institutional Audits*. Pretoria: Council on Higher Education.
10. Higher Education Quality Committee (2004). *The framework for Institutional Quality Review*. Pretoria: Council on Higher Education.
11. Higher Education Quality Committee (2015). *The framework for National Reviews of Higher Education Programmes*. Pretoria: Council on Higher Education.

Approval:-
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Signed _____

Date: _____

Chair of Senate

Signed _____

Date _____

Chair of Council