Non - State Higher Education Circular No. 01/2023

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The Chief Executive Officers,
Non-State Higher Education Institutes.

Operational Guidelines for the Centre for Quality Assurance of Degree Awarding Non-State Higher Education Institutions (DANSHEIs)

1. Introduction

This document outlines the key aspects of the approach for internal quality assurance of the Degree Awarding Non-State Higher Education Institutions (DANSHEIs) which have been recognized by the section 25A of the Universities Act No.16 of 1978.

The UGC Circular No. 04/2015 was issued on 05.05.2015 to enable universities and other higher educational institutions in Sri Lanka to set up their own internal quality assurance system at a high level of functionality. It is observed that at present a majority of the DANSHEIs have established Internal Quality Assurance Units/Centre for Quality Assurance to ensure that proper quality standards are maintained.

These guidelines define a ''Roadmap' for the Quality Assurance Activities of the DANSHEIs to improve the Quality Standards of the Non-State Higher Education Sector.

Thereby DANSHEIs that have not established a Centre for Quality Assurance (CQA) shall take immediate steps to establish such a facility as per the guidelines given in this circular.

2. Objectives of the CQA

The CQA should seek to,

a) Institutionalize a culture of quality assurance in accordance with national guidelines and international practices.

b) Ensure the DANSHEI procedures are aligned with the Ministry of Education guidelines and national requirements.

c) Develop and maintain favorable public perception of the DANSHEI through improved quality of education based on consistent practice of quality assurance procedures.

3. Functions of the CQA

To achieve the above objectives, the major functions of the CQA should include,

a) Conduct of all activities pertaining to Internal Quality Assurance of the DANSHEI on a daily basis.

b) Support the DANSHEI and programme offering entities (Departments, Faculties, and Institutes) within the DANSHEI in preparation for external quality assurance, assessment, and accreditation requirements.

c) Offer guidance and assistance to programme offering entities in defining programme objectives and outcomes, graduate profiles, and curricula which are in accordance with national reference points such as the Sri Lanka qualification Framework (SLQF) and Subject Benchmark Statements (SBS).

d) Support establishment and effective functioning of Entity (i.e, Faculty, Colleges, Schools, Departments) Quality Assurance Cells (EQACs)

e) Promote and coordinate quality assurance activities within the DANSHEI and in institutions affiliated to the DANSHEI through conduct of workshops, seminars, development of manuals and other appropriate capacity building activities.

f) Liaise with the Non state Higher Education Division (NSHED) of the Ministry of Education (MoE) and other external quality assurance agencies as well as relevant international agencies.

g) Develop, review, and revise by–laws and standard operational procedures necessary for governance and management of the CQA

4. Aims of the Centre for Quality Assurance

The aims of the CQA of the DANSHEIs have been identified as follows:

To be in line with the nationally recognized documents of Minimum Standards for DANSHEIs, with particular importance to include the following:

1. Policy and procedures for higher education
2. Approval, monitoring and periodic review of programmes and awards
3. Teaching, Learning and Assessment of students
4. Quality assurance of teaching staff
5. Learning resources and student support
6. Information systems
7. Public information

5. Post of Head, Centre for Quality Assurance

A. Position within the Institute

The post of Head of CQA should ideally be a full-time position. As the Head needs the support of all the Deans and other senior academics/administrative staff, it is important to position the Head at an appropriate level. Hence, the position of the Head can be specified in the HEI Organogram at the level of the DVC or at least at the level of a Rector or a Dean.

The Head of CQA should be free of other major administrative responsibilities to implement the QA process effectively. Since academic auditing is a part of internal quality assurance, the person should not be a DVC, Dean, or an administrative Head of Department, to maintain the transparency of the quality assurance process.

He /She should be a senior academic/Professor with significant experience in administration (at least 3 years), as well as in the QA process and have a thorough knowledge of the external review process, since the Head bears important responsibilities in the process.

He /She should be appointed for a period of three years, with the concurrence of the DANSHEI.

B. Terms of Reference

The responsibilities of the Head of CQA should include the following.

