INTERNAL QUALITY ASSURANCE FRAMEWORK POLICY

THE MICO UNIVERSITY COLLEGE

1A Marescaux Road, Kingston 5

Office of Accountability:	VP, Academics
Office of Administrative Responsibility:	Quality Assurance Unit
Document Number	Mico.Aca.Po.13.003
Effective Date of Policy	September, 2013
Date of any Policy Revision	
Policy Prepared by:	Quality Assurance Consultant
Date Policy Created:	May, 2013
Date Accepted by Executive Management Com. :	
Authorized by:	
	President and Chairman of Executive Management Com.
	VP Administration
Date Approved by the Board of Directors:	
Authorized by:	
	Pro-Chancellor and Chairman of the Board
	Chairman of the Sub-Committee
Version	01

Draft

Table of Contents

A. POLICY

1.0 Introduction

Quality Assurance (QA) and enhancement are core aspects of the life of modern higher education institutions. However, different institutions are at different stages of the quality journey and all experience and address specific challenges in developing robust quality assurance policies. The key element of QA and enhancement in most higher education systems is the improvement of the student experience. Central to the student experience remains the quality of teaching and learning.

The Mico University College has identified as part of its philosophy the development of high quality programmes and graduates. To ensure the quality of the programmes/courses it offers, The Mico University College shall establish an internal QA System which aims at maintaining and enhancing the quality of the learning experience of the student as well as to provide assurance to its stakeholders of the continuing high standards at The Mico University College. The system will also complement the external QA processes such as accreditation and other external reviews.

The Mico University College also recognises and supports the view that "Quality in higher education demands the establishment of an institutional culture and should be a process of critical dialogue within the institution, where course teams accept ownership and facilitate student engagement towards learning and development, and there is a self-critical culture of continuous care for the students' quality of experience in the programme of study". (Barnett, 1992)

2.0 Scope

The Policy shall apply to all stakeholders.

3.0 Definitions

Quality Assurance (QA)	Aplanned and systematic review process of an institution or programme to determine that acceptable standards of education, scholarship and infrastructure are being maintained and enhanced.
Internal Quality Assurance	Incorporates every institutional activity and lies in collecting evidence and information about mission fulfilment, efficiency of activity, and ways ensuring quality within the institution.
External Quality Assurance	A quality assessment provided by a body external to the institution.
Accreditation	A primary mode of external quality assurance and is generally accepted as a good indicator that the institution is providing quality higher education.
Policy Framework:	A set of over-arching principles, goals, and critical components that provides procedural guidelines for the development and management of organizational policies.

4.0   Policy Objectives

The Policy aims to establish an internal QA System, which aims at

i)   Improving and enhancing the quality of the learning experience of students

ii)   Providing assurance to stakeholders – students, parents, alumni, staff, employers, the general public, the government and accrediting agencies of the continuing high standards at The Mico University College.

iii)   Encouraging compliance with the elements of QA for teaching and administrative staff through training.

iv)   Establishing guidelines for the responsibilities to achieve compliance

v)   Promoting awareness of internal quality assurance elements and issues among staff and students.

vi)   Maintaining and enhancing standards

vii)   Providing opportunities for people and programme development.

5.0   Policy Statements

5.1. THE OVERALL ENVIRONMENT

The Mico University College shall establish a comprehensive QA System structured around the various groups that comprise the University College community. The following areas shall be included:

- Mission and structure of the institution
- Governance and management
- Staff and students
- Academic programmes and Assessment methods
- Infrastructure
- Support services
- Resources – human, physical, financial
- Stakeholder feedback
- Collaborative relationships
- Accreditation and other external reviews

5.2. SELF-ASSESSMENT CRITERIA

Because self-assessment is integral to QA and the management of the institution, the following self-assessment criteria shall be adopted.

i)   The institution's governance, management, financial control and quality assurance arrangements are sufficient to manage existing operations and respond to development and change.

ii) The institution has clear and consistently applied mechanisms for establishing its academic objective s and outcomes.

iii) The institution seeks to ensure that programmes of study consistently meet stated objectives and outcomes

iv) Programme performance is carefully and regularly monitored

v) The effectiveness of the institution's learning and teaching infrastructure is carefully monitored.

vi) The academic and related support requirements of students studying off-site are considered.

vii) Standards of students' achievements are maintained at a recognised level and there is a strategy for developing the quality of academic provision.

viii) Effective action is taken to address weaknesses, promote strengths and demonstrate accountability.

ix) The institution's administrative systems are sufficient to manage its operations now and in the foreseeable future.

x) The qualifications and competencies of staff are appropriate for an institution with degree awarding powers.

xi) The institution's academic staff is actively engaged with the pedagogic development of their discipline.

xii) Staff maintain high professional standards

xiii) The institution has an environment of post-graduate academic staff which fosters and actively supports creative research and scholarship.

5.3. PRINCIPLES OF THE INTERNAL QA SYSTEM

The QA system shall be built on the following institutional principles:

i) Coherent policies regarding its academic, administrative and financial planning, