

TERTIARY EDUCATION COMMISSION

Quality Audit Report University of Mauritius

Third Cycle Audit

(August 2018)

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Réduit

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Tertiary Education Commission is a statutory body under the aegis of the Ministry of Education and Human Resources, Tertiary Education and Scientific Research. The Commission has as objects to allocate government funds, promote, plan, develop and coordinate tertiary education in Tertiary Education institutions under its purview in order to achieve an accountable and responsive tertiary system of international standards. Since 2005 the objects of the Commission has been extended to include the responsibility to promote and maintain high quality standards in post-secondary education through appropriate quality assurance and accreditation processes.

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1. Executive Summary

In August 2018, the Tertiary Education Commission (TEC), by virtue of the Tertiary Education Commission Act, conducted the third cycle quality audit of the University of Mauritius (UoM). The UoM is the first tertiary education institution (TEI) in Mauritius to have undergone a third cycle quality audit. This Report contains the main findings of the Audit Panel with regard to quality assurance at the University, specifically concerning the progress made by the UoM to address the recommendations made in the Second Cycle Quality Audit Report (2012) and the two thematic areas covered during the quality audit, namely, ‘Student Experience’ and ‘Curriculum Development’.

In line with Quality Handbook (2010) of the TEC, the findings of the Audit Panel have been formulated as commendations, highlighting areas of good practices and recommendations to serve as guide for institutional improvement. The views of the Audit Panel have been formulated taking into consideration the Self-Evaluation Report (SER) submitted by the UoM in May 2018, additional information as requested by the Audit Panel and the findings of the Audit Panel during the Audit Visit.

The Audit Panel formed the view that the UoM remains well placed to offer a unique and vital role in the Mauritian higher education system, especially, in the process of nation building. The University can celebrate pockets of good practices such as the University-Government linkages such as the Agri-Tech Park initiative, efficient facilities management practices, a responsive finance team and commendable emerging younger academic talents.

However, in its efforts to strengthen and celebrate itself as the national and regional higher education leader, there are several challenges confronting the University at this time. These challenges must be identified, acknowledged and forthrightly addressed through bold measures such as:

- Making relevant decades-old practices and streamlining of university processes;
- Confronting untransformed and resistant staff attitudes towards changing higher education and workplace demands;
- Holding accountable poor performance by structures and staff, including performance management and improvement;
- Proactively engaging with Government, industry and society;

- Renewing the curriculum for relevance and the future of work;
- Comprehensively reviewing and restructuring of its Quality Assurance Unit.
- Aligning academic and academic support structures in favour of a 21st century university that provides a high quality student experience for student success; and
- Embracing change and modernisation at all levels.

The Audit Panel is particularly concerned by one such challenge which relates to the UoM's organisation culture, which could be seemingly characterised as a university in which many staff may have become complacent and disengaged in terms of outdated ways of thinking and operating, in spite of the changing regional and national higher education environment. The Audit Panel gained the impression that, as the national flagship university, the UoM is in a comfort zone and there is little sense of urgency to respond to a number of threats and opportunities facing the University. If not cautious and quick to re-imagine itself through fundamentally positioning and modernising itself, the UoM has the potential to be considered irrelevant and self-referential in the eyes of industry, society and students.

The Quality Audit which occurs every five years presents valuable opportunity for the University leadership and stakeholders to assess its quality performance. It would be expected that every effort is made to make the most of this opportunity. The Panel was disappointed that the University, having arranged for the audit visit earlier this year, was unable to ensure that key leaders were appropriately available to meet with the Audit Panel as expected for a TEC Audit. The Audit Panel finds it unacceptable that the Registrar, who should be demonstrating a high level of leadership, was unavailable to meet with the Panel. This was important, given that one of the themes under consideration, namely that the Student Experience is under that portfolio.

The Audit Panel also raised strong concerns about the limited usefulness of SER which was submitted to the TEC for the purpose of this Quality Audit. Despite the fact the UoM is being audited for its third quality audit, the Panel observed that the expertise and leadership demonstrated by the Quality Assurance Directorate was of great concern. In many instances, it was left to the Audit Panel to establish the significance of major documents, given the limited relevance of the SER and a poorly managed quality assurance system.

The Second Cycle Quality Audit Report (2012) contained 25 recommendations which the UoM was required to address over the period (2012-2017). The Audit Panel noted with dismay that a significant number of these recommendations have not been comprehensively addressed. While the University seemed to have prioritised the implementation of the Visitors' Report over the TEC Audit Report, the Audit Panel formed the view that in many instances, the Quality Assurance Office at the UoM is no longer responding to the emerging and changing needs of the University. Although the SER (2018) of the UoM refers to several measures taken by various instances at the University to address the recommendations of the QA Report (2012), the Panel formed the view that these actions were taken in isolation. Consequently, there is limited analytical evidence to confirm whether the measures taken to address the recommendations of the QA Report (2012) have led to institutional and academic quality improvements.

With respect to the thematic areas, reviewed during the third cycle quality audit, the Audit Panel formed the view that curriculum development processes at the UoM are well structured. A number of programmes in the UoM portfolio have been successful in obtaining professional accreditation with foreign professional accrediting bodies. These professional accreditations are particularly useful as they provide the University with external benchmarking and improvement opportunities. The Audit Panel, however, formed the view that quality assurance at the UoM must not rely on these isolated departmental initiatives to raise academic standards.

Furthermore, the UoM must consider revising dated and expensive mechanisms such as the external examiner system, in favour of much larger and more effective range of external benchmarking. To this end, the UoM would do well to develop a university-wide curriculum strategy that gives context and rationale to faculty-specific initiatives. Also, as the national flagship university, the UoM is encouraged to play a greater role in public life by deepening its engagement with industry and by strengthening the University's value creation role to its external stakeholders.

The Audit Panel is particularly appreciative of the UoM to have embraced Student Experience as the second theme for this audit. The concept of student experience is relatively new to Mauritius and it is the first time that a higher education institution is being audited for

same. For this purpose, the UoM conducted a university-wide a Student Experience Survey (2018), with a view to determine the students' satisfaction with respect to the student life cycle at the UoM. The findings of this survey were communicated to the Audit Panel in the SER (2018). However, based on current international trends in the area of student experience; the Audit Panel formed the view that the university must consider aligning "faculty based" student experience specificities to a university-wide model for managing student success. Concurrently, quality assurance at the University must be extended from its focus on formal academic components to cover a more comprehensive range of university core areas, including the student experience and support. The UoM is encouraged to change its perspective from an organisational culture centred on "institutional structures" to one that is focussed on "Student Success".

2. Overview of the Audit

2.1 Background

The TEC is the statutory body under the aegis of the Ministry of Education and Human Resources, Tertiary Education and Scientific Research (MoE&HR,TE&SR), responsible for ensuring and monitoring quality in tertiary education institutions. This Report of the Third Cycle Quality Audit of the University of Mauritius is published by the TEC, further to a cyclical institutional audit carried out in publicly funded tertiary education institutions (TEIs) in Mauritius. The Quality Audit Handbook (2010) of the TEC provides the criteria and guidelines necessary to assist institutions in preparing for the audits.

The Third Cycle Quality Audit of the TEC was based on the ‘fitness for purpose’ approach, which is widely used by quality assurance agencies worldwide. The audit seeks to verify as to whether the TEIs have the necessary internal processes, structures and regulations in place to achieve their stated strategic objectives and to improve the standards of their awards.

For the purpose of this report, quotations and references from the Self-Evaluation Report are referenced in the Report as (SER). The membership of the Audit Panel is provided at Appendix A and Appendix B defines the abbreviations and technical terms used in the Report.

2.2 Terms of Reference of the Auditors

- a) To make a commitment to act as a quality auditor for the institution identified as per the schedule worked out and participate in the pre-audit workshop and the audit.
- b) To act within the scope as approved by the TEC Board in the *Quality Audit Handbook (2010)*.
- c) To evaluate as part of its scope the progress made by the University of Mauritius in addressing the recommendations of the second cycle quality audit and two themes for quality audits i.e. Curriculum Design and Student Experience.
- d) To be objective at all times, ensuring that they are non-judgmental in their approach; that they are aware of possible personal bias.
- e) To observe confidentiality.
- f) To give full support to the Chairperson.

- g) To work as a team, ensuring that members are working in harmony with a view to accomplishing a fact finding mission grounded on the Self-Evaluation Report.
- h) To identify good practice as well as unhealthy practice and make necessary recommendations.
- i) To ensure that there is agreement among the members on the conclusions of the panel.
- j) To fully co-operate in getting the audit report ready within two months of the audit by writing the specific observations made and checking with the Tertiary Education Commission's Secretariat to see that the report is a true reflection of the panel's findings.

2.3 The Audit Process

The Audit Panel was appointed by the TEC to undertake the Third Cycle Quality Audit of UoM. The SER was submitted to the Commission on 18 May 2018 and same was circulated to the Audit Panel members for their views and comments, and for additional information that may be required prior to the Quality Audit exercise. UoM was informed of the programme of work of the Audit during a meeting with UoM on 06 August 2018. UoM was also informed of necessary arrangements required during the audit and the additional information requested by the Panel and the interview schedule was also discussed with representatives of UoM for the smooth running of the audit.

The first meeting of the Panel was held on 26 August 2018 to examine the information submitted by UoM and to finalise its programme of work for the Audit exercise. The Audit exercise started on 28 August 2018 and ended on 31 August 2018. The Audit Panel split into groups on 29, 30 and 31 August 2018 for interview sessions with the Heads of Department, academic staff, students, stakeholders and individuals for the open session. The UoM in consultation with the TEC agreed on two themes for the Audit, namely 'Curriculum Design' and 'Student Experience'. In all, the Audit Panel spoke with around 230 people in some 35 interview sessions during the Audit Visit, including:

- Senate Members
- Council Members
- Pro-Chancellor
- Vice-Chancellor
- Pro Vice-Chancellor Academia
- Pro Vice-Chancellor Planning & Resources

- Deans of Faculties and Director of Centres
- Advisory Committee Members
- Members of the Academic Staff
- Heads of Department
- Members of the Quality Assurance Office
- Members of the Faculty Quality Assurance Team
- Members of the Finance Section
- Members of the Registrar Office & Examinations Office
- Members of the Admissions and Student Records Office & Student Welfare Office
- Work-Based Coordinators
- Chief of Facilities and Team & Health & Safety Office members
- Stakeholders from the Industry and Employers
- Alumni
- Staff Unions
- Student Union
- Students.

Open sessions were also available for any member of the University community to meet with the Audit Panel. Some staff members took advantage of this opportunity to meet with the Panel.

This Report relates to the situation current at the time of the Audit Visit, which ended on 31 August 2018, and does not take account of any changes that may have occurred subsequently. The Report records the conclusions reached by the Audit Panel based on the SER provided by UoM, supplementary information requested as well as information gained through interviews, discussions and observations during the Audit Visit. While every attempt has been made to reach a comprehensive understanding of the University's quality arrangement within the scope of the audit, the Report does not identify every aspect of quality assurance and its effectiveness or shortcomings.

It is expected that UoM will use these findings to strengthen its quality management systems with the objective of facilitating quality improvement in all spheres. The decision about the

manner in which this is to be done is the prerogative of UoM. It is expected that UoM will submit an improvement plan based on the TEC Audit Report.

