

NATIONAL OPEN UNIVERSITY OF NIGERIA

**QUALITY ASSURANCE
FRAMEWORK AND POLICY**

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1.0 BACKGROUND

The National Open University of Nigeria (NOUN) is committed to strengthening its position as the leading provider of flexible and quality education through open and distance learning in Nigeria and the West African sub-region as provided for in the University's Act. No. 6 of 1983. The university strives for its provisions to be characterised by excellence and innovation in teaching and learning, research and scholarship, community engagement, partnerships and collaboration in response to changing national and global labour market needs, and underpinned by principles of lifelong learning, flexibility and learner-centredness. This is with the view to providing learners with a high quality learning experience that equips them with a competitive advantage and the skills to contribute to national development (Strategic plan 2013 -2017).

From inception, and in recognition of the important role that quality plays and the attendant issues associated with quality in open and distance learning systems, the institution aimed to employ critical assessment procedures for constant evaluation and review in its first strategic document (Blueprint and Implementation Plan 2002).

Currently, Quality Assurance at the National Open University of Nigeria takes the form of internal and external quality measures. Internal Quality measures that take the form of policy guidelines and practices have been built into key aspects of the institution's ODL system- governance, staffing, admission, programme curricula, course design and development, facilitation, assessment and evaluation, learner support, academic planning. External Quality Assurance measures comprise mainly periodic accreditation exercises by the national regulatory body, the National Universities Commission (NUC). However, there is the need to evolve a new quality assurance system by which the guidelines and practices of these key aspects can be continually monitored and improved upon.

In order to achieve the University's strategic goals (2002, 2013 – 2017), NOUN shall adopt a systematic and comprehensive approach to quality assurance. The institution shall also assure the quality of its systems and operations through the deployment of a robust quality assurance system that will promote a culture of quality through continuous improvement.

The National Open University of Nigeria (NOUN)'s commitment to quality is reflected in

its vision and mission statements:

1.1 Institutional vision

To be regarded as the foremost University providing highly accessible and enhanced quality education anchored by social justice, equity, equality and national cohesion through a comprehensive reach that transcends all barriers.

1.2 Institutional mission

To provide functional, cost-effective, flexible learning which adds lifelong value to quality education for all who seek knowledge.

1.3 Rationale

Higher education institutions, in line with best practices and the concept of Total Quality Management (TQM), have internal quality assurance systems in place as part of their quality assurance arrangements with the aim to be able to continuously monitor, evaluate and improve the quality of their educational provisions (Mishra 2006). Within ODL contexts, there is an increasing awareness by ODL institutions to enhance the quality of educational provision for learners to maximize academic benefits. This is due to increasing competition for students among higher education providers; increasing demand from stakeholders for value for their money; and demand from governments and employers to produce graduates that are capable of making meaningful contributions to economic development (SAIDE 2015). Furthermore, the decentralised nature of ODL institutions, large student numbers and the dispersed nature of their geographical spread which accounts for a different set of conditions under which staff work and students learn- all pose a challenge to the management of teaching and learning (Mhlanga 2015).

NOUN is a mega institution with a student enrolment of over 170,000 spread across the length and breadth of the country. Reports of a workshop on quality assurance for senior management (Mhlanga 2015) and survey findings on quality practices in NOUN (ms.) indicated the limitations of the current quality measures in the University- at institutional level, there is little awareness of QA measures, weak enforcement of these measures, non-sustenance of quality assurance as a culture, centralisation of several processes, weak capacity for QA, and a lack in mechanisms to monitor educational performance in a systematic manner to facilitate the implementation and monitoring of quality related

decisions in the university. These issues bring to the fore the need to strengthen existing quality measures in order to improve the quality of educational provisions.

The Quality Assurance Unit of the National Open University of Nigeria was created in August 2014 to address this need in line with the directive of the National Universities Commission (NUC) that all Universities should establish a quality assurance unit/directorate to coordinate the implementation of Quality Assurance activities.

Through the Unit, the University aims to enhance the quality of its provisions through the development and insitutionalisation of an internal quality assurance system that will enable the institution to meet its stated objectives. It shall comprise a quality assurance policy, framework, procedures, guidelines, instruments, and supporting documents that are required to implement quality assurance processes in a decentralised ODL institution like NOUN. The Quality Assurance Framework and Policy clearly spells out principles and guidelines for monitoring the institution's operations. This document has been prepared using several sources, including the ACDE QAAA quality assurance framework which has been largely adopted and customised to meet the institution's quality needs.

1.4 Definition of quality

In the context of higher education, quality is generally recognised by stakeholders as referring to satisfaction with or excellence in institutional service delivery, programmes, and graduates. Based on the attributes of quality identified by Harvey & Green (1983) and those enshrined in the institution's vision, mission, and strategic goals, NOUN's concept of quality is characterised as the following:

1.4.1 Fitness for purpose

- Ensure that its educational provisions fulfill the institution's vision, mission and strategic goals.

1.4.2 Fitness of purpose

- Ensure that its educational provisions meet national and international standards.

1.4.3 Value for money

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- Ensure efficient and effective management of human, physical and financial resources to achieve high levels of competency among staff and optimal performance in the quality of the institution's programmes and services.
- Ensure that our stakeholders receive high quality services through continuous quality enhancement that is informed by feedback from stakeholders and institutional research on our processes (what we do, why we do it, and how we do it).

1.4.4 Transformation of the learner:

- Ensure the involvement of all stakeholders, staff and tutors in the management of the teaching-learning process (curriculum design, development, and delivery) to improve learner experience and performance.
- Encourage adoption of good practices and capacity building of academic staff in the principles of course design and development, course delivery, and assessment for transformative outcomes in learners.

Based on these attributes, the institution aims to measure the quality of its educational provisions internally through a mechanism of regular institutional reviews, and external reviews by national and international regulatory bodies using a defined set of standards.

2.0 Policy Statement

NOUN shall be committed to providing functional, accessible, cost effective, flexible, and technology enhanced learning through the effective and efficient management of its programmes and services leading to high quality outputs. NOUN shall also aim at meeting stakeholders' expectations through a systematic process of consistently and continuously meeting an agreed set of quality standards that are benchmarked against national and international good practices.

