



# Quality Assurance and Enhancement Policy



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## Quality Assurance and Enhancement Policy

The University of Seychelles (UniSey) is committed to providing the best possible learning experience for its students. In order to achieve this there must be:

- an effective means of assuring quality; and
- in pursuit of constant improvement, a means of enhancing quality.

The two objectives are inseparable, which is why this is a combined Quality Assurance and Enhancement Policy. It is supported by a Quality Assurance and Enhancement Manual, which provides details of related procedures.

In addition to meeting the needs of students, a policy with measurable outcomes is designed also to provide assurance to other stakeholders, notably, the Government and its agencies, as well as graduate employers and the general community. Such outcomes also provide assurance to international bodies, who will wish to know that the standards achieved by UniSey students are comparable with those in their own institutions.

Thus, this policy is comprehensive and comprises four aspects:

1. Validation of Programmes
2. Quality Assurance of Student Learning
3. Institutional Quality Assurance
4. Quality Enhancement

## 1 Validation of Programmes

The foundation of the Quality Assurance and Enhancement Policy rests on UniSey's ability to effectively validate all of its programmes. This will ensure that they are all properly designed to reach the required levels of study, and that they provide the necessary content and appropriate methods of learning and assessment for students to achieve successful outcomes.

An essential starting point is to match proposed programmes against the standards set by the Seychelles Qualifications Authority. This national body, in turn, benchmarks its own requirements against those of international QA agencies. In this way, an approved programme at UniSey will be regarded as equivalent in quality and outcomes to comparable programmes internationally. UniSey is, thus, committed to working closely with the SQA to achieve this objective.

Staff will be encouraged to attend SQA training programmes and to liaise with officers from the time of curriculum design through to the launch of a new course. Nor will the process stop there as validation itself is a continuing process, requiring periodic monitoring to ensure that standards remain at an appropriate level. UniSey will implement its own review mechanisms to ensure that this aspect of validation is achieved.

In summary:

- UniSey is committed to the achievement of an effective validation process to ensure that all of its programmes are – and that they remain – of an appropriate level of intellectual achievement and standard of delivery.
- This process will contain both internal and external procedures:
  - internally, all proposed new programmes must first be validated as being fit to proceed to external validation;
  - externally, all programmes must be validated by the SQA, according to its own guidelines and procedures; and
  - both internally and externally, monitoring will ensure that appropriate standards are maintained.

## 2 Quality Assurance of Student Learning

The provision of good programmes is one thing but this is not enough on its own. What is the quality of teaching and how effective is the student learning process? Ultimately, are the students able to achieve the required learning outcomes?

The term 'teaching' is itself shorthand for the different ways in which students are assisted in the learning process. In modern education, a more appropriate term might be 'facilitation'. Different methods are employed and it is not a question of what is 'right' or 'wrong', so much as their effectiveness in particular circumstances. Thus, an assessment of the quality of teaching needs to be undertaken with sensitivity and with a primary regard to outcomes.

Against this background, the following policy objectives need to be achieved:

### 2.1 Teaching

- Classroom teaching will be effective and fit for purpose.
- Tutors will be adept at providing effective individual and small group learning opportunities, and will be readily available to do so.
- Programme and module handbooks will be clear, relevant and up-to-date.
- A peer review system will be in place to ensure that required standards of teaching are achieved.

### 2.2 Faculty

- Faculty will be well qualified and experienced for the required level of teaching.
- An effective programme of professional development will be designed to ensure continuous improvement.
- Research and scholarship will be benchmarked against external standards.

### 2.3 Other Learning Support

- Classrooms and other study areas will be sufficiently well equipped to support the learning process.

- Libraries will be adequately stocked with required texts and reference materials, and users will have good access to international data bases.
- IT support facilities will be at least adequate for the purpose and the IT team will be responsive to student needs.

#### 2.4 Assessment and Learning Outcomes

- All assessment will be matched directly to the achievement of learning outcomes.
- Assessment methods will be fair and balanced, and their aims will be explicit.
- Students will be clear about what is required and they will be well prepared to adapt to different methods.
- The assessment results will demonstrate an acceptable pass rate and level of achievement.

#### 2.5 Student Involvement

- Students will be required to attend classes punctually and regularly, to meet UniSey's attendance criteria and to undertake all examination and other assessment assignments.
- Students will be invited to provide feedback on the teaching of individual modules as well as their particular programme overall. This feedback will be matched against the outcomes of a parallel process of staff feedback.

### 3 Institutional Quality Assurance

This aspect of policy is based on the premise that a student's learning environment is dependent not only on their direct academic experience but on the wider university setting. To what extent are the students supported by accessible and effective pastoral services? Does the campus where they spend most of their time offer a professional and enjoyable setting for their studies? Are there good opportunities to meet other students?

All of these contextual issues can have a direct bearing on a student's learning experience. For this reason the institutional quality of the university as a whole must be assured, and account will be taken of the following:

#### 3.1 Student Support

- The range of support services will be at least sufficient to meet student needs.
- The various services will be professionally staffed and equipped to offer sound advice and information.
- Individual services will be available for a reasonable number of hours and accessible to all students.

#### 3.2 Campus Environment

- The various campuses offer a suitable range of facilities for students to enjoy their university experience.
- The campuses will be welcoming and properly maintained.
- Sufficient attention will be paid to health and safety issues.
- Standards will be consistent across all of the university's campuses.

#### 3.3 Student Activities

- There will be an active Student Union, supported by the university.
- Opportunities will be available for sport and other extra-mural activities.
- Due consideration will be given to the needs of mature and part-time students as well as the full-time constituency.

## 4 Quality Enhancement

Especially as UniSey is still in its developmental stage, it is important to build in mechanisms to ensure that there is continuous improvement. Processes and outcomes will need to be constantly reviewed, as a basis for introducing new and improved operations. Account must also be taken of the changing context of higher education, including technological innovation and the bearing this might have on the student experience. Are current methods of delivery, which are still largely based on face-to-face contact, necessarily the most effective? In a global environment, should all students experience an international dimension? Ways of providing this might range from video conferencing at one extreme to direct exchange schemes at the other.

In other words, nothing should be taken for granted and ways to improve the student experience should be uppermost in the minds and actions of all participants in the higher education process. Thus:

- All programmes will be reviewed annually and an enhancement plan will be produced for consideration, firstly at Faculty level and then at Senate.
- All of the university's administrative and other services will be required to produce their own enhancement plans.
- An online equivalent of a traditional 'suggestions box' will be introduced in order to encourage participation of all users in ways to identify and implement measures for improvement.

The university's Annual Plan will contain a section on quality enhancement, to include a summary of programme and service-based changes as well as reference to the constantly changing external environment.