QUALITY ASSURANCE AND MANAGEMENT POLICY

Custodian/Responsible Executive	Deputy Vice-Chancellor
Responsible division	Centre for Academic Development
Status	Approved
Recommended by	Centre for Academic Development
Date recommended	31 October 2024
Approved by	Council
Date approved	12th December 2024
Review date	2029
Stakeholders affected by this Policy	All academic and non-academic staff at all levels and students
Related documents	

University documents	National documents
• Copperbelt University Act No. 19 of1987 • University Act No. 11 of 1999 • All policies, guidelines, rules and regulations of the University • Schools and Directorates' handbooks	• Higher Education (Amendment) Act No. 4 of 2013 • Higher Education (Amendment) Act No. 23 of 2021 • Zambia Qualifications Authority Act No. 13 of 2011 • Higher Education Authority Framework for Institutional Audits • Education and Training Sector Improvement Program (ETSIP) • Technical Education, Vocational and Entrepreneurship Training Act No. 13 of 1998

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Abbreviations and Acronyms

ADC	Academic Development Committee
CAD	Centre for Academic Development
CBU	Copperbelt University
DDEOL	Directorate of Distance Education and Open Learning
ETSIP	Education and Training Sector Improvement Program
HEA	Higher Education Authority of Zambia
HOD	Head of Department
ICT	Information and Communication Technology
M & E	Monitoring and Evaluationa
MOU	Memorandum of Understanding
ODL	Open and Distance Learning
QA	Quality Assurance
QAF	Quality Assurance Framework
QMS	Quality Management System
TEVETA	Technical and Vocational Education Training Authority
ZAQA	Zambia Qualifications Authority
ZQF	Zambia Qualifications Framework
ZTA	Zambia Training Authority

Glossary of Terms

Accreditation: The establishment of status, legitimacy or appropriateness of an institution, programme or module of study by a recognised authority.

Benchmarking: A process that enables comparison of inputs, processes or outputs between institutions or parts of institutions) or within a single institution over time.

Blended learning: Thoughtful fusion of face-to-face and online learning experiences. Blended learning is referred to by various terms like blended, hybrid, mixed-mode, and flexible learning. It is also sometimes referred to as flipped classes.

Continuous improvement: A systematic process of conducting self- reviews to identify strengths and weaknesses, developing and implementing improvement plans, and reviewing progress after a specified period of time.

External evaluation: A generic term for most forms of quality reviews undertaken by national quality assurance agencies. External evaluation is a process that uses people external to the programme or institution to evaluate the quality of provision.

Information and Communication Technology: an extensional term for *information technology* (IT) that stresses the role of *unified communications* and the integration of *telecommunications* (telephone lines and wireless signals) and computers, as well as necessary enterprise software, middleware, storage, and audio-visual systems, that enable users to access, store, transmit, and manipulate information

Internal evaluation: Consists of regular self-review processes by a higher education provider, based on explicitly defined quality standards, which are commonly developed and shared widely within an institution. The prime purpose of internal evaluation is to enlighten the institution on its strengths and weaknesses on the basis of which improvement plans are made and implemented.

Learning Management System: A platform for digital learning. It is a software application that provides an instructor with a way to create and deliver content, monitor student participation, and assess student performance.

Open and Distance Learning: Often misunderstood to mean one thing, open and distance learning refers to two distinct concepts. The first is making learning open and this can be both in a distance and in a conventional face-to-face environment. A provider can be open in terms of entry age, entry qualifications, when to register, when and how to study, etc. Distance learning simply refers to learning remotely from campus and from the teacher. Distance education can be open but it can also be closed (offered rigidly in terms of the aspects mentioned above). Not all distance learning is open.

Online learning: Online learning is structured web-based learning.

Peer review: Evaluation of a provider's performance by somebody with similar competences as the provider. This is usually done at the request of the reviewed partner and for their own benefit.

Quality: Standards that an institution sets itself to achieve within a given period of time.

Quality Assurance: Systems and mechanisms that are put in place to ensure that aspired standards are achieved. It is a proactive and not a reactive process.

