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Manual for Institutional Review of Sri Lankan Universities and Higher Education Institutions

University Grants Commission

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Manual for Institutional Review of Sri Lankan Universities and Higher Education Institutions

Manual for Institutional Review of Sri Lankan Universities and Higher Education Institutions

Higher Education for the Twenty First Century (HETC) Project
Ministry of Higher Education and Research, Sri Lanka
&
University Grants Commission
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This publication is the outcome of an activity funded by the World Bank project on Higher Education for the Twenty First Century (HETC) to produce a Manual for Institutional Review of Sri Lankan Universities and Higher Education Institutions for the UGC. The Manual was developed by the following:

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Foreword

Quality Assurance is the means by which Universities and HEIs can guarantee with confidence that the quality of education provision and the standards of awards are being maintained and enhanced. In 2004, the UGC jointly with the CVCD, established a Quality Assurance and Accreditation (QAA) Unit which was subsequently renamed as the QAA Council in 2005. The first cycle of Institutional and Subject Reviews were conducted from 2004 to 2013 using the original manual "Quality Assurance Handbook for Sri Lankan Universities 2002' prepared with assistance of the Quality Assurance Council of UK, and funded by the World Bank IRQUE & HETC Projects. During the first cycle of quality assurance reviews, the academic community appreciated the principles, concepts, practices and the outcomes achieved through quality assurance. Those who took part in the first cycle of quality reviews also felt that the quality assurance review process must be transparent and objective, and built on a set of pre-defined best practices and standards, and a scoring system based on evidence as prescribed by the QAAC. Accordingly, the UGC-QAAC decided to develop two manuals, one for institutional review and the other for study/programme review, by revising and updating the existing quality assurance manual adopting a consultative approach.

During preparation of the revised manual, the Ministry of Higher Education (MoHE) proposed that Student-Centred Learning (SCL) and Outcome-Based Education (OBE) concepts be introduced within the higher education study programmes. The WB-HETC of the MoHE also had a mandate to institutionalize the norms of the higher education sector of which quality assurance is one major activity. The HETC therefore provided financial and technical assistance to revise and update the QA IR manual.

We appreciate all those resource persons who developed and compiled the revised version of the manual. We are indeed very happy to present the new manual titled "Manual for Institutional Review of Sri Lankan Universities and Higher Education Institutions". This manual will be used as the manual for institutional review of the conventional system commencing from the next cycle of quality assessment of universities and other state and non-state higher education institutions under the purview of the UGC.

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List of Abbreviations / Acronyms

APQN	Asia Pacific Quality Network
AR & FR	Administrative Regulations & Financial Regulations
ARWU	Academic Ranking of World Universities
CEOs	Chief Executive Officers
CODL	Centre for Open and Distance Learning
CPD	Continuous Professional Development
CVCD	Committee of Vice Chancellors and Directors
DE	Distance Education
EDP QA	External Degree Programme Quality Assurance
ELTU	English Language Teaching Unit
EQA	External Quality Assurance
GEE	Gender Equity and Equality
HEIs	Higher Education Institutions
HETC	Higher Education for the Twenty First Century
HR	Human Resource
ICT	Information & Communication Technology
ILOs	Intended Learning Outcomes
INQAAHE	International Network for Quality Assurance Agencies in Higher Education
IPR	Intellectual Property Rights
IQA	Internal Quality Assurance
IQAU	Internal Quality Assurance Units
IQAC	Internal Quality Assurance Cells
IR	Institutional Review
IRQUE	Improving Relevance and Quality of Undergraduate Education
IRR	Institutional Review Report
IT	Information Technology
LMS	Learning Management Systems
MBBS	Bachelor of Medicine & Bachelor of Surgery
MIS	Management Information System
MoHE	Ministry of Higher Education
MOUs	Memoranda of Understanding
NAAC	National Assessment and Accreditation Council
NEC	National Education Commission
NQAAB	National Quality Assurance and Accreditation Board
NVQF	National Vocational Qualification Framework
OBE	Outcome-Based Education
ODL	Open and Distance Learning
PG	Post Graduate

QA	Quality Assurance
QAA	Quality Assurance Agency / Accreditation
QAAC	Quality Assurance and Accreditation Council
SBS	Subject Benchmark Statements
SCL	Student-Centred Learning
SDC	Staff Development Centre
SER	Self Evaluation Report
SGBV	Sexual and Gender-Based Violence
SJTU	Shanghai's Ja Tong University
SLMC	Sri Lanka Medical Council
SLQF	Sri Lanka Qualifications Framework
THES	Times Higher Education Supplement
TOR	Terms of Reference
UMO	University Medical Officer

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Introduction

Purpose of the Manual

The manual for Institutional Review has been developed to provide guidance to Universities and other Higher Education Institutions (HEIs) who wish to submit themselves for Institutional Review under the Quality Assurance Framework of the University Grants Commission (UGC) and the Ministry of Higher Education (MoHE). It is expected to serve as a guide for universities and other HEIs to adopt and internalize good practices and standards in respect of quality assurance.

It will effectively replace the Quality Assurance Handbook for Sri Lankan Universities published by the Committee of Vice Chancellors and Directors (CVCD) and UGC in 2002 which has served this purpose up to now.

The experiences gained during the first cycle (2004-2013) of Institutional and Subject Reviews by the Quality Assurance and Accreditation Council (QAAC) of the UGC have contributed to the preparation of this manual which is meant to be more relevant within the present context of higher education in Sri Lanka.

Though primarily meant as a guide for Institutional Review, it will give a brief overview of all aspects pertaining to quality assurance in higher education in Sri Lanka for the benefit of academics and administrators in universities and other HEIs.

Although this Manual is meant for universities and other HEIs within the state sector, it will be sufficiently generic in nature to permit its use for non-state higher education institutions. It will be applicable for review of conventional universities and HEIs where the principal mode of delivery is face to face. However, it should be noted that more and more Universities/HEIs are now becoming multimodal in their delivery. In the Institutional Review of a conventional university offering some external degree or ODL programmes, distance education would be viewed as one criterion in the overall review using this manual. There is also a separate manual for review of external degree programmes offered by conventional universities.

HEIs dedicated to the Open and Distant Learning (ODL) mode, such as The Open University of Sri Lanka will continue to be evaluated using the Quality Assurance Toolkit: Distance Higher Education Programmes published by the Commonwealth of Learning (2009).

Who will find this manual useful?

The primary target group of this manual are the academics and administrators in the universities and other HEIs. It will be essential reading for members of the Internal Quality Assurance Units (IQAUs), Heads of Departments, Deans, Registrars and Vice-Chancellors of Universities and Chief Executive Officers (CEOs) of other HEIs. The manual will serve as a practical guide for Universities and other HEIs to prepare a Self Evaluation Report (SER).

It will be useful for all reviewers and potential reviewers of universities and other HEIs as well as administrative staff of the QAAC and other external review agencies. It will help the reviewers to conduct an effective review within a given time frame and to prepare a report.

It will be a useful reference for other stakeholders such as students, parents, funding agencies in state or private sector, international agencies, employers of graduates, professional bodies, professional accrediting agencies and policy makers.

The Institutional Review reports based on this manual which will enter the public domain through the website of the QAAC will be useful to all stakeholders mentioned above. It would enable these stakeholders to give a feedback to the UGC or QAAC, or to the specific HEI on relevant findings in the report.

How the Manual is organized

The manual consist of three parts.

Part I consists of two chapters.

Chapter One deals with the theoretical/conceptual perspectives including definitions of quality and quality assurance, purpose and importance of quality assurance within the changing context of higher education, a brief history of quality assurance in higher education in Sri Lanka, components of the quality assurance system and the respective roles of internal and external QA mechanisms. This chapter will also deal with future prospects for quality assurance in higher education in Sri Lanka.

Chapter Two deals with the importance of external quality assessment, the unit for assessment and the difference between institutional and subject/programme review. It also describes the purpose and scope of Institutional Review (IR), the pre-requisites for IR, the institutional review process and review outcomes including feedback and follow up mechanisms.

Part II deals with important theoretical and practical considerations in objectively assessing quality by peer review and consists of two chapters.

Chapter Three defines quality 'Criteria' that show different aspects of the HEIs' operations including inputs that facilitate certain processes to achieve the desired outcomes. Ten criteria have been identified. Best practices have been summarized for each of the defined criteria. Higher Educational Institutions can adapt and internalize the best practices in their operations and reviewers can use them in their evaluations.

Chapter Four – In order to enable reviewers to evaluate the performance objectively, these best practices are captured into specific and measurable statements termed 'Standards'. The reviewers are expected to score the performance of the institution in respect of each standard on a four point scale. The procedure to be used for assessment of standards and computing of the final score is described.

Part III deals with the practical aspects of the Institutional Review and the Institutional Review Report and will consist of three chapters.

Chapter Five describes the SER and provides a detailed guideline as to how it is to be prepared in relation to the expected standards listed in Chapter four. This would be most important for institutions that are preparing themselves for review.

Chapter Six describes the review process in detail from selection of peer reviewers, reviewer profile, attributes and the conduct expected of reviewers.

Chapter Seven provides a guideline for writing the review report including its purpose, structure, how the review judgment is arrived at both quantitatively and qualitatively and the procedure for submission of the report.

Appendix, Bibliography and Glossary are included at the end.

Part I

Quality Assurance System in Higher Education

Chapter One

Perspectives of Quality Assurance in Higher Education

Higher Education is perceived as one of the most important instruments of individual, social and economic transformation. German philosopher, Karl Jaspers (1946) described the role of a modern university as comprising three interconnected centres, a 'training centre' to produce society's professionals, a 'research centre' to solve its problems and a 'cultural centre' to provide a liberal environment for its thinkers. Jaspers envisaged the three roles merging with each other as a composite whole.

With the demise of the welfare state and the advent of the global free market, the social importance of universities is viewed in more practical terms within the socio-economic context of a 'knowledge society'. The essential functions of higher education in supporting knowledge driven economic growth and development as described in a World Bank report (2002) include

- training of high level human resources including scientists, professionals and technicians
- generating new knowledge through research
- accessing and adapting existing stores of global knowledge for local use
- transmission of norms, values, attitudes and ethics necessary for constructing healthy civil societies and cohesive cultures

The mission of any modern university has to address all these functions. However, some non-state HEIs may concentrate only on the first one. The need for universities to provide space for free and open discussion of ideas and values is often obscured in the pursuit of economic goals. They also need to be permitted to address topics whose long term value to society may exceed their immediate value to students and employers.

The 'quality` of a university has to be viewed within this broad perspective.

1.1 Trends in Higher Education

There are certain global and local trends and paradigm shifts in higher education which make concern regarding its quality more important than ever before. Understanding these trends is important for a university or a HEI to better respond to societal needs.

There is a rapidly increasing demand for higher education compelling most countries to shift from an elitist model to a mass model.

In Sri Lanka, in spite of a rapid expansion of the number of universities, the state sector is still unable to meet the demand for higher education of all those who become eligible on completion of their general education. Improving access to higher education without compromising equity or quality has become a major challenge to policy makers and educationists.

There is a decline in the state contribution to financing higher education in real terms. This is a global trend and Sri Lanka is no exception. This decline is due to competing priorities which have emerged within the context of the global free market.

While primary and secondary education are viewed as a public good in economic terms with their social benefits clearly exceeding individual benefits, the reverse is said to be true of higher education. This has compelled higher education in many countries to have greater reliance on the private sector to finance it by investment or endowment.

In many countries including Sri Lanka, there is a greater need now for Universities and HEIs to compete for funds and to generate income innovatively without depending exclusively on the state grant. University leadership is now required to have entrepreneurial abilities.

The other impact of market forces on higher education is through employment. The private sector, considered to be the engine of growth, is the major employer. The relevance of some courses of study to the world of work and the quality of these graduates has been less than optimal. Their generic skills such as communication, teamwork, computer literacy and their work ethic and mindset have been found wanting. These have many implications for quality conscious academics and administrators.

Producing a twenty first century graduate requires a shift towards Outcome-Based Education (OBE) and Student-Centered Learning (SCL). The curriculum design process should incorporate the necessary knowledge, skills, attitudes and mindset that a graduate needs into the curriculum, which is delivered using teaching and learning methods which facilitate student centered learning. Assessment and evaluation should ensure that the graduate has achieved the intended learning outcomes. A continuous process of quality improvement has to be sustained through monitoring and feedback from employers and other stakeholders.

The impact of science, technology and innovation on all aspects of life has increased globally. Achieving a better quality of life for the ordinary people in developing countries, needs the collaboration of universities with industry in generating new knowledge and in transmitting and adapting existing knowledge to suit local needs.

The demand for non formal education is increasing. Adults who are in work wish to enhance their skills and competencies which enhance their value in a knowledge economy. They wish to do so at their own pace and convenience. The concept of lifelong education is gaining popularity. Universities and HEIs which usually provide full time degree courses to young students directly from secondary school by the face to face mode, are now beginning to offer more extension courses to mature students, often by the open and distance mode.

There is a movement towards a `global` benchmark in education, a standard of excellence that all could aspire to. In general education, a set of characteristics that define an Education for the 21st Century has been drawn up by the Centre for Public Education. There is a developing concept of 'World Class Universities' as centres of excellence which all countries would aspire to have. Paradoxically this has led to a market driven expansion of Higher Education across borders, which in the absence of regulation has led to a wide variation in the quality of courses being offered.

Universities and HEIs that are responsive to societal needs are aware of these trends and plan their courses and modify their curricula, teaching, learning and assessment accordingly. They make full use of their academic and technical resources to expand educational opportunities for a wider variety of students. They improve their learning environment making full use of ICT. These enable them to improve access without compromising equity or quality.

1.2 Concept of Quality and Quality Assurance in Higher Education

The modern concept of quality which evolved originally in an industrial context was further improved in the discipline of management.

Described originally as 'fitness for purpose' of a product, it has also been conceptualized as being 'exceptional' i.e. well above the standard with 'zero defects', as providing 'value for money' and being 'transformative'. The Chairman of the Commonwealth of Learning (2006) defined it as 'fitness for purpose with minimum cost to society'.

The organizational view of quality as a 'process of transformation' is more conducive to generating a quality culture. Quality is now considered a desirable attribute of every human activity including higher education.

The industrial model of quality is clearly inapplicable to its assessment in an educational setting, the teaching learning process being less amenable to precise control unlike the industrial process. The role of university in knowledge generation or innovation and its transformational role cannot be viewed only in relation to its products, the graduates. The concept of quality in higher education is multi-dimensional and encompasses all its functions and activities, academic, research, and scholarship as well as its community services.

Quality Assurance is the means by which the universities can guarantee with confidence and certainty that standard of its awards and quality of its education provision and knowledge generation are being maintained. It is a way of auditing the degree of compliance by the institution of rules, regulations and by-laws drawn up by its own Senate/Academic Board, and

with standards and guidelines prescribed by the QAAC codes of practice/SLQF, and/or professional bodies like the Sri Lanka Medical Council (SLMC) where relevant.

Universities being public institutions have to exercise their responsibility for maintaining quality and standards. Though this responsibility lies primarily with the institution itself where the power to control or change practice exists, periodic external review by an independent agency will give further credibility in the eyes of the public and satisfy social accountability. This is the basic rationale for periodic external review. However, external review is only one aspect of the Quality Assurance System. Before detailing its other components it would be pertinent to briefly look at the gradual evolution of a quality culture within the Sri Lankan University system.

1.3 Development of Quality Assurance within Sri Lankan Universities

The first formal discussion on Quality Assurance and Academic standards was at a workshop on "Evaluation of University Teaching" jointly organized by the CVCD and UGC in September 1996. Following this workshop, the UGC requested the university councils to conduct departmental reviews with the participation of external reviewers. Though this was done by some universities, the practice was neither sustained nor widespread.

It was in 2001, after a series of participatory workshops facilitated by two consultants from the Quality Assurance Agency (QAA) of UK in which senior academics participated, that a committee on Quality Assurance (QA) was formed within the CVCD. This committee initiated all QA related activities such as developing the QA handbook for Universities, training of a pool of reviewers for institutional and subject review, preparation of codes of practice and developing subject benchmarks. A team nominated by this committee visited the National Assessment and Accreditation Council (NAAC) of India to study the process of external review of HEIs. It must be placed on record that the pioneering work of this committee laid the foundation for subsequent developments in quality assurance within the university system.

In December 2004, a standing committee for quality assurance and accreditation was appointed by the UGC. Simultaneously a unit for quality assurance and accreditation (QAA) was formed within the UGC. A full time quality assurance specialist was appointed to coordinate the activities. This was supported by the Improving Relevance and Quality of Undergraduate Education (IRQUE) project of the MoHE and the World Bank (2003-2010).

It was under the supervision of the QAA unit of the UGC, that the first cycle of Institutional and Subject Reviews were conducted using the Quality Assurance Handbook for Sri Lankan Universities. During this period subject committees consisting of senior teachers in the subject from all universities developed Subject Benchmark Statements (SBS) for almost 45 subjects/disciplines.

In 2005, although the QAA Unit was renamed the QAA Council (QAAC), it was not an autonomous body and continued to function under the supervision of the UGC. The QAAC commenced publication of a newsletter and developed a website in which the institutional and subject review reports were made available. In spite of its semi-autonomous character, the

QAAC received full membership of the International Network for Quality Assurance Agencies in Higher Education (INQAAHE) and APQN (Asia Pacific Quality Network) in 2006.

World Bank funded IRQUE project (2003-2010) introduced the concept of competitive funding into the Sri Lankan University system through the Quality Enhancement Fund. University departments were encouraged to practice introspection and write self evaluation reports on their current programmes and to reflect and plan the direction in which they wished to develop. Their proposals were subjected to a process of rigorous peer review. Both winners and losers benefitted from the process.

Although the QA activities were initially received by some academics with scepticism, mistrust and apprehension, the mood has changed now and there is a broad consensus of its usefulness in the present context. Majority of the academia have come to accept the value of introspection and reflection on what they are doing, and to submit themselves to peer review after a critical self evaluation. Many senior academics are volunteering to join the pool of reviewers. In the journey towards a quality culture within the Sri Lankan higher education system, the first phase is now complete. The next phase has to be one of consolidation, with more rigorous peer review spurring institutions not to merely adopt good practices, but to innovate ones themselves in their quest for excellence.

The National Policy Framework for Higher Education prepared after wide stakeholder consultation by the National Education Commission (NEC) in 2008, recommended the creation of an independent National Quality Assurance and Accreditation Board (NQAAB) for Higher Education. This has still not become a reality. For the time being, all quality assurance activities in the state sector HEIs continue under the purview of the UGC.

This manual is being prepared with the support of the HETC Project of the World Bank for future cycles of institutional review.

1.4 Components of the Sri Lankan Quality Assurance System

During the last ten years the QAAC under the aegis of the UGC has set up a robust and comprehensive Quality Assurance System within the state sector. The Sri Lankan academic community has actively participated in all its activities. The documents and structures which are now in place are the products of the collective effort of a large number of academics. If correctly used, they would lead to quality enhancement within the Sri Lankan University System. The main components of this system are listed below.

- Sri Lanka Qualification Framework.
- Subject Benchmarking.
- Codes of Practice.
- External Quality Assurance.
- Internal Quality Assurance.

Sri Lanka Qualifications Framework (SLQF): The Sri Lanka qualification framework provides a structure within which all HEIs can position their awards at an appropriate level. The SLQF combines descriptors of qualifications/awards at each level with credit measures that indicate the levels and volume of learning that a student is expected to achieve for each type of qualification.

Qualification level descriptors summarize the student learning outcomes/objectives of the qualification at each level. Unlike benchmarks which are subject specific, qualification level descriptors are generic and enable a distinction to be made between the attributes and achievements of graduates from programmes at different levels. They differentiate between a diploma and a degree, between a Bachelors degree and a Bachelors (Honours) degree, between an M.Phil. and a Ph.D.

The SLQF facilitates lateral mobility between courses both nationally and internationally. The SLQF aligned with the National Vocational Qualification Framework (NVQF) enables lateral mobility between vocational education and higher education. It also provides room for recognition of accredited prior learning and enables vertical progression of a student from a lower to a higher level using valid criteria.

Subject Benchmarking: This is a policy device aimed at improving the capacity of subject communities to regulate their academic standards. Subject communities consist of senior teachers drawn from a wide and representative sample of academics in that subject/discipline. They collectively create subject based information that can be used by other teachers and groups as a basis for critical reflection and further development of their curricula.

Subject Benchmark Statements (SBS) provide a set of reference points for key features of a programme, its intended learning outcomes and the standards as deemed appropriate by the subject community. They describe the characteristics of a graduate in the subject and usually indicate both optimum and threshold levels.

When planning new programmes in that subject or when modifying the existing curricula, academics are well advised to use the SBS as a reference point. Subject reviewers too are expected to be familiar with them. However, they are not meant to be prescriptive. Flexibility is permitted and deviations from the benchmark are acceptable as long as they are justified within the particular context.

Codes of Practice: Codes of practice are documents which lay down the standards that need to be met when conducting any academic procedure. They are meant to provide a reference point for Universities/HEIs on the main aspects of setting academic standards and safeguarding the quality of education. They are reflective of the key elements of good practice which support the student learning experience.

Initially six codes of practice were prepared through a participatory exercise involving senior academics and coordinated by two consultants from the QAA of the United Kingdom. They were on assessment of students, career guidance, external assessors, programme monitoring, approval and review, postgraduate research programmes, and student support and guidance.

They were incorporated into an Academic Procedures Handbook and published by the CVCD/UGC in 2003.They were widely circulated amongst the academic community.

Since then five other codes of practice have been developed by the QAAC (2010-2012). They are on staff development, student feedback, peer observation, external degrees and academic accountability. In addition to these codes of practice, the QAAC has published three Manuals/Handbooks on postgraduate degree programs, Internal Quality Assurance Units and Libraries. Universities/HEIs are expected to adopt and/or adapt these codes to suit their own needs. Although quality conscious academics would find them useful even in their present form a revision based on present ground realities of higher education in Sri Lanka will make them more widely acceptable.

External Quality Assurance: When the system of higher education was relatively small with a few institutions catering to a smaller number of students, the internal mechanisms for safeguarding standards of education and quality of awards conventionally monitored by the University Senates/Academic syndicates were sufficient. With both global and local expansion in higher education with greater intra and international competition, it has become essential to assure quality through a reliable national mechanism. External quality assurance by peer review has now gained worldwide acceptance as an effective method to ensure quality and standards of education.

The unit of assessment for external review could be the Institution as a whole or individual Subjects/Programmes within the Institution. The aspects or criteria which will be assessed would differ based on the unit of assessment. During the first cycle of external review, both institutional reviews and subject reviews were conducted in parallel. Subject review evaluated the quality of education within a department of study. Where a department contributed to several programmes of study, all were reviewed. Where several departments contributed to a single programme of study, e.g. Medicine, a programme review was conducted.

The reviewers use the aims and learning outcomes of the subject/programme as the reference point for review. Although some flexibility and autonomy exists for each institution to decide on the intended learning outcomes, they need to reflect widely accepted reference points such as the subject benchmarks, specially with regard to professional courses. If they differ significantly from the subject benchmarks, the subject team would have to justify such deviation. The criteria that are looked at usually in a subject/programme review include curriculum design, content and review, teaching learning and assessment methods, quality of students and their progression, extent and use of student feedback, skills development, academic guidance and counselling and peer observation. The review process and reporting are almost the same as in institutional review. The subject review reports of an institution and the institutional response to them will contribute to the review of the institution as a whole.

Internal Quality Assurance : While periodic external review by a peer group provides an impetus for reflective behavior and self appraisal which are essential pre-requisites in the quest for excellence, the responsibility for quality and standards lies effectively where the power to control or change practices exist, and that is with the institution itself, and not with an external

agency. Quality Assurance is a continuous process, not a one-time event or an event at specific intervals. The process has to be a part of the institution`s continuous concern for maintaining and enhancing quality.

All Universities and HEIs are expected to establish Internal Quality Assurance Units (IQAU). They have to co-ordinate the quality assurance activities within their universities. However the body with the responsibility for maintaining academic standards within the University is the Senate. As such, the IQAU has to report its activities to the Senate and the Council. It would be desirable to have this report as a regular agenda item in the Senate. In Universities with several faculties, each faculty should have an Internal Quality Assurance Cell (IQAC), which will coordinate all quality assurance activities within the faculty in liaison with the IQAU. A report from the IQAC has to be a regular agenda item in the Faculty Board. Internal Quality Assurance Manual published by the QAAC in 2013 gives guidelines for setting up Internal Quality Assurance Units. Functions and responsibilities of the IQAU are listed below.

- Coordinating QA related activities within the institution.
- Liaising with UGC/QAA Council and other external QA agencies.
- Implementing reviews/audit recommendations and follow up action.
- Preparing institutional self-evaluation report.
- Providing advice on QA to faculties and departments.
- Reporting all these activities to the Senate.

Source : IQA Manual for Sri Lankan Universities (2013)

As mentioned earlier, internal quality assurance is supported by periodic external review. The two processes have to be harmonized for maximum benefit. Findings of one inform the other. Both are essential for maintaining and enhancing quality. The interaction between the Internal Quality Assurance and the External Quality Assurance is depicted in Figure 1.

