

CURRICULUM DEVELOPMENT AND DISTANCE EDUCATION



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INTRODUCTION

The Office of the Pro-Vice-Chancellor for Curriculum Development & Distance Education for the period under review addressed the issue of knowledge construction in a borderless society, given the challenges of WTO regulations on Tertiary Education. In response to these important trends in a volatile environment, the transformation of many systems at the University was undertaken. Not only were past achievements consolidated, but a four-pronged offensive was launched in four important areas, namely, Lifelong Learning, Internationalisation, Teaching and Learning and Quality Assurance.

LIFELONG LEARNING

The Office is fully conscious of the short shelf life of knowledge, skills and occupations, and the consequent need for continuing education and for regular updating of individual capacities and qualifications.

In this respect, the Office played a pre-eminent role in the development phase of the BSc (Hons) Police Studies and BSc (Hons) Nursing Programmes with the Universities of Portsmouth and Middlesex, respectively. The first cohort of students on these two Programmes graduated in 2002.

In line with the intention of the Government of Mauritius of transforming the Port Louis Harbour into a hub in the Indian Ocean, the Office was involved in negotiations with the Mauritius Ports Authority, the European Union and the Ministry of Economic Planning and Financial Services, with a view to mounting and delivering a postgraduate award in Port Management and Shipping Administration to the cadres of the Port Community and the Region.

INTERNATIONALISATION

The term internationalisation refers to the process of incorporating an international dimension into the teaching, research and service functions of higher education institutions.

The CD & DE Office, which also looks after international relations, embarked on professionalising the services relating to international students. An International Affairs Committee was set up to look into all matters relating to international students, specially in the region. Support to the foreign students englobes a range of activities including assistance to secure accommodation and integration into Mauritian society.

TEACHING AND LEARNING

The new paradigm shift in tertiary education emphasizes the privacy of the learner and the growing importance of methodological knowledge and analytical skills. Further, the clientele of the University is now increasingly of a heterogeneous nature: part-time and full-time students, working students, students on flexible learning, etc.

To accommodate these changes, the Office initiated the Training the Trainers Scheme for the University's academic staff. Academic staff were invited to enroll on the Postgraduate Certificate/Diploma/MSc in Teaching and Learning in Higher Education. The Programme was administered by the J Baguant Centre for Distance Learning and resource persons were from South African universities.

QUALITY ASSURANCE

The University Strategic Plan (1999-2004) assigned an important role to Quality Assurance and Enhancement. In this respect, in October 2002, a Quality Assurance Office, falling under the aegis of the Pro-VC, CDDE, was set up and is headed by a full-time Director of Quality Assurance to demonstrate the University's commitment to Quality.

The Terms of Reference of the Quality Assurance Office are to:

- 1 Provide leadership for Quality Assurance and Good Practice at the University;
- 1 Lead the development and oversee the implementation of University-wide policy in Quality Assurance;
- 1 Lead, co-ordinate and support Quality Assurance and Enhancement Management System across the University;
- 1 Contribute to the identification, development and promotion of the University's aims and objectives in the Strategic Plan; and
- 1 Contribute to the formulation of the University's Quality Assurance and Enhancement Policies and Practices and to their implementation and monitoring across the University and, where appropriate, in collaborative partner institutions.

Main Activities

The staff within the Quality Assurance Office contributed to the work of a number of Committees set up by CD & DE Committee and Senate and also helped in the publication of several documents, as indicated below:

- 1 Committee on Revisiting the University Regulations on General Entry Requirements for Admission to the University
The Committee, chaired by the Director, Quality Assurance reviewed the section on Approved Subjects for Admission to Schemes of Study to take into account the changes that have taken place over the years in subject combination/availability at O and A Level examinations.
- 1 Programme Validation Committee
Several meetings were held, under the Chairmanship of former Dean, Faculty of Agriculture Associate Professor S Goburdhun, with the partner institutions.
- 1 Adhoc Examinations Committee
An Adhoc Examinations Committee, comprising representatives of Faculties/Centres/Partner Institutions, under the Chairmanship of the Director, Quality Assurance was set up to consider

- (a) the report of Dr N Patel, Timetabling and Examinations Manager, University of Birmingham,

- pertaining to examination-related matters at the University of Mauritius and particularly concerning the establishment of an Examinations Office, and
- (b) the proposal of conducting examinations on a yearly basis for new intakes.

Its recommendations were approved by Senate on 18 June 2003.

