



QUALITY PROMOTION POLICY

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1. PREAMBLE: QUALITY PROMOTION IN THE SA CONTEXT

The University of Johannesburg is internationally established and recognised as a university of choice, anchored in Africa. The University maintains and enhances the quality of its academic programmes through collaboration and mutual agreement on quality procedures, processes or systems.

The Higher Education Quality Committee (HEQC) is a permanent committee of the Council on Higher Education (CHE), established by the Higher Education Act, No. 101 of 1997. The special functions of the HEQC include:

- quality promotion in higher education;
- auditing the quality promotion mechanisms of institutions of higher education;
- accrediting programmes of higher education.

The Board of the HEQC determines policy and procedures for the quality promotion work of the HEQC and has final responsibility for approving audit and accreditation reports. It makes its judgements independently of other national agencies and seeks to complement their work regarding quality and standards. The judgements are based on evaluation reports from peer and expert review panels.

Specific quality-related and transformation-related goals facing the South African higher education sector include:

- increased access and *equity* opportunities for previously marginalised groups, especially women and black students and staff;
- greater *responsiveness* to local, regional and national needs in and through teaching and research;
- improved institutional efficiencies leading to increased *throughput*, retention and graduation rates in academic programmes;
- increasing the pool of black and women *researchers*, as well as the pool of basic and applied knowledge, to enhance understanding and social application.

Quality in the SA higher education context includes the following elements:

- Quality is defined in terms of fitness *for* purpose. This allows, enables and supports higher education institutions to implement autonomously determined visions and missions (CHE, December 2005: 111).
- Quality is defined in terms of fitness *of* purpose. This entails institutional fitness in terms of autonomously determined visions and missions that seek to align institutional purposes with national policy goals, priorities and targets for transformation.
- Quality promotion is an ongoing process in which a university strives to meet national HEQC criteria. Quality promotion and quality improvement should never be seen as completed processes or as one-time exercises.
- Quality as transformation defines quality in terms of change from one state to another and refers to individual and social transformation.
- Quality is also defined in terms of value for money from a student and community perspective (HEQC, June 2004: Framework for institutional audits).

In view of the prevailing higher education policy context, the HEQC understanding of quality encompasses *fitness for purpose*, *value for money* from a student and community perspective, and *individual and social transformation*, within an overarching *fitness-of-purpose* framework. With due allowance for mission differentiation and diversity, institutional audits assess whether institutions manage the quality of their core academic functions in a manner that:

- advances the institution's mission and goals (i.e. fitness for purpose);
- addresses transformational issues (i.e. fitness of purpose);
- provides value for money in relation to the full range of higher education purposes.

The implementation of these goals is underpinned by three steering mechanisms, i.e. planning, funding and quality promotion. The key premise of the quality promotion system proposed by the HEQC is that quality of provision is the main responsibility of higher education institutions. The HEQC has designed a system in which programme accreditation (including national reviews), institutional audits, quality promotion and capacity development and support interact with one another as parts of an integrated system of which the objective is to sustain the improvement of actual quality of provision.

Quality promotion and capacity development focus on building and strengthening institutional and systemic knowledge, skills and practices in quality promotion. This is to enable higher education institutions to benefit from the implementation of a national system.

2. PURPOSE

The purpose of this document is to present a *Quality Promotion Policy* that provides the *University of Johannesburg* with principles that:

- 2.1 Inform the thinking and practices of all staff and students as they consider quality enhancement and continuous improvement in their environments. A thoughtful and empowering approach to quality is necessary in an organisation with learning, research and the development of knowledge as its core concern and a condition for the development of a learning organisation;
- 2.2 Establish a coherent and integrated quality system (i.e. policies, plans and strategies, structures and management) for the core functions of the University, i.e. teaching, learning and assessment, formal and continuing education programmes, academic and other support and service functions, and research and community engagement.

To serve this purpose, this policy is aligned with the strategic objectives of the University and includes principles and elements for continuous quality enhancement. The policy is aligned with the following UJ Strategic Objectives:

- Strategic objective 1: Excellence in Teaching and Learning
- Strategic objective 2: Excellence in Research and Innovation
- Strategic objective 3: International Profile for Global Excellence and Stature
- Strategic objective 4: An enriching student-staff friendly, learning and living experience
- Strategic objective 5: National and Global Reputation Management
- Strategic objective 6: Fitness for Global Excellence and Stature

- 2.3 Furthermore, the policy describes the University quality promotion system (i.e. policies, structures and management) and provides broad guidelines for enhancing the University's core functions.

