



Framework for the Development and Review of Academic Programmes

1. Introduction:

The Mico University College has as a strategic objective to achieve distinction in teacher education, research and community service and to this end will have to ensure the integrity of its programmes by ensuring the adequacy of new programmes and regular reviews, assessment and remedial works as required for existing programmes. The proposal plan for any new programme will require the same rigorous review, as applied to existing programmes. The University College will put in place a policy to oversee its academic programme development and review system to be subsumed under a “Policy for the Development and Review of Academic Programmes”.

2. Purpose:

The purpose of the review of academic programmes is to institute a continuous assessment to inform programme development for undergraduate and graduate programmes and to aid in the ongoing improvement of existing programmes. The academic programme review is also designed to meet the University College’s responsibility of ensuring the quality of such programmes. The process involves evaluation of the status, effectiveness and any programme improvement required, as well as, helping to identify the future direction, needs and priorities of the programme. Therefore, it is closely connected to strategic planning, resource allocation, and other decision-making activities at the department/faculty and institution levels.

The emphasis of the reviews is on forward planning, informed by analysis of recent data trends, and the identification of any short comings. The plans shall develop the necessary steps to maintain excellence and to correct deficiencies.

3. Scope:

The Academic Programme Review applies to all undergraduate and graduate programmes offered at the Mico University College, as well as, programmes offered in collaboration with other institutions that lead to degrees or diplomas.

4. Definition of New Programmes and Major Modifications:

A new programme is any programme not previously been offered at the Mico University College and will involve new courses, new outcomes and new or re-allocated resources and will provide students with an academic path not previously available to them.

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 as outlined in Section 7. Major modifications must be reported annually to the Academic Board.

For undergraduate programmes, a major modification will be one in which more than 30% of the programme requirements are being changed from one academic year to the next. For graduate programmes, a major modification will be one in which 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. If these conditions do not apply, the modifications will not be considered to be major.

In situations where disagreement exists on whether a proposal constitutes a minor modification, a major modification, or a new programme, the determination shall be made by the a Quality Assurance Committee named by the Academic Board and chaired by the Quality Assurance Officer.

5. Stages in the Development of a New Programme

5.1 Consultation

The Dean(s) in consultation with members of the Faculty Board(s) shall ensure that there is broad consultation within the faculty and between faculties especially in the cases of interdisciplinary programmes. It will also be essential to have appropriate discussion with other institutions when the proposed programmes to be offered are collaborative.

The Dean(s) shall also ensure the gathering of the requisite information to demonstrate that the new programme –

- Will be consistent with The Mico's principles, priorities and strengths
- Is of high academic quality
- Is viable, because there is high student demand and/or societal need
- Has sufficient financial support, infrastructure and human resources from the Institutional/ Faculty Budget or has the potential to be a revenue generating programme.
- Has a sound structure, providing a framework for the development of courses.

There should also be consultation with the following Units/Department

- Curriculum Unit
- Quality Assurance Unit
- The Library
- The Office of the Registrar

- The ICT Department
- ITER

Discussions with these Units/Department should determine the impact of the introduction of the new programme. Input should also be sought from relevant groups of students for whom there is a potential impact of the proposal.

5.2 Programme Proposal Brief

The Dean shall have the responsibility to seeing to the development of the Programme Proposal Brief, which should address the following:

5.2.1 Programme Objectives

- a) Consistency of the programme with the University College's mission, vision and strategic plans.
- b) Clarity and appropriateness of the programme's requirements and associated learning outcomes.
- c) Appropriateness of degree nomenclature.

5.2.2 Admission requirements

- a) Appropriateness of the programme's admission requirements for the learning outcomes established for completion of the programme.
- b) Alternative requirements, if any, for admission into the programme, such as minimum grade point average, additional languages or portfolios, along with how the programme would recognize prior work or learning experience.

5.2.3 Structure

- a) Appropriateness of the administrative, governance, and communication processes proposed in support of the programme.
- b) Appropriateness of the programme's structure and regulations to meet specified programme learning outcomes.
- c) Level of the programme
- d) For graduate programmes, a clear rationale for programme length, which ensures that the programme requirements can be reasonably completed within the proposed time period.

5.2.4 Programme content

- a) Ways in which the curriculum addresses the current state of the discipline or area of study.
- b) Identification of any unique curriculum or programme innovations or creative components.

