UNISEY QUALITY ASSURANCE AND ENHANCEMENT FRAMEWORK

Version 1.0- 2020

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The University of Seychelles (UniSey) has been operational since September 2009 and as any higher education institution (HEI) is expected and committed to displaying high standards in the quality of education and support services as reflected in its Vision and Mission statements[1].

Currently, two significant shifts have occurred in the paradigms in higher education in the regions (recognised internationally) that have implications on UniSey's quality assurance systems. These are the Addis Convention[2] and the alignment of the National Qualifications Framework with the SADC Qualifications Framework[3].

In 2019, as UniSey reached 10 years of existence, it also embarked on a process to review its first Quality Assurance Policy (2104). The need for the review was significantly important to ensure alignment between internal, external and international trends in higher education in general, but specific to the evolution of quality assurance in this context.

UniSey's Quality Assurance vision is for the University, by 2023, to have defined academic and non-academic standards that are equivalent to national, regional and international standards and that the quality of teaching and learning, research and community engagement fulfil the expectations of the stakeholders. The strategy to achieve this vision is to have quality assurance mechanisms that are integrated into a single system of continuous appraisal and improvement of academic programmes/courses and operational practices at the institutional level. Importantly, the QAEF provides the quality standards that support the aspiration of UniSey to become an internationally renowned higher education institution as outlined in its vision and mission statements.

The Quality Assurance and Enhancement Framework (QAEF) replaces the Quality Assurance and Enhancement Policy of 2014. This revised and more comprehensive policy is the overarching mechanism to guide UniSey's general mandates, mainly towards the country's human resource development [4] that supports the Sustainable Development Strategy (2012-2020)[5]. Drawing from contemporary evidence-based practices, the standards in this policy reflect the context of UniSey as the highest educational institution in Seychelles. The QAEF is the overall strategy to help UniSey achieve quality management and a culture of quality within the institution. The accompanied Monitoring and Evaluation plan will help UniSey towards continuous improvement.

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[1] The University of Seychelles Strategic Plan, 2017-2021

[2] Seychelles endorsed the revised 2014 Addis Convention on the recognition of academic qualifications on higher education in African States that was ratified in November 2019 by UNESCO during the 40th General Conference in Paris. This paved the way for ensuring credibility, validity and reliability of equivalence of qualifications across the region by providing guidelines for the recognition of these qualifications.

[3] The alignment of the National Qualifications Framework with the SADC Qualifications Framework was approved in the SADC Technical Committee on Certification and Accreditation in 2019.

[4] National Human Resource Development Strategy 2018-2020

[5] Seychelles Sustainable Development Strategy (SSDS) 2012-2020

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ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

The Quality Assurance Office expresses its deepest appreciation to all those who contributed to the development of the Quality Assurance and Enhancement Framework, which sets the standards that guide quality management and ultimately create a culture of quality at UniSey.

Special gratitude goes to all who contributed to stimulating in-depth discussions around making the document appropriate for the University and its stakeholders and the successful completion of the task.

Deepest gratitude is expanded to the staff who participated in the two workshops (Annex 1: List of participants) and the members of the Executive Committee, the Senate and the Council for providing deep insights and expertise that greatly assisted the development and approval process. The outstanding contribution of all is an asset in promoting quality assurance and enhancement at UniSey.

The University of Seychelles (UniSey) also acknowledges the work of national, regional and international quality assurance (QA) agencies and higher education institutions (HEIs) with established QA mechanisms and systems. The concepts, principles and practice guidelines from several QA agencies were consulted/adopted in the development of UniSey's Quality Assurance and Enhancement Framework (QAF). In addition to the reference list, the following significantly informed the QAEF:

1. The Seychelles Tertiary Education Act, 2011.
2. The University of Seychelles Charter, 2017.
3. The Seychelles Qualifications Authority: Quality Assurance Manual, 2011.
4. The African Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance in Higher Education (ASG-QA), 2018.
5. The European Commission: Standard and Guidelines for Quality Assurance in the Higher Education Area, 2015.
6. The United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation (UNESCO) Policy Brief on Internal Quality Assurance and Management, 2018.
7. The United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) European Centre for Higher Education, 2159, Quality Assurance and accreditation: Glossary of Basic Terms and Definitions, 2007.
8. The United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) Quality management in higher education: Developments and drivers
Quality management in higher education: Developments and drivers (results from an international survey; new trends in higher education (2017)
9. The Australian Tertiary Education Quality and Standards Agency: Higher Education Standard Framework, 2015.
10. The International Standardisation for Organisation (ISO): Quality Management Principles (QMPs) and related Quality Management Standards, ISO 9000, ISO 9001, 2015.
11. The Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD), Glossary of Statistical Terms, 2007.

ITEM NO	1
DATE SUBMITTED	March 2021
CLASSIFICATION	Policy

AUTHOR	Beryl Camille
COMMITTEE/SECTION	QA Office
PAPER TITLE	UniSey Quality Assurance and Enhancement Framework.
PURPOSE OF SUBMISSION	To propose to the Senate the Quality Assurance and Enhancement Framework as overarching QA policy, replacing the existing Quality Assurance and Enhancement Policy, July 16, 2014.

BRIEF INTRODUCTION

In October 2019, the QA Office proposed the concept and principles of a Quality Assurance and Enhancement Framework (QAEF) to replace the existing Quality Assurance and Enhancement Policy or 2014.

The rationale for a comprehensive review was based on the continued quest for quality management institution-wise; creating a culture of quality. The existing QA policy and procedures do not respond to the evolutions of quality assurance higher education institutions; hence, the need for an overarching policy that would encompass the necessary key standards that will necessitate thorough, structured, and documented procedures.

The development of the QAEF followed the procedure for policy development set by UniSey. The consultation was done to the optimal level with staff. Firstly, the Senate endorsed the concept, principles and standards, which was followed by the structuring of the document. The first draft was reviewed by the staff in two workshops conducted in November 2019 (refer to Annex 1 of the QAEF for the list of participants). Secondly, the document was presented to the Executives Committee and further amendments were made. The final document is attached to this paper for the Senate to endorse before editing, proofreading, branding and disseminating.

The endorsement of this policy will be an advantage for UniSey as it demonstrates to the external evaluators and auditors (TEC, SQA and international collaborators) that we are committed to assuring and enhancing an optimum level of quality through evidence of sound quality assurance mechanisms. Such behaviour will award UniSey a good rating for good governance; ultimately, credibility and sustainability. The proposed Quality Assurance and Enhancement Framework (QAEF), which include a component of Monitoring and Evaluation is the pathway for such achievement.

MAJOR POINTS FOR DISCUSSION

As described previously, the QAEF reflects the best international standards and guidelines (core characteristics) of the provision of higher education. It also takes into account the cores areas (SQA QA Manual) considered by SQA in the institutional evaluation process.

The QAEF adopts a cyclical structure (Figure 1 in the framework) that follows the experience of a student or the "student life cycle" from the start of "the prospective student" through to "the award of a qualification". The QAEF addresses all students, referring always to both undergraduates and postgraduates. It also addresses all staff (full-time or part-time) from academic, research, and administrative to technical/support staff are concerned. The principles here, also apply to all modes of teaching encompassing both the classic (classroom) and the more contemporary approaches (Open Distance Learning).

The Standard Elements of this framework, nine in total, encompass the core quality areas that a higher education institution is (ordinarily) expected to address in the course of planning and developing, implementing, supervising, monitoring and evaluating its educational activities, including identifying and managing associated risks, at all times. The standards set as principles, accompanied by guidelines, focus broadly on: institutional governance, policies and processes that promote quality higher education; teaching and learning environment; research and innovation; collaboration and community engagement.

The standards, derived for each of these elements, focus on aspects of UniSey's operations in different but inter-related ways across the cycle starting with the prospective student, the education provided, experiences of the students, quality of learning outcomes, the services that support teaching and learning, award/graduation, and the reputation of UniSey, as illustrated in Figure 1.

The Standard Elements shall be used internally as QA operational parameters and evaluation indicators that could be used by external auditors and evaluators.

The QA Manual will later be aligned with this framework.

Attached is the final draft of the QAEF.

RECOMMENDATIONS

The QA Office requests that the Senate approve the Quality Assurance and Enhancement Framework (replacing the UniSey Quality Assurance and Enhancement Policy, 2014) as the overarching policy for quality assurance management, institutional-wise.

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GLOSSARY OF TERMS, ABBREVIATIONS AND ACRONYMS

The definitions and terms stated herein are in accordance with the meanings in the field of quality assurance as guided by use in the international and national contexts.

Quality Assurance and Enhancement Framework	QAEF
Seychelles Qualifications Authority	**SQA** **It is important to note that SQA is** a full member of the International Network for Quality Assurance Agencies in Higher Education (INQAAHE). SQA works closely with the SADC Quality Assurance authorities and its latest activity, through the Technical Committee on Certification and Accreditation (TCCA) was an exercise to align the National Qualification Framework with the SADC Regional Qualifications Framework (SADCRQF)[6].
Quality Assurance	**QA:** an all-embracing term referring to an ongoing, continuous process of evaluating (assessing, monitoring, guaranteeing, maintaining, and improving) the quality of higher education system, institution or program[7].
Quality Management, Total Quality Management and Quality Culture, [8]	
Quality Management	**QM**: an aggregate of measures taken regularly at the system or institutional level, to assure the quality of higher education … with an emphasis on improving quality as a whole covering all activities that ensure fulfilment of the quality policy, quality objectives, responsibilities, and implement them through quality planning, quality control, quality assurance, and quality improvement mechanisms.
Total Quality Management	**TQM**: a particular influential comprehensive approach to quality management that emphasises factors such as continuous improvement, stakeholder focus, strategic management, need for explicit systems to assure the quality of higher education, and a view of leadership and supervision that stresses employee empowerment and delegation. Such an approach to quality management emphasizes assessment undertaken on (i) defined objectives or standards; (ii) measures of stakeholder satisfaction; (iii) expert and professional judgment; and (iv) comparator organisations. TQM is considered to have a close conceptual and philosophical link with benchmarking methodologies.

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[6]An Update on the SADC Qualifications Framework. Available at: www.sqa.sc/pages/news/SADCQF.aspx
 Accessed on 11/11/2019
[7] The Seychelles Qualifications Authority, Quality Assurance Manual, 2011
[8] The UNESCO European Centre for Higher Education, 2159, Quality Assurance and accreditation: Glossary of Basic Terms and Definitions, 2007

Quality Culture	'a set of shared accepted and integrated patterns of quality (often called principles of quality) to be found in the organisational cultures and the management systems of institutions. Awareness of and commitment to the quality of higher education, in conjunction with a solid culture of evidence of this quality (through quality assurance procedures) are the ingredients of a quality culture'.
Internal Quality Assurance	IQA
External Quality Assurance	EQA
Academic governance	'a framework of policies, structures, relationships, systems and processes that collectively provide leadership to and oversight of a higher education provider's academic activities (teaching, learning, scholarship, research, and research training) at an institutional level. The collective oversight of the academic community is usually exercised through a single body (e.g. an academic board, with or without sub-committees) and/or a variety of other structures (e.g. faculty boards, teaching and learning committees or course advisory committees)[9].
Mechanism	In the context of this framework, mechanism means a **system consisting of the policy, structure and procedures.**
Corporate governance	'a framework of principles and procedures that help build an environment of trust, transparency and accountability necessary for fostering long-term investment, financial stability and business integrity, thereby supporting stronger growth and more inclusive societies'[10].
Good governance	'is characterised by participation, transparency, accountability, rule of law, effectiveness, equity, etc.'[11]
Delegated authority	"action in which an individual or institution transfers his or its political or legal authority to a subordinate individual or institution for execution or application. Only the execution or application is transferred, as the individual or institution to which the authority was originally granted retains all of the original authority".[12] "financial procedures enable the transfer of delegated authority from the Vice-Chancellor to members of the Executive, Deans, Directors, Heads of Support Departments while keeping strict adherence to financial code of ethics and accountability. This enables the University to increase effectiveness through: - streamlining decision-making - allowing greater flexibility on the use of funds

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[9] Higher Education Standard Framework, Tertiary Education Quality and Standards Agency - Australia
[10] Gurría A. (2015), G20/OECD Principles of Corporate Governance
[11] Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD), Glossary of Statistical Terms, 2007.
[12] Marume; Ndudzo; and Chikasha, citing William and Meyer (2016). The essence of the principle of delegation of authority.

	- motivating and incentivising staff to maximise the return from their funds whilst maintaining sound financial controls.
Autonomy	Autonomy means having the freedom, within set parameters, to be creative and make key decisions on the road towards delivering the agreed goals, including setting the *team's strategies; manage the team's budget etc.*[13]
Monitoring and Evaluation (M&E)[14]	
Monitoring	'an ongoing, systematic collection of information to assess progress towards the achievement of objectives, outcomes and impacts. It can signal potential weaknesses in programme/course design, allowing adjustments to be made. It is vital for checking any changes (positive or negative) to the target group that may be resulting from programme/course activities. It is usually an internal management activity conducted by the implementing agency'.
Evaluation:	'systematic and objective assessment of an ongoing or completed project, programme/course or policy, its design, implementation and results, to determine the relevance and fulfilment of objectives, development efficiency, effectiveness, impact and sustainability.
Stakeholders	A person such as an employee or citizen who is involved with an organisation, society and therefore has responsibilities towards it and an interest in its success[15]. The stakeholders of UniSey are any person or group that influences or benefit the University and are categorised as (i) internal and (ii) external. "Stakeholders of tertiary education in Seychelles include learners and their families; local and international communities; teachers and researchers; employers and professional bodies; partner institutions; other funders of tertiary education, like scholarship awarding bodies and donors; government Ministries; and regulatory bodies like the Seychelles Qualifications Authority [and Tertiary Education Commission]. All these diverse stakeholders have one key interest in common, and that is the desire to be assured that the education that is provided to learners in Seychelles is good quality education"[16].
Competency	The knowledge, skills, attitudes, values and personal attributes combined with the underlying understanding to perform all or some of the functions of an occupation or a profession[17]

[13] Mike Pegg, author of "The art of strengths coaching" (2017).
Post of March 2017. Available at ttps://www.thepositiveencourager.global/mike-pegg-the-art-of-strengths-coaching
[14] Claire Mcloughlin and Oliver Walton (2012). Measuring Results, Applying Monitoring and Evaluation, Governance and Social Development Resource Centre, International Development Department, College of Social Sciences, University of Birmingham, UK
[15] https://dictionary.cambridge.org/dictionary/english/stakeholder
[16] Seychelles Qualifications Authority, Quality Assurance Manual, 2011
[17] Seychelles Qualifications Authority, Quality Assurance Manual, 2011

Staff	For this framework, the term 'staff' will refer to all persons carrying out roles under the responsibility of UniSey, even if the person concerned are not employees of the provider e.g. a part-time lecturer, visiting professors, visiting scholar, visiting researcher, visiting lecturer, fellows, scholars/researchers, external examiners, workplace supervisors with responsibilities to the provider.
Academic staff	'Academic Staff' (International Standard Classification of Education) includes personnel whose primary assignment is instruction, research, or public service. This includes staff personnel who hold an academic rank with titles such as professor, associate professor, assistant professor, instructor, lecturer, or the equivalent of any of these academic ranks. The category includes personnel with other titles, (e.g. dean, director, associate dean, assistant dean, chair or head of a department) if their principal activity is instruction or research'[18].
E-learning	E-learning refers to the use of Information and Communications Technology (ICT) to enhance and/or support learning in tertiary education, both fully online and partially on-campus and online or distance-based provision supplemented with ICT in some way.[19] E-learning is opposed to place-based course delivery and implies the physical separation of students and instructors. E-learning is facilitated through various technologies and media and can be implemented for both fully online and blended courses. [20]. In the context of this framework, e-learning and online distance learning (ODL) are used interchangeably.
Work-integrated learning (WIL)	**WIL:** encompasses any arrangement where students undertake learning in a workplace outside of their higher education provider (or one operated jointly with an external partner) as a part of their course of study. Such arrangement includes student placements, internships, practicum, research/project work etc.[21]
Work-based Experience	In the context of this framework, Work-based Experience will cover the following terms: Work-based Learning - **Work-based learning** is defined by a particular set of skills to be acquired over a fixed duration … with regulations regarding duration, content [including assessments], requirements regarding firms and supervisors, monitoring schemes etc.[22]

[18] Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD), Glossary of Statistical Terms, 2007. Adopted from Collection on Education Systems: Definitions, Explanations and Instructions, UNESCO, OECD, Eurostat, page 45.
[19] OECD (2005): Policy Brief on E-learning in Tertiary Education.
[20] OECD (2005): Policy Brief on E-learning in Tertiary Education.
[21] The Australian Tertiary Education Quality and Standards Agency: Higher Education Standard Framework, 2015.
[22] ww.oecd.org/education/skills-beyond-school/work-based-learning-and-productivity.htm

Internship	Internship - An **internship** is an opportunity offered by an employer to potential employees, called interns, to work at a firm for a fixed period. Interns are usually undergraduates or students, and most internships last between a month and three months. Internship, either paid or voluntary, are usually part-time if offered during a university semester and full-time if offered during the vacation periods.[23]
Third-party arrangement	**TPA**: 'delivery with other parties' in an arrangement made by a university with another education institution (local or international) to deliver some or all of a higher education programme/course that leads to the award of a qualification on the NQF. Such an arrangement may also include student placements, internships, also covered under WBE/ Work-integrated learning.[24] The arrangement should also consider components of intellectual property rights and the challenges of assuring quality and standards associated with the internalisation strategies.
Research and Research Training[25]	
Research	'academic activities of a higher education provider that contribute to new knowledge through original investigation', or 'the creation of new knowledge and/or the use of existing knowledge in a new and creative way to generate new concepts, methodologies and understandings, or 'research comprises systematic experimental and theoretical work, application and/or development that increases the dimensions of knowledge'.
Research Training	'a formal course of postgraduate study that leads to the acquisition of advanced skills, techniques and knowledge in the conduct of research, and requires the production of substantial original research output, such as a thesis … usually refers to studies for Research Masters and Research Doctorate degrees (Levels 9 and 10), including higher degree(s) by research. 'Research training can be contrasted with 'coursework' is defined as a *method of teaching and learning that leads to the acquisition of skills and knowledge that does not include a major research component*'. While HDR may contain some coursework subjects designed to build skills and knowledge in research methods, research should constitute at least two-thirds of the course if they are to be classified as higher degree(s) research'.
Professional bodies	Education and professional regulatory authorities e.g. TEC, SQA, social work, nursing, medical and other health professionals' councils etc.'.
Sections	Faculties, Department, Institutes, Offices

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[23] https://www.wikijob.co.uk/content/internships/advice/what-internship
[24]The Australian Tertiary Education Quality and Standards Agency: Higher Education Standard Framework, 2015.
[25] The Australian Tertiary Education Quality and Standards Agency: Higher Education Standard Framework, 2015

Workforce Planning (can be used as staffing or Human Resource Planning)	"A term used for the collective processes that are used by an organisation to plan, establish, develop, maintain and optimise its staffing profile to achieve its objectives"[26].
Inputs, activities, outputs and outcomes	**Inputs**: the resources dedicated to or consumed by the programme/course. Examples, money, technical expertise, relationships and personnel. **Activities**: the actions or activities designed to meet the intended objectives. Examples, hiring staff, purchasing equipment, or other facilities, commissioning legal guidelines, and providing other forms of technical assistance. **Outputs**: the tangible and intangible products that result from project activities. Examples, actions or the number of activities completed. **Outcomes:** the benefits that an intervention is designed to deliver, during and after the implementation phase.[27]

[26] Australian Government, Tertiary Education Committee and Standards: Guidance Note on Workforce Planning. *Version 1.1* (3 April 2019)

[27] The United Way Worldwide Task Force on Impact. Cited by Professor J. Louw-Potgieter (2017) in the Programme Evaluation Handbook, Module 10267

INTRODUCTION

As mentioned, the QAEF replaces the existing Quality Assurance Enhancement Policy (2014) and is supported by the Tertiary Education Act 12 of 2011, the University Charter, and the Seychelles Qualifications Authority's (SQA) Quality Assurance policies and regulations.

The QAEF sets the optimal standards and procedures that provide a unified structure of all internal QA processes necessary to maintain current levels of performance and improvement, add value to UniSey's services and allow an enhancement-led approach to sustain quality management and create a culture of quality. The QAEF also describes the principles and practices to best achieve the standards and, most importantly, permit for the provision of evidence to support the status of quality at UniSey.

The QAEF will operate alongside UniSey's QA Manual, the Strategic Plan and associated operational plans to ensure sustainable quality management.

The QAEF aims to ensure alignment between the University Charter, the Strategic Plan, policies and standards of procedures and operational plans and targets. As such, KPIs, aligned with UniSey's regulatory mandates and its strategic goals, will be used to measure performance across structures of the organogram. Thus, ensuring that UniSey's internal quality assurance activities integrate into a single system of continuous appraisal and improvement. The QAEF is presented in the following parts:

1. Part A: Structure of quality assurance at UniSey.
2. Part B: Purpose and principles of the QAEF.
3. Part C: Context and quality assurance and enhancement standard elements.
4. Part D: Monitoring and evaluation framework.

PART A: STRUCTURE OF QUALITY ASSURANCE AT UNISEY
1.0 Quality Assurance Structure28

The QA system at UniSey is located within a dual framework of governance, namely externally and internally. This dual framework provides the legal basis for the operation of the University and, therefore, the context for the design and implementation of quality assurance.

Although the University of Seychelles enjoys a measure of autonomy, as befits a higher education institution of international standing, it remains indirectly accountable to Government. Cabinet decisions are communicated through the Minister of Education and Human Resource Development, either directly to the University or (more regularly) through the Tertiary Education Commission. Additionally, an annual report on the performance of the functions of UniSey endorsed by the University Council is submitted to the Tertiary Education Commission (within the Ministry of Education and Human Resource Development).

The University's internal quality assurance system is linked directly with the Seychelles Qualifications Authority (SQA), which constitutes the external quality assurance system for the University. The SQA being the national quality assurance authority is the accreditation body for tertiary education and the guarantor of standards across the respective institutions. Hence, the importance of UniSey to demonstrate compliance with the SQA standards and provide evidence of continuous improvement benchmarked with international standards. The University's goal is to maintain its accreditation status with the SQA through the comprehensive and rigorous operation of its quality assurance and enhancement system.

The main point of contact of the University with the SQA is through UniSey's Director of QA. This relationship is not in the form of line management but, rather, one of consultation, advice and negotiation.
Within the context of the external framework, the internal quality assurance system takes the form of the common governance, leadership and management principles and practices across the structures of the University

The Quality Assurance administrative team comprises the Director of QA and the QA Officers. The Director has the ultimate jurisdiction to appoint working groups or co-opt other members of staff to perform specific QA tasks. In addition to the minutes of the Quality Assurance administrative team, a report of each meeting of the working group(s) over matters of policy and procedures is presented to the Executive Board (Top Level Management Team) monthly.
The QA administrative team and working groups have the following terms of reference:
- oversee the development and approval process of all policies and procedures;
- oversee the development and approval process of all academic programmes/courses;
- present the policies/procedures and academic programmes/courses to the Senate for approval;
- prepare a schedule of all academic programmes/courses requiring review and validation (internal and external);
- verify validation proposals for academic programmes/courses in good time and undertake a rigorous assessment of each one;
- explore, encourage and disseminate good practice and innovation in teaching and assessment;

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28 Adapted from the narratives of the UniSey QA Manual, 2018

- make recommendations on proposals that support programme/course development and other learning, teaching and assessment initiatives;
- monitor the outcomes of, and actions after, quality audits, annual and periodic reviews and external examiner reports and to advise on the modification of policies and/or practice accordingly;
- consider procedures for the quality assurance of support services and undertake the necessary assessments;
- examine reports of any changes in the national context for quality assurance;
- ensure the UniSey website is regularly updated, and that the outcomes of the Office are duly communicated to all staff and, where appropriate, to the Seychelles Qualifications Authority; and
- provide reports to the Senate and Council.

In summary, Quality Assurance at UniSey is coordinated by the QA Office and facilitated by a network of structures that represents the University's organisation as a whole. However, *assurance* and *enhancement* of quality at UniSey is the responsibility of each member of its internal community. The Senate is at the apex of the internal QA structure with a direct reporting line to the University Council.

The QA Office comprises three personnel, namely a Director, a QA Officer responsible for programme/course development, review and validation and a QA Research Officer responsible for evaluations of teaching and learning, and systems audits.

The Director of QA is a senior administrative post, the main purpose of which is to manage and further develop the quality assurance and enhancement systems in collaboration with UniSey's management and stakeholders as well as the relevant external agencies.

PART B: PURPOSE AND PRINCIPLES OF THE QUALITY ASSURANCE AND ENHANCEMENT FRAMEWORK

2.0 Purpose

The QAEF aims to support the implementation of the highest attainable level of quality assurance (QA) practices by guiding members of UniSey's internal and external communities in the application of standards and procedures required in higher education institutions, by helping to develop adequate internal QA mechanisms that fit international best practices and assisting in assessing own quality through self-assessment. The quality assurance systems of this QAEF cover the common quality assurance mechanisms (i) clear and measurable objectives and standards; (ii) guidelines for implementation, including stakeholder involvement; (iii) appropriate resources; (iv) consistent evaluation methods, associating self-assessment and external review; (vi) feedback mechanisms and procedures for improvement; and (vii) widely accessible evaluation results. Specifically, the QAEF provides directions on quality assurance mechanisms that cover context, input, process and output dimensions, while giving emphasis to outputs and learning outcomes.

The QAEF provides the direction in the alignment between the External and Internal QA regulations/mechanisms, specifically, the Tertiary Education Act, 12 of 2011, the UniSey Charter, Strategic Plan and policies, and the SQA regulation and procedures.

Consequently, UniSey's Key Performance Indicators shall focus on the objectives and outcomes of strategies covering the nine Standard Elements of this framework that are presented and discussed in Part C of this document. This principle is commonly essential for the attainment of the provision of quality education in Higher Education Institutions (HEIs).

The specific objectives of the QAEF are to:

(a) Inform the development of mechanisms (policies, structures and procedures) that facilitate cohesion in the conduct of quality-assured academic activities and support services.
(b) Create a common understanding of quality assurance and enhancement among all stakeholders.
(c) Establish quality standards for each of the core functions of UniSey (using the student cycle concept, Fig. 2) to enforce, underpin and protect the credibility and reputation of the University to maintain its registration and accreditation status as a Higher Education Institution; ultimately, develop mutual trust that facilitates recognition of its products, locally, regionally and internationally.
(d) Establish the quality standard requirements for the development and management of educational programmes/courses and related teaching, learning, assessments and certification.
(e) Establish quality standard requirements for the development and management of research and research training.
(f) Establish quality enhancement and serve as a model for internal and external monitoring and evaluation.
(g) Promote good governance (transparency and accountability) by demonstrating, recording and disseminating appropriate information to all stakeholders, external evaluators and the public.
(h) Promote the creation of total quality management, hence, a culture of quality at UniSey.

2.1 Guiding Principles

The principles that guide the UQAF are all-encompassing in the categories below.

1.1.1   Regulatory Principles

The provisions of the Tertiary Education Act 12, 2011, facilitated by the UniSey Charter (2017) and the Seychelles Quality Assurance QA regulations and procedures, as amended from time to time, guide the University of Seychelles regulatory approach.

1.1.2   Administrative Principles

Central to the University of Seychelles QAEF, besides the regulatory principles, are two broad administrative principles (i) *Good Governance* and (ii) *Quality management*.

i.   The Principle of Good Governance

The Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD), of which Seychelles is a member state, published the fundamental principles of an overall system of **good governance** as "integrity, includes transparency, stakeholder participation, accessibility, oversight and control. The OECD further recommends policymakers to:

> "encourage an open culture where ethical dilemmas, public integrity concerns, and errors can be discussed freely, and, where appropriate, with employee representatives, and where leadership is responsive and committed to providing timely advice and resolving relevant issues"[29]

ii. The Principle of Quality Management

The International Standardisation Organisation's Technical Committee (ISO/TC 176), which is responsible for developing and maintaining quality management standards for organisations defines Quality Management Principles (QMPs) as

> "a set of fundamental beliefs, norms, rules and values that are accepted as true and can be used as a basis for quality management … developed for use as a foundation to guide an organisation's performance improvement"[30].

Whereas, Quality Management is viewed as

> "an aggregate of measures taken regularly at the system or institutional level to assure the quality of higher education with an emphasis on improving quality as a whole ... it covers, all activities that ensure fulfilment of the quality policy and the quality objectives and responsibilities and implements them through quality planning, quality control, quality assurance and quality improvement mechanisms"[31]

Therefore, UniSey commits to upholding "**Good Governance"** and "**Quality Management"** as core principles in governing and managing its activities.

Also, the specific principles of UniSey's QAEF, which arise from its values[32] and benchmarked with principles of international quality management in HEIs (listed in the acknowledgement section), are combined as follows:

- *Innovation* – stakeholder-oriented (innovating and addressing the prime needs of the students, staff and stakeholders);
- *Leadership -* (connecting vision, aims and strategies in UniSey's plans and targets);
- *People's participation -* (confirming the effective and equitable participation of all/UniSey communities);
- *Tools -* (quality assurance processes of operations) that are benchmarked by international evidence-based practices and evaluated by external experts;
- *Quality -* continuous improvement (recognising the commitment to respond to changing global needs of quality assurance systems in higher education);

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[29] Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD): Recommendation of the Council on Public Integrity, 2017.

[30] International Standardisation for Organisation Technical Committee (ISO/TC 176): ISO 9000, ISO 9001 Quality Management Principles and Standards, 2015.

[31] The European Commission: Standard and Guidelines for Quality Assurance in the Higher Education Area, 2015.

[32] The University of Seychelles, Strategic Plan, 2017-2021

- *Respect, tolerance and academic freedom*- autonomy (respecting the responsibility of Offices, Faculties, Institutes, Sections and Standing Committees of Senate for its academic & non-academic activities);
- *Transparency and team spirit* – shared benefits (taking an approach to the range of participants – reviewers, institutions, students and the society – that promises the development and transfer of knowledge and skills);
- *Continuity* - (ensuring that the Offices, Faculties, Departments, Institutes, Sections and Standing Committees are committed to engaging in a dynamic and open-ended process of continuous improvement; Quality Management and Quality Culture; and
- *Inclusive and factual* - (judgments that are unbiased, evidence-based and logical)

PART C: CONTEXT AND STANDARD ELEMENTS.

3.0 Context of the Framework

The QAEF reflects the best international standards and Procedures (core characteristics) for the provision of higher education. It also takes into account the cores areas (SQA QA Manual) considered by SQA in the institutional evaluation process.

The QAEF adopts a cyclical structure (Figure 1)[33] that follows the experience of a student or the **"student life cycle"** from the start of "**the prospective student"** through to "**the award of a qualification".**

The QAEF addresses all students, referring always to both undergraduates and postgraduates. It also addresses all staff (full-time or part-time) from academic, research, and administrative to technical/support staff are concerned. The principles here, also apply to all modes of teaching encompassing both the classic (classroom) and the more contemporary approaches (Open Distance Learning).

Figure 1

Governance, Management & Leadership

QUALITY ASSURANCE AND ENHANCEMENT FRAMEWOK_V2 QA POLICY_ QA OFFICE_DECEMBER 2020

Resources

Student Administration & Support Services

Programme/course Development

Teaching and Learning

| Prospective Students | Students Participation & Attainment | Graduates with Certified Qualifications |

Research and Research Training

Community Engagement

Information and Communication

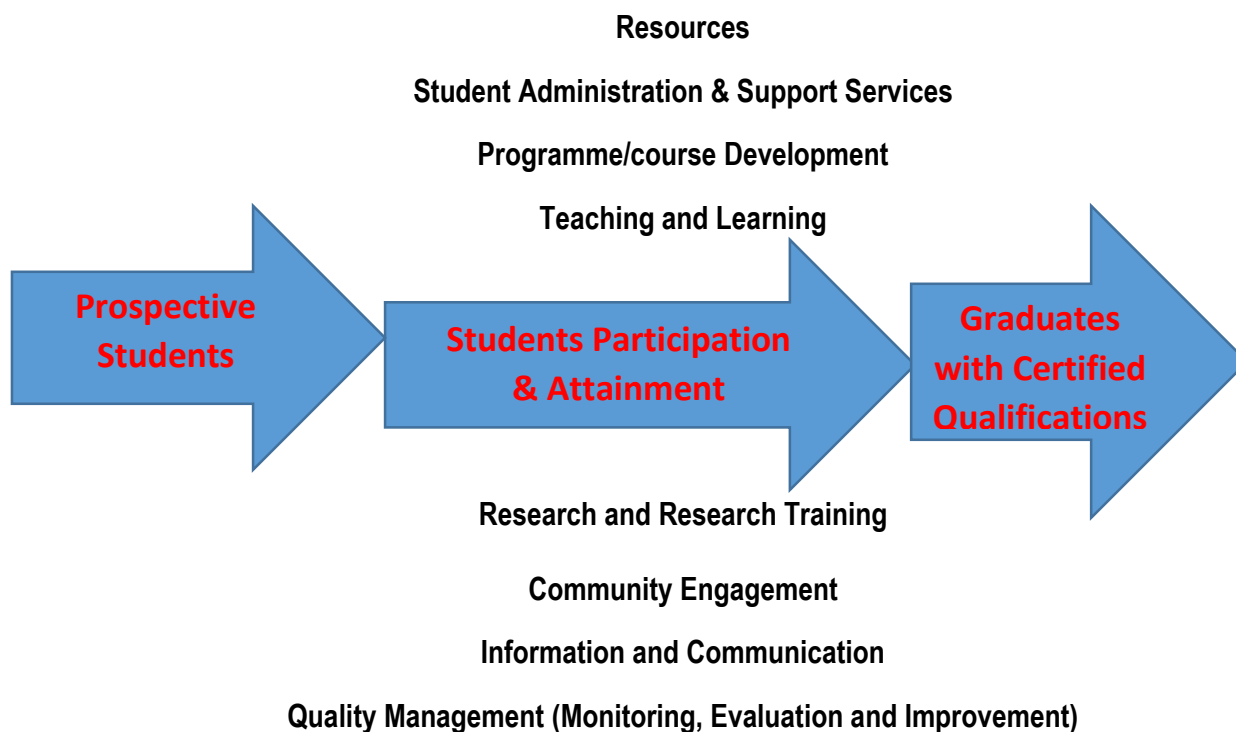**Quality Management (Monitoring, Evaluation and Improvement)**

Figure 1: Illustration of the QA and Enhancement Framework through a pathway of the student's experience across the essential domains i.e. the core characteristics in the provision of higher education that frame the standards, as Standard Elements.

3.1 The UniSey Quality Assurance and Enhancement Standard Elements

The Standard Elements of this framework, nine in total, encompass the core quality areas that a higher education institution is (ordinarily) expected to address in the course of planning and developing, implementing, supervising, monitoring and evaluating its academic activities, including identifying and managing associated risks, at all times[34]. The standards, derived for each of these elements, focus on aspects of UniSey's operations in different but inter-related ways across the cycle starting with the prospective student, the education provided, experiences of the students, quality of learning outcomes, the services that support teaching and learning, award/graduation, and the reputation of UniSey.

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[34] 1. African Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance in Higher Education (ASG-QA)

2. Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance in the European Higher Education Area

3. Higher Education Standard Framework, Tertiary Education Quality and Standards Agency - Australia

The standards accompanied by procedures focus broadly on: *institutional governance, policies and processes that promote quality higher education; teaching and learning environment; research and innovation; collaboration and community engagement.*

The Standard Elements that shall be used both internally and externally by auditors and evaluators as the QA and Enhancement operational Procedures and evaluation indicators are:

1. **Governance, Leadership and Management**

2. **Resources**
   2.1 Financial Resource
   2.2 Human Resource
   2.3 Infrastructure and Facilities
   2.4 Information Communication Technology (ICT)

3. **Student Administration and Support Services**
   3.1 Student Enrolment and Progression
   3.2 Student Support Services

4. **Programme/course Development**
   4.1 Design
   4.2 Review
   4.3 Validation
   4.4 Monitoring and Evaluation

5. **Teaching, Learning, Assessment and Certification**

6. **Research and Research Training**

7. **Community Engagement** (collaborations: local, national, regional and global)

8. **Information and Communication** (including information management)

9. **Quality Management and Enhancement** (including Monitoring and Evaluation)

3.2 Standard Element 1: Governance, Leadership and Management

The University's governance structure has been developed to true to the ethos, principles and requirements of good governance in tertiary education. Good governance at UniSey is characterised by 'participation, transparency, accountability, rule of law, effectiveness and equity, as previously defined'. In spite that UniSey possesses characteristics similar to a public/government institution, the practice of corporate governance is significantly important or the current and possible future development. Corporate governance has been defined as a 'framework of principles and procedures that help build an environment of trust, transparency and accountability necessary for fostering long-term investment, financial stability and business integrity, thereby supporting stronger growth ...'.

The key guidelines that establish the legal standing of the University are:

1. Tertiary Education Act, 2011
2. The Charter of the University, 2017

The University reports to the following authorities:

2. The Tertiary Education Commission.
3. The Seychelles Qualifications Authority.

The key elements that set the parameters for quality operations are:

1. The University's vision, mission and values.
2. Committee structures
3. The organisation of Governance, Leadership and Management

Hence, the Governance, Leadership and Management Standard Element becomes the **overarching** standard of this QAEF.

This standard element encompasses three components (i) Governance (ii) Leadership and Management, and (iii) Governance Accountability.

3.2.1 Governance[35]

Standard

The University of Seychelles is a not-for-profit organisation with financial (generate and manage its finances) and academic governance autonomy, guided by the Tertiary Education Act, 2011. Irrespective of its legal status, UniSey remains accountable to its stakeholders and society and upholds practices that support the achievement of its mission and legal and ethical mandates.

Institutional Governance

The institutional governance accountability of UniSey lies with its Council headed by the **Chancello**r (Tertiary Education Act 2011, Section 20: 1-3). The appointment, function and constitution of the University of Seychelles' Council are set outlined in the Tertiary Education Act 2011 (Part 3: Item 21) and the University of Seychelles Charter 2017 (Item 16.3, p. 12), as amended, subsequently.

The Tertiary Education Act 2011, the University of Seychelles Charter 2017 and Statutes 2016, prescribe the governance structure and officers of the University of Seychelles. The University's organogram ensures that the institution holds to the

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[35] African Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance in Higher Education (ASG-QA)

ethos, principles and requirements of good governance to ensure that UniSey upholds its duty to conduct its affairs responsibly and transparently taking into account the contributions and requirements of its stakeholders[36]. The organogram show reflects direct, overlapping or interconnected links between the QAEF Standard Elements and the structures (Governance, Leadership and Management), depicting the **collective** and **supportive** engagement of QA efforts at the University.

The UniSey Council ensures that the University operates according to the terms and conditions of the Tertiary Education Act and that, it acts consistently with its Vision, Mission and Values, none of which can be achieved without the highest regard for quality.

In effect, the Charter determines the governance structure, including the appointment of a Chancellor, who in turn appoints members of the Council. Public accountability is derived from:

- the strategic governance exercised by the University Council, comprising a majority of external members;
- the accountability framework of the Tertiary Education Commission; and
- the quality assurance framework of the Seychelles Qualifications Authority.

Academic Governance

The **Vice-Chancellor** of the University of Seychelles, appointed by the University Council is the Chief Executive Officer of the University; hence, heads both the Academic Governance body (Senate) and the Executives Board (Top Level Management Board). The appointment and responsibilities of the Vice-Chancellor are as per the ordinance of both the Tertiary Education Act and the Charter.
The Vice-Chancellor is authorised to delegate any function under this portfolio to any other officer in the manner prescribed by the Charter. The officer of whom the authority is delegated answers to the Vice-Chancellor for the performance of the delegated functions (Tertiary Education Act, 2011, Section 22).

The Vice-Chancellor is answerable to the UniSey Council, hence the reporting line between the Academic Boards (Senate and Faculty Boards) and the Executive Board.

The **Student Council** represent the learner community and act as the main forum through which learners may express their views. The composition and functions of the Student Council are established by a Constitution. The Student Council reports to UniSey's Senate and UniSey's Council, accordingly.

The **Senate** is the main body responsible for the academic governance of UniSey. The Tertiary Education Act and the UniSey Charter prescribe and describe the composition and the functions of the Senate, respectively. The Senate has the mandate "*to establish* committees *as it deems fit for assisting it to perform its functions*" (Tertiary Education Act 2011, Section 22: *m).* Hence, the Senate is the body responsible for policy planning and development at UniSey.

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[36] Seychelles Tertiary Education Act 2011 – Part 3-Universities

Adjacent to the Senate is a few boards/committees, the most significant is the **Faculty_Boards**. The Tertiary Education Act and UniSey Charter prescribe the composition and functions of the Faculty Boards. In summary, the main roles of the Faculty Boards are to:

(i)   prepare plans for the development of the Faculty and submit them to the Senate for approval,
(ii)   direct the academic affairs of the Faculty in consultation with the relevant authorities,
(iii)   determine the learning programmes/courses, teaching and research within the Faculty, and
(iv)   provide for the administration, publication and diffusion of the academic work of the Faculty.

The Faculty Boards refer to rules made or recommended to the Senate for approval, in other words, report to the Senate.

The Executive Committee (Top Level Management Team)
The **Executive Committee** is the body responsible for the Leadership and Management of the services of UniSey. The members of the Executive Board are the heads of the operational services, each with authority on their finances (budget line holder) and operations. The Executive Board members are answerable to the Vice-Chancellor.

The Standards and Procedures for governance are presented under four sub-sections (i) Vision, Mission and Strategic Objectives as per its identity and legal status, (ii) Stakeholder Orientation (iii) Leadership and Management, and (iv) Governance Monitoring and Accountability.

3.2.2 Vision, Mission and Strategic Objectives

The vision and mission statements help shape the strategy used by an organisation to achieve the desired future. Also,

UniSey shall, therefore:

a) Have vision and mission statements, and strategic objectives that reflect the aspirations and needs of its stakeholders, indicate strategic development plans and targets and reflect a commitment to quality enhancement;
b) Have its vision and mission statements, and strategic objectives publicly declared;
c) Have an organisational structure (organogram) that aligns with the Charter and relevant to the Standard Elements of this QAEF, including:
   i.   relevant governance and management (e.g. the Council, Senate, Executive Committee (Top Level Management and related influential bodies (e.g. sub-committees to the Senate and the Student Council),
   ii. policies and procedures for the delegation of authority, clarifying mandates, responsibilities, powers, privileges and tenure to ensure proper coordination for efficiency, effectiveness and excellence, and
   iii. clear communication systems and networks for effective dissemination of information (internal and external). Communication is also covered in details in Standard Element 8;
d) Have a strategic plan and operational plans with Key Performance Indicators to facilitate objective monitoring and evaluation of strategies specifically, academic programmes/courses, sections and institutional performance (self-assessment), staff performance for continuous improvement;

e) Have mechanisms (policies, structure and procedures) to promote a high degree of institutional integrity and responsiveness such as honesty and non-discrimination in treating staff, students and members of the public, managing academic affairs (teaching, learning and research activities), and managing institutional affairs;

f) Have mechanisms to ensure regular consultations with stakeholders, including reports and follow up actions on key issues (policy and operations), promoting quality, cohesion, harmony and identity within the institution;

g) Have mechanisms that enable students to participate in decision-making in relevant governance and management bodies;[37]

h) Publish and disseminate regularly, impartial and objective qualitative and quantitative information about the academic and general institutional affairs);

i) Have effective, systematic, timely and fair processes to manage conflict of interests and investigate complaints, grievances and appeals by stakeholders; and

j) Have QA mechanisms that integrate at all levels.

3.2.3 The focus on Stakeholders

Standard

The University of Seychelles recognises the stakeholder satisfaction level as an important indicator to measure the quality of its outputs and as such, strives to meet the requirements and/or to exceed their expectations.

Therefore, UniSey shall have:

Mechanisms to involve stakeholders in decision-making, ensuring their views and needs are considered when planning, implementing, supervising, monitoring and evaluating its academic and non-academic activities. In implementing its mechanism, UniSey shall:

i. Recognise direct and indirect stakeholders as those who receive value from the University;

ii. Understand the stakeholders' current and future needs and expectations;

iii. Link the University's objectives to the stakeholder needs and expectations;

iv. Communicate the stakeholder needs and expectations throughout the University;

v. Plan, design, develop, produce, deliver and support goods and services to meet the stakeholder needs and expectations;

vi. Monitor and measure stakeholder satisfaction and take appropriate actions on interested parties' needs and expectations that can affect stakeholder satisfaction; and

vii. Actively manage relationships with stakeholders to achieve sustained success.

3.3 Leadership and Management

Standard

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[37] The Charter makes provision for students' representations on the Council, the Senate, and the Faculty Boards. There should also be a structured student forum, i.e. the Student Council.

Leadership and Management entail the bonding of UniSey's vision, mission, goal and strategies in its operational plans and across interactions with its stakeholders. The Executive Committee through the delegated authorities is responsible to synergise UniSey's effective Leadership and Management culture across the University and to support the achievement of its mission and legal mandate.

Firstly, UniSey trusts that its leaders should be role models of professionalism who gain the respect of stakeholders through their achievement and maintenance of high standards of performance and conduct. Significant to this belief is the understanding by the University that leadership parallels the concept of authority and autonomy; the latter, which is derived from autonomy[38]. On this premise, UniSey believes that leaders need authority and autonomy to make decisions and as such, leaders must be accountable for the decisions they make and accountability being a measure of how leaders use the power that comes with the authority and autonomy. Hence, UniSey strongly believes that formal authority accompanied by tangible autonomy to make decisions and accountability for the decisions made will enhance success in operations.

Secondly, UniSey believes that effective quality management is a goal to develop a "Quality Culture" where quality is everyone's responsibility. The practice of quality management will be through policies and processes that are the main pillars of a coherent institutional quality assurance system that forms a cycle for continuous improvement and contribute to the accountability of the institution.

The inception of Quality Management in higher education drew upon principles derived from the corporate sector (ISO 9000, ISO 9001). These Quality Management Principles, seven in total (QMP) are *[stakeholder] focus, leadership, engagement of people, process approach, improvement, evidence-based decision-making, and relationship management[39].* Currently, these practices coexist with recent approaches that pay more attention to the specificities of HEIs. The elements that form the present-day QM mechanisms are:

> self-evaluations (programmes/courses and services) that are periodically conducted; approval, monitoring and review of academic programmes/courses; student surveys on teaching effectiveness, student and staff satisfaction surveys; student workload assessments; graduates/alumni destination surveys; monitoring of indicators and statistical information to analyse student progression and success; and analysis of the quality of teaching staff and learning resources[40].

The University of Seychelles shall adopt the seven Quality Management Principles mentioned above and the present-day QM mechanisms (indentation) to set the standards required for a culture of quality at the Institution. Components of these principles are reflected directly and indirectly in all the standard elements of this framework. Besides, the monitoring and evaluation element of the Management and Enhancement standard forms the complete quality management system that would enable UniSey to optimise the quality of its performance.

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[38] Joh Gentil (2010). Oxford Management Readers: Leadership and authority,.

[39] International Standardisation for Organisation (ISO): Quality Management Principles (QMPs) and related Quality Management Standards, ISO 9000, ISO 9001, 2015.
United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO). Quality management in higher education: Developments and drivers (results from an international survey; new trends in higher education (2017)

[40] United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO). Quality management in higher education: Developments and drivers (results from an international survey; new trends in higher education (2017)

Therefore, UniSey shall have:

a) Leaders and managers with a clear mandate and responsibilities (delegated authority as defined in the glossary) to:

    i.   guarantee efficiency, effectiveness and quality by ensuring that its strategies, policies, processes and resources are aligned to achieve the intended objectives.

    ii.   synergize a culture that is appropriate for the commitment to robust quality practices and the development of effective processes for quality assurance,

    iii.   monitor and evaluate operations to identify areas that require improvement to optimize the strategic goals, e.g. processes for decision-making and accountability, identification of priorities based on sound interpretation of facts, making plans happen and have reliable information of achievements.

b) A policy for delegation of authority that clarifies the financial procedures to enable the transfer of authority;

c) Leaders who are qualified, competent and experienced to ensure a common (internal and external) understanding of the vision of the University and of a culture that fully supports the fulfilment of its mission; and

d) Leaders who can establish unity of purpose and direction, and create conditions in which people are engaged in achieving the University's quality standards.

3.3.1 Governance Monitoring and Accountability

Standard

An important segment of the Governance, Leadership and Management standard is monitoring and accountability. This sub-element interrelates heavily with all the other standard elements, which together address a variety of mechanisms that enable and support effective governance and management through the oversight responsibilities of the Council. Governance monitoring and accountability also include the delegated responsibilities/authorities across the structures of the organogram.

Therefore, guided by the UniSey's Charter, the Council shall ensure that:

a) Governance, Monitoring and Accountability are achievable through a framework of structures, rules, relationships, systems and processes through which:

    i.   directions and targets are set and that these relate to the strategic goals,

    ii.   authority is delegated through clear structures (organogram, chart of accounts, job descriptions/specifications and scheme of service),

    iii. organisational performance is monitored

    iv. risks are identified, managed and controlled,

v. organisational accountability is maintained, evident through consistent monitoring and evaluation (internal audits and evaluations) that are objective and transparent),

vi. a culture of quality is developed and influenced.

b) Satisfy itself that these accountabilities stand, evident by recorded items in its business agendas, confirmed minutes and actions that arise from its compliance monitoring, risk management and monitoring of delegated authorities. As such, UniSey shall have:

i) A Records Management Policy or framework with assigned responsibilities to ensure that full and accurate records of all operative (academic and non-academic) activities of the University are maintained and disposed of per best practices. The Record Management Policy/framework shall also include a Record Retention Schedule that describes:

   a) the types of data to be kept,
   b) the length of which the data must be kept, and
   c) disposal guidelines for how items should be discarded.

Evidence to assure that UniSey is complying with its regulatory obligations shall include, but not limited, the following:

   i. minutes of all internal (Council, Senate and Senate Sub-committees, Faculty Boards, Department Advisory Committees, Board of Examiners, Student Council, Health and Safety, Welfare and ad hoc committees) and external meetings (TEC, SQA, Government Ministries/Agencies, Private Agencies/Organisations, Professional Councils etc.),
   ii. internal evaluation and audit reports,
   iii. external evaluations and audits by independent evaluators such as the Seychelles Qualifications Authority, Tertiary Education Commission and intervention evaluator for higher education institution,
   iv. performance reports that demonstrate that UniSey is meeting its planning targets as set out in its strategic plan and operational plans,
   v. financial reports and audited statements that show UniSey's financial position and projection, indicating sustainability and control,
   vi. risk management plans, which show that risks have been identified and reasonable and credible mitigation strategies have been implemented,
   vii. operations and academic governance reports demonstrating that UniSey's structures are operating as planned and at the level of quality intended,
   viii. evidence that shows reasonable contingency plans are available to deal with unexpected events, and
   ix. records of incidents and complaints that are maintained and used to inform risk management and prevent recurrences.

Governance Monitoring and Accountability Parameters:

   i. The University of Seychelles can demonstrate and assures itself that the University is operating effectively and sustainably, including:

ii.   The governing body and the entity comply with the requirements of the Tertiary Education Act under which UniSey is established and recognised, any other legislative requirements and the University Charter.

iii.   Future directions have been determined, realistic performance targets have been established, progress against targets is monitored and action is taken to correct underperformance.

iv.   The capacity to continue to apply, sufficient financial and other resources to maintain the viability of the entity and its business model, to meet and continue to meet the requirements of this QAEF, to achieve its educational objectives and performance targets and to sustain the quality of higher education that is offered

v.   Financial position, financial performance and cash flows of the entity are monitored regularly and understood, financial reporting is materially accurate, financial management meets the Country's accounting standards, effective financial safeguards and controls are operating and financial statements are audited independently by a qualified auditor against the Country's accounting and auditing standards

vi.   The risk to operation as a higher education institution and material risks have been identified and are being managed and mitigated effectively.

vii.   Mechanisms for competent academic governance and leadership required for higher education provision and other academic activities have been implemented and these are operating according to an institutional academic governance framework and policies and are effective in maintaining the quality of higher education offered

viii. Qualifications are awarded legitimately.

ix.   The occurrence and nature of formal complaints, allegations of misconduct, breaches of academic or research integrity and critical incidents are monitored and action is taken to address underlying causes, and

x.   Lapses in compliance with the Higher Education Standards Framework are identified and monitored, and prompt corrective action is taken.

Academic Governance Monitoring and Accountability Parameters

i. Processes and structures are established and responsibilities are assigned that collectively:

- achieve effective academic oversight of the quality of teaching, learning, research and research training
- set and monitor institutional benchmarks for academic quality and outcomes
- establish and maintain academic leadership at an institutional level, consistent with the types and levels of higher education offered, and
- provide competent advice to the corporate governing body and management on academic matters, including advice on academic outcomes, policies and practices.

ii. Academic oversight assures the quality of teaching, learning, research and research training effectively, including by:

- developing, monitoring and reviewing academic policies and their effectiveness
- confirming that delegations of academic authority are implemented
- critically scrutinising, approving and advising on approving courses of study and their associated qualifications
- maintaining oversight of academic and research integrity, including monitoring of potential risks
- monitoring and initiating action to improve performance against institutional benchmarks for academic quality and outcomes
- critically evaluating the quality and effectiveness of educational innovations or proposals for innovations
- evaluating the effectiveness of institutional monitoring, review and improvement of academic activities, and
- monitoring and reporting to the corporate governing body on the quality of teaching, learning, research and research training.

iii. Students have opportunities to participate in academic governance.

4.0 Standard Element 2: Resources

This standard element encompasses three components (i) Financial Resources (ii) Human Resources, and (iii) Infrastructure and Facilities, and Information Communication Technology (ICT).

4.1 Financial Resources

Standard

The University of Seychelles understands that financial sustainability is the backbone of any organisation, and adequate financial resources and prudent financial management (appropriate financial accounting standards) is crucial to support the provision of the range of resources required to assist teaching, learning and research. The range of resources varies from physical resources e.g. libraries, laboratory/workshop facilities, appropriate and adequately equipped lecture rooms, study facilities and Information Communication Technology (ICT), infrastructure to human resources (e.g. administrators, lecturers, supervisor, researchers, counsellors and other support staff). The role of technical support services is of particular importance for UniSey as it facilitates the mobility of students within and across its systems.

Financial planning and management should consider the needs of diversity in the student population (mature, part-time, and employed, students with disabilities and international students).

UniSey is also cognizant of the financial support that is required in its shift towards student-centred learning and flexible modes of teaching, hence to consider those in the allocating, planning and providing of the learning resources and students support services.

Hence, UniSey commits to conducting its financial management within an approved framework (policies, strategies and procedures) that would enable the institution to meet its financial viability; importantly, quality academic outcomes.

Therefore, UniSey shall have:

    a)   A financial mechanism that aligns to its vision, mission and mandate to ensure quality education and entails feasible and clear strategies, strategies, policies and procedures for budgeting, resource allocation, repairs and maintenance of infrastructure, asset management, debt management and financial reporting etc.;

    b)   A system to identify and address the risks, gaps and challenges for continuous improvement (Monitoring and Evaluation). The system should include risks assessment, financial audits and benchmarking processes for the financial management system; and

    c)   Procurement policy and procedures to ensure good governance and accountable management;

    d)   A comprehensive automated system that aligns closely with fees and scholarships;

e) A prudent procedure to ensure a balanced allocation of resources to core functions of the University, i.e. teaching and learning, student services, research, information communication and management, community engagement and monitoring and evaluation activities; and

4.2 Human Resources

Standard [41]

Adequate and appropriate human resource (HR) is crucial to meet the academic support, administrative and needs of the students. The University of Seychelles upholds primary responsibility for the quality of its staff and for providing them with a supportive environment to carry out their work effectively. This includes an overall staffing profile sufficient to create a high-quality student experience, enable the acquisition of knowledge, skills and the required attitudes, and provide the quality support services that are required.

A quality staff profile is also necessary to provide collective **academic leadership** to lead intellectual enquiry at the level required by the programme/course of study.

Importantly, UniSey recognises that academic activities rely heavily on the contributions of the non-academic and support staff. Consequently, a strong team of academic and non-academic leaders play an important role in guiding the development of UniSey's learning environment. UniSey understands that the acquisition and sustenance of a quality human resource capacity depend on sufficient financing and an efficient human resource management team and that ineffective workforce planning can carry several risks to its mandates.

Therefore, UniSey shall have:

a) A mechanism that promotes effective management and development of its workforce. These policies or procedures should ensure that concurrently with the development of a Strategic Plan, a workforce assessment is carried out and a workforce plan including professional development (training) is developed. This activity also entails the alignment of job specifications and Scheme of Service. Other instances that necessitate a workforce assessment are:
   i. introduction of a new field of education or course of study,

   ii. development of a new campus or mode of delivery,

   iii. the proposition of a change in UniSey's status/mandate,

   iv. noticeable changes in the scale of operations, and

   v. noticeable changes in service delivery such as induction and regular continuous training/professional development.

b) A mechanism that promotes gender equality and provides equal opportunities for all in the recruitment, employment, retention, development, succession plan (this entails having a local staff understudying an expatriate), and promotion processes. These policies and procedures should:
   i. be relevant, transparent, equitable and systematically applied,

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[41] Adopted from the Higher Education Standard Framework, Tertiary Education Quality and Standards Agency - Australia

ii. offer opportunities for and promoting the professional development of staff;

iii. encourage scholarly activity to strengthen the link between education and research;

iv. encourage innovation in teaching methods, administrative practices and the use of new technologies,

v. ensure that staff promotion is based on performance, qualification, competency (knowledge, skills and attitudes/character qualities), and

vi. ensure recruitment and retention of adequate numbers of qualified and competent (knowledge, skills & attitude) staff to achieve the University's mission and carry out its legal mandate;

c) Clear and inclusive contractual agreement with staff that outlines clear conditions of employment aligned with relevant and current laws of Seychelles;

d) Clear and inclusive scheme of service aligned with relevant and current laws of Seychelles;

e) Adequate staff support facilities and services e.g.:

i. health and safety,

ii. staff welfare,

iii. resolution of grievances, and

iv. induction and exit.

f) Clear recruitment/appointment criteria for staff who hold academic leadership roles at any level with experience and qualifications at a level suitable for their responsibilities;

g) Clear recruitment criteria for staff teaching significant components of a programme/course to ensure they meet specified capabilities and qualifications such as:

i. knowledge of contemporary developments in the field they are teaching (which is informed by continuing scholarly activity),

ii. competency in teaching, learning and assessment relevant to the needs of the student cohorts involved,

iii. at least one level of qualification (NQF) higher than the programme/course being taught, or have equivalent relevant academic, professional, or practice-based experience and expertise.

h) Procedures to ensure that in the case where the staff is needed to teach a specialised component of a programme/course but do not fully meet the requirements of the standards, he/she is supervised by staff who meet the standard;

i) Procedures to ensure that academic staff who are supervising doctoral degrees **must** have a doctoral degree or equivalent research experience. The standards for research and research training also require staff to have relevant qualifications and experience;

j) Procedures to ensure an appropriate balance of core full-time staff and part-time staff, updated records of staff (numbers, qualifications and employment) turnover rates, and that promote fair and reasonable workloads (balance between teaching, research and other engagement activities)[42];

k) Procedures to conduct risk assessment during recruitment of casual staff (part-time) considering the contextual factors such as qualifications, experience and depth of knowledge in the related field. **Note:** It is reported that remarkably, high reliance on casual staff poses risks for the quality of the student experience (high reliance on casual staff correlates with lower student outcomes);

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[42] There is evidence to support the impact of research and other activities by lecturers on teaching and learning outcomes.

l) A staff handbook that provides clear information on UniSey's history, UniSey's profile, orientation/Induction, Health and Safety, pay and promotion, compensation and benefits, leave, employee behaviour/conduct, discipline and termination, agreement with clear responsibilities etc.;

m) A Performance Management System that ensures effective and efficient monitoring and evaluation of staff performance and that promotion is based on performance, qualification, competency and characters aligned with the University principles and values; and

n) A Human Resource Management System or Human Resource Information System for a more cost-effective and efficient way to manage and develop the human resource;

o) System(s) to ensure that HR management is carried out in collaboration with line managers; and

p) Effective structures to undertake periodic monitoring, evaluation, and appraisal of staff.

4.3 Physical Infrastructure and Facilities

Standard

For UniSey to ensure a good higher education experience, it must provide a range of adequate infrastructure and facilities appropriate for higher education which is in line with its vision, mission, mandate and strategies, the programmes/courses on offer, the teaching and learning, and research strategies.

Therefore, UniSey shall have:

a) A mechanism to ensure efficient planning and management of the infrastructure and facilities to ensure that facilities that are fit for purpose, clean and safe.

b) A feasible infrastructure and facilities (including ICT) development and sustainable plan (including monitoring and evaluation);

c) Facilities for teaching, learning and research activities (meetings, preparations, study, teaching, learning, mentoring, assessment etc.) including support services and ensure that these facilities are adequate, conducive and inclusive for all gender, cultural orientations, disabilities (physical or learning), and conducive for high performance for both students and staff;

d) Facilities for administrative and recreational activities (lecture theatres, seminar rooms, staff offices, laboratories, a reprographics room, etc.) adequate for the number of students and staff;

e) Organised library equipped with facilities and resources (physical and/or electronic), adequate for the number of students and staff;

f) Appropriate and affordable facilities as part of staff welfare activities (e.g. pantry/kitchenette, common room/restroom); and

g) Procedures to ensure the infrastructure and facilities are accessible for persons with disabilities and conform to appropriate national health and safety and gender-sensitive requirements.

4.4 Information Communication and Technology

Therefore, UniSey shall have:

a) A mechanism to ensure effective planning, provision and management of ICT, such as;
   i. adequate finance to support operations and development plans,
   ii. maintaining and upgrading of technologies to ensure reliability, privacy, safety and security,
   iii. adequate server space,
   iv. a technical help desk,
   v. reliable internet access, adequate and reliable back-up services, and training plan ICT technicians.
b) An electrical system that is reliable to ensure consistent delivery of ICT services;
c) An adequate ICT infrastructure, hardware and software, including affordable, high speed, secure and dedicated internet connectivity;
d) A policy with procedures to ensure acceptable use of ICTs and infrastructure;
e) A framework for students and staff that is consistent and coherent to ensure that any technology change is introduced in a way to minimise negative impacts on students and staff. Therefore, UniSey shall have:
   i. learning policy on new software when a student,
   ii. a clear structure for communicating changes in the software programme/course, hardware or technical system/procedure,
   iii. a training programme/course/process for both staff and students when new software or a new system is adopted, and
   iv. access to training by off-campus or virtual students,

In the case of Online Distance Learning (Refer to Annex 2: UniSey Online Distance Learning Guidelines, 2021)

Primarily, student-centred (access, diversity and equity) learning becomes the central principle in teaching and learning activities, as this is instrumental in stimulating students' motivation, self-reflection and engagement in their learning process. ODL programmes/courses should be creative, interactive, relevant, student-centred, and group-based. Furthermore, UniSey must remain cognizant of its responsibility to ensure that the delivery of education programmes/courses and courses leading to the award of a qualification meets the standard requirements of the National Qualifications Framework (NQF) for the qualification.

Hardware, software and technical support are important elements of Online Distance Learning (ODL), UniSey shall, therefore, have a mechanism to ensure quality ODL support. This will also include:

   i. a designated person to manage the systems,
   ii. clearly stated technical expectations,
   iii. a help desk that physically during office hours and a portal that is accessible 24 hours and 7 days a week,
   iv. a system for monitoring and supporting the hardware/software,
   v. a system that guarantees the protection of data e.g. personal information, teaching and learning materials etc.,

vi.   a system for Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs), which should be assessed and feedback is given to students, and

vii. a system to evaluate the accessibility of the hardware/software.

5.0 Standard Element 3: Student Administration and Support Services

This standard element encompasses three components (i) Enrolment, (ii) Progression and (iii) Support.

5.1 Enrolment and Progression

Standard

Firstly, UniSey recognises the students as its primary stakeholders, hence need to satisfy itself, its stakeholders and the external evaluators, that the students who are enrolled on a programme/course are supported throughout to succeed in their chosen course of study. This necessitates fit-for-purpose enrolment, recognition and completion procedures that are necessary for the students to make progress in their academic life. Importantly, these procedures shall address the diverse student population (e.g. mature, full-time, part-time, and international students, as well as students with disabilities) in responding to the different needs. Furthermore, UniSey understands that these procedures are important to ease the mobility of the students within and across higher education systems (regional and international).

Secondly, UniSey realises that the recognition of its qualifications, duration of the study and prior learning (including non-formal and informal learning) are essential components that complement enrolment and progression procedures, ultimately easing professional and educational mobility.

Lastly, UniSey is cognizant of its mandate to demonstrate the status of student enrolment and progression through objective reports (internally and externally). The reports must provide data on the rates of enrolment, retention, progression and completion for all cohorts over time.

Therefore, UniSey shall have:

a)   Mechanisms for efficient management of students' enrolment and progression, ensuring publishing and consistently applying policies and procedures for fair and equitable opportunities and support throughout their life cycle up to employability;

b)   Policies and procedures that promote diversity in enrolment, including gender mainstreaming and consideration of disadvantaged groups and persons with disabilities, whenever applicable;

c)   Enrolment policies, requirements and procedures are documented, are applied fairly and consistently, and are designed to ensure that the students enrolled have the academic preparation needed to participate in their intended study and no known limitations that would be expected to impede their progression and completion.

d) Enrolment and other contractual arrangements with students, or where legally required, with their parent or guardian, are in writing and include any particular conditions of enrolment and participation for undertaking a particular programme/course such as fieldwork, work placements, travel etc.

e) An updated prospectus and student handbook that are clearly written, easily accessible, and that disclose transparently, all information needed by students to make informed-decision when applying for a programme/course. The prospectus shall entail a summary on:

i. types of programmes/courses on offer and potential changes expected e.g. start date,

ii. expected learning outcomes,

iii. application process and selection criteria,

iv. teaching and learning procedures,

v. requirements specific to the programme/course or part of a programme/course.

vi. certifications/awards

vii. graduation rates, learning opportunities, and information about the employment of its graduates.

viii. programme/course cost and related fees/charges and notices of potential changes to fees,

ix. the student support and facilities being made available, and

x. UniSey contact details.

f) The student handbook shall entail:

i. Generic calendar,

ii. UniSey's organisational structure,

iii. Programmes/courses on offer,

iv. Application process,

v. Student progress (attendance, assessment, appeals, deferment, withdrawal)

vi. Useful contact details,

vii. Campus infrastructure and facilities,

viii. Student support services (academic support including personal lecturer/supervisor, internship, WBE, student association/union and or council, welfare)

ix. Specific obligations placed on students,

x. Specific study obligations for international students,

xi. Specific obligations for students studying online,

xii. Student evaluation of programmes/courses, and

xiii. Complaints and feedback.

g) Clear and fair selection criteria (entry requirements) and process for each programme/course;

h) System for Recognition of Prior Learning or Credit Transfer.

i) Publish and consistently apply set criteria and the considerable factors (such as educational, academic, or technical qualifications/experience) that are taken into account in the selection and enrolment process for prospective students who fall short of the entry criteria or not adequately prepared for the programme/course;

j) A mechanism that promotes student retention and progression, and address issues concerning drop-out rates. This shall include:

i. System to identify and support individual student or cohorts who are initially at some known risk of encountering difficulty or not succeeding (e.g. specific group of students admitted on programme/course as a targeted initiative and those students are known to be educationally disadvantaged);

ii. Continual collection and compilation of data on students' enrolment, progress and performance, and graduation rates;

k) A repository of student enrolment and progression records, analysis and reports. The reports shall include the identification of factors that might be causing variations and provide actions for improvement.

5.2 Support Services

Standard

Supplementary to learning, the Students' Support Office/Officers should provide students with guidance and appropriate advice and assistance in their curricular, vocational and personal domains. UniSey is committed to ensuring that all resources made available as support to students are fit-for-purpose and accessible. Most importantly, students are aware of the services available to them.

Therefore, UniSey shall have:

a) Mechanisms for efficient management of the students' support services, ensuring publishing and consistently applying policies and procedures that are fair and equitable, throughout the student's life cycle up to employability;

b) Systems to provide adequate information and advice to potential students during the application and enrolment phases on specific academic support (first-year orientation academic technology support, libraries, study methods, study skills, training of student mentors, personal tutoring/mentoring/supervising, work-related learning activities e.g. WBE, internship, research work/project etc.);

c) Systems to support the development of appropriate strategies for the creation and functioning of student association/union and/or council;

d) Systems to provide support with extra-curricular activities (develop strategies/activities for sports, artistic, socio-cultural life etc.);

e) A system that promotes students' welfare.

6.0 Standard Element 4: Programme/course Development (including monitoring and evaluation).

6.1 Programme/course Development

Standard

The University of Seychelles understands that study programmes/courses anchor its vision and mission strategies and address its mandate, which is to provide quality education. The measure of quality education relies on the ability of the graduates to demonstrate a high level of competency in practice and transfer their acquired competencies to enhance the workforce capacity, increase their mobility within and across organisations, and promote life-long learning, depicting personal and professional development.

The University of Seychelles recognises that complying with HE academic regulations necessitate that evidence of the conceptual underpinning of the programme/course is sufficiently available for standards verification by the internal and external QA systems.

Furthermore, UniSey understands that in the case where programmes/courses from other institutions are on offer in its institution, it is imperative to seek evidence from the relevant institution, professional/educational accrediting body or equivalent before the programme/course commences; required by SQA. Importantly, to clarify roles and responsibilities and quality assurance standards as well as property rights.

Besides designing programmes/courses with the required graduate attributes and employability, clarity in objectives and learning outcomes and cohesion between philosophy, content and teaching modes, the qualification resulting from the programme/course should be specified and refer to the correct level on the National Qualifications Framework, consequently, the regional and international NQF for higher education. This is crucial in terms of equivalence and mobility of students and graduates in the local, regional and global contexts.

Therefore, UniSey shall have:

a) Mechanisms to ensure need, currency, quality and relevance for the programmes/courses. Structures and procedures must be in place for:

    i.   Conceptualising, approving, developing and validating (internal) of new or reviewed programmes/courses,

    ii.   validating and/or recognised by external QA authorities and professional bodies, (where applicable) of new or reviewed programmes/courses,

    iii.   continuous monitoring and evaluation (annual and periodic reviews),

    iv.   evaluating programmes/courses by students and lecturers, and

    v.   discontinuing or phasing out of programmes/courses.

b) Academic programmes/courses that are in line with its vision and mission and address the expectations and needs of stakeholders. Therefore, programmes/courses must:

    i.   show range, depth, coherence, quality and relevance in its design,

    ii.   reflect the purposes of UniSey as stipulated in the Tertiary Education Act,

    iii.   contain overall aim, explicit objectives and intended learning outcomes that are aligned with the needs of stakeholders,

    iv.   be up to date and adequate in content and scope, promoting core courses, philosophies, values and acquisition of employability skills e.g. work-related learning/attachment/internship or research/project work.

     v.   where appropriate, present a well-structured work-related learning component (aim, objectives, outcomes, supervision and assessment of learning, and monitoring and evaluation of the exposure),

     vi.   present the required credits (notional hours), as per the National Qualifications Framework and for the duration and amount of workload/study required for each qualification (or for the level of the qualification awarded),

c) Learning Outcomes:

i. the expected learning outcomes for each course of study are specified, consistent with the level and field of education of the qualification awarded, and informed by national and international comparators,

ii. the specified learning outcomes for each course of study encompass discipline-related and generic outcomes, including:

- specific knowledge and skills and their application that characterise the field(s) of education or disciplines involved,
- generic skills and their application in the context of the field(s) of education or disciplines involved,
- knowledge and skills required for employment and further study related to the course of study, including those required to be eligible to seek registration to practise where applicable, and
- skills in independent and critical thinking suitable for life-long learning.

d) Mechanisms to ensure staff with proper educational certificates and experience to deliver the programmes/courses;

e) Mechanisms to ensure adequate resource for the programmes/courses;

f) Mechanism/formula that is appropriate to calculate the cost of the programme/course;

g) Appropriate formal agreements for all programmes/courses offered for other institutions, specifying in detail the roles and responsibilities of both institutions, including teaching and learning commitments, QA arrangements, and the administrative and legal aspects (renewal of the agreement); and

h) Mechanisms for effective stakeholder participation in curriculum design, review and validation, including feedback from students, lecturers, alumni and employers.

6.2 Monitoring and Evaluation

Standard

The regular monitoring and review of programmes/courses aim to ensure that the provision remains appropriate and to create a supportive and effective learning environment for students. The University of Seychelles recognises the need to monitor and periodically review its programmes/courses to ensure that they achieve the objectives set and respond to the needs of students and stakeholders/society and the latest research in the given discipline. These

reviews should lead to the continuous improvement of the programmes/courses and any action planned or taken, as a result, communicated to all those concerned.

Therefore, UniSey shall have:
    a) Mechanisms to ensure on-going monitoring, including annual and periodic reviews of programmes/courses. The reviews shall include the following:
      i. changing needs of society/stakeholders,
      ii. content of the Programme/course in the light of the latest research in the given discipline,
      iii. students' workload, progression and completion,
      iv. effectiveness of procedures for teaching and assessment of learning,
    b) Systems for Programme/course evaluation in terms of:
      i. involvement of students and other stakeholders in the evaluation processes,
      ii. expectations, needs and satisfaction of the programme/course,
      iii. the learning environment and support services and their fitness for the programme/course;
      iv. analysis of the information collected and adapting the programme/course and learning environment, and
      v. decision-making process and publishing of the revisions and adjustments.

7.0 Standard Element 5: Teaching, Learning, Assessment and Certification

This standard element encompasses three components (i) Teaching and Learning (ii) Assessment and (iii) Certification/award and is central to all the Standard Elements of this framework.

7.1 Teaching and Learning

Standard

Teaching and learning are core activities of UniSey and as per its mandate, expects the academic and support staff to provide quality services to ensure that the students acquire appropriate competencies (knowledge, skills and attitude). Therefore, student-centred learning becomes central in teaching and learning activities, as this is instrumental in stimulating students' motivation, self-reflection and engagement in their learning process. Furthermore, UniSey is conscious of its responsibility to ensure that any third party (local or international) delivering a higher education programme/course on its behalf (either wholly or partly), which leads to the award of a qualification on the NQF, provides the course consistent with the standard requirements for higher education.

This standard also covers work-integrated learning, in our context work-based experience. This also includes clinical or professional placement, online projects, internships, practicum, workplace projects/research.

The Teaching and Learning Standard links directly to all the standards in this QAEF, such as:

    i. Student-centred learning, diversity and equity.
    ii. Academic integrity.

iii.　Design and delivery of programmes/courses and assessments (including cultural sensitivity, flexibility and disability).

iv.　Specification of the programmes/courses, especially the requirement for engagement with advanced knowledge and enquiry, current knowledge, theoretical frameworks and concepts.

v.　Staffing, especially qualifications/competencies and sufficiency.

vi.　Student wellbeing and safety, and access to staff and educational support.

vii.　Coherence between learning objectives, teaching content and modes and learning outcomes.

viii.　Accreditation status of the programme/course.

ix.　Nature, appropriateness, quality and level of teaching material (content, delivery and assessment) including peer review and benchmarking process.

x.　Quality of facilities and infrastructure.

Therefore, UniSey shall have:

a) Mechanisms that support quality teaching, promote learning and acquisition of appropriate knowledge and competencies and ensure quality assessment. These mechanisms shall consider items I to X above, specifically ensuring the following:

  i.　Published and consistently applied policies and procedures for academic integrity,

  ii.　The teaching, learning and assessment strategies are student-centred and flexible; and motivate students' self-reflection and engagement in the learning process by:

- respecting and attending to the diversity of the students and their needs,
- enabling flexible learning pathways,
- considering and using different modes of delivery, where appropriate;
- using flexible, a variety of pedagogical/educational methods,
- evaluating and adjusting (regularly) the modes of delivery and pedagogical/educational methods;
- encouraging a sense of autonomy in the student, while ensuring adequate guidance and support from the lecturer, and
- promoting mutual respect within the student-lecturer relationship.

b) A policy to ensure adequate academic integrity;

c) Programmes/courses designed and delivered in a way that encourages students to take an active role in creating the learning process and that the assessments of students reflect this approach;

d) Environment and resources that are appropriate and adequate to support each cohort;

e) Systems for periodic monitoring, assessment and evaluation of the teaching and learning approaches for quality improvement;

f) Systems for students to provide feedback on their learning experience; and

g) Procedures that are appropriate for dealing with students' complaints.

In the case of ODL (Refer to Annex 2: **UniSey Online Distance Learning Guidelines, February 2021**)

h) The medium or media (platform) of delivery should take into account the following:

i.   Accessibility to the students.

ii.   Cost of use, both by the institution (installation and maintenance), as well as students' financial implication.

iii.   Clarity and strengths of the teaching and learning materials (content level),

iv.   Capacity in creating inter-activity.

v.   Institutional capacity for development and sustenance.

vi.   Originality and innovation.

vii.   Promptness in setting and improving.

i) There are face-to-face sessions to provide general orientation and introduction to the medium or media and the programme/course materials at the commencement of the programme/course; and

j) There are special face-to-face sessions for difficult aspects of the programme/course during the programme/course.

In the case of delivery of programmes/courses with a third party, UniSey shall have systems to ensure that:

a) The provider:
  I.   is a certified HEI (approved by the relevant Quality Assurance Authority or equivalent),
  II.   has efficient internal QA systems (e.g. Governance, programme/course development, accreditation, monitoring and evaluation, research and research training and information and information management);
  III.   monitors and ensures the quality of the delivery of the programme/course and assessment of learning outcomes; and
  IV.   complies with and remains accountable for agreed arrangements,

b) A system to ensure that programmes/courses under collaboration are of the required standard and rigour as those of the parent institution;

c) A system to ensure that students benefit from the same standard of resources as those for the regular students of the awarding institution;

d) Both the program delivery and the student experience with other parties comply with the requirements of the SQA regulations and procedures;

e) Agreements/contracts contain clearly define the rights and responsibilities of parties, legal ownership, accreditation status of the programme/course, and resources available for the programme/course; and

f) A mechanism to ensure that students are informed of their roles and responsibilities, and those of the institutions involved in the collaborative agreement.

7.2 Assessment

Standard

The University of Seychelles is cognizant that student assessment as one of the most important elements of higher education as the outcomes of assessments has a profound effect on students' progression and future careers. Also, the quality of assessment and its processes have a direct implication on the credibility of the awards and ultimately, the institution. Hence, UniSey emphasises that assessments are carried out with utmost ethics, credibility and validity at all times.

Therefore, UniSey shall have:

a) A mechanism (structures, policy and procedures) for assessment that is explicit and available publicly to both students and staff. The policy and procedures developed shall safeguard the validity and reliability of assessment practices by ensuring:

    i.   External Examiner for all local programmes/courses,

    ii.   assessments are student-centred,

    iii.   internal and external moderation and examination,

    iv.   invigilation of examinations,

    v.   competent and impartial examiners carry out assessments,

    vi.   methods of assessment that are consistent with the learning outcomes being assessed are capable of confirming that all specified learning outcomes are achieved and that grades awarded reflect the level of student attainment,

    vii.   that students have demonstrated the learning outcomes specified for the course of study, whether assessed at the unit level, course level, or in combination,

    viii. a range of methods (e.g. coursework, projects, research, dissertation and examinations to serve formative and summative assessment purposes) are used in assessments,

    ix.   assessment methods allow students to demonstrate the extent to which the intended learning outcomes have been achieved,

    x.   more than one examiner is used,

    xi.   regular objective feedback is provided to the students on their strengths and weaknesses, and appropriate counselling support for improvement,

    xii.   internal validation of results,

    xiii. stringent recording of results,

    xiv. analysis (monitoring) of student performance/progress, and

    xv.   rigorous security of assessment papers and results.

b) Provide revision activities to students before examinations;

c) Ensure that assessment standards are spelt out for each Programme/course and are competency or outcomes-based, where applicable;

d) Ensure assessors (content specialists/lecturers/moderators) are familiar with existing testing and examination methods and receive support in developing their skills in this field;

e) Publish in advance criteria for and method of assessment as well as criteria for marking;

f) Ensure integrity of examinations and award of degrees to guard against examination malpractice; and

g) A disciplinary and appeal's process

7.3 Certification

Standard

The issuance of legitimate certification is one of the key academic governance responsibilities of UniSey. The specifications for the issuance of certification, with regards to the way they are certified, the security, and the records of attainment that are available to students are set in this standard element.

In line with this, UniSey is conscious that processes and tools to collect, monitor and act on information with regards to student progression across their enrolment period (student life cycle) are crucial for the Institution's credibility, image, visibility and viability. It is crucial for UniSey that any certification provided is positioned at a level equivalent to the National Qualifications Framework (NQF). Also, certificates that are issued after completion of short courses or stand-alone courses should carry credits that are transferrable to a level on the NQF or could be considered during the Recognition of Prior Learning process and Credits Transfer Systems.

Therefore, UniSey shall have:

a) Policy and procedures for classifications of awards at all levels (undergraduate and post-graduate);

b) A procedure to collaborate with other institutions, professional regulatory bodies (e.g. professional councils) and the SQA to ensure coherent recognition of qualifications across the country;

c) Appropriate recognition procedures that are in line with the principles of the SQA's Credit Transfer and/or Recognition of Prior Learning systems;

d) Procedures to authenticate certificates/qualifications before issuing;

e) Benchmark its programmes/courses with international standards to ease the progression of professional study and mobility of graduates;

f) Provide documentation (e.g. letter of completion of the study, training transcripts, certificates, awards) explaining the qualification gained, including achieved learning outcomes and the context, level, content and status of the studies that were pursued and completed;

g) The authorised certification documentation must include a record of results or a graduation statement that state correctly:

   i. the name of the University (University of Seychelles)

   ii. the full name of the person to whom the documentation applies

   iii. the date of issue

   iv. the name and office (Registrar) of the person authorised by the higher education provider to issue the documentation, and

h) Rigorous processes for issuance and storage of certificates including:

i. . records of results state correctly, in addition to the requirements for all certification documentation;

- the full name of all courses and units of study undertaken and when they were undertaken and completed
- credit granted through recognition of prior learning
- the weighting of units within courses of study
- the grades and/or marks awarded for each unit of study undertaken and, if applicable, for the course overall
- where grades are issued, an explanation of the grading system used

ii. where a course of study includes a significant particular focus of study such as honours, an area of specialisation or a major study, a definition of that component of significant focus,

iii. any parts of a course or units of study or assessment that were conducted in a language other than English, except for the use of another language to develop proficiency in that language,

iv. taking active measures to protect the information from unauthorised disclosure; and

k. System for safe storage of detailed records and transcripts, indicating the list of courses, units and grades.

8.0 Standard Element 6: Research and Research Training

Standard

Besides teaching and learning, research is another core activity of a higher education institution, and therefore requires an institution-wide research policy that sets the direction of its research activity. This standard element addresses both the conduct of research and research training (postgraduate studies) to ensure the optimal level of academic management. The University should never overlook the moral and ethical dimensions of conducting a specific research project. Research projects need to be reviewed and cleared before their commencement by a research ethics committee. The respective authority/committee needs to consider also whether the research is worth conducting, as research will only be ethically acceptable if potential benefits justify any risks that will be incurred and that there are controls for any risks that reasonably can be foreseen in the conduct of a research project. Also, UniSey is cognizant that research through grants must meet stringent processes and that researchers abide by all requirements, including other pertinent organisations' policies and codes of conduct.
The research training should occur in an environment of research/scholarly/creative activity with adequate resources and with competent continuing supervisory arrangements.

Therefore, UniSey shall have:

a) A mechanism for efficient management of research (structures, policies and procedures) that:
   i.   create a shared understanding of the nature, role and goals of research at UniSey;
   ii.   encourage, promote, engage in innovative research consistent with its policies and strategic plans,
   iii.   guide capacity building for researchers,
   iv.   are available for the approval of research proposals, the conduct and supervision of research studies and theses,
   v.   ensure the management of postgraduate studies are conducted within an approved framework,
   vi.   ensure all research training (higher degree by research) entail a research activity and is guided by and undertaken following an institutionally-approved policy framework, and
   vii.   discourage the conduct of research that is controversial but keeping in mind the academic freedom of the individual to push boundaries to expand knowledge,
   viii.   ensure research undertaken is relevant and responsive to the needs for academic advancement and community development expectations,
   ix.   ensure preventative action is taken to mitigate foreseeable risks to academic and research integrity including misrepresentation, fabrication, cheating, plagiarism and misuse of intellectual property, and to prevent recurrences of breaches,
   x.   students are provided with guidance on what constitutes academic or research misconduct and the development of good practices in maintaining academic and research integrity.

b) There shall be Academic and Research Integrity Policies that promote and uphold the academic and research integrity of courses and units of study, research and research training activities, which also address misconduct and allegations of misconduct.

c) Academic and research integrity and accountability for academic and research integrity are maintained in arrangements with any other party involved in the provision of higher education, including placements, collaborative research, research training and joint award of qualifications.

d) Specific policies for the conduct of research for:
   i.   ensuring adequate academic and research integrity,
   ii.   ensuring the availability of adequate and qualified staff;
   iii.   ensure academic staff workloads allow for research activities, locally and aboard, that contribute to the UniSey's vision and mission,
   iv.   managing research partnerships and research contracts,
   v.   handling intellectual property and commercialisation of research,
   vi.   appropriate due diligence for work funded by grants; and
   vii.   effective and trustworthy management of research information (recording and dissemination of output);

e) An institutional research training policy framework to ensure:
   i.   coursework components,
   ii.   availability of adequate and qualified staff,
   iii.   necessary supervisory and study environment of research activity,
   iv.   adequate and appropriate supervisory arrangements, and
   v.   adequate and appropriate induction of research students, including relevant policies,

vi.   that on completion of the research training the students have demonstrated specific and generic learning outcomes related to research, including:

- a detailed understanding of the specific topic of their research, within a broad understanding of the field of research,
- capacity to scope, design and conduct research projects independently,
- technical research skills and competence in the application of research methods, and
- skills in analysis, critical evaluation and reporting of research, and in presentation, publication and dissemination of their research.

The research training policy framework includes specific matters that UniSey need to achieve with:

i.   the rights and responsibilities of research students and supervisors,
ii.   monitoring the progress of research students,
iii.   communication of research outputs by students, and
iv.   the resolution of disputes.

b) Adequate resources (financial, infrastructure) that facilitate all staff to undertake innovative research, and publish research results; and
c) Effective monitoring and evaluation of the research mechanism.

9.0 Standard 7: Community Engagement (internal, national and international)

This Standard Element also covers quality assurance of internationalisation strategies and activities.
Standard

Community engagement in the context of this framework encompasses both the internal, external and international communities that UniSey collaborates with during planning, developing, implementing, and evaluating its strategies.

The internal community entails all members of its organisation, including the students, staff and others that benefit from or participate in its operations, including on-campus partners/contributors to campus life, visitors etc.

The external community (local, national and international) comprises members of different sectors such as the government, non-government organisations, parastatals, private practices, professional organisations, regulatory agencies etc.

The aim of incorporating community engagement in its operations is to enrich teaching and learning, research, and innovative activities that benefit students, staff, partners and societies.

The specific objectives are to (i) enhance teaching and learning; (ii) facilitate the preparation of educated and engaged citizens; (iii) strengthen democratic values and responsibility in the students; (iv) enhance the generation and sharing of knowledge; (v) address critical societal issues, and (vi) contribute to the public good/community activities.

Hence, UniSey is cognizant of the importance of having competent, empowered and engaged people at all levels throughout the organisation as essential to enhancing its capability to create and deliver on its mandates. Further, UniSey recognizes the importance of involving all people within its organisation and respect each member at all levels for its management to be effective and efficient, and that recognition, empowerment and enhancement of competence facilitate the engagement of people in achieving the organization's quality objectives.

Consequently, with the understanding that the University is not only responsible for teaching, learning and research, but also for serving society, UniSey is mandated to have mechanisms that promote effective and efficient involvement and respect for all people within the Organisation.

Significantly, UniSey is cognizant of the need for mechanisms to ensure the quality of its international strategies and activities.

Therefore, UniSey shall have:
  a) Mechanisms to create and sustain engagement of internal and external stakeholders, inclusive of staff, students, external organisation etc. Ensuring that each section (UniSey) must be aware of which stakeholders in the local/national/international community they are expected or likely to engage with. All liaisons must be disclosed formally through established procedures. This will entail:
  i.   empowering people to determine constraints in performance and to take initiatives without fear,
  ii.   facilitating open discussion and sharing of knowledge and experience,
  iii.   recognising and acknowledging people's contribution, learning and improvement (e.g. recognition, appreciation incentives etc.),
  iv.   enabling self-evaluation of performance against personal and organizational objectives, and
  v.   conducting surveys to assess people's satisfaction, communicating the results, and taking appropriate actions.
  b) Mechanisms to ensure engagement activities with the external community are conducted within a framework for effective collaborations and sustainable development;
  c) Specific mechanism to ensure that quality assurance initiatives at the international, national and regional level are coordinated to ensure overview, coherence, synergy and system-wide analysis;
  d) Mechanisms to promote collaboration with other HEIs, professional bodies, research institutions and relevant social sectors at local, national, regional, and international levels for the mutually beneficial exchange of knowledge and resources in a context of partnership and reciprocity; and
  e) Strategies that encourage and coordinate engagement in community outreach programme/course (academic and non-academic) as part of its social responsibility.

10.0 Standard Element 8: Information and Communication (including information management)

Standard

Besides its obligation to disseminate adequate information to its stakeholders, UniSey is also required by the Access to Information Act, 2018, to disclose publicly a range of information, aimed largely at enhancing informed choices and demonstrating accountability.

This Standard Element entails the minimum requirements to ensure that whatever UniSey presents (directly or through other parties) about itself and its programmes/courses are accurate and ethical. It also ensures the availability and publication of sufficient information to assist potential, current and past students in making informed choices of study to enable effective and informed engagement in the University activities; targeting the national and international community.

Hence, UniSey commits to publish information about its activities, including programmes/courses, in a clear, accurate and objective manner and ensure that the information is up-to-date and accessible. Furthermore, to ensure that promotion of its academic and non-academic programmes/courses is carried out fairly and ethically, following acceptable best practices, and comply with all relevant legislation.

Reliable data is crucial for informed decision-making and hence, UniSey is conscious of the importance of institutionalising effective processes to collect, analyse, and utilise relevant information for the effective management of its programmes/courses and other activities.

This standard sets the requirement to ensure that UniSey's Management Information System (MIS) meets at least the common critical requirements concerning content, security and integrity.

