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# ST. AUGUSTINE INTERNATIONAL UNIVERSITY

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## **QUALITY ASSURANCE**

### POLICY

July 2013

## **1.0 Introduction**

St. Augustine International University (SAIU) exists to enhance quality higher education. The University operates an integrated quality assurance system contributing effectively towards the achievement of its Strategic Plan and academic planning process. The ultimate aim supporting this system is to develop the best student experience using robust safeguards of academic standards and awards.

The University seeks to build on existing academic strengths and reputation base on quality. Its ethos involves a total commitment to encourage, support and nurture learners, to gain their full potential, be creative and contributes to societal development. This makes it important for the University to keep abreast of external development and good practices in higher education as a tool to evaluate and enhance quality assurance procedures as a culture. The University will maintain and enhance its academic standards and provision through commitment and continuous evaluation.

The University shall established rigorous and comprehensive system for the approval, review, modification and annual monitoring of its academic provision. The quality improvement and enhancement system shall be adhered to at all times. The University will be subjected to both internal and external audits and scrutiny for the purpose of self improvement.

### **1.1 Scope of the policy**

This policy will apply to all aspect of the University from the inputs through the processes up to outputs. The responsibility of quality maintenance and academic standards of SAIU lies in the hands of every individual staff. The University community shall work as a team and enhance Quality Assurance culture in all its activities.

### **1.2 Policy Statement**

Quality assurance system has been adopted by universities around the world and recognized as a vital component of higher education system. The quality assurance processes has increased pressure on universities to give public accountability and emphasize on learning outcomes. This process will be more streamlined, effective, transparent and publically accountable. By bringing SAIU into line with the international quality assurance standards, the policy will facilitate internationally recognized awards of the University.

SAIU has taken care in developing Quality Assurance Measures that facilitate continuous improvement in its academic provision. The policy will support innovation and improvement while cultivating the culture of transparency and accountability. Under this policy, SAIU will undertake to design and implement its internal quality assurance processes consistent to the mission and vision of the University.

### **1.3 Key Principles**

The main principles underpinning the SAIU Quality Assurance policy are:

1. that quality assurance and enhancement can be best achieved through fostering critical self assessment in partnership with students;
2. that the University academic community, individually or groups of individuals, should take responsibility for enhancing the quality of learning;
3. that collegiality and rigorous external peer review are vital in identification of areas of improvement, foster collaboration and the exchange of best practice;
4. that the heart of academic standards is based on benchmarking;
5. that it is desirable to promote consistency, transparency and accountability in all University systems;
6. that quality assurance and enhancement shall be in line with the national Quality Assurance framework of the National Council for Higher Education (NCHE);
7. that students and other stakeholders are key component of quality and standards of SAIU; and
8. that Quality Assurance Policy should be subjected to regular review to ensure it fit the purpose to which it was formulated.

#### 1.4 Definitions

**“Quality”** means “fitness for purpose” implying that SAIU shall conform to the purpose to which it was established in all its activities.

**“Quality Assurance”** means the process of evaluating/assessing the extent to which the institution has delivered its promises.

**“Quality Assessment”** means the process of evaluating the functionality of the Quality Assurance mechanism in an institution.

**“Quality Audit”** means a process of evaluating whether the institution is complying with the set quality standards.

**“Quality control”** means the process of ensuring compliance with the Quality Assurance set standards and procedures.

**“Quality Culture”** means the process of treating Quality Assurance as being a primary responsibility of every member of the University Community.

**“Stakeholders”** means all players in higher education both public and private including but not limited to government, industry, employers, students, alumni and the public.

#### 1.5 Aims

The aim of the policy is to support SAIU efforts in achieving its vision and mission through setting up world class academic infrastructure and facilities and running unique academic programs that are internationally recognized.

#### 1.6 The objectives

The objectives of the policy are to:

- 1) Provide guidance in the implementation of both internal/external quality assurance procedures and processes;
- 2) Ensure that SAIU academic programs are of quality, unique and meet international standards;
- 3) Ensure that SAIU graduates are of quality and can compete for international jobs;
- 4) Enable SAIU account to all its stakeholders that the Quality Assurance systems and processes are functioning in its educational provision;

- 5) Facilitate and enhance the adoption of quality culture for continuous improvement in all aspect of the University; and
- 6) Provide leadership in the implementation of Quality Assurance activities within the University.

## **2.0 Quality Assurance Mechanisms**

SAIU Quality Assurance Mechanisms shall take into account the whole University and its activities conforming to the purpose for which it was established. The mechanisms shall look at internal aspects of the University including regular institutional audits and external aspects including peer reviews.

The institutional audits shall cover areas of Governance, academic staff, academic programs, teaching and learning, student assessment, student evaluation, academic infrastructure and facilities, research and publication, finance and quality of outputs. This shall be followed by external peer review as a follow up exercise. SAIU will do Institutional audits for the purpose of self improvement. Improvement plan for the university shall be drawn from the recommendations of both internal and external evaluation/reviews.

