



ACADEMIC PROGRAMMES DEVELOPMENT AND REVIEW POLICY

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1. INTRODUCTION

- 1.1. The Botswana Open University (BOU) seeks to be recognized for innovation in teaching and learning and for the quality of its programmes. It aims to develop and offer high quality, relevant academic programmes. Furthermore, as disciplinary knowledge and the scholarship of teaching and learning are constantly evolving, the reputation of BOU can only be maintained and improved if its programmes are regularly reviewed to take into account emerging labour market issues and national, regional and global trends. This Policy provides guidance for ongoing processes of programme development and review.
- 1.2. Although the primary objective of this Policy is to state the institution's commitment to the continuous improvement of BOU's academic programmes, the processes that are adopted are also designed to meet BOU's responsibility to the regulatory bodies on quality assurance, and specifically to meet the standards of the Botswana Qualifications Authority and others including the Human Resource Development Council (HRDC).

2. DEFINITIONS

Programme: A collection of courses in a given area of study, lasting over a specified period and leading to an award of the University.

Programme Approval: The process, overseen by the Academic Policies, Programmes and Quality Assurance Committee, Senate and Council, which endorses a new or reviewed programme as meeting BOU policies and standards and conforming with the *General Academic Regulations*.

Programme Development: The steps, discussions and processes needed to translate a set of ideas into a documented statement about student learning.

Programme Development Team: The group of staff members responsible for developing a new programme and documenting the outcome of the development process and decisions made.

Programme Review: The processes needed to evaluate an existing programme and produce a documented statement of revisions.

3. PURPOSE

The *Academic Programmes Development and Review Policy* is intended to guide the development of new undergraduate and graduate programmes and to aid in the ongoing improvement of existing programmes. It also promotes the University's responsibility of ensuring the quality of its programmes.

4. SCOPE

This Policy applies to all new programmes which lead to a Botswana Open University qualification and to all existing programmes that require regular reviews to effect major changes. It covers both undergraduate and graduate programmes. It also applies to programmes offered in collaboration with other institutions that lead to BOU qualifications.

5. RELATED DOCUMENTS

The Policy should be read in conjunction with the *General Academic Regulations*. Its implementation is supported by the *Quality Policy* and the *Programme Development and Review Guidelines*.

6. OBJECTIVE

The objective of this Policy is to ensure that all new and revised programmes offered by the University are:

- 6.1. Consistent with BOU values, mission, vision, and strategic objectives;
- 6.2. Responsive to identified labour market needs in Botswana, the region and globally, and to lifelong learning requirements;
- 6.3. Developed in consultation with the relevant industry, business, professional bodies and community stakeholders;
- 6.4. Designed to meet appropriate educational standards;
- 6.5. Resourced according to the University's strategic priority of academic excellence.

7. POLICY STATEMENT

- 7.1. The University's vision is to be recognised internationally as an Open and Distance Learning institution which provides high quality education, research and community engagement. To achieve its vision, the University commits to the goal of academic excellence in its teaching programmes.
- 7.2. The Policy is based on the following principles:
 - 7.2.1. Academic rigour – BOU will ensure that its programmes are well-designed, academically coherent and intellectually challenging, and that they are informed by research and capable of enriching the student experience.
 - 7.2.2. Peer review – the development and review of programmes will be underpinned by academic and professional peer review by internal colleagues and external subject specialists.
 - 7.2.3. Academic standards – in the design of programmes, BOU will adhere to the academic and professional standards indicated by academic research in its fields of expertise and by the standards and guidelines established by other institutions of higher education, professional bodies and regulatory authorities.
- 7.3. In line with these principles, programmes will:
 - 7.3.1. Provide participants with professional learning opportunities in their chosen field of study;
 - 7.3.2. Provide a critically reflective theoretical and experiential learning context;
 - 7.3.3. Integrate theory and practice in a dynamic learning environment that provides support to promote personal and professional development;
 - 7.3.4. Emphasise the centrality of the learner within the learning process; and
 - 7.3.5. Support the personal and professional development of each student to foster innovation, critical thinking, and ethical and professional practice.

- 7.4. All new programmes will be developed by a Programme Development Team as defined in the *Programme Development and Review Guidelines* and will follow the stages and processes stipulated in the *Guidelines*.
- 7.5. All academic programmes will be reviewed on a five-year cycle. Programme reviews will follow the stages and processes stipulated in the *Guidelines*.

8. POLICY IMPLEMENTATION

- 8.1. Central to the initial stages of programme development, revision and approval are the Departmental Board and the School Board.
- 8.2. The Academic Policies, Programmes and Quality Assurance Committee (APPQAC) monitors the quality of academic programmes and is responsible for the validation of all new programmes and programme revisions.
- 8.3. Senate recommends to Council the introduction of new programmes and approves revisions to existing programmes.
- 8.4. All new programmes are approved by Council to ensure that they align to the University's strategic direction and that the necessary resources are provided.
- 8.5. The Deputy Vice Chancellor – Academic Services has overall responsibility for the Policy and the Director, Centre for Teaching, Learning and Quality Assurance (CTLQA) is responsible for implementation and compliance.

9. REVIEW

The Policy shall be reviewed every three years or earlier as necessary.