1.5 Future Prospects in Quality Assurance in Higher Education

The higher education sector in Sri Lanka has strongly felt the impact of globalization during the last few decades. The aim of making Sri Lanka a regional educational hub is consistent with the need to face the challenges posed by the current globalized environment. It is in this context that one has to view the future of quality assurance in higher education.

While preserving a vibrant and strong public sector with equitable access to higher education that many Sri Lankans have benefitted from, a competitive private sector with or without cross border affiliation can be foreseen running side by side. As it would be unrealistic to expect higher education to be an exclusively state preserve, this arrangement will widen access to higher education as well as enhance its quality. The anticipated developments in quality assurance within such a context are described below.

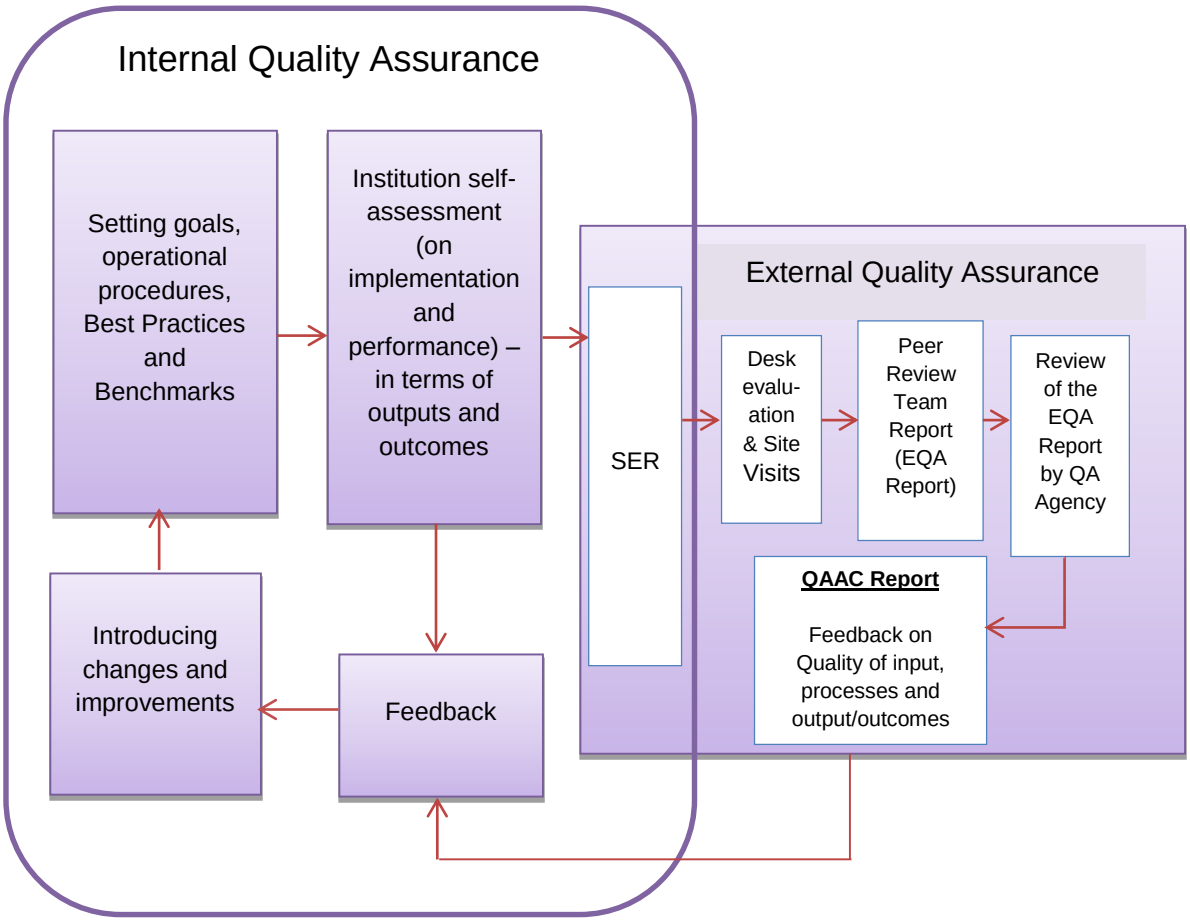

Figure 1 **Functional link between the Internal Quality Assurance and the External Quality Assurance.**

(*Adapted from "Manual for Internal Quality Assurance for Higher Education Institutions, Ministry of Education (2008): Thailand)*

1.5.1Establishment of a National Quality Assurance and Accreditation Board (NQAAB)

The National Education Commission which by statute is entrusted with the task of educational policy presented a National Policy Framework on Higher Education in June 2008, after a series of wide and in depth consultation with all stakeholders including senior academics and academic administrators.

This policy framework states "Assurance of the quality of programmes offered by the state higher educational Institutions as well as non-state sector higher educational institutions is vital to maintain equally high standards of the programmes offered by them. In order to achieve these objectives it is recommended to establish a central authority for quality assurance and accreditation." It goes on to specify the establishment of the NQAAB as an independent agency.

The quality culture has now taken root within the higher education system in Sri Lanka. With the completion of the second round of institutional reviews in the state sector, all HEIs would

have come of age and the *milieu* would be set for the next stage viz., accreditation of Universities and HEIs. With a significant number of non-state HEIs, with or without cross border affiliation lining up for accreditation, the establishment of the NQAAB becomes a *sine qua non.*

1.5.2 Accreditation

Accreditation is a process in which an institution's services and operations are examined by an external accrediting agency to determine if applicable standards are met. If they are met the institution receives accreditation. Accreditation creates confidence and trust about the quality of the University/HEI and its programmes and awards amongst students, parents, prospective employers and the general public. It serves as a signal of the University's/HEI's adequacy in five aspects viz., academic quality, value for money, efficiency and effectiveness, student protection and transparency.

There are several fundamental decisions which have to be taken by the academic community in this respect. They include

- how soon should we move towards accreditation?
- should accreditation be optional or obligatory?
- what should be the unit for accreditation?
- should there be a link between professional accreditation and academic accreditation?
- should there be grading or should the decision be one of meeting minimum standards?
- should there be ranking of Universities/HEIs based on merit?

How soon should we move towards accreditation? The second institutional review cycle is due to be completed within two years i.e. by 2016. By then most if not all state sector Universities/HEIs should have the confidence to submit themselves for accreditation. It is likely that there will be many private HEIs too, especially those with cross border affiliation who would like to be accredited by a local accrediting agency. The human resources and infrastructure and facilities of the QAAC would need to be strengthened if it is to transform itself into a fully fledged NQAAB. More reviewers would have to be trained to expand the present pool of reviewers.

Should accreditation be optional or obligatory? It would be wise for Sri Lanka to follow India`s example and make it an optional exercise initially, i.e. the University/HEI can decide whether to apply for accreditation or not. A time frame within which accreditation becomes obligatory could be decided upon taking into consideration the maturity and capacity of the NQAAB and the University system as a whole. This approach would be non-threatening to the weak and encouraging to the strong. Formal accreditation by a credible agency will enhance their ability to attract good quality students and staff and to compete for additional funding.

What should be the Unit for Accreditation? The choice is between accreditation of the institution as a whole or accreditation of individual programmes offered by the institution. Depending on the capacity of the accrediting agency, it would be possible to do both in parallel. Size of the country and the number of HEIs and programmes of study are important criteria on

which the decision is made. In India, NAAC has decided to confine themselves to Institutional accreditation initially. In the United Kingdom however, the Quality Assurance Agency (QAA) offers only Programme accreditation.

Professional accreditation is always in respect of a programme of study e.g. Medicine, Nursing, Engineering, Architecture, Quantity Surveying etc. As Sri Lanka has a relatively small number of HEIs and programmes, it would not be impossible to do both institutional and programme accreditation, especially if both are optional at the start. In Sri Lanka there is a strong case for both Institutional and Programme accreditation from the inception. This however is a decision that the academic community needs to take, preferably by discussion and consensus.

Should there be a link between professional and academic accreditation? Professional courses of study need special consideration in this regard. In Medicine, the SLMC is empowered by ordinance to prescribe standards for the medical schools whose graduates it registers. The SLMC has also developed criteria for accreditation of medical schools. Although there are Professional organizations in the other professional disciplines such as Engineering, Accountancy and Law, they are not at present statutorily empowered for the purpose of accreditation. However, various mechanisms are in place to ensure that graduates in these disciplines are admitted to these professions by a process of further training/ apprenticeship/assessment by the respective professional bodies. In some disciplines like Engineering, they are subject to scrutiny by international accrediting bodies such as the Washington Accord for greater credibility. In Architecture and Quantity surveying also a similar practice is followed. In programmes that lead to professional degrees, there is a need for consultation with professional bodies in order to synchronize the two processes of professional and academic accreditation.

Should there be grading or should the decision be one of meeting minimum standards? There are several models for University/HEI accreditation. In the United States it's a two point scale, accredited/not accredited. To be accredited the institution has to meet a set of minimum criteria. The United Kingdom which focuses on the programme gives a 1-4 point grade on six aspects of teaching quality without giving an overall grade. In India, NAAC uses seven criteria to assess the institution. It grades the institutions being accredited on a 9 point scale using both letters and stars, viz. A,B,C and A, A*,A**. Previously they had a six point scale with 0 to 5 stars, zero being not accredited. The present grading system was devised after much discussion within the academic community. The main advantage of grading is that it promotes competition and rewards the good institutions with value addition. In a market economy it makes sense. The disadvantage is that it is unfair when the playing field is not level.

The method of assessment used in this manual takes into account 10 criteria and a variable number of prescribed standards for each criterion, with weightage based on the relative importance of the criterion. This scoring system would enable the reviewers to give a percentage score which is used to grade the institution on a four point scale, A, B, C, D (see chapter 4). Presently this system of grading will be used only for external review.

When the process of accreditation is implemented, a similar system of grading can be developed with room for provisional accreditation of younger institutions subject to review in two to three years.

Should there be ranking of Universities based on merit? Only a few countries in the world have intra-country ranking systems for universities. There is hardly a need for it as there are several international rankings of universities which could be used to ascertain the relative positions of universities within a particular country. The ranking systems use a wide variety of criteria not all of which are focused on quality. The more prestigious of these rankings include, Times Higher Education Supplement (THES), QS World University rankings and the Academic Ranking of World Universities (ARWU) done by Shanghai University.

QS World University ranking which is the most objective, considers six differently weighted criteria that focus on teaching, research, employability and international outlook. The criteria used for ranking in the ARWU include quality of education, quality of faculty, research output and size of institution. In THES, the criteria used are research quality, graduate employability, international outlook and teaching quality. The ranking which includes the largest number of global universities (13,000), is the Webometrics ranking of World Universities. This ranking looks at the web visibility of the University including its research. It is the only ranking in which all Sri Lankan Universities figure at present and its details are given in the QAAC website.

Whether a ranking system should be especially designed for Sri Lankan Universities to spur them towards excellence or whether Sri Lankan Universities should be encouraged to gain higher positions on the presently available international rankings is another question before the academic community. There is no doubt that obtaining a high rank on any one of these well known world university rankings will give a particular university a competitive advantage in attracting research funding, good students and staff. There appears to be little justification for adopting a ranking system purely for the local universities.

1.5.3 Quality of Graduates

There are many, especially from industry and the corporate sector who are critical of the process of quality assurance in higher education, as its focus is primarily on the process and not the product. They believe that ensuring the quality of the process does not necessarily guarantee the "fitness for purpose" of the product, i.e. the graduate. Although tracer studies and employment rates are used as proxy indicators of graduate employability, they may not be a true reflection of graduate quality due to the influence of other contextual factors.

In the future, quality assurance may need to include direct assessments of quality of a random sample of graduates across subjects/disciplines using the intended learning outcomes, qualification level descriptors and subject benchmarks. One may need to develop valid instruments for this purpose, taking into account that employability is not the sole aim of higher education. Graduates could contribute to society in a myriad of ways. However it would be possible to develop intended learning outcomes for all courses to ensure that graduates make a

useful contribution to society. The Knowledge, Skills, Attitudes and Mind- set (KSAM) model (2014) as advocated by the MoHE could be used for this purpose.

1.5.4 Competitive and Performance based Funding

At present, the state sector universities and HEIs are almost exclusively dependent on state funding. The allocation of funds is based on past allocations with adjustments based on student numbers, development of new programmes and new infrastructure. A few universities attract small amounts of funding mainly for research from national and International sources.

The first exposure to competitive funding that the Sri Lankan Higher Education system had was through the quality enhancement fund of the IRQUE project (2003-2010). During the first round of the IRQUE Quality enhancement fund (2003-2007), equity conscious academics were critical of the concept, as they felt that a sufficiently equitable context had not been created for all participants to compete. Ten years on and the first review cycle being completed, the situation is different. The capacity of all universities and HEIs has been strengthened to enable them to compete.

Accreditation, grading and ranking are designed to provide some advantage to those who participate and succeed. With credible independent peer review becoming a reality, time is ripe now to introduce at least some element of competitive and performance based funding. The institutions that have utilized their allocations effectively and efficiently to improve their performance as depicted by valid performance indicators need to be rewarded. Making some funds available through open competition assessed in a transparent manner is likely to stimulate innovation and creativity in designing programmes and curricula which are more relevant to societal needs. Formula based funding in which an additional allocation is made for recurrent expenditure based on key performance indicators such as rates of employment, dropout rates, degree of student satisfaction etc., is another strategy that could be employed.

1.5.5 World Class Universities

During the last decade the term 'world class university' has become a catch phrase. It implies a university`s capacity to compete in the global tertiary education market place through acquisition and creation of advanced knowledge. For a university to be considered a world class university, the following three criteria need to be fulfilled.

- The university academics and students should publish their research in refereed journals and those articles should be cited by other researchers.
- The university should have an international academic and student community.
- The university should produce globally employable graduates.

If Sri Lanka is to be a regional knowledge hub, at least a few universities should achieve this status. Though sceptics doubt the likelihood of a Sri Lankan University meeting these criteria, at least some state sector universities could aspire to this if they maintain their focus on quality. However, the state providing adequate financial resources is mandatory for such an achievement.

Chapter Two

External Quality Assurance - Institutional Review

External Quality Assurance (EQA) or review is an important component of the QA framework. Its main objectives are to safeguard standards of awards and quality of delivery in higher education; to identify good practices; to facilitate continuous quality improvement; and to inculcate the quality culture into the higher education system. The main features of EQA irrespective of the unit of assessment are self evaluation by the institution/programme, peer review including a review visit and perusal of evidence culminating in a review report with judgement and commentary.

2.1 The Objectives and Extent of External Quality Assessment

The Quality Assurance Handbook for Sri Lankan Universities (2002) lists the following components for review within the national quality assurance system. Based on the unit for assessment selected and the context of the review, all or some of the following aspects will be selected as criteria for assessment.

- The university's corporate plan and whether it sets out objectives, activities and targets in the national, regional and local community contexts.
- Curriculum design, content and review; adoption of rational and defensible processes, maintaining transparency at all levels.
- Teaching and learning infrastructure, including teaching and learning resources.
- Teaching, learning and assessment arrangements.
- Research.
- Quality of students including entry qualifications/requirements; the concept of multi-level entry and exit; implications for quality of the current system of allocating students to universities.
- Postgraduate studies.
- University/industry/other partnerships.
- Extension activities (work done in the community).
- Career guidance and counselling services.
- Generation and management of financial resources.
- Administration and management.

- Staff quality, development and appraisal, including peer observation and sharing good practices.
- Peer observation/assessment and use of student feedback.
- External degree programmes.

2.2 Distinction between Institutional Review and Subject/Programme Review

Institutional review analyses and tests the effectiveness of an institution's processes for managing and assuring the quality of academic activities undertaken by the University/HEI. It evaluates the extent to which internal quality assurance schemes can be relied upon to maintain the quality of provision of educational programmes over time.

Subject/Programme review evaluates the quality of a student's learning experience at programme level. It is about management and assurance of quality at subject/programme, rather than institutional level. Subject review refers to evaluation of a subject/department as a whole while programme review refers to evaluation of a programme of study offered by the department singly or jointly. During the first cycle, subject reviews were done. Internal evaluation of the quality of education at subject level is normally part of the university's quality assurance scheme.

2.3 Institutional Review – Purpose

Institutional review focuses on the powers and responsibilities which universities hold for quality and standards. It is concerned with how a University/HEI assures itself and the wider public that the quality and standards it sets for itself are being achieved. Institutional review is separate from, though still closely linked to, subject review. Institutional review is concerned with university-wide processes, which support sound quality management and university planning to maintain an appropriate environment for teaching, learning, research and other activities.

The overall purpose of institutional review is to achieve accountability for quality and standards, and by using a peer review process to promote sharing of good practices and to facilitate continuous improvement. This overall purpose is sub-divided into five specific aspects.

1. *Confidence* -to instill confidence in an institution's capacity to safeguard standards, both internally and externally, through a transparent process which involves and is owned by staff throughout the institution and is accessible to students and other external groups with an interest in an institution's teaching, learning and research activities.

2. *Accountability* -To achieve accountability through external review and public report of an institution's evidence of its own attentiveness to quality and standards and of actions taken to improve and be responsive to feedback from students and others engaging with the institution as a provider of academic activities.

3. *Information* - to provide systematic, clear and accessible information on the standards and quality claimed by a University/HEI, so as to enable choices and decisions of potential students, employers, funding bodies and other 'users' of an institution's intellectual resources and its awards.

4. *Improvement* - to promote improvement by identifying and sharing good practice through peer review, active use of national and international standards and benchmarks as well as implementation of recommendations made in previous institutional and subject reviews.

5. *Innovation* - to showcase innovative approaches in teaching, research, community extension, management, linkages or income generation to meet national or regional needs that could be recognized by the review panel and highlighted in the report as an example of a good practice which can be adopted by others.

2.4 Institutional Review – Scope

The scope of Institutional Review has been widened for this second cycle based on the feedback received during the first cycle. The criteria selected for scrutiny through institutional review, reflect the concerns and expectations of senior staff in Sri Lankan universities of areas regarded as key to the development and maintenance of an effective and competitive higher educational system, within and beyond Sri Lanka. Some aspects which were confined in the first round to subject/programme review e.g. curriculum development, assessment and student support have been included in the institutional review. They will be viewed in a University wide context. The ten criteria which will be looked at are the following:

1. Governance and Management.
2. Curriculum Design and Development.
3. Teaching and Learning.
4. Learning Resources, Student Support and Progression.
5. Student Assessment and Awards.
6. Strength and Quality of Staff.
7. Postgraduate Studies, Research, Innovation and Commercialization.
8. Community Engagement, Consultancy and Outreach.
9. Distance Education.
10. Quality Assurance.

When carrying out an Institutional Review, it is necessary to be aware of certain constraints that bind the state university system. They include central control of student admissions and non-academic staff recruitment by UGC, archaic financial regulations, rigid organizational structure with strict approval process for cadre modification and politicization of higher decision making processes. These constraints limit the scope of review in respect of universities and have to be taken into account when the review panel arrives at its judgement.

However, many universities have devised innovative measures to circumvent or mitigate the effect of these constraints. These include aptitude testing for entry with UGC approval; lateral entry for mature students; allocation of students to different courses within a faculty based on merit or aptitude; strict criteria for staff recruitment within the state guidelines; strict work norms which permit remunerated consultancy without compromising the academics' contribution to teaching and research; and establishing departmental/project funds for more effective utilization of generated income while complying with procurement guidelines etc. In contrast, non-state HEIs being free of the constraints faced by state universities, may enable the full scope of the review to be applied. However, there may be other limitations specific to their context which too need to be taken into consideration by the review team.

During the first cycle of Institutional review the focus was on verifying compliance with minimum standards in respect of quality. During the second cycle there is a greater need to recognize excellence and good practice specially with a view to disseminating it within the system. There is also a need and a social obligation to comment on any unhealthy tendencies within a university which have an adverse impact on quality.

2.5 Institutional Review – Requirements

Institutional review is based on a prior process of institutional self evaluation. There has to be a willingness by university staff to gather and consider evidence of university policies and processes in action and to discuss them self critically. Universities/HEIs which have well established and functioning Internal Quality Assurance Units (IQAU) would be better prepared for external review.

In preparation for the second cycle of institutional review, institutions are expected to have developed over the first review cycle the following capabilities:

- Capacity to set university goals and objectives in the Strategic Management plan and Action plans.
- Capacity to implement strategies and procedures in accordance with the codes of practice. Universities should be familiar with these codes of practice and manuals developed through a participatory process. They should have adopted or adapted them based on their own context. e.g. the code of practice on work norms.
- Compliance with SLQF and SBS published by the QAAC/CVCD when developing new programmes of study or modifying existing ones, keeping in mind that they are not meant to be prescriptive and that deviations are permissible with justification.
- A desire for university self-knowledge (gained through inquiry, evidence and feedback) and commitment to gathering and using data to support inquiry and evaluation e.g. tracer study information for all degree programmes.
- Willingness to engage in a constructive critical self evaluation without threat or hindrance, and willingness to submit oneself and the institution to external peer review with a sense of 'ownership' of the process of inquiry and review at all levels.

These essential pre-requisites for external quality assurance should be by now well entrenched in the state university system. The mindset of the academics and administrators should be imbued with a quality culture.

2.6 Institutional Review – Process

The QAAC will select the review team from the pool of accredited reviewers and identify one of them as the Review Chair. About two months before the review, the dates for the review visit are agreed upon by mutual agreement of the team and the institution. The QAAC will liaise all activities. The SER will be sent to the review team members at least six weeks prior to the review. The broad scope of the review process, including the range of documentation to be made available and the timetable for the visit will be intimated to the Institution by the QAAC.

The review process has three distinct parts:

1. Preparation (a) by the university / institution
   (b) by the review team
2. The review visit
3. The review report and process prior to publication

1. (a) Preparation by the University/HEI: Some months before the visit, the institution will have begun to compile its self evaluation document to be completed by a date agreed in advance for submission to the review team.

(b) Preparation by the Review Team: The review team will meet about four weeks in advance of the visit, having read the university's self-evaluation document to identify lines of inquiry and any further information they need to see in advance, either to fully understand the document or to plan their detailed inquiries. They will also identify individuals and groups they wish to meet during their visit. The team may decide to allocate particular areas of inquiry to individual reviewers.

2. The Review Visit - During the visit, the review team will

- examine and verify (as far as possible) the claims in the university's self-evaluation;
- review with the university any specific concerns arising from reviews of subjects or professional body reviews done before the visit;
- gather any further evidence necessary to enable it to form a view on the effectiveness of the institution's arrangements for the management of quality and standards including the functioning of the IQAU and its reporting mechanisms;
- assess to what extent the recommendations and criticisms made by the previous institutional, subject and programme reviews have been addressed.

The review team will also consult documentation provided by the institution. It will endeavour to keep to a minimum the amount of documentation it requests during the visit. The aim is to consider evidence provided by the institution and to focus on discussions with staff and students to get a clear picture of the institution's processes in operation. The review team should always seek to read and use all information requested.

Institutional review is evidence-based. The judgments made by the review team emerge from collective consideration of the evidence. They should not rest on unsupported views or prejudice. Most evidence for review will come from information and documentation used by the institution itself. In addition, and as available, review teams will draw on other relevant material such as (professional body accreditation reports, UGC standing committee reports etc.) where appropriate. All reviews will draw upon the following principal sources of evidence:

- The university's self-evaluation prepared for the review.
- Evidence referenced in the self-evaluation.
- Use of local codes of practice developed or adopted by the university.
- Use of national benchmarks and guidelines as available.
- Information gathered by the review team during the review visit.

The visit should under normal circumstances last five days. It may take less time, depending on the number of campuses/sites; diversity of provision; and clarity and depth of the university's review document/self evaluation document or SER.

The visit should conclude with a meeting with the Vice-Chancellor/Director and senior staff. The team will give a general indication of its conclusions based on the review and including strengths and weaknesses identified. The institution can correct any obvious errors of fact or misinterpretations at this point, but they would have to wait until the written report is submitted to give their response to the report.

3. The Review Report and process prior to publication.

The outcome of institutional review is a published report. Its purpose is to inform the institution and external parties of the findings of the review and to provide a reference point to support and guide staff in their continuing quality assurance activities. In particular, the report will give an overall judgment on the reviewer's assessment of the performance of the institution with regard to quality assurance supported by a commentary on

- the rigour and robustness of the university's mechanisms for discharging its responsibility for the standard of its awards; the quality of the education it provides; the effectiveness of its planning, quality and resource management; and the efficiency of its administration;
- the sufficiency, reliability of the evidence used and its accessibility to external scrutiny;

- a statement on the level accomplishment of the institution under the Grading of A, B, C or D based on the University/HEI score as given in chapter 4;
- a commentary with commendations and recommendations to encourage further excellence and/or improvement based on the grade achieved.

The draft report will be submitted to the QAAC by the review team. The QAAC will send a copy of the report to the University to see whether the university has any concerns regarding the report and if they do, a request for discussion would be followed by a meeting between the review team, QAAC and the university. Details of the procedure to be followed are described in Chapter 7.

2.7 Final Outcome of Institutional Review

After the University/HEI accepts the Institutional review report, it will enter the public domain through the QAAC website so that all stakeholders including students, graduates, prospective employers, grant providing agencies, educationists and policymakers have access to it. The UGC and MoHE will receive a copy through the QAAC. The recommendations regarding provision of resources and other administrative factors influencing quality need to be addressed by these agencies in consultation with the University/HEI. The institutional report may provide valuable data to the University/HEI at its annual audit review, fund allocation and cadre review meetings.

The most important follow up actions have to be at the University/HEI itself. IQAU should ensure that all faculties, departments and support units have access to the report. Ideally, after all concerned academics, administrators and support staff have read at least the sections relevant to them, their reactions have to be obtained in a formal manner and discussed in special meetings of the Curriculum & Evaluation committees, Faculty boards, Senate and Council. A comprehensive follow up action plan has to be drawn up and integrated into the current action plan. The IQAU and other relevant committees should continue to monitor the progress in redressing defects and enhancing quality. The Institutional review report should be made available for public scrutiny through the University's/HEI's website.

The QAAC should continue to provide system wide analyses and information regarding Institutional reviews to the University/HEI system, specially with a view to inculcating good practices. This could be through the QAA newsletter and website.

Part II

Quality Assessment
Criteria, Best Practices and Standards

Chapter Three

Criteria and Best Practices

In both internal and external quality assessments, transparency, objectivity and comparability are ensured by having a framework or assessment structure against which measurement could be made. The UGC-QAAC, in keeping with international QA practices and procedures, has identified an assessment structure with ten 'Criteria' and corresponding 'Standards' for each of the 10 criteria for institutional review of Universities and HEIs. These criteria reflect various aspects of the HEI's operations including inputs that facilitate processes to achieve the desired outcomes. In an institutional review, performance in relation to all of the ten criteria is considered for the institution as a whole, including an overview of programmes across the institution.

3.1 Criteria

The ten criteria used in this manual were identified as most appropriate for institutional review in the present context after careful study of several documents including the previous Quality Assurance Handbook for Universities (UGC/CVCD 2002), the Toolkit for Quality Assessment of Open and Distance Learning Institutions (Commonwealth of Learning 2009), and QA Manuals adopted by QA Agencies of other countries. They had been developed through a process of wide stakeholder participation.

The ten criteria selected for Institutional Review in this manual are listed below.

1 Governance and Management.
2 Curriculum Design and Development.
3 Teaching and Learning.
4 Learning Resources, Student Support and Progression.
5 Student Assessment and Awards.
6 Strength and Quality of Staff.
7 Postgraduate studies, Research, Innovation and Commercialization.
8 Community Engagement, Consultancy and Outreach.
9 Distance Education.
10 Quality Assurance.

3.2 Best Practices

For each of the above Criteria, quality principles are stated as best practices. A practice qualifies to a 'Best Practice' status if it had resulted in value addition to any aspect of institutional operations in a University/HEI. Best practices are adopted by Universities/HEIs to enhance quality and may be looked upon as signposts that lead towards excellence. For quality enhancement, best practices should be internalized and become a part of the working culture of the University/HEI. The internalization and institutionalization are facilitated through an Internal Quality Assessment (IQA) process. Validation of the degree of internalization and institutionalization of best practices takes place through an External Quality Assessment (EQA) process.

The 'best practices' are dynamic and continuous. They are the result of identification, experimentation, reflection, feedback and innovation based on experience. Best practices are amenable to documentation and have the potential for replication; they are transparent, accountable, affordable and accessible to both staff and students, and add value to an institution. They are contextual and influenced by many factors. Best Practices show the path to success through continuous improvement leading to the benchmark of excellence.

Brief descriptions of best practices and/or processes with respect to the 10 'Criteria' are given below. The best practices presented here depend on many variables and contexts and are not exhaustive. They are representative of the different standards.

3.3 Criteria and Corresponding Best Practices

Criterion 1- Governance and Management

- The University/HEI has put in place the organization structure, the governance and management system in compliance with what is prescribed in the Universities Act No. 16 of 1978 as amended, relevant Ordinances and their amendments, Universities Establishments Code, and the Circulars and Establishment Letters by the UGC and relevant ministries.

- The University/HEI has a clear vision encapsulated in its Corporate Plan/Strategic Management Plan which enables it to meet the challenges of the 21st century and to acquire a competitive edge. Its mission and goals are compatible with this vision and supported by a well defined strategic plan for systematic future development within a specific time frame.

- The University/HEI complies with the national policy framework for higher education which includes standards and guidelines issued by the MoHE, UGC and QAAC and other professional bodies where applicable, e.g. Sri Lanka Medical Council (SLMC) for Medicine. It will as far as possible also comply with other reference points such as the Sri Lanka Qualifications Framework (SLQF), Subject Benchmark Statements

(SBS) and Codes of Practice. When the University or HEI deviates from these, there is a rational explanation based on context and or other factors. The University/HEI will also comply with the standards, by-laws and guidelines drafted by the Council/Senate/Academic Syndicate.

- The management is vigilant about changes in the educational sphere nationally and globally. There is a visionary and dynamic leadership with ability to respond to continuous changes and challenges. Participatory management is promoted with a flexible mix of formal and informal mechanisms which encourage teamwork in a transparent manner. Informal/ad-hoc committees complement the work of the statutory bodies. The success of the University/HEI is dependent on the efficiency and effectiveness of the monitoring, evaluation and reporting mechanisms. This is output and outcome based rather than input or process based. Monitoring and evaluation procedures are built into all departments and programmes.

- Managing resources such as space, money, material and human resources form the crux of organizational management based on forecasting, planning, implementation, and monitoring. The Institution complies with national administrative and financial regulations as well its own pre-approved Manual of Procedures or Standard Operational Procedures (SOPs). The institution generates income by optimum utilization of space and human resources. It has an efficient internal audit mechanism, complemented by an external auditing process.

- Information and Communication Technology (ICT) is integrated into the system for teaching and learning, administration, research and community engagement. A user friendly Management Information System (MIS) is in place for effective and efficient management of operations. This system allows information to be logically stored and easily retrieved for instant availability of information and swift execution of tasks in a cost effective and efficient manner.

- Administration is receptive to the welfare of staff and students and adequate welfare measures are in place for staff and students to function optimally.

- The University/HEI strives to improve the employability of its graduates by maintaining a dialogue with a wide range of stakeholders and ensures that its products meet societal/labour market expectations. The stakeholders include national/regional government and legislative bodies; professional and statutory bodies; employers and industry; future students, alumni and parents; partner institutions and the wider society.

- The University/HEI considers quality as a strategic objective and is committed to fostering continuous improvement in teaching, learning and assessments. It engages in national, regional and international networks to share best practices in quality teaching.

- The University/HEI has clearly defined work norms for academic staff taking into account all aspects of workload including teaching, assessment, counselling, research, administrative work, outreach activities, community work, etc.

- The University/HEI has clearly defined duties and responsibilities for administrative, technical and support staff.

- Performance appraisal system for staff is available with the aim of identifying training needs, motivating, improving performance and retention.

- The University has a clear QA framework supported by QA action plans, policies and procedures for reflection, review and systematic enhancement of existing practices.

- The University/HEI regards the availability of effective channels for student feedback as a key element in monitoring of quality and standards. Detailed procedures may vary but must be clear and appropriately publicized. Faculties and departments have documentation that refers to consultative committees, feedback questionnaires, and student representation.

- The University/HEI has a clear policy reflected in the Examination By-laws, Regulations and Manual of Examination Procedures. Faculties/departments are in a position to demonstrate that their processes comply with policy and all the relevant regulations. Key elements in the overall management of assessment processes are monitored closely such as appointment of examiners, examination conventions, examiners' reports and examination of research degrees.

- Academic staff are ensured a conducive teaching environment characterized by induction for new staff; regular staff skills audit and counselling; providing opportunities for staff development; providing appropriate physical facilities and technologies; assigning reasonable and fair teaching loads; and recognizing and rewarding outstanding teaching, research and community engagement.

- The University/HEI has a clearly defined code of conduct for all categories of staff emphasizing the maintenance of the highest moral and ethical standards. This is effectively communicated to all staff at the time of appointment to the institution.

- The University/HEI strives to promote gender equity and equality (GEE) and deter any form of sexual and gender-based violence (SGBV) amongst all categories of staff and students by adopting an appropriate policy and strategy drawn up in line with the UGC prescribed policy and strategy (on GEE and SGBV) and it is spearheaded through a task force/coordinating body with necessary empowerments and resources for effective implementation.

- The University/HEI adopts the policy of zero-tolerance to ragging and any form of intimidation/harassment among students and develops and adopts students' disciplinary by-laws, framed according to UGC Circular 919 and implements the preventive and deterrent measures through a comprehensive network operated through academia, student counsellors, proctors, marshals and security staff.

Criterion 2 - Curriculum Design and Development

- Programmes are developed based on the needs analysis exercise of including market research, liaison with industry, review of national priorities, and views of professional bodies and reflecting the latest development and practices in the field of study.

- The process of curriculum design takes into account the core elements of the educational process such as graduate attributes and intended learning outcomes (ILOs); aligning the course content with reference points in SBS, SLQF and ILOs; teaching and learning activities that are congruent with student-centred learning; and appropriate assessment methods to measure the attainment of ILOs.

- The University's/HEI's policy on programme/course design approval, monitoring and review are contained in by-laws, regulations, rules and schedules. The requirement for approval by the academic authority of the institution of a new proposal takes account of external reference points such as SLQF, SBS, and requirements of professional bodies; codes of practice; academic justification for new programmes/courses; anticipated demand; programme specification and academic content; bridges between component subjects; teaching learning strategies and assessment methods; availability of teaching learning resources, library and IT facilities; and administration, servicing and research training. Regulations are widely communicated across the institution. Programme approval panels draw on appropriate expertise within and outside the institution.

- The Faculty adopts a participatory approach to reach consensus on ILOs, curriculum alignment, teaching learning strategies and assessment. Collaborations with institutions of acknowledged repute nationally and internationally and consultations with external stakeholders such as experts, professional bodies, employers, industry, private sector etc. are encouraged in order maintain academic standards.

- Curricular development process includes selection and organization of relevant programmes to meet national needs, and to suit the international context; flexibility to accommodate student interests; commitment to enhance graduate employability; opportunity to develop independent learning skills; and encourage innovations.

- Curriculum structuring and assignment of credit to courses/modules and study programmes are based on SLQF guidelines.

- Curricula are enriched by incorporating quasi-professional/professional, interdisciplinary, and multidisciplinary courses. Choice of media and technology are integrated into the programme/course design.

- Each study programme has offered ample scope for encouraging and developing creative and critical thinking, independent and lifelong learning, interpersonal and communication skills and independent learning skills. Appropriate learning strategies such as experiential learning, collaborative learning, and personal learning are designed into the curricula of programmes and course/modules.

- Continuous quality improvement of programmes is ensured through regular monitoring and review of programme design, development, and approval by the faculty/department/programme advisory committees, IQAC and IQAU.

- Information and reports collected by such monitoring are considered by the IQAU of the University/HEI and ensures that appropriate actions are taken to remedy any shortcomings. Departments are encouraged to use a common template for programme monitoring. The reports are open to scrutiny within the institution as well as to external subject reviewers.

- The University/HEI appreciates the complementarity of regular internal monitoring of programmes/courses and periodic external review. Regular monitoring is to ensure that programmes remain current and valid in the light of developing knowledge in the discipline and practice in its application; to evaluate the extent to which the ILOs are being attained by students; and to evaluate the continuing effectiveness of the curriculum and of assessment strategies in relation to the ILOs. In contrast, periodic reviews at intervals not exceeding five years, enable programme teams to stand back and reflect on broader aspects such as programme ILOs, scope and depth of student learning, market/employer requirements, and review of the continuing validity and relevance of programmes offered.

- The study programme information package/prospectus available in print and electronic forms is comprehensive, contains learner friendly description of the study programme and course curricula including ILOs at the programme and course level, credit hours, course contents, teaching learning strategies, assessment and evaluation details, and recommended and supplementary readings.

- Faculties and departments are clear on lines of responsibility and accountability for the accuracy of information provided and maintain consistency between programme specifications, examination regulations and amendments to handbooks and to websites.

- The University/HEI facilitates transfer of credits between faculties and between HEIs by recognizing accredited prior learning/qualification based on SLQF.

Criterion 3 - Teaching and Learning

- The teaching and learning are meticulously planned and executed through team work and coordination. The institution ensures that everyone involved is appropriately qualified, supported and facilitated for continuous professional development (CPD).

- The University/HEI adopts and implements appropriate teaching and learning strategies to suit an outcome-based and student-centred learning approach.

- The University/HEI provides students with clear and current information that specifies the learning opportunities and support available to them and assists them to understand their responsibilities to engage in the learning opportunities provided.

- Teaching learning process is student-centred, where students learn by actively engaging in and interacting with the study material with the role of the teacher being more as a guide and facilitator.

- The University/HEI promotes the adoption of student-centred teaching techniques and tools such as student presentations, self-learning assignments, project work, role plays, field visits, case studies, debates, seminars, focus group discussions, brain storming sessions, games, problem-based/inquiry based learning, group work, quizzes, practical classes & industrial training as a supplement to classroom teaching.

- The University/HEI offers induction programmes to all incoming students regarding the rules and regulations of the institution, student-centred learning (SCL) and outcome-based education (OBE), and technology based learning.

- Self-directed learning by students is encouraged through assignments which require student to refer books and journals, use the internet, and engage in computer assisted learning.

- Student engagement and interaction with teachers and peers is used as a powerful driver for quality teaching. Formal representation of students in decision making bodies and their participation in discussions on educational changes are facilitated by the institution and attention paid to their view points. To enable this, students actively contribute when consulted on teaching matters and when serving as representatives on relevant committees.

- The University/HEI facilitates the practice among students in the formation of peer study groups consisting of strong and weak students in which the better performers help slow learners in their studies.

- Assessment methods are integrated into teaching and learning strategies. Formative assessments e.g. objective type tests, open book tests etc. give feedback to students in achievement of learning outcomes and for improvement of knowledge and skills.

- Teachers are encouraged to promote innovative pedagogy and introduce ICT into teaching learning practices and to link innovations in their practice to the institutional teaching and learning goals. Learning Management Systems (LMS) are in place to encourage technology enabled teaching and learning.

- Student and peer assessment of teachers are used for self-improvement in teaching skills, teaching methods, interest in teaching, and responsiveness to student problems and participation in co-curricular and extra-curricular activities.

- A set of indicators of excellence in teaching are defined, and used to encourage improvement, evaluate performance and take into account decisions concerning promotion. These will identify champions of excellence, examine what makes their teaching excellent, publicize their accomplishments and use them as role models for others.

- Progress in implementing the teaching learning framework across each level of the institution are monitored and reported regularly to heads of departments, deans and programme leaders, and remedial actions taken where needed.

Criterion 4 - Learning Resources, Student Support and Progression

- Student support includes academic and personal counselling; financial support; progression of studies, acquisition of skills for employability and career guidance; inculcation of values; and overall development of personality. Best practices related to this criterion embrace all activities that take place from the pre-entry contact with the institution to the point of exit and beyond.

- The University/HEI ensures availability of adequate and well maintained infrastructure facilities including ICT and human resources, laboratory facilities, language laboratories and library facilities for the support of student learning and effective execution of each programme. Infrastructure growth must match the academic growth.

- Staff: Student ratio is adequate subject-wise to ensure a learning environment conducive for supporting effective teaching and learning.

- Appropriate student-friendly administrative, academic and technical support system targets retention and provides preventative support such as mentoring, personal advice and counselling to facilitate progression. The institution provides opportunities to

create an environment that proactively encourages students to engage with staff positively.

- A well laid out and networked library with increasing holdings and newer titles, digital collections, other facilities such as reprography, internet, inter-library loan etc. is in place along with a user-friendly service. Open access to the library and computerization of library services makes the library an information dissemination centre.

- The University/HEI has an effective, efficient and securely maintained MIS with accessibility only to authorized persons to ensure confidentiality. The MIS has an updated permanent record of all currently enrolled students comprising all admissions; academic, demographic, educational background records; assessment and examination results.

- Students are provided with learning resources such as adequate laboratory facilities and a spacious computer centre with local area network and internet as well as a well-equipped and staffed English Language Teaching Unit (ELTU) and other language laboratories and recreation facilities for co-curricular activities.

- Career education, information and guidance, and the development of career management skills along with soft skills are considered as inter-dependent parts of a whole area of student support and there is an institution-wide commitment to preparing students for their future careers.

- The University/HEI promotes social harmony and ethnic cohesion through programmes and activities coordinated through institutional mechanisms such as student counselling and welfare systems and a multicultural centre.

- The University/HEI has arrangements that increase awareness and understanding of students to promote mutual respect and confidence amongst students and teachers. This includes attractive induction programmes for all new students, psychological support such as mentoring, personal tutoring and counselling, publication of calendar of events for each semester/academic year, and use of student handbooks and study programme prospectuses.

Criterion 5 - Student Assessment and Awards

- The University/HEI pays due recognition to assessment as the key motivator to learning and as an integral part of the teaching learning process. Assessment is transparent and aligned with ILOs and measures the knowledge acquired, skills developed and understanding and attitudes gained.

- Student assessment policies, regulations and processes underpin the setting and maintenance of academic standards with reference to SLQF and SBS and where applicable requirements of the professional bodies.

- Assessment and examination policies, practices, and procedures provide differently abled students with the same opportunity as their peers to demonstrate the achievement of learning outcomes.

- The University/HEI ensures that policies, regulations and processes are clear and accessible to all stakeholders (students, academic staff, administrative staff, examiners both internal and external)

- The University/HEI has approved procedures for designing (setting, moderating, marking, grading), monitoring and reviewing the assessment methods for programmes and awards.

- The University/HEI ensures that all staff involved in assessment of students have the necessary knowledge and skills, have received the appropriate training to fulfill the specific role and are clear about their roles and responsibilities.

- Assessments are designed within the academic framework and regulations. Effective assessment should take into consideration the appropriate number and weightage of assessment tasks, the type of tasks and their timing. Consideration is also given to the appropriateness of assessment tools for recognition of prior learning.

- Institutional policy on examinations is available in examination By-laws, Rules, Regulations and Manual of Examination Procedures approved by appropriate authorities. Faculties/departments ensure that their processes comply with all relevant regulations, policy and guidelines in particular with reference to appointment of examiners, examination conventions (setting, moderating, marking, and classification) and examiners' reports.

- Examination boards and panels are responsible for ensuring that assessment decisions are recorded accurately with an explicit policy detailing the length of time for which records and students' results will be maintained.

- The staff carry out all aspects of assessment in a way which ensures the integrity of the assessment process and in turn the integrity of academic standards of each award.

- Where a programme forms part of the qualification regime of a professional/statutory body, clear information is made available to staff and students about specific assessment requirements that must be met for the award of the professional qualification.

- Assessment includes diagnostic, formative as well as summative methods and specific guidance on the amount and weighting of assessment, taking into account level of study, ILOs and credit requirements of the programme/course. Formative assessments are treated as learning tools which enable students to receive constructive feedback and an opportunity to improve by reflecting on their own learning.

- Involvement of external/second examiners is an essential part of the process of quality control and maintenance of standards. Faculty/department has a clear policy on who is responsible for considering the external examiners' reports, reporting lines and time frame to ensure that changes recommended in the examiners reports are implemented. Assessment outcomes are used to inform teaching methods and for improvement of the curriculum.

- Assessment regulations are strictly enforced and disciplinary procedures are in place for handling breaches of examination regulations by students; malpractices such as copying, plagiarism etc.; and violation of codes of conduct.

- Effective mechanisms are in place for continuous monitoring of assessment practices, student learning experiences and outcomes, completion, retention and progression rates and reviewing the overall performance of the assessment system. The institution provides periodic reports on academic performance to the Senate and Council.

- Students are informed before the commencement of the programme/course about the types of assessment, intended learning outcomes, timelines for assessment and publication of results, and distribution of transcripts. Students are also made aware of ethical practices, code of conduct for submission of assignments, project work, and for sitting examinations.

Criterion 6 - Strength and Quality of Staff

- Human resource planning forms an integral part of institutional governance and management, undergraduate and postgraduate programme and course development, and assessment, research and innovations and outreach activities.

- Human resource policies on staff recruitment, career progression, professional development etc. would support the strategic objective of quality teaching.

- The responsibilities and job descriptions of staff are clearly specified to meet the learning needs of students and to suit a particular programme. The workload of staff conforms to the work norms agreed to, by the institution/UGC.

- A well designed professional development programme through Staff Development Centres address the needs of all categories of staff and regularly train, retrain and motivate them for the roles and tasks they perform.

- The faculty is supported to develop IT skills to upgrade their knowledge and digital capability for introduction of ICT into teaching and learning practices.

- Performance of staff is evaluated at regular intervals through annual self-appraisal reports, confidential performance appraisal reports and learner feedback on teaching. The outcomes of performance evaluation are communicated to and discussed with staff with the aim of improving the performance and identifying further training needs.

- Policies on recognition and reward for innovative and effective teaching, research and innovations, and outreach activities are available and implemented.

Criterion 7 -Postgraduate studies, Research, Innovation and Commercialization

- Research, innovation and commercialization, publication and community engagement are encouraged as core duties of academic staff in addition to teaching.

- Institutional regulations regarding both postgraduate taught courses and research programmes are made available through the Graduate Prospectus and relevant websites.

- Effective arrangements are in place to maintain appropriate academic standards and enhance the quality of both postgraduate taught courses and research programmes that are regularly monitored against appropriate internal and external indicators and targets.

- Supervisors appointed for postgraduate student supervision have the appropriate skills and subject knowledge to support, encourage and monitor students effectively. The quality of supervision is not put at risk as a result of excessive volume and range of responsibilities assigned to individual supervisors. The role of a supervisor is defined and there are clearly defined mechanisms communicated to students and staff for conducting formal reviews of student progress.

- Assessment procedures and progress reports are clear, operated rigorously, fairly and consistently and are communicated to students, supervisors, and examiners.

- Student research potential is optimized through the research culture of the institution. Undergraduate students carry out research as part of the teaching and learning strategy and are encouraged and supported to publish their research.

- The entitlements and responsibilities of students undertaking postgraduate research/taught programmes are formally communicated to students.

- A conducive environment exists for research and scholarship to enable students to interact with academics and peers towards promoting their wellbeing and personal and professional development.

- An adequate structure is in place to promote good research practice that emphasizes integrity and rigour to create a research culture within the university.

- The University/HEI facilitates and encourages research by providing support to its academic staff through a research committee or an equivalent body that monitors and evaluates the research funded by the institution.

- Encouragement and motivation of good research is made possible by suitable incentives, awards, rewards, and public recognition.

- Provision of seed money for research, especially for the younger teachers, puts them on the research path early in their career.

- Participation and organization of national and international seminars and workshops on research also rejuvenate the faculty with fresh inputs of global knowledge.

- Publication linked incentives to the faculty in the form of enhanced funding from university resources serve to enhance the research culture.

- The University/HEI has strong links to various international, national, governmental and non-governmental agencies and industries undertaking research. Linkages with industries and getting consultancies significantly add to the academic standing of the institution.

- The institution has a stated code of conduct and ethical practices in research.

- Collaborative arrangements for research cooperation are negotiated, agreed and managed in accordance with formally stated policies and procedures of the institution.

- Fair, transparent, robust and consistently applied complaints and appeal procedures, appropriate to all categories of postgraduate students are in place and publicized.

Criterion 8 - Community Engagement, Consultancy and Outreach

- The University/HEI, as reflected in its mission, has a community service policy with a clear link to the goals and objectives of the strategic plan, and procedures for their implementation, monitoring and improvement.

- The University/HEI diversifies their sources of income, principally undertaken by offering fee-levying programmes/courses for external students, consultancy and advisory services, commercializing research and innovations, laboratory services etc.

- A clearly defined policy framework and manual of procedures exist for income generating activities. This includes budgeting, fee-structures and rates, financial disbursement procedures, dispute resolution and termination of contracts.

- Faculty/department/centre/unit plans show that specific academic abilities of staff are made use of for community service, demonstrating a proactive approach.

- The co-curricular activities of the institution engage students, staff, administrators and faculty with the community and are supported by institution's resources physical, financial and human.

- Appropriate mechanisms and procedures are in place to encourage and facilitate academia to take on consultancies for the wider community. Potential expertise of the academic staff are identified and published through media and the website. Continuous offering of consultancies builds up the reputation of the faculty and helps in augmenting institutional corpus, quest for new areas for research and social acceptance.

- Research, consultancy and extension services are actively promoted through extension units to build linkages and outreach to end users in farm and industry.

- University/HEI has strong industry-institution-community linkages built into its activities through membership of Advisory Boards, Council and Board of Governors.

- The University/HEI has business centres/incubators to link with industry and assist in commercialization.

- Policies and strategies are established to encourage, recognize and reward extension and consultancy services.

- Quality is enhanced through collaboration with other recognized national/international institutions for jointly awarded degree programmes, student exchanges and placements for internships. The University/HEI satisfies itself that the partner organization has effective measures to assure that staff engaged in delivering a collaborative programme are appropriately qualified and competent. The University/HEI ensures that the quality of learning opportunities offered through a collaborative arrangement enable students to achieve the academic standard required.

- Where work-based or placement learning is a part of the programme of study, the institution ensures that the intended learning outcomes are clearly identified, contribute to the overall aims of the programme and are assessed appropriately. The

University/HEI also informs students of their specific responsibilities and entitlements relating to their work-based and placement learning. The institution has policies and procedures for securing, monitoring, administering, and reviewing work-based and placement learning.

Criterion 9 - Distance Education

- The Corporate/Strategic plan provides the foundation for all distance learning policies, procedures and activities. The University/HEI defines the areas of responsibility for each internal department/unit/centre and each external organization involved in the operations of the distance learning enterprise. University/HEIs management and administration ensure that the distance learning programmes/courses meet the objectives and mission of the institution. Operational planning on all aspects must be done well in advance on a yearly basis and the year planner circulated to all concerned. They are regularly monitored through financial, administrative and academic audits and QA procedures.

- The University/HEI retains the responsibility for the quality of the programmes/courses offered through distance education and the achievement of expected outcomes, irrespective of any contractual arrangements or partnerships entered into with third parties for the provision of components of a distance education programme/course of study.

- The University/HEI's publications, print or online, clearly describe distance learning programmes/courses, including the delivery system used, the pre-requisites for participation, ILOs, completion requirements and student services.

- Course materials developed by the faculty have clearly defined ILOs and are interactive, accessible and comprehensive to enable the learner to achieve the desired outcomes.

- ICT is used to mediate learning (e.g. video tapes, audio tapes, CDs, online sources). Learner support is provided through a variety of communication channels which could be synchronous or asynchronous via phone, fax, email, video conferencing etc.

- The programmes and courses of study provide for timely and effective interaction between students and the study materials, as well as students-faculty and student-student interaction.

- Clear policies and ownership of instructional materials and protection of copyrights are established.

- The faculty defines student learning outcomes on the course and programme level; assess student attainment of learning outcomes equivalent to face to face courses; design curricula for all learning formats; ensure the rigour of distance programmes and the quality of instruction; provide direct instruction and/or mentor adjunct faculty when/where appropriate.

- The University/HEI provides orientation and training of faculty in ODL pedagogy to those who will teach using distance learning methods and evaluate faculty effectiveness for teaching learning.

- The University/HEI has established policies addressing teaching load in credit hours, class size, time needed for course development, and sharing of instructional responsibilities which allow for effective teaching using distance education methods.

- Infrastructure facilities are adequate and appropriate for distance learners. Academic learner support may be provided by part-time tutors, full-time academic staff, counsellors and advisors. Adequate tutor: student ratio for each programme is maintained. Services are available to enable students to achieve their educational objectives in the distance learning programmes.

- Learning resources (library, computer and internet facilities, English language laboratories etc.) and instructional materials are adequate and appropriate for ODL. Clearly defined procedures and processes are available to evaluate the adequacy and accessibility of the resources and services for students in the distance learning system on an ongoing basis.

- Programmes/courses of study offered through distance learning methods are comparable to programmes/courses with similar subject matter offered through the face to face mode.

Criterion 10 - Quality Assurance

- The University/HEI recognizes that the primary responsibility for quality lies with the institution itself, and this provides the basis for accountability within the national quality assurance framework.

- The University/HEI has put in place the internal system of quality assurance, as prescribed by the UGC-QAAC within the framework of the national QA system.

- The University/HEI develops processes through which it demonstrates its commitment to Quality. It develops a quality culture by paying more attention to internal quality enhancement through the IQAU.

- The University/HEI recognizes that the impact it makes on its stakeholders is determined by the degree to which it achieves the quality of its standards, its competitiveness, the quality and impact of research and the range and quality of its consultancy, advisory and community services.

- The University/HEI has a policy and associated procedures for the assurance of the quality and standards of its programmes and awards. The policy statement includes the institution's strategy for quality and standards, organization of the quality assurance system, and the ways in which policy is implemented, monitored and revised.

- The University/HEI ensures formal mechanisms for well designed, regularly monitored and periodically reviewed programmes.

- Institutional quality assessment procedures are designed to measure the intended learning outcomes and programme objectives using published criteria, regulations and procedures.

- The University/HEI ensures that it has mechanisms to collect, analyze, and use relevant information for the effective management of its study programmes. The quality related information system includes profile of the student population, effectiveness of faculty, student progression and success rates, student satisfaction and employability of the graduates.

- The University/HEI ensures that the recommendations of the External review Report are dealt with appropriately through the IQAU in consultation with the Senate and the Council.

Chapter Four

Standards for Assessment

Quality assessment in higher education is a diagnostic review and evaluation of the University's/HEI's compliance with a set of best practices and the degree of attainment of the 'Standards'/Benchmarks prescribed by the UGC-QAAC. The best practices for each of the ten criteria are summarized in Chapter three of this Manual. The best practices captured into specific statements termed 'Standards' are presented here but are not necessarily in the same order in which they appear in Chapter three. The Standards are to be used by reviewers, to measure quantitatively or qualitatively, the degree of compliance with best practices and the level of attainment in the relevant 'Standards'.

4.1 Standards

Standards are usually established by an authority (rule or principle) by general consensus as a basis for comparison. They define exactly how a task should be completed or what the outputs and outcomes would be. Generally there is not much room for variance. Factors that affect input, process, output and outcome have been taken into account in developing these standards.

The self-evaluation report (SER) of the University/HEI has to be structured in line with the 'Standards' provided in this chapter describing the extent to which it has adhered to the best practices defined in the ten criteria. A quality assessment uses evidence to make judgments objectively. In order to facilitate the use of standards in assessment, examples of evidence are given against each standard. During the review, the peer team after scrutiny of the documentary evidence provided for each standard, will measure its level of attainment and give a corresponding score.

To arrive at standard and criteria-wise assessments, examples of evidence and a score-guide on a 4-point Likert scale are provided. The examples of evidence are not exhaustive and the university/HEI may present any relevant evidence deemed appropriate for a particular standard. The standards could be used for both IQA & EQA.

4.2 Standards, Sources of Evidence and Score Guide

Criterion 1- Governance and Management

Scope –Legal Acts, establishment codes, rules, regulations, national policy framework and strategies are integrated within the governance and management of the University/HEI. The University/HEI determines its own mission and objectives that reflect its values and standards, academic commitments, national needs and international context. The University/HEI has clear and effective communication channels. The University/HEI has administrative policies, procedures, appropriately qualified personnel, efficient management and administrative capacity, physical facilities, financial stability, and resources adequate for effective operations and evidence-based strategic decision making. The University/HEI should manage its activities in a technology-enabled way in addition to using technology as a teaching/learning resource.

Criterion 1 is captured in the following 'Standards':

No.	Standards	Examples of Evidence	Score Guide 0 - Inadequate 1 - Barely Adequate 2 - Adequate 3 - Good
1.1	The organizational structure, governance and management system are in compliance with respective Acts, relevant Ordinances and their amendments, Establishment Codes, rules and regulations issued by the relevant Ministries/Authorities or Articles of Association where relevant.	University Act and Ordinances; University Calendar and By-laws; Organogram; Manual of Procedures/Standard Operational Procedures (SOP) approved by the relevant authorities.	**0 1 2 3** ○ ○ ○ ○
1.2	The University/HEIs Strategic Plan is in alignment with the National Higher Education Policy Framework and Action plans of institutes/ faculties/centres/units are in line with University/HEIs strategic plan.	National Higher Education Policy Framework; Corporate Plan/Strategic Plan; Action Plans of institutes/faculties/centres/ units.	**0 1 2 3** ○ ○ ○ ○
1.3	Vision and mission statements are clear and articulate publicly the University/HEI's commitments reflecting national, regional and international trends.	Corporate Plan/Strategic Plan; Minutes of the Strategic Management Plan Committee and Planning and Development Committee; Action Plans of institutes faculties/ centres/units.	**0 1 2 3** ○ ○ ○ ○

No.	Standards	Examples of Evidence	Score Guide 0 - Inadequate 1 - Barely Adequate 2 - Adequate 3 - Good
1.4	Governance and administrative structures enable the University/HEI to fulfill its mission, goals, aims/ objectives and facilitate effective leadership through policy development and processes for accountability.	Corporate Plan/Strategic Plan; Action Plans of institutes/faculties/centres /units; Organogram; Composition, TOR and minutes of Standing and Ad-hoc Committees; Minutes of Governing Board, Senate/Academic Syndicate.	**0 1 2 3** ○ ○ ○ ○
1.5	University/HEI engages in participatory, systematic, and integrated planning with all relevant stakeholders in alignment with the Corporate/Strategic plan, assigning responsibilities to them and communicated to all concerned.	Annual report; Corporate Plan/Strategic Plan; Action Plans of institutes/faculties/ centres/units; Minutes of Planning and Development Committee and Senior Management Committee Meetings.	**0 1 2 3** ○ ○ ○ ○
1.6	Mechanisms and approved procedures are in place to ensure implementation and monitoring of all institutional policies and strategies, and actions plans.	Minutes of Council, Planning and Development Committee and Senior Management Committee meetings; Progress reports of Corporate Plan/Strategic Plan and Action Plans of units; Annual Report.	**0 1 2 3** ○ ○ ○ ○
1.7	Resource allocation is explicitly and transparently linked to activities identified in the annual plans of the respective years.	Manual of Procedures/ SOPs; UGC circulars; Minutes of Finance committee; Council minutes.	**0 1 2 3** ○ ○ ○ ○
1.8	The University/HEI has an effective system for the procurement, management and maintenance of equipment and facilities.	Manual of Procedures/ SOPs; Minutes of Finance Committee, Procurement Committee, Technical Evaluation Committee, and Maintenance Committee; Fixed Assets Register.	**0 1 2 3** ○ ○ ○ ○

No.	Standards	Examples of Evidence	Score Guide 0 - Inadequate 1 - Barely Adequate 2 - Adequate 3 - Good
1.9	The University's/HEI's financial procedures comply with the requirements of national/University/ HEI financial regulations and guidelines.	HEI's Reports to COPE and COPE's recommendations; Minutes of Finance committee, Procurement Committee, Audit and Management Committee; Council minutes; Manual of Financial procedures/ SOPs.	**0 1 2 3** ○ ○ ○ ○
1.10	The University/HEI has well defined policies and procedures for seeking and receiving funds from external sources and fund disbursement.	SOP Manual; Council Minutes; Audit Reports.	**0 1 2 3** ○ ○ ○ ○
1.11	Governance and management based on principles of transparency and participation are monitored through internal and external auditing systems.	Minutes of Audit and Management Committee; Internal Auditors and External Auditors annual reports; COPE submissions and reports.	**0 1 2 3** ○ ○ ○ ○
1.12	There is a strong commitment by the University/HEI leadership to reflect upon performance, output/outcomes rather than processes and inputs.	Monitoring committee documents; Strategic Plan and Action Plans and outputs; survey reports; self-review reports.	**0 1 2 3** ○ ○ ○ ○
1.13	The University/HEI has put in place an information system (MIS) which is complete and current.	MIS; evidence of maintenance of complete records and regular updates; websites.	**0 1 2 3** ○ ○ ○ ○
1.14	The University/HEI incorporates use of ICT in management, communication, teaching and learning, research and community engagement.	Policy documents on ICT; Strategic Plan; Handbooks; Planning and Development Committee documents; Annual Report; website, MIS & LMS.	**0 1 2 3** ○ ○ ○ ○

No.	Standards	Examples of Evidence	Score Guide 0 - Inadequate 1 - Barely Adequate 2 - Adequate 3 - Good
1.15	All staff and students have access to efficient and reliable networked computing facilities including access to university-wide information service and are trained to use them.	Policy documents on ICT; MIS, LMS; Minutes of IT committee; Feedback from students and staff; Documents from Staff Development Centre (SDC).	**0 1 2 3** ○ ○ ○ ○
1.16	The University/HEI has policies that are enforced on academic honesty and integrity, conflict of interest and ethics.	Senate Minutes; Council minutes; Documented policies on academic honesty, conflict of interest and ethics; proof of enforcing them; Ethical Approval Committee meeting minutes; Code of Conduct for students and staff.	**0 1 2 3** ○ ○ ○ ○
1.17	The University/HEI recruits adequate, appropriately qualified and experienced staff through transparent mechanisms, take efforts to retain them and upgrade their skills periodically to achieve performance targets.	Recruitment and Promotion criteria circulars/ documents; Selection committee appointments; implementation of interview board's decisions; policy on retention of staff; SDC documents; interaction with staff; staff feedback survey reports; Annual Reports.	**0 1 2 3** ○ ○ ○ ○
1.18	The roles, responsibilities, obligations and rights of staff are clearly defined , documented and communicated to all concerned and reviewed regularly.	Job descriptions of all categories of staff; staff charter; evidence of communication to staff and students.	**0 1 2 3** ○ ○ ○ ○
1.19	The University/HEI has well defined work norms for all categories of staff and adherence to the work norms ensured.	Institutional/UGC adopted work norms of staff; action taken to enforce it; staff appraisal documents.	**0 1 2 3** ○ ○ ○ ○

No.	Standards	Examples of Evidence	Score Guide 0 - Inadequate 1 - Barely Adequate 2 - Adequate 3 - Good
1.20	The University/HEI has an effective staff performance appraisal and management system for all categories of staff	Staff appraisal documents and reports; Academic and non-academic Staff Charters.	**0 1 2 3** ○ ○ ○ ○
1.21	The University/HEI has a clear policy on the use of Subject Benchmark Statements (SBS), Sri Lanka Qualifications Framework (SLQF), Codes of Practice and credit transfer mechanisms.	University/HEI Policy and Procedures for Academic Planning and Development; Minutes of Senate, Faculty Boards, Curriculum Development Committees (CDC); Handbooks, Prospectus; website.	**0 1 2 3** ○ ○ ○ ○
1.22	The University/HEI has a stated policy and framework for quality assurance (QA) effectively communicated to all internal constituencies.	Institutional QA policy; Corporate plan; Senate minutes; Council minutes; Faculty Boards/Heads' meeting documents relating to IQAU& IQAC.	**0 1 2 3** ○ ○ ○ ○
1.23	The University/HEI has a policy which promotes and rewards innovation in curriculum development, teaching and learning, research and community engagement, and allocates resources accordingly.	Corporate/Strategic plan; Minutes of Council/Senate/ CDC/Awards Committee/Finance Committee.	**0 1 2 3** ○ ○ ○ ○
1.24	The University/HEI has an explicit policy and a framework on internationalization that includes international student recruitment, staff/student exchange, alliances with off-shore University/HEIs, student support services and cross-border delivery.	Internationalization plans; Corporate Plan/Strategic Plan; surveys of international students; mission statement; enrollment data; Annual Report.	**0 1 2 3** ○ ○ ○ ○

No.	Standards	Examples of Evidence	Score Guide 0 - Inadequate 1 - Barely Adequate 2 - Adequate 3 - Good
1.25	The University/HEI has transparent, fair, effective, and expeditious disciplinary procedures and grievance redress mechanisms for staff and students, which are communicated to all concerned and implemented.	Disciplinary By-laws for staff and students; Minutes of Disciplinary Committees; By-laws for grievance redress mechanisms; Minutes of Grievance Committee meetings; Complaints received and actions taken; Council minutes.	**0 1 2 3** ○ ○ ○ ○
1.26	The University/HEI supports and promotes parity of esteem of both face-to face and distance modes of delivery where programmes are offered through ODL.	Corporate Plan/Strategic Plan; Mission statement; By-laws governing degrees/diplomas/ certificates; transcript template.	**0 1 2 3** ○ ○ ○ ○
1.27	The University/HEI administers relevant welfare schemes for all constituents of the University/HEI.	Evidence of established welfare facilities through Handbook, website or any other documents; records of students and staff availing of facilities.	**0 1 2 3** ○ ○ ○ ○
1.28	The University/HEI has a comprehensive policy and has strategies and action plans drawn up in line with the UGC prescribed policy and strategies to promote GEE and deter SGBV.	Policy document on GEE and SGBV; Strategies and Actions Plans drawn and implemented; Reports on the progress made in promoting GEE and deterring SGBV.	**0 1 2 3** ○ ○ ○ ○
1.29	The University/HEI has put into practice a comprehensive policy and has strategies and action plans drawn up in line with the UGC Circular 919 to curb ragging and any other form of intimidation and harassment of students.	Policy and Strategy document on curbing ragging; Student disciplinary by-laws; Mechanisms for preventing ragging and related misdemeanours; Reports on incidences of ragging and related misdemeanours and deterrent measures.	**0 1 2 3** ○ ○ ○ ○

Criterion 2 – Curriculum and Programme Development

Scope – Academic Programmes reflect University/HEI's mission, goals and objectives. Programmes are designed and developed according to needs analysis based on an audit of existing courses and programmes, market research, liaison with industry, national and regional priorities according to approved procedures.

The programme complies with the SLQF and as far as possible with SBS and any deviations justified with reasons. Curriculum and programmes are outcome-based incorporating the knowledge, skills and attitudes that a graduate of the 21st century should possess. Courses are components of a programme of study and are designed according to the stated programme objectives. Adequate emphasis is given in the course design for the development of self-directed learning and lifelong learning. Courses clearly present the learning outcomes, content, teaching and learning strategies, assessment strategies, and student support approaches. There is an identified process for monitoring and review of programmes/courses.

Criterion 2 is captured in the following 'Standards':

No.	Standards	Examples of Evidence	Score Guide 0 - Inadequate 1 - Barely Adequate 2 - Adequate 3 - Good
2.1	The University/HEI systematically and consistently maintains conformity of academic programmes with its mission and goals; approval of course design and development by the academic authority; regular monitoring and review of programmes.	Organizational arrangements for curriculum development and approval; TOR and guidelines for Senate and Faculty level curriculum development committees; Curriculum development documents with programme evaluation policies and procedures.	**0 1 2 3** ○ ○ ○ ○
2.2	The University/HEI communicates to all concerned the policies and principles on which programmes are designed and developed, and the regulations by which programmes are assessed by the academic authority.	Curriculum development documents with programme evaluation policies and procedures; credit accumulation and transfer policy and procedure; Minutes of Faculty Boards/Senate.	**0 1 2 3** ○ ○ ○ ○

No.	Standards	Examples of Evidence	Score Guide 0 - Inadequate 1 - Barely Adequate 2 - Adequate 3 - Good
2.3	In programme design and approval the University/HEI makes use of reference points such as SLQF, SBS & Codes of Practice, employment market signals; and expertise from outside including industry and employers.	Policy and procedures on Curriculum and course design; evidence of compliance with SBSs, SLQF; programme evaluation instruments, needs analysis and market survey data.	**0 1 2 3** ○ ○ ○ ○
2.4	The University/HEI adopts outcome-based education (OBE) and student-centred learning (SCL) approach for design and development of curricula of all study programmes and communicates to those involved.	Programme/Course specifications; standards prescribed by professional bodies; Minutes of CDC/ Faculty Boards/Senate.	**0 1 2 3** ○ ○ ○ ○
2.5	Curricula of all academic programmes of the University/HEI are constructively aligned with Institutional and discipline-specific graduate profile.	Graduate profile of University/HEI; approved documents of Senate/CDC on teaching learning strategy and its alignment to Intended Learning Outcomes (ILOs).	**0 1 2 3** ○ ○ ○ ○
2.6	For each study programme there is a comprehensive document of 'programme specification' which specifies programme outcomes, course objectives/ILOs specified in consistence with graduate profile, SLQF and SBS, course contents, teaching and learning methods, assessment methods and recommended readings.	Curriculum development committee meeting minutes/Senate approved programme documents; Programme specifications/ course specifications with justification for any deviation from SBS.	**0 1 2 3** ○ ○ ○ ○
2.7	Programme and course specifications are publicly available.	Handbook/Guidebook/ Prospectuses/website	**0 1 2 3** ○ ○ ○ ○

No.	Standards	Examples of Evidence	Score Guide 0 - Inadequate 1 - Barely Adequate 2 - Adequate 3 - Good
2.8	Curriculum and content are up-to date with recent development in pedagogy, subject/discipline-specific advances, and changes in professional standards.	Approved curricula with evidence of incorporating inputs from relevant research, industry and professional bodies.	**0 1 2 3** ○ ○ ○ ○
2.9	Content, teaching learning strategies and assessment are carefully structured to facilitate the achievement of learning outcomes and programmes are assessed on the basis of the students' attainment of learning outcomes.	Senate approved programme with assessment methods aligned to ILOs; examination papers; student achievement survey data; annual and periodic evaluation data.	**0 1 2 3** ○ ○ ○ ○
2.10	The University/HEI offers supplementary courses such as vocational, professional, inter-disciplinary & multidisciplinary to enrich the general curricula.	Handbook; Prospectus; curriculum of individual programmes.	**0 1 2 3** ○ ○ ○ ○
2.11	The University/HEI adopts measures to protect the academic interest of students registered for/ accepted for admission to a programme when a programme is discontinued or suspended.	Handbook/Guidebook/ Prospectus; evidence of formal notification by any other means.	**0 1 2 3** ○ ○ ○ ○
2.12	All programmes are outcome based and reflected through indicators such as retention rates, time taken for completion of a programme, graduation rates at first attempt, employer satisfaction, admission rates to advanced degree programmes, participation rates in fellowships, internships, societal impacts, etc.	Results of surveys of employment rates: tracer studies; surveys to determine numbers obtaining scholarships/ fellowships/internships; outcome surveys on benefits to society; evidence of admission to PG/advanced programmes	**0 1 2 3** ○ ○ ○ ○
2.13	The University/ HEI has in place a mechanism for annual tracer studies on graduate employment.	Evidence of conducting tracer studies annually; survey data; Annual Report.	**0 1 2 3** ○ ○ ○ ○

No.	Standards	Examples of Evidence	Score Guide 0 - Inadequate 1 - Barely Adequate 2 - Adequate 3 - Good
2.14	Effectiveness of programmes are regularly monitored at least annually by all relevant stakeholders to ensure appropriate actions are taken to remedy any identified shortcomings.	Adoption of policy and procedures in curriculum design and improvement of programmes; data obtained; improvements made on the results; IQAU/IQAC reports; Senate approvals.	**0 1 2 3** ○ ○ ○ ○
2.15	The programmes are periodically reviewed (5-year cycle) for continuing validity, synchronizing with EQA and relevance of programmes offered.	Internal/external review reports; EQA reports, reports from professional bodies; accreditation reports; feedback from stakeholders; remedial measures taken.	**0 1 2 3** ○ ○ ○ ○

Criterion 3 – Teaching and Learning

Scope –The teaching and learning process is student-centred in keeping with outcome-based education (OBE). Faculty uses multiple teaching and learning methods to engage students actively in the learning process and adopt an assessment strategy aligned with ILOs.

Criterion 3 is captured in the following 'Standards'.

No.	Standards	Examples of Evidence	Score Guide 0 - Inadequate 1 - Barely Adequate 2 - Adequate 3 - Good
3.1	The University/HEI adopts a teaching and learning plan which includes modes of delivery, student support, resource allocation, individual responsibilities, implementation arrangements, and approaches to continuous enhancement of quality.	Teaching learning plans of faculties/programmes; Records of attendance and delivery of lectures/ tutorials/practicals/ clinicals; samples of students' log books/ portfolios; Minutes of Faculty Boards/Senate;	**0 1 2 3** ○ ○ ○ ○
3.2	The University/HEI adopts the policy of student-centred teaching and learning process to ensure that students actively engage in and interact with all prescribed study material, peers and teachers.	University/HEI-wide policy and strategy on teaching and learning; approved curricula; training programmes on student-centred teaching for staff at all levels; peer observation records and staff performance appraisal documents; student satisfaction surveys; records on active learning ie. utilization of language and computer laboratories and library etc.; samples of students' log books/portfolios, and evidence of group activities, creative work, inventions, & innovations.	**0 1 2 3** ○ ○ ○ ○

No.	Standards	Examples of Evidence	Score Guide 0 - Inadequate 1 - Barely Adequate 2 - Adequate 3 - Good
3.3	The University/HEI evaluates and continuously improves its learning provision and regularly benchmarks learning outcomes to ensure consistency.	Policy on benchmarking learning outcomes documents; evidence of regular programme reviews and analyzed data; evidence of improving programmes based on the outcome of reviews.	**0 1 2 3** ○ ○ ○ ○
3.4	The University/HEI ensures availability and equitable access for students and staff to required teaching and learning resources with opportunity to develop skills to use them effectively.	Inventory of learning resources/tools; evidence of induction programmes; records on the use of learning resources by students and staff; training schedules of SDC.	**0 1 2 3** ○ ○ ○ ○
3.5	The University/HEI ensures that the teachers adopt innovative pedagogy and ICT-based learning tools including LMS into teaching learning practices.	Programme and course specifications; samples of teaching and training materials and methods developed/adopted (eg. print and ICT-based material); student feedback; peer observations.	**0 1 2 3** ○ ○ ○ ○
3.6	The University/HEI provides opportunities for students to form peer study groups to promote development of necessary skills.	Evidence of presence of peer study groups; student achievement surveys data; student satisfaction data.	**0 1 2 3** ○ ○ ○ ○
3.7	The University/HEI ensures that all study programmes and courses integrate assessment methods to teaching learning strategy.	Approved policy and mechanism on curriculum design; Senate/curriculum development committee documents; evidence of assessments integrated to teaching and learning; sample assessment papers; external assessors' and moderators' reports.	**0 1 2 3** ○ ○ ○ ○

No.	Standards	Examples of Evidence	Score Guide 0 - Inadequate 1 - Barely Adequate 2 - Adequate 3 - Good
3.8	The University/HEI has regular peer and student review of teaching, providing feedback to the teacher for self-improvement.	Records and reports on student feedback; records on feedback provided to teachers based on student feedback/peer observation reports.	**0 1 2 3** ○ ○ ○ ○
3.9	The University/HEI recognizes the value of creative and innovative approaches in teaching and rewards those who excel in them.	Policy documents on incentives/rewards/awards for recognition of innovative teaching to encourage creativity; records of evaluation mechanisms applied; records of staff receiving such awards.	**0 1 2 3** ○ ○ ○ ○
3.10	The academic staff enrich the content of the discipline and teaching and learning strategy with recent advances in research and published literature.	Research output of staff in relation to their discipline/ teaching learning; evidence of teachers incorporating their own research output and those in the public domain.	**0 1 2 3** ○ ○ ○ ○

Criterion 4 – Learning Resources, Student Support and Progression

Scope – The University/HEI has adequate and appropriate infrastructure and maintenance facilities for the mode and type of teaching and learning and for the number of students to conduct quality academic programmes. University/HEI's strategic, operational, and financial plans recognize and support adequacy, appropriate and optimal use of facilities including new technologies, communication channels, teaching learning, management and administration and quality assurance of programmes. The University/HEI/Faculty/Department facilitates the use of technological innovations in educational transaction to enrich the learning experiences it provides to students. Students are supported adequately by provision of a range of opportunities for tutoring, mentoring, counselling, and stimulation of peer support structures to facilitate their holistic progression. The University/HEI provides adequate support for student-centred learning and outcome-based education.