Quality criteria: Specific elements or functions that will be selected, tested and measured in order to confirm that defined quality objectives have been met.

1. Preamble

Copperbelt University pursues the key functions of (i) teaching and learning, (ii) research and consultancy, and (iii) public service. These functions and terms of reference are drawn from several policies and development plans, namely: *Educating Our Future (1996),* the Higher Education (Amendment) Act of 2021 that repealed and replaced the Higher Education Act no.4 of 2013, and the *7th National Development Plan (2017-2021*). The Acts of Parliament provide the legal framework for the University*.* As far back as the *Educating Our Future (1996) policy*, it was recognised that institutions of learning and training including universities needed to reform in three ways:

(i)   Teaching and research programmes to be responsive to the real developmental needs of society;
(ii)   Teaching, research and service to be of such high standard that, on merit, they win the respect of all stakeholders;
(iii)   Establish suitable quality assurance and public accountability systems.

This Quality Assurance and Management Policy seeks to ensure that the University achieves these goals that would help satisfy and meet the needs and expectations of its students, the labour market, and all stakeholders. This policy promotes a dual mode (face to face and Distance mode) delivery system for all its programmes.

The Copperbelt University is a Tier one higher education institution that provides education and training at certificate (ZQF level 3-5), diploma (level 6), undergraduate degree (level 7), postgraduate diploma (level 8), master's degree (level 9) and doctoral degree (level 10). The University is responsible for setting and maintaining the standards of its academic awards (and of its affiliated institutions) at these levels corresponding to levels on the Zambia Qualifications Framework (ZQF) and to the satisfaction of minimum standards regulated by the Zambia Higher Education Authority. This Policy enables the University to assure and demonstrate to both internal and external stakeholders (i.e., students, government, employers, and universities in the region and internationally) the achievement and continuous improvement in the standards of its teaching and learning, research and innovation, and service to the society. The Policy also serves to show how the University protects its standards and the integrity of its qualifications and awards.

In order for the University to achieve and maintain high standards an effective Academic Quality Assurance Policy must be implemented. The Policy will provide guidelines with respect to quality of core services of the University which are in teaching and learning, research and innovation, and service to the society.

2. Vision

To be a premier institution in Teaching, Research and Innovation for National Development

3. Mission Statement

To contribute to sustainable development through the provision of flexible and inclusive teaching, research and service that are innovative and entrepreneurial.

4. Aim of the Policy

The Mission Statement and Quality assurance Policy articulate the University's commitment to its learners. Learner expectations must be understood, converted into requirements, and have processes designed to exceed them in order to fulfil the intentions of this Policy. The aim of the Quality Assurance Policy is to ensure that quality is consistently maintained in the University in terms of teaching and learning, research and public service, student learning experiences and, subsequently, the quality of the university graduates. It commits the University to the development of a quality culture where continuous improvement in standards of services is sustained. The Policy regulates all processes to ensure that the university meets its social mandate.

5. Objectives of the Policy

The objectives of this quality assurance policy are to:

i. Provide guidelines and procedures for implementing Quality Assurance for conventional and open and distance learning programmes, taking into account national, regional and international educational concerns.
ii. Guide staff in the execution and implementation of Quality Assurance management systems and mechanism.
iii. Monitor and evaluate quality assurance systems in the University to ensure that they meet set local national, regional and international standards.
iv. Make quality assurance an explicit undertaking in all institutional business as a way of establishing a quality culture in the university.

6. Policy Statement

In the effort to realize its vision, mission, values and objectives, the University shall regularly monitor and evaluate the implementation of all its mandated activities to ensure continuous quality achievement and improvement. The university shall ensure that all its governance and management processes are consistent with standard quality-assured best practices.

7. Provision of Resources

Appropriate resources, including trained staff, are identified and provided throughout the university. These include the resources needed to ensure implementation and improvement of the quality management system, conduct audits/due diligence, and address customer satisfaction. Copperbelt University believes that its employees are the most valuable assets. In line with its values and beliefs, the University will do the best to help its employees achieve their full potential through continuous education and training.

