UNIVERSITY of
RWANDA

University of Rwanda Quality Assurance policy for ODeL

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QUALITY ASSURANCE POLICY FOR ODeL

Custodian/Responsible Executive	Deputy Vice-Chancellor: Academic Affairs and Research
Responsible division	Centre for Teaching and Learning Enhancement (CTLE)
Status	To be Approved
Recommended by	Centre for Open, Distance and e-Learning (CODeL)

Date recommended	February 2020
Approved by	Senate
Date approved	February 2020
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Stakeholders affected by this Policy	All academic and non-academic staff at all levels in the University and students
Related documents	
University documents	National documents
Teaching and Learning Policy	

Contents

Foreword

Abbreviations and Acronyms

ADC	Academic Development Committee
CODeL	Centre for Open, Distance and e-Learning
UR	University of Rwanda
DCAD	Director of the Centre for Academic Development
DTLE	Director of Teaching and Learning Enhancement
SPIU	Single Project Implementation Unit
CMHS	College of Medicine and Health Sciences
ICTs	Information and Communication Technologies
QA	Quality Assurance
MoU	Memorandum of Understanding
ODeL	Open, Distance and eLearning
QA	Quality assurance
CTLE	Centre for Teaching and Learning Enhancement

Accreditation	The establishment of status, legitimacy or appropriateness of an institution, programme or module of study by a recognised authority.
Benchmarking	A process that enables comparison of inputs, processes or outputs between institutions or parts of institutions or within a single institution over time.
Blended learning	Thoughtful fusion of face-to-face and online learning experiences. Blended learning is referred to by various terms like blended, hybrid, mixed-mode, and flexible learning. It is also sometimes referred to as flipped classes.
Continuous improvement	A systematic process of conducting self- reviews to identify strengths and weaknesses, developing and implementing improvement plans, and reviewing progress after a specified period of time.
External evaluation	A generic term for most forms of quality reviews undertaken by national quality assurance agencies. External evaluation is a process that uses people external to the programme or institution to evaluate the quality of provision.
Information and Communication Technology	A term that is used to refer to information technology (IT) that stresses the role of unified communications and the integration of telecommunications (telephone lines and wireless signals) and computers, as well as necessary enterprise software, middleware, storage, and audio-visual systems, that enable users to access, store, transmit, and manipulate information.
Internal evaluation	Consists of regular self-review processes by a higher education provider, based on explicitly defined quality standards, which are commonly developed and shared widely within an institution. The prime purpose of internal evaluation is to enlighten the institution on its strengths and weaknesses on the basis of which improvement plans are made and implemented
Learning Management System	A platform for digital learning. It is a software application that provides an instructor with a way to create and deliver content, monitor student participation, and assess student performance
Open, Distance and eLearning	Often misunderstood to mean one thing, open and distance learning refers to two distinct concepts. The first is making learning open and this can be both in a distance and in a conventional face-to-face environment. A provider can be open in terms of entry age, entry qualifications, when to register, when and how to study, etc. Distance learning simply refers to learning remotely from campus and from the teacher. Distance education can be open but it can also be closed (offered rigidly in terms of the aspects mentioned above). Not all distance learning is open.
Online learning	Online learning is web-based learning.
Peer review	Evaluation of a provider's performance by somebody with similar competences as the provider. This is usually done at the request of the reviewed partner and for their own benefit.
Policy	The implicit or explicit specification of courses of purposive action being followed or to be followed in dealing with a matter of concern, and directed towards the accomplishment of some intended or desired set of goals. Policy also can be thought of as a position or stance developed in response to a problem or issue of conflict, and directed towards a particular objective. Policy provides guidance in undertaking a course of

	action.
Quality	Standards that an institution sets itself to achieve within a given period of time.
Quality Assurance	Systems and mechanisms that are put in place to ensure that aspired standards are achieved. It is a proactive and not a reactive process.
Quality criteria	Specific elements or functions that will be selected, tested and measured in order to confirm that defined quality objectives have been met.
Self-evaluation	A procedure to systematically observe, analyse and value one's own performance in order to identify weaknesses and strengths with a view to making improvements. In higher education, the self-evaluation process precedes external review by the national quality assurance agency.

1. Preamble

The University of Rwanda seeks to provide high quality innovative education that equips graduates with knowledge and skills needed in the Fourth Industrial Revolution (4IR). In keeping with its mission, the University is investing in both expanding access by introducing technology supported distance education and in enhancing the quality of such provision. Thus, capacity is being fast developed to harness the affordances of educational technologies and to develop and implement robust quality assurance systems in order to meet the needs of the knowledge economy. In pursuing this end, the University aspires to be accountable, transparent and efficient in all its key functions of (i) teaching and learning, (ii) research and consultancy, and (iii) community service. These functions and terms of reference are drawn from several policies and development plans in the university, namely, The UR 2018-2025 Strategic Plan and the general academic regulations for open and distance learning programme.

This Quality Assurance Policy seeks to ensure that the University achieves its goals that would help satisfy and meet the needs and expectations of its students, the labour market, and all stakeholders. The policy promotes a **dual mode** (face-to-face and Distance mode) delivery system for all its programmes. It is however premised on the assumption that growth in distance education will be done cautiously and gradually in order to ensure that quality is not compromised. The University is responsible for setting and maintaining the standards of its academic awards (and of its affiliated institutions) at certificate, diploma and degree levels as spelt out on the National Qualifications Framework (NQF) and to the satisfaction of minimum standards regulated by the National Quality Regulatory Body. This Policy enables the University to assure and demonstrate to both internal and external stakeholders (i.e. students, government, employers, and universities in the region and internationally) the achievement and continuous improvement in the standards of its teaching and learning, research and innovation, and service to the society. The Policy also serves to show how the University protects its standards and the integrity of its qualifications and awards.

In order for the University to achieve and maintain high standards an effective Academic Quality Assurance Policy must be implemented. The Policy will provide guidelines with respect to quality of core services of the University which are in teaching and learning, research and innovation, and service to the society. To this extent, effort will be made to ensure that all stakeholders in the university familiarise themselves with this policy.

2. Vision

To be a leading University that develops highly enterprising graduates prepared and dedicated to building a more just and sustainable society locally, nationally and globally, with appropriate innovations that advance quality of life.

3. Mission Statement

To support the development of Rwanda by discovering and advancing knowledge, committed to the highest standards of academic excellence, where students are prepared for live of service, leadership and solutions.

4. Policy Rationale

The purpose of the Quality Assurance Policy for ODeL is to ensure that quality is consistently maintained in the University of Rwanda in terms of teaching, learning and assessment and, subsequently, the quality of the UR graduates. It is meant to ensure the continuous improvement in standards of services delivered inclusive and flexible education through ODeL mode and its quality management system, processes and mechanisms.

5. Objectives of the Policy

The UR Institutional Quality Assurance Policy for ODeL aims at providing a framework for an efficient quality assurance system through:

- Providing guidelines and procedures for implementing Quality Assurance in delivering open and distance learning programmes, taking into account local, national, regional and international educational concerns and needs.
- Guiding staff in the execution and implementation of Quality Assurance management systems and mechanisms for ODeL.
- Monitoring and evaluating quality assurance systems in the University of Rwanda to ensure that they meet set national, regional and international standards.
- Making quality assurance an explicit undertaking in all institutional business as a way of establishing a quality culture in the University of Rwanda.

6. Scope of the Policy

This policy provides a general guide to the process of implementing, monitoring and evaluating quality in all aspects of UR operations related to ODeL. It applies to:

- all schools, academic/administrative departments and other institutional structures operating under the umbrella of UR;
- all staff, temporary and permanent, who are active in teaching, research and providing any form of support service to the core functions of ODeL at the University of Rwanda;
- staff operating in decentralised centres of the university (e.g. ODeL regional centres) shall be familiar with university rules, regulations and procedures in order to enable them to provide quality service to the students they serve.
- all students registered with UR in ODeL programmes;
- all infrastructure, teaching and learning resources, governance/institutional set up, information dissemination structures and social amenities belonging to UR.

7. Policy Statement

In the effort to realize its vision, mission, values and objectives, UR shall constantly monitor and systematically evaluate the implementation of all its mandated activities to ensure continuous quality improvement. UR shall also ensure that all its governance and/or management processes are in line with standard Quality Assured best practices.

 As a starting point, each unit, in concurrence with propositions of CODEL, shall review all its existing policies, regulations and procedures and, where such instruments are lacking, develop appropriate ones, so as to ensure that all these guidelines are in line with the unit's vision, mission, values and overall objectives. In addition, CODEL shall ensure that at all times each unit has in place well stipulated and widely understood criteria for judging performance standards in all its core activities.

This entails compilation and distribution of a comprehensive Quality Assurance Manual. In line with these guidelines, each unit shall constantly monitor and evaluate all its day-to-day activities in the core mission areas of teaching/learning, research, community service and support services to students and staff.

8. Provision of resources

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

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

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

9. Continuous Improvement

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

10. Policy Alignment

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

- National Vision 2050
- University of Rwanda 2018-2025 strategic plan
- National Development Plans
- National, Regional and International Quality Assurance Bodies
- Relevant Institutional Policies and University Senate regulations
- Smart Rwanda Framework

11. Policy Values

The ODeL at the University of Rwanda level shall promote education, culture and Rwandan values. This education is underpinned by unity, patriotism, and respect for human rights, excellent work and respect for the environment.

The National Gender Policy is in line with the overall goal of the Economic Development Poverty Reduction Strategy (EDPRS) of achieving equity of voice, participation, and accessibility to services in every sector. Social protection and universal access to justice, including enactment and implementation of gender responsive laws can draw on this policy for effective implementation through ODeL. This policy has great potential to impact on women and men differently, and gender dimension has great potential for impacting the outcomes of the programmes since they address issues that affect gender relations in Rwandan society.

The ODeL quality assurance policy is framed around the following values of:
- Inclusiveness
- Excellence.
- Honesty, integrity and professionalism.
- Creativity and innovativeness.
- Entrepreneurship.

12. Approach to Quality Assurance

The ODeL quality assurance approach at the University of Rwanda shall be through internal self-regulation coordinated by the unit responsible for ODel (Centre for online Distance e-learning). The Centre for Teaching and Learning Enhancement in collaboration with CODeL shall make regular QA visits to all units and departments at the university to assess compliance with the QA policy. The approach will also include external regulation by the Higher Education Council (HEC) and other statutory regulators and also allow for peer review of the quality assured areas.

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

13. Areas to be quality assured

- Programme design and development

- Module design and development

- Materials Development

- Learner support systems

- Student Assessment

- Admission and Certification processes

- Staffing and capacity building

- Academic promotion and incentives

- Teaching and Learning strategy

- Teaching and Learning Environment

- Partnership and Collaboration

- Physical / Virtual Infrastructure resources

- Research and Community services (Outreach) / Engagement

- Information dissemination

13.1 Programme Design and Development

Academic programmes are flexible and relevant to the needs of the society and those of prospective learners and employers; are responsive to the changing environment; provide appropriate articulation; and have assessment strategies that are effective and in line with relevant outcomes. Programmes are reviewed on a regular basis as per institutional policy.

13.2 Module Design and Development

A module is a component of a broader programme of study. The module content is underpinned by research. The module clearly presents objectives and learning outcomes, content, approaches to teaching, learning and assessment, learner support and the use of technology. There is an identified process of development and review of modules collaboratively where necessary.

13.3 Materials Development

Learning materials are in appropriate formats that allow easy access by learners; there is coherence between learning materials, graduate attributes and learning outcomes, course content and assessment. Learning materials support teaching in a coherent way, engage learners, and promote development of problem solving and critical thinking skills. Learning materials are evaluated and updated on a regular basis.

13.4 Learner Support Systems

There is a wide range of learner support mechanisms that cater for the variety of learners with different needs. Learner support takes care of both academic and non-academic needs of learners; makes use of student data in order to enable timely provision of support where needed; makes effective use of appropriate of technology; and puts learner success at the centre.

13.5 Student Assessment

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

13.6 Admission and Certification Processes

The institution's admission process reflects its academic commitments and the needs of society. The admission and registration processes are transparent and handled efficiently. The processing of students' results and certification processes are efficient and transparent.

13.7 Staffing and Capacity Building

ODeL providers have an appropriate staffing structure and learning programmes are supported by enough administrative, academic, technical and other support staff with appropriate qualifications and experience. Responsibilities and job descriptions of such staff are clearly defined. There is systematic development of staff in order to ensure that it is kept up to date with developments and performs its duties effectively.

13.8 Academic Promotion and Incentives

The recruitment, promotion and incentives of academic staff are appropriate for the education and training services provided. The institution avails appropriate rules, guidelines and procedures for recruitment, promotion and incentives of academic staff.

13.9 Teaching and Learning Strategy

Teaching and learning strategy are effect if they allow achieving learning outcomes; there is coherence between teaching and learning strategy and teaching and learning materials, module content and assessment. The strategy used in teaching and Learning in effective way, engages students and increase the collaboration among students, and critical thinking skills. Teaching and Learning strategy are evaluated and updated on a systematic basis.

13.10 Teaching and Learning Environment

The institution ensures that the environment is conducive to teaching and learning and basic resources are available for ODeL students.

13.11 Partnership and Collaboration

A strategy and a formal relationship between the institution and another institution or agency that engenders cooperation for the benefit of both parties and for the learners need to be developed. This increases the visibility of the institution towards potential employers and allows mobility of students and faculties within the country, region and the world.

13.12 Physical Infrastructure and Facilities

Physical Infrastructure and facilities that commensurate with student numbers are in place to facilitate effective rolling out of learning programmes. Institutional facilities take into account the dispersed nature of the student body in both open and distance learning and in eLearning. Where the institution has arrangements with other stakeholders to allow students to have access to their facilities, the responsibility for quality provision of such services still lies with the providing institution (i.e. the institution where the student is registered).

13.13 Research and Community services (Outreach) / Engagement

Continuous development of educational programmes and services is influenced by research. The institution supports community outreach by ensuring consultancy and extension services.

13.14 Information dissemination

Credible information dissemination tools are appropriate for the dissemination of information

14. Integration of Technology / ICTs

As much as possible, the university will integrate appropriate technology in teaching and learning in order to equip all students with the technological literacy and competencies (pedagogical aspect) needed in the world of work. All technologies used for teaching and learning shall be subjected to regular review and updating to ensure their currency. Maintenance budget shall always be set aside to guarantee the smooth functioning of technological facilities and infrastructure. Induction of people will also be conducted to inform on and familiarize ICT users with new technologies

15. Quality Assurance Structures
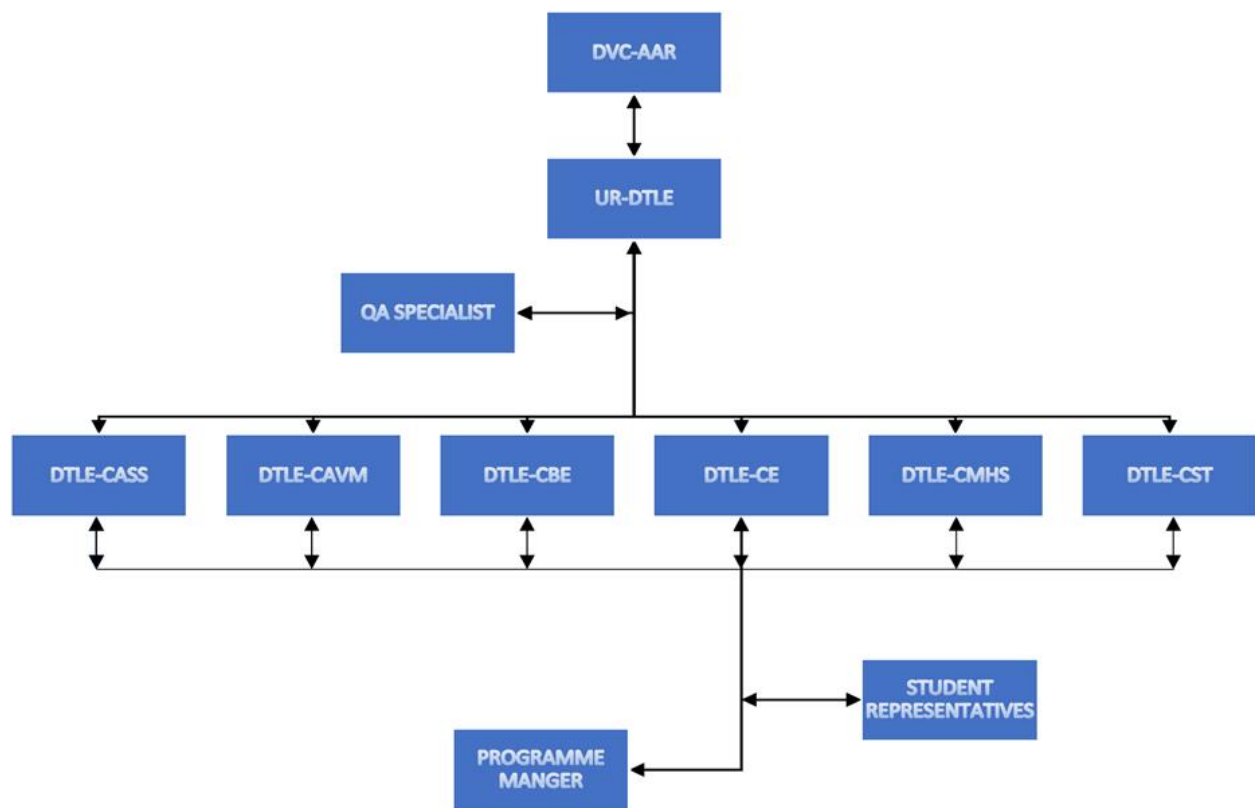
16. Copyrights management

The university shall have clear policy on the licensing of materials developed through staff and students, including software and research outputs. The policy shall clarify copyright ownership for such materials and resources.

17. Role Responsibilities

University of Rwanda

- Support distance and online systems that are geared towards supporting distance teaching and learning.
- Provide necessary resources for the ODel program.
- Assure the overall coordination of the ODel program
- Avail necessary policies relative to the ODel

CODel

- Guide and support all the distance education online activities at UR.
- Ensure that e-learning and distance education initiatives are aligned to UR policies and systems.
- Manage and support Regional Study Centres to ensure that they provide support to students.
- Develop collaborative and benchmarking activities with regional and international partners.
- Carry out functional responsibilities of ODel such as budgeting, procurement, marketing, human resources, and finance.

- Maintainan updated database for distance learners.
- Evaluate and revise processes, procedures, programmes and courses on a regular basis.
- Appraise proposals from Colleges which are proposing to offer ODeL programmes.
- Coordinate and facilitate training for material development, online learning and support for facilitators and staff, ODeL programmes hosted in colleges, student assessment processes.
- Provide systematic ongoing ODeL professional development programmes and support to all staff participating in the delivery of ODeL.
- Administer and supervise the provision of all ODeL programmes and monitor the quality of face-to-face tutorials.
- Provide demand-driven courses for the community
- Provide support services to students
- Advise the UR in terms of Open, Distance and e-Learning

18. Policy Validation

This Policy shall go through normal university processes of approval and shall be a competency of the Deputy Vice Chancellor- Academic.

19. Quality Assurance Policy Review

The entire policy shall be reviewed every five (5) years.

In the event that any statement in the policy is outdated or there is a need to introduce new statements brought about by developments in the higher education environment, or as a result of market forces, such statements may be changed or modified at the recommendation of the CTLE and approval of UR Senate.

20. Policy Implementation, Monitoring and Evaluation.

To facilitate effective implementation, this policy shall be accompanied by an implementation plan. All employees of the university shall take responsibility for effective implementation of this policy. The Deputy Vice Chancellor- Academic shall ensure that implementation of policy is monitored and evaluated and shall exercise the right to hold staff accountable for failure to implement the policy.

21. Policy Awareness and advocacy

This policy will be disseminated to all university stakeholders using different channels of communication. The CTLE, which is responsible for coordinating and monitoring quality in the University will also organise Quality Days where various activities meant to draw staff and students' attention to the quality thrust of the university will be implemented. To motivate people to implement the policy, annual quality awards will also be given to people excelling in identified areas.

22. Conclusion

The success of this policy will depend on the cooperation and enthusiasm of all university stakeholders to implement it. Equally, the benefits of realising high quality delivery will be shared by all stakeholders in the university. In this regard, it is envisaged that all university stakeholders will be self-motivated to make the policy a success.