5.7 Areas for consideration by the Audit Panel

5.7.1 Institutional Mission , Aims and Objectives

- Institution's mission is explicit. It is understood and owned by its staff

- Aims and objectives are in keeping with the mission. They are realistic and achievable.

5.7.2 Institutional Approach to Quality Assurance

- The institution has adopted a working definition of quality assurance which is compatible with its mission.

- A systematic and comprehensive approach to quality assurance affecting all the essential services of the institution is being implemented.

- A quality assurance handbook addressing all the affected activities is in evidence.

- The quality assurance handbook is available to all departments for consultation by all staff members.

5.7.3 Administrative and Management Issues

Governance

- Principles of good governance are evident and they are translated into:

  - working in an open manner so as to facilitate access to its policies and decisions by   the public
  - encouraging institution-wide participation in the formulation of policies
  - ensuring that specific responsibilities are clear and are assumed appropriately by members according to their hierarchy
  - timely implementation of policies and monitoring thereof
  - Governing body being cohesive in its approach

- Top management Leadership is demonstrable through:

  - developing and communicating the institution's strategic plan with identifiable short term and long term goals and objectives
  - developing and communicating the institution's mission and plan
  - establishing effective links with external stakeholders
  - developing an organisational structure which reduces bureaucracy and improves communication, efficiency and effectiveness

- Management of funds through:

  - transparency and accountability
  - proper budgeting and rationalisation of funds with justification, taking into account short term and long term goals
  - ensuring cost effectiveness of programmes
  - effective internal auditing

- Management of academic activities through:

  - ensuring that programmes are relevant
  - ensuring that academic standards are continuously monitored and improved
  - ensuring that the institution's awards are recognised nationally, regionally and internationally

- Admissions

  - Policies regarding admissions are clear, transparent and accessible by the public Policy on equal opportunities is implemented consideration is given to physically disabled and mature students

- Students Council

  - A body such as a Students Council is operational to represent students in various committees, including the Academic Board.

  - The Council's voice is heeded by management and appropriate action taken

- Students Welfare

  - An office for students welfare is operational and it is actively supported by management

  - There is evidence that students are encouraged to use the services provided.

- Staff Council

  - A body fitting the description of staff council is active with full participation of staff.

  - It caters for the needs of all the institution's staff, ensuring that their rights are respected.

  - It positively contributes to the effective management of the institution.

- Staff Welfare

  - Provision is made to have an office or an association to provide support to staff

  - It takes an active role in ensuring that staff are listened to and their needs are acted upon in the most appropriate manner

- Staff Appointments, Appraisal and Promotion

  - The institution has well established policies for appointment, appraisal and promotion of staff and that these policies are effectively implemented

  - These policies are reviewed to reflect changing circumstances

- Staff Development

  - Performance appraisal is undertaken periodically in a transparent manner with the employment of clearly developed policies.

  - Staff are informed of management's recorded perception of their strengths and weaknesses

  - Appropriate support and training is given to staff concerned to enable them to overcome weaknesses so as to perform more effectively. Opportunities are given to deserving members to further their career.

  - Continuing professional development is actively promoted

5.7.4 Curricula and Programmes

Aims and Objectives

  - Curricula aims and objectives are explicit and known to staff and students.

  - Specialist aims and objectives are consistent with institutional mission and aims.

  - Aims and objectives correspond to the needs of students, society and the economy, as revealed by systematic investigation.

  - Curricula accurately reflect declared aims and objectives and the needs identified.

  - Curricula provide an appropriate balance of specialist content, general conceptual skills and personal, transferable skills.

  - Curricula are up-to-date in terms of specialist developments and current thinking on curriculum development and delivery.

Programme Design, Validation, Approval and Review

  - Programmes are designed to meet the needs of students, taking into account programme length/duration, modes of attendance, location, structure and sequence, optional elements etc.

  - Provision is made to enable students who do not have traditional academic qualifications, but who have the motivation and potential, including accreditation of prior learning (APL), accreditation of experiential learning (APEL), credit accumulation and transfer (CAT) work-based learning (WBL) and those who are mature to enrol on these programmes.

- Programmes go through a validation process and are subsequently approved by the academic council/senate prior to their offer

- The validation process is an established procedure which is thorough, consistent, reliable and is in conformity with international norms

- Programmes are periodically reviewed to assess their suitability

- There is an established system of regular liaison between the institution and industry, public agencies, professional bodies and other potential end-users.

The Teaching and Learning Environment

- The academic environment, physical and social, is generally conducive to learning, and the level of research and other scholarly activities is appropriate to the level of teaching.

- Teaching accommodation is sufficient in quantity and is appropriate for the curricula on offer and for the full range of students.

- There are adequate specialist facilities - including practical and experimental learning facilities - for the curricula on offer.

- Ancillary facilities - staff accommodation, storage space, preparation rooms, amenity accommodation etc. - are adequate.

- The physical environment is adequately maintained in terms of safety, cleanliness, repairs and decor.

- Accommodation, especially specialist accommodation, is optimally used as evidenced by suitable plans, schedules, timetables and control systems.

Staff Resources Ancillary

- The teaching staff establishment is sufficient to deliver the curricula.

- The teaching staff complement is suitable for the curricula, in terms of the mix of qualifications and skills, experience, aptitudes, age, status etc.

- There is adequate support in terms of library, technician, administrative, student services, staffing, etc.

- Staff resources are effectively deployed: roles and relationships are well defined and understood; duties allocated are appropriate to qualifications, experience and aptitude; there is provision for review, consultation and redeployment.

