GUIDANCE SHEET FOR PERIODIC PROGRAMME REVIEWS

This sheet is intended to supplement and clarify the AKU *Academic Quality Assurance Framework: Policy and Procedures.* Questions should be directed to the Director or Assistant Director of QAI_net.

Selection and Appointment of Self-Assessment Committee

- The Committee should have no more than six members, including a staff member and at least one student;
- The Department Chair or, in the event that he or she has too many obligations, the Programme Director should chair the Committee;
- The entity whose programme is under review shall recommend to the Dean or Entity Director the membership of the Committee, and that membership will require the agreement of the Dean or Entity Director and the Provost; and
- The Dean or Director appoints the members of the Committee.

Selection and Appointment of the External Peer Review Team

- The Review Team will normally consist of two peer reviewers who are external to the University and one internal AKU reviewer[1] who is external to the entity;
- The Reviewers shall all be at arm's length from the programme under review;[2]
- The external reviewers should all be respected and active in their field(s), and should have had academic administrative experience (e.g. programme director, department chair or dean), and experience in periodic reviews;
- The team as a group should match and cover the intellectual profile of the programme;
- The academic entity whose programme is under review shall nominate a list (perhaps five or six names) of potential external reviewers, and provide a brief explanation for the nomination; from that list the Dean, the Director of QAI_net and the Provost select the external members of the team; the same individuals identify the internal AKU member, where applicable;
- The Provost appoints the members of the External Peer Review Team, and also appoints the Chair of the team.

Please note that the composition of the External Peer Review Team will be decided at least a month before the anticipated date of the submission of the SAR, in order that the team can be appointed and a date can be established for the site visit of the External Peer Review Team.

Training of the SAR Committee

The Committee will use the IUCEA's *Guidelines For Self-Assessment at Program Level* to guide its work and to write the self-assessment report (SAR). This document, which is Volume 1 of the IUCEA's *Road Map to Quality*, is essential reading, and is available at http://tiny.url.com/RoadMapVol1 for consultation.

Once the Committee has been appointed, the QAI_net will provide the Committee with training on the IUCEA model (18 cells) and, more broadly, on the benefits of self-assessment and on how the Committee should proceed. The training session will last usually about 2-3 hours and should include the student members.

Importance of Consultation and Transparency

It is imperative that the Committee consults frequently, from the outset and throughout the process, with the members of the entity, including the faculty, staff and students. Wherever possible, the Committee should strive to maintain transparency as it goes about its work: the goal should be to avoid any surprises about the overall contents and structure of the SAR. Ultimately, the entity should endorse the SAR and its principal findings.

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[1] The role of this member is fundamentally to help the external reviewers to understand any issues to do with AKU, its policies and procedures.

[2] For clarification of this criterion, please consult the Director of QAI_net.

Assembling the Evidence for the SAR

Ultimately the findings of the SAR have to be grounded in evidence. Accordingly, in addition to the information from the Stakeholders, the Committee needs to do an assessment, early in its deliberations, of the evidence it will require in order to identify the strengths and weaknesses of the programme under the criteria as defined in the 18 cells mentioned above. In many instances collecting the necessary evidence can take time, so again this procedure should be initiated early in the Committee's work. While the Committee should oversee this work, the topics can divided among the Committee's members.

Writing the SAR

The Committee will be introduced to this task at its Training session.   QAI_net has developed a template for the format of the SAR, and you should immediately consult QAI_net if the Committee is uncertain about how to proceed. You will find further guidance in the IUCEA Volume mentioned above (pp.34ff.). Although the Chair of the SAR team is ultimately responsible for consolidating the report, the SAR should reflect the views of the whole Committee and carefully take account of what has been heard and learned in consultations and discussions. The SAR should never be the work of a single Committee member. At the beginning, it is often helpful to establish a timetable for the Committee's work, including deadlines for the various components of that work. The SAR must include the resulting Improvement Action Plan.

The Test of a Complete SAR

One test of the Committee's work will be the completeness of its SAR. That test will be first employed by the Dean or Director, to whom the SAR is presented in the first instance, and then by the Quality Assurance Review Committee (QARC) before the SAR is presented to the External Peer Review Team. "Completeness" is a difficult criterion to define across a variety of processes, but in this case perhaps the following set of requirements will suffice:

1. The SAR critically addresses all 18 cells, and provides a substantial array of evidence to support the findings of the Report;
2. The SAR clearly defines the strengths and weaknesses of the programme, as the Committee sees them, and also areas of good practice; and
3. The contents of the proposed Improvement Plan (or Action Plan) are closely aligned with the identified weaknesses of the programme, and the proposed actions are SMART (i.e. specific, measurable, achievable, realistic and time-bound).

QAI_net

A QAI_resoruce person from your unit will act as facilitator and a link person to QAI_net. They are there to support the process but are not responsible for writing of the SAR. Whenever you are in doubt about how you are proceeding or about an AKU policy or procedure, please consult QAI_net without delay. QAI_net has a set of resources on their website (Website: http://www.aku.edu/qtl/) to assist the entities and committees that are engaged in a periodic programme review, and in the first instance you might check the website to see whether the help you seek is available there. The QAI_net Assistant Director, Mr Faisal Notta (faisal.notta@aku.edu) or Director Dr. Tashmin Khamis (tashmin.khamis@aku.edu) can also be contacted.

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