Criterion 4 is captured in the following 'Standards'.

No.	Standards	Examples of Evidence	Score Guide 0 - Inadequate 1 - Barely Adequate 2 - Adequate 3 - Good
4.1	The University/HEI has an efficient administration that responds promptly to all student enquiries on admissions, programmes, examinations, fees, dues, graduation and scholarships etc. with accurate and complete answers.	Web site with FAQs; Job descriptions of relevant staff; administrative structure; students' feedback; help desk.	**0 1 2 3** ○ ○ ○ ○
4.2	The University/HEI has arrangements for registration, induction and orientation of new students and ensure that these arrangements promote effective integration of new entrants to the student community.	Induction and orientation programmes; measures to minimize/eliminate ragging.	**0 1 2 3** ○ ○ ○ ○
4.3	The University/HEI securely maintains updates and ensures confidentiality of permanent records of all currently enrolled learners.	A comprehensive, up to date MIS with data on students; Evidence of measures such as firewalls, passwords etc. for maintaining security and confidentiality of records.	**0 1 2 3** ○ ○ ○ ○

No.	Standards	Examples of Evidence	Score Guide 0 - Inadequate 1 - Barely Adequate 2 - Adequate 3 - Good
4.4	The University/HEI ensures accessibility of relevant information through the MIS, LMS, Handbooks, Prospectus and Websites to all registered students.	MIS; LMS; Programme/ course information package in print (Handbook) and on the website; dissemination of print information package at the commencement of the programme; student feedback.	**0 1 2 3** ○ ○ ○ ○
4.5	The University/HEI provides accurate and updated information to prospective students on programmes, avenues for financial support, academic calendar, examination system, etc. through print media or the Website.	Handbooks/Guidebooks/ Brochures; evidence of dissemination of information; Website; date of last updating.	**0 1 2 3** ○ ○ ○ ○
4.6	The University/HEI has built into the design of all study programmes and courses, a student support system that promotes teacher - student and student- student interaction.	Evidence of student support system in Programme/ Course specifications; job descriptions of staff.	**0 1 2 3** ○ ○ ○ ○
4.7	The University/HEI ensures that adequate, appropriate and accessible resources are provided and maintained for the support of teaching and learning activities, with user surveys to assist in monitoring and improvement.	University/HEI Annual Budget Estimates; evidence of final allocations through respective programme budgets; students' feedback; user surveys; relevant infrastructure.	**0 1 2 3** ○ ○ ○ ○
4.8	Information, adequate resources and student-centred services are provided to support the social and personal development of all students.	Student satisfaction surveys and analyzed data.	**0 1 2 3** ○ ○ ○ ○

No.	Standards	Examples of Evidence	Score Guide 0 - Inadequate 1 - Barely Adequate 2 - Adequate 3 - Good
4.9	The University/HEI provides appropriate delivery strategies, academic support services and guidance to meet the needs of differently-abled students.	Policy documents on facilities for differently-abled students; evidence of identified needs of differently-abled students and provision of support and services; students' feedback; appropriate infrastructure.	**0 1 2 3** ○ ○ ○ ○
4.10	The University/HEI library and its branches use ICT-led tools to facilitate the students to access and use information effectively for academic success, research and lifelong learning.	Availability of library services for students; evidence of use of ICT-based tools; library training/ orientation schedules and user surveys; Annual report; Minutes of Library Committee meetings.	**0 1 2 3** ○ ○ ○ ○
4.11	The University/HEI has put in place the policies, practices, systems and opportunities that facilitate students' progression from one stage of a programme to another and for qualifying for an award.	Records of student usage of academic and career counselling services and other facilities; student feedback reports; and regular tracer studies on graduates.	**0 1 2 3** ○ ○ ○ ○
4.12	The University/HEI provides and maintains adequate learner support resources including counselling, ELTU, computer facilities, library, career guidance, field areas and service centres; residential facilities; welfare services; health and medical facilities; facilities for sports and recreation and cultural and aesthetic activities .	Availability of resources in the field areas and service centres; medical records of students attending the health centre; presence of facilities for sports and recreation, and cultural and aesthetic activities; recording systems showing the use of services and facilities; students' feedback forms and reports.	**0 1 2 3** ○ ○ ○ ○

No.	Standards	Examples of Evidence	Score Guide 0 - Inadequate 1 - Barely Adequate 2 - Adequate 3 - Good
4.13	The University/HEI monitors retention, progression, completion/graduation rates, employment rates and per student cost in relation to national targets and remedial measures taken where necessary.	Student admission, progression, drop outs and graduation data; student satisfaction surveys; programme evaluation; tracer studies; Annual Report.	**0 1 2 3** ○ ○ ○ ○
4.14	The University/HEI has a means of determining students' satisfaction after the completion of their programme of study and use the feedback for remedial action.	Student satisfaction survey data; evidence of use of findings of feedback survey for continuous improvement.	**0 1 2 3** ○ ○ ○ ○

Criterion 5 – Student Assessment and Awards

Scope –The University/HEI has effective assessment systems, both in-course and end of course, that reflect academic standards and measure the accomplishment of the learning outcomes for individual programmes/courses through the use of diagnostic, formative and summative types of assessments. The University/HEI ensures that principles, procedures, and processes of all assessments are explicit, fair, transparent, valid and consistent while ensuring confidentiality and integrity.

Criterion 5 is captured in the following 'Standards'

No.	Standards	Examples of Evidence	Score Guide 0 - Inadequate 1 - Barely Adequate 2 - Adequate 3 - Good
5.1	The University/HEI has effective procedures for designing, approving, monitoring and reviewing the assessment strategies for programmes and awards; implementing policies and procedures rigorously through appropriate assessment practices to ensure that the academic standards of the awards are maintained.	By-laws, examination rules and regulations; Curriculum; past question papers; random samples of answer scripts; marks sheets; theses and dissertations; undergraduate project reports; in-course assessment records.	**0 1 2 3** ○ ○ ○ ○
5.2	The University/HEI reviews and amends assessment regulations periodically as appropriate, to assure itself that the regulations remain fit for purpose.	Minutes of review meetings; Amended By-laws, rules and regulations; Curriculum Development/Evaluation Committee minutes; Senate/ Academic syndicate/ Governing Board minutes.	**0 1 2 3** ○ ○ ○ ○
5.3	Students are assessed using published criteria, regulations, and procedures which are communicated to all students and staff at the time of enrollment/recruitment and applied consistently.	Examination By-laws; regulations and rules governing student assessments; Manual of examination procedures; Students' Handbook/Study Programme Prospectuses; student assessment records.	**0 1 2 3** ○ ○ ○ ○

No.	Standards	Examples of Evidence	Score Guide 0 - Inadequate 1 - Barely Adequate 2 - Adequate 3 - Good
5.4	The University/HEI ensures that staff involved in assessments of students are competent to undertake their roles and responsibilities and have no conflicts of interest.	Evidence of knowledge about Manual of examination procedures, By-laws, regulations; SDC's past and future training schedules for academics	**0 1 2 3** ○ ○ ○ ○
5.5	Assessment strategy is aligned to the relevant qualification descriptors of the SLQF, the objectives/ILOs, teaching and learning strategies.	Curricula of programmes/ courses; alignment of assessments to ILOs and teaching and learning methods; Students feedback reports; Exit survey reports.	**0 1 2 3** ○ ○ ○ ○
5.6	The University/HEI regulates the weightage relating to different components of assessments with respect to ILOs, based on a clear policy stated in the programme/course specifications.	Policy on weightage relating to different components of assessments; Course syllabi reflecting University/HEI policy on weightage; Handbooks/Prospectuses.	**0 1 2 3** ○ ○ ○ ○
5.7	The University/HEI ensures that the volume, timing and nature of assessment tasks enable effective measurement of students' attainment of ILOs.	Evidence of adopting policy on timing of assessment and measurement of student achievement of ILOs; examination papers and time tables; Examination regulations and By-laws.	**0 1 2 3** ○ ○ ○ ○
5.8	The University/HEI ensures that assessments diagnostic/ summative/formative are conducted with rigour, honesty transparency and fairness and with due regard to security and integrity.	By-laws on Examinations; Manual of examination procedures; Appeal mechanisms; evidence of adherence to above; students feedback reports; Exit survey reports.	**0 1 2 3** ○ ○ ○ ○
5.9	Students are provided with appropriate and timely feedback to enable them to monitor their progress and promote learning.	Students' feedback forms; Answer scripts of formative assessments; evidence of release of formative assessment results on time.	**0 1 2 3** ○ ○ ○ ○

No.	Standards	Examples of Evidence	Score Guide 0 - Inadequate 1 - Barely Adequate 2 - Adequate 3 - Good
5.10	University/HEI has explicit policies and regulations governing the nomination and appointment of both internal and external examiners.	Policy documents on appointment of external examiners; By-Laws of examinations; Senate minutes; Letters of appointment to examiners.	**0 1 2 3** ○ ○ ○ ○
5.11	The University/HEI involves external examiners or an independent second examiner or conference marking in examinations as part of quality control and assurance of academic standards.	Manual of examination procedures; By-laws on examinations; Records of adopting the guidelines and using external examiners' reports.	**0 1 2 3** ○ ○ ○ ○
5.12	The University/HEI ensures that assessment decisions are documented accurately and systematically and that the decisions of relevant assessment panels and examination boards are communicated to students as early as possible.	Documented records of all formal meetings related to assessments; procedures in place to maintain the confidentiality and accuracy of such records; evidence for effective and timely communication to relevant staff and students.	**0 1 2 3** ○ ○ ○ ○
5.13	Examination results are communicated without undue delay.	Policy on timely release of results and documents with evidence of adoption of the policy.	**0 1 2 3** ○ ○ ○ ○
5.14	Disciplinary procedures for handling malpractices such as copying and plagiarism are in place, and strictly enforced.	By-laws on examination offences; Manual of Examination Procedures; Evidence of enforcement of disciplinary procedures.	**0 1 2 3** ○ ○ ○ ○
5.15	University/HEI has in place a policy, mechanism and procedures for recognition of prior learning/qualifications, inter-faculty and inter-institutional credit transfer and made available to prospective applicants.	Approved policy and guidelines for recognition of prior learning/qualifications; Policy and regulations on credit transfers; Evidence of action.	**0 1 2 3** ○ ○ ○ ○

Criterion 6 - Strength and Quality of Staff

Scope – The University/HEI has qualified and competent faculty and staff needed for effective high quality programmes and student services. Professional development of human resource is regularly organized for faculty and staff to assist in efficient and effective management of the design, development and delivery of programmes and courses and student-centred learning. University/HEI facilitates faculty and staff to be innovative and creative and recognizes excellence in teaching and learning, research and community engagement.

Criterion 6 is captured in the following 'Standards'.

No.	Standards	Examples of Evidence	Score Guide 0 - Inadequate 1 - Barely Adequate 2 - Adequate 3 - Good
6.1	The University/HEI has a comprehensive human resource (HR) policy on recruitment, retention, performance appraisal, career development, promotion, leave, grievance, rewards, occupational health and safety.	Approved cadre in relation to UGC Cadre norms; University/HEI register on approved and available cadre; data on cadre filled and vacant; HR policy; Performance appraisal forms; records of rewards; Grievance committee meeting minutes; Guidelines on occupational health and safety and protective measures.	**0 1 2 3** ○ ○ ○ ○
6.2	The University/HEI has sufficient number of teaching staff who are suitably qualified, adequately trained in pedagogy, and experienced for their particular teaching responsibilities, research and outreach activities.	Policy on staff: student ratio with respect to the discipline; Policy and procedures for staff recruitment; cadre estimates matched against UGC approved cadre and the gaps; University/HEI's efforts to remedy the gaps; qualification profile of existing academic cadre (cadre books); retirement and succession plans.	**0 1 2 3** ○ ○ ○ ○

No.	Standards	Examples of Evidence	Score Guide 0 - Inadequate 1 - Barely Adequate 2 - Adequate 3 - Good
6.3	The University/HEI has ensured that all faculties/ institutes/centres/units have adequate and qualified academic and non-academic cadre as per the approved faculty/department staff: student ratio.	HR records; Institutional staff: student ratio norms based on faculties and departments.	**0 1 2 3** ◯ ◯ ◯ ◯
6.4	Newly recruited academic staff are guided in their career development by the professors/senior academics and supported by the department/faculty and the University/HEI.	Policy on career development of newly recruited staff; evidence of departments assigning professors to guide younger staff; evidence of faculty/department supporting this facility.	**0 1 2 3** ◯ ◯ ◯ ◯
6.5	The University/HEI has an adequately resourced Staff Development Centre (SDC) which conducts induction programmes for new staff and regular Continuous Professional Development (CPD) programmes for all categories of staff, and assessment of regular application of new skills by trained staff.	Evidence of resources of SDC; past and present training schedules of SDC; evidence of relevant training to all levels of staff based on identified training needs; mechanisms for assessing the improvement in performance of staff vis-à-vis the training programme; Peer observation forms.	**0 1 2 3** ◯ ◯ ◯ ◯
6.6	Staff are encouraged and trained on outcome-based education and student-centred learning.	Staff development training schedule on staff induction and professional training; evidence of training on outcome-based education and student-centred teaching; Peer observation forms; programme specifications; Student feedback.	**0 1 2 3** ◯ ◯ ◯ ◯

No.	Standards	Examples of Evidence	Score Guide 0 - Inadequate 1 - Barely Adequate 2 - Adequate 3 - Good
6.7	The University/HEI ensures that allocation of workload to staff is transparent and fair.	Policy of the departments in allocating workload according to work norms; evidence of fair and transparent allocation of workload; staff performance appraisal forms; staff evaluation surveys; staff meeting minutes.	**0 1 2 3** ◯ ◯ ◯ ◯
6.8	The University/HEI ensures that responsibilities and job descriptions of all categories of staff are clearly specified and made known to each member at the time of appointment.	Policy on role and responsibilities of staff; records of job descriptions of staff given at the time of appointment.	**0 1 2 3** ◯ ◯ ◯ ◯
6.9	Performance of staff is appraised regularly against work norms, and due recognition, incentives and rewards are given for outstanding performance in teaching, research and community engagement.	Policy on assessment of staff for outstanding performance in their different roles for recognition; staff performance appraisal reports; evidence of recognition and awards; survey data.	**0 1 2 3** ◯ ◯ ◯ ◯
6.10	Underperformance revealed by performance appraisal is adequately addressed and remedial action taken.	Performance appraisal forms; action taken to address poor performance; staff surveys.	**0 1 2 3** ◯ ◯ ◯ ◯
6.11	Staff feedback is regularly obtained through diverse means and concerns are addressed adequately.	Staff feedback; Actions taken.	**0 1 2 3** ◯ ◯ ◯ ◯

Criterion 7 –Postgraduate studies, Research, Innovation and Commercialization

Scope – The University/HEI has an adequate infrastructure and administrative and financial mechanisms for research and post graduate degrees. The University/HEI generates new knowledge through research. This is done in conjunction with other stakeholders such as Industry. University/HEI is able to attract competitive research funding nationally and globally. The results of research are published in indexed peer reviewed journals and where relevant patents obtained.

Research influences teaching at both undergraduate and post graduate levels. There is an obligatory exposure to research for all undergraduates while post graduate degrees are primarily research based or professionally oriented. Research degrees sharpen critical thinking and transferable skills to a high degree and prepare students for a wide range of careers both in academia and outside.

Systematic and transparent monitoring and assessment mechanisms are in place to ensure students' progress. The final examination is robust, fair and consistent. The requirements for the awards are consistent with the respective SLQF levels. Ethical aspects of research are adequately addressed.

Research, consultancy and extension services are actively promoted to build linkages with industry, business, community and public organizations which foster close relationships between the world of work and the world of learning for the students.

Criterion 7 is captured in the following 'Standards'.

No.	Standards	Examples of Evidence	Score Guide 0 - Inadequate 1 - Barely Adequate 2 - Adequate 3 - Good
7.1	The University/HEI recognizes post graduate training, research innovation, scholarship, and commercialization as core functions as reflected in the Strategic Plan and organizational structure.	Strategic Plan; evidence of facilities available for postgraduate training, comparable with national and international benchmarks; Handbook; Prospectus; website.	**0 1 2 3** ○ ○ ○ ○
7.2	The University/HEI has established By-laws and Regulations, subject-specific guidelines (where relevant) for postgraduate degrees readily available to students, staff, and examiners.	By-laws and regulations for postgraduate degrees; subject-specific guidelines where appropriate; evidence of dissemination to prospective students and registered students; website.	**0 1 2 3** ○ ○ ○ ○

No.	Standards	Examples of Evidence	Score Guide 0 - Inadequate 1 - Barely Adequate 2 - Adequate 3 - Good
7.3	The University/HEI has clear procedures for selection, admission, enrollment, and induction of postgraduate students.	Admission procedures in place; evidence of consistent application; evidence of induction programmes.	**0 1 2 3** ○ ○ ○ ○
7.4	The University/HEI ensures a conducive academic, social and research environment that inculcates scholarship, critical inquiry, innovation, and commercialization where relevant.	Availability of Code of practice endorsed by the Council and Senate; evidence of opportunities to exchange and develop ideas and networking with other researchers; adequate learning and research tools.	**0 1 2 3** ○ ○ ○ ○
7.5	The University/HEI has in place effective arrangements to maintain academic standards and enhance the quality of postgraduate programmes aligned with SLQF.	Evidence of using SLQF as a reference point; Lists of postgraduate qualification holders, their registration and completion dates; action taken to improve.	**0 1 2 3** ○ ○ ○ ○
7.6	The University/HEI promotes a research culture and research excellence within the University/ HEI through offering incentives and rewards to those who excel in research and innovations and dissemination.	Institutional Policy and Procedures of Incentives and Rewards system; Postgraduate Research grants and travel grants for academics; Records on awarding incentives and annual research awards & records of past recipients.	**0 1 2 3** ○ ○ ○ ○
7.7	University/HEI provides access to training programmes to the postgraduate academic staff and research students to develop a range of skills and knowledge.	SDC activity plan; evidence of attendance and assessment of skills development; student feedback obtained and action taken.	**0 1 2 3** ○ ○ ○ ○
7.8	The University/HEI ensures an appropriate policy for postgraduate supervision with guidelines to supervisors and students.	Manual of examination procedures; examination regulations; documents on supervisory staff.	**0 1 2 3** ○ ○ ○ ○

No.	Standards	Examples of Evidence	Score Guide 0 - Inadequate 1 - Barely Adequate 2 - Adequate 3 - Good
7.9	University/HEI appoints supervisors with appropriate skills and subject knowledge, and sufficient time to support and encourage research students and to monitor their progress effectively.	Approved By-laws and Guidelines for postgraduate degree programmes; documents on procedures for postgraduate student supervision; feedback from postgraduate students.	**0 1 2 3** ○ ○ ○ ○
7.10	The University/HEI has in place clearly defined guidelines on the role, responsibilities and conduct of postgraduate research supervisors, and ensures their compliance.	Guidelines on the role, responsibilities and conduct of postgraduate research supervisors; Students'/ Graduates' feedback.	**0 1 2 3** ○ ○ ○ ○
7.11	The University/HEI demonstrates that its PG programme has a balance of taught courses and independent research component with appropriate weightage in alignment with SLQF.	By-laws of programmes on offer; Programme specification documents reflecting the component courses and their weightage in relation to the research component aligned to SLQF.	**0 1 2 3** ○ ○ ○ ○
7.12	Post graduate assessment procedures are documented in By-laws and complementary guidelines and effectively communicated to all students, relevant staff, examiners and supervisors.	By-laws and Regulations on postgraduate degrees; Prospectus; website; student and staff feedback.	**0 1 2 3** ○ ○ ○ ○
7.13	University/HEI has in place transparent mechanisms to monitor and review progress of postgraduate programmes annually.	Monitoring and evaluation mechanisms in force; evidence of data collection, analysis and feedback from stakeholders; action taken.	**0 1 2 3** ○ ○ ○ ○
7.14	University/HEI has a clearly defined mechanism for monitoring the progress of research students including formative assessments where relevant.	By-laws on postgraduate degrees; documents on monitoring and review meetings; discussion with students; records of formative assessments; seminars.	**0 1 2 3** ○ ○ ○ ○

No.	Standards	Examples of Evidence	Score Guide 0 - Inadequate 1 - Barely Adequate 2 - Adequate 3 - Good
7.15	The University/HEI has clearly formulated policies and procedures on data recording and maintenance and confidentiality of records.	Documents on policies and procedures for data recording, maintenance, and confidentiality of records.	**0 1 2 3** ○ ○ ○ ○
7.16	The University/HEI promotes and facilitates dissemination and publication of research in accredited/refereed journals and apply for patents where relevant.	Approved publication policy with authorization procedures; evidence of academic and fiscal support for researchers to publish their work; number of papers published; number of patents.	**0 1 2 3** ○ ○ ○ ○
7.17	The University/HEI has clear policies on criteria for authorship of research output, and publications of papers, innovation, patents and Intellectual Property Rights (IPR).	Policy documents on authorship; publications; IPR; number of papers, patents.	**0 1 2 3** ○ ○ ○ ○
7.18	The University/HEI ensures that postgraduate students adhere to ethical guidelines, intellectual property rights and authorship criteria.	Codes of practice distributed to students through print and online on admission to a programme; records of attendance at a formal induction process where the concepts are defined and communicated to students.	**0 1 2 3** ○ ○ ○ ○
7.19	The University/HEI has clearly formulated policies regarding potential conflicts of interest communicated to research students and staff.	Policy documents on conflict of interest and enforcement procedures; evidence of action taken.	**0 1 2 3** ○ ○ ○ ○
7.20	The University/HEI has a stated Code of conduct and ethical practices in research implemented through an ethical review committee.	Code of practice documents; approval of research projects/areas prior to commencement of research by ethical review committee.	**0 1 2 3** ○ ○ ○ ○

No.	Standards	Examples of Evidence	Score Guide 0 - Inadequate 1 - Barely Adequate 2 - Adequate 3 - Good
7.21	The University/HEI has policies and procedures which are enforced to deal with research misconduct such as plagiarism, deception, fabrication or falsification of results.	By-laws governing misconduct; procedures for enforcing; evidence of action taken.	**0 1 2 3** ○ ○ ○ ○
7.22	The University/HEI has fair, transparent, robust and consistently applied complaints and appeals procedures appropriate to all categories of postgraduate research students.	Policy and procedures for appeals and complaints; number of complaints and appeals received; action taken.	**0 1 2 3** ○ ○ ○ ○
7.23	The University/HEI has a policy on collaboration/partnerships with local, national, regional and international organizations to share knowledge, expertise, human resources, services and research with criteria for monitoring and evaluation.	Policy and procedures for collaborations/partnerships stated in the Corporate plan; Council approved MOUs; evidence of progress on activities of MOUs and evaluation of outcomes.	**0 1 2 3** ○ ○ ○ ○
7.24	The University/HEI facilitates interaction with industry and wider society providing new avenues for applied research (such as research incubators).	Signed agreements and MOUs with industries.	**0 1 2 3** ○ ○ ○ ○
7.25	The University/HEI has policies, Institutional arrangements and procedures for research/ innovation and commercialization.	University/HEI's Annual finance report; IPR policies; Commercial management plan linked to Strategic Plan; Transparent budget; Business planning partnership agreement with exit strategies; Project monitoring/litigation procedures; Staff training programmes on finances and business skills; list of commercialized products; Annual Report.	**0 1 2 3** ○ ○ ○ ○

Criterion 8 – Community Engagement, Consultancy and Outreach

Scope – The University/HEI is responsive to the needs of the community and supports community outreach by providing consultancy and extension services. Continuous encouragement of faculty to offer consultancy not only builds up the reputation of the faculty but also helps in augmenting institutional image and social acceptance while providing new areas for research.