TEC expresses its appreciation to the UoM for the cooperative manner in which it has participated in the audit process. TEC also thanks the UoM for providing additional information and access to key documents to the Audit Panel during the course of the Audit.

3. Commendations and Recommendations

3.1 Commendations

1. The UoM is commended for repositioning itself through bold and innovative measures as proposed in the Turnaround Plan (2017). pg.27
2. The UoM is commended for re-orienting its focus to engage in consultative meetings with the Government and industry with a view to increase linkages and be demand-driven rather than supply driven. pg.30
3. The UoM is commended for the measures it has taken to redress its financial deficit and for implementing cost efficiency measures necessary for its longer term institutional viability. pg.33
4. The UoM is commended for its initiative to provide students with limited psychological services, as needed. The University is encouraged to expand its pastoral and counselling services to promote the wellbeing of the University community at large. pg.43
5. The Department of Medicine is commended for its initiative in seeking regular student feedback to inform teaching and learning in its modules. pg.56
6. The UoM is commended for the initiatives to benchmark some of its programmes internationally and for having obtained recognition by professional and international recognition bodies. pg.59
7. The Examinations Office is commended for the rigorous processes in place and for effectively ensuring the security of examinations. pg.64

3.2 Recommendations

1. The Audit Panel recommends that the UoM Council and Senate demonstrate increased proactive leadership to ensure that the University is continuously embracing up-to-date good practice and is geared to achieve its Vision of becoming a leading international tertiary education provider as a research-led university. pg.29
2. The Audit Panel recommends that the UoM includes in its organisational structure, an appropriate mechanism to identify and monitor institutional risks. pg.29
3. The Audit Panel recommends that the UoM develops an inclusive approach to improve institutional ownership and enhance internal communication with a view to foster trust and engage productivity across all levels at the University. pg.30

4. The Audit Panel recommends that the UoM Council consider aligning the duration of mandate for senior executive positions with the international good practice of five years renewable, with a view to providing the UoM with a more stable and consistent leadership. pg.31
5. The Audit Panel recommends that the UoM finalises a comprehensive staff development plan which can be used in decisions related to staff promotion. pg. 33
6. The Audit Panel recommends that the UoM defines clear KPIs for the various levels of employees at the University and that they are used in the Performance Management process. pg.34
7. The Audit Panel recommends that the UoM develops a new framework for quality assurance that covers all the core areas of the University through the identification of appropriate KPIs, standards, reward and accountability mechanisms aligned with good international practices. pg.35
8. The Audit Panel recommends that the UoM establishes a function which deals with data analytics and supports institutional planning, decision making, management and monitoring of all key institutional processes. It would also facilitate effective locally and internationally benchmarking. pg.35
9. The Audit Panel recommends that the UoM considers introducing a university-wide model for managing student success which aligns faculty-specific models, beyond the current focus on the quality of formal teaching to take account of the broader student experience and support. pg.37
10. The Audit Panel recommends that the UoM reviews its student selection process to provide the University with a holistic assessment of its recruits. pg.38
11. The Audit Panel recommends that the UoM develops a student management information system that will enable the University to personalise its student services to the needs of various categories of students. pg.38
12. The Audit Panel recommends that the UoM finds ways to engage students in the University's community and social life, to better develop good citizenship and social identity and solidarity among its future graduates. pg.39
13. The Audit Panel recommends that the UoM reviews its student feedback mechanism and separates same from accessing examination results to enhance its credibility and

reliability, and ensure that it will take into account the core areas related to the student life cycle. pg.40

14. The Audit Panel recommends that the UoM develops and demonstrates a more proactive approach to supporting and improving the student campus experience. pg41
15. The Audit Panel recommends that the UoM establishes a complaints resolution protocol which clearly defines the service and response timelines that students should expect. This will provide a basis to assess the effectiveness of the complaints resolution process. pg.41
16. The Audit Panel recommends that the UoM puts in place appropriate accountability mechanisms to ensure that doctoral research students are not unduly penalised due to unreasonable long delays in the various stages of their research journey. pg.42
17. The Audit Panel recommends that UoM reviews its internationalisation strategy to ensure that international students benefit from adequate support to ensure their academic success, integration into Mauritian society, as well as give attention to their safety and wellbeing. pg.44
18. The Audit Panel recommends that the University develops a strategic plan for its library that includes the impact of technological advancements, future growth plans, continuous quality review initiatives, improvement plans, procurement plans, study areas and ensure that they are aligned with the academic programmes and research agenda. pg.46
19. The Audit Panel recommends that the UoM reviews and considers the use of appropriate digital means of communication, including its website, to enhance communication with students, staff and stakeholders, and to foster inclusiveness on its campus. pg.47
20. The Audit Panel recommends that the UoM implements an integrated and multifaceted career strategy for its undergraduate and postgraduate students. This would start with the process of employment creation as part of students' first engagement with the University and conclude with students moving seamlessly into the workforce. pg.49
21. The Audit Panel recommends that the UoM improves its market intelligence to inform the identification of new programmes and areas of study, by making more proactive

use of University-industry coordinators and faculty-driven market research techniques. pg.52

22. The Audit Panel recommends that the UoM develops a university-wide curriculum strategy that gives context and rationale to the faculty specific initiatives and gives public life to the University's academic vision. pg.52
23. The Audit Panel recommends that the UoM develops and acquires internal capability in the form of one or more curriculum development specialists, and a teaching and learning specialist who would assist in providing relevant expertise and consolidate institutional educational intelligence. pg.53
24. The Audit Panel recommends that UoM harmonises its concept of outcome-based learning in its programmes across all its faculties and affiliated institutions, as relevant. pg.53
25. The Audit Panel recommends that the UoM develops a university-wide curriculum strategy which gives context and rationale to faculty-specific initiatives, avoids productivity decline and gives public life to the university's academic vision. pg.53
26. The Audit Panel recommends that the UoM develops an institutional approach to benchmarking of academic processes and standards development, and in other core processes of the University. pg.53
27. The Audit Panel recommends that the UoM develops a graduate profile document which takes into account desired graduates attributes and that its programmes are responsive to national and regional needs. pg.54
28. The Audit Panel recommends that the UoM reconsiders its over-reliance on the external examiner system as the sole programme review mechanism in favour of new and less expensive strategies. pg.55
29. The Audit Panel recommends that the UoM considers its use of surveys as a means for review and continuous improvement of programmes. pg.56
30. The Audit Panel recommends that the UoM firmly schedule programme reviews which would drive a major curriculum reform in all programmes. It would also allow for the streamlining and integration of programmes and which would suggest ways to achieve the vision and strategic intent of the University. pg.57

31. The Audit Panel recommends that the UoM enhances its programme design and delivery through increased and sustainable collaborations with industry or employers. pg.58
32. The Audit Panel recommends that the UoM considers developing market intelligence and development capability for consultancy purposes through appointing one or more strategy and finance specialists to improve the university's reach and national impact. pg.58
33. The Audit Panel recommends that the UoM develops a coherent approach to the development, implementation and monitoring of academic standards. pg.60
34. The Audit Panel recommends that the UoM institutionalises continuous professional development of academics as an embedded requirement for staff development pg.60
35. The Audit Panel recommends that the UoM institutionalises its Teaching and Learning Framework to align its practices with international good practice. pg.62
36. The Audit Panel recommends that the University implements, as part of broader curriculum reform, a range of cross-university programmes to develop student academic literacy and broader academic skills. pg.64

4. Progress on Recommendations of the 2nd Cycle Quality Audit (2012)

The 2nd Cycle Quality Audit Report (2012), hereafter referred to as the QA Report (2012), of the University of Mauritius (UoM), contains 25 Recommendations which the University was required to address during the period 2012-2017. In 2013, the UoM started to address the implementation of these recommendations, through an Action Plan. However, based on the Self-Evaluation Report (2018) submitted by the UoM and the findings of the audit visit, the Audit Panel notes with dismay that the recommendations made in the QA Report (2012) have not been addressed comprehensively. Apart from the recommendations which required high level policy decisions, attempts to address most of the remaining recommendations appear to have been made in silos through ad-hoc measures taken by individual departments. As a result, there was limited evidence to support the claims made in the SER about any progress or institutional improvement made at the UoM further to the actions taken.

The Audit Panel formed the view that the serious failure to implement the Action Plan is attributed to some important institutional weaknesses which the UoM has cumulated over the last five years. These pertain mostly to a significant deterioration in the core quality assurance functions of the University. The Panel formed the view that quality assurance at the UoM is characterised by an organisational culture of cumbersome and highly bureaucratic institutional processes, with limited evidence of monitoring and quality improvement. Consequently, the implementation of the QA Report (2012) lacked an overarching institutional arrangement, which would have provided the UoM, with a platform to evaluate the effectiveness of the measures taken. This, according to the Panel raises serious concern about the fitness for purpose of the quality assurance framework at the UoM.

In view of the fact that SER (2018), contained limited analytical data and reflection to support the claims on the progress made by the University in addressing the recommendations of the QA Report (2012), this section of the Report will provide a macro-assessment of the progress made by the UoM in this regard.

Governance & Strategic Planning

R(2012)1: It is recommended that the University of Mauritius undertake an expert, external review of its governance models, to ensure they are fit for purpose and allow for a clear separation between governance and management of the University.

R(2012)2: It is recommended that the University of Mauritius refresh its strategic plan by reviewing the KPIs in the plan and ensures that the plans and the KPIs can be cascaded through both academic and administrative units and applied in staff performance management.

R(2012)14: It is recommended that the University of Mauritius review the adequacy and coverage of its academic policies to ensure comprehensiveness without duplication.

R(2012)1 has been addressed by the UoM, further to the Visitor's Report. Changes in the governing structure and the statutes of the UoM have been effected to address the recommendation.

R(2012)2 has been partially addressed through the development of the Strategic Plan (2015-2020). However, the Audit Panel is of the view that the KPIs in the Strategic Plan (2015-2020) needs to be more specific to the context of the UoM. The Audit Panel was presented with a Turnaround Plan 2017, which is expected to bring new impetus and align the strategic operations of the University with the Strategic Plan (2015-2020).

The Audit Panel is of the view that the UoM must provide for regular assessment and monitoring of the KPIs through appropriate internal reporting and accountability mechanisms across all levels of the university structure, with a view to ensure that the University is being steered in the approved strategic directions.

R(2012)14 has not been addressed comprehensively. The SER (2018) has attempted to demonstrate implementation of the recommendation through ad-hoc measures. However, the Audit Panel was not convinced that the actions taken were related to the requirements of the recommendation.

Quality Assurance

R(2012)3: It is recommended that the University of Mauritius conceptualise its quality management system in such a way that it moves beyond compliance and focuses on provision of good quality teaching and learning, research and community engagement.

R(2012)4: In order to make better use of existing data and improve the quality of information at the University of Mauritius, it is recommended that the University establish an internal institutional research function that would foster the development of appropriate institutional systems for benchmarking, student and employer surveys, and impact studies.

R(2012)5: It is recommended that the University of Mauritius take urgent and sustained action to ensure effective quality assurance of standards and teaching at all its affiliated teaching institutions and clarify the accountabilities of these institutions to the University as the institution that awards the degree.

The Audit Panel noted with concern that the R(2012)3 has been left to deteriorate. The role, responsibilities, and functions of the actual Quality Assurance Unit are not responding adequately to the basic quality assurance and standard development requirements at the UoM. The Audit Panel is of the view that the UoM must urgently undertake a comprehensive review of its quality assurance system.