- c) For graduate programmes which shall all be research-focused, a clear indication of the nature and suitability of the major research requirements for degree completion.
- d) 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 (e.g., transfer exams, comprehensive exams).

5.2.5 Mode of delivery

- a) Appropriateness of the proposed mode(s) of delivery to meet the intended Programme Learning Outcomes.

5.2.6 Assessment of teaching and learning

- a) Appropriateness of the proposed methods for the instruction and assessment of student achievement of the intended Programme Learning Outcomes.
- b) Completeness of plans for documenting and demonstrating the level of performance of students.

5.2.7 Resources for all programmes

- a) Adequacy of the administrative unit's planned utilization of existing human, physical and financial resources, and any institutional commitment to supplement those resources, to support the programme.
- b) Participation of a sufficient number and quality of faculty who are competent to teach and/or supervise in the programme.
- c) 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.

5.2.8 Resources for graduate programmes only

- a) Evidence that full-time tenured/tenure-track faculty have the recent research and/or professional/clinical 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.
- b) Where appropriate to the programme, evidence that financial assistance for students will be sufficient to ensure adequate quality and numbers of students.
- c) Evidence that faculty research supervisors have current and ongoing research programmes and funding, and space and relevant research infrastructure appropriate to support students' research in the programme.
- d) Evidence of how supervisory loads will be distributed, and the qualifications and appointment status of faculty who will provide instruction and supervision.

- e) Evidence of prior experience in graduate teaching and research supervision for faculty participating in the programme.

5.2.9 Resources for undergraduate programmes only

- a) Evidence of plans for adequate numbers of faculty and staff to achieve the goals of the programme;
- b) Evidence of plans to provide the necessary resources in step with the implementation of the programme;
- c) Planned/anticipated class sizes;
- d) Provision of supervision of experiential learning opportunities (if required); and,
- e) Role of adjunct and sessional faculty.

5.2.10 Quality and other indicators

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

5.2.11 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

5.3 Institutional approval

The Programme Proposal brief shall be reviewed by a wide cross-section of the institution departments/units to include:

- the Academic Department(s) – to ensure that the new programme meets the stated objectives within the context of the discipline;
- the Faculty(ies) (or Faculty Board(s)) – to ensure that the programme is consistent with the Faculty’s strategic plans and that the new programme adds sufficient value to the programmes already offered in the Faculty, and that the necessary resources are available if these are to be provided from within the Faculty’s resources;
- the University Curriculum Committee – to examine the curriculum patterns and programme content of the new programme and assess its impact on students within the faculty(ies) and between faculties (where applicable);
- the University Quality Assurance Committee – to assess the compliance with the established standards and protocols of the University College.

The above institutional departments/units when evaluating should consider the criteria outlined in Section 5.2 and the feedback submitted to the Dean(s) with responsibility for the new programme, who shall assess the feedback and incorporate in the brief as is necessary. The

completed programme brief shall be submitted to the Review Team through the VP Academic Affairs.

Only on completion of the entire process shall the recommendation be made to the Academic Board.

- Academic Board – to provide an avenue for a broad discussion on the new programme and ensure that the programme is consistent with University-wide goals and criteria specifically related to undergraduate or graduate programming; and to ensure the financial viability of the new programme and evaluate the need for additional resources if these are to be provided from outside the Faculty resources; and,
- Board – to ensure that the programme is consistent with the University's general strategic plans with respect to academic programmes and that the necessary resources can be made available in support.

Normally, approvals by all of the above University bodies will take place before the proposal is sent to the Review Team. However, in cases where the Review Team recommend significant changes to the programme proposal, it may have to return to these bodies for re-assessment.

5.4 Review Team

The VP Academic Affairs, in consultation with the Committee of Deans shall select a team of reviewers to assess the proposal. Ideally, the review team should consist of at least one external reviewer for new undergraduate programmes and two external reviewers for new graduate programmes.

External member(s) of the review team would be required to conduct site visit, although reviews could be conducted by desk audits, video-conference or an equivalent method if the external reviewer is satisfied that the off-site option is acceptable.

External member(s) 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, with an established commitment to higher education. They must have an impartial, arms-length relationship to the programme (for clarity, arms-length reviewers should not have been a research supervisor or student of members of the proposed programme; and should not have collaborated with members of the proposed program within the past 4 years, or have made plans to collaborate with those individuals in the immediate future. There also should be no other potential conflicts of interest (e.g., personal or financial).

External member(s) shall be selected from a list of at least four suggested individuals compiled by the Faculty and endorsed by the Dean for undergraduate programme under review, or six for graduate programs. The list should have details on each proposed external reviewer to include qualification, experience and any affiliation with the University or association with individual members of the programmes.

The internal members of the Review Team shall be at least five members chosen from the academic staff of the University College, and shall include at least one member from the Curriculum Unit and one member of the Quality Assurance Unit.

The Programme Proposal Brief and all pertinent information shall be provided to all members of the Review Team. The Team should be free to request any additional information they may deem necessary.

5.5 Review Teams' report

The report on the proposal review should be returned within 4 weeks of reviewing the proposal. The report should appraise the standards and quality of the proposed programme, as well as, address the criteria set out in Section 5.2, and include the associated faculty and material resources. The report should also acknowledge any clearly innovative aspects of the proposed programme, together with recommendations on any essential or otherwise desirable modifications to the programme.

5.6 Internal response

Responses to the Review Team's report should be prepared and attached to the report before submission to the VP Academic Affairs, who shall take the report and response to the report to the Academic Board.

5.7 Approved new programs

Once the Academic Board endorses the offering of a new programme, and the Board approves arrangements may be made for the programme to be offered and financing arrangements confirmed. The programme must begin within twenty-four months of the date of approval; otherwise, the approval will lapse.

The first cyclical review for any new program must be conducted no more than six years after the date of the programme's initial enrolment.

Between eighteen and twenty-four months after onset of the programme, the Dean shall provide Academic Board with a brief update on progress in the programme, addressing any concerns from the initial programme review, and highlighting any unanticipated changes in curriculum, resources, enrolment, funding, or governance structure. The Dean after consultation with the Faculty Board(s) may authorise and nominate persons within the faculty to conduct an informal internal assessment of the programme, including interviews with current faculty, students, and any other staff, to determine if a more complete, early cyclical review is warranted.

6. Expedited Approvals of New Programmes

The Protocol for Expedited Approvals applies when one or more of the following applies:

- there is a proposal for a new collaborative program; or
- there are major modifications to existing programs, and the University College requests approval.

The Expedited Approvals process requires all the approvals listed in Section 5.6 and the submission of the proposed programme change/new programme with the rationale to the Academic Board. It does not require the involvement of external members in the review team, and thus provide for a faster turn-around on decisions.

6.1 Proposal Brief

The Proposal Brief should describe the new programme or the significant changes being proposed (including, as appropriate, reference to Programme Learning Outcomes, faculty and resource implication), provide a brief account of the rationale for the changes, and address the evaluation criteria.

6.2 Institutional Identification of Major Modifications to Existing Programs

Existing programmes can be expected to routinely undergo revisions with the aim of quality enhancement. This includes, for example, the introduction or deletion of courses, major exam structures, change in emphases, options, or mode of delivery. These revisions will be assessed during the course of the next cyclical review of the programme.

There may be, however, situations where the changes to the programme are of such significance that a more immediate review is desirable. This situation may occur, for example, where:

- the programme's revisions meet the definition of a major modification, as defined in Section 4;
- the fundamental objectives of the programme change; or,
- there are significant changes to the faculty engaged in delivering the programme and/or to the essential physical resources,

In such cases, the Department, Faculty, Faculty Board may, if it deems it advisable after consultation with the relevant Dean(s), initiate a programme review and request that the Academic Board considers its proposal. Normally, such review will occur through an Expedited Approval.

7. Cyclical Programme Reviews

All academic programs are to be reviewed on a cycle of between four and six years. Combined programmes do not require review if their constituting programmes are reviewed separately. Emphases and Options do not require review. The list of programmes that require review, and the schedule of such reviews, should be maintained by the Vice President, Academic Affairs.

Departments may conduct programme reviews done jointly with accreditation reviews, at the discretion of the Faculty Board, in consultation with the Dean.

The review shall consist of the following steps:

7.1 Self-study: Internal programme perspective

The Dean 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. It should identify any pertinent information deemed appropriate for inclusion. The self-study must address and document the consistency of the programme's learning outcomes with the University College's vision and mission, and how its graduates achieve those outcomes;

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

7.1.1. Objectives :

- a) Programme is consistent with the University College's mission and academic plan
- b) Programme requirement and learning outcomes are clear, appropriate.

7.1.2. Admission requirements :

Admission requirements are appropriately aligned with the learning outcomes established for completion of the programme.

7.1.3. Curriculum :

- a) How the curriculum reflects the current state of the discipline or area of study.
- b) Evidence of any significant innovation or creativity in the content and/or delivery of the programme relative to other such programme.
- c) How the mode(s) of delivery are appropriate and effective at meeting the program's identified learning outcomes.
- d) The level of the programme is appropriate and the course levels are properly identified.

7.1.4. Teaching and assessment :

- a) Methods for assessing student achievement of the defined learning Outcomes.
- b) 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 objectives.

7.1.5. Resources :

Appropriateness and effectiveness of the academic unit's use of existing human, physical and financial resources in delivering and maintaining the quality of its programme(s), in relation to the University's priorities for and constraints on funding, space, and faculty allocation.

7.1.6. Quality indicators :

Information on the quality of the programme under review. Defined standard quality indicators, should be provided by Faculties and departments, and where applicable professional standards should have to be used.

7.1.7. Quality enhancement :

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.

7.1.8. Additional graduate program criteria

- a) Evidence that students' time-to-completion is both monitored and managed in relation to the programme's defined length and programme requirements.
- b) Quality and availability of graduate supervision.
- c) Definition and application of indicators that provide evidence of faculty, student and program quality, for example:
 - i) Faculty: funding, honours and awards, and commitment to student mentoring;
 - ii) Students: grade-level for admission, scholarly output, success rates in national and regional scholarships, competitions, awards;
 - iii) Programme: evidence of a programme structure and faculty research that will ensure the intellectual quality of the student experience, and commitment to development of professional and transferable skills; evidence of sufficient and regular graduate level course offerings to ensure that students will be able to meet the University College's requirements in terms of the minimum number of courses required, the level of courses required, and the timely completion of other required elements appropriate for the degree level (e.g., transfer exams, comprehensive exams).

7.1.9. 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.

7.1.10. Concerns and recommendations raised in previous reviews;

7.1.11. Areas identified through the conduct of the self-study as requiring improvement;

7.1.12. Areas that hold promise for enhancement;

7.1.13. Participation of programme faculty, 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.

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

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

The VP Academic Affairs, in collaboration with the Committee of Deans should select an internal team of reviewers to assess the programme review proposal. The team shall include the Curriculum Specialist and the QA Officer. The Team may include an External Reviewer as it sees fit.

7.2 Institutional perspective and report

The Review Team's report should

- Identify the strengths and weakness of the programme ;
- addresses the appropriateness of resources for the success of the programme;
- make recommendations as necessary for the improvement and enhancement of the programme;
- may include a confidential section (e.g., where personnel issues may be addressed);

The report of the Review Team shall be submitted to the VP Academic Affairs, who should contact the Dean to have any recommendations implemented.

All programme reviews, whether for new programmes or for existing programmes, will be have to be endorsed by the University College's Academic Board. The report from the Review Team, as well as, the remedial action taken by the Faculty Board shall be submitted to the Academic Board through the Dean. The VP Academic Affairs shall monitor the implementation of the implementation of the recommendations.

7.3 Reporting requirements

Once per year, the Dean will prepare a report of major modifications to existing programmes, as defined in Section 4, and will submit the report to the Academic Board through the VP Academic Affairs.

Once per year, the Quality Assurance Committee will prepare an Annual Report on programme reviews for that year. The Chair of the Quality Assurance Committee will present the Annual Report (excluding any confidential information) to Academic Board. Deans will be invited to answer any questions that arise. The Academic Board, shall submit an annual report to the Board.

7.4 Use of accreditation and other external reviews in the Institutional Quality Assurance Process

Programmes that periodically undergo accreditation reviews may use the associated documentation as a partial substitute for the self-study. The Dean will review the accreditation requirements to determine their suitability and identify any components of the cyclical review that are missing. An addendum to the accreditation documentation, containing any revised or missing components, will be prepared and appended to the accreditation documentation if these documents are to be used in the review.