



## PROGRAMME DEVELOPMENT AND REVIEW GUIDELINES

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## PROGRAMME DEVELOPMENT AND REVIEW GUIDELINES

### 1. INTRODUCTION

These *Guidelines* provide information and describe procedures relating to different stages of the process for the development of new undergraduate and graduate programmes and for the review of existing ones. The *Guidelines* are intended for all academic and support working on programme development and review.

### 2. DEFINITIONS

#### 2.1 New Programmes

A new programme is any programme that has not been previously offered at the Botswana Open University (BOU). It generally involves a combination of new courses, new learning outcomes, and new or re-allocated resources, and will be meant to provide students with an academic path that was previously not available to them.

#### 2.2 Modifications to Existing Programmes

2.2.1 Revisions to an existing programme will be classified as either a minor or a major modification to the programme. In both cases, the programme will continue to be subject to a cyclical programme review. Major modifications must be reported annually to the Academic Policy, Programmes and Quality Assurance Committee.

2.2.2 Major modifications include the following programme changes:

- a) Requirements that differ significantly from those existing at the time of the previous cyclical programme review. For undergraduate programmes, it would be considered a major modification when more than 30% of the programme requirements are being changed from one academic year to the next. For graduate programmes, it would be considered a major modification when more than 50% of the programme requirements (including requirements such as courses, major exams, and research) are being changed from one year to the next.

- b) Significant changes to the Programme Learning Outcomes or to the essential resources as may occur, for example, where there have been changes to the existing mode of delivery (such as different campus, switch to online delivery or new inter-institutional collaboration).

2.2.3 The addition of a new field to an existing graduate programme is considered to be a major modification. The inclusion of a new area of specialization within the same degree designation will normally be considered a major modification.

#### 2.2.4 Minor modifications

Minor modifications are part of a programme's inherent flexibility and would not be expected to have an impact on the overall programme aims or learning outcomes. Minor modifications usually affect a single course or a small number of linked courses; the programme as a whole should not be significantly different.

2.2.5 In situations where it is unclear or where disagreement exists on whether a planned change constitutes a minor modification, a major modification, or a new programme, the determination will be made by the Deputy Vice-Chancellor (Academic Services) in consultation with the Academic Programmes, Policy and Quality Assurance Committee of Senate, where appropriate. A record of any decision will be kept.

2.2.6 Once per year, the Centre for Teaching, Learning and Quality Assurance will prepare a report of major modifications to existing programmes and will submit the report to the Academic Programmes, Policy, and Quality Assurance Committee.

### 3. NEW GRADUATE AND UNDERGRADUATE PROGRAMMES

The steps required for the approval of any new programme include:

#### 3.1. Initiation of a New Programme Proposal

Proponents of a new programme shall begin by preparing a Statement of Intent and acquiring endorsement from the relevant Dean(s) and in the case of graduate programmes, the Director of Graduate Studies also.

## 3.2. Broad Consultation

- 3.2.1 The Head of Department, in consultation with the Dean, is responsible for ensuring that there is broad consultation. Such consultation is especially important when proposing interdisciplinary programmes as those initiators of the proposed plan may not know all the disciplines or individual academic staff members who might potentially be interested, or have expertise. It will also be essential to have appropriate discussions with other institutions when the proposed programmes are to be offered in collaboration with those institutions and stakeholders/interested parties.
- 3.2.2 Whenever academic staff members from several departments will be involved in a proposed programme, the proponents must have the opportunity to discuss the proposal with their respective Dean(s) and Head(s). Similarly, if there is a proposal to cross-list a course, or to recommend or require students in the new programme to take existing courses, the teaching Department(s) must be consulted and agreement obtained, in writing, from the appropriate Head of Department/Dean.
- 3.2.3 Discussions should be held with support units such as, but not limited to, the Library, the Academic Registry, Centre for Research and Innovation, and Centre for Teaching, Learning and Quality Assurance (CTLQA), to assess the impact of the introduction of the new programme. Input also should be sought from relevant groups of students for whom there is a potential impact of the proposal.
- 3.2.4 A proposal for a new interdisciplinary programme must be presented to any related School to ensure that there is widespread awareness of the programme and of its potential impact. If a new interdisciplinary programme utilizes or cross-lists one or several new courses from other Departments, the Department(s) offering the course(s), rather than the new interdisciplinary group, must submit those courses for approval. Prior written agreement also must be obtained from Heads of participating Departments for teaching, graduate supervision and other resources required for interdisciplinary programmes. Departments must be given adequate time to consider these requests. Schools must include the proposed administrative and governance structures in interdisciplinary programme proposals.

- 3.2.5 A proposal must be presented to the School's Advisory Board and/or ad hoc meetings of external stakeholders who represent relevant industries, professions and potential employers.

### **3.3. New Programme Proposal**

The Head is responsible, in collaboration with relevant groups and/or individuals, for the preparation of a New Programme Proposal that addresses the following criteria:

#### **3.3.1. Programme**

- Description of the extent and method of the consultation process undertaken during the development of the proposal, including the groups and /or individuals who helped to prepare the proposal.

It is advised that the proposal be drafted taking into account the template for programme development provided by the Regulatory Body (Botswana Qualifications Authority)

- Consistency of the programme with the University's mission and academic plans.
- Clarity and appropriateness of the programme's requirements and the Programme Learning Outcomes.
- Appropriateness of degree nomenclature.

#### **3.3.2. Admission requirements**

- Appropriateness of the programme's admission requirements for the Programme Learning Outcomes established for completion of the programme.
- Alternative requirements, if any, for admission into the programme, such as minimum grade point average, additional languages, or portfolios, along with how the programme recognizes prior learning.

#### **3.3.3. Structure**

- Appropriateness of the administrative, governance, and communication processes proposed in support of the programme.

- Appropriateness of the programme's structure and regulations to meet specified Programme Learning Outcomes.
- A clear rationale for programme length, which ensures that the programme requirements can be reasonably completed within the proposed time period.

#### 3.3.4. *Programme content, curriculum and teaching*

- Ways in which the curriculum addresses the current state of the discipline or area of study.
- Identification of any unique curriculum or programme innovations or creative components.
- Appropriateness of the proposed mode(s) of delivery to meet the intended Programme Learning Outcomes and availability of the necessary physical resources.
- Ways in which the programme addresses current institutional, school or departmental priorities (e.g. experiential learning, diversity and inclusion, accessibility, community engagement, entrepreneurship, etc.).
- Ways in which the programme addresses the strategic mandate of BOU.
- For research-focused graduate programmes, clear indication of the nature and suitability of the major research requirements for degree completion.
- For graduate programmes, verification that the courses included meet University requirements in terms of the minimum number of courses required, the level of courses required, and the appropriate inclusion of other required elements appropriate for the degree level. At least two thirds of the course requirements must be at the defined level.

#### 3.3.5. *Assessment of teaching and learning*

- Appropriateness of the proposed methods for the instruction and assessment of student achievement of the intended Programme Learning Outcomes.

- Completeness of plans for documenting and demonstrating the level of performance of students.

### 3.3.6. Resources

For all programmes:

- Adequacy of the Department/School's planned utilization of existing human, physical and financial resources, and any institutional commitment to supplement those resources to support the programme.
- Participation of a sufficient number and quality of academic staff who are competent to teach and/or supervise in the programme.
- Evidence that there are adequate resources to sustain the quality of scholarship produced by undergraduate students as well as graduate students' scholarship and research activities, including library support, information technology support, and laboratory access.

For graduate programmes:

- Evidence that full-time or part time staff engaged by the School have the recent research and/or professional/academic expertise needed to sustain the programme, promote innovation, foster an appropriate intellectual climate, and provide excellent supervision of students in academic and research components of the programme.
- For programmes with a research component, evidence that School research supervisors have current and ongoing research programmes, and space and relevant research infrastructure appropriate to support students' research in the programme.
- Evidence of how supervisory loads will be distributed, and the qualifications and appointment status of staff who will provide instruction and supervision.
- Evidence of prior experience in graduate teaching and research supervision for staff participating in the programme.

For undergraduate programmes:

- Evidence of plans for adequate numbers of academic staff to achieve the goals of the programme;
- Evidence of plans to provide the necessary resources in step with the implementation of the programme;
- Planned/anticipated class sizes;
- Provision of supervision of experiential learning opportunities (if required); and,
- Role of part-time staff.

#### 3.3.7. *Quality and other indicators*

- Definition and use of indicators that provide evidence of quality of the academic staff (e.g., qualifications, research, innovation and scholarly record; appropriateness of collective staff expertise to contribute substantively to the proposed programme).
- Evidence of a programme structure and School research that will ensure the intellectual quality of the student experience.

### **3.4. External Evaluation**

3.4.1 The Deputy Vice-Chancellor (Academic Services) in consultation with the Dean will select a team of reviewers to evaluate the New Programme Proposal. The review team shall consist of at least one external reviewer for new undergraduate programmes and two external reviewers for new graduate programmes. Additional members may be added to the team if appropriate, for instance when evaluating professional programmes or interdisciplinary programmes.

3.4.2 External reviews of new graduate programmes must incorporate an on-site visit. External reviews of new undergraduate programme proposals may be conducted on-site, but may be conducted by desk audit, video-conference, or an equivalent method if the external reviewer is satisfied that the off-site option is acceptable. Exceptions to on-site visits for undergraduate programme reviews will be determined by the Deputy Vice-

Chancellor (Academic Services) in consultation with the Dean, prior to the commencement of the review.

3.4.3 External members of the review team shall normally be individuals who are in the same discipline as the programme under review (or across disciplines for interdisciplinary programmes), and who are distinguished senior academics of broad experience. Non-traditional programmes may consider non-academics with relevant expertise and experience. Reviewers must have an impartial relationship to the programme. There also should be no other potential conflicts of interest (e.g., personal or financial). Wherever possible the review team shall represent broad institutional categories and/or geographic regions.

3.4.4 Reviewers will be selected from a list of at least six suggested individuals compiled by the School and endorsed by the Dean. The list shall include, for each proposed external reviewer:

- name;
- rank and position;
- institution or company and current address, telephone number, e-mail address, and URL if available;
- professional (including administrative) experience or expertise relevant to the programme under review;
- details of any previous or current affiliation with the University, and any association with individual members of the programme under review (e.g., co-author, previous student/supervisor, close relationship); and,
- for graduate programmes, a description of research expertise, and a partial listing of recent scholarly publications.

3.4.5 The *Programme Development and Review Guidelines* and other materials specific to the review will be provided to all members of the review team no less than two weeks prior to their visit.

### 3.5. Reviewers' Report

The reviewers shall provide, within four weeks of the review, a report that appraises the standards and quality of the proposed programme including

the associated resources. Reviewers also will be invited to acknowledge any clearly innovative aspects of the proposed programme, together with recommendations on any essential or otherwise desirable modifications to the programme.

### **3.6. Internal Response**

Responses to the reviewers' report from both the Head of Department and the Dean should be prepared, as per the New Programme Response template, and attached to the reviewers' report.

### **3.7. Institutional Approval**

3.7.1 Following the completion of the external review, approval of New Programme Proposals by the following University bodies will commence:

- The School Board reviews the New Programme Proposal to ensure that the new programme is of appropriate quality and adds sufficient value to the programme menu already offered in the School; and to ensure that the programme is consistent with its strategic plans.
- The Director of Finance reviews the resource implications and financial viability component of the document to ensure that all potential University resource requirements are captured and the programme is properly costed.
- The Academic Policy, Programmes and Quality Assurance Committee (APPQAC) reviews the New Programme Proposal to ensure that the programme is consistent with University principles and priorities; the programme is of high academic quality; there is convincing evidence of student demand and societal need for the programme; and sufficient financial support, infrastructure, and human resources can be made available to initiate and support the programme.
- Senate ensures that the programme is consistent with the University's Academic Master Plan and its standards for academic programmes.
- Council ensures that the programme advances the University's strategic plan and that adequate resources are available.

- 3.7.3 If any one of the bodies requires changes to the proposal, those changes shall be subsequently provided to the other approving bodies for approval, depending on the nature of the changes.

### **3.8. Monitoring of Approved New Programmes**

Between eighteen and twenty-four months after commencement of the programme, the Dean will provide the Deputy Vice Chancellor (Academic Services) with an update on progress in the programme, addressing any concerns from the initial programme review, and highlighting any unanticipated changes in curriculum, resources, enrollment, funding mechanisms, or governance structure. If, after consultation with the Dean, the Deputy Vice-Chancellor deems it appropriate, an informal internal assessment of the programme may be undertaken, including interviews with current students and staff, to determine if a more complete, early cyclical review is warranted.

## **4. CYCLICAL PROGRAMME REVIEWS**

All academic programmes shall be reviewed on a five-year cycle. The list of programmes that require review, and the schedule of such reviews, will be maintained by the Centre for Teaching, Learning and Quality Assurance.

The review shall consist of the following steps:

### **4.1. Internal Evaluation**

The Head is responsible, in collaboration with relevant groups and/or individuals, for preparing a self-study document that is broad-based, reflective, forward-looking, and inclusive of critical analysis. The self-study must address and document the consistency of the programmes learning outcomes with the University's mission, and how its graduates achieve those outcomes.

The self-study should include criteria and quality indicators including:

#### **4.1.1. *Programme Description and Overview***

- Programme is consistent with the University's mission and academic plans.
- Programme requirements and Programme Learning Outcomes are clear, appropriate and aligned.

#### 4.1.2. *Admission requirements*

- Admission requirements are appropriately aligned with the Programme Learning Outcomes established for completion of the programme.

#### 4.1.3. *Curriculum*

- How the curriculum reflects the current state of the discipline or area of study.
- Evidence of any significant innovation or creativity in the content and/or delivery of the programmes relative to other such programmes.
- How the mode(s) of delivery are appropriate and effective at meeting the Programme Learning Outcomes.
- Ways in which the programme addresses current institutional, School or Departmental priorities (e.g. experiential learning, diversity and inclusion, accessibility, community engagement, entrepreneurship, etc.).

#### 4.1.4. *Teaching and assessment*

- Methods for assessing student achievement of the defined Programme Learning Outcomes are appropriate and effective.
- Appropriateness and effectiveness of the means of assessment, especially in the students' final year of the programme, in clearly demonstrating achievement of the Programme Learning Outcomes.

#### 4.1.5. *Resources*

- Appropriateness and effectiveness of the use of existing human, physical and financial resources by the Department/School in delivering and maintaining the quality of its programme(s), in relation to the University's priorities for and constraints on funding, space, and staff allocation.

#### 4.1.6. *Quality indicators*

- Information on the quality of the programme under review. Standard quality indicators will be availed by the Centre for Teaching, Learning and Quality Assurance. Heads of Department will be expected to provide context and commentary on the data. When possible and appropriate, Heads will also refer to applicable professional standards.

Additional graduate programme criteria:

- Evidence that students' time-to-completion is both monitored and managed in relation to the programmes defined length and programme me requirements.
- Quality and availability of graduate supervision.
- Definition and application of indicators that provide evidence of staff, student and programme quality.

#### 4.1.7. *Quality enhancement*

- Concerns and recommendations raised in previous reviews;
- Initiatives that have been undertaken to enhance the teaching, learning and/or research environments thus, the quality of the programme, and how these will be sustained;
- Areas identified through the conduct of the self-study as requiring improvement;
- Areas that hold promise for continued enhancement.

#### 4.1.8. *System of governance*

- Evidence that a consultative and inclusive system of governance has been used on an ongoing basis to assess the programme and implement changes as appropriate.

#### 4.1.9. *Academic support services*

- Assessment of academic support services that directly contribute to the academic quality of each programme under review.

#### 4.1.10. *Self-Study Participation*

- Participation of programme staff and students in the self-study and how their views were obtained and taken into account, and who contributed to the development and writing of the self-study.

#### 4.1.11. *External Participation*

- The input of others deemed to be relevant and useful, such as graduates of the programme, representatives of industry and the professions, and employers may also be included.

It is the Dean's responsibility to review and approve the self-study report to ensure that it meets the above criteria.

## 4.2. External Evaluation

4.2.1 The Deputy Vice-Chancellor (Academic Services) in consultation with the Dean will select a team of external reviewers to evaluate the programme. The External Review Team shall consist of at least one external reviewer for undergraduate programmes and two external reviewers for graduate programmes. Additional members may be added to the team if appropriate, such as when evaluating professional programmes or interdisciplinary programmes.

4.2.2 External members of the External Review Team normally shall be individuals in the same discipline as the Programme under review (or across disciplines for interdisciplinary programmes) who are distinguished senior academics of broad experience. They must have an impartial relationship to the Programme. Wherever possible the Team shall represent broad institutional categories and/or geographic regions. They will be selected from a list of at least six suggested individuals compiled by the School under review and endorsed by the Dean. The list shall include, for each proposed external reviewer:

- name;
- rank and position;
- institution or company and current address, telephone number, and e-mail address, and URL if available;

- professional (including administrative) experience or expertise relevant to the Programme under review;
- details of any previous or current affiliation with the University, and any association with individual members of the Programme under review (e.g., co-author, previous student/supervisor, close relationship); and,
- for graduate programme reviews, a description of research expertise, and a partial listing of recent scholarly publications.

4.2.3 The Self-Study, the *Guidelines for External Review Teams*, and other materials specific to the current review will be provided to all members of the Team no less than two weeks prior to their visit. If applicable, the results of the previous accreditation review also will be made available to the Review Team to provide them with the views of the relevant regulatory body. The *Guidelines for External Review Teams* describe the review process and the roles and obligations of the Team, which include:

- to identify and comment on the programme's notably strong and creative attributes;
- to describe the programme's respective strengths, areas for improvement, and opportunities for enhancement;
- to recommend specific steps to be taken to improve the programme, distinguishing between those the programme can itself take with existing resources and those that require external action;
- to respect the confidentiality required for all aspects of the review process.

It is required that all reviewers visit at the same time, normally for two days. As appropriate, the Team shall meet with the following:

- Head of Department;
- Full-time School members (in groups);
- Part-time School members (in groups);

- Programme students (a broad cross section of students should participate in a meeting with the review team);
- School support staff
- Dean;
- Deputy Vice-Chancellor (Academic Services)

4.2.3 The External Review Team will submit to the Deputy Vice Chancellor (Academic Services) a report for the programme under review, normally within four weeks of the visit. The Team's report should address the substance of both the self-study report and the evaluation criteria. The intent of these reports is to be formative and constructive. The reports are intended to provide counsel rather than prescriptive courses of action. The Deputy Vice-Chancellor (Academic Services) will circulate the Team's report to the appropriate Head of Department and Dean.

4.2.4 Responses to the reviewers' report from both the Head and the Dean should be prepared, as per the Programme Response template, and be attached to the reviewers' report.

### **4.3. Institutional Response**

4.3.1 All programme reviews, including the self-study, reviewer's report, and responses from the Head and Dean, will be submitted to the Academic Policy, Programmes and Quality Assurance Committee which will assess the review and will submit a Final Assessment Report to Senate that:

- identifies significant strengths of the programme;
- addresses the appropriateness of resources for the success of the programme;
- identifies opportunities for programme improvement and enhancement;
- identifies and prioritizes the recommendations;
- may include a confidential section (e.g., where personnel issues may be addressed);

- 4.3.2 Eighteen months after receiving the report from Senate, the Dean will meet with the Head for an update on the programme. The Dean will submit a progress report to the Academic Policy, Programmes and Quality Assurance Committee summarizing the status of any actions taken or being taken.

## 5. Review

These Guidelines will be reviewed every three years or as necessary.