## **3.0 Organization of the Quality Assurance and enhancement system**

### **3.1 Governance**

Governance of a university institution is at the core of its success. Better governed University promotes efficiency, transparency, accountability and flexibility for it to respond effectively to the diverse and continuous changing needs of learners. The quality of institutional governance shall include:

- 1) Availability of the University Council, the Senate, the College Board, departments and unions whose functions must be clearly defined and functional;
- 2) Availability of strategic planning process of the University;
- 3) Availability of financial mechanisms in place to control finances;
- 4) The relationship between the University and the community.

### **3.2 Quality of Academic Programs and Courses**

SAIU academic programs and courses shall be developed and reviewed in line with academic program development and review policy. This will help the University to check on the quality of the academic programs offered and its awards. The academic programs shall:

- 1) Be designed showing the structure, content, learning outcomes, delivery and assessment methods and reference textbooks;
- 2) Be designed involving all stakeholders such academics, alumni, students, industry, government, employer and the public;
- 3) Be approved by relevant organs of the University like the Senate and the University Council; and
- 4) Be monitored and periodically reviewed to promote current and up-to-datedness;

### **3.3 Quality of students Assessment**

The quality of the awards of a University is determined by the quality of the assessment of its students. The students assessment process are underpinned in the guidelines for conduct of

examination and other assessment which require transparent, fair, valid and robust assessment methods. The outcomes of student assessment have a profound effect on to their future careers and provide valuable information on the efficiency of teaching and learners support. Student assessment shall:

- 1) Be done in a consistent and transparent manner using a variety of methods;
- 2) Involved quality assurance mechanism in the assessment process where internal examiners set the examination and moderated by the head of department or external examiner;
- 3) Have timely feedbacks to the stakeholders involved;
- 4) Involve the role of external examiners to check on the quality of University assessment; and
- 5) Be made known to them in time to allow preparation;

### **3.4 Quality of Academic Staff**

SAIU is committed to attract, appoint and retain high caliber faculty scholars as reiterated in the Human Resources Manual who are excellent in teaching and research in order to support the core function of teaching and learning. The quality of academic staff is a key to the quality of an institution. Academic staff shall:

- 1) Undergo regular pedagogical training to promote their professional development;
- 2) Be mentored by senior academic staff to perfect their teaching and research skills and experience;
- 3) Involve themselves in research as a core activity of the University and publish;
- 4) Have no more than twelve (12) hours teaching load per week; and
- 5) Be appraised at regular interval for the purpose of self improvement and effectiveness.

### **3.5 Quality of Students' Evaluation**

Student's evaluation of their academic staff is one of the common practices in higher education institution today. Students are the first to judge the quality of teaching and learning in an institution. SAIU will use student's evaluation system in order to check on the quality of content delivery and support services. Student shall use standardized evaluation form or online evaluation to evaluate their lecturers at the end of every course unit. Student evaluation shall:

- 1) Be initiated by the Quality Assurance Unit in support of the Heads of Department;
- 2) Supplement other evaluation systems of the academic staff to promote objectivity and avoid biasness;
- 3) Be used as a tool for academic staff to address their areas of weaknesses and maintain/improve areas of strength; and
- 4) Use a quick mechanism for feedback to promote trust and accountability to the stakeholders involved.

### **3.6 Quality of Teaching and Learning**

The quality of teaching and learning shall be assessment by the students, heads of department, the Dean and the principal of the College. The assessment process shall:

- 1) Use student evaluation to assess the teaching and the learning processes;

- 2) Use staff appraisal to check on their efficiency and effectiveness in teaching and learning;
- 3) Use peer evaluation to check on the relevancy of teaching and learning;
- 4) Use induction and regular pedagogical training for career and professional development; and
- 5) Check on the quality of graduates.

### **3.7 Quality of Infrastructure and Academic Facilities**

The adequacy of infrastructure and academic facilities in an institution determines its quality. The quality of infrastructure and academic facilities shall be measured by:

- 1) Availability of modern and spacious infrastructure (classrooms, library, laboratories) fully furnished with modern desks and chairs;
- 2) Availability of modern Information Communication Technology (ICT) facilities with reliable internet connectivity;
- 3) Availability of adequate, relevant and up-to-date library textbooks and e- resources;
- 4) Availability of adequate teaching and learning equipment and materials; and
- 5) Availability of qualified and competent technical and support staff to support the functionality of academic facilities such as library, laboratories and ICT facilities.

### **3.8 Quality of Student Support**

The Dean of Students, the University Chaplaincy, the Counseling unit and academic staff will be responsible for the development of student support system. Each of these offices shall advise students in their areas of specialty on personal matters, spiritual, academics and socio-economic affecting their studies. The quality of student support system shall be measured by availability of:

- 1) Mentoring systems including supervision, training, guidance and counseling;
- 2) Induction system to put students to light on what the University expect out of them and what they expect from the University;
- 3) Students Guild union with approved constitution and students representation on various organs of the University.