R(2012)4 has not been addressed by the UoM. The Audit Panel is of the view that the UoM must align with international best practices and use analytical data for informed institutional planning, management, and evaluation of performances. For this purpose, the University must prioritise the recruitment of a qualified institutional researcher and a statistical analyst.

R(2012)5 has been partially addressed through a review conducted in 2014 with regard to examination processes at the affiliated institution. However the Audit Panel was not presented with any evidence to indicate whether the UoM has been assuring the quality of standards and teaching at its affiliated institutions.

Resources (Infrastructure and Finance)

R(2012)7: It is recommended that the University of Mauritius find innovative ways to develop and resource a five-year growth plan for its library that will ensure currency and sustainability.

R(2012)11: It is recommended that the University of Mauritius develop an ICT policy that addresses the use of all IT facilities, including an IT security policy and disaster recovery plan, and formalise its structures and processes for governance of IT at the University.

The Audit Panel was presented with a comprehensive development plan to address R(2012)7. While the Audit Panel appreciates the various initiatives of the UoM, to modernise and resource the library, the Panel noted with concern that during the period 2012-2017, not much has been done to address this recommendation. The UoM is advised to expedite the modernising of its library with a view to ensure that the academic support it provides, is commensurate with a modern university.

R(2012)11 has been partially addressed through the development of in-house management information systems. The UoM has also developed several ICT policies which guide the use of information technology at the University. The Audit Panel is of the view that the IT governance at the UoM can be further improved through more user friendly and updated applications. The UoM must also alert internal and external stakeholders on IT security issues, especially with regard to data protection requirements.

Finance

R(2012)12: It is recommended that the University of Mauritius, with the assistance of external expertise, comprehensively redevelop its budget model, to ensure greater transparency throughout the process and appropriate incentives for good performance by faculties.

R(2012)13: It is recommended that the University of Mauritius establish realistic plans to achieve, over the medium-term, the allocation of a sustainable proportion of the University budget to salaries, and thus to achieve an increase in the availability of funds available for non-salary expenditure.

R(2012)12 was addressed in 2015, through the commissioning of the KPMG Advisory Services Ltd to review specific aspects of the UoM's operations. The findings of the KPMG Advisory Ltd are under consideration by the UoM.

R(2012)13 was addressed in 2014, after consultations with the MoFED. Furthermore, the

Turnaround Plan 2017 of the UoM, has identified five major priority areas which may be developed to improve the financial situation of the UoM whilst at the time enrich the student experience at the university.

Staffing

R(2012)8: It is recommended that the Council of University of Mauritius urgently finalise the recruitment and appointment of the Vice-Chancellor, following which the incumbent must participate in the selection and appointment of the two Pro-Vice-Chancellors.

R(2012)9: It is recommended that the University of Mauritius develop a professional human resources function, clearly designed to be responsible for all staff, academic and non-academic. The direct reporting line for this function should signal both its importance to the University and its impartiality with respect to academic and administrative staff.

R(2012)10: It is recommended that the University of Mauritius revise its processes for the appointment of Deans and Heads of Department, to ensure these positions are filled competitively, and that the University of Mauritius ensure that these positions have authority over their budgets.

R(2012)16: It is recommended that the University of Mauritius ensure that the number of full-time academic staff is sufficient to create an enabling teaching and learning environment for students across all faculties and that the practice of the over-use of part-time lecturers be discouraged.

R(2012)8 was addressed by the UoM, the position of the Vice-Chancellor has been filled and the Pro Vice-Chancellors have also been appointed.

In response to R(2012)9, the UoM has recruited a Director of Human Resources, who is responsible for the University staffing strategy, for providing advice and guidance on organisational development, recruitment and promotion of staff.

R(2012)10 has been addressed. The Deans of Faculty are now appointed through a competitive selection process. Since 2017, a Faculty Liaison Officer from the Finance Section has been allocated to each Faculty/Centre/Office. Deans are already authorised to use the earmarked funding under their respective faculty's vote for operational expenses.

R (2012)16 was not addressed comprehensively. From the documentary evidence provided, the Audit Panel formed the view that while some faculties had reduced the reliance on part-

time academic staff, the actions taken were not consistent across all the faculties at the University.

Teaching and Learning

R(2012)15: It is recommended that the University of Mauritius develop strategies that have clear time frames and allocation of responsibilities to ensure that there is an equivalent learning experience across faculties for all of its students.

R(2012)18: It is recommended that the University of Mauritius develop University-wide strategies for the use of blended and online learning, including the provision of more comprehensive information to prospective and enrolled students.

The Audit Panel was not convinced that the actions taken by the UoM with regard to R(2012)15, were fit for the purpose and had achieved the desired outcomes. There was very little evidence to support the claims made about the learning experience of the students from an institutional perspective.

R(2012)18 has been implemented by the UoM and faculties are encouraged to use e-learning technologies to inform their teaching. However, the Audit Panel formed the view that the UoM must reassess its strategy on the use of blended and online learning and align same to its Strategic Plan (2015-2020) and the Turnaround Plan (2017).

Programme Design

R(2012)17: It is recommended that the University of Mauritius systematise and implement a regular cycle of programme reviews.

R(2012)17 has not been implemented. Although the UoM has a theoretically robust programme approval structure. Based on the evidences presented, the Audit Panel formed the view that the deployment and quality control related to processes and procedures for programme design must be strengthened. Accountability mechanisms must be institutionalised to ensure that academic standards of programmes are systematically improved.

Research

R(2012)19: It is recommended that the processes governing the acquisition of new infrastructure/equipment at the University of Mauritius be delegated to the faculties with commensurate transparency, responsibility and accountability.

R(2012)20: It is recommended that the University of Mauritius refresh a strategy for research, which should be endorsed by all stakeholders, and which will help to develop a vibrant institutional research environment.

R(2012)21: It is recommended that the University of Mauritius earmark funding annually for the renewal/replacement of research equipment in order to ensure that the University has the best equipment to conduct globally competitive research.

R (2012)22: It is recommended that the University of Mauritius consider establishing a Higher Degrees Committee that will embrace responsibility for postgraduate student supervision and student completion, the need for consistency in the application of research student policies and procedures, and student publication requirements and student support.

R(2012)23: It is recommended that a Research Information Management System (RIMS) be developed and implemented for the tracking of all research-related activities at the University of Mauritius.

R(2012)24: It is recommended that the conceptualisation, framework and implementation of the National Research Chairs initiative be re-visited by the appropriate Government/ Ministry together with target institutions so that the institutional arrangements governing the Chairs' initiative are unambiguous and that the role, responsibilities and obligations of all parties are clearly spelt out.

R(2012)25: It is recommended that the University of Mauritius confine the role of the Consultancy and Contract Research Centre to a more focused mandate so that the aspects of Research Management, Research Capacity Building and Higher Degree studies become the responsibility of the appropriate university research structures.

R(2012)19 has been addressed by the UoM. In line with the requirements of Public Procurement Regulations, this responsibility is vested with the Chief of Facilities and Services. However, departmental consultations are held to ensure transparency and accountability of infrastructural / equipment upgrades.

R(2012)20 has been addressed by the UoM in its Strategic Plan 2015-2020 and the

Turnaround Plan 2017.

Implementation of R(2012)21 has started, the UoM has embarked on modernising its research equipment in a phased manner. The Audit Panel visited some laboratories which has already been refurbished and modernised.

To address R(2012)22, the UoM has set up a Doctoral School in May 2014. The Director for the Doctoral School was appointed in October 2016. The Audit Panel is concerned that administrative processes at the UoM are too lengthy and cumbersome. This is impacting negatively on the functioning of the University. Furthermore, the Audit Panel also noted that the policies, procedures and functions of the Doctoral School have to be made more transparent with well-defined KPIs and expected outcomes. Furthermore, given the mandate of the Doctoral School, duplication concerning the management of research degrees at the level of the Faculties must be avoided and their responsibilities well defined. The Audit Panel formed the view that role and functions of the Doctoral School have to be aligned to the Turnaround Plan (2017).

R(2012)23, has been implemented by the UoM through the development of a Research Information Management System online platform.

R(2012)24 the National Research Chair project has been transferred from TEC to the Mauritius Research Council. Recommendation 24 is therefore no longer applicable.

R(2012)25 was partially implemented in 2013. The Audit Panel formed the view that consultancy and contract research is at its minimal and that the UoM, as an institution, could be more enterprising in terms of research consultancy activities.

Community Engagement

R(2012)6: It is recommended that the University of Mauritius develop an agreed understanding of the communities it wishes to engage with and develop a framework, policies and plans for community engagement.

Although the SER mentions several actions taken by the UoM to engage with the community, R (2012)6 has not been addressed from an institutional perspective. The Audit Panel was presented with once-off community engagement initiatives, from some faculties.

5. Institutional Quality Overview

5.1 Strategic Governance

Established in 1965, the UoM is the oldest public university in Mauritius, as the premier national university, it has a critical role to play in providing the society with qualified graduates and in the creation and dissemination of knowledge for the development of Mauritius. At the time of the audit, the UoM had 9087 students on its roll and offered 177 undergraduate and 43 postgraduate programmes (SER, pg.11).

In 2013, the Statutes of the University of Mauritius were amended and the University was restructured into three main divisions, the Academic Division, the Planning and Resources Division and the Facilities and Services Division. The UoM is funded primarily through Government grants and funds generated by the University in the form of tuition fees, consultancy and other miscellaneous services. In 2014, in view of its increasing budget deficit and financial constraints, the University conducted a situation analysis, which led to the development of its Strategic Plan (2015-2020). The Strategic Plan (2015-2020) elaborates on the strategic directions and key performance indicators (KPIs) which the UoM has set for itself for the current period.

Furthermore, in 2015, at the request of the Ministry of Finance and Economic Development (MoFED), the UoM Council commissioned the KPMG Advisory Services Ltd to advise on the key operational areas of the University. This is to remediate the declining financial performance of the University. In a Turnaround Plan (2017), the UoM has identified five major turnaround strategies for sustained recovery as follows: (1) consolidating teaching and learning; (2) re-engineering research and innovation; (3) reviewing the UoM financial model; (4) investment in infrastructure; and (5) promoting internationalisation through strategic alliances.

The Strategic Plan should be the key tool to monitor and track progress of the University in delivering its ambition. However, the Audit Panel is of the view that the implementation of the Strategic Plan (2015-2020) seems to have lost momentum with the change in leadership. Accordingly, the turnaround strategies may provide the University with a new impetus for improvement and long-term sustainability. The UoM is encouraged to align the Turnaround

Plan (2017) with its broader operational plans and to realistically consider the timeframe for implementation. Consequently, a dashboard with clear KPIs on strategic initiatives should be developed and monitored at the appropriate university forums.

Commendation 1:

The UoM is commended for repositioning itself through bold and innovative measures as proposed in the Turnaround Plan (2017).

Furthermore, the Audit Panel is of the view that the Vice-Chancellor must hold university-wide formal planning around the major Turnaround and reform initiatives which takes account of staff buy-in, staff capability, public buy-in, industry buy-in, political instability, implementation risk and governance risk. For this purpose, it is imperative to ensure that change is not being pursued too fast with too many interventions, taking into account the change capability of university processes and staff capabilities for change.

The Office of the Vice-Chancellor must also be supported by adequate and appropriate resourced, such as considering retaining a strategic advisor who would:

- Ensure that the management chain of command is aligned with broader university objectives;
- Create innovative opportunities for enhancing education and research for the university and country;
- Provide university-wide advice and planning and oversee all major projects at the university;
- Identify and manage major risks, including financial sustainability, industry relations, marketing/recruitment, and people risk which is essential to university medium-term sustainability;
- Have effective management systems for converting thinking by institutional leadership into practical changes which ensure a successful student experience;
- Review quality arrangements and infrastructure within the university to ensure it enables and monitors the Turnaround Plan, where the current arrangements are not optimally working and unable to support future growth of the university;

5.2 Governing Structures

With regard to the governing structures, the UoM Council is responsible for the management and administration of revenue and properties of the University. The Council also has general control over the conduct of the affairs of the University and is chaired by the Pro-Chancellor of the University. The Panel noted that the members of the Council are conversant with their roles, functions and responsibilities. Generally, the Audit Panel noted that the UoM Council is abreast of the challenges facing the UoM and that the Council is working synchronously with the UoM Management with a view to implement the Mission of the University. The Audit Panel appreciated that the UoM statutes provide for an open council, whereby staff and students may observe the proceedings of Council. Furthermore, the Audit Panel formed the view that the UoM Council was receptive of student voice and that student representation on the Council was effective.

The Audit Panel was informed that the UoM Council does not have any oversight on quality assurance related matters. However, given the urgent need to comprehensively review the quality assurance framework at the UoM and to extend the quality assurance functions to cover all areas of the University, the UoM Council, is encouraged to play a more proactive role in ensuring institutional ownership of quality and standards at all levels of the University. The UoM Council may also consider some benefits to conducting annual reviews of the University Council to support its governance and oversight responsibilities. Such reviews will provide opportunities for the Council introspect on its capabilities and address areas for improvement.

The Senate is chaired by the Vice-Chancellor and is the highest academic structure responsible for the academic work of the University both in teaching and research, the award of degrees (other than honorary degrees), diplomas, and other academic distinctions and the regulation and superintendence of education and discipline of students (SER.pg.5).

The Audit Panel is of the view that the UoM Senate has a vital role to play in ensuring student success. Accordingly, Senate must ensure that academic policies are continuously strengthened and coherently implemented across the University. In order to boost the academic leadership at the UoM, Senate must play a more active role in ensuring that academic policies and practices are aligned to the new strategic directions of the University and that the related KPIs are being achieved. Consequently, academic leadership at the UoM

must be strengthened at all levels of the University with a view to ensure that academics are informed, prepared and equipped to adopt more contemporary forms of academic management good practice.

Furthermore, in view of the changing tertiary education landscape and the decline in student enrolment, Senate must ensure that academic risks at the UoM are continuously identified and monitored. The Audit Panel noted that presently the UoM does not have any internal structure or instance that identify and monitor academic risks at the University.

Recommendation 1

The Audit Panel recommends that the UoM Council and Senate demonstrate increased proactive leadership to ensure that the University is continuously embracing up-to-date good practice and is geared to achieve its Vision of becoming a leading international tertiary education provider as a research-led university.

Recommendation 2

The Audit Panel recommends that the UoM includes in its organisational structure, an appropriate mechanism to identify and monitor institutional risks.

5.3 Institutional Leadership

The Audit Panel was appreciative that the leadership in place at the UoM is forward looking and aims at transforming the University into an entrepreneurial university. While these new strategic directions provide an ambitious roadmap for the UoM for the coming years, the Audit Panel is of the view that the vision and actions of the current leadership at the UoM to turn around the finances and strengthen research must be accompanied by a firm resolve to engage the University community, and particularly the staff in the process. In this line, the UoM is urged to consider measures for improving communication, enhancing trust among staff, students and university stakeholders, and the broader Mauritian community. The new Turnaround Plan (2017) must be shared, new values, attitudes and behaviours be forged within the University, so as to provide the UoM with the foundation for future sustainability and an inclusive approach to institutional development and growth.

Recommendation 3

The Audit Panel recommends that the UoM develops an inclusive approach to improve institutional ownership and enhance internal communication with a view to foster trust and engage productivity across all levels at the University.

The UoM is currently facing a major challenge in ensuring the stability and continuity of leadership at senior levels of the University which, if not well managed, presents significant threats to its sustainability, quality, reputation and growth. There have been significant organisational changes since the last quality audit (2012) which has provided opportunities for positioning the University for its next stage of growth.

In this regard, Audit Panel noted that in 2017, with the change in leadership at senior management level, the focus of the UoM has been on the development of a research-engaged and entrepreneurial University. The new management has further strengthened the decentralisation process through the appointment of deans of faculties by selection (as compared to appointment by rotation based on seniority previously). The new orientation championed by the new management is well in line with the vision of Government to develop Mauritius into a knowledge-based and innovation-led economy. The Audit Panel took cognisance of the new senior management's triple-helix approach to establish and strengthen linkages with the government and industry.

Commendation 2:

The UoM is commended for re-orienting its focus to engage in consultative meetings with the Government and industry with a view to increase linkages and be demand-driven rather than supply driven.

In line with the above, the Audit Panel has the view, that even with the role and oversight of Council in ensuring university continuity, that great care must be given to securing the continuity of senior management leadership appointments. As suggested by international higher education good practice a term of five years generally allows for reasonable sufficient time for Management to successfully implement a university's strategies and plans. The University of Mauritius faced a recent change in leadership in the last eighteen months with

the appointments of a new Vice-Chancellor and two new Pro Vice-Chancellors. The Audit Panel has taken note that the current mandate is a three-year appointment for a senior leadership positions at the University which, in the view of the Audit Panel, may be counterproductive to a sustainable and long-term approach to managing and growing the University. The Audit Panel is of the view that the current arrangements mitigate against or could even hinder the advancement and development of the University. The University Council is strongly urged to consider increasing executive appointments to five-year terms to enhance stability and transformation (and increase the prospects of actually ensuring that strategies and changes are effected), given that frequent leadership changes inhibit coherent institutional development at the University. Such positions could also be considered for a renewable term on the basis of performance. In this regard, and as a matter of good practice, the Council must see that the Vice-Chancellor has appropriate KPIs in place for the senior management team. In addition, it must have a firm performance agreement with the Vice Chancellor which is subject to appropriate evaluation by the Pro Vice-Chancellor.

Recommendation 4

The Audit Panel recommends that the UoM Council consider aligning the duration of mandate for senior executive positions with the international good practice of five years renewable, with a view to providing the UoM with a more stable and consistent leadership.

5.4 Budgeting and Finance

In 2016, the UoM was informed by the MoFED that the institution has been categorised and included as an institution which meets the criterion to be “*identified as one meeting the loss-making and/or debt accumulation*” criteria (Turnaround Plan 2017). The University was subsequently requested to submit a Turnaround Plan, identifying the reasons/causes for low financial and non-financial performance of the institution, the strategies and measures to be adopted to redress the institution, accompanied by an Efficiency Plan.

The University conducted a SWOT Analysis to evaluate the major factors affecting the University’s financial deficit. Accordingly the main factors have been identified as follows: First, the social mandate of the UoM to offer a wide array of programmes in highly technical

and specialised areas such as agriculture, medicine, engineering and technology at highly competitive tuition fees offering and secondly, the rise in staff costs to cater to the increased in number of student enrolment and implementation of the Pay Research Bureau Report (2013).

The Audit Plan noted that persistent financial deficit at the UoM which has made it difficult for the University to maintain and upgrade its physical infrastructure, IT infrastructure and retain the level of human resources needed to provide quality higher education.

The Audit Panel is of the view that the University must take a new approach to creating and sustaining wealth, which builds engagement with new opportunities and moves away from a subsidy-cost mentality. The UoM is urged to identify the opportunities for procuring consulting revenues, generate alumni resources, stimulates internal growth and incorporate a commercial pricing capability. For this purpose it is essential that the University implements the Turnaround Plan (2017) and puts into place the necessary monitoring structures to manage its performance and to ensure its financial sustainability.

To achieve the above approach, the Audit Panel considers that regular communication by senior management to staff and students on decisions related to the budget and finance remains important. The Panel urges the University to assist its staff, students and stakeholders to have a frame of reference that is entrepreneurial and innovative about its opportunities and possibilities, and move beyond a 'deficit' mindset which is totally reliant on government funding, as an important step to achieve its strategic goals.

Furthermore, the University must work with government to develop transparent and consistent and contemporary approaches to formula-/performance-based funding which stimulate the University's growth and improvement. The Audit Panel suggests that the University proactively engage with the Ministry of Education to develop a comprehensive higher education financial and budgeting model that is geared to the short- and long-term financial stability and in particular, which is geared to include its quality academic and research provision.

Commendation 3

The UoM is commended for the measures it has taken to redress its financial deficit and for implementing cost efficiency measures necessary for its longer term institutional viability.

5.5 Human Resources

The UoM has restructured its Human Resources (HR) Department with a view to demarcate the HR functions from general administration. The Audit Panel is of the view that the quality and morale of staff is key to the performance of any university. For this purpose, the HR Department, must proactively engage with the leadership at the UoM to ensure that the organisational culture is values-based, ethical, healthy, and vibrant, fostering a strong sense of belonging, participation, ownership and productivity.

An HR Plan must be developed and shared with all staff with a view to motivate and engage staff in taking ownership and promoting the UoM core values. For this purpose, it is essential that staff feel included and valued. The UoM is encouraged to develop a comprehensive staff development plan that goes beyond promotion requirements and include the essential components of continuous professional development. This may include other parameters such as time spent for community work, 360 feedbacks from peers, among others.

Recommendation 5

The Audit Panel recommends that the UoM finalises a comprehensive staff development plan which can be used in decisions related to staff promotion.

Performance Management is a key enabler in driving operational excellence in any organisation. Based on the feedback gathered, there are some areas of the University whereby it is being implemented but it was evident to the Panel that a high-performance management culture doesn't yet operate at the University. The University is urged to consider introducing employee-based appraisal and incentive schemes to enhance staff engagement. The University is encouraged to enhance its management systems to build accountability and /or// recognition for excellent or low performance. It is also essential that the HR Department develops a work culture where staff are not discriminated and unduly penalised through

lengthy and bureaucratic processes. The HR Department must ensure that the University becomes highly productive and that staff are equipped with up-to-date technology to effectively and efficiently perform their work intelligently.

Recommendation 6

The Audit Panel recommends that the UoM defines clear KPI's for the various levels of employees at the University and that they are used in the Performance Management process.

5.6 Quality Assurance

It appears to the Panel that quality assurance function at the University has in many areas either stagnated or reversed the gains noted at the TEC 2012 audit. There seems to have been a lapse in the leadership and oversight of quality at the University. One factor which may have contributed to this could be that additional responsibilities have been given to the Quality Assurance Office. A further concern noted by the Audit Panel is that the present arrangements in the Quality Assurance Office may be operating below par due to it not being appropriately staffed and equipped to manage the University's quality assurance framework.

The Audit Panel suggests that in order to support the University's strategic goals, the Quality Assurance Office's roles, responsibilities, capacity and competencies be reviewed. The Panel suggests that the University leadership take a more assertive role in ensuring that the Quality Assurance Office is held accountable for enhanced effectiveness and efficiency, with a view to drive the quality outputs and improvement agenda forward. The fundamentals of quality monitoring must be systematically actualised to drive quality enhancement and its embeddedness in the academic and research projects, as well as in the administrative and professional areas of the University. The Faculty Quality Assurance Teams must be trained and equipped to become functional and drive the academic and research quality agenda. Quality Assurance would benefit the University when it is results driven and that the accountability mechanisms across all levels must be made explicit, strengthened and individuals held to account. In terms of quality promotion, the University must see that it embeds a culture of quality and improvement across the University as part of everyday work.