3. SCOPE

The UJ Quality Promotion Policy provides a framework within which continuous improvement of the delivery and design of academic programmes takes place. The Framework consists of a strategic document, i.e. the *Quality Promotion Policy*, and a planning document, i.e. the *UJ Quality Promotion Plan* (including faculty and division quality promotion plans), as well as a number of guidelines. The

list of documents below is part of the *UJ Quality Promotion Framework*. Additional guidelines may be developed as needed. These documents provide guidelines for the implementation of an integrated approach to quality promotion, management and review, namely:

- Faculty and divisional quality promotion policies;
- UJ Quality Promotion Plan;
- Faculty and division-specific quality plans;
- guidelines for quality promotion and review of teaching and learning, modules, programmes, academic divisions and faculties;
- guidelines for quality promotion and review in academic development, support and service divisions;
- guidelines for review panel members and chairs;
- current plans and practices.
- UJ quality criteria;
- review of the institutional quality system.

4. DEFINITIONS

The following key concepts are defined by taking the national quality framework into consideration, as well as the unique UJ context.

4.1 Accountability

The University is accountable when:

- 4.1.1 its purpose statements, goals and objectives are aligned with various society and stakeholder needs, i.e. there is a fitness of purpose;
- 4.1.2 effective institutional planning, funding and resource allocation are done to achieve the strategic goals, i.e. there is a fitness for purpose;
- 4.1.3 an effective quality system is established to ensure the quality of the outcomes at learning, programme, research and community engagement levels.

4.2 Benchmarking

Benchmarking allows universities to measure and compare themselves to good or superior practice and to work towards improving standards of practice and performance. It is continuous and systematic and involves comparing programmes, functions and institutions on an agreed set of quantitative (and on occasion qualitative) tracking measures. Internal benchmarking is set by the institution, faculty or division for itself, while external benchmarking involves comparing with programmes, etc. external to the university – both with the purpose of improving quality.

4.3 Evaluation

Evaluations (e.g. self-evaluation) are conducted in keeping with the UJ's strategic goals, and may be programme, Department, Division, Faculty, or Centre reviews, according to the strategic purposes identified. The gap between the plans and goals and the achievement thereof should be:

- 4.3.1 measured in terms of each relevant criterion;
- 4.3.2 expressed by applying the relevant evaluation instrument (consult the relevant guidelines in this regard).

4.4 Quality

Quality is not seen as an objective in itself, but is aimed at the continuous and iterative identification and addressing of gaps and the enhancement of strengths to ensure a continuous and integrated cycle of planning action, monitoring, review and improvement with a view to effecting improvements.

4.5 Quality assurance

This is the process that ensures that specified standards or requirements have been met.

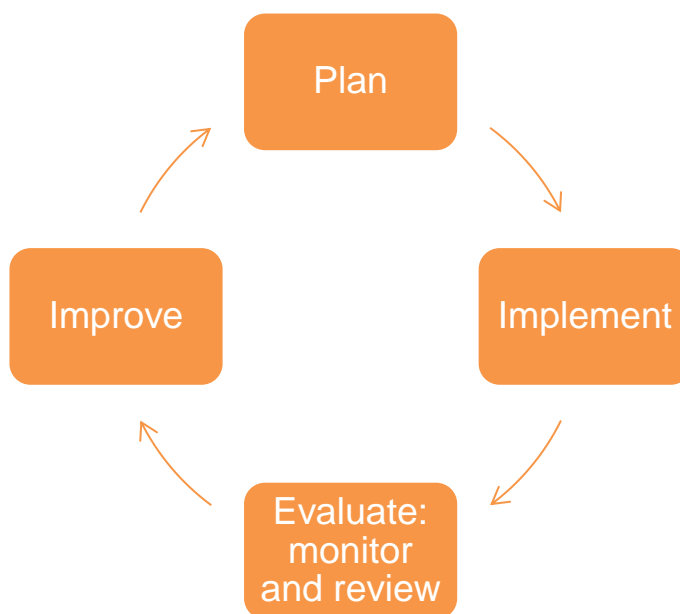
4.6 Quality enhancement

The process of taking deliberate steps at institutional level to improve the quality of teaching and learning, research and community engagement.

4.7 Quality improvement cycle

Quality as a continuous process is described as a quality improvement cycle as illustrated in Figure 1:

Figure 1: Quality Improvement Cycle



The quality improvement cycle consists of the following four elements:

(a) Purpose, goals and planning

These are processes and structures for establishing directions, goals and strategies, i.e. formal planning at institutional, faculty, divisional and departmental levels. At group and individual levels, it reflects the planning that UJ staff members do either by project, programme, module and/or over time, and includes yearly and daily planning.

(b) Implementation processes

Implementation (i.e. acting or doing) includes processes and intentional functions undertaken to achieve goals and objectives, and structures for implementing strategies to achieve the goals defined.

(c) Evaluation

This refers to the outcomes of strategies implemented, and involves processes for evaluating achievement and modifying or improving goals and strategies, and includes two major aspects, namely monitoring and review. Continuous monitoring of quality is an important aspect of continuous quality improvement and an integral part of risk mitigation.

(d) Improvement

Quality improvement (i.e. enhancing) refers to improvement plans that address the weaknesses while maintaining the strengths of the institution, and also progress reports to monitor progress with the improvement plans.

These are the processes by which the results of the evaluation/review are utilised in order to generate improvement. This often results in the modification of an existing plan or the development of a new plan, and thus the cycle commences once more.

To implement the quality improvement cycle, enablers are required, i.e. a network of institutional and faculty promotion structures, information and communication.

4.8 Quality Management

Quality management refers to institutional arrangements for ensuring, supporting, developing, enhancing and monitoring the quality of teaching and learning, research and community engagement (CHE, 2004: Framework for Institutional Audits, p.16).

Quality Management includes all activities of HE that ensure the execution of: quality policy, quality objectives and quality responsibilities. These activities are implemented through mechanisms such as, quality planning, quality support, quality monitoring, quality assurance and quality development and enhancement (Milisiunaite, Adomaitiene and Galginaitis, 2009:5).

4.9 Quality Monitoring

Quality monitoring is a short- to medium-term activity mainly for developmental or formative purposes. It usually focuses on the implementation of policies and plans and provides opportunities for the early identification of possible risk areas. It includes informal evaluation of quality at different levels and may lead to formal and systematic evaluation with the purpose of acting and/or improving.

4.10 Quality Promotion

Quality promotion refers to the enhancement of an ethos of quality in the University. It is used as an umbrella concept to include a broad spectrum of quality-related matters ranging from enhancement (i.e. a developmental approach) to quality reviews (i.e. the evaluation of quality in any of the units of analysis) to quality support (i.e. sustaining existing quality). This broad spectrum of quality-related functions should be addressed in the UJ quality system.

4.11 Quality system

A quality system in higher education includes three interdependent elements, namely policies, structures and management that should develop together over time (Smout, 2002: *Quality Assurance in South African Universities*. Pretoria: SAUVCA, p. 18). A quality system can be seen as having two purposes: enhancement and accountability. Quality enhancement requires a process of continuous improvement at institutional level, and at the level of the academic discipline, while accountability requires external scrutiny of institutions and publishable outcomes (Newton 2007:16).

The structure of a quality promotion system ensures that feedback loops link with people in a position to effect improvements in teaching and learning. The investment of resources in a system must be mediated by its contribution to the enhancement of teaching and learning and to public accountability. The system is essentially a structured manifestation of good academic practice that builds upon and describes existing academic planning and reflective processes in the University.

5. QUALITY PROMOTION PRINCIPLES

The University commits itself to the following principles to guide continuous and integrated quality promotion across the different programmes, academic departments, faculties and support and service divisions:

5.1 Institutional Accountability

The UJ is responsible and will be held accountable for setting strategic goals that address international, national and regional priorities and needs, and accepts its accountability to the broader national and regional community. The UJ Strategic Plan addresses its own fitness of purpose and provides direction in this regard. Institutional accountability also includes planning, funding and resource allocation (i.e. fitness for purpose) to achieve the strategic goals. The purpose of the UJ Quality Promotion Framework is to enable the University to be an accountable institution of higher learning. To this end, the University ensures that it has a formal quality system consisting of a network of policies, quality management structures and mechanisms that addresses the quality promotion and review of teaching, learning and assessment, programmes, research and community engagement and the support thereof. This system involves the quality improvement cycle from planning and implementation to the review of all the core functions and the support thereof. It also ensures that the results of monitoring and review are fed back in order to effect improvement at all levels of decision-making.

5.2 Continuous improvement of the University's functions

Quality promotion is an ongoing process aimed at continuous improvement of the University's core functions and the support thereof through the implementation of the quality cycle at *institutional*, *group* and *individual* levels. Continuous improvement is based on the quality improvement cycle, namely planning, implementation, evaluation and improvement. This quality improvement cycle will also enhance the University's capacity for early risk identification and mitigation.

5.3 An integrated approach

This approach includes horizontal and vertical integration. The following aspects are integrated:

- horizontal integration of quality promotion of the core functions – namely teaching and learning, academic programmes, research and community engagement – is regarded as interdependent units of analysis;

- vertical integration of quality promotion in management units (i.e. faculties and divisions) is not addressed as isolated units, but is regarded as a continuum of interdependent units of analysis as reflected in their reporting lines.

The integrated approach should be evident in the UJ Quality Plan and supporting faculty and divisional quality plans.

5.4 Quality promotion as an individual responsibility

Responsibility for continuous improvement and delivering quality is best located with those individuals and/or groups closest to each particular University activity. Quality promotion as an integral part of all their individual tasks and responsibilities is the responsibility of all UJ staff members.

5.5 The alignment of quality promotion, planning and resourcing

Quality promotion at all levels at the UJ should be aligned with the UJ Strategic Plan, the UJ Quality Promotion Policy and Plan, as well as faculty and division quality policies and plans. Planning quality promotion and financial planning (to provide the necessary resources) should be done as two complementary processes.

6. ELEMENTS OF QUALITY PROMOTION

The following elements are integral to the comprehensive and integrated quality promotion practice in the University:

6.1 Quality criteria

The UJ quality criteria include the following:

- 6.1.1 nationally approved criteria, for example, relevant, national HEQC audit and programme accreditation criteria;
- 6.1.2 additional UJ, faculty and division-specific criteria that have been approved by the relevant quality structure;
- 6.1.3 additional criteria by official and nationally acknowledged professional and/or statutory bodies.

6.2 Evidence

- 6.2.1 The practice of evidence-based quality promotion must be practised by individuals and groups, and at systemic levels. Quality promotion must be documented to ensure that stakeholders and others involved and affected are thoroughly informed about expectations, the practice itself, its outcomes, and its links with the improvement of practice.
- 6.2.2 Evidence that the quality improvement cycle (i.e. planning, implementation, evaluation and improvement) is applied, must be collected and kept for at least one cycle, i.e. six years.
- 6.2.3 Evidence should, as far as possible, be kept in electronic format for inclusion in an institutional document warehouse.

6.3 Quality improvement cycle

- 6.3.1 Continuous quality improvement should be achieved by implementing the quality improvement cycle at institutional, group and individual levels in all the core functions.
- 6.3.2 Faculty and divisional quality plans should be aligned with the UJ Quality Plan and the faculty or divisional quality policies.

- 6.3.3 Continuous and systematic monitoring of the implementation of institutional, faculty and division-specific quality policies and plans and improvement plans should be undertaken by the relevant quality structures.
- 6.3.4 Regular evaluation of the different units of analysis (modules, departments, etc.) should be addressed in the UJ Quality Promotion Plan, as well as the faculty and division-specific quality plans.
- 6.3.5 Formal evaluation reports, improvement plans and progress reports should be submitted to the relevant faculty or divisional quality and institutional quality promotion structures as indicated in the faculty or divisional quality policy and plan.

6.4 Self-evaluation and peer reviews

The following kinds of formal reviews should be undertaken:

6.4.1 Self-evaluation

- 6.4.1.1 Systematic monitoring, as a part of self-evaluation, should be undertaken as a continuous process by individuals and groups and at institutional level.
- 6.4.1.2 Self-evaluation reports (SERs) should be submitted to the faculty or division quality promotion structures.

6.4.2 Peer reviews

- 6.4.2.1 Peer reviews complement self-evaluation processes and are conducted by external experts with the purpose of:
- validating the self-evaluation report;
 - reviewing the implementation of the faculty, department or division quality plan.
- 6.4.2.2 Criteria for the appointment of peer-review panel members should be developed and applied by the quality structure in the faculty or division.
- 6.4.2.3 Members of peer-review panels should be approved by the faculty or division quality structure.
- 6.4.2.4 National reviews are undertaken by either the HEQC or relevant professional and/or statutory bodies. Only formal and nationally recognised (professional) bodies may be allowed to review any aspect of the University's core functions.
- 6.4.2.5 The UJ Senate Teaching and Learning Committee (STLC) and the Unit for Quality Promotion, as well as the relevant faculty and/or division quality structures, should be informed of a pending visit.
- 6.4.2.6 Review reports and subsequent improvement plans and progress reports must be submitted to the relevant faculty and/or division quality structures.
- 6.4.2.7 An executive summary of the review reports and subsequent improvement plans and progress reports must be submitted to the STLC by faculties and the Management Executive Committee Academic (MECA) by service and support divisions.

6.4.3 Thematic reviews

- 6.4.3.1 Thematic reviews are internal reviews and serve the principle of risk management because they can be used to identify future risks. The purpose is to "take a snapshot" of an existing practice to evaluate quality in a particular area or to enable a rapid response to an identified issue or set of circumstances. Thematic reviews may be undertaken as needed.

- 6.4.3.2 The decision to commission a thematic review may be taken by a member of the Management Executive Committee, Senate or Council and in faculties and divisions by the Deans and Executive Directors.

6.4.4 Annual monitoring and reporting

- 6.4.4.1 Dialogic accountability refers to a process whereby different categories of staff are involved in reporting to one another on matters of mutual importance. Frank and open exchanges between all levels of staff, as well as among academic, academic development, support and service divisions, are encouraged.

6.4.5 Faculty Reviews

The faculty reviews are benchmarking exercises to determine the national and international stature of the individual faculties with reference to the sustained excellence of their academic programmes, research, community engagement and leadership in accordance with the UJ Strategic Thrusts.

7. UJ QUALITY PROMOTION SYSTEM

7.1 Quality policies

- 7.1.1 A network of UJ policies, plans, frameworks and strategies that focus on the core functions provides direction with respect to high standards, quality and effectiveness. All UJ policies should adhere to the *Policy on Policy Development* that serves as an important quality mechanism.
- 7.1.2 The Quality Promotion Policy and the Quality Promotion Plan provide guidance and direction to quality promotion matters in all core functions. All faculty and division-specific quality promotion policies and plans should be aligned with the University policy and plan.

7.2 Quality structures

7.2.1 Institutional structures

- 7.2.1.1 The UJ Council and the Vice-Chancellor are ultimately accountable for quality in the University. The UJ Council ensures good management and the implementation of the UJ strategic plan.
- 7.2.1.2 Senate assists Council in complying with public accountability related to the academic responsibilities of the University.
- 7.2.1.3 The Deputy Vice Chancellor: Academic reports to the Management Executive Committee (MEC) on all strategic and institutional planning and quality-related matters.
- 7.2.1.4 The different Senate committees, including the Senate Teaching and Learning Committee (STLC), are responsible for quality promotion in accordance with their charters.
- 7.2.1.5 The STLC supports Senate in the implementation of the UJ Quality Promotion Policy and Plan for the core functions in faculties and the support thereof.
- 7.2.1.6 The Executive Leadership Group, i.e. members of the MEC, Deans and Executive Directors, are responsible for quality management in their respective faculties and divisions.
- 7.2.1.7 The Centre for Academic Planning and Quality Promotion facilitates and supports the implementation of the UJ Quality Promotion/enhancement Policy and Plan.

7.2.2 Faculty quality structures

Faculties should develop and establish their own formal quality structures by taking their context, size, etc., into consideration.

7.2.2.1 I.e. formal committees or portfolios on the Dean's Committee.

7.2.2.2 The Deans manage quality promotion of the following core functions through these structures:

- teaching, learning and assessment;
- academic programmes, including modules and continuing education programmes;
- research;
- community engagement.

7.2.3 Divisional quality structures

Academic development, support and service divisions should develop their own division-specific quality structures, i.e. formal committees and / or Executive Directors, manage quality promotion through these structures