### **3.9 Quality of Research and Publication**

Research and publication is one of the core functions of a university that differentiate it from a glorified primary and secondary schools. SAIU is a research led university and is committed to conduct research of international standards in relation to its research policy and agenda. In assessing research, publications and intellectual originality, the focus will be on:

- 1) The availability of research infrastructure and facilities;
- 2) The institutional budget provision towards research and publications;
- 3) Number of research projects won, completed and the research grant won by the institution;
- 4) Number of publications (books or journals) of international repute; and
- 5) Any patents won by the staff of the University.

### **3.10 Quality of Outputs**

The quality of the outputs (graduates) is determined by the quality of the inputs and the quality of the processes. SAIU graduates will be well grounded with a lot of practical experience and competencies to enable them compete for global jobs. In assessing the quality of outputs, the focus shall be on:

- 1) Tracer studies to track how SAIU graduates perform in the labour market;
- 2) The period SAIU graduates takes to get gainful employment after graduation; and
- 3) Evidence of lifelong learning where a number of SAIU graduates acquired masters and Doctor of Philosophy (PhD).

### **3.11 Quality of Finance**

The institutional finance is at the centre of all activities without which an institution cannot survive. The financial health of a University should reflect all sources of revenue and expenditure to promote accountability and transparency as reflected in the Financial Manual. In assessing the institutional finances, the focus will be on:

- 1) The existence of financial mechanisms in place to control the finances of an institution (financial manual, banking and withdrawal system, the signatories to bank accounts, etc);
- 2) Existence of endowment funds to support the university activities; and
- 3) Audit reports of the University books of accounts.

### **3.12 Access to Information**

SAIU will develop communication strategy for effective communication to its stakeholders. The information on the quality standards of the University shall be made available to the current, prospective students and the general public. Every registered student shall be provided with general information, program guide, course guide, timetable, and academic calendar, support services like the Information Technology, library and laboratories, regulations and policies. The University will upload all the available information for public consumption on its website for ease of access.

### **3.13 Curriculum development and Review**

The university will develop and review its academic programs in accordance to curriculum development and review policy. Curriculum development and review will be participatory involving all relevant stakeholders following the national guidelines of the NCHE. The new or revised curriculum will go through relevant organs of the University for the purpose of quality checks and approval before submitted to the NCHE for accreditation.

## **4.0 Implementation of the Quality Assurance Policy**

- 1) It is the responsibility of Quality Assurance Unit to implement this policy. The head of Quality Assurance Unit will report directly to the Vice Chancellor. S/he will sit on various Committees of the University including Senate and University Council;
- 2) The implementation of this policy will be participatory. The QA Unit will initiate establishment of Committees at different levels of the University;
- 3) There will be Quality Assurance Committee, a Committee of Council to take charge of Quality Assurance matters of the University. The Committee members will select one person amongst themselves to be the Chairperson.

## **5.0 Quality Assurance Structure**

SAIU has established an independent QA Unit responsible for overall QA activities. The head of QA Unit shall be a member of various Committees, part of the Senate and Council and oversee day-to-day QA activities in the University with his/her staff. A University QA Committee will be established to ensure quality represented by the Vice Chancellor, Registrar, Principal of Colleges, Dean of Schools, Human Resources, the Senate, QA Unit, Staff and Student Union. This Committee shall meet at least four times in an academic year to ensure that the University formulate and adhere to QA Policy, prepare for institutional audits and program accreditation. The QA Committee shall advise the Senate and Council on development and implementation of QA policies.

The university Quality Assurance Committee will be supported by committees at the school and departmental levels. These Committees shall be responsibilities for monitoring the implementation of QA activities at their respective levels. The Committee members shall hold office for a period of four years renewable once with exception of student representative whose membership will be renewed on yearly basis.

## **6.0 University Quality Assurance Strategies**

Quality Assurance at SAIU is a shared responsibility with the Vice Chancellor and senior management playing a major role in driving QA system and encouraged the University community to strive for the highest quality in all their activities. The individual lecturers are responsible for defining the quality of teaching and learning while their heads of departments are responsible to ensure that the policy requirements are met. The focus here is on continuous improvement which is a shared responsibility of every individual at the University.

The University assessment system shall be based on self-evaluation and peer review where individual department will be encourage setting up their own targets. Appropriate performance indicators will be used to monitor performance in relation to the University Vision and Mission. It is the responsibility of the Head of Department to guide the QA processes in their departments and ensure frequent communication to inform staff of all QA activities and report to the Dean of school and Principal of the College.

## **7.0 Monitoring and Evaluation**

It is the responsibility of Quality Assurance Unit to give accountability of quality standards of a University for the purpose of continuous improvement. This can be done through:

- a) Data collection on various aspect of a University, analysis and production of report to be shared by all stakeholders;
- b) Training the University community to create awareness on Quality Assurance matters;
- c) Setting up appropriate QA performance targets that are measurable;
- d) Recording unmet issues for the purpose of drawing up plan of action to improve them;
- e) Production of a University annual report on QA performance provision; and
- f) Undertaking regular reviews of academic programs, policies and guidelines.

## **8.0 Review of Quality Assurance Policy**



The Quality Assurance Policy shall be reviewed from time to time as need arises. The revised version shall be approved by the University Council.

**9.0 Effectiveness of the Policy**

This policy will be effective from the date of approval by the University Council.