1 Sub-Committee on Assessment

On the recommendation of the Committee chaired by the Dean, Faculty of Science, Professor S D D V Rughooputh, module weighting would be introduced and would be applicable as from academic year 2003/2004 for fresh cohorts. The assignment of weighting for modules should be relevant to the level of complexity of the modules. The change in module code and in the computation of CPA/GPA resulting from the introduction of module weighting was approved by Senate on 24 July 2003.

1 Information on Undergraduate Programmes Handbook 2003/2004

A Handbook on Information on Undergraduate Programmes 2003/2004 was designed prior to advertisement of undergraduate Programmes to assist prospective students in their choice for a first degree at the University of Mauritius. The Handbook contains information on the entry requirements, credit system, duration, list of modules, programme structures and brief outlines of modules.

1 General Information to Students 2003/2004 Handbook

The Handbook was updated to accommodate new information and also changes brought to regulations by Senate.

Procedural and Policy Guidelines

1 Exemptions, interruption of studies and special cases

The regulations governing exemptions, interruption of studies and special cases were streamlined and updated.

1 Setting up of Programme Boards of Studies

Senate at its 450th (Ordinary) meeting held on 18 June 2003 approved the setting-up of a Board of Studies (Departmental or Inter-Departmental) for each Programme of Studies at the University, together with its composition and terms of reference.

Senate also approved the procedures for the approval of new Programmes of Studies.

1 Regulations for Postgraduate Programmes

Regulations were harmonized for Taught Postgraduate Programmes in relation to assessment, module codes and self-study modules.

1 Multiple Exit points

Multiple exit points, where applicable, were introduced in undergraduate and postgraduate Programmes of Studies.

TRANSFERABLE OUTREACH SKILLS PROGRAMMES (TOSPs)

The main aim of providing TOSPs is to enable a student to be an effective communicator, be able to negotiate and take responsibilities when working in groups, and to provide an opportunity for personal development and social interaction.

The TOSPs offered during the Academic Year 2002/2003 on a University-wide basis were:

TOSPs Offered	Period
Assembling and Troubleshooting Your Own PC	February-April 2003
Windows and Linux - Know Both Worlds	June 2003

There was a noticeable increase in the number of students who participated in the above two TOSPs having an IT dimension. The TOSP SPSS for Data Analysis in Management Research (17 May to 17 July 2003) and Case Study Methodology in Management Research (31 May to 16 July 2003) were Outreach Programmes initiated by the Faculty of Law and Management under the Faculty banner.

CONFERENCES/MEETINGS ATTENDED AND VISITS UNDERTAKEN

Professor I. Fagoonee, Pro-Vice-Chancellor:

- (i) Visited Pretoria Technikon from 8 to 12 September 2002 in connection with Quality Assurance Audit
- (ii) Visited CDAC, Infosys, IIIT (Bangalore) and the Ministry of IT, India from 12 December 2002 to 4 January 2003
- (iii) Attended the 12th Session UNCLCS, New York from 28 April to 3 May 2003
- (iv) Visited Brunel University from 5 to 7 May 2003, as University Professor
- (v) Attended the Conference on Legal and Scientific Aspects of Continental Shelf Limits in Iceland from 20 June to 1 July 2003
- (vi) Visited the ICIPE, Nairobi in connection with the PhD Research Work of Miss Aruna Manrakhan from 13 to 20 August 2003

Dr H. Li Kam Wah, Director, Quality Assurance:

- (i) Participated in a mock Quality Assurance Audit at Technikon Pretoria, South Africa from 8 to 12 September 2002.
- (ii) Attended the Residential Seminar on National Qualifications Framework, Standards Setting, Qualifications and Related Issues organized by the Mauritius Qualifications Authority at Indian Resorts, Mauritius from 20 to 22 June 2003.
- (iii) Participated in the Validation Workshop for Common Country Assessment for Mauritius, De Chazal Du Møe, 8 July 2003.
- (iv) Attended the 15th International Conference on Assessing Quality in Higher Education at the University of Western Cape, South Africa from 14 to 16 July 2003.

VISIT FROM OVERSEAS RESOURCE PERSON

Dr E Genis, Chief Director of Quality Promotion, Technikon Pretoria, South Africa, visited the University from 17 to 20 June 2003. The purpose of the visit was to overview the different quality assurance mechanisms in place or required at the University of Mauritius, and to monitor and update the University of Mauritius Quality Management System.