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At NOUN, Quality Assurance shall:

- (i) Be a continuous process that includes goal setting, implementation of plans, regular monitoring and review in order to enhance continuous and systematic improvement of institutional delivery.
- (ii) Involve the collection and analysing of data to inform institutional delivery
- (iii) Be a part of the University's quality management framework and informs strategic planning and performance evaluation.
- (iii) Contribute to achieving the University's strategic goals.
- (iv) Imply that the design, development, production, delivery and distribution of self-instructional content through a selection of appropriate media are evaluated.
- (v) Be based on evidence as it applies to institutional delivery and aspects of its operations with provision for more in-depth review for under-performing areas.
- (vi) Imply that all sections will undertake regular periodic reviews of the processes that inform their activities and are encouraged to identify and implement ongoing maintenance improvements.
- (vii) Imply that the review of institutional processes closes the loop in the Quality Assurance process on previously identified issues and actions arising from an evaluation exercise.

NOUN shall achieve its policy goals by ensuring the design, development, and implementation of a quality assurance system comprising quality assurance policy guidelines, processes and procedures, relevant criteria and standards, monitoring and evaluation instruments, systems and tools in line with national and international frameworks for open and distance learning systems.

Furthermore, the goals of this policy shall be achieved by:

- Placing quality at the Centre of the learner's learning experience.
- Promoting the criteria and standards of the institution
- Creating an enabling environment for the development and implementation of quality improvement activities
- Promoting quality awareness within the institution
- Promoting a shared understanding of goals to be achieved and processes to be

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followed and monitored among staff and students

- Ensuring that its quality assurance instruments, tools and systems are evidence-based, and are in line with international good practices.
- Developing data collection systems to ensure the availability, reliability and accessibility of evidence required for internal and external quality audits and reviews.
- Pursuing performance goals and development of performance measures or indicators (KPIs) based on reliable information, data and analysis.
- Promoting unity of purpose through internalisation of standards and continuous quality improvement of the institution's quality management system to meet national and international benchmarks.
- Developing capacity for quality management and assurance through training.

The Quality Assurance arrangements at NOUN shall be reviewed on a regular basis.

3.0 Aim of the Quality Assurance Policy

This policy provides a framework for evaluating NOUN's quality arrangements and for the systematic monitoring and review of its processes through the implementation of the University's new quality assurance system.

The aim of NOUN QA policy is to strengthen the quality management of institutional practices and service delivery through an internal mechanism of continuous self-improvement and commitment to a culture of quality in line with internationally acceptable standards.

4.0 Objectives of the Quality Assurance Policy

The objectives of this Policy are to provide guidance for:

- 4.1 Development and implementation of a quality assurance system for continuous monitoring and evaluation for quality enhancement of the institution's service delivery.
- 4.2 Development, documentation, and implementation of quality assurance processes and procedures in line with international good practices;
- 4.3 Development of quality standards set for the institution's programmes, courses, operations and delivery services measured against international benchmarks for

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Open and Distance Learning;

- 4.4 Effective monitoring and evaluation of institutional practices through a quality management system to ensure that they are being followed for consistency, standardisation, and maintenance of quality standards across its constituents;
- 4.5 Deploying appropriate and adequate ICT, infrastructure, human and financial resources in line with set standards for efficient institutional operations;
- 4.6 Promoting effective collaborations and partnerships that will enhance internationalisation of NOUN and its products (programmes and graduates).
- 4.7 Promoting a culture of research and innovation in ODL and eLearning approaches.
- 4.8 Regular monitoring and evaluation of the quality assurance system put in place to ensure its effectiveness in achieving the institution's intended quality outcomes in line with global good practices.

5.0 Policy Values

As an ODL institution, our fundamental values are underpinned by the following key principles of open and distance learning:

- Learners are provided with opportunities and capacity for lifelong learning
- Learning processes centre on the learners and the contexts of learning, build on their experience and encourage active engagement leading to independent and critical thinking
- Learning provision is flexible, allowing learners to increasingly determine where, when, what and how they learn, as well as the pace at which they will learn.
- Prior learning and experience is recognised wherever possible; arrangements for credit transfer and articulation between qualifications facilitate further learning.
- Providers create the conditions for a fair chance of learner success through learner support, contextually appropriate resources and sound pedagogical practices.

The quality assurance policy supports these fundamental principles that inform our institutional values of social justice, equity and equality, national cohesion, and the principles of accessibility, lifelong learning, learner-centredness, flexibility, affordability and integrity.

The core value of the quality assurance policy is enhancement of the quality of institutional

practices, delivery, and the maintenance of high academic standards with the aim of achieving competitive advantage through open and distance learning.

The following fundamental principles and values underpin the policy:

5.1 Independent and flexible learning

We aim at achieving equity, equality through expanding access to higher education and learner satisfaction by providing quality education in functional, cost-effective and flexible ways.

5.2 Excellence

We strive for excellence at every stage of the design, development and delivery of our programmes informed by research and based on a quality culture that ensures achievement of set standards and the setting of higher standards.

5.3 Stakeholder involvement

We are committed to the involvement of all stakeholders in the quality assurance process leading to the institutionalisation of a culture of quality

5.4 Collaborative partnerships

We strive to achieve internationalisation of our programmes and development of a credible ODL system through strategic partnerships with other ODL institutions.

5.5 Efficiency and accountability

High quality service delivery, programmes and graduates through efficient and effective planning, management, and allocation of resources.

5.6 Quality enhancement

Quality is integral to our practices. We achieve this by putting in place processes, documentation and review systems for effective monitoring and evaluation to ensure that quality standards are practiced and maintained to meet national and international standards. The quality of educational provisions is also enhanced through appropriate use of technology to support and improve the quality of the learning experience.

5.7 Lifelong and transformative learning

We are committed to promoting a culture of lifelong learning that transforms learners into independent, global, critical thinkers and individuals of sound character

with the ability to add value to society.

6.0 Policy Alignment

The Quality Assurance policy of the National Open University of Nigeria shall ensure that all institutional practices (procedures, processes and systems) are integrated and aligned for the management and assurance of quality and are in consonance with the vision and mission, strategic objectives, policies, rules and regulations as contained in the following documents:

- (i) Blueprint and Implementation Plan (2002)
- (ii) The vision and mission of NOUN
- (iii) NOUN Strategic Plan (2013-2017)
- (iv) Academic Brief
- (v) Scheme and Conditions of Service for Staff
- (vi) Course Content Development and Training Manual
- (vii) Policy on Learner support
- (viii) Policy on Assessment and Examinations
- (ix) Other NOUN Policies, Rules and Regulations

In addition to this policy, a Quality Assurance Manual shall be developed in order to provide adequate guidance for policy realignment and implementation within the University.

7.0 Approach to Quality Assurance

Quality Assurance at NOUN shall adopt a systematic approach that is premised on regular self-reviews (which may also include peer reviews) supported by periodic external reviews. It shall involve a cyclical and systematic process of evaluation- planning, implementation, monitoring and review, and improvement to ensure continuous quality improvement, accountability, effectiveness and efficiency of institutional systems and operations.

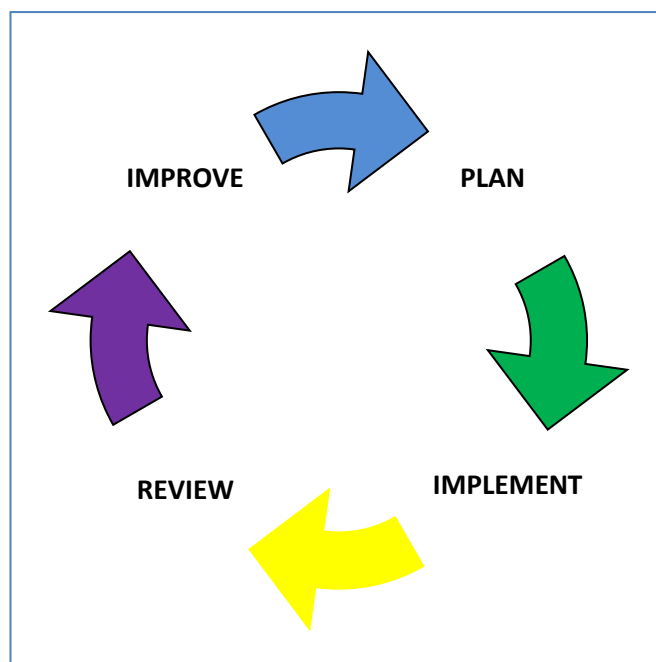


Fig.I Cyclic approach to Quality Assurance

8.0 Scope of the Policy

In this policy, the following are identified as the core service areas of NOUN's open and distance learning system that need to be consistently monitored:

1. Institutional Governance and Management
2. Programme Design and Development
3. Course Design and Development
4. Programme and Course Review
5. The Learner, Support Services and Progression
6. Assessment and Evaluation
7. Media and Technology (including OER)
8. Infrastructure and Facilities
9. Human Resources and Development
10. Collaboration and Partnerships
11. Research and Community engagement
12. Quality Assurance.

8.1 Institutional Governance and Management

NOUN shall ensure quality in the governance and management of its educational provisions by establishing effective and efficient organisational, administrative, infrastructural, budgetary structures and technology supported administrative systems. In view of the drive to take advantage of the affordances of educational technology to enhance the quality and efficiency of its delivery, NOUN shall ensure that the unique requirements of technology enhanced learning such as eLearning shall be accommodated in the governance and policy framework of the University.

NOUN shall ensure that

- 8.1.1 Its governance system is transparent and efficient.
- 8.1.2 Its governance system also provides an enabling environment for effective quality assurance policy implementation
- 8.1.3 Its Management provides strategic direction, leadership and support, including recruitment and retention of qualified staff.
- 8.1.4 Its Management also provides an enabling environment for the development and implementation of policy, decisions, planning, administration, allocation of resources and infrastructure in accordance with the strategic objectives of the institution.
- 8.1.5 Its institutional vision and mission, and structures adequately reflect its strategic goal of integrating technology enhanced learning, and there are policy guidelines to guide its implementation
- 8.1.6 The organs of governance and leadership shall be responsible for:
 - (i) Policy formulation
 - (ii) Administrative matters
 - (iii) Finance matters
 - (iv) Infrastructural matters (including ICTs for technology enhanced learning)
 - (v) Supervision and monitoring of academic affairs

The administrative structures shall include those set up for the management of:

- (i) Development of academic programmes and self-instructional contents
- (ii) Production and distribution of self-instructional content
- (iii) Student support services

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- (iv) Information and record systems
- (v) Planning and Finance
- (vi) Monitoring, evaluation and research; and
- (vii) General management and administration.

8.2 Programme Design and Development

NOUN shall be committed to ensuring that its programmes are relevant, current, and promote the principles of self-learning. The curricula shall be designed and developed in a manner that is consistent with intended programme outcomes which meet stakeholders' (learners, employers, and national human resource) needs and expectations, and provide learners with a high quality learning experience. NOUN shall deploy effective assessment practices for its programmes that include internal and external moderation in tandem with the university's current strategic direction. Effective strategies for communication and interactivity using appropriate technology shall be selected and consistently implemented. Programme content shall be designed and developed to meet the requirements for deployment through a variety of media and technology (including eLearning and OERs).

NOUN shall ensure that:

- 8.2.1 There is a policy and clear procedures in place for programme design and development.
- 8.2.2 The University has a guiding policy for effective implementation of elearning
- 8.2.3 There are explicit pedagogical and technical criteria for the selection, production and adaptation of programme curricula.
- 8.2.4 There is a programme design team in place.
- 8.2.5 The processes for approval of programmes are strictly followed.
- 8.2.6 Needs assessment for proposed programmes are carried out to inform new programmes.
- 8.2.7 Proposed programmes are peer reviewed by external senior programme experts.
- 8.2.8 Assessment effectively measures the stated learning objectives.
- 8.2.9 Appropriate strategies for communication and interactivity are selected based on available technology, pedagogical needs and available human resources
- 8.2.10 There is a process in place for systematic review of programmes.