Criterion 8 is captured in the following 'Standards':

No.	Standards	Examples of Evidence	Score Guide 0 - Inadequate 1 - Barely Adequate 2 - Adequate 3 - Good
8.1	The University/HEI has a policy and strategy to foster and promote consultancy and extension services to build linkages with industry and community.	Institutional procedures on linkages with industry; brochures on consultancy and extension services; monitoring and evaluation records of consultancies undertaken.	**0 1 2 3** ○ ○ ○ ○
8.2	The University/HEI has appropriate mechanisms and adequate resources to facilitate and encourage staff and students to engage in community services, consultancy services and outreach activities for the benefit of the wider community and such programmes are widely publicized.	Documents on Policy and Strategy on community engagement; co-curricular activities; websites, leaflets, brochures and newsletters for awareness creation and publicity on expertise and resources available for community services; sponsorships sought for fiscal support.	**0 1 2 3** ○ ○ ○ ○
8.3	The University/HEI monitors community perceptions of its activities and adopts appropriate strategies to improve the understanding and enhancement of its reputation.	Periodic surveys to assess the impact on social transformation; documents and newspaper articles where community leaders have testified to the usefulness of the programmes of engagement, interactions with schools and communities etc.	**0 1 2 3** ○ ○ ○ ○

No.	Standards	Examples of Evidence	Score Guide 0 - Inadequate 1 - Barely Adequate 2 - Adequate 3 - Good
8.4	The University/HEI collaborates with external partners such as industry/business/state sector institutions for work-based or industry-placement learning as part of the programme of study with clearly defined ILOs.	Policy on collaborative provisions and placement learning; Programme specifications; Council/ Senate approved proposals for educational collaborations, written agreements, and institutional support.	**0 1 2 3** ◯ ◯ ◯ ◯
8.5	The University/HEI ensures that the staff involved in teaching of work-based or industry-placement assignments are appropriately qualified and competent to fulfill their role.	Qualifications and profile of the staff involved in teaching; documents to show monitoring mechanism to review competencies of staff.	**0 1 2 3** ◯ ◯ ◯ ◯
8.6	Where appropriate professional courses have access to service facilities as required, through which faculties could provide a professional service to the public.	Policy and procedures for professional programmes/ courses of the University/ HEI providing service facilities to the public; evidence of service to the public.eg. clinic services, health camps, MOUs with relevant ministries.	**0 1 2 3** ◯ ◯ ◯ ◯

Criterion 9 – Distance Education

Scope – The UGC Circular on EDPs and Extension Courses (UGC Circular No. 932 of 2010), UGC Handbook on External Degrees and Extension Courses (UGC 2010) and External Degree Programmes Quality Assurance (EDP QA 2014) Manual provide the foundation for all distance learning policies, procedures, and activities. Programmes are delivered through open and distance learning (ODL) methods in order to offer educational opportunities to students unable to enter the conventional system. The University/HEI places great emphasis on the consistency, continuity and integrity of the learning environment. All academic programmes/courses are taught by regular faculty and/or approved adjunct faculty or approved external training University/HEIs and adhere to same standards and requirements as identical courses conducted face to face. Regardless of the delivery format, learning is the primary aim with achievement of stated programme learning outcomes as the primary assessment measure.

Criterion 9 is captured in the following 'Standards':

No.	Standards	Examples of Evidence	Score Guide 0 - Inadequate 1 - Barely Adequate 2 - Adequate 3 - Good
9.1	The University/HEI in alignment with national policy and in consistence with its mission, operates a mechanism through open and distance learning (ODL), for those unable to enter a conventional system but aspire for higher/ tertiary education.	Compliance with UGC Policy Framework and Guidelines; Corporate plan with mission statement reflecting ODL as an alternative delivery system; ODL programmes/courses in consistence with the mission and objectives.	**0 1 2 3** ○ ○ ○ ○
9.2	The University/HEI offers ODL programmes through a Centre for Open and Distance Learning (CODL) in alignment with the policy framework and guidelines issued by the UGC.	By-laws of CODL; Manual of Procedures for CODL; Records on student enrollment and graduation: Records on performance of students and graduates produced through EDPs.	**0 1 2 3** ○ ○ ○ ○
9.3	The University/HEI ensures that students enrolled satisfy the requirements for admission as stipulated by the UGC.	Admission criteria documents approved by the Council in alignment with UGC guidelines, applied transparently, consistently and fairly; Senate minutes.	**0 1 2 3** ○ ○ ○ ○

No.	Standards	Examples of Evidence	Score Guide 0 - Inadequate 1 - Barely Adequate 2 - Adequate 3 - Good
9.4	The University/HEI has policies addressing number to be admitted for each EDP, time for course development, sharing of instructional responsibilities among the staff, and effective teaching using ODL methods.	Policy on work norms and work load with respect to faculty involved in teaching both on campus and EDP students; Work norm which indicate time spent for EDP course development, delivery and monitoring.	**0 1 2 3** ○ ○ ○ ○
9.5	The University/HEI ensures sufficient facilities, equipment, and financial resources to support Distance Education.	Availability of adequate facilities for EDP students and reflected in the long term plans and budget of the University/HEI; Field centres; MOUs with ETIs.	**0 1 2 3** ○ ○ ○ ○
9.6	The University/HEI provides adequate services to enable the learners to achieve their educational outcomes through Distance Education.	Services such as tutoring, academic advising, assessment methods with feedback, delivery of learning materials, counselling and adequate supervision as appropriate.	**0 1 2 3** ○ ○ ○ ○
9.7	The University/HEI offers learner support and provides students access to learning resources such as library, LMS equivalent to those available for on- campus students either within the University/HEI or external to it.	EDP students' access to learning resources such as library, LMS with training to use them; evaluation of adequacy and accessibility of the resources and services on an ongoing basis.	**0 1 2 3** ○ ○ ○ ○
9.8	The University/HEI has identified measurable and achievable student performance outcomes so that ODL courses and programmes within the same discipline are aligned to SLQF, and comparable in respect of quality with internal programmes.	University/HEI Policy and Strategy Document on EDPs; Comparison of curriculum design for EDPs and curricula of internal degree programmes.	**0 1 2 3** ○ ○ ○ ○

No.	Standards	Examples of Evidence	Score Guide 0 - Inadequate 1 - Barely Adequate 2 - Adequate 3 - Good
9.9	The University/HEI supports parity of esteem of both face-to-face and distance modes. Certification of qualifications and awards makes no distinction between modes of study.	University/ HEI Policy and Strategy Document on qualifications and awards; Comparison of certificates for EDPs and certificates of internal degree programmes.	**0 1 2 3** ○ ○ ○ ○
9.10	The University/HEI has clear policies on ownership of learning materials and protection of copyrights.	Policy and procedures for production of learning materials both in house and by external experts; clear policy on IPR.	
9.11	The CODL operates an IQA system as a part of the University/ HEI - IQA system and takes responsibility of internalizing good practices outlined in the EDP - QA Manual (2014).	Establishment of an IQAC in the CODL with a clear TOR specifying objectives, functions, composition and intended outcomes as stipulated in the EDP-QA Manual (2014).	**0 1 2 3** ○ ○ ○ ○
9.12	The degree awarding University/HEI has policies and practices in place to ensure the quality of any external training University/HEIs.	Signed MOUs with external training University/HEIs; evidence of the University/ HEI retaining responsibility for the quality of the programmes/courses; evidence for ensuring quality of the training University/HEI and ETIs.	**0 1 2 3** ○ ○ ○ ○
9.13	Policies, procedures and systems are in place for off-shore academic programmes, to ensure sustenance of the institution, assurance of academic quality, and selection of partners, operational efficiencies, financial success and strategic relevance.	Organizational documents, Annual reports; reports from partner organizations	**0 1 2 3** ○ ○ ○ ○

Criterion 10 – Quality Assurance

Scope – Quality Assurance (QA) is an integral part of the overall functioning of a University/ HEI to ensure that the University/HEI/programme fulfills the purpose as well as the standards set. It is developed to ensure that the University/ HEI is committed to comply with national policies, regulations and guidelines prescribed by the regulatory agencies. External monitoring emphasizes accountability as well as continuous improvement. Traditional regulatory methods to ensure quality of higher education are internal and carried out through Internal Quality Assurance Units (IQAUs). Critical self-assessment promotes the development of a quality culture that triggers continuous improvement and quality enhancement. University/HEIs will develop best where external and internal QA are well balanced. Academic networks are expected to play an important role in the development of QA. Regular reporting to the highest body of the University/HEI assures that QA is well respected.

Criterion 10 is captured in the following 'Standards':

No.	**Standards**	**Examples of Evidence**	**Score Guide** 0 - Inadequate 1 - Barely Adequate 2 - Adequate 3 - Good
10.1	University/HEI adopts quality assurance (QA) policy and strategy in alignment with the national policy on QA in Higher Education.	Availability of University/ HEI's QA policy and a strategy for continuous enhancement of quality; Corporate/Strategic Plan and Action Plan.	**0 1 2 3** ○ ○ ○ ○
10.2	Quality assurance processes involve all sections of the University/HEI effectively integrated into the normal planning and administrative processes.	Evidence of incorporation of QA policy and strategy in Institutional Strategic Plan and Action plans of institutes/ faculties/centres/units.	**0 1 2 3** ○ ○ ○ ○
10.3	The stated policy and associated procedures for assurance of quality and standards are communicated to all stakeholders and implemented through internal quality assurance (IQA) mechanisms.	Evidence of QA policy, and procedures communicated to all stakeholders; established IQAC and IQAU with clearly defined TOR; evidence of internal processes for self monitoring, self analysis and assessment enabling continuous quality enhancement.	**0 1 2 3** ○ ○ ○ ○

	Standards	Examples of Evidence	Score Guide 0 - Inadequate 1 - Barely Adequate 2 - Adequate 3 - Good
10.4	The University/HEI promotes internalization of best practices in its various units as a move towards quality culture through the (IQA) system.	Council, Senate, Faculty Board and other relevant committee minutes providing evidence of internalization of best practices in the various units; evidence of University/ HEI providing necessary resources, training of staff and leadership for creating a quality culture.	**0 1 2 3** ○ ○ ○ ○
10.5	The University/HEI has an established and effective internal quality assurance system with internal quality assurance unit (IQAU) at the centre and internal quality assurance cells (IQAC) at the faculty level.	Evidence of IQAC and IQAU in the University/HEI with clearly defined objectives, functions, composition and intended outcomes as given in the Internal Quality Assurance Manual (2013) of the UGC.	**0 1 2 3** ○ ○ ○ ○
10.6	The University programmes/ courses/awards are reviewed regularly against identified performance targets by the IQAU and IQAC and reported at the Senate and Councils, and improvement plans are implemented by the faculties/ departments.	Minutes of the IQAU and IQAC; Minutes of the Curriculum Development/ Evaluation Committee, Faculty Board, Senate and Council; SER of Institution/ Programmes completed/in preparation.	**0 1 2 3** ○ ○ ○ ○
10.7	Recommendations/comments made by previous external quality assurance (EQA) reports are adequately addressed by IQAU and IQAC, Faculty Boards, Senate and Council and monitored by the IQAU.	Council/Senate approved policy on follow up of recommendations of the Institutional Review Report (IRR); evidence of IQAU following recommendations; Faculty Board, Senate and Council minutes; Progress reports on remedial actions based on past QA report.	**0 1 2 3** ○ ○ ○ ○

4.3 Procedure for Use of Standards for Assessment of Performance of the University/HEI

This procedure will describe how the standards of the ten criteria based on the evidence given against each standard by the University/HEI and the score guide are used by the external peer review team in arriving at the final assessment of performance of a University/HEI (Quality Assurance). The University/HEI may also use this procedure in self assessment of their performance.

The terms mentioned below will be used in the validation and the subsequent judgement on assessment of the University/HEI.

- Standard-wise judgement giving 'standard-wise score'
- Criterion-wise judgement giving 'raw criterion-wise score'
- Application of weightages to obtain 'actual criterion-wise score'
- Calculation of 'University/HEI score'
- Grading of overall University/HEI performance on University/HEI score

The procedure is described in a series of steps.

Step 1 - The evidence given against each standard by the University/HEI are carefully and objectively analyzed and assessed.

Step 2 - Based on the evidence, assessment of the extent to which each standard has been achieved by the University/HEI is recorded by placing a tick in the appropriate circle against each standard on a 4 point scale from 0-3. (Table 4.1)

Table 4.1 – Score Guide for each standard

Score	Descriptor
3	Good
2	Adequate
1	Barely Adequate
0	Inadequate

Each standard will receive a score from 0-3 (standard –wise score)

Step 3 - Performance of each Criterion is derived by totalling the scores gained in all the standards in respect of the Criterion. The value obtained is the 'raw criterion-wise score'.

Different weightages of Criteria

Recognizing the variance in their relative importance in a University/HEI, different Criteria have been allotted differential weightages on a thousand scale. The weightages given in Table 4.2 will be used for calculating the 'actual criterion-wise score'.

Table 4.2 – Differential weightages of Criteria

No.	Assessment Criteria	Weightage on a thousand scale
1	Governance and Management	180
2	Curriculum Design and Development	120
3	Teaching and Learning	100
4	Learning Resources, Student Support and Progression	80
5	Student Assessment and Awards	100
6	Strength and Quality of Staff	100
7	Postgraduate studies, Research, Innovation and Commercialization	100
8	Community Engagement, Consultancy and Outreach	60
9	Distance Education	40
10	Quality Assurance	120
	Total	1000

Step 4 - Based on the weightages listed in Table 4.2 and the formula given in Box 1, the 'raw criterion-wise score' is converted into an 'actual criterion-wise score'. Taking Criterion 1 which has 29 standards as an example, and a fictitious value of 60 for the raw criterion score given by the review team, the actual criterion-wise score for Governance and Management (Criterion 1) is 124. (Box 1)

Box 1 - Formula for converting 'raw score' to 'actual score' on the weighted scale

Maximum raw score for each criterion = total number of standards for the respective criterion x 3 which is the maximum score for any standard

Raw criterion-wise score x weightage in a 1000 point scale = 'actual criterion-wise score'

Example: Criterion 1 with weightage of 180 (Table 4.2) and 29 standards

Raw criterion-wise score (given by the peer team) = 60

Maximum Score = (29 standards x 3) = 87

Weightage in a 1000 scale = 180 (as in Table 4.2)

$$\textbf{\textit{Actual criterion-wise score}} = \frac{60}{87} \times 180 = 124.1$$

Step 5 - The University/HEI-wise score is derived by totalling all the 'actual criterion-wise scores' of the ten criteria and converting the total to a percentage as exemplified in Table 4.3.

Table 4.3 –University/ HEI-wise Score Conversion to percentage

No	Criteria	Weighted minimum score*	actual criteria-wise score
1	Governance and Management	90	124
2	Curriculum Design and Development	60	80
3	Teaching and Learning	50	71
4	Learning Resources , Student Support and Progression	40	56
5	Student Assessment and Awards	50	80
6	Strength and Quality of Staff	50	75
7	Postgraduate studies, Research, Innovation and Commercialization	50	68
8	Community Engagement, Consultancy and Outreach	30	40
9	Distance Education	20	25
10	Quality Assurance	60	90
	Total		**709**
	%		**70.9**

*Represents 50% of the values given in Table 4.2

University/ HEI-wise score is graded as shown in Table 4.4

Table 4.4 Grading of Overall University/HEI performance

University/ HEI score%	***Actual criteria- wise score***	***Grade***	***Performance descriptor***	***Interpretation of descriptor***
≥ 80	Equal to or more than the minimum weighted score for each of all 10 criteria (Table 4.3).	*A*	*Very Good*	*High level of accomplishment of quality expected of an academic institution; should move towards excellence*
70 - 79	Equal to or more than the minimum weighted score for nine of the 10 criteria (Table 4.3)	*B*	*Good*	*Satisfactory level of accomplishment of quality expected of an academic institution; room for improvement*
60 – 69	Equal to or more than the minimum weighted score for eight of the 10 criteria (Table 4.3)	*C*	*Satisfactory*	*Minimum level of accomplishment of quality expected of an academic institution; definitely requires improvement*
<60	Irrespective of minimum weighted criterion scores.	*D*	*Unsatisfactory*	*Inadequate level of accomplishment of quality expected of an academic institution: Needs significant degree of improvement in all aspects*

Final Assessment of Performance of a University/HEI

For a University/HEI to receive an 'A' Grade, the following conditions are applicable.

i) Overall University/HEI Score of ≥ 80%
and
ii) A score equal to or more than the weighted minimum score for each of all 10 criteria (Table 4.3).

For a University/HEI to receive a 'B' Grade, the following conditions are applicable.

i) Overall University/HEI Score between 70% - 79%
and
ii) A score equal to or more than the weighted minimum score for at least nine out of the 10 criteria (Table 4.3).

For a University/HEI to receive a 'C' Grade, the following conditions are applicable.

i) Overall University/HEI Score between 60% - 69%
and
ii) A score equal to or more than the weighted minimum score for at least eight out of the 10 criteria (Table 4.3).

For a University/HEI to receive a 'D' Grade, the following conditions are applicable.

i) Overall University/HEI Score of < 60% irrespective of weighted minimum criterion scores. (Table 4.3)

Part III

Quality Assessment Guidelines for Institutions and Reviewers

Chapter Five

Self-Evaluation Report

Every University or Higher Education Institution (HEI) is committed to a policy of self-evaluation of all its programmes, services, procedures, and administrative mechanisms on an annual basis which encompasses a quality self-assessment. This is because the responsibility for quality and standards in higher education lies primarily within the University/HEI, not outside of it. Institutional self-awareness, informed by periodic self-evaluation of the strengths and areas for improvement provide the principal point of reference for any external review process.

Therefore, the Self-Evaluation Report (SER) prepared by the University/HEI, becomes a key document both for the University/HEI and for the review team. A carefully and concisely prepared SER, while helping the University/HEI to understand its own strengths and weaknesses, also helps the review team to plan its review process more effectively and efficiently. This chapter provides guidance on how to prepare the SER that will help maintain uniformity in SERs prepared by all Universities/HEIs.

5.1 Purpose of the Self Evaluation Report (SER)

The purpose of the SER is to provide the review team with an account of how the University/HEI knows that it meets the expectations of stakeholders and the wider society in terms of the Standards and Best Practices set out in this Manual, and those of statutory professional bodies where relevant. Section 4.2 of this Manual has Tables under each criterion with the standards listed in the second column and examples of sources of evidence alongside each standard in the third column. Therefore, the citation of all pertinent evidence becomes a major requirement of the SER and the review team expects provision of all relevant documentary evidence to support each claim that the university or the HEI makes with regard to the standards. Evidence may include Corporate plan or the Strategic Management plan; various By-laws; Student Handbook; numerous policy documents; University calendar; Annual Reports of the three preceding years; minutes of the Council, Board of Management, Senate and Faculty Boards etc.

5.2 Scope, Accuracy and Focus of the SER

Scope: The SER should describe and analyze in depth with supporting evidence and comments, the effectiveness of the ways in which the University/HEI discharges its responsibility for maintaining academic standards, quality, ethical behavior, and adherence to good practices.

This will include adherence to the Best Practices and Standards given under the ten Criteria detailed in Chapter 3 & 4 of this manual:

1. Governance and Management.
2. Curriculum Design and Development.
3. Teaching and Learning.
4. Learning Resources, Student Support, and Progression.
5. Student Assessment and Awards.
6. Strength and Quality of Staff.
7. Postgraduate Studies, Research, Innovation, and Commercialization.
8. Community Engagement, Consultancy, and Outreach.
9. Distance Education.
10. Quality Assurance.

The SER should indicate the ways in which the institution has responded to national policy and guidelines in safeguarding standards and promoting high quality.

The SER should also indicate how the University/HEI has responded to the recommendations of previous institutional reviews and subject reviews, supported by documentary evidence. It is not the responsibility of the review team to seek out evidence to support the institution's claims but it is the University/HEI that should furnish the evidence required during the visit.

Accuracy of Information: It is imperative that the University's/HEI's claims and evidence mentioned in the SER are accurate and verifiable. It should not be used to make unsubstantiated claims. In instances where changes are in progress and evidence not yet available, the HEI should state so. In such situations, the University/HEI should seek to address why the changes were necessary, how it is managing the process of change, and the expected outcome of the changes.

***Focus of the Report*:** The main focus of the SER is to describe the ways in which the University/HEI safeguards the standards of the awards made in its name through maintaining quality of the ten areas of its functioning as identified by the ten criteria mentioned in Chapter 4 of this manual. The SER should reflect the extent to which these matters are dealt with by the University/HEI clearly, convincingly, and honestly.

5.3 Guidelines for Preparation of SER

The Universities/HEIs are expected to prepare the SER according to the structure given below. Accordingly, the SER begins with an introduction to the University/HEI; followed by a section on the University's/HEI's adherence to the criteria, standards, and a list of evidence; and ending

with a concluding section with a list of current actions. The contents of each section are outlined below.

5.3.1 Introduction to the Institution

The Introduction section that begins with the vision and mission statements of the institution will include its brief history comprising its establishment and major milestones of its development; size in terms of faculties, academic departments, units, and centres; number of students and teachers; number of administrative and supporting staff etc. It should describe the organizational structure of the institution and the line of responsibilities among its administrative units and committees. It should contain a description of the context within which the institution operates by providing an analysis of the Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, and Threats (SWOT) it is faced with. This information will help the review team to contextualize the institution and plan the review process.

Additionally, it should describe the major changes since the last review, and the implications of the changes and challenges for safeguarding academic standards and quality of students' learning opportunities.

This section should also include a brief outline of the process followed to prepare the SER; for example, who was involved in the process and what actions were taken to gather information etc.

5.3.2 Adherence to the Criteria, Standards, and List of Evidence

In compiling the second section of the SER, Chapter 4 on Standards for Assessment could be used as a guide. It will be logical to structure this section in line with the Standards described under the ten Criteria. Accordingly, this section will have ten major sub-sections describing the extent to which the university/HEI has adhered to the ten criteria and the relevant standards elaborated in Chapter 4.

It is suggested that the SER writers will compile the ten sub-sections in tabular form, one table for each sub-section (Criterion), using the template given in the Appendix.

A coded list of relevant documentary evidence should be included at the end of this section to support its claims that the university/HEI upholds the standards stipulated in this manual. Examples of sources of evidence are mentioned under each of the Standards under the 10 criteria in Chapter 4 (section 4.2) of this manual. It is imperative that each of the documents is coded and that the code is mentioned in the 4^{th} column of the tables in this section of the SER, indicating the adherence to the standards under each criterion along with relevant evidence.

The contents of the ten sub-sections to be prepared in tabular form are described below.

Criterion 1 - Governance and Management

In this section, the SER should describe the ways in which the HEI has made its internal institutional arrangements and mechanisms to uphold and safeguard the national policy framework on higher education as described under the 'scope' of Criterion 1 and elaborated in its 29 standards. The SER should demonstrate how the policy statements of the University/HEI and its Corporate Plan/Strategic Management Plan are aligned with the institution's statements of its vision and mission, national needs, and regional and international contexts in terms of its academic commitments. The SER should also describe the principles of governance of the institution and the implementation of such policies including the management of its funds and other financial resources.

Criterion 2 - Curriculum and Programme Development

In this section, the SER should demonstrate with evidence, the University's/HEI's adherence to the policies and practices pertaining to curriculum and programme development as outlined under the 'scope' of Criterion 2 and elaborated in its 15 standards. It should clearly mention the extent to which the study programmes reflect the University's/HEI's mission and long-term goals. The review team will see whether the study programmes are in compliance with the standards outlined in the Sri Lanka Qualification Framework (SLQF), Subject Benchmark Statements (SBS), and the standards laid down by professional organizations where relevant, although deviations may be acceptable with due justification. The review team would also need to see evidence of the processes that the University/HEI followed in curriculum designing and programme development; i.e., whether accepted procedures were followed such as needs analysis, liaison with industry and other stakeholders, national and regional priorities etc.

Criterion 3 - Teaching and Learning

In this section, the SER should demonstrate with evidence the University's/HEI's adherence to the policies and practices pertaining to teaching and learning as outlined under the 'scope' of Criterion 3 and elaborated in its 10 standards. It should describe the University's/HEI's commitment to encourage the faculty for multiple teaching learning methods that promote outcome-based education with emphasis on student-centered learning and teaching.

Criterion 4 - Learning Resources and Student Support

Providing appropriate learning infrastructure and student support is another key requirement for the maintenance of high quality academic programmes. The University/HEI is responsible to have policies and practices in place to assure that students are provided with suitable infrastructure facilities and systems to extend necessary support to students when needed. Therefore, in this section, the SER should demonstrate with evidence the commitment of the University/HEI of its adherence to the guidelines mentioned under 'scope' of Criterion 4 and elaborated in its 14 standards.

Criterion 5 - Student Assessment and Awards

The SER must describe with evidence firstly, the regulatory framework and procedures followed by the University/HEI to maintain fairness and transparency of its student assessment methods, and secondly, the extent to which the students and teachers are informed of such frameworks and procedures. Therefore, in this section, the SER should demonstrate the manner in which the University/HEI ensures its adherence to the guidelines mentioned under 'scope' of Criterion 5 and elaborated in its 15 standards.