1. Develop regulations for the CQA
2. Prepare operational guidelines for the CQA in accordance with the general guidelines developed by the NSHED of the MoE and customized for the DANSHEI's governance structure/ organogram and specific implementation arrangement.
3. Develop a 3-year strategic plan for the CQA and obtain approval from the Management Committee (MC) (composition given below) of the DANSHEI and the NSHED.
4. Develop the annual work plan for the CQA and obtain approval from the Management Committee (MC) of the DANSHEI.
5. Develop an annual budget for QA Activities in the DANSHEI.
6. Ensure that the CQA is established on the DANSHEI's website.
7. Report regularly on QA activities and progress to the MC and the NSHED
8. Circulate notices of QA activities to the DANSHEI community.
9. Conduct DANSHEI and entity level awareness programs on QA.
10. Initiate and support preparation of SER of Institutional Reviews.
11. Motivate and support study programmes to prepare SERs for programme reviews.
12. Provide necessary training and workshops for self-assessment report (SER) preparation.
13. Motivate and support academic staff to showcase best practices in QA.
14. Develop relationship and liaise with international agencies and DANSHEIs on QA activities.
15. Support Academic staff in the process of preparing proposals for the conduct of new degree programs and, ensure that applications submitted to the NSHED approval in this regard are compliant with the Sri Lanka Qualification Framework.
16. Report on DANSHEI's QA activities to the NSHED
17. Submit an annual report of the CQA to the NSHED.
18. Convene and facilitate all meetings of the CQA and EQACs.
19. Assist manual preparation on QA aspects in Entities
20. Make available to all staff and external stake holders the results of external and internal reviews including students' surveys.

c. Logistics Support for the Head/CQA

The Head/CQA should be remunerated as advertised if he/she is a full-time officer. If the position is held on a part time basis by an officer who is already recruited at the DANSHEI, an honorarium payment and a telecommunication allowance should be made as decided by the Board of Governors.

He /she should be provided with transport facilities when required to attend to QA activities at the DANSHEI.

The DANSHEI authorities should provide the CQA suitable permanent office space and a dedicated phone line and internet facilities

The DANSHEI should provide suitable support staff whenever necessary for the smooth function of the CQA.

6. Composition of the CQA

CQA is led by the Head and supervised and advised by the Board of Governors of the DANSHEI.

The CQA should have a Management Committee (MC) for taking decisions of governance of the CQA. The MC is chaired by the Head of the CQA. The MC comprises representatives from all Faculties of Study, and Divisions of Administration, Finance and Academic Support. Accordingly, the members of the CQA MC are as follows:

1. Head of CQA - Chairperson
2. Deans of all Faculties/Colleges/ Schools of Study
3. Registrar
4. Bursar / Finance Manager
5. Librarian
6. Director-SDC/Head of HR
7. Secretary, CQA (DR/SAR/AR)
8. Head of Marketing
9. Two other relevant Academic and Administrative staff members (e.g., QA consultants, etc.)

7. Reporting Procedure of the CQA

The CQA will report the progress of its activities to the MC monthly. Further, the EQACs of the Faculties of Study will present the progress of their activities monthly to the respective Faculty Boards, which will be subsequently reported to CQA to report to the MC. The administration, finance and academic support divisions will present the progress of their activities monthly at the Academic and Administrative Officers' Meeting, which will be subsequently reported to the CQA.

Monthly report should include Institute name, period of monthly report, and Quality assurance activities in the format expected by the NSHED.

Quality Assurance (QA) is a continuous process. Everyone in the DANSHEI is collectively responsible for the QA of its education provision and standard of awards. Hence everyone is expected to improve the quality of activities that they are engaged in. The establishment of the stipulated internal processes would contribute to enhance the quality of the DANSHEI leading to a quality culture.

This Circular is issued as per the recommendations of the Standing Committee on Accreditation and Quality Assurance (SCAQA) given on 28.02.2023 at its 84th meeting.

M. N. Ranasinghe
Secretary/Specified Authority