8.2.11 Appropriate technology and media needs are identified during the planning stage.

8.3 Course Design and Development

NOUN shall be committed to providing course content that promotes the principles of self-learning. The effectiveness of distance learning provisions is hinged upon the preparation of quality learning content. Therefore, NOUN shall give utmost priority to the development of course content by ensuring that the courses that make up each programme are designed and developed in line with national and international standards, reflect current research, and provide clearly stated learning objectives that are linked to assessment. In line with the University's drive to optimise its use of technology for delivery and supported learning, instructional content shall be designed and developed to meet the requirements for deployment through a variety of media and technology (including eLearning and OERs).

NOUN shall ensure that:

- 8.3.1 There is a policy and clear procedures in place for course design and development.
- 8.3.2 There are adequate arrangements to evaluate modification and enhancements made to course content to be delivered as e-learning content.
- 8.3.3 The processes for approval of course content are strictly followed.
- 8.3.4 Course development is team work rather than individual effort.
- 8.3.5 There are procedures to ensure that subject matter experts define course objectives, learning resources, learning activities as well as relevant assessment for the course. Courses are developed by qualified academics with relevant expertise and experience.
- 8.3.6 All courses are subjected to internal and external assessment measures to ensure high quality learning materials.
- 8.3.7 All course materials are subjected to content review and language editing.
- 8.3.8 All courses follow the institution's adopted instructional design process.
- 8.3.9 An appropriate mix of media and technology appropriate for effective course delivery is in the design of courses.
- 8.3.10 All courses meet the standards and requirements for deployment of the content through a variety of media and technology.

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- 8.3.11 All courses pass through necessary quality checks for plagiarism, content and language editing, instructional design, and field testing.
- 8.3.12 All sources utilised in the development of a course are properly attributed and referenced.
- 8.3.13 Content developed by the University will be released as OERs.
- 8.3.14 The University has a guiding policy for effective implementation of OER
- 8.3.15 Course and programmes offered through eLearning and as OERs have both vertical and horizontal articulation with offerings in the wider university and in other universities in the country. This facilitates student progression.
- 8.3.16 There is a mechanism in place to obtain feedback from learners on the quality of programme and course content, facilitation, and assessment to inform programme and course development and review.

8.4 Programme and Course Review

Programme and course content shall be reviewed periodically to ensure currency and accountability. The institution shall conduct regular reviews and improvement of its programme curricula and course content as may become expedient but not later than five years from the date of the first publication. In accordance with the university's strategic direction, new programmes shall be designed and developed to meet the requirements for deployment through a variety of media and technology while existing programmes shall be reviewed to meet the same standards.

NOUN shall ensure that:

- 8.4.1 There is a policy and clear procedures for the revision of programme/course materials and that the policy states the lifespan of a programme/course.
- 8.4.2 There is a systematic procedure to guide the review of programmes/course content.
- 8.4.3 Programme/course content are reviewed regularly to ensure that they remain up to date and appropriate for the target group.
- 8.4.4 The course team approach is adopted for the course review.
- 8.4.5 The procedure for course revision is strictly followed.
- 8.4.6 The revised programmes/courses are passed through quality checks for plagiarism, content, language, and format editing, and field testing.

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8.4.7 The sources of all quotations and content are properly acknowledged and copyrights are respected.

8.4.8 Information of original authors are maintained and acknowledged where applicable

8.4.9 Learning is enriched through the appropriate use of OER.

8.5 The Learner, Learner Support and Progression

NOUN shall ensure that there is a feedback mechanism in place, such that information obtained from learners' profiles informs policy formulation, course development and learner support services. NOUN shall put in place effective systems and platforms for learner support (learning resources, IAG, communication) and progression by leveraging on innovative technology. NOUN shall maintain a comprehensive database of its current and past learners that shall be updated regularly. Learner information shall form an integral component of programme planning and design.

NOUN shall:

8.5.1 Ensure that there are policies and clear procedures for the processes of admission and learner support.

8.5.2 Ensure that online student admission and registration facility is available throughout the year with counseling facilities at the study centres and the university's offices.

8.5.3 Admit applicants in consonance with national requirements and based on accurate advertised admission criteria without discrimination.

8.5.4 Properly communicate a response on admission applications to prospective learners.

8.5.5 Ensure timely issuance of student ID cards and learning materials to learners.

8.5.6 Ensure that a wide range of learner support services is provided in order to cater for the diverse needs of enrolled learners.

8.5.7 Ensure that learners are supported in developing requisite skills for learning via ODL and eLearning: ICT and information literacy, time-management, writing, effective study, note-taking, presentation, team building and self-spaced learning.

8.5.8 Develop systems to provide psycho-social support, leadership development, character building as well as clear guidelines for engagement for online interaction.

8.5.9 Encourage collaborative learning through peer support and discussion groups.

- 8.5.10 Put in place appropriate structures and mechanisms to provide timely feedback and communicate test and examination results to students.
- 8.5.11 Provide a student database that contains information such as student demographics, special needs, access to learning infrastructure, prior learning and work experience and information to track learner progression with a view to minimising attrition.
- 8.5.12 Ensure that there is a mechanism in place to obtain feedback from learners on the quality of programme and course content, facilitation and assessment that will inform programme and course content development and review.
- 8.5.13 Ensure that there is a timely feedback mechanism in place such that the information obtained on learners profile informs policy formulation, programme planning and design and student support services.
- 8.5.14 Provide adequate support for Informing, Advising, and Guidance (IAG), counseling, communication channels for contact and facilitation.
- 8.5.15 Evolve policies and mechanisms to ensure the adequacy of learning infrastructure (including virtual learning infrastructure, library services and facilities) for learning and research.
- 8.5.16 Ensure that there is a policy in place to guide the deployment of learning infrastructure (virtual library) and the provision of library/learning resources and services.
- 8.5.17 Provide an institutional repository in place that houses its learning resources and scholarly publications.
- 8.5.18 Ensure effective use of appropriate technologies for the deployment of library services, digital and information literacy.
- 8.5.19 Deploy technology as a learning resource and manage its activities in a technology enabled way.
- 8.5.20 Ensure that there is a timely turn-around time for marked assignments and for student queries.
- 8.5.21 Ensure that there are strategies in place for the technical, administrative and social support of its learners, and learners can access the university's support services electronically.

8.6 Assessment and Evaluation

NOUN shall evolve policies and mechanisms to ensure the integrity and credibility of its assessment and evaluation system. NOUN shall ensure that assessments and examinations align with programmes/courses' stated learning outcomes, and that the processes of the relevant units in the University involved in assessments and examinations are aligned. NOUN shall deploy technology to optimise the efficiency and to ensure the security of its assessment and examination processes.