Criterion 6 - Strength and Quality of Staff

As the quality of faculty and supporting staff is fundamental to assure quality of the educational outcomes of the University/HEI, the SER should provide evidence of adherence to prescribed guidelines by relevant authorities for appointment and promotion of faculty and staff, induction and probation of new recruits, staff development, and recognition and reward for outstanding performance. The SER must describe with evidence the University/HEI's commitment to outcome-based education and student-centred learning as outlined under 'scope' of Criterion 6 and elaborated in its 11 standards.

Criterion 7 - Postgraduate Studies, Research, Innovation and Commercialization

As the quality of research has been the traditional measure of how well a University/HEI performs academically, the SER is expected to demonstrate with evidence, the institution's commitment to facilitate the development and maintenance of a healthy research culture; strengthen the postgraduate-level education that includes both taught-courses and research degrees; and encourage innovation and commercialization of research outcomes. The SER should, in the first instance, show how the University/HEI has established procedures and guidelines to support and encourage good research practice and generation of new knowledge. Also, the University/HEI should describe the policies, guidelines, and by-laws set-out by the University/HEI to maintain standards of the postgraduate degrees that it awards and research activities it conducts. The SER should describe with evidence, the University's/HEI's adherence to the guidelines set-out under the 'scope' of Criterion 7 and elaborated in its 25 standards.

Criterion 8 - Community Engagement, Consultancy and Outreach

Extension activities allow the Universities/HEIs to engage with the wider public and maintain links with the community and the industry that would contribute to enhance the quality of its academic programmes benefitting students in myriad of ways. The SER must demonstrate with evidence, the commitment of the University/HEI to encourage and facilitate community engagement, consultancy, and other outreach programmes. Therefore, the SER must cite all evidence for the effectiveness of the University's/HEI's policies and practices to ensure its commitment to establish community engagement, consultancies and outreach programmes as mentioned under the 'scope' of Criterion 8 and elaborated in its six standards.

Criterion 9 - Distance Education

Owing to national policy and public demand, teaching offered through the open and distance learning mode has become an integral part of academic programmes of the majority of state sector Universities/HEIs. This has provided the means of offering educational opportunities to students who were unable to enter the on-campus system of higher education. The Universities/HEIs are responsible for the maintenance of quality and standards of their external degree programmes with the same emphasis that they place on internal degree programmes. Therefore, the SER must provide evidence on the commitment of the University/HEI to adhere to the guidelines stipulated in the 'scope' of Criterion 9 and elaborated in its 13 standards.

Criterion 10 - Quality Assurance

Public confidence in a University/HEI is a crucial indicator for the latter's own existence and depends largely on its policies and practices of quality assurance. Therefore, the SER must provide necessary information to the review team on the policies, processes, and practices that it exercises to maintain the quality of its academic programmes. In this section, the SER should describe the adherence of the University/HEI to the broad guidelines mentioned under the 'scope' of Criterion 10 and elaborated in its seven standards.

5.3.3 Conclusions/Current Action List

It would be helpful to the review team if the University/HEI draws meaningful conclusions from its self-evaluation. It should convey to the review team how the University/HEI reflects on its own policies and practices pertaining to all of its educational activities in accordance with its vision and the mission, and the effectiveness of such policies and practices in maintaining the quality of its educational programmes and awards. The University/HEI should identify a list of actions that are being undertaken at present or to be taken in the future to redress any weaknesses or failures. It is useful if the SER mentions any specific issues that it needs to discuss with the review team.

5.4 Length of the SER

The self-evaluation document should be concise and analytical, with references to all relevant evidence. It should be between 10,000 and 12,000 words (using Times New Roman in 12 point font size with 1.5 line space on A 4 size pages) excluding appendices. Appendices should be kept to a minimum and contain illustrative or statistical information essential to the main text.

A good self-evaluation document should be readily understandable to a reviewer. All sections should be self-explanatory as far as possible, minimizing the need for the review team to request further clarifications.

Chapter Six

Review Team and the Review Visit

The knowledge, experience and professional standards of the members of the review team and its chairperson are crucial to the conduct of a credible and high quality institutional review. It is also of equal importance that reviewers and the HEIs are aware of each other's roles and responsibilities in order to ensure that the review process takes place in a timely manner without any obstacles or conflicts. This chapter will provide guidelines on the selection of reviewers, their training and attributes, composition of the review team, profile of the reviewers, attributes of the review chair, review visit arrangements and schedule of meetings etc.

6.1 Selection of Reviewers

The QAAC will maintain a pool of institutional reviewers from which it will select and appoint reviewers for each institutional review. The reviewers will be senior academics; either those who are holding or have held managerial or other senior positions such as current or past Vice-Chancellors, Directors of Institutes, Deans or Professors; and one member from outside of the academia. The following criteria will be considered in the selection of institutional reviewers:

- Undergone training as a reviewer.
- Experience in quality assurance activity in areas appropriate to the review.
- Awareness of national, professional and employers' requirements of graduates.
- Acceptability to the university being reviewed, as independent reviewers with suitable subject or institutional expertise.

In addition, each reviewer should sign a self-declaration of no involvement with the particular University/HEI that may lead to a conflict of interest.

6.2 Composition of the Review Team

The review team would ideally be composed of five members with adequate gender representation. It is essential that one of the members should be selected from outside of the academia, who can look at issues from a more industry-related or professional perspective. The QAAC will identify the review chair from among the team of five members selected for the review team.

6.3 Profile of Reviewers

Reviewers have a key role to play in institutional review. Their qualities as individuals and the coherence and effectiveness of review teams are vital to the success and credibility of an external review process. Informed, constructive and perceptive reviewers are extremely persuasive ambassadors for the process within and beyond higher education.

The 'reviewer profile' below, describes the attributes and characteristics expected of Institutional Reviewers:

- High degree of professional integrity.
- An enquiring disposition.
- Personal authority and presence.
- Ability to act as an effective team member.
- Good individual time management skills.
- Ability to readily assimilate a large amount of disparate information.
- Good command of analysis and sound judgment.
- Ability to make appropriate judgments in the context of complex institutions different from their own.
- Experience in organization and management, particularly in relation to teaching and learning matters.
- High standard of oral and written communication, preferably with experience in writing formal reports.

In addition, the QAAC expects reviewers to have: a broad knowledge of higher educational institutions and educational practices in Sri Lanka and abroad; experience of academic management and quality assurance; knowledge and understanding of the review process; and a detailed working knowledge of and commitment to principles, national guidelines and other aspects of quality assurance in higher education.

6.4 Review Chair – Training and Role

The Review Chair would have received the same training as a reviewer, and would possess extensive experience in higher education and familiarity with assurance of standards and quality. The duties of the Review Chair besides managing the conduct of the review, include writing certain sections as agreed upon, and facilitating the compilation and editing of the review report. Above all, the Review Chair must enable the team to analyze the documents provided by the University/HEI and develop a robust evidence base on which to make judgements.

6.5 Review Chair – Knowledge and Skills

In-depth knowledge of all aspects of higher education is a necessary pre-requisite to provide leadership to the review team. Therefore, the Review Chair is expected to be a senior academic with high professional standing. Additionally, the Review Chair also needs to possess certain managerial skills to be able to effectively and efficiently lead the review team. Therefore, the Review Chair is expected to have the

- ability to manage small teams (with experience either in HE or in industry);
- ability to work within given timescales and adherence to deadlines;
- ability to lead a team of experts;
- ability to communicate effectively in face-to-face interaction;
- experience of word processing; and ability to produce clear and succinct reports on time.

The essential qualities outlined above may be reinforced by experience in teaching at Universities/HEIs; experience of programme accreditation by professional or statutory bodies; programme approval or validation events; and internal reviews.

6.6 Conduct of Reviewers

Reviewers will strive to uphold the highest standards of professional practice throughout the review process, exemplified by

- respectful, professional conduct towards staff and students at all times;
- application of guidance provided through reviewer training on the conduct of peer observation of teaching;
- acceptance of privacy of the review process for the duration of a review visit;
- acceptance of individual responsibility for assigned tasks within the review team;
- acceptance of collective responsibility for the review team's judgments.

6.7 Review Visit Arrangements

Consistency and clarity in interactions between a review team and a University/HEI will be facilitated by the following:

- Designation of the review team Chair as the team's formal point of contact with the University/HEI before, during and after the review.
- Designation of the Chair/Secretary of the IQAU of the respective University/HEI to co-ordinate communications between the HEI and the review team and to provide logistical support.

6.8 Schedule of Meetings

The review team will divide its time between meetings with staff and students and reading documented evidence provided by the institution. It may also request a tour of the main campuses, though the extent and purpose of this should be judged in the light of the team's view of its main lines of inquiry.

The Review team having read the SER beforehand will suggest a schedule of meetings in advance of the visit. The team may request meetings with individuals or small groups, for example with

- representative group of the University Council/Governing Body (or equivalent)
- the Vice-Chancellor/Director
- members of the Senior Management team
- representative group from Senate/Academic Syndicate
- Deans of Faculties, Librarian, Heads of Departments/Units/Centres
- a cross section of academic staff/administrative support staff/non-academic staff
- students and student representatives
- external examiners
- external stakeholders including employers, industry, private sector involved with the university activities
- community representatives with links to or involvement with the university.

The review team will also carefully read the documentation provided by the institution as evidence. It will endeavor to keep to a minimum the amount of documentation it requests during the visit. The aim is to consider evidence furnished by the institution and to focus on discussions with staff and students to get a clear picture of the institution's processes in operation. The review team should always seek to use all information requested in arriving at a judgment. At the conclusion of the visit, a meeting with the Vice-Chancellor/Director and senior staff will be held at which the review team may give a general indication of its overall findings.

Chapter Seven

Institutional Review Report

The Institutional Review Report (IRR) is compiled by the Review Team once the institutional review has been completed and is the final outcome of the review visit.

The IRR is self-contained and will provide a concise account of the review process and findings supported by evidence, an analysis of the issues identified and discussed with members of the University/HEI together with the team's reflections and conclusions. The report will culminate in an overall judgment of the level of accomplishment by the university with regard to the quality of its education provision and the standard of its awards. The IRR will be made available to the institution concerned. The IRR will enter the public domain subsequently through the UGC website depending on the national policy prevailing at the time.

7.1 Purpose of the Report

The purpose of the IRR is to inform the institution and external parties of the review findings and to provide a reference point to support and guide staff in continuing quality assurance activities towards quality enhancement and excellence.

The IRR will include

- a brief introduction to the University/HEI and its review context
- a brief description of the review process (The review visit programme or schedule of meetings as an appendix)
- the review team's view of the University/HEI's self evaluation report (SER)
- commentary on the actual criterion wise scores achieved by the institution under the ten criteria of the institutional review listed in Box 1
- overview of the University's/HEI's approach to Quality Assurance
- final assessment of performance of the institution in terms of Quality based on the institution wise score or University/HEI score
- commendations and recommendations
- summary

Box 1 Criteria and Standards

1. Governance and Management
2. Curriculum Design and Development
3. Teaching and Learning
4. Learning Resources, Student Support and Progression
5. Student Assessment and Awards
6. Strength and Quality of Staff
7. Postgraduate Studies, Research, Innovation and Commercialization
8. Community Engagement, Consultancy and Outreach
9. Distance Education
10. Quality Assurance

Under each of these ten criteria, a variable number of standards will be assessed by the review team after careful scrutiny of the documentary evidence provided by the institution for the standards under each criterion.

7.2 Review Judgments

Under the national quality assurance system, this new Institutional Review Manual identifies ten broad areas for scrutiny that all universities and other HEIs in Sri Lanka will be subject to at regular intervals of time (five years in general).

Institutional Review is a complex process. It involves analysis of data and commentary on complex processes and an awareness of a particular university's mission and stated objectives which makes inter-university comparisons difficult. Thus review judgments should take into account the areas where minimum standards and proper inter-institutional comparisons can be made (for example programme approval procedures, operation of student assessment and recruitment and induction of new academic staff). Not all of the institutional review aspects will be of equal importance to all universities. Therefore, the review team will look at areas to which one institution may give particular emphasis while another may seek to excel in something else.

Universities affirm different missions and there are acknowledged differences in size, age and maturity of institutions. It is important that the review process does not unreasonably and inaccurately measure all Universities/HEIs by a fixed 'gold standard'. At the same time, all Universities/HEIs are expected to be able to account for arrangements for quality assurance which support and sustain the standards expected. These standards and quality should reflect agreed national guidelines. Therefore, clear and concise outcomes are expected of the IRR which will enable the wider public to form a picture of each HEI's effectiveness in maintaining the standard of its awards and the quality of education offered in its name.

7.3 Format of the Report

The following structure or format is recommended when writing the report. Each section should comprise a description, analysis and commentary followed by judgement.

Section 1 - Brief introduction to the university and its review context

This will introduce the reader to the University/HEI and the context for the review. It will describe the background of the university such as the year of establishment as a university under the Universities Act No 16 of 1978. It will list the number of faculties and departments, number of programmes and courses, number of students enrolled, number of academic, administrative and academic support and non-academic staff etc. to enable the reader to get an idea of the size, age and maturity of the institution. This should reflect the context within which the HEI operates taking into account constraints if any.

This section will also summarize the outcomes of previous subject reviews and any interim institutional review reports which may have preceded this final report. It will mention any key issues within the ten criteria of institutional review which the team has identified for particular scrutiny or as requiring correction.

Section 2 - Review team's view of the University's/HEI's Self - evaluation (SER)

This presents the review team's view of the university's SER. The review team will also look at previous subject reviews and interim institutional review reports, if any. The SER should have been prepared according to the guideline given in this manual. The SER should have mentioned the issues identified and recommendations contained in previous IR reports and state whether remedial action had been taken to correct any deficiencies so as to instill confidence among all stakeholders that the institution is striving to achieve and maintain the quality of its educational provision and the standard of its awards. The SER should also have presented an analysis carried out by the institution in terms of Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities and Threats (SWOT). The HEI's Corporate Plan/Strategic Management Plan should have been made available to the review team along with the SER.

In this section of the report, the review team needs to identify the strengths and limitations of the SER, the sufficiency and the reliability of the evidence provided, comment on the SWOT analysis and mention areas that have been identified for particular scrutiny during the current review. The review team should also comment on the HEI's Corporate Plan and the Vision, Mission, Goals and Objectives contained therein, and whether clearly identified strategies and activities are in place along with personnel responsible for implementation according to a given time-frame.

Section 3 - A brief description of the Review Process

This will describe the steps involved in preparation by the review team and by the institution prior to the institutional review. It will also outline details of the review visit such as the schedule of meetings, the personnel interviewed, processes observed, evidence examined and meetings of the review team at intervals during the review visit. It will also mention the review team's satisfaction with the arrangements made by the institution to facilitate the conduct of the review in a cost effective manner with minimal wastage of time during the five day period. The degree of commitment of the institution to openness, transparency, communications and logistical support should be recorded in this section.

Section 4 - Overview of the University's approach to Quality and Standards

This presents the review team's observations on the overall approach of the university to quality assurance and management. Although the HEI's approach to quality assurance has been dealt with as the last criterion, it deserves special mention here. Internal Quality Assurance is an ongoing process which is built into the day to day routine activities of an institution.

This section will describe the key features of the university's approach and arrangements to quality assurance, any recent and proposed developments and evidence from the SER of the university's capacity to take action to remedy weaknesses and seek improvement. More importantly this section should deal with whether the university has a well established IQAU in accordance with the Internal Quality Assurance Manual for Sri Lankan Universities (February 2013), and whether the quality culture is now well entrenched within the university since the first cycle of IR.

The commentary could include whether

- internal quality assurance processes being looked at by the University/HEI involve one or more of those listed in the IQA manual;
- existing practices within these processes have contributed to maintenance of standards;
- the institution has taken necessary steps to identify and implement measures that would enhance quality to achieve excellence.

Section 5 - Commentary on the ten criteria of Institutional Review

This presents the review team's analysis of the effectiveness of the university's/HEI's processes under each of the ten criteria identified in this manual. Where appropriate, reference will be made to national guidelines and/or local codes of practice as a baseline for the review team's commentary. The commentary would focus on the objective (quantitative) assessment of standard-wise scores and actual criteria-wise scores calculated according to the respective weightages allotted to the ten criteria as described in chapter 4. This section will conclude with a commentary on the overall (global/qualitative) impression of the review team on the capacity of the University/HEI to achieve and maintain the highest standards and quality expected under the ten criteria within the existing constraints of the particular University/HEI.

Section 6 - Grading of Overall Performance of the University/HEI

This will set out the review team's assessment of the level of accomplishment of quality expected of an academic institution based on the grading of performance of a University/HEI under the categories of Grade A,B,C, or D as indicated in Chapter 4 under Procedure for use of Standards for Assessment. Table 4.4 from Chapter 4 is reproduced below for convenience of the reader and members of the review team.

Chapter 4, Table 4.4 - Grading of Overall Performance of Quality by a University/HEI

University/ HEI score%	***Actual criteria- wise score***	***Grade***	***Performance Descriptor***	***Interpretation of descriptor***
≥ 80	Equal to or more than the minimum weighted score for each of all 10 criteria (Table 4.3).	*A*	*Very Good*	*High level of accomplishment of quality expected of an academic institution; should move towards excellence*
70 – 79	Equal to or more than the minimum weighted score for nine of the 10 criteria (Table 4.3)	*B*	*Good*	*Satisfactory level of accomplishment of quality expected of an academic institution; room for improvement*
60 – 69	Equal to or more than the minimum weighted score for eight of the 10 criteria (Table 4.3)	*C*	*Satisfactory*	*Minimum level of accomplishment of quality expected of an academic institution; definitely requires improvement*
<60	Irrespective of minimum weighted criteria-wise scores	*D*	*Unsatisfactory*	*Inadequate level of accomplishment of quality expected of an academic institution: Needs significant degree of improvement in all aspects*

The University/HEI score is derived from the sum of all actual criterion-wise scores expressed as a percentage. The University/HEI percentage score together with minimum weighted criterion-wise score for each criterion will give a Grade of A, B, C or D to the University that has undergone the Institutional review. (Please refer page 88 for further details.)

When a University/HEI obtains an overall grade of A, the Institutional Review Report (IRR) will indicate the grade and encourage the University/HEI to continue working towards quality enhancement and excellence.

When the University/HEI receives a grade of B or C, the IRR will indicate the grade and also mention the criteria which have received less than the minimum weighted score and the standards which have received a grade of inadequate or barely adequate (score of 0 or 1). The University/HEI will make note of the recommendations made in the IRR and take remedial

measures to bring about improvements in quality overall with particular emphasis on the standards and criteria that had scored less than the expected minimum.

When the University/HEI obtains an overall grade of D, it is expected to take remedial measures to improve the quality of all criteria and standards before the next cycle of Institutional review.

Section 7 - Commendations and Recommendations

This will list the commendations of policy and procedures for higher education, areas of good and innovative practice, quality of research and publications, approval and review of programmes and awards, quality of teaching and students' assessments, research and innovations, community engagement, national and international collaborations, management information systems etc. This list is not all inclusive and any comments on quality pertaining to excellence in higher education could be included under commendations.

This section will also make recommendations for remedial actions needed to bring about improvement and quality enhancement.

Section 8 – Summary

This will be a summary of the review team's main findings as given under the different sections of the report and will be no longer than 1000 words.

7.4 Procedure for Submission of the Report

Members of the review team will take responsibility for individual sections of the report. The Chair of the Institutional Review Team will coordinate the sections of the report to produce the final comprehensive report agreed to by the team. The review team will submit a draft report to the QAAC. The QAAC will send a copy of the draft report to the university.

7.4.1 Request for Discussion

The review team would already have given an indication of its conclusions at the final meeting with the Vice Chancellor and senior management of the University/HEI at the conclusion of the review visit where the latter would have had an opportunity to sort out any factual errors and misinterpretations made by the review team. However, on receiving the draft report from the QAAC, the university may ask for a further discussion with the review team about the contents of the report, prior to publication. The university should notify the QAAC of its wish to take up this opportunity within two weeks of receipt of the first draft of the report, highlighting the particular areas it wishes to discuss.

The meeting to discuss any clarifications should take place within three months of the university making the request and may last up to one day. The meeting should normally be chaired by a member of the QAAC. The chair of the meeting should not be a member of the university concerned, nor should he or she have any other close links with it.

Others present at the meeting will be members of the review team (all if possible, but at least two), and representatives chosen by the university, who are likely to be staff who participated in the review and members of the senior management of the university. Detailed notes of the meeting should be taken by a representative of the QAAC.

The discussion is likely to focus on one or more of the following:

- A request from the University/HEI for clarification of one or more of the statements made in the draft report.
- A request from the University/HEI that one or more of the statements in the report be changed.

The notes of the meeting will be approved by the Chair after consultation with colleagues on the QAAC. He or she will then make a final decision on amendments if any to the contents of the report which will then be published.

7.5 Publication of the Report

The publication process and follow up action plan by the QAAC is dealt with in Part I, Chapter 2.

Appendix

Template for Section 2 of the Self-Evaluation Report

It is suggested that the SER writers will use the following template when compiling the section on 'Adherence to the Criteria, Standards, and List of Evidence' of the SER as described under 5.3.2 in Chapter 5 of this Manual. It will be more convenient to use the landscape layout for this section and to use ten separate tables in the same format for each of the ten criteria.

5.3.2 Adherence to the Criteria, Standards, and List of Evidence

Criterion 1. Governance and Management			
Standard No.	**University/HEI's Adherence to the Standard**	**Documentary Evidence to Support the Claim**	**Code No. of the Evidence Document**
(Mention the number of the standard stated in the first column of the Tables in Section 4.2 of the Manual, pp. 50-84).	*(Describe actions or measures taken by the University/HEI to comply with or adhere to each of the Standards mentioned in the second column of the Tables in Section 4.2 of the Manual, pp. 50-84).*	*(Mention the titles of all documents that you will produce for the Review Team to substantiate the claims you have mentioned in Column 2. Examples of Evidence are mentioned in the third Column of the Tables in Section 4.2 of the Manual, pp. 50-84).*	*(Mention the code No. you have given to each document mentioned in the third Column of this Table.*
An example for Standard 1, under Governance and Management is given overleaf.			

Example for Criterion 1, Standard 1 under Governance and Management

Criterion 1. Governance and Management			
Standard No.	**University/HEI's Adherence to the Standard**	**Documentary Evidence to Support the Claim**	**Code No. of the Document**
1.1	Governing structure of the University, which is made of the Council, the Senate, and the six Faculty Boards is in compliance with Part IV of the Universities Act, No. 16 of 1978. Distribution of powers between the Vice Chancellor, the Registrar, the Bursar, the Deans of Faculties are done as laid-down in the same Act and the two UGC Circulars. The Organogram of the University illustrates the position of all officers and their roles, responsibilities, and the lines of reporting. Policies on matters relating to students' rights and responsibilities, and disciplinary issues are clearly laid-down in the By-Laws on Students' Affairs adopted in June 2012.	The University Act, No. 16 of 1978 UGC Circular No. xxx of 1985 UGC Circular No. xxx of 1998 University Calendar for 2013-14 Organogram, last updated in Dec. 2013 By-Laws on Students' Affairs, adopted in June 2012.	**1**. *UA/16/1978* **8**. *UGCC/xxx/1985* **12**. *UGCC/xxx/1998* **15**. *Cal/2013-14* **7**. *Org/2013* **23**. *BL/2012*
1.2			
1.3			

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Glossary

Term	Definition
Academic calendar	the schedule of the institution for the academic year giving details like dates of re-opening and closing, holidays, exams, results, convocation, etc.
Academic quality	describes how well the learning opportunities available to students help them to achieve their awards. It is about making sure that appropriate and effective teaching, support, assessment and learning opportunities are provided.
Academic standards	the level of achievement a student has to reach to gain an academic award.
Access	the arrangements that an educational or training system makes with respect to entry requirements so as to offer entry opportunities for a much wider range of applicants than was traditionally the case.
Accreditation	a formal process of enquiry against a set of agreed criteria (or standards), undertaken by a formally constituted body and will lead, if successful, to a formal status (as an accredited institution or accredited programme or accredited degree).
Accrediting agency	an organisation or association with authority to certify the quality of the educational provision of an institution and of individual programmes.
Action plan	description of specific activities related to short and long term strategic objectives including outcomes and outputs with detailed roadmap, planned milestones, details of resource commitments and time lines.

Active learning	interactive instructional techniques that engage students in such higher-order thinking tasks such as analysis, synthesis, evaluation and reflection. Students engaged in active learning might use resources beyond the faculty. They may demonstrate their abilities to analyze, synthesize, and evaluate through projects, presentations, experiments, simulations, internships, practicum, independent study projects, peer teaching, role playing, or written documents.
Activities	questions or tasks designed to help learners to think for themselves, come up with explanations/solutions, sort out the features of an argument, draw inferences, engage in controversy and relate their own ideas and experience to a topic.
Appeal mechanism	documented procedure for dealing with challenges to a rule or decision, or for reviewing a judgement or decision made on behalf of the institution. This also includes the constitution, roles, responsibilities and ethical practices of the committees or authority established for the purpose.
Assessment	the measurement of aspects of a learner's performance in terms of knowledge, skills and attitudes (usually referred to as 'evaluation' in the USA). It can be formal or informal and formative or summative. It may be paper or computer-based or on-the-job assessment.
Assignments	student-centred learning exercises given during a course at pre-determined intervals and according to defined criteria in fulfillment of assessment requirements. Work submitted by the learners may be computer-marked or tutor marked.