Therefore, UniSey shall have:

a) A mechanism to communicate effectively with people (internal and external community) to promote understanding of the importance of their contributions (individual or collective).

b) Specific procedures to enforce the implementation of the communication mechanisms in place for both staff and students (e.g. students and staff alike to use the UniSey portal or the university email). This is important to ensure consistency in the main/official channel of communication, effective and efficient communication, and enhance the responsibility and accountability level.

c) Specific procedures to disseminate information, internally and externally, and delegate this responsibility (a designated staff). This is important for control, accessibility, efficacy, consistency and accountability taking into account the Access to Information Act, 2018.

d) Specific procedures to facilitate the enforcement of communication ethics. This is important for several reasons (i) to ensure that the stakeholders are not misinformed, (ii) to ensure information is passed on correctly and appropriately, and (ii) to limit unresponsiveness on the part of the stakeholders due to lack of consultations all of which is address may limit the level of harm to UniSey's image. Include an element of communication ethics in staff contract, other stakeholders' agreement and the staff and students handbook. Add procedures to manage bridge of communication ethics in Human Resource Manual and Student Handbook e.g. follow up of incidents, letters of counsel, followed by warnings or appraisals must reflect this non-compliance.

e) A mechanism to market/promote the institution and its programmes/courses, recruitment, enrolment, selection and registration as one entity;

f) System and standard to display and publish information about the current status of the University and its programmes/courses/course to its stakeholders;

g) An updated Prospectus and Student Handbook that is clearly written, easily accessible, and discloses transparently, all information needed by students to make informed-decision when applying for a programme/course.

h) An updated Staff Handbook

The prospectus shall entail a summary on:

i. types of programmes/courses on offer and potential changes expected e.g. start date,
ii. expected learning outcomes,
iii. application process and selection criteria,
iv. teaching and learning procedures,
v. requirements specific to the programme/course or part of a programme/course.
vi. certifications/awards
vii. graduation rates, learning opportunities, and information about the employment of its graduates.
viii. Programme/course cost and related fees/charges and notices of potential changes to fees,
ix. the student support and facilities being made available,
x. information for international students (Global Office), and
xi. UniSey contact details.

The student handbook shall entail:

i. UniSey calendar.
ii. UniSey's organisational structure,
iii. Programmes/courses on offer,
iv. Application process,
v. Student progress (attendance, assessment, appeals, deferment, withdrawal)
vi. Useful contact details,
vii. Campus infrastructure and facilities,
viii. Student support services (academic support including personal lecturer/supervisor, internship, WBE, student association/union and or council, welfare)
ix. Specific obligations placed on students,
x. Specific study obligations for international students,
xi. Specific obligations for students studying online,
xii. Student evaluation of programmes/courses, and
xiii. Complaints and feedback.
  i) Systems to control the way its corporate identity is represented to the stakeholders e.g. consistency in the presentation of marketing material and published documentation.
  j) Systems of control over materials published by a third party, including through third-party websites.

k) Promotional materials that give a clear and accurate view of the University and Programme/course, and the delivery of academic and non-academic programmes/courses. Information on academic programmes/courses shall entail:
   i.   The rationale of the programme/course.
   ii.   Aim, objectives and outcomes.
   iii.   The body awarding the qualification and its accreditation status.
   iv.   Mode of delivery.
   v.   Level of the programme/course on the NQF, where applicable.
   vi.   Terms and conditions.
   vii.   Conditions for withdrawal from the programme/course.
   viii. Fees involved.
   ix.   Financial agreements with the provider (in the case of international or other partners).
   x.   Rights, obligations and commitments expected of UniSey and the student.

   Information on non-academic programmes/courses shall entail:

   i.   Appropriately branded.
   ii.   Language of communication (promoting all three national languages).
   iii.   The rationale of the programme/course.
   iv.   Target audience.
   v.   The timeframe of the event.
   vi.   Event fee (if applicable).
   vii.   Contact details.
   viii. Venue.
   ix.   Terms and conditions.

l) A mechanism to ensure that students are fully informed of the issues that affect them concerning the management of the programme/course, such as:
   i.   Language of communication.
   ii.   Required access to technologies, in the case of ODL.
   iii.   Technical competencies of students required to enrol in the programme/course, in the case of ODL.
   iv.   The timeframe in which the programmes/courses are offered and the nature of learning outcomes.
   v.   Required texts and access to reference materials.
   vi.   Understanding of independent learning expectations.
   vii.   Schedule for face-to-face interactions, in the case of ODL.
   viii. Schedule for examinations.
   ix.   Schedule for submission of assignments.
   x.   Collection of certificates.

m) A Management Information System that is reliable, secure and safeguarding the integrity of the data generated. The following data must be accurate and easily accessible:
   i.   Key performance indicators;
   ii.   Profile of student (population and biographic data);

iii.   Learning resources and available student services;

iv.   Student registration;

v.   Student progression (repeating courses, deferment, drop-out rates and graduation rates);

vi.   Examination results;

vii.   Certifications/awards;

viii.   Profile of staff (recruitment/adverts and applications, employment, retention, development and promotion; staff numbers, qualifications, contracts/agreements; lecturer/student ration; full-time/part-time ratio);

ix.   Community engagement activities (national and international;

x.   Research activities,

xi.   Data on income (e.g. scholarships, donation and grants etc.;

xii.   Student satisfaction surveys;

xiii.   Staff satisfaction surveys;

xiv.   Alumni destination survey;

xv.   Graduate employers' survey.

A repository of publicly-available current information about UniSey's operations shall include:

- the official name of the University, trading name (UniSey), regulatory status and authority to provide courses of study to international students studying on a student visa
- the instrument establishing the entity
- the members of the governing body (Council), Senate and Executive Committee (Top Level Management Team)
- the financial standing of the provider
- indicative total students' enrolments

ii. An organogram

iii. The locations of the campuses

iv. An overview of teaching campuses, facilities, learning resources and services provided for students

v. list of all higher education courses of study that are offered, including indicative estimated annual enrolments

vi. arrangements with other parties to deliver courses of study or to conduct research training

vii. the three most recent annual reports

viii. how to lodge a complaint about the higher education provider, and contact details.

ix. The list of all programmes/courses from international institutions within the repository of information includes:

- the accreditation status of each course of study
- the qualification(s) offered
- whether the qualification is recognised in the National Qualifications Framework
- confirmation of recognition of each course of study by the relevant professional body if such recognition is required for registration of graduates to practise

- whether each course of study is authorised to be offered to international students studying on a student visa, and
- the duration of each course of study

x. Information systems and records are maintained, securely and confidentially as necessary to:

- maintain accurate and up-to-date records of enrolments, progression, completions and award of qualifications
- prevent unauthorised or fraudulent access to private or sensitive information, including information where unauthorised access may compromise academic or research integrity
- document and record responses to formal complaints, allegations of misconduct, breaches of academic or research integrity and critical incidents, and
- demonstrate compliance with the Seychelles Qualifications standards.

PART D: MONITORING AND EVALUATION FRAMEWORK

11.0 Standard Element 9: Monitoring, Evaluation and Improvement (TQM)

Standard

The University of Seychelles adopts UNESCO's definition (refer to Glossary of acronyms and terms) of QM and Total Quality Management (TQM) that set the standards for continuous quality enhancement (M&E).
Despite the view that TQM is mostly used in the economic sector, the principles are very much applicable in higher education institutions.[43]

Significantly, the monitoring, evaluation and improvement standard element is meant for the UniSey's stakeholders (internal and external) to understand and engage to the optimal level in the processes involved in continuous monitoring and evaluation, and planning that would lead to the success of quality assurance at UniSey, and hence creating a culture of quality.

The Monitoring and Evaluation system for UniSey is twofold:

1. The internal system that covers all the elements of this QAEF, involving Programme/course evaluations of teaching and learning (lecturers and students), Programme/course reviews, systems audits, self-assessments and research.

2. The external system that involves evaluations by external academic experts (External Examiners and Institutional Evaluators). The External Examiners evaluate the academic assessment processes to ascertain the standards of UniSey's certification and awards and to ensure compliance with assessment policies, while the Institutional Evaluators look at the Institution's compliance with the Internal Quality Assurance policies and procedures and the

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[43] The UNESCO Quality management in higher education: Developments and drivers
Quality management in higher education: Developments and drivers (results from an international survey; New trends in higher education (2017)

Seychelles Qualifications Authority standards and the Tertiary Education Act. The internal and external evaluation systems strongly integrate and complement each other.

11.1 Internal Monitoring and Evaluation System (evaluations, audits and self-assessment)

The internal M&E processes generate information continuously and in a systematic way about compliance with quality standards. Besides the evaluations of teaching and learning and the systems audit processes, self-assessment is another effective mechanism to assure academic quality. The self-evaluation documents provide feedback to management for the planning of actions for improvement. Each section of the organisational structure has fundamental roles to play in the internal QA processes. The self-assessment reports are the cornerstone of the whole QA and Enhancement system and need to be prepared by UniSey under the guidance provided by QAEF in addition to the process outlined in the SQA QA Manual, 2011, page 13-18.

11.2 External Monitoring and Evaluation System (External Examiners, auditors, evaluators)

The QA Office facilitates and strengthens the processes of internal assessment to provide baseline information for external quality assessments.

Institutional evaluation is a significant stage of the external QA system for UniSey to be evaluated against the Seychelles Qualifications Authority standards. The process of Intuitional Evaluation is led by the SQA and the process is outlined in the SQA QA Manual 2011, page 13-22.

The University of Seychelles must provide the baseline information to the SQA for it to be used to guide the Institutional evaluation visit. The information that is compiled into a comprehensive report is generated through the self-assessment process and submitted to the SQA.

Therefore, UniSey shall have:

a) Quality Assurance mechanisms that:
   i.   reflect the relationship between teaching, learning, research and supporting services taking into account the context within which UniSey operates (Tertiary Education, UniSey Charter & Statutes, and the Internal QA and External QA systems).
   ii. define the organisation of the quality assurance systems,
   iii. describe the implementation, monitoring and revision of these systems,
   iv. transform the policies into practice through a variety of internal quality assurance procedures and that allow participation across the University,
   v.   focus primarily on meeting stakeholder requirements and strive to exceed stakeholder expectations,

   vi. adopt the student-centred principle,
   vii. support all staff and students (internal stakeholders) to take their responsibilities in enhancing quality management,
   viii. promote and sustain the involvement of external stakeholders in internal quality management, and
   ix. promote and sustain UniSey's values, specifically its integrity.

c) A QAE Monitoring and Evaluation framework, targeting key outcome indicators for all the Standard Elements (Annex 2).

The indicators that will determine the achievement of quality at UniSey emerge from the QAEF Standard Elements that are also aligned with the Seychelles Qualifications Authority's quality assurance measurements (Seychelles Qualifications Authority, QA Manual 2011). The University of Seychelles quality assurance monitoring and evaluation framework includes input, process, output, outcomes and impact indicators.

Monitoring and Evaluation Framework

NB: The M&E framework is not complete.

STANDARD ELEMENT 1: GOVERNANCE, LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT				
SOURCES OF MEASUREMENT & REPORTING	M&E reports (Institutional performance, QA evaluation, survey and audit reports)		Annual	QA Office
	Teaching and learning M&E reports		Bi-annual	Academic Governance
	Operational reports		Quarterly	Line Managers
	Meeting agenda; minutes of meetings with actions, responsible person, timeline & resolutions/decisions taken.		Monthly	Chairperson of Committees
EXPECTATIONS/IMPACT INDICATORS	UniSey is a well-governed and functional higher education institution.			
INPUT INDICATORS	**PROCESS INDICATORS**	**OUTPUT INDICATORS**	**OUTCOME INDICATORS**	
Standard Element 1: Governance, Leadership and Management 6.1.1 Budget to develop a Strategic Plan inclusive of a Monitoring and Evaluation (M&E) Framework. • Technical expert/Consultant • Stakeholders (internal & External)	• Recruit technical expert/consultant. • Develop a Strategic Plan with the involvement of its stakeholders. • Develop an M&E Framework to accompany the plan.	• Strategic plan uploaded on the Website and on UniZone. • # Stakeholders forum regarding the development of the strategic plan. • M&E Framework for the strategic plan uploaded on the Website and on UniZone.	• UniSey's Strategic Plan and M&E Framework are easily accessible to all stakeholders. • The University's vision and mission statements are clear.	

2.0 An organisational structure (organogram) that aligns with its Charter and is relevant to the Standard Elements of this QAEF.	• Organogram with clear leadership and management mandate; delegated authorities; responsibilities & adequate degree of autonomy. • Approved policies and standards of procedures, relevant to the University's mandate.	• # of developed and/or reviewed and implemented policies • # of approved policies and standards of procedures. • % of compliance with approved strategic and operational plans and strategic objectives. • % compliance with governance policies and standards.	• UniSey demonstrates effective and efficient leadership and management at all levels. • UniSey complies with approved policies and strategies.
1.1 Strategic Plan and operational plans (implementation) with KPIs	Approved strategic and operational (implementation) plans. Approved KPIs.	# of strategic objectives that reflect the vision and mission statements and commitment to quality enhancement. # of plans developed, implemented and evaluated as per approved KPIs.	Achievement of approved strategic and operational (implementation) plans as per approved KPIs
1.2 Mechanisms to involve stakeholders (stakeholders) in decision-making.	Effective involvement of stakeholders' views and needs in the planning, implementing, supervising, monitoring and evaluating academic and non-academic programmes.	% of involvement of stakeholders in the planning, implementing, monitoring and evaluating of academic and non-academic programmes.	Mechanisms developed to involve effectively, stakeholders in decision-making.

1.3 Mechanism for institutional data management (analysis, dissemination).	Data/Information management system	Available and effective data/information management system. # of published quantitative and quantitative reports.	Mechanisms to manage effectively institutional data, including analysis and dissemination.
1.4 System to record accountabilities and compliance with regulations, standards and policies.	Governance, monitoring and accountability structures and processes.	# of approved reporting formats. # published M&E reports (evaluation, audit, surveys). Minutes of meetings for each structure (complete with agenda, actions, responsible person, timeline & resolutions/decisions taken).	Systems developed to effectively record accountabilities and compliance with regulations, standards and policies.

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Annex 1: QAEF Workshop participants' list

Group D, E & F

NAME	DEPARTMENT	
1. PRETTA SERVINA	GLOBAL OFFICE	
2. Aneesa Vel	CLCRI - FASD	
3. Rachel Onezime	FBSD	
4. MARIE-CECILE ADELA	FASD	
5. Olga Klymenko	FASD	
6. PENDA CHOPPY	LLCRI	
7. Nuette Ciardan	Environmental Science BERI	
8. SABEERA ROBERT	FASD	
9. STUART LAING	ENV SCIENCE + BERI	
10. Anaie Laurette	L&M	
11. A. MURUGAIYAN	CIS	
12. NATALIE LABIWED	FBSD	

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| Annex 2 | ONLINE DISTANCE LEARNING GUIDELINES. |

1.0 INTRODUCTION

During closure of its campuses or with blended learning mode, UniSey commits to continuing its teaching and learning activities online. Similar to the conventional teaching and learning mode, UniSey expects the management, administrative, academic and support staff to provide quality teaching and support to ensure that the students acquire appropriate competencies with the online mode (E-learning).

The Online Distance Learning Guidelines provide some basic strategies for the use of E-learning or Online Distance Learning (ODL) to support teaching and learning during the closure. The guidelines have been adopted from contemporary practices and adapted to the current local context.