NOUN shall ensure:

- 8.6.1 That there is an assessment and examination policy in place and clear procedures that adequately provide guidelines for all aspects of the assessment and examinations processes including moderation processes and other examinable aspects such as projects, practicum, and industrial attachment. The policy is reviewed regularly.
- 8.6.2 That there is a plagiarism policy in place to ensure originality of learners' assignments and projects.
- 8.6.3 All examination and assessment processes by the various units involved are well documented and aligned.
- 8.6.4 That there is proper management of all aspects of the processes of assessment and examinations such that they are in line with international standards.
- 8.6.5 That timelines for registration for examinations, opening and closing of TMA portals are strictly followed.
- 8.6.6 That procedures for assessment and examination processes such as question item development, examination venues, ratio of invigilators to students, examination misconduct, grading (conference marking), processing and moderation of results (internal and external) are well documented.
- 8.6.7 That there is adequate provision for learners to assess their progress such as self-assessment questions and online quizzes with feedback.
- 8.6.8 That there is a robust and well managed question bank in place to generate parallel question sets of comparable level of difficulty and to be administered through its Pen-on-Paper and e-examination platforms.
- 8.6.9 That the e-assessment and examination system allows for critical thinking, creativity,

and indepth knowledge of the subject matter.

- 8.6.10 That examination results are processed and released on schedule using appropriate technology.
- 8.6.11 That there is grading policy in place and it is well communicated to staff and students.
- 8.6.12 That assessment and evaluation processes reflect programme/course stated learning objectives.
- 8.6.13 That a mechanism is in place to ensure that assessment outcomes inform the improvement of teaching and learning processes.
- 8.6.14 That there is a robust LMS in place that links all relevant units (Faculties, Study Centres, DEA, ICT and Academic Registry) with appropriate levels of access.
- 8.6.15 That all assessment and examination related data (including examination scripts) are properly stored and archived in digital format for easy retrieval and for a minimum period of five years.
- 8.6.16 That there is a system in place to ensure the security and accountability of examination answer booklets that are distributed to, and retrieved from study centres.
- 8.6.17 That online platform and assessment types are appropriate for online assessment.
- 8.6.18 That there is continuous training on assessment and evaluation.

8.7 Media and Technology (including OER)

In accordance with its ICT driven strategic goal, NOUN shall pursue the effective deployment of IT processes to enhance the quality of students learning experience as well as to improve its administrative operations. To this end, the institution shall deploy a robust ICT infrastructure such as an integrated enterprise information system that will link, integrate, and share information among all its constituents. NOUN shall also deploy a variety of media and technology for the delivery of its programmes/course content, interaction between and amongst its learners and staff for facilitation and assessment. NOUN shall also evolve policies and deploy management systems to ensure the adequacy of learning infrastructure required to achieve stated learning outcomes.

In consonance with its commitment to make education accessible to all, NOUN shall

mainstream the use of Open Educational Resources (OERs) and MOOCs to enhance the learning experiences of its students.

NOUN shall ensure that

- 8.7.1 There is an ICT policy as well as an elearning policy in place, and it is updated regularly in keeping with technological advancements that enhance learning and delivery processes.
- 8.7.2 There is an eLearning strategy and policy in place that informs ICT infrastructural needs, and there are clear guidelines for its implementation
- 8.7.3 The e-learning infrastructure shall be updated regularly with relevant up-to-date media and technology deployed as necessary taking cognisance of learners' needs and circumstances.
- 8.7.4 There shall be a mechanism in place to obtain feedback from learners on the quality of programme and course content, facilitation, and assessment that will inform programme and course content development and review.
- 8.7.5 That learning content, scholarly publications shall be published as Open Educational Resources (OERs).

8.8 Human Resources and Development

NOUN shall develop a Human resource strategy, policies and mechanisms that ensure the provision, retention, and effective utilisation of qualified human resources /personnel. It shall also take into consideration criteria for the recruitment and placement of personnel with technical or specialized skills such as ICT, elearning, instructional designers, editors, and statisticians. Appropriate staff development programmes for capacity building using appropriate technologies shall be designed to equip staff to perform their role and tasks effectively.

NOUN shall:

- 8.8.1 Ensure that there is a policy and clear procedures for recruitment, training, monitoring of full time and part –time staff.
- 8.8.2 Have clearly stated guidelines to guide recruitment, retention, promotion and staff welfare.

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- 8.8.3 Put in place appropriate guidelines to ensure appropriate distribution and utilisation of human resources.
- 8.8.4 Put in place a robust Management Information and Records System (MIS) for effective management of the records of its human resource personnel located at its various sites including part-time personnel (e.g. tutorial facilitators).
- 8.8.5 Provide a systematic programme for continuous staff development in order to keep abreast of latest development in open and distance learning.
- 8.8.6 Ensure that academic workload is adequately measured in terms of design, preparation of course content, design and preparation of assessments; online facilitation; monitoring and management of courses; research and evaluation; and communication with learners;
- 8.8.7 Take into consideration that more time is required for the development of technology-supported programmes and courses because of its complexity. The workload of staff involved in online facilitation for learners shall be monitored.

8.9 Collaborations and Partnerships

NOUN shall, in tandem with its policies and procedures on collaboration and partnerships, enter into collaborative relationships with international bodies and ODL institutions with similar mandates with a view to internationalise its curricula, enhance the quality of its processes through peer review and promoting collaboration in research and capacity building. It shall also enter into partnerships with national agencies and other stakeholders on a need basis for joint programme offerings, utilisation of facilities, work placement services, employability initiatives.

NOUN shall:

- 8.9.1 Put in place policy, guidelines and procedures on collaboration and partnership and a designated unit responsible for updating, maintaining a database of all agreements and their review.
- 8.9.2 Pursue affiliation with relevant national and international institutions, agencies and/or organisations with similar goals and objectives for the utilisation of learning facilities (such as libraries, learning centres, ICT facilities and examination centres), staff/student exchange/training, research, joint programmes and conferences.