The Audit Panel holds the view that the University undertake a major reform to ensure that there are effective faculty-level arrangements for quality assurance which integrate with university-wide arrangements. A comprehensive framework for quality assurance that supports a range of good quality practices is essential. These would include (i) quality indicators around education, research and services, (ii) clarify and strengthen internal processes around quality assurance, and (iii) implement university-wide quality-focused performance development.

Recommendation 7

The Audit Panel recommends that the UoM develops a new framework for quality assurance that covers all the core areas of the University through the identification of appropriate KPIs, standards, reward and accountability mechanisms aligned with good international practices.

5.7 Data Analytics for Decision Making

Based on the submissions made during the audit process, it became evident to the Panel that the University produces a large amount of data across faculties and the administrative functions. Yet, there is little indication of data analysis conducted to create value from the generated data and which would potentially help in more proactive/seamless decision-making management and monitoring processes. The University is encouraged to ensure that there is adequate data analysis conducted and that it explores where such a function would optimally reside, such as in an institutional planning office.

Recommendation 8

The Audit Panel recommends that the UOM establishes a function which deals with data analytics and supports institutional planning, decision making, management and monitoring of all key institutional processes. It would also facilitate effective locally and internationally benchmarking.

6. Theme (A): Student Experience

The student experience is a key dimension for any university and is a key contributor to an NPS (Net Promoter Score) for the University. *“As per the UOM Act and Statutes, the student portfolio falls under the purview of the Registrar’s Office who oversees three offices: 1. Admissions and Student Records, 2. Examinations and 3. The Students Welfare”* (SER, pg.105).

On the basis of the SER and information obtained during the Audit Visit, the Audit Panel observed that the UoM does not have a holistic approach to the concept of the “Student Experience”. While the University has initiated a number of measures to improve the quality of student life, there are several key gaps that would need to be comprehensively addressed. The Audit Panel is of the view that one of the main reasons for this could be that, at the moment, the quality assurance framework of the University does not encompass the quality oversight of the services functions.

6.1 Student Life Cycle

The current approach to student experience at the UoM is highly bureaucratic; students are expected to write to the Registrar, which then sets forth what seems to be a series of cumbersome administrative processes. The Audit Panel formed the view that the UoM is reactive the various touch and/or pain points that would positively influence the student experience at the University.

It would be prudent for the University to develop a student journey map to identify pathways and profiles which characterise a student’s experience with the University, and to identify and manage the risks to the various aspects of the student experience. A university-wide plan can help ensure that every student succeeds, identifying pressure points, pathways, journeys, profiles, opportunities and risks. The student journey map would include:

- i. The phases on the Student Life Cycle;
- ii. The activities in place to cater for each phase; and
- iii. The monitoring and tracking of these activities.

Apart from structural changes, following the Visitor's Report, the Audit Panel noted that the student management system is anchored in time. The student management services are not connected to current trends in student experience management. As a result, the University is passive to important risks with regard to student market dynamics such as the increased competition for students, the changing student profiles, and the need to diversify the portfolio of programmes.

Recommendation 9

The Audit Panel recommends that the UoM considers introducing a university-wide model for managing student success which aligns faculty-specific models, beyond the current focus on the quality of formal teaching to take account of the broader student experience and support.

6.2 Student Recruitment

In view of its history, social mandate and highly subsidised tuition fee, the University, has for a long period of time been the first choice of students wishing to pursue tertiary education in Mauritius. The Audit Panel noted that since 2012, the student enrolment at the University has been fluctuating (SER, pg.13). However, the University was unable to provide the Panel with any market or other research to explain these fluctuations. The Panel encourages the University to make efforts to better understand the student enrolment dynamics and the attendant risks so as to better plan and market student enrolments.

The Admissions and Student Records Office (ASRO) manages the student screening process at the University through a computerised process that is based on the academic credentials of applicants. Currently, the University does not have any formal mechanism by which academics can review the demographic information of students. Hence the University is unable to tailor or shape the learning experience of its students based on the information and analysis of their student profile.

Given that the student selection process at the University is based solely on academic achievement at secondary school, the Audit Panel noted that the UoM student recruitment process functions merely as a feeder for channelling applications. The University is

encouraged to diversify its selection criteria to balance academic requirements with other extracurricular criteria.

The Audit Panel is of the view that the University of Mauritius consider establishing a student screening mechanism in order to facilitate recruitment of right calibre students into programmes which suit their interests and potential. Following the practice at many universities, the University could better involve faculties in the student screening process. The University would also benefit from gathering information on incoming students so as to enable the provision of specific support mechanisms with a view to ensuring student success. This plan when developed would take into account the understanding and managing of different student segments, working within and beyond major cohort groups such as level and field of study, nationality, etc.

Recommendation 10

The Audit Panel recommends that the UoM reviews its student selection process to provide the University with a holistic assessment of its recruits.

Recommendation 11

The Audit Panel recommends that the UoM develops a student management information system that will enable the University to personalise its student services to the needs of various categories of students.

6.3 Student Engagement

The Audit Panel observed that the University currently does not have any specific mechanism to gauge, follow and interpret students who are disengaged from their learning and participation in University life. The Audit Panel was informed that in many cases, the University finds out about student attrition either when the student does not turn up for examinations or during the board of examiners meetings. The Audit Panel is of the view that the UoM consider implementing a University Student Management System which actively tracks the student life cycle from enrolment to graduation.

Furthermore, besides the academic experience through engaging students in the formal programmes, it is essential to find ways to engage all students, regardless of field, in creative

projects that build on the learning and societal experiences of students as critical and socially responsive citizens. Such measures will improve the University's community atmosphere and make the general campus environment more vibrant, including contributing to social cohesion at the national level.

Recommendation 12

The Audit Panel recommends that the UoM finds ways to engage students in the University's community and social life, to better develop good citizenship and social identity and solidarity among its future graduates.

6.4 Student Feedback Questionnaire (SFQ)

The UoM administers a Student Feedback Questionnaire (SFQ) every semester to assess the quality of teaching and learning at the University. The SFQ is the only formal mechanism at the University, through which feedback is invited from students. On the basis of information and views obtained, the Audit Panel formed the view that the SFQ remains largely a 'tick the box' exercise as it is a condition for students to obtain their examination results. It was expressed to the Panel during the interviews that there is a general feeling among the student community that the SFQ has little value-add as no communication/feedback is provided to students post the survey. Students would therefore, in general, fill the questionnaire at random as it is a compulsory process to be able to access their examination results. Concerns were raised with regard to the anonymity of students providing feedback on the SFQ platform since they have a compulsory student login requirement (with their Student ID) in order to provide feedback.

The Audit Panel was pleased to note that some programmes do cater for informal feedback at the end of each session whereby students are requested to submit their views on their learning experience. The informal feedback is to be encouraged so that students remain supported and engaged in their academic experiences. Nevertheless, informal feedback mechanisms are not sufficient to ensure the quality of teaching and learning. The Quality Assurance Office must work with Faculty Quality Assurance Teams (FQAT) to develop formal and harmonised institutional student feedback mechanisms. The student feedback mechanisms must cover all the phases of the student life cycle. Effective communication channels must be established to

ensure that students remain informed of improvements being made and that complaints are promptly addressed.

Recommendation 13

The Audit Panel recommends that the UoM reviews its student feedback mechanism and separates same from accessing examination results to enhance its credibility and reliability, and ensure that it will take into account the core areas related to the student life cycle.

6.5 Student Support

The University of Mauritius provides a number of student support services to its students to cater for their academic, as well as their non-academic, experiences. Student support is an important pillar in the student life cycle and is key to student welfare.

The UoM has a Student Welfare Office (SWO) that acts “an interface between Donors and Faculties/Centres/Partner institutions by providing administrative support” (SER, pg 45). Whereas, the Admission and Records Office (ASRO) is vested with the responsibilities for the student admissions and maintenance of student progress records. Some of the services provided by the SWO and the ASRO have been digitalised for better efficiency. However, the Panel noted from interviewees that the offices remain crowded with students and that there was no evident protocol in place to address student complaints.

While the SWO endeavours to improve student life on campus, there is an urgent need for a comprehensive review of the mandate and scope of student welfare at the University. Contrary to expectations, the SWO is not driving the University’s student welfare agenda. Students tend to rely heavily on the Student Union of the UoM, for help rather than approach the University administration. While staff at the SWO appeared to be highly committed to the cause of students, the Panel formed the view that due to the absence of appropriate institutional support structures and policies, student welfare is functioning mostly in a reactive mode rather than a proactive mode to problems highlighted by students or by the Student Union. This bureaucratic nature of the student services discourages students to engage with the University for improvement of their student life. The approach to managing

the student experience is a priority and a thorough review would send a signal that the University welcomes and includes students as important stakeholders.

Recommendation 14

The Audit Panel recommends that the UoM develops and demonstrates a more proactive approach to supporting and improving the student campus experience.

Recommendation 15

The Audit Panel recommends that the UoM establishes a complaints resolution protocol which clearly defines the service and response timelines that students should expect. This will provide a basis to assess the effectiveness of the complaints resolution process.

The Audit Panel noted that a University Needy Students' Fund has been established and which caters for students facing financial problems. Some stakeholders expressed the view that the UoM must communicate more effectively about the existence and support provided by this Fund. However, in general, students are most appreciative of the financial support provided by the University Needy Students' Fund. The UoM is encouraged to continue and expand this initiative.

With regard to postgraduate students, the Audit Panel noted that part-time students do not receive any orientation prior to the start of their programmes. Currently, there is no formal mechanism to track whether the needs of postgraduate students are on the radar of the University staff. The Audit Panel is of the view that this is a serious shortcoming in the University's quality assurance system. The University must have designed and structured mechanisms to understand undergraduate and postgraduate student needs, including the drivers of student choice to study at UoM.

In 2014, the UoM established the Doctoral School to boost research at the University and the objective of the Doctoral School as recommended by the TEC Audit Report (2012) was to streamline doctoral processes and improve the research experience of doctoral students. The Panel noted with concern that the Doctoral School is not responding efficiently to the research needs of the University and to doctoral students. Concerns were raised with the

Panel regarding unstructured and unreasonably lengthy procedures of assigning supervisors to PhD students. In this respect, the UoM leadership must deploy appropriate control and accountability mechanisms to ensure that doctoral students are well supported in their research and that transparent processes are in place and monitored. The Audit Panel would like to emphasise that the support provided to doctoral students determines to a large extent the achievement of the research ambition of the UoM as documented in the Turnaround Plan (2017).

Recommendation 16

The Audit Panel recommends that the UoM puts in place appropriate accountability mechanisms to ensure that doctoral research students are not unduly penalised due to unreasonable long delays in the various stages of their research journey.