8. Continuous Improvement

The Copperbelt University will plan and manage the processes necessary for the continual improvement of the Quality Management Systems. This will be done through the establishment of objectives of the System, the planning of the process, the provision of resources and information needed to carry out the process, the monitoring of related measures needed to assess process effectiveness and efficiency, and the identification/implementation of actions needed to achieve desired results.

The University determines employee training, awareness, and competency needs through a variety of methods. All employees are evaluated and qualified on the basis of documented or demonstrated competencies. Qualification records for all employees are maintained.

Copperbelt University develops and provides training that balances organisational competency needs with the development and career needs of its employees. When a procedure is updated and implemented, those employees responsible for that specific process are trained prior to deployment of the new or changed process or procedure. Records for all training received are maintained.

9. Policy Alignment

The Quality Assurance Policy of the University shall be aligned and in consonant with other relevant national and regional policies. These include the following:

(i)   National Vision 2030
(ii)   National Development Plans
(iii)   National, Regional and International Quality Assurance Standards and Regulations
(iv)   Relevant Institutional Policies and Regulations

10. Policy Values

The CBU Quality Assurance policy is framed around the following values:

i.   Creativity and Innovativeness;

ii.   Entrepreneurship;

iii.   Environmental sustainability;

iv.   A Positive Attitude to Work; and

v.   Integrity and Professionalism

11. Approach to Quality Assurance

The quality assurance approach at the University shall be aligning our Internal Quality Assurance to national standards and guidelines stipulated by the HEA and ZAQA. The internal self- regulation shall be coordinated by the Unit responsible for Quality Assurance, benchmarking against the global leading universities. The Unit shall make regular QA visits to all Units and Departments at the University to assess compliance with the QA policy. The approach will also include external regulation by the Higher Education Authority and other statutory regulators and also allow for peer review of the quality assured areas.

A key role of the Unit responsible for Quality Assurance will be to coordinate quality assurance activities in the university, and to build capacity among staff to manage quality assurance in their day to day activities.

12. Areas to be Quality Assured

The following are the areas to be quality assured. These include those in the HEA standards and guidelines for quality assurance and criteria for institutional audits.

12.1 Vision. Mission and Strategy

The University shall ensure that statements of Vision and Mission are translated into key documents (e.g. Strategic Plans/ Operational Plan, Quality Assurance Policy, Statutes) of the University.

12.2 Governance and management

The University shall enforce clear organisational and administrative structures in line with the statutes and a communication systems for the promotion of internal and external information dissemination for public accountability.

12.3 Financial Management

The University shall maintain financial transparency by having the annual financial statement audited by external auditors. The CFO shall prepare a detailed plan of expenditure based on the learner intake versus the expected cost with frequent periodic reviews. Programmes offered shall be accurately costed to ensure that students are provided with enough support to facilitate learning.

12.4 Programme Design and Development

Programme design and development is informed by needs analysis. Academic programmes of study are responsive to the needs of the society. Programmes are designed and developed by qualified staff and approved by Senate before they are rolled out. All approved programs shall be submitted to the HEA for accreditation and registration with ZAQA as required by the law. The University shall also periodically submit to the HEA requests for renewal of accreditation of its programmes as specified by the HEA. Programmes of the university are subject to review every five years to ensure that they remain relevant.

12.5 Course Design and Development

The course curriculum is well-researched, with aims and learning outcomes appropriate to the level of study; content, teaching and learning, and assessment methods facilitate the achievement of the aims and learning outcomes; there is an identified process of development and regular review of courses.

12.6 Teaching and Learning Strategy

The University shall provide self-contained materials for its learners with diverse needs. Self-learning materials shall be designed in such a manner that the teacher is built into them and are user-friendly to learners. The University shall also ensure the provision of other appropriate supplementary materials such as audio-video programmes and live radio talks.

12.7 Learner Support Services

Learner support shall take care of both academic and non-academic needs of learners including full time, evening and distance students. The University shall make use of student data in order to facilitate timely provision of support where needed; make effective use of appropriate technology; and put learner success at the centre.

12.8   Teaching and Learning Support Systems

Learning materials shall be in appropriate formats that allow easy access by learners. There shall be coherence between learning materials and learning outcomes, course content and assessment. Learning materials shall teach in a coherent way, engage learners, and promote development of problem solving and critical thinking skills. Learning materials shall be evaluated and updated on a regular basis.