- Staff development needs are systematically identified, in relation to individual aspirations, the curricula and institutional requirements.

- All staff, academic and non-academic, are given the opportunity with necessary support to undertake appropriate staff development related to identified needs: induction, in-service training, secondments, consultancy, research and other scholarly activities.

Learning Resources

- There are sufficient physical resources to deliver the curricula, including equipment, materials and Information and Communications Technology.

- Equipment is up-to-date, readily available and effectively deployed.

- Library, audio-visual, internet access, appropriate software and hardware and other academic services are adequate for the curricula.

Programme Organisation and Delivery

- Learning programmes are effectively organised and managed.

- Teaching programmes are clearly articulated, made known to students and regularly monitored.

- Coursework and assessment are systematically scheduled.

- Feedback is regularly obtained from students, employers, moderators and auditors, and analysed and acted upon as appropriate.

Teaching and Learning

- Teaching and learning are based on explicit learning outcomes which are consistent with programme/course aims.

- Teaching methods are innovative, varied, and appropriate to the stated learning outcomes and make effective use of available facilities, equipment, materials and aids.

- Teaching is well planned and prepared and effectively performed, taking account of the needs of all categories of students.

- The style and pace of teaching and learning takes due account of the nature of the curricula, students' varied abilities and prior learning, and the specific needs of the very able or weak students equally.

- Teaching approaches encourage independent learning with critical thinking and students take responsibility for their own learning.

- Learning is enriched by appropriate reference to cross-curricular links, current research, industrial applications and development of generic skills such as communication and teamwork.

Student Support

- Students' needs for guidance and support are recognised and provision made for advice and assistance in the curricular, vocational and personal domains.

- Responsibility for particular aspects of student support is clearly located and effective liaison maintained between arrangements at all levels.

- Adequate provision is made for information and advice to potential students during the application and enrolment phases.

- Students are effectively supported during their studies by systems of induction, course tutors, personal tutors and provision for remediation and curricular choice.

- Students are adequately prepared for the next stage of study or employment by appropriate contacts, information, advice and training.

Monitoring and Assessment

- A range of assessment methods including coursework, projects, research and examinations etc is used in a planned manner to serve diagnostic, formative and summative purposes.

- Assessment schemes are compatible with the aims and aspects of the curricula as taught.

- The scope and weighting of assessment schemes are clear and known to all concerned and the standards applied are explicit and consistent across the curricula.

- Procedures are regularly applied to ensure that, as far as possible, assessment schemes are valid, reliable and fairly administered.

- Coursework is regularly set and assessed and is at the appropriate level of attainment.

- Coursework faithfully reflects the full range of curricular aims, including the development of generic skills.

- Student achievement, as represented by their coursework, is comparable with that of students on similar courses elsewhere.

- Students' performance and attitudes indicate a positive and successful learning experience.

- A systematic procedure for keeping record of student progress, for providing feedback to students and taking corrective action where necessary is effectively employed.

- Students have ready access to reasonable appeal procedures.

Output, Outcomes and Quality Control

- Performance indicators are regularly used to inform institutional assessment of achievement in relation to educational aims and learning outcomes.

- Results are monitored and analysed and appropriate action taken.

- Results against these or other appropriate indicators compare favourably with institutional or national norms.

- Quality Control arrangements at institutional, department, subject and/or course level are consistent and coherent.

- Quality standards, policies and strategies, are consistently applied and periodically reviewed within the cognate area.

- There is a general commitment to excellence in teaching and learning, apparent in staff and student attitudes in all aspects of provision.

5.7.5 External Examiners

- External examiners, as implied, are independent of the institution and are appointed for a specified period not exceeding three years.

- They are from reputable institutions and have the necessary expertise and experience.

- Terms of reference are explicit and should include moderation of question papers and model answers, moderation of scripts and providing feedback on performance of students. A feedback on the curriculum should be included.

- Ethical practice is given due importance.

5.7.6 Research Degree Students

- Students are clearly informed of their commitment to research through appropriate guidelines.

- Role of supervisors is explicit and expectations by students from them and vice versa are clearly understood.

- Students receive adequate support through regular tutorials and continuous monitoring of progress, together with feedback.

- Physical resources including appropriate equipment are readily available

5.7.7 Collaborative Provisions

- The collaboration is legally binding through a memorandum of understanding.

- Collaborating institutions undertake the responsibility to ensure that programmes are of the required standard and are offered with the same rigour as those in the parent institution.

- Students benefit from the same standard of resources as the regular students of the awarding institution.

- The awarding institution undertakes the responsibility to assure the quality of the educational provision under the collaboration.

- The partner institution is subject to quality audit or quality assessment together with the parent institution.

- Students are fully informed of the nature of the collaboration between the institutions concerned.

5.7.8 Industrial Links/Work-based Experience

- A committee comprising the institution and industry and other principal stakeholders meets regularly for the purposes of manpower planning.

- An active interface exists with industries for the purposes of identifying programmes of study and suitable work experience compatible with the students' programme.

- The industrial sector is encouraged to participate is curriculum design and validation.

5.7.9 Community Service and Good Citizenship

- The institution plays an active role in inculcating the spirit of a healthy community and in providing its services and expertise to it to promote psycho-socio-economic integration and development.

5.8 Deliberations and Decision of the Audit Panel

The audit panel takes note of all the findings. Members discuss their observations and decide on their conclusion, ensuring that it is a true reflection of the state of affairs at the institution. At the end of the audit the panel gives an oral feedback to the top management. Thereafter the institution is given a copy of the draft report within two months of the visit. This is followed by the final report which is sent within a period of three months.