COMMISSION FOR HIGHER EDUCATION

STANDARDS AND GUIDELINES FOR UNIVERSITY ACADEMIC PROGRAMMES

INTRODUCTION

These standards and guidelines have been developed by the Commission for Higher Education and are intended for use by university education institutions in Kenya in the development, implementation, quality assurance and review of academic programmes. Focus has also been given to the provision of academic resources for the support of the programmes.

Two (2) main types of university education institutions exist in Kenya, namely:

1. **Public Universities**

    The Public Universities shall be constituted under their own Acts of Parliament that empower them to make decisions on their academic programmes through their Senates. The Public Universities, in addition to their main campuses are mandated to have campuses and constituent colleges.

2. **Private Universities**

    The Private Universities shall be categorized hierarchically as:

    a. Chartered Universities;

    b. Universities with Letters of Interim Authority/Registered Universities; and

c. Proposed Institutions.

DEFINITION OF TERMS

The following terms shall apply in the context provided:

"academic programme"   means an architectural design of learning content, which is multi-dimensional and includes intentions, structure of content, delivery modes, academic resources and assessment modes;

"academic staff" means members of the teaching staff of a university;

"academic year" means a continuous period of teaching examination and study organised in a full year mode, semester mode, trimester mode and quarter mode and extending over not less than thirty weeks in a calendar year;

"associate professor" means an imminent professor who is a scholar with Doctor of Philosophy qualifications in the relevant discipline, immense teaching experience, evidence of provision of mentorship to postgraduate students,   high quality published work, active engagement in research evidenced by peer reviewed and published articles and books, great contribution to educational innovations including designing appropriate curriculum;

"the Commission" shall refer to the Kenya Commission for Higher Education;

"course" means a single unit in a programme of study;

"curriculum" means an organised programme of study for a given degree or diploma awards incorporating all matters including rationale of the programme, purpose, expected learning outcomes, academic resources for the support of the programme, academic organization of the programme, admission requirements, mode of delivery, programme content requirements, assessment process requirements and requirements for the award of the degree;

"department" means an academic division into which a faculty is divided for purposes of teaching, examinations and administration;

"faculty" means an academic division so designated or established under the instruments constituting a university and it may also mean academic members of staff;

"institution" means an organisation founded for a particular work such as education, promotion of arts or scientific research;

"lecture hour" means a period of time equivalent to one hour and representing one such continuous hour in lecture form, two in a tutorial or open learning session, three in a laboratory practical or practicum and five in farm or similar practice;

"lecturer" means a scholar with qualifications in the relevant discipline, teaching experience and engagement in research and publication;

"programme of study" means the prescribed syllabus that students must be taught at each key stage;

"professor" also referred to as 'full professor' means a reputable scholar with Doctor of Philosophy qualifications in the relevant discipline, immense teaching experience, evidence of vast provision of mentorship to postgraduate students, high quality published work, active engagement in research evidenced by peer reviewed and published articles and books, great contribution to educational innovations including designing appropriate curriculum and demonstrated provision of leadership in the discipline area;

"senior lecturer" means a scholar with doctorate qualifications in the relevant discipline, great teaching experience, active engagement in research evidenced by peer reviewed and published articles, contribution to educational innovations including designing appropriate curriculum and evidence of supervision of both undergraduate and postgraduate students and lecturers involved in studying and teaching respectively.

1. **LAUNCHING OF ACADEMIC PROGRAMME**

   Standard

   No university shall launch an academic programme without prior consent from the Commission.

   Guideline

   a. The academic programmes of the universities are accredited through the Commission for Higher Education. The Commission evaluates the programmes, ensuring that the said institution has met the various requirements and academic standards prior to the programmes being launched;

   b. The resources for the support of a proposed academic programme shall be verified and considered appropriate and adequate for at least the first two years of study before consent to launch of the programme can be considered;

   Non-Chartered Institutions

   c. The academic programmes of non-chartered institutions shall only be launched once the entire evaluation process for a given programme is complete;

   Chartered Universities

   d. The academic programmes of chartered universities shall only be launched once the initial requirements of the Commission have been met. These requirements shall include:

   i. The Vice Chancellor of the institution has officially submitted a properly designed curriculum, in line with the Commission's guidelines for preparing an academic programme, for evaluation. This curriculum should be accompanied by:

   - A needs assessment report on the proposed programme;
   - Detailed deliberations of meeting of the Senate at which the proposed programme was approved;
   - Comprehensive reports on:

- Academic facilities and infrastructure available for the support of the programme, including infrastructure;
- Equipment and learning materials available for the support the programme;
- Core-texts and journals for the support of the programme;
- Academic and support staff, indicating academic qualifications and areas of expertise, where obtained from, experience in teaching, research and publications and whether full-time or part-time staff. Curriculum vitae of the listed academic staff and support staff should also be appended;

- The name of academic programme leader including his/her curriculum vitae with details of staff level, academic and professional qualifications, research and publications and teaching experience in the university; and

- In case of a professional programme, an attachment of a letter of consent from the relevant professional body.

ii. The Vice Chancellor of the institution has signed the Commission's commitment form indicating that he/she:

- Is responsible for ensuring that the laid down process of curriculum design and development has been adhered to; and

- Will ensure that the report on academic resources to support the academic programme is updated and available at all times.

iii. The institution has a functional and approved Internal Quality Assurance (IQA) structure; and

iv. A regular peer review of academic programmes has been institutionalized and a 5-year peer review plan submitted to the Commission.

2. QUALITY ASSURANCE SYSTEMS FOR ACADEMIC PROGRAMMES

Standard

Each university shall have its own quality assurance systems and mechanisms in line with the Commission's prescribed guidelines.

Guideline

The Commission is the external quality assurance agency of the universities in Kenya. The universities are therefore responsible for the internal quality assurance of their academic programmes.

a. Each university shall institute its own internal quality assurance policies, systems and mechanisms in line with the Commission's prescribed guidelines; and

b. Each university shall review its academic programmes at least once in every cycle of the programme in accordance with its quality assurance policies.

3. COLLABORATION ON ACADEMIC PROGRAMMES

Standard

Any institution seeking collaboration with another to offer academic programmes shall ensure that the mother institution is accredited in its country of origin and that the programme has been accredited/validated by the relevant accrediting body or the state.

Guidelines

a. Chartered Universities, by virtue of their charter, are authorized to collaborate/affiliate with other institutions on given academic programmes provided that the said institution has institutional and programme accreditation. This collaboration shall be communicated to the Commission for purposes of updating its database;

b. Any other institution seeking collaboration on degree programmes with another institution within or outside the country shall meet the following requirements before consideration can be given to the collaborative status:

   i. The academic programme should be in existence in the institution being sought for collaboration;

ii. The institution offering the academic programme should be accredited in its country/region of origin;

iii. The academic programme should be recognized/validated by an accrediting body (where applicable). Academic programmes that are not recognized by an appropriate accrediting body shall be subjected to the Commission's validation/accreditation processes before consideration can be given to collaborative status;

iv. There should be evidence of an existing detailed written Memorandum of Agreement and Understanding (where applicable) between the institution seeking collaboration and the institution being sought for collaboration. The collaboration details shall include:

- The nature of the collaboration;

- A statement on the degree awarding institution. More specifically, the institution offering the academic programme shall be the degree awarding institution; and

- Signatures from the management of the two (2) or more institutions seeking the collaboration.

4. NEW ACADEMIC PROGRAMMES

Development of Academic Programmes

Standard

a. An academic programme shall facilitate a balanced learning process, ensuring that the students are able to acquire such cognitive, affective and psychomotor skills as are consistent with educational goals and aspirations of Kenyans;

b. The design of an academic programme shall take into account:

i. Contextualization and relevance;

ii. Contribution to the overall national human resource development and requirements;

iii.   *Broad-base, diversification and integration aspects;*

iv.   *Practical-orientation; and*

v.   *The Commission's standards in curriculum development.*

c.   *Each level of academic programme shall be differentiated by specific attributes. Higher levels of academic programmes shall require higher and more complex attributes;*

d.   *An institution shall be expected to have successfully graduated several cohorts of the lower level academic programme before proposing a higher level academic programme; and*

e.   *Each level of academic programme shall be differentiated by specific attributes. Higher levels of academic programmes shall require higher and more complex attributes.*

Guidelines

a. Each institution shall have a Programme Development Team that guides the institution on programme and curriculum development and ensures that the institution's proposed curricula has met the standards of curriculum development prior to being presented to the Senate of the institution, and their after, to the Commission for evaluation and consideration for accreditation;

b. A bachelor's programme is a basic educational foundational programme. The programme shall:

    i.   Provide a broad knowledge base within a discipline involving critical and analytical understanding of the major theories, principles and concepts in the discipline;

    ii.   Provide the learner with a comprehensive range of cognitive and analytical skills and their application to various situations;

    iii.   Entail demonstration of adequate problem solving skills; and

    iv.   Enhance society consciousness and contributions to the general development of the society.

c.   A master's programme is designed to provide additional education or training in the student's specialized branch of knowledge. The programme shall:

i. Offer highly specialized knowledge in a discipline or field of study;

ii. Enhance critical awareness of knowledge issues in a discipline or field of study;

iii. Promote specialized problem solving skills required in research and/or innovation ;

iv. Entail demonstration of mastery of a given discipline or field of study;

v. Entail originality and creativity in the application of knowledge, skills and practice in the field of study;

vi. Entail contributing to advanced knowledge and skills in the field of study; and

vii. Prepare the individual to take a significant responsibility in society.

d. A doctorate programme is designed to train research scholars and, in many cases, future university faculty members. The programme shall:

i. Enhance knowledge at the most advanced frontier of the discipline or field of study;

ii. Provide the learner with the most advanced and specialized skills and techniques required to:

- Solve critical problems in research and/or innovation; and

- Extend and redefine existing knowledge.

iii. Entail demonstration of substantial authority, innovation, autonomy, scholarly and professional integrity and sustained commitment to the development of new ideas or processes at the forefront of a discipline or field of study.

e. In order to propose the accreditation of a master's programme, a university shall have successfully graduated four (4) cohorts of a similar undergraduate programme; and

f. In order to propose the approval of a doctorate-level programme, the university shall have successfully graduated three (3) cohorts of the masters-level similar programme.

Evaluation of Academic Programmes

Standard

a. New academic programmes from the private universities shall be submitted to the Commission for accreditation at a stipulated fee; and

b. A revised academic programme shall be considered as new and thus warranting re-submission to the Commission if it is extensively different from its original version.

Guidelines

a. New academic programmes from the private universities shall be submitted to the Commission for evaluation once in every quarter and at a stipulated time period, notably, within the last week of March, June, September and December;

b. A pre-determined fee shall be charged on every new academic programme submitted to the Commission depending on the category of the institution in focus, notably:

   i. Chartered Private Universities;

   ii. Universities with Letters of Interim Authority/Registered Universities; and

   iii. Proposed Institutions.

c. The maximum number of academic programmes that a proposed institution shall be permitted to submit to the Commission before the granting of the Letter of Interim Authority is three (3) programmes;

d. A revised academic shall be considered new, thus warranting re-submission to the Commission for re-accreditation if its content is more than 30% different from that in the original programme;

e. The evaluation process of a proposed academic programme shall encompass:

   i. Evaluation of the curriculum by peer reviewers using guidelines prepared by the Commission.

   The peer reviewers shall have the appropriate academic qualifications and experience in the field in focus. The peer reviewers, who are drawn from a central

database of the Commission and are trained in the peer review process, shall be drawn from one (1) of the following two (2) categories:

Universities

The peer reviewers are mainly drawn from public and chartered universities. They should have been senior lecturers or professors for a minimum of five (5) years with doctorate degrees in the relevant field of programme. For programmes where there is scarcity of doctorate level academic staff, senior lecturers who are holders of relevant master-level degrees shall also be considered.

Industry

The peer reviewers drawn from industry should be holder of a master-level degree in a relevant field with more than five (5) years working experience in the field. Where applicable, they should also have membership in a professional body and a practicing/professional license.

    ii. Verification of academic resources for the support of the programme by peer reviewers; and

  iii. Approval of the programme by the Commission.

5. PROFESSIONAL PROGRAMMES

Standard

a. ***Professional programmes shall only be considered for approval only if the basic programmes on which they are dependant are on offer in the said institution; and***

b. ***Professional programmes shall be granted approval by the respective professional body prior to being recognized as approved programmes by the Commission.***

Guidelines

a. Any institution seeking approval on an undergraduate professional programme shall first have on offer the supportive basic programmes; and

b. A professional programme shall be considered for approval only after the relevant professional body has approved it. The respective institution shall provide the Commission with evidence of approval by the relevant professional body while seeking recognition of the programme by the Commission.

6. THE ACADEMIC PROGRAMME STRUCTURE

Standard

An academic programme structure shall be aligned to a standard frame as provided by the Commission and shall include background information of the institution, information on the various programme facets and details on the academic resources for the support of the programme.

Guidelines

a. Each academic programme structure shall consist of:

  i. The institution's background information, which includes the vision, mission and philosophy of the institution; the institution's minimum admission requirements; the academic resources in the institution including facilities (*lecture rooms, library, Information and Communication Technology, laboratories, workshops, studios and tuition farms/fields*) and equipment (*computers, printers, projectors, computer software, laboratory , audio-visual equipment*), academic staff (*both teaching and technical*) and reference materials *(books and journals, print and online reference materials*); the programmes offered by the institution including duration of each programme, academic organization of the programmes and definitions of terms including course units, credit hours, lecture hours and contact hours;

  ii. Information on the various facets of the programme including its Title, Philosophy; Rationale including market survey implications; Goal; Expected Learning Outcomes of both the programme and the specialization areas (if any); Mode of Delivery;

Academic Regulations comprising of admission requirements, regulations on credit transfer, programme requirements, student assessment policy/criteria, grading system, examination regulations including moderation of examinations, graduation requirements, classification of degrees and regulations for thesis/dissertation/projects (where applicable); Programme Evaluation; Management and Administration; List of Courses/units; Duration and Structure; Course Distribution Table and Course Outlines including course title, purpose, expected learning outcomes, content, mode of delivery, instructional materials and/or equipment, assessment, *(reference materials including textbooks, journals and e-materials*); and

iii. Appendices of the academic resources for the support of the programme comprising of the facilities; equipment and teaching materials; core-texts and journals; academic staff; and the University Policy on Curriculum Development.

b. There shall be a linkage between the various facets of an academic programme:

   i. The institutional information shall be cascaded down to the programme while the programme's general information shall be cascaded down to the various courses of the programme; and

   ii. The course title shall be reflected in the purpose of the course and the course's expected learning outcomes. The expected learning outcomes shall be reflected in the course content, which shall be linked to the mode of delivery, instructional materials and/or equipment, assessment and reference materials.

c. *Academic programme title*

   An academic programme title shall be reflective of its content.

   i. It shall adopt universal nomenclature for similar programmes;

   ii. It shall be short, concise and descriptive of its overall content;

   iii. The appropriateness of an academic programme title shall be determined by:

   - At least 70% of the content being relevant and core to the academic programme. This includes both core and specialization courses; and

- For academic programmes titles that include two (2) field of study, the allocations of core courses to the two (2) fields being equally shared.

iv. Two (2) or more similar academic programmes shall be considered distinct, thus warranting unique programme titles, if more than 30% of the content is different.

d. *Academic programme content*

i. The content of a given programme shall reflect the vision and mission of the institution and shall be aligned to the Vision 2030 and Millennium Development Goals;

ii. The content of a given academic programme shall be presented in a systematic manner as follows:

- *Foundational courses;*
- *Courses focusing on concepts and principles;*
- *Application and Skills Development courses; and*
- *Practical and Project-based courses.*

e. *Thesis/Dessertation/Project*

A thesis or dissertation is an original research document submitted in support of candidature for a given degree or professional qualification presenting the author's research and findings. The terms are used interchangeably and may refer to the same aspect depending on an institutions' orientation. In some institutions' orientations, the word *'thesis'* is used as part of undergraduate or master programmes requirement, while '*dissertation*' is applied to a doctorate programme. However, in other institutions' orientations, the reverse is true.

The differences between a thesis/dissertation and regular project paper include the amount of research performed for each type of document; degree of originality required; amount of critique of literature required; quality of arguments expected; flexibility given to recommendations for further review; and level of critical thinking, analysis and development of concepts called for.

i. Each institution shall clearly articulate the terms thesis/dissertation/project as is applicable to it, providing details on the:

- *Institution's operational definitions of the terms thesis/dissertation/project;*
- *Facets of the thesis/dissertation/project; and*
- *Regulations of the thesis/dissertation/project.*

ii. Based on the operational definition of terms, each institution shall identify the most applicable term and apply it to the content of the programme.

f. *Course codes*

Distinct course codes shall be provided for the various courses on offer in a given programme.

i. An outline of the various types of course codes applicable to the courses of the programme shall be provided;

ii. The course codes shall comprise of letters and digits; and

iii. The letters of the course code shall represent the department/subject area from which the specific course is drawn while the digits shall be serialized and shall be indicative of the level and year of study recommended for a given course. For instant, in a four-digital course code system:

- *Bachelor-level degree programmes shall have 1000 to 4000/5000 series;*
- *Master-level degree programmes shall have 5000/6000 to 7000 series; and*
- *Doctoral-level degree programmes shall have 8000 to 9000 series.*

g. *Academic organization and structure*

Each institution shall clearly articulate the academic organization and structure of its programmes and shall include its academic calendar mode; duration of each segment of the academic calendar; definition of course/units/credit hours/lecture hours in relation to the academic calendar; total number of courses; and course distribution table.

i. The academic calendar for any given institution shall be divided into one of the following modes:

- *Semesters, which comprise two (2) equal divisions/terms of between 15-17 weeks in an academic year;*

- *Trimesters, which comprises three (3) equal divisions/terms of between 13-15 weeks in an academic year; or*
- *Quarters, which comprises four (4) equal divisions/terms of between 9-12 weeks in an academic year.*

ii. The institution shall define the terms credit hours/lecture hours/contact hours in its own context, relating the terms to each other, where appropriate, and the semester/trimester/quarter mode;

iii. One lecture hour shall be equated to:

- *One (1) contact hour in a lecture-designed session;*
- *Two (2) contact hours in a tutorial-designed or open-learning-designed session;*
- *Three (3) contact hours in a laboratory-designed or practicum session; and*
- *Five (5) contact hours in a farm or similar practice.*

iv. The institution shall provide the total number of lecture hours allocated to any given programme, in line with prescribed standards and professional bodies (where applicable);

v. A bachelors' academic programme shall carry a minimum of the following lecture hours per cluster programme and shall be designed in line with the minimum national standards provided for a given programme and professional bodies (where applicable):

- *Applied Sciences   -   2240*
- *Arts and Humanities   -   1680*
- *Medical and Allied Sciences -   3960*
- *Pure and Natural Sciences   -   1785*
- *Social Sciences   -   1680*

vi. A masters' academic programme shall extend over a period of at least eighteen (18) months and shall comprise of a minimum of 630 lecture hours;

vii. The research: taught course ratio for the content of a masters' academic programme shall be 1:2;

viii.   A doctorate academic programme shall extend over at least three (3) academic years; and

ix.   The student workload shall be between 1500-1800 hours per year and shall include attending of lectures, tutorials and seminars; carrying out assignments; independent and private studies; placements; preparation of projects; and examinations.

7. ADMISSION QUALIFICATIONS

Standards

Minimum admission requirements shall be provided for every academic programme in line with prescribed admission requirements.

Guidelines

Institutions shall set up the academic admission requirements for programmes on offer in line with national and international trends, minimum standards set for each programme *and* professional bodies (where applicable). The minimum admission qualifications in any university shall be:

a. Undergraduate

   i.   C+ for Kenya Certificate of Secondary Education (KCSE) holders;

   ii.   5 credits for International General Certificate of Secondary Education (IGCSE) holders;

   iii.   A minimum of 24 out of 45 points for International Baccalaureate (IB) holders;

   iv.   Two (2) principle passes for 'A' Levels qualification holders;

   v.   C in KCSE for recognized pre-university qualification holders or recognized diploma holders with a minimum of credit C (of 2.50 on a scale of 4.00) from a recognized institution; and

vi.   Any other equivalence as determined by the Kenya National Examination Council.

b. *Masters*

Undergraduate degree holders with:

i.   Upper second class honors or a cumulative Grade Point Average (GPA) of 3.00 on a scale of 4.00; and

ii.   Lower second class honors or a cumulative Grade Point Average (GPA) of 2.50 on a scale of 4.00 with additional relevant training, evidence of research capability either through research, paper presentations or peer reviewed publications and relevant working experience.

c. *Doctorate*

Masters degree holders.