Audio-visual	a term used to describe instructional materials or teaching aid which use both sound and vision; more generally, a term used to describe all communication media.
Award	a certificate or title conferred by an academic institution signifying that the recipient has successfully completed a prescribed course of study that leads to a qualification such as a degree, diploma or certificate or other formal recognition.
Benchmarking	technique in which an institution measures its performance against the best of other institutions, making reference to how those institutions achieved the 'benchmark' levels and using that information to improve its own performance according to the standard / good practice of others.
Code of conduct	expectations of behaviour mutually agreed upon by the institution and its constituent members.
Collaboration	the process by which people/organizations work together to accomplish a common mission.
Collaborative learning	method of teaching and learning in which students team together to explore a significant question or create a meaningful project. Within the context of electronic communication, collaborative learning can take place without members being physically in the same location.
Community engagement	a working relationship between an institution and one or more community groups to help both to understand and act on the needs and issues that the community experiences.

Competencies	ability to apply to practical situations the essential principles and techniques of a particular subject.
Compliance	a state of being in accordance with established guidelines, specifications, requirements or legislation.
Constituencies	various departments in the institution including administration and other sectors.
Continuous improvement	a management process whereby the content, material, services, teaching/learning processes are constantly evaluated in the light of their efficiency, effectiveness and flexibility, and continuously improved.
Continuous quality improvement	a philosophy and attitude for analyzing capabilities and processes and improving them on a continual basis to achieve the stated objectives and stakeholder satisfaction.
Counselling	the provision of academic, personal and emotional support and guidance to learners.
Course	is a planned series of learning experiences in a particular subject offered by an institution.
Course completion rate	percentage of students in the total enrollment for the course/programme who have satisfactorily completed the prescribed requirements of a given course/programme.
Course materials	materials in print or electronic format which are provided to the learner to support the achievement of the intended learning outcomes.
Credit	a unit used in the calculation of the academic value of the courses taken by a learner. The value of a credit is normally determined by the number of notional learning hours required to complete it.

Credit transfer	Transfer of credits (for learning) from one setting to another. This not only facilitates smooth transfer of learners from one programme to another and one institution to another but also enables transnational mobility.
Culture of the institution	norms, values, beliefs and behaviours inherent in an institution and reflected in the functioning of the institution and its staff. The top management of the institution defines and creates the necessary environment for the institutional culture.
Differently abled learners	learners who have a physical or mental impairment which effect their ability to carry out normal day-to-day activities.
Distance Education	an educational process and system in which all or a significant proportion of the teaching is carried out by someone or something removed in space and time from the learner. Distance education requires structured planning, well-designed courses, special instructional techniques and methods of communication by electronic and other technology, as well as specific organizational and administrative arrangements.
Distance learning	a system and a process that connects learners to distributed learning resources. All distance learning, however, is characterized by separation/distance of place and/or time between instructor and learner, amongst learners, and/or between learners and learning resources conducted through one or more media.
Dropout	a term used for learners who cease to be active in their course of study before its completion.

Dual mode institution	an institution that offers learning opportunities in two modes: one using traditional classroom-based methods, the other using distance methods.
Educational Technology	is the study and application of techniques, systems, tools and media used in education and training.
Equity in education	the absence of differences in educational opportunity or achievement based on social class, ethnicity, caste, gender, disability, area of residence which are clearly preventable and unfair.
Ethics	the practice of applying a mutually agreed code of conduct based on moral principles to the day-to-day actions of individuals or groups within any organization.
Evaluation	a periodic assessment of the relevance, efficiency, effectiveness impact and/or sustainability of an activity or intervention.
Experiential learning	learning acquired through workplace or other previous experience.
Extension programmes/courses	educational training/courses provided by universities to people who are not enrolled as regular students.
External quality Assurance (EQA)	performed by an organization external to the institution to assess the operation of the institution or its programmes to see whether it meets the pre-determined standards.
Feedback to learners	formative and evaluative comments made to individual learners by their tutors in response to tasks or written assignments that enable learners to improve their learning.

Feedback mechanism	systems for obtaining information from participants in a process that contributes to the assessment of its quality and effectiveness.
Formative assessment	assessment of learning that is carried out during a course to give feedback to students.
Formative evaluation	evaluation that occurs while a project or course is in progress, with the aim of identifying short-comings in the course.
Generic skills	skills that are fundamental to a class of activities and are transferable from one job or activity to another. Lists of generic skills usually include basic/fundamental skills such as literacy, numeracy, analytical skills, technical skills: people-related skills; conceptual skills; learning-to-learn skills; personal skills and attributes; innovative and entrepreneurial skills; entertainment skills etc.
Goal	a result, milestone or checkpoint in the future which will indicate significant progress towards achieving the institutional mission. A goal should be specific, measurable, critical for success and benchmarked.
Governance	managing an organization based on pre-determined policy; providing leadership and managing and coordinating the use of physical and human resources, procedures and processes, in a transparent and efficient manner to successfully achieve the vision of the organization.
Governance structure	the system and structure for defining policy, providing leadership, managing and coordinating the procedures and resources that ensure the quality of all the activities of the organizations (NCATE Standards – http://urlm.co/www.cqaie.org).

Grievance redressal	mechanisms for receiving , processing and addressing dissatisfaction expressed, complaints and other formal requests made by learners, staff and other stakeholders on the institutional provisions promised and perceived.
Independent learning	instructional system in which learners are encouraged to carry out their studies beyond the classroom instruction so as to prepare students for lifelong learning.
Independent study	mode of learning in which learners work through their study materials independently of other learners.
Induction	is the process by which learners are helped to understand the requirements, learning skills, mode of operation etc. of a course or programme.
Innovation	using new knowledge and understanding to experiment with new possibilities in order to implement new concepts that create new value.
Inputs	products, services and prepared materials used to produce the desired outcomes.
Institutionalization	formalization of a practice; it is the opposite of any ad hoc arrangement which offers extensive flexibility.
Institutional research	collection, analysis, reporting of quantitative and qualitative data about an institution's students, faculty, staff, curriculum, course offerings and learning outcomes to inform institutional decision-making and planning.
Instructional design	process of designing instructional materials in a way that helps learners to learn effectively.

Instructional package	all essential study materials for a course.
Interactivity	there are two kinds of interactivity viz: learning material interactivity involving the learner's interaction with the medium, and the immediacy of feedback the medium itself provides, and the extent to which the medium will accommodate learner's own input and direction and social interactivity; extent to which learners interact with teachers and with each other via a given medium.
Interdisciplinary study	an integrative approach in which information from more than one discipline is used in interpreting the content of a subject, phenomenon, theory or principle.
Intellectual Property Rights (IPR)	temporary grants of monopoly intended to give economic incentives for innovative and creative activity. IPR exist in the form of patents, copyrights and trademarks.
Internal Quality Assurance (IQA)	internal system of monitoring to ensure that policies and mechanisms are in place and to make sure that it is meeting its own objectives and pre-determined standards.
Internal review	methods used by universities to assure their own academic standards and quality.
Institutional Review Report (IRR)	compiled by the peer review team is the final outcome of an Institutional Review and provides a concise account of the review process and findings supported by evidence, an analysis of the issues identified together with the team's conclusions on the level of accomplishment of the institution in terms of quality of its educational provision.
Learner-centred education	a system of education where the learner is at the centre of education with responsibility for learning while the teacher functions as the facilitator of learning.

Learner support	a supportive network of preparatory courses, skill development opportunities, personal and academic counselling to meet learners needs through a flexible approach to resources including individualized support from the teacher/facilitator.
Learner support services	physical and academic facilities made available to learners to enable every individual to achieve the stated learning outcomes through online support, tutor support, library and information services, laboratories and administrative support.
Learning centres	offices or buildings maintained by open and distance learning programmes in order to provide localized delivery of learning materials and support to learners.
Learning environment	the place and setting where learning occurs. A virtual learning environment is one in which a student is provided with tools and resources to learn both autonomously and with a virtual cohort of learners.
Learning outcomes	statements of what a learner is expected to know and/or be able to do at the end of a period of learning.
Learning resources	the resources of the learning process which may be used by a learner (in isolation or with other learners) to facilitate learning.
Lifelong learning	a philosophical concept in which learning is viewed as a long term process beginning at birth and lasting throughout life; a conceptual framework within which the learning needs of people of all ages, educational and occupational levels may be met, regardless of circumstances; a process of accomplishing personal, social and professional development throughout the lifespan of individuals to enhance the quality of life.

Lifelong learning skills	knowledge and skills which improve learners' competence at the time of learning and facilitate continuous learning throughout life.
Management Information System (MIS)	a computerized integrated information collection, collation, analysis and reporting system to support institutional management and decision making processes.
Market research	activities undertaken by an institution to determine the demand for its programmes and services.
Mission	the overall function or purpose of an institution.
Module	a separate and coherent block of learning; a part of the modular programme of studies where the curriculum is divided into a range of similar sized segments.
Modular curricula	courses offered in units which are complete in themselves.
Monitoring	a management function that operates during programme implementation to carry out a continuous or on-going collection and analysis of information about implementation, and to review programmes with a view to correcting problems as they arise. It is an internal activity that is the responsibility of those who manage implementation procedures thus representing good management practices.
Multimedia	learning technologies that involve the whole range of audio, visual, text and graphics media available, integrated into a package that has been effectively designed from an instructional perspective.

Needs analysis	a process of identifying the learning and training needs of a particular group or population.
Open access	a way of providing learning opportunities that implies a lack of formal entry requirements, prerequisite credentials or an entrance examination.
Open learning	an educational philosophy that also emphasizes giving learners choices about media, place of study, support mechanisms and entry and exit points.
Open and Distance Learning	a way of providing learning opportunities characterized by the separation of teacher and learner in time and/or place; learning that is certified in some way by an institution or agency; the use of a variety of media, including print and electronic; two-way communications that allow learners and tutors to interact; the possibility of occasional face to face meetings between tutor and learners; and a specialized division of labour in the production and delivery of courses.
Open educational resources	educational resources offered freely and openly for anyone to use and under some licenses to re-mix, improve and re-distribute.
Open source software	a licensing model for software that gives free access to the source code of the software to allow interested parties to modify or contribute to the software as they see fit.
Organizational chart / Organogram	a diagram that shows the structure of an organization and the relationships and relative ranks of its parts and positions/jobs.
Organizational structure	a framework that shows the divisions of an organization and reveals vertical responsibilities and horizontal linkages, and may be represented by an organization chart.

Orientation	a process through which a new student or employee is integrated into an institution, learning about its culture, policies and procedures, and the specific practicalities of his or her programme of study or job.
Outputs	products, materials, services or information arising out of a particular process.
Outreach	the provision of programmes, services, activities and /or expertise to those outside the traditional university community. Outreach is a one-way process in which the university is the provider either on a gratis basis or with an associated charge.
Outreach programmes/activities	a systematic attempt to provide services beyond the conventional limits of institutional provision to particular segments of a community e.g. educational programmes for illiterate adults.
Participatory management	a system of institutional management in which every member of the institution is involved at one stage or the other in the decision making process.
Partner institutions/organizations	key institutions/organizations which are working in collaboration with another institution to achieve a common goal or to improve performance.
Partnership/alliance	a formal arrangement between two partners for a specific purpose; It is both a strategy and a formal relationship between the university and another major provider that engenders cooperation for the benefit of both parties and the student population at large.
Peer assessment	a method of assessment that is based on the consensus opinion of a peer group of learners on the respective contributions made to the work of the group by each individual.

Performance appraisal	a systematic assessment of an employee's performance in order to determine his/her achievement of assigned tasks, training needs, potential for promotion, eligibility for merit increment etc.
Performance indicators	criteria used by educational institutions in self-evaluation and by external evaluators when judging the quality of educational provision.
Policy	a statement of principles or intentions which serve as continuing guidelines for management in accomplishing objectives.
Print media	printed materials, as distinguished from broadcast or electronically transmitted communications.
Prior learning	what has been learnt by an individual prior to enrollment in a particular programme by means of knowledge or skills acquired in an educational institution or previous experience gained from a workplace.
Process	a set of interrelated work activities characterized by a set of specific inputs and activities to achieve specific outputs.
Programme	structured teaching and learning opportunities which lead to an award; Refers to all activities that engage students in learning.
Progression	vertical movement of learners from one level of education to the next higher level successfully or towards gainful employment.
Prospectus	a publication produced by an institution for prospective students giving details about itself, its programmes, courses and admission requirements.

Quality	the fitness for purpose of a product or service according to a set of required standards, with minimum cost to society.
Quality Assessment	a process of evaluation of performance of an institution or its unit based on certain established criteria.
Quality Assurance	the policies and procedures by which the universities can guarantee with confidence and certainty that standard of its awards and quality of its education provision and knowledge generation are being maintained. It also refers to the process of maintaining standards reliably and consistently by applying criteria of success in a course, programme or institution.
Quality review (external)	a systematic, independent examination by an independent third party to determine whether quality activities in an institution comply with plans and whether these plans are implemented effectively and are suitable to achieve the stated objectives.
Quality enhancement	a term concerned with seeking to achieve quality that is understood to be reasonably better than that which prevailed earlier. It is also defined as performance efficiency of a system.
Reflective practice	thoughtfully considering one's own experiences in applying knowledge to practice.
Regulatory agencies	government or quasi government agencies with responsibility for the overall planning and monitoring of the educational provision of institutions commonly under their purview.

Research	rigorous intellectual activity which involves systematic investigation to generate new knowledge.
Review judgement	a conclusion arrived at by a peer review team of a university's overall effectiveness with regard to quality.
Self-appraisal	individual's or institution's evaluation of own performance.
Self-assessment	a process in which learners answer questions or carry out prescribed activities to determine whether expected learning has occurred.
Self Evaluation Report (SER)	a document prepared by the HEI providing a description and analysis with supporting evidence of the effectiveness with which the HEI discharges its responsibility for academic standards and adherence to good practices.
Sri Lanka Qualification Framework (SLQF)	a comprehensive document published by the Ministry of Higher Education, outlining a nationally consistent framework for all higher education qualifications offered in Sri Lanka, recognizing the volume of learning of students and identifying the learning outcomes that are to be achieved by qualification holders. Its objective is to have a uniform system in naming a qualification, the designators, and qualifiers of each qualification awarded by HEIs in Sri Lanka.
Staff development	skills development, refresher programmes or other training provided for staff within or outside the institution to enable them to continuously update their knowledge and skills for effective and efficient performance and career advancement.

Standards	measurable indicators that provide the basis of comparison for making judgements concerning the performance of an instructional activity, programme or institution.
Strategic plan	a specific and action-oriented, medium or long-term plan for making progress towards a set of institutional goals.
Student handbook	an information book for registered students of an institution containing information on all matters relevant to students for their academic progress in the institution.
Students' Feedback Analyses	gathering and analyzing feedback from students at the end of a study program or an individual course unit for improving and refining the education that the HEI provides. Strategies for gathering feedback from students may range from informal discussions with students to the use of feedback forms containing a mix of free-responses and quantitative questions using Likert scales.
Student: Tutor ratio	the average number of students assigned to an individual tutor across a programme or institution.
Subject Benchmark Statement (SBS)	reference point that provides a description of a particular subject/discipline to make explicit its general academic characteristics and standards, and to articulate the attributes that a graduate should be able to demonstrate. It describes expectations about standard of awards in a subject/discipline and what gives a subject/discipline its coherence and identity. It also meets the expectations of a graduate in understanding of the subject in terms of knowledge, skills, and attitudes. Subject Benchmarks are used when developing or revising course syllabi.

Summative assessment	assessment of learning that takes place on completion of the learning activity or activities.
Summative evaluation	evaluation that occurs at the completion of a course or project, which provides a summary account of its effectiveness and the extent to which it meets its goals and objectives.
Survey	the act of examining a process or questioning a selected sample of individuals to obtain data about a process, product or service.
Total Quality Management	a comprehensive approach for improving competitiveness, effectiveness and flexibility through planning, organizing and understanding each activity and involving each individual at each level.
Transparency	institutional processes that are characterized by openness, communication and clearly assigned accountability.
Tracer Studies	graduate survey methods conducted by an HEI to evaluate the relevance of their educational programmes in terms of employability and professional development of its graduates. Tracer studies are conducted using questionnaires to obtain information from former graduates about the state of their employment, labour market signals, professional success, retrospective evaluation of study programmes, curricular development, continuing education etc. Sri Lankan HEIs are encouraged to conduct tracer studies to evaluate and improve the relevance of their study programmes.
Tutoring	an interactive approach to disseminating knowledge that helps students to improve their learning strategies in order to promote empowerment and independent learning.

Validation	process of confirming the appropriateness of something; determination of the effectiveness of instructional materials or system by the use of appropriate summative evaluation techniques.
Vision	a short memorable statement that paints a vivid picture of an ambitious, desirable future state aligned with institutional values. Its purpose is to inspire and act as a guide for decision-making and planning.

Notes on Authors

Professor Narada Warnasuriya is the Senior Professor of Paediatrics at the General Sir John Kotelawala Defence University. He is Emeritus Professor of Paediatrics, former Dean, Faculty of Medical Sciences and a former Vice Chancellor of the University of Sri Jayawardenepura. A former Chairman of the Committee of Vice-Chancellors and Directors of Sri Lanka (CVCD), he is a senior academic who has been intimately involved in the Quality Assurance Programme of the Sri Lankan University system from its inception. He is currently a member of, the Sri Lanka Medical Council (SLMC); Academic Affairs Board of the National Institute Education(NIE); and the Standing Committee on General Education of The National Education Commission (NEC). He was formerly a member of the Standing Committee on Higher Education of the NEC and actively contributed in the formulation of the National Framework on Higher Education (2008).

Professor Uma Coomaraswamy is Emeritus Professor and a former Vice-Chancellor of the Open University of Sri Lanka, served Sri Lanka University System for over forty years, as an academic and administrator; served as a QA consultant, ADB/Distance Education Modernization Project 2006-2009; developed QA tools and systems for Distance Higher Education at a national level and spearheaded the preparation of the "QA Toolkit for Distance Higher Education : Institutions and Programmes" published by the Commonwealth of Learning, Canada (2009); working in the field of QA from 2002; current involvements " QA Manual for External Degree Programmes"; Manual of Best Practices, Standards and Guidelines for External Training Institutions" to be published by the UGC (2014); chapter to "Quality Assurance of Distance Education and e-learning: Challenges and Solutions from Asia" (2013) IDRC, Canada. She currently functions as an External Reviewer of Quality on COL RIM for universities in South Asia.

Professor Nandani de Silva is Senior Professor of Family Medicine at the General Sir John Kotelawala Defence University, Emeritus Professor of Family Medicine, University of Kelaniya and a former Vice Chancellor of the Open University of Sri Lanka (OUSL). She is the UGC nominee on the Board of Management, CODL, University of Moratuwa and member of the Standing Committee on External Degrees, UGC. She is a Quality Assurance Reviewer for Institutional and Programme Reviews and conducted the SLQF Survey in 2014 for the HETC. She is the Consultant for the Online Continuing Professional Development Programme for Doctors at the OUSL; Previous positions include Project Coordinator, Diploma in Family Medicine by distance education and Chairperson of the Board of Study in Family Medicine, Postgraduate Institute of Medicine 2009-2011; Editor of the CME Bulletin of the Sri Lanka Medical Association 2002-2006; and a contributing author to the National Policy Framework on Higher Education 2008 by the NEC.

Professor B.D. Nandadeva is a Professor in the Department of Fine Arts of the University of Kelaniya with over 36 years of experience in teaching. He earned his Ph.D. in Art Conservation Research from the University of Delaware, USA, M.Sc. from the University of Moratuwa, a Graduate Diploma from the University of Canberra, Australia, and B.A. (Hons) from the University of Ceylon. He has conducted research at the University of Thessaloniki in Greece, the Freer Gallery of Art of the Smithsonian Institution in WashingtonDC, SojoUniversity in Japan, and at the Courtauld Institute of Art of the University of London. He has contributed to academic administration at the University of Kelaniya holding several important positions as Head of Department, Director of the Staff Development Unit, Deputy Director of Student Affairs, Member of the Internal Quality Assurance Unit, Coordinator of the HETC-UDG Project, and in numerous Senate and Faculty Sub-committees.

Professor Harischandra Abeygunawardena holds a BVSc degree from the University of Peradeniya, and MSc & PhD degrees from the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign, USA. He is Senior Professor in Farm Animal Production and Health and former Dean, Faculty of Veterinary Medicine and Animal Science in the University of Peradeniya. He is a former Vice Chancellor of the University of Peradeniya. He served as a member of the University Grants Commission (UGC) from October 2009 to February 2015 and functioned as Chairman of the Standing Committees on Quality Assurance and Accreditation, External Degrees and Extension Courses, Staff Development, and Career Guidance. He has been serving as a consultant of WB-HETC Project on External Degree Programmes. He has wide experience in strategic planning in higher education, developmental project planning and project administration, institutional governance & management, planning and implementing curricular reforms, quality assurance and accreditation and open and distance learning systems.

List of Participants at Stakeholder Meetings

1. Mr. P. Ranepura, Secretary, Ministry of Higher Education and Research.
2. Prof. K A Nandasena, Director/HETC Project; Former Vice Chancellor/Rajarata University of Sri Lanka.
3. Prof. Kshanika Hirimburegama, former Chairperson, University Grants Commission.
4. Dr. Sunil J. Nawaratne, former Secretary, Ministry of Higher Education.
5. Mr. Douglas Nanayakkara, former Additional Secretary, Non -State Higher Education Institutes, Ministry of Higher Education.
6. Mr.P. G. Jayasinghe, Additional Secretary, Administration, Ministry of Higher Education.
7. Prof. L. L. Ratnayake, Chairman, SLIIT, former Director, HETC Project.
8. Prof. Ananda Jayawardena, Vice Chancellor, University of Moratuwa
9. Prof. Saman Abeysinghe, Chairman, Internal Quality Assurance Unit, University of Ruhuna.
10. Prof. Samanthi Senaratne, Chairperson, Internal Quality Assurance Unit, University of Sri Jayawardenepura.
11. Prof. P. Ravirajan, Chairman, Internal Quality Assurance Unit, University of Jaffna.
12. Prof. R. P. C. Ranjanie, Representative, Internal Quality Assurance Unit, University of Kelaniya.
13. Dr. Shelton Perera, Director, Science Education Unit, University of Peradeniya.
14. Prof. Aruni Weerasinghe, Director, Staff Development Center, Rajarata University of Sri Lanka
15. Dr. N. Pallewatta, Representative, Internal Quality Assurance Unit, University of Colombo.
16. Dr. K.D.R.R. Silva, Chairman, Internal Quality Assurance Unit, Wayamba University of Sri Lanka.
17. Dr. S.J. Samarakoon, Chairperson, Internal Quality Assurance Unit, Sabaragamuwa University of Sri Lanka.
18. Mr. Chandraguptha Thenuwara, Chairman, Internal Quality Assurance Unit, University of Visual and Performing Arts.
19. Ms. K.M.R.Siriwardena, Champion, Sri Lanka Qualification Framework, Uva Wellassa University.

20. Prof. Narada Warnasuriya, Emeritus Professor and former Vice Chancellor, University of Sri Jayawardenepura; Senior Professor of Paediatrics, General Sir John Kotelawela Defence University.
21. Prof. Uma Coomaraswamy, Emeritus Professor and former Vice Chancellor, Open University of Sri Lanka; Competent Authority, Eastern University of Sri Lanka.
22. Prof. Nandani de Silva, Emeritus Professor, University of Kelaniya, former Vice Chancellor, Open University of Sri Lanka; Senior Professor of Family Medicine, General Sir John Kotelawela Defence University.
23. Prof. B.D. Nandadeva, Professor, Department of Fine Arts and Member, Internal Quality Assurance Unit, University of Kelaniya.
24. Prof. H. Abeygunawardena, former Vice Chancellor and Senior Professor in Farm Animal Production and Health, University of Peradeniya; former member, UGC and former Chairman, Standing Committees on QAA, External Degrees and Staff Development.
25. Prof. Kalyani Perera, Senior Professor, University of Peradeniya; Member, UGC QA Standing Committee; Consultant (QA Universities), HETC Project.
26. Prof. Sarath Amunugama, Former Vice Chancellor, University of Kelaniya; Consultant (QIG & UDG), HETC Project.
27. Prof. Kapila Gunasekara, Former Vice Chancellor, University of Peradeniya; Consultant (M&E), HETC Project.
28. Prof. Lalith Munasinghe, Retired Professor, University of Kelaniya; Consultant (HRD Long Term), HETC Project.
29. Dr. Upali Mampitiya, Senior Lecturer, University of Kelaniya; Consultant (SLQF) HETC Project.
30. Dr. Gominda Ponnamperuma, Senior lecturer, University of Colombo; Consultant (HRD short-term), HETC Project.
31. Dr. R.M.K Ratnayake, Director, National Centre for Advance Studies; former Consultant (HER & HRD), HETC Project.
32. Dr. Malaka Walpola, Senior Lecturer, University of Moratuwa; former Consultant (IT & ENGLISH), HETC Project.
33. Ms. Vishaka Nanayakkara, Senior Lecturer, University of Moratuwa; former Consultant (IDAS), HETC Project.
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