12.9   Learner Assessment and Progression

There shall be in place an effective strategy that is valid and reliable; appropriate security and quality assurance measures shall be in place to ensure the integrity of assessment processes. There shall be a policy on student appeals and turn-around times for such appeals shall be clearly defined in the policy and followed in practice.

12.10 Admission Processes

The University shall make available appropriate student registration facilities round the year with counselling facilities at all its campuses. It shall ensure that sufficient and appropriate infrastructure and resources are available at each campus for the convenience of learners, irrespective of their geographical location.

12.11 Graduation and Certification

The processing of student results will always be done professionally and timely enough in order to avoid causing unnecessary inconveniences to students. The institution will have arrangements in place to ensure that the integrity of the certification processes is not compromised. Information on graduation will be communicated to students timely.

12.12 Physical Infrastructure and Resources

Enough and appropriate infrastructure and facilities shall be provided to facilitate effective teaching and learning as well as research by both students and staff. The institution shall always have a budget for maintenance as well as for upgrading facilities where necessary. The university shall also take into account students with special needs when planning and investing in infrastructure and facilities.

12.13 Staffing and Training

The University shall appoint qualified staff selected as per the recruitment policy of the University. Appropriate measures will be taken to try and retain qualified staff. There shall be a systematic programme for continuous staff development in order to keep it abreast with latest developments in face-to-face and ODL delivery methods. The University shall provide an opportunity for all academic staff to acquire teaching methodology skills in addition to their areas of expertise.

12.14 Information Dissemination

The University shall maintain an ethical advocacy and information dissemination strategy at all times. Various channels of disseminating information about the University's programmes and services shall be used to ensure the widest possible reach. Where appropriate, local languages are used in order to avoid excluding marginalised groups of society that do not understand English.

12.15 Research and Community Services/ Engagement

The institution actively encourages and promotes research by staff and students by availing resources and creating an enabling policy environment. There is a research committee or an appropriate body which develops procedures and guidelines for undertaking research by staff and students, andmaintains an updated audit report for all research publications produced by theUniversity.

12.16 Partnerships and Collaboration

The University shall enter into collaborative arrangements with other institutionsand organisations in order to ensure that all its distance learning students have access to learning facilities. Such partnerships shall always be formalised through MOUs and MoAs.

12.17 Integration of ICTs

The University shall have a policy on the integrationof ICTs in teaching and learning. The design and deployment of courses will reflect institutional policy on ICT for learning and teaching.

12.18 Library Services and Resources

The University library shall provide up-to-date information resources for all learning programmes, which shall facilitate teaching, learning, research and community service for students and staff. Library resources shall be appropriate and shall include peer reviewed journals, text books, periodicals, monographs and other readings; library resources shall include those that cater for users with special needs; the library shall subscribe to databases and facilitate access by students and staff to the databases; library shall establish and sustain institutional repositories.

13. Quality Assurance Structures

An appropriate quality assurance structure that is inclusive and promotes participatory decision making shall be in place. The Centre for Academic Development shall be transformed into the quality assurance unit of the University and shall be adequately resourced line with the University' Quality Assurance Framework.

14. Quality Assurance Policy Review

14.1 Comments

Any member of staff or student may, without fear or prejudice submit any comment, complaints, objections, questions or suggestions with respect to the implementation of this QA policy.

14.2 Amendments or Review

In the event that any statement in the policy provision is outdated or there is a need to introduce new statements brought about by new developments in higher education, such statements may be changed or modified at the recommendation of the Boards of Studies and escalation of the same to the higher committees before approval by the Senate and Council of the University. The policy shall be reviewed every five (5) years.

15. Policy Implementation, Monitoring and Evaluation

The Centre for Academic Development shall be responsible for monitoring implementation of the Quality Assurance Policy in the University. It shall ensure

adherence to the University quality assurance policy by all stakeholders within the University. The Centre for Academic Development shall also be responsible for inducting University Departments on quality assurance processes and procedures.

16. Bibliography

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