6.6 Counselling and Pastoral Care

In responding to the Second Cycle recommendations the University noted that:

“...students were provided support regarding academic and administrative queries with the help of Faculties/Centres/Offices. Cases of students having difficulties in studies, personal problems, traumas and conflicts between peers were also referred by Faculties to the Registrar’s office which then directed them to Psychologists, Family Counsellors and Psychiatrists for counselling. A call for expression of interest for enlistment as Psychologist (clinical) had been made by the HR Department in November 2015. The subsequent appointment, if any, would guide the way forward for the setting-up of the Counselling Unit which was subject to availability of funds.”
(SER, pgs., 67-68)

It would appear, in the opinion of the Panel that a minimal counselling service and formal pastoral care at the University is sorely lacking. It appears that over the years the University has invested most of its resources in improving the academic components of the University. However, given the above extract from the SER, it seems that insufficient attention has gone into improving the social and pastoral experience of students on campus. The Panel formed the view that the UoM would do well to consider reorienting some of its resources to cater for its changing student profile. This must include counselling and pastoral care services which

are in line with the needs of the millennial student. The Panel heard that a majority of the student population are vulnerable to a number of social and interpersonal influences, pressures and stresses. The Panel was informed, as is the case in many universities, that there are students who deal with serious challenges such as racial/gender discrimination, depression, anorexia, family problems or bullying, and that they experience these issues in isolation. Campus security needs to be made aware of such issues and design their security strategy with such issues in mind. The University community, staff and students, must be sensitised about the need to ensure that there is a respectful and inclusive campus environment to all who are members of the University community. The Panel appreciated that the UoM has recognised these risks and that arrangements have been recently made for limited psychological assistance to be provided to students as needed. The Panel is of the view that academics have an important role in identifying students who are at risk and guiding them the appropriate counsellors.

Commendation 4

The UoM is commended for its initiative to provide students with limited psychological services, as needed. The University is encouraged to expand its pastoral and counselling services to promote the wellbeing of the University community at large.

The Audit Panel also noted that academically low performing students are not well supported in their academic experience. Presently, the UoM does not have any formal structure/arrangement to assist students in need of academic support. Although some programme coordinators may assist students, generally, struggling students tend to drop out of their programmes or take a very long time to graduate. The Panel is of the view that the UoM develops a student success policy which takes a graduated approach to identifying students at-risk of failing, keeping them engaged, and helping them achieve the desired learning outcomes and careers.

6.7 Internationalisation and Students from Rodrigues

The UoM has earmarked internationalisation as one of its strategic pillars. During the audit visit it was emphasised to the Audit Panel that the UoM is strengthening its internationalisation strategy and that an International Affairs Office is now operating under the aegis of the Planning Division. The University is diversifying its efforts to position itself

as a regional leader in tertiary education. The Panel noted some measures taken by the UoM to attract more international students to its campus. The Panel was informed that the University has reviewed the tuition fees for international students and is exploring potential markets in the region. In pursuing its internationalisation agenda, the University is encouraged to develop clear strategies which have well defined KPIs, timeframes and lines of accountability.

The UoM has a small group of international students on its campus. The University hosts a number of students from Rodrigues Island. The Panel noted that the University does not provide any facilities/support to familiarise and guide these students for the duration of their studies. A concern raised with the Panel was the report that the University does not assist international and Rodriguan students in securing accommodation. As part of the internationalisation agenda, it would be reasonable expected that international students are inducted and oriented to living in Mauritius, and are adequately supported to find accommodation, open bank accounts, access a range of services, etc.

Recommendation17

The Audit Panel recommends that UOM reviews its internationalisation strategy to ensure that international students benefit from adequate support to ensure their academic success, integration into Mauritian society, as well as give attention to their safety and wellbeing.

6.8 University Facilities

Since 2013, a significant allocation of the capital grant received from Government has been used to refurbish and upgrade laboratories and office equipment at the University. During a guided tour of the campus, the Panel noted that several amenities were under renovation and that the UoM is approaching refurbishment of its infrastructure in a phased manner. The Panel was pleased to note that attention is being given to the renovation and improvement of the University's infrastructure and facilities, but that attention must be given to a sustained renovation agenda as it impacts on its reputation and future growth plans. The UoM must continue upgrading of its laboratories and technological equipment and facilities with a view to provide students with a quality learning experience. In addition, the Panel is of the view

that the UoM facilities could be reorganised to provide students with conducive and comfortable study areas, including spaces for group study, that is commensurate with a 21st century university. In this regard, the Panel heard about the need to deal with health and safety issues such as noise, bird excrements, broken ceiling fans and non-ergonomic furniture. Furthermore, the Panel is of the view that the University completes with some urgency a comprehensive Health and Safety Audit to address the major health and safety issues on campus. In this respect, the Panel noted that a prior decision on the recruitment of the health and safety manager has not yet been implemented and strongly urges the finalisation of an appointment.

The Panel heard from interviewees and observed that the library requires urgent attention in terms of a strategic acquisitions approach for new publication titles and online resources aligned to the qualifications offered and research agenda, as texts are outdated or incomplete and access to online journals is limited. In a number of interviews, the Panel was informed that the library is unable to cater for many programmes which are on offer at the University. Management informed the Audit Panel that works on the refurbishment of the library will begin in the near future. The Panel is of the view that the library is the heart of the University's academic project and care must be taken to ensure that the conceptualisation and refurbishment plans takes into account the global changes with respect to how university libraries are physically arranged and takes into account the impact of the use of electronic resources over and against the proportion of hard copy book holdings to retain. A modern, resourced and refurbished library would contribute significantly to providing a successful academic experience for all students and staff, and become a critical national knowledge resource. It is also critical that the current library plans take into account the contemporary library science knowledge and good practices, as well as consideration of responding to local community needs.

Recommendation 18

The Audit Panel recommends that the University develops a strategic plan for its library that includes the impact of technological advancements, future growth plans, continuous quality review initiatives, improvement plans, procurement plans, study areas and ensure that they are aligned with the academic programmes and research agenda.

In terms of sports facilities, whilst those are generally available, well-resourced and diverse in terms of activities proposed, the Panel was informed that students do not make optimum use of these facilities. It was reported to the Panel that about 30% of students make use of the sporting facilities. The Panel is of the view that it would be important to understand the reasons for this and encourage widespread participation in sports activities as a healthy and socially beneficial practice. The University is encouraged to implement a consistent approach to monitoring student participation and triggering interventions to enhance student participation, where required.

The Panel reviewed the information available to it and heard from interviewees about the ways in which the University accommodates persons with disabilities. A special effort is required to make the building and infrastructure increasingly conducive to people with disabilities. The University is strongly encouraged to formalise protocols, and conduct workshops to sensitise and train its administrative and academic staff to respectfully assist and support those with disabilities.

6.9 Communication with Students

The University website and the email system are the main channels of communication between the UoM and its students. The Panel heard from interviewees that the style and content of communications could be improved. The Panel is of the view that the interactions between the UoM and its students are inadequate, including the underlying style, tone and bureaucratic nature of communications which could be perceived as not being student friendly. In this digital era, the University would gain much through enhancing its ways of reaching out to and engaging students (via more instant and interactive methods). These may also enhance student inclusiveness on campus and improvements the student support services.

In a review of the website, the Panel observed that the University website is not very user-friendly for staff, students and stakeholders, and a review has the potential give a better feel of the University. For those external to UoM, the website is the first interaction with the University and it immediately creates an impression about the national university of Mauritius. The website must be improved to engage people's interest in engaging with the University. In this respect, the University would do well to benchmark with other leading universities to ensure that its website is in line with the demands and research emanating in the digital era.

Recommendation 19

The Audit Panel recommends that the UoM reviews and considers the use of appropriate digital means of communication, including its website, to enhance communication with students, staff and stakeholders, and to foster inclusiveness on its campus.

6.10 Industry Connections

The UoM provides its students with opportunities to interact with the corporate world and industry via job fairs and work-based learning (WBL) opportunities (SER, Annexure 14, pg. 4). At the moment, the focus appears to be on providing work experience to guide students in making the right career choices. The Audit Panel is of the view that the UoM is not deploying sufficient resources to enhance its collaboration with the industry and to enhance the employability skills of its students. The Panel noted that the potential for University-industry collaborations have not been fully developed, as it appears that it is largely limited to organising student placements.

Placement opportunities are currently made available for a number of faculties and through the University Industry Linkage Office (UILO). It is recognised that work-based learning is an important component of the UoM student experience. The Audit Panel observed that the role of the UILO is constrained in terms of establishing and nurturing relations with industry due to a lack of resources. The Audit Panel is of the view that the University of Mauritius reviews the overarching framework of the UILO and consider ways to better resource this office.

In addition, the Audit Panel suggests that the University implement a mechanism to track students on placement and make efforts to ensure that all students have a minimum of one placement during their studies. The UoM is encouraged to ensure that there is closer collaboration between the faculties and the UILO, so that the UoM is seen as one entity which takes a coordinated approach when it comes to industry partnerships.

Feedback received by the Panel from industry interviewees highlighted that the level of graduates and the quality of education is well appreciated. Accordingly, the UoM must consider implementing work and career counselling services that would help students develop broader non-academic skills required for launching and sustaining successful graduate careers. The Student Union could also contribute to this endeavour. Based on feedback gathered from industry, the following should be considered to enhance the employability of students:

- i) Language and writing skills as it was reported that there has been a drastic drop in standards;
- ii) Soft skills training;
- iii) Increase in length of exposure for WBL to 4-6 months, where relevant;
- iv) Get students more involved in industry-based research projects and for them to come with up innovative ideas.

The Audit Panel is also of the view that the various faculties and the UILO ensure that all students have education-related experience in the world of professional work, embedding evaluation within this process to safeguard that inefficiencies are avoided and productivity is improved. The UoM is also called to do follow-ups to ensure that students make the most and acquire required critical skills and competencies from those placements. In this respect, it is important that the UoM considers the implementation of methodologies to measure the impact and effectiveness of work-based learning or internship programmes with a view of continuously improving the experience students are getting. The UoM must ensure that on-site supervisors who shadow interns are trained and well-versed in their roles to be able to better evaluate intern competencies. The faculties and UILO must set up common goals with industry prior to the start of any placement.

Furthermore, the Audit Panel is of the view that the UoM forge its relationship with the industry well beyond the need for placement, to ensure that both undergraduate and postgraduate students develop the right skills and knowledge required to be employable. As part of social and economic responsiveness, the UoM must develop a new approach to creating work and career capabilities that will equip students for emerging economies and professional roles, and aligning them with the UoM Turnaround Plan (2017), whilst creating new forms of public and industry value addition.

Recommendation 20

The Audit Panel recommends that the UoM implements an integrated and multifaceted career strategy for its undergraduate and postgraduate students. This would start with the process of employment creation as part of students' first engagement with the University and conclude with students moving seamlessly into the workforce.

6.11 Student Union

The UoM Student Union (SU) established on 1971, is the official representative body of the students of the University (SER, pg111). Concerns were raised during interviews regarding many issues currently faced by the Student Union mostly pertaining to weak communication between the University Management and the Union. It was reported to the Panel that there is minimal consultation between the University management and the Student Union on various student-related matters and that there is a lack of induction and training provided to newly elected student union representatives.

Based on the above, the Audit Panel formed the view that the UoM leadership urgently ensure that the student voice is heard concerning all major academic and non-academic decisions that would impact on the student experience at the University. The University of Mauritius must ensure that student representatives are well trained and enabled to support all students in their academic programmes for them to succeed, and for opening new fora and pathways for communication among students, with staff and with management. Furthermore, the UoM Student Union could consider benchmarking itself with student unions from other universities to assess its strengths and weaknesses and earmark areas for improvement, for example, in setting minimum criteria for those to be elected to student leadership positions

and in managing its own budget. This would include making possible improvements to its constitution based on drawing on good international practice in this area.