- 8.9.3 Ensure the documentation of all collaborative arrangements and affiliations entered into, by written agreements or MoUs between itself and collaborative partners with all relevant terms, scope, benefits, obligations, duration and review clearly spelled out.
- 8.9.4 Encourage collaborations and partnerships that aim at internationalisation of the institution, programmes and that which will transform its students into global citizens.

8.10 Research and Community Service/Engagement

NOUN shall provide an enabling environment to promote research and community engagement that are in consonance with institutional strategic plans and objectives. It shall also ensure a conducive environment for the conducting of multidisciplinary research that will have an impact and can also add value to the institution, its stakeholders and communities of engagement.

NOUN shall:

- 8.10.1 Ensure that there is a research policy in place that provides guidelines including research ethics for carrying out research by staff and students.
- 8.10.2 Ensure that there are regular training opportunities for staff and students on research knowledge, research ethics, and skills towards internationally accepted good practices to build individual and institutional capacity for research.
- 8.10.3 Ensure that there is a plagiarism policy in place to guarantee originality of research outputs by staff and students.
- 8.10.4 Ensure the relevance of research programmes to institutional and contemporary needs.
- 8.10.5 Encourage research for development and promote research output at individual and institutional levels.
- 8.10.6 Ensure that research outcomes are appropriately disseminated, utilised by the institution and relevant stakeholders. The institution shall establish and maintain an accurate, digitised archiving system and repository for research and records of research published by staff and students. It shall use it to boost the visibility and public image of the institution.

- 8.10.7 Ensure that institutional research ethics guidelines are strictly followed.
- 8.10.8 Provide a framework for monitoring and evaluation to improve the quality of research management, planning, and allocation of research funds.
- 8.10.9 Provide a conducive environment for staff to carry out research and consultancy services as well as research in ODL.
- 8.10.10 Utilise research findings to guide planning of its programmes and innovative practices shall be disseminated among stakeholders.
- 8.10.11 Carry out regular training of new personnel in research in harnessing the affordances of ICT.
- 8.10.12 Carry out capacity building for other stakeholders through its training institute in its capacity as the leading single mode institution in ODL in Nigeria and the West Africa sub-region.

8.11 Learning Infrastructure and Facilities

NOUN shall ensure the provision of adequate and appropriate infrastructural facilities for its academic programmes through open and distance learning. NOUN shall deploy appropriate technological innovations for its educational transactions to enrich students' learning experiences and will manage its institutional provisions in a technology-enabled way for effectiveness.

NOUN shall ensure that

- 8.11.1 It has a master plan that guides the physical infrastructural development of the institution and it is aligned to the institution's strategic plan.
- 8.11.2 It has a policy that guides the provision of study centre of varying types with facilities such as classroom spaces, laboratories and recreational facilities. The policy provides guidelines for the provision for infrastructure (e.g. study centres) by external stakeholders.
- 8.11.3 It has adequate physical facilities and equipment to conduct academic and administrative functions efficiently.
- 8.11.4 There are procedures, mechanisms, and system in place for the provision and maintenance of the institution's infrastructural facilities and equipment.
- 8.11.5 Library facilities use latest technology to facilitate learners' access to information to

- meet the stated learning outcomes.
- 8.11.6 The NOUN Virtual Library defines the basic principles of the library as a digital enterprise supports discovery and access of physical and digital knowledge resources for research, teaching and learning within the University community.
- 8.11.7 The NOUN Library also works in consonance with the University policies in support of its mission to provide information resources and services of the highest quality to sustain and enhance the University's teaching, research, professional and performance programs.
- 8.11.8 Study centres are adequately distributed across all the geopolitical zones including remote areas to ensure equity, access and learner satisfaction.
- 8.11.9 It has documented procedures for the recruitment, training and monitoring of staff at the Study Centres.
- 8.11.10 The Study Centres are covered and connected to each other and to headquarters in a technology enabled way to facilitate timely dissemination of communication.
- 8.11.11 Study centres are adequately funded to cover all their operations and a financial audit schedule is conducted at the end of each academic year to ensure sound financial management.
- 8.11.12 Study centres maintain records of current and projected learner enrolment figures and it tallies with recurrent expenditure
- 8.11.13 There are procedures in place for agreement with other institutions for students to use their facilities such as libraries or laboratories.
- 8.11.14 NOUN has mechanisms to regularly evaluate the adequacy and accessibility of resources and services for learners and procedures for appropriate remedial measures to address inadequacies.

8.12 Quality Assurance

NOUN shall put in place a quality management system to ensure continuous improvement of its institutional practices. The QA system shall be embedded at all levels of the institution to ensure the promotion of a quality culture. The Quality Assurance Unit shall be responsible for the development, deployment and implementation of QA at NOUN including staff and student induction on QA matters.

NOUN shall ensure that

- 8.12.1 A customised quality assurance management structure and system is put in place to ensure the implementation of robust institutional quality assurance arrangements.
- 8.12.2 All academic units and supporting units shall be represented in the quality assurance structure.
- 8.12.3 A quality assurance policy and manual (procedures and standards) shall be developed for monitoring and evaluating institutional systems.

The Quality Assurance Unit (QAU)

The Quality Assurance Unit shall be headed by a Unit Head and shall comprise other relevant staff. The Unit Head shall be directly responsible to the Vice Chancellor as shown in the diagram below. The Quality Assurance Unit shall oversee and monitor the implementation of the Quality Assurance Policy, supported by the University Quality Assurance Committee and other management structures at all institutional levels.

Functions and Responsibilities

The Unit shall be primarily responsible for deploying monitoring mechanisms of data capturing, collating, and analysis from various units of the University to facilitate accurate reporting on performance and improvement purposes. It shall also be responsible for capacity development of staff in business of quality assurance.