Standard Operating Procedures (SOPs) must be read in conjunction with these guidelines.

The Online Distance Learning Guidelines apply to management, administrative, academic, support staff, and students in the planning, implementing, monitoring and evaluating the quality of teaching and learning delivery, in cases where UniSey transitions from conventional to online teaching and learning during periods of campus closure.

2.0 DEFINITIONS (E-learning and Online Distance Learning)

E-learning refers to 'the use of Information and Communications Technology (ICT) to enhance and/or support learning in tertiary education, both fully online or partially on-campus and online or distance-based provision supplemented with ICT in some way.[44]

E-learning or Online Distance Learning (ODL) covers a wide range of systems, from students using e-mail and accessing course work online while following a course on campus to programmes offered entirely online. E-learning or ODL can be divided into several different types and applies in all cases, where a campus-based institution offers courses using E-learning or ODL tied to the Internet or alternative online networks to a varying degree.[45]

In UniSey's context, E-learning and ODL shall be used interchangeably.

3.0 PRINCIPLES

Primarily, student-centred (access, diversity and equity) learning becomes the central principle in teaching and learning activities, as this is instrumental in stimulating students' motivation, self-reflection and engagement in their learning process. ODL programs should be creative, interactive, relevant, student-centred, and group-based. Furthermore, UniSey must remain cognizant of its responsibility to ensure that the delivery of education programmes and courses leading to the award of a qualification meets the standard requirements of the National Qualifications Framework (NQF) for the qualification.

Eight general standards need to be upheld in the planning, development, implementation, monitoring, and evaluation of E-learning. These are as follows:

1.   Course Overview and Introduction.

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[44] OECD (2005): Policy Brief on E-learning in Tertiary Education.
[45] E-Learning in Tertiary Education: Where Do We Stand? – ISBN 92-64-00920-5 © OECD 2005

2. Learning Objectives (Competencies).
3. Assessment and Measurement.
4. Instructional Materials.
5. Learning Activities and Learner Interaction.
6. Course Technology.
7. Learner Support.
8. Accessibility and usability.
9. Feedback methods.

4.0 KEY CONSIDERATION

The Commonwealth of Learning proposes the following as key considerations for the effective design and delivery of a programme/course through ODL[46]:

Learning resources:	Teaching and learning content is designed to support self-learning and made accessible to students using a variety of media and technology, including print, computers, mobiles and the internet. When there are clear objectives and support to achieve specific learning outcomes, effective teaching and learning can happen without students and lecturers being in the same place at the same time.
Pedagogy:	Teaching and learning are based on sound pedagogical principles of guided-didactic conversation, and appropriate use of two-way communication tools and technologies that help support dialogue and communication. Interaction between students and other students, students and lecturers and students and content results in deeper understanding and is an integral part of ODL. To benefit maximally from ODL opportunities, students need to be guided to develop self-directed learning skills.
Learner support:	Providing psychological and emotional support to learners at a distance alongside continuous academic interaction are keys to student success. Caring human support at a distance facilitates self-directed learning, reduces student isolation, and creates an environment for student engagements in learning (citing Simpson, 2013).
Communication:	Communication is the key when it gets difficult to try reaching out to students via texts, various messaging apps, video calls, and so on content should be such that enable students for practice and improve their skills.

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[46] COL (2020): Guidelines on Distance Education during COVID-19

| | Communication is necessary to create 'social presence' – the expression of emotion, open communication, and group cohesion.[47] |
| *Administration:* | To implement effective teaching and learning at a distance, planning and organisation of the teaching and learning process from curriculum development to assessment of student learning needs to be managed by an efficient and accountable administration. |

5.0 GUIDES[48]

5.1 UNISEY MANAGEMENT

Develop and implement technology:	Enable learning policies/strategies that are accessible and appropriate for the needs of learners. This would involve making appropriate technology choices such as print, (radio & television) and the internet to suit different contexts.
Share the course content:	Enable development and dissemination by faculty members through an institutional repository to facilitate the access by anyone, anywhere, anytime.
Use innovative approaches:	Enable innovation to assessment in both offline and online environments. Institutions may review the one-time exit examination system and follow a process of continuous formative assessment to enable student learning and success.
Develop ethical guidelines for the appropriate use of learning analytics:	Enable the tracking of student progress and provide support, especially for those at risk. Adequate attention must be paid to privacy issues so that student data is not compromised.
Provide orientation to students:	Enable the student to use online learning effectively and to develop self-directed learning skills by creating engaging learning enrolments.
Develop robust student support services using a range of technologies:	Enable the provision of: ■ Personal/personnel contact through a variety of means, including telephone, email, discussion

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[47] Qian Sun A. and Chen Xiufang (2016), Online Education and Its Effective Practice: Research Review
[48] adapted from COL (2020): Guidelines on Distance Education during COVID-19

	boards, appropriate social media to reduce the feeling of isolation and loneliness.
	▪ Call centre facilities for student support, where there are large enrolments.
	▪ Targeted support to disadvantaged students and those in remote locations.

Ensure the quality of all courses:	Enable the offering/delivery of quality courses (teaching & learning) to students by following an appropriate institutional quality assurance process.
Internet bandwidth:	Strengthen to provide access to institutional resources as well as digital resources on the web.
Appropriate technology support:	Institutions must establish multiple ways of providing remote support noting that technology failures can interrupt learning.

5.2 ACADEMIC AND SUPPORT STAFF

Approach ODL and the teaching process with empathy and care for students:	Staff must ensure that the student is at the centre of every action and that their expectations are met.
Take proactive steps to adapt to the new environment:	Take advantage of both offline and online learning opportunities, appropriately.
Integrate online educational resources (as appropriate) in teaching and learning:	Lectures can draw on quality educational resources available around the world in various formats and adapt these to local contexts. This helps lectures to focus on interaction and student support.
Consider student workload while developing activities and graded assignments:	▪ It is important to ensure that the workload assigned is reasonable and realistic. ▪ Deadlines for assignments should be staggered so as not to inconvenience the learner.
Availability of staff	▪ Make sure staff are available at designated times for students to reach them via telephone or social media. ▪ Ensure that all student queries are responded to within a specified timeframe.

	▪ Provide a general space for frequently asked questions and information on the website and the course management system.
Work in teams and develop communities of practices learnt:	To avoid duplication of effort, share best practice and leverage lessons.

5.3 STUDENTS AND STUDENT COUNCIL

Develop skills to learn online:	To become self-directed learners by accessing appropriate digital tools and learning activities.
Engage in group learning activities:	▪ To remain connected with peer groups. ▪ Stay connected with lecturers and other students regularly through the telephone, social media and a learning management system.
Develop a study schedule:	To manage time effectively.
Develop critical skills:	To understand the consequences of plagiarism, privacy issues and the negative impact of misinformation in the digital space.
Student Council should play a central role in Online Distance Learning:	▪ To advocate for Online Distance Learning and provide support to peers who are new to such forms of learning through mentorship and guidance. ▪ To educate and encourage peers on the benefit of providing constructive feedback through the appropriate channels and methods.

6.0 CHARACTERISTICS OF TEACHING MATERIALS[49]

Content:	▪ The content and knowledge assessment tests and exercises must "match" the learning objectives at every step in the workflow process. ▪ It must include all the knowledge needed to meet the learning objectives, including information that may seem obvious to the lecturer but may be unknown to students.

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[49] adopted and adapted Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (2011), E-learning methodologies: A guide for designing and developing e-learning courses.

	▪ Use examples that are likely to be familiar to most, if not all, students. People taking the course may have different backgrounds, so use a variety of examples. This will help students understand and remember concepts.
Language:	▪ Write directly, simply and clearly. It is important to not give the reader more ideas or information than can be handled at one time. ▪ Avoid jargon. ▪ Avoid culture-specific slang, vulgarisms and examples. ▪ Minimize the use of compound sentences. When you see a colon or semi-colon, examine the sentence to see if it could be made simpler and clearer by breaking it into shorter sentences. ▪ Use personal pronouns (e.g. "you") to refer to students. This personalises instruction and involves your reader. ▪ Use bulleted lists when appropriate. ▪ Use gender-inclusive, non-sexist language (e.g. sexist: "Over the years, men have continued to use non-renewable resources at increasing rates;" gender-inclusive: "Over the years, people have continued to use non-renewable resources at increasing rates.") ▪ Use the active voice. In a passive construction, the agent of the action often disappears from the scene. Use the passive voice only when the active voice is unduly awkward. ▪ Spell out acronyms in full the first time they are used. Consider adding them to the glossary if appropriate
Audio:	▪ Keep the audio short. ▪ Use audio to complement the visual elements of the screen. For example, during a procedural demonstration, audio can be used to explain animated steps. ▪ When using audio to comment on graphics and animations, present corresponding graphics and spoken words at the same time to avoid splitting the student's attention. ▪ Avoid redundant audio. Do not use it to "read" the text on the screen; instead, combine audio narration with a textual summary. ▪ Use written text for key messages, which need to remain on the screen as long as desired so that student can refer to that information over time. ▪ Avoid adding unnecessary audio, such as background music and sounds, to a narrated animation.
Video: Video requires a lot of bandwidth. In many cases,	▪ Video sequences should always be accompanied by comments in either written text or audio narration.

graphics or animation can be an effective substitute for video.

- In situations with limited bandwidth connections, a video sequence can be replaced by a sequence of pictures.

Questioning for learning:
Practice and assessment questions should be designed to reinforce the achievement of learning objectives. Questions play an important role in involving students and keeping their attention and should be used as much as possible during the sessions.
In a job-oriented course, the questions should be placed in a job-realistic context to build knowledge and skills that can be transferred to the job.

Questions formats:
In self-paced e-learning, practice and tests mainly consist of questions associated with response options and feedback.

They generally have the following structure:
- a question or statement,
- an operational message that indicates to the student how to perform the required operations (e.g. click, drag, press a key),
- a series of options,
- the correct answer, and
- feedback for the correct and incorrect answers.

7.0 TEACHING AND LEARNING PLATFORM

Microsoft Office 365 is the official platform to facilitate online teaching, learning and work during the closure of the campuses. There may be instances where a specific programme-based platform may be required, in all instances; approval must be sought from appropriate committee e.g. the COVID-19 Management Committee, the Executive Committee, and Senate through the Teaching Learning and Assessment Committee.
Approved teaching and learning platforms should take into account the following:
- Accessibility to the students and lecturers.
- Clarity and strengths of the teaching and learning materials (content level).
- Capacity in creating inter-activity.
- Institutional capacity for development and sustenance.
- Originality and innovation.
- Promptness in setting and improving the e-learning.
- Cost of use, both by the institution (installation and maintenance), as well as student and lecturer cost.
- Security and confidentiality/privacy of data.

Microsoft Office 365 (as secure cloud storage) provides the following important support:

Structure*:* centralisation and interoperability by enabling easy and efficient navigation via interfaces.
Administration*:* centralised management of all involved functions.
Assessment: creating and administrating assessments, storing assessment data, also includes all functions related to assessment results.
Security: prevent unauthorised access to courses, student account, and other administrative facilities.

Attendance: lecturers can keep a record of students who attend their classes.

Delivery: on-demand delivery of learning content and experiences to students.

*Interaction***:** student interacts with lecturers, learning materials and peers during and after the session.

Reporting: store and extract information about students and teaching and learning activities and materials.

Record keeping: store and maintain data about lecturers and students' activities including their work.

Reuse: search and compose contents for delivery in different learning tracks.

Hardware, software and technical support are important elements of ODL. Therefore, the mechanisms to ensure quality ODL support at UniSey involve:

- a designated person to manage the systems; the IT Manager
- clearly stated technical expectations
- a help desk that is active during office hours and a portal that is accessible 24 hours and 7 days a week; ITS@unisey.ac.sc
- a system for monitoring and supporting the hardware/software; through ITS@unisey.ac.sc
- a system which guarantees the protection of data e.g. personal information, teaching and learning materials etc.,
- a system for Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs)
- a system to evaluate the accessibility, efficiency and effectiveness of the hardware/software.

8.0 MANAGING TEACHING AND LEARNING[50]

It is the responsibility of the Deans to take full control of the teaching and learning matters within their faculty to ensure that no staff or student are affected when access to the campus is restricted.

Additionally:

- Lecturers must establish and maintain contact with their students.
- The University will communicate with students via their UniSey email address.
- Lecturers must record and monitor student interaction and to report it to their Deans accordingly.
- Students not engaging should be contacted for knowledge of their challenges or reasons for them not engaging.
- Lecturers should make it their responsibility to devise logical and practical teaching and learning plan.
- All teaching plans must be communicated to and approved by the Dean who in turn will inform the Executive Team or relevant committee based on the context of the operation (e.g. the Covid-19 Management Committee).
- No students should be called in for lectures during mandatory closures of campus unless otherwise authorised by the relevant committee.
- Library and laboratories will remain closed unless otherwise authorised by the relevant committee.
- All academic and support staff must follow procedures to access the campuses.
- IT Services is responsible for ensuring the operation of Microsoft 365. ITS may also provide technical support for other approved teaching and learning platforms, but is not responsible for their operation, or access issues.

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[50] Emergency Preparedness & Response to COVID -19: University of Seychelles' Plan, March 2020

9.0 QUALITY MANAGEMENT

The Commonwealth of Learning reiterates that there is

"no significant difference between distance and traditional classroom instruction in terms of learning outcomes and that, if done well, ODL is as effective as campus provision in leading to learning outcomes and satisfaction and distance learning is based on a student-centred approach to education, facilitating lifelong learning skills such as self-directed learning discipline and critical thinking".[51]

UniSey shall judge the quality of ODL by the same generic measures as are used for conventional teaching and learning but enhanced with criteria and measures. UniSey's Standard Operating Procedures will be used to evaluate teaching and learning. The checklist in Annex 2 will be used in addition to the appropriate conventional evaluation tools to evaluate teaching and learning during the closure of campuses.

10.0 RELATED REGULATIONS AND OTHER DOCUMENTS

1. Assessment Unit, April 21, 2020:

(i) Timed Computer-based Mock Examination approved by the Academic Governance Committee.

(ii) Standard mechanism use for Mock Examination, as per Assessment Policy, 2014, before COVID-19 Policy.

(iii) Mechanism for Continuous Assessment - Per Assessment Policy, 2014.

(iv) Virtual Conduct of Board of Examiners Meeting

2. Programme Handbooks

3. Student Services SOPs

4. UniSey Assessment Policy, 2014

5. UniSey Assessment Unit, January 2021: Standard Operating Procedures for Campus Examinations during COVID-19.

6. UniSey Quality Assurance Manual, 2018.

7. The Acceptable Use of ICT Resources Policy, 2019

8. Other UniSey and relevant Government regulations.

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[51] COL (2020): Guidelines on Distance Education during COVID-19

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SENATE POLICY APPROVAL STATEMENT

Policy Name: Quality Assurance and Enhancement Framework 2020	Developed: The Quality Assurance Office
Approval Statement No: 5	Pages: 71

Statement

The Senate, upon the power vested by the University of Seychelles Charter, approved the Quality Assurance and Enhancement Framework as the overarching policy for university replacing the Quality Assurance and Enhancement Policy of 2014.

Approval Date: April 15, 2021.

Approved by:

Ms. Joelle Perreau

Vice-Chancellor as Chairperson of the Senate.