6.12 Alumni

The Audit Panel was informed that a University of Mauritius Alumni Association was set up two years ago. The University's aim behind launching the alumni association was to create a community which would contribute through talks, inputs, funding as well as provide experience and develop projects with the university. Yet, the UoM has been unable to track those of its alumni who are still alive.

The Audit Panel is of the view that, given its large number of alumni, the University deploy resources to bring together a significant number of its graduates to assist it in remaining relevant and facilitating the University's engagement with the community and industry.

7. Theme (B): Curriculum Development

7.1 General Overview

Programme design, development and approval are core academic functions of any university and have an important role to play in the quality of the awards granted. As an autonomous degree awarding institution, the UoM is responsible for the academic standards and the quality of the learning opportunities that its programmes provide to its enrolled students. As the national flagship university, the programmes offered at the UoM have an important contribution to bring to the socio-economic development of the country. As at March 2018, the UoM offered 177 undergraduate programmes and 43 postgraduate programmes. The University developed well-elaborated procedures for programme design, approval, monitoring and review in 2004. These were amended in 2015 and are currently used by the UoM to guide programme design and review.

7.2 Programme Design and Approval

Programmes are developed by academics at departmental/unit or boards. The curricular cycle comprises four stages namely, programme needs assessment, programme design, programme implementation and programme outcome. The UoM has formalised quality assurance guidelines for programme development, which comprises a Credit System Framework. The UoM identifies a new programme of studies based on a number of factors such as the University/Government strategy, training needs analysis, international trends, industry needs, the list of indicative priority fields of study from the Tertiary Education Commission, and the employability rates in the field (SER, pg 62).

Deans, heads of departments and academic staff have important functions to ensure that the UoM programmes are productive, sustainable and innovative. The Panel noted that while the processes at the UoM are well documented, the approaches to programme design are not consistent across all faculties/departments. The process of getting a new programme approved could take up to a maximum of one year. In view of the above, the UoM is called to reassess its programme development grid to re-evaluate the time-frame of the process and have a more contemporary approach in devising those grids. The University must also

consider reviewing the processing time of different stages of its programme design in order to better ensure efficiency of the whole process.

For this purpose, it is critically important that all the faculties, departments and centres are aligned to the University's academic priorities. Consequently, the UoM must ensure that stakeholder consultations and training needs analysis are conducted by all faculties and departments in a harmonised manner and that feedback from external stakeholders is used to inform the programme outcomes.

Recommendation 21

The Audit Panel recommends that the UoM improves its market intelligence to inform the identification of new programmes and areas of study, by making more proactive use of University-industry coordinators and faculty-driven market research techniques.

Recommendation 22

The Audit Panel recommends that the UoM develops a university-wide curriculum strategy that gives context and rationale to the faculty specific initiatives and gives public life to the University's academic vision.

The University has introduced the approach of outcome-based teaching and learning on many of its programmes. While the concept of outcome-based programmes is to be encouraged, several stakeholders have expressed concern about the lack of expertise in outcome-based learning. As a result, programme design based on learning outcomes have not been successfully implemented across all faculties. The Panel reached the view that in order to improve the University's education capacity and impact in areas such as teaching, assessment, curriculum development, and statistics, the UoM would first build its education intelligence and develop or acquire internal capability in the form of one or more curriculum development specialists, and a teaching and learning specialist. The Audit Panel is of the view that these specialists will assist the University to develop capacity with regard to new trends in programme design including curriculum, teaching, assessment and academic experience.

Recommendation 23

The Audit Panel recommends that the UoM develops and acquires internal capability in the form of one or more curriculum development specialists, and a teaching and learning specialist who would assist in providing relevant expertise and consolidate institutional educational intelligence.

Recommendation 24

The Audit Panel recommends that UoM harmonises its concept of outcome-based learning in its programmes across all its faculties and affiliated institutions, as relevant.

The UoM has embarked on a series of professional accreditations of its some of its programmes. The Audit Panel gives credit to some academics and departments which ensure that their programmes are benchmarked and accredited internationally. However, the Audit Panel observed that there is no structured and consistent approach with regard to benchmarking of curriculum development processes with other universities. The Audit Panel is of the view that the general approach to benchmarking at the University should be updated and harmonised through appropriate institutional approaches. To this end, the UoM must consider establishing benchmarking protocols to assess its programmes and processes. In a related way, benchmarking would be expected to be conducted across all areas of the University's operations, both academic and administrative.

Recommendation 25

The Audit Panel recommends that the UoM develops a university-wide curriculum strategy which gives context and rationale to faculty-specific initiatives, avoids productivity decline and gives public life to the university's academic vision.

Recommendation 26

The Audit Panel recommends that the UoM develops an institutional approach to benchmarking of academic processes and standards development, and in other core processes of the University.

7.3 Programme Outcomes and Graduate Profile

The responsibility to ensure the implementation in the programmes of the graduate profile is vested with each faculty (SER pg.58). And yet, the SER highlighted the different ways in which faculties have attempted to embed graduate profile requirements in their curricula (SER, pg58). Further to the Graduates' Satisfaction Survey 2017, a Graduate Profile document was developed but it has not been approved and implemented. It was brought to the attention of the Panel that the University currently does not have a documented institutional graduate profile.

The Panel is of the view that a graduate profile document is crucial in informing curriculum design as it outlines the various knowledge, skills (critical, problem-solving, communication amongst others) and competences graduates are expected to develop by the end of their studies. The finalisation and approval of such a document will help inform the development, management and review of programmes.

Recommendation 27

The Audit Panel recommends that the UoM develops a graduate profile document which takes into account desired graduates attributes and that its programmes are responsive to national and regional needs.

7.4 Programme Monitoring

Programme monitoring is conducted through the use of the external examiner system. *“External Examiners are appointed for all final year undergraduate and at the beginning of Year 1 of the postgraduate degree programmes at the UoM”* (SER, pg.68). External Examiners are required to assess and benchmark UoM's programmes and assessment standards, and the quality of students seen in the *“...teaching, curriculum syllabuses and resources of the course”* (SER, pg 68). The University Senate in August 2015 reviewed the procedures to address recommendations made in external examiner reports *“...in view of ensuring that Faculties/Centres revert back to the External Examiners to report on how actions have been taken”* (SER,pg, 68). As per UoM procedures, the external examiner's (EE's) report is submitted to faculties or centres for consideration and actions to be taken. The dean or director is then expected to provide feedback on the actions taken to the Director

for Quality Assurance within an assigned timeframe. The latter then directs feedback to relevant committees and/or offices for any further actions to be taken.

The Audit Panel observed that the use of the external examiner system for programme monitoring is very expensive, outdated, over-stretched and over-used. The justification provided to the Panel for the appointment of international external examiners rather than local examiners is that most local people who could be potentially considered to serve as external examiners at UoM currently are or have been involved in the delivery or development of programmes which leads to a conflict of interest.

In view of the above, the Audit Panel holds the view that the University give serious consideration to moving beyond reliance on the external examiner system which inhibits other forms of innovation and improvement in programme monitoring and evaluation. The Audit Panel noted the intent of the UoM to be internationally comparable. It is advised to seek a benchmarking strategy for its curriculum and programmes, and through strategic partnerships for a targeted external examining system which would focus on academic standards and quality. In this case, much of the work could be done virtually and significantly reduce, but not eliminate, travel costs related to the system.

Recommendation 28

The Audit Panel recommends that the UoM reconsiders its over-reliance on the external examiner system as the sole programme review mechanism in favour of new and less expensive strategies.

The Student Feedback Questionnaire mechanism is another mechanism used to monitor the delivery of programmes. Students usually provide feedback at the end of the semester as already noted in another section of this Report. The Audit Panel is of the view that such a survey be inclusive of gathering feedback during the semester. The Panel noted and appreciated the initiative of the Department of Medicine, which collects feedback systematically during the last five minutes of each class. The University must give consideration to other ways to ensure that students have effective channels of communication to provide feedback. The UoM could also consider implementing an institution-wide

mechanism to obtain regular feedback from various stakeholders namely employed graduates, alumni and employers.

Recommendation 29

The Audit Panel recommends that the UoM considers its use of surveys as a means for review and continuous improvement of programmes.

Commendation 5

The Department of Medicine is commended for its initiative in seeking regular student feedback to inform teaching and learning in its modules.

7.5 Programme Review

The SER notes that a "...Programme can be reviewed by an advisory committee at least once every cycle and this vary depending on the duration of the programme which may be three, four or five years" (SER, pg 63). The Senate is the highest academic governance structure which is vested with the responsibility to ensure that UoM programmes are of quality and up-to-date with current trends.

The Audit Panel received conflicting feedback from interviewees on the frequency of programme reviews. The Curriculum Development Survey highlighted the need to review the programme structures every academic year (SER, pg 81).The Audit Panel recommends that a consistent schedule of review is implemented across all faculties. The UoM must reconsider its strategy of making use of industry and alumni partnerships or networks to draw benefit from their involvement and engagement in programme reviews. In this case, information from graduates/employer surveys and external examiners are sources to inform programme content and areas for improvement. It is expected that these measures also apply to the programmes offered by the UoM affiliates.

Recommendation 30

The Audit Panel recommends that the UoM firmly schedule programme reviews which would drive a major curriculum reform in all programmes. It would also allow for the streamlining and integration of programmes and which would suggest ways to achieve the vision and strategic intent of the University.

7.6 Stakeholder engagement

Positive feedback was received from industry representatives in terms of collaboration with the University. The Panel formed the view that there are expectations from industry about a more proactive and enterprising approach to curriculum development. The Panel observed that while the UoM has been successful in implementing WBL, it heard that industry involvement in career counselling and programme development remains limited.

Some industry representatives highlighted that they are approached to deliver lectures at the University and have been asked to contribute by offering input and suggestions with regard to programme design and content (topics of relevance). Industry representatives highlighted the need to increase student exposure in the actual industry environment through longer placement periods, and through motivating students to be more involved in industry-based projects. Mention was made of the availability of many research projects which could be taken up by students. The Panel is of the view that the University find ways to ensure effective work-based learning or placement programmes through soliciting a higher level of engagement from students and staff. Placements are opportunities to upgrade research capability and a number of other skills. In summary, it is to be connected to the practical world of work as well as to increase opportunities to secure employment.

The Panel noted that not all programmes have a placement component. Mention was made to the Panel that there are still some students (e.g., French/ or English programme students) who do not go on placement as it is not prescribed in their programme. The Audit Panel is of the view that the University review its strategy and approach towards partnerships to explore ways in which all students could be exposed to the workplace.

Recommendation 31

The Audit Panel recommends that the UoM enhances its programme design and delivery through increased and sustainable collaborations with industry or employers.

Increasing the number of University and industry partnerships remain a key challenge for the UoM. The Panel was not convinced that academics are sufficiently engaged in the process of contributing for the University to becoming ‘research-led’. The University would certainly be able foster knowledge creation with increased levels of research and consultancy projects with government, industry and other external stakeholders. The Panel encourages the University to consider developing its market intelligence and staff development capability for consultancy purposes through appointing one or more strategy and finance specialists to improve the University’s reach and capacity for national impact. This may imply revising its pricing model to make it competitive with other service providers. The University could also consider the option of having academics assigned to workplaces for specific assignments for their personal and professional development.

As the premier national University, collaboration with government to develop a broader national agenda to create a national ecosystem for engaged-research and engaged-education, and inform national leadership through advancing debates around the Vision 2030 to enable the University to play a greater role in public life and prove the University’s value-creation role to government.

Recommendation 32

The Audit Panel recommends that the UoM considers developing market intelligence and development capability for consultancy purposes through appointing one or more strategy and finance specialists to improve the university’s reach and national impact.

7.7 Quality Assurance of Academic standards and Benchmarking

The quality assurance of academic standards is primarily the collective responsibility of faculties, departments and the quality assurance unit. The Audit Panel noted that while the UoM has well elaborated processes for development of academic standards, the present management of the curriculum development framework at the UoM is not happening with the

required rigour. Several inconsistencies were observed by the Panel with regard to the approach and processes for development of academic standards. For example, the Panel noted that while some faculties have embarked on outcome-based programmes where there is a clear assessment strategy linked to academic standards (criterion-referenced assessment), other faculties were still struggling to comprehensively bring the outcome-based educational approach into their programmes.

The Audit Panel noted a number of ad-hoc initiatives, taken at the level of departments to enhance the benchmarking of programmes. For example, some departments have embarked on seeking accreditation with several international professional bodies (SER, pg 65). The Audit Panel recognises that professional accreditation provides international recognition and often leads to the raising of academic standards for the respective, and other, programmes.

Commendation 6

The UoM is commended for the initiatives to benchmark some of its programmes internationally and for having obtained recognition by professional and international recognition bodies.

However, the Audit Panel is of the view that the quality assurance of academic standards is a core academic function which must be taken very seriously. For this purpose, it is essential that the Quality Assurance Office provides faculties and departments with the necessary guidance and support, to ensure that the approach to academic standards development is coherent and thorough across the University. The Faculty Quality Assurance Team (FQAT) must receive training in the areas such as quality assurance, programme design and monitoring. The quality assurance model of the UoM must be reviewed to empower the FQAT with the responsibility and authority to drive effectively the quality assurance agenda in their respective faculties.

External benchmarking must at no time substitute the need for the core internal quality assurance functions of the University.

Recommendation 33

The Audit Panel recommends that the UoM develops a coherent approach to the development, implementation and monitoring of academic standards.

7.8 Capacity Development of Staff

The Panel observed and heard in interviews about an urgent need for capacity development across the University in the form of academic staff development schemes, and training and mentoring mechanisms for academics. This is also echoed in the Curriculum Development Survey (SER, pg.80). Academics expressed the need for training in areas such as “*Active Learning, Mixed-Mode Delivery, Use of the Online Platform and How to calculate the Student Load*” (SER, pg.83).

The Audit Panel is of the view that the UoM must have a risk-based and scaled approach to academic development, going beyond offering a short course in teaching and learning provided to newly appointed academics. This must also include ongoing monitoring and must be in line with an academic workload and management system. The UoM must consider engaging in more professional development in education to enhance academics in building skills in educational design, management and practice, and as already commented on in an earlier section, looking beyond an expensive and dated external examiner system. Training must be managed transparently and systematically to ensure that all academics have the opportunity to upgrade their skills and align to new trends in academia.

Recommendation 34

The Audit Panel recommends that the UoM institutionalises continuous professional development as an embedded requirement for staff development.

The Audit Panel is of the view that the UoM extend the currently planned academic workload or productivity changes to also incorporate education workload or productivity developments, looking beyond academic workload models and the European Credit Transfer System (ECTS) to also incorporate broader forms of sustainable productivity improvement across all segments of the University.

The UoM must seriously consider improving efficiency and productivity across all its functions to ensure that all staff are accountable for their performance and their use of University resources. In the same line, the University is urged to invest in the design and training of staff to enhance their productivity.

7.9 The Academic Standards Framework

The UoM is in the process of developing an Academic Standards Framework (ASF). Through this framework it intends to shift from the teaching workload model to the academic workload model. The Audit Panel is of the view that such a framework is long overdue, given that mention was made in the QA Report in 2012. It would be expected that the ASF forms part of a comprehensive University academic strategy. The University is encouraged to see to it that this framework is finalised and implemented consistently across the faculties as there is a strong perception from academic staffs that they are tied up in a lot of administrative duties.

The UoM is encouraged to take into account individual staff careers and role characteristics, and most importantly focus on the ‘delivery of outcomes’ and ‘not hours of work’. The ASF must guide program identification, development and review, which is aligned with other policies such as workload planning and management. The UoM may conduct a “root-and-branch” review of (i) academic work roles and management, (ii) developing systemic policies for setting academic standards, (iii) designing quality into resources/practices via training, monitoring, (iv) managing performance, and (v) recognising excellence.

Furthermore KPIs for academics are currently more geared towards achieving qualification versus gaining industry experience. The right balance of KPIs and measures should be devised. The academic to non-academic staff ratio also appears to be a challenge based on feedback gathered and this needs to be benchmarked to assess whether there is a need to review it. This should be done in conjunction with the academic workload model review.

8.0 Teaching and Learning

The Audit Panel observed that the University of Mauritius does not have a comprehensive mechanism for monitoring and evaluating teaching and learning. The Student Feedback Questionnaire (SFQ) is one such way “to obtain feedback from students on academic and

administrative issues” (SER, pg 65). However there was no comprehensive evidence available to the Panel on how UoM closes the quality loop.

A policy paper to evaluate the quality of Peer Review Teaching was submitted to the Academia Committee of the University by the Quality Assurance Office in 2014. However, it is still under discussion (SER, pg 32). The Audit Panel noted that there is some resistance from a number of academics to engage in peer-review of teaching. Furthermore, the Performance Management System of academics is yet to be implemented.

The Audit Panel is of the view that the Teaching and Learning Framework is an important mechanism for improving the quality of teaching and learning. The UoM must consider ensuring the provision of a broad range of innovative teaching methods as well as contemporary assessment modes in order to embed the desired employability skills with a view to improve students’ work readiness.

Recommendation 35

The Audit Panel recommends that the UoM institutionalises its Teaching and Learning Framework to align its practices with international good practice.

The Panel recognises the dynamism of academics in giving their best to the cause of teaching and research despite limited resources and various constraints. The Panel is of the view that in spirit of continuous improvement; the University consider a mechanism to evaluate teaching to ensure quality and consistency in the delivery of programmes, evaluate and hold staff accountable for poor performance. This includes evidence-based educational practices

Many interviewees raised concern with the Panel about the lack of student participation and engagement in learning for a number of reasons such as their lack of independence and maturity, coming from a Mauritian secondary school approach to learning and mechanisms to monitor class attendance, and which consequently makes teaching by academics more challenging.

The Audit Panel noted that the lack of data analysis on student academic performance makes it difficult to efficiently address student needs, including high failure rates. In this regard, the

Panel has already recommended that the University consider recruiting a statistician who would be a valuable resource to the University at a range of levels.

As previously noted in this Report, the Panel is also of the view that the University considers the changing profile and needs of students. In this respect, an appropriate mechanism is needed which promotes student-oriented types of learning, utilises activities which foster students' exposure to real-life cases and help students them to become independent learners. The University must find ways to ensure a smooth transition from a teacher-centred approach to a learner-centred approach. Furthermore, the UoM must implement a consistent University approach to monitoring student participation and triggering interventions when required, as well as offer a new engaged curriculum which engages both teacher and students in a new contemporary suite of socially engaged academic programmes. This would include the implementation of a graduate attributes document and which also includes an outcome-based competencies checklist to assess the 'graduate-ness' of its students.

The University must change its approach to student education in response to changing student markets. The University must ensure that teaching facilities and equipment are sufficient for the present number of students and their learning needs as well as address the challenges of enhancing student participation in class. Student participation in class can be enhanced through more interactive activities (group work, seminars, presentations, debates and brainstorming), thus providing students increased opportunities to open up and develop their own insights and reason-based opinions.

The Panel is of the view that it is opportune to align the teaching and learning methods with more technology-induced teaching and learning to increase students' critical thinking skills as well as their creativity. More emphasis can be put on the use of technology, such as increased utilisation of the 'Moodle' platform, interactive technology, multi-media, online learning, as well as the use of more online, hybrid or blended modes of delivery. The Audit Panel was pleased to note that one faculty has recently started the use of flipped classrooms.

Stakeholders have highlighted a decline in soft skills among students who face problems in articulating what they learn. The UoM currently does not have any particular strategy to address their skills development. Some departments embark students on peer projects to help them improve their English writing skills. The Panel heard of suggestions to introduce

Academic English as a compulsory component in programmes. It is something that the University could consider as part of academic literacy for students.

Recommendation 36

The Audit Panel recommends that the University implements, as part of broader curriculum reform, a range of cross-university programmes to develop student academic literacy and broader academic skills.

8.1 Examinations

In general the Audit Panel was satisfied with the procedures and processes for examinations at the UoM. The Audit Panel is of the view that the Examinations Office, is well staffed and staff are conversant with the processes in place. Security protocols are in place and each faculty has a dedicated examinations section. The Audit Panel is of the view that the UoM should provide more resources to its faculty examination offices to improve their infrastructure as well as modernise the submission of examination papers processes, etc.

Commendation 7

The Examinations Office is commended for the rigorous processes in place and for effectively ensuring the security of examinations.

8. Appendices

Appendix A: Composition of the Audit Panel

Audit Chairperson

Dr. Mark Hay, Advisor and Strategic Support in the Office of the Vice-Chancellor and Principal, Tshwane University of Technology, South Africa.

Audit Panel Members

- Professor Hamish Bennett Coates, Professor at Tsinghua University's Institute of Education and Deputy Director of the Tsinghua University Global Research Centre for the Assessment of College and Student Development, Tsinghua University, China.
- Associate Professor Douglas Darko Agyei, Associate Professor in the Department of Mathematics and ICT Education and Director, Centre for Teaching Support, College of Education Studies, University of Cape Coast, Ghana.
- Mr Dev Sewgobind, Chief Officer Talent and Culture, CIEL, Mauritius.
- Mrs Kalyani Putty-Rogbeer, Quality Assurance and Accreditation Officer, Tertiary Education Commission.

Secretary to the Audit Panel

Miss Diya Jogarah, Programme Officer, Tertiary Education Commission.

Appendix B: Acronyms and Abbreviations

ASF	Academic Standard Framework
ASRO	Admissions and Student Records Office
CD	Curriculum Development
CV	Curriculum Vitae
ECTS	European Credit Transfer System
EE	External Examiner
FQAT	Faculty Quality Assurance Team
HR	Human Resource
IT	Information Technology
ICT	Information and Communication Technology
KPI	Key Performance Indicator
MoFED	Ministry of Finance and Economic Development
MoE&HR,TE&SR	Ministry of Education and Human Resources, Tertiary Education and Scientific Research
NPS	Net Promoter Score
QA	Quality Assurance
RIMS	Research Information Management System
SER	Self Evaluation Report
SFQ	Student Feedback Questionnaire
SWO	Student Welfare Office
SWOT	Strengths Weaknesses Opportunities and Threats
TAL	Teaching and Learning
TEI	Tertiary Education Institution
TEC	Tertiary Education Commission
UILO	University Industry Linkage Office
UoM	University of Mauritius
WBL	Work-Based Learning