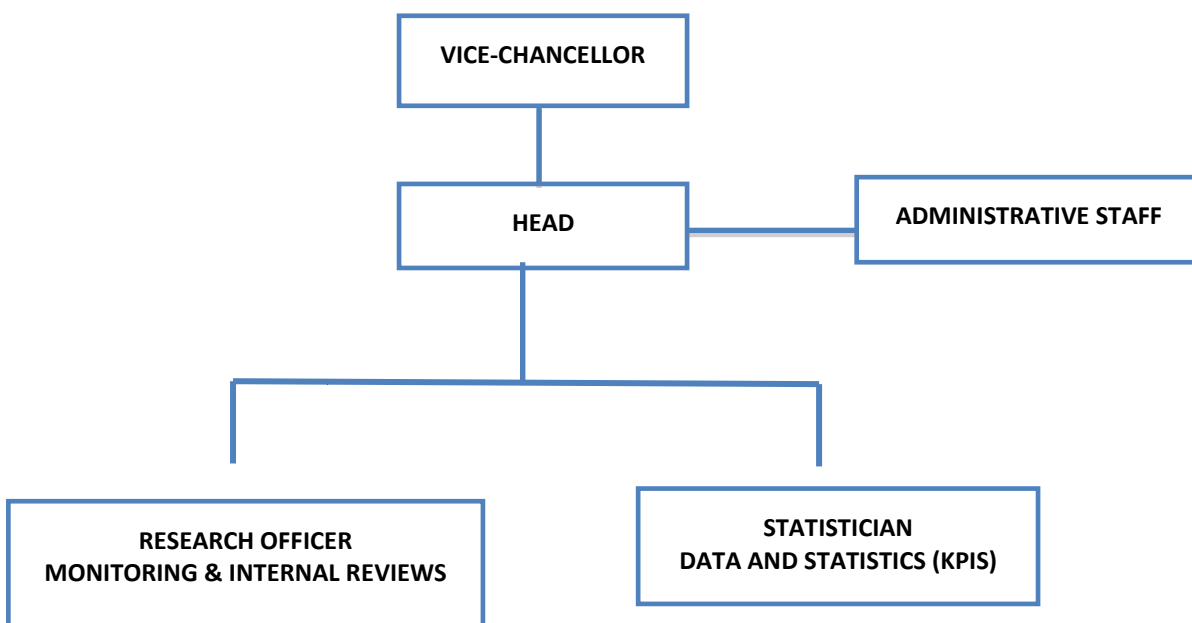


Fig.2: Organogram of the Quality Assurance Unit

8.12.5 The Quality Assurance Committee (QAC)

The QA Unit shall operate through a committee system, the members of which shall be appointed by the Vice-Chancellor. The QAC shall comprise of representatives from all academic and support units of the University and shall be chaired by the Head of the QA Unit. The QAC shall participate in the development, documentation, implementation and promote awareness about the QA policy, procedures and instruments to be used for continuous self-improvement.

The Head of the QA Unit shall present all documents to Senate through the office of the Vice Chancellor for approval.

Documents prepared by the Unit and Committee such as policies, manuals containing procedures and standards, instruments and templates shall be reviewed regularly in keeping with global good practices.

8.12.6 Accountability

The Vice-Chancellor shall be the highest authority on matters pertaining to quality assurance in NOUN. The Quality Assurance Unit (QAU) shall be headed by an academic head of unit who shall also chair University's Quality Assurance Committee (UQAC) on behalf of the Vice-Chancellor as shown in the diagram below.

The UQAC shall comprise representatives of all academic units and support units who shall represent Deans and Directors/Heads. The Deans/Directors/Heads of Faculties/Directorates/Centres/Units represented on the UQAC shall be accountable for the implementation of the quality assurance policy in their respective units.

The Senate shall be the highest approving body on quality assurance matters in NOUN. The QAU shall be directly responsible to the Vice Chancellor who is also the Chairman of Senate. The Head of the QAU shall be the chairperson of the UQAC.

The UQAC shall be accountable to the Vice Chancellor through the Head of the QA Unit. Representatives on the UQAC shall be responsible to the Head of their respective institutional units.

Deans/Directors and Heads shall be responsible for the implementation of the quality assurance policy and will be supported by QA committees that shall be constituted at the Faculty/Directorate/Centre/Unit level.

At the Faculty level, Heads of Departments will be responsible for the implementation of quality assurance procedures and review of their programmes and courses and shall be accountable to the Dean.

QA Committees at the Faculty/Directorate level shall be responsible for coordinating the implementation of the quality assurance policy and QA matters. They shall be accountable to the UQAC through the Dean/Director.

The quality assurance policy document shall be held by the Quality Assurance Committee and any revisions/changes shall be approved by the Vice-Chancellor.

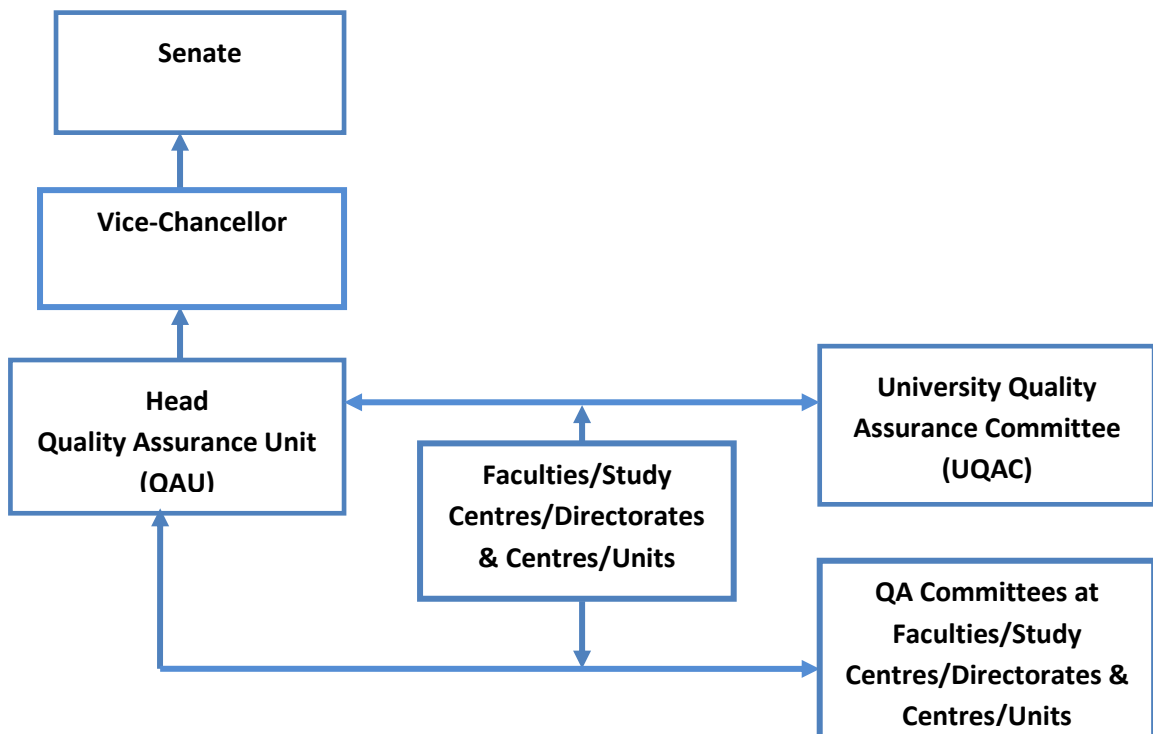


Fig. 3: Organogram showing the Quality Assurance Management structure.

9.0 Implementation of this Policy

The Quality Assurance Management Framework, structure and instruments comprising the scope, guidelines, quality assurance system, and management structure provide for the implementation of this policy.

- 9.1 It shall be operationalised through instruments such as procedures, standards and supporting documents as contained in the quality assurance manual which provide instructions and set out processes to implement the policy.
- 9.2 Clear implementation procedures, monitoring, evaluation, and cyclical review of institutional processes every five years will be put in place.
- 9.3 The QA Unit will facilitate monitoring, evaluation and review of institutional processes.
- 9.4 The QA Unit will monitor, evaluate and review the implementation procedures.
- 9.5 The QA approach will be implemented on a project management basis in respect of identified critical aspects of institutional processes.
- 9.6 New processes and procedures that will be introduced to operationalise the new QA system will be funded through annual Unit budgets.
- 9.7 A training plan indicating short, medium, and long term goals relating to upgrading staff knowledge and skills in the practice of QA will be put in place.
- 9.8 Institutional research on QA in ODL will inform continuous improvement plans to institutional processes.
- 9.9 The policy will take effect upon approval of the University Senate.
- 9.10 Review of the policy which shall be on a regular basis, shall be consultative, informed by principles of continuous improvement, legislative requirements, best practices, and the University's strategic plan.
- 9.11 A communication plan that will ensure that the new approach to QA is adequately communicated to all staff in such a way that each staff understands the approach and his/her role will be put in place.

10.0 Communication Plan

The QA policy shall be communicated mainly through workshops, print, and electronic publications to staff, students and stakeholders. The aims shall be to:

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- I0.1 Institutionalise the QA policy
- I0.2 Create awareness and knowledge of QA, framework and system
- I0.3 facilitate a common understanding of, and standardise operating procedures of all institutional processes; and
- I0.4 Provide a means of sharing information on best practices and guidance in the implementation of QA processes.

10.0 Acronyms

QA	Quality Assurance
UQAC	Quality Assurance Committee
QAU	Quality Assurance Unit
NOUN	National Open University of Nigeria
ICT	Information, Communication and Technology
ODL	Open and Distance Learning
MIS	Management Information and Records System
OER	Open Education Resources
MOOCs	Massive Open Online Courses
IAG	Information, Advertising, Guidance
DEA	Directorate of Examinations and Assessment
POP	Pen-on-Paper

11.0 Glossary of Terms

Accreditation: Accreditation refers to the award of a status to an institution based on the application of a set of pre-defined standards. It is primarily an outcome of evaluation by a regulatory body which leads to public confidence in the institution's programmes and products.

Assessment: In the context of quality assurance, assessment is the process of identifying and ensuring that appropriate internal procedures are in place and operational and that outcomes of academic programmes and activities are in accord with established standards.

Audit: Audit is a process of identifying and ensuring that appropriate internal quality assurance processes are in place and operational.

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External quality assurance: A summative evaluation process by which an institution's programmes and practices are adjudged and accredited against a set of minimum standards and benchmarks. The goal is compliance and accountability.

Guidelines: A flexible framework designed to assist and guide people to achieve the implementation of policy and procedures. Guidelines are a recommended approach but not mandatory.

Institutional practices: refers to all procedures, processes and systems by which the institution carries out its activities.

Internal quality assurance: A continuous process of self-assessment by which the institutional practices are monitored, maintained, and improved upon towards institutional excellence in service delivery and products. The goal is continuous self-improvement.

Internal reviews: A process of assessing and evaluating the capacity of an institution in terms of the effectiveness of its processes in achieving its stated objectives and the quality of its outputs. They are carried out regularly as part of an institution's Internal QA mechanism for monitoring, maintenance, and continuous improvement (a.k.a. Self-assessment or self-evaluation).

Policy: A set of documented principles and values or a written statement which defines the position or strategy in regard to the matter(s) the policy addresses. It provides direction, defines parameters and expected practices at the institution. Compliance is required.

Procedures: A set of ordered steps setting out how an activity should be performed in order to obtain a specified outcome or output. It must comply with all relevant policy and compliance is required.

Programme review: Programme review is a process of holistic appraisal of a course/programme and resources, with a view to its further improvement.

Quality: Quality at NOUN is characterised by its attributes and as reflected in the institution's vision and strategic goals as fitness for purpose, value for money and transformation of the learner.

Quality assurance: A continuous process of evaluating the quality of an institution's systems and through which the institution guarantees to itself and stakeholders that its teaching, learning and other services are consistently of a certain standard of excellence.

Quality control: The process by which outcomes are assessed to determine whether they

are of the prescribed standard.

Quality management: Process of overseeing all activities and tasks required to maintain and facilitate a desired level of excellence in the institution.

Quality Management System: A system of clearly defined organisational structures, processes, responsibilities and resources used to assure quality.

Quality evaluation: Process of examining and passing judgment on the appropriateness on the level of quality or standards.

Monitoring: A continuous process of reviewing all activities in order to ensure sustainable quality.

Stakeholders: The stakeholders include agencies (government and private) that control tertiary institutions, students, staff, individuals and groups that participate in or have responsibilities towards tertiary education in Nigeria.

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Dr. Tosin Awolalu	Sub-Chair
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Mr Adefemi O. Oyedipe	member
Mrs Francisca Anene	member
Dr. Juliet Inegbedion	(co-opted)
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