8. ACADEMIC STAFF

Standards

a. Each academic programme shall be supported by at least one (1) appropriate academic leader and an appropriate specialization area co-ordinators (where applicable);

b. Each academic programme shall be supported by an adequate number of full-time academic staff ; and

c. The academic staff shall hold an appropriate academic qualification for the support of the programme.

Guidelines

a. Each academic programme shall be headed by an appropriate and qualified senior academic staff with at least five (5) years experience in university teaching, preferably a Professor, Associate Professor or Senior Lecturer, with a doctorate degree in a relevant

field of study, evidence of research inclinations and having at least three (3) peer reviewed publications;

b. The programme's academic leader shall be on full-time employment;

c. Each academic programme specialization area shall be headed by a qualified and appropriate academic staff with at least five (5) years experience in university teaching and a doctorate degree in a relevant field of study. He or she shall be on full-time employment;

d. Each academic programme shall be supported by at least two (2) other appropriate full-time academic staff members;

e. The ratio of full-time to part-time academic staff members shall be 2:1;

f. The minimum academic qualifications of academic staff shall be at least one level above that of the academic programme as provided:

  i. *Bachelors' level*

  Relevant masters-level degree.

  ii. *Masters level*

  Relevant doctoral degree, with at least three (3) years of teaching experience and evidence of research inclination through individual research, supervision of research and theses and involvement in peer reviewed publications;

  iii. *Doctorate*

  Relevant Doctorate degree, with at least five (5) years of teaching experience, and evidence of research inclinations through individual research, supervision of research and theses and involvement in peer reviewed publications.

g. Each institution shall determine its lecturer: student ratio based on their available academic resources. However, the maximum lecturer: student ratio for each course shall be:

  i. Theoretical-based courses   -   1:50

  ii. Practical-based courses   -   1:20

h. An academic staff shall be assigned students to supervise on thesis/dissertation based on a combination of his/her teaching load, administrative duties, and supervision

experience and capacity. The maximum number of students an academic staff shall supervise in any given academic year shall be:

    i.   Masters   -   5

    ii.   Doctorate   -   3

i. The maximum lecturer workload shall be 40 hours per week and shall include teaching; preparation of examination papers; marking of examination scripts; tutorials; preparation of teaching; supervision of academic work; administrative work; laboratory and laboratory preparation; and research/research assignments.

9. REFERENCE MATERIALS

Standards

Each programme shall be supported by relevant reference materials.

Guidelines

a. Each course of a given programme shall be supported by relevant core texts and references recommended for further reading, which shall comprise of both print and electronic books and journals;

b. A maximum of three (3) current core texts shall be assigned to every given course;

c. Each institution shall adopt a referencing style and apply it consistently throughout the curriculum;

d. Each programme shall be supported by both print and electronic reference materials;

e. Each programme shall be supported by a minimum collection of sixty (60) core titles or five (5) core titles per course;

f. Each programme shall be supported by a minimum of five (5) core journals; and

g. The library shall be stocked with adequate number of appropriate reference materials for each programme in offer.

10. FACILITIES AND EQUIPMENT

Standards

Each programme shall be supported by appropriate and adequate number of facilities and equipment.

Guidelines

a. Modern, relevant and adequate number of facilities and equipment shall be availed for the support of a given programme;

b. Each programme shall be supported by a minimum of two (2) lecture rooms for a four year programme; departmental offices; lecture theatres/conference rooms; and laboratory facilities.

c. The type of facilities and equipment required for any given programme shall be dictated by the nature of the programme;

d. A rotation plan shall be availed for facilities and equipment that are shared among several programmes; and

e. Memoranda of Agreements shall be availed for facilities and equipment sourced from other institutions for the support of the programme.

REFERENCES

Credit Accumulation and Transfer System Minimum Standard documents

Commission for Higher Education's Established Standards and Guidelines for University Libraries in Kenya

Commission for Higher Education Handbook on Processes for Quality Assurance in Higher Education in Kenya

The Inter University Council for East Africa Handbook for Quality Assurance in Higher Education)

DISCLAIMER

The Commission for Higher Education reserves the right to amend the content of these guidelines without notice. Institutions should obtain the latest edition from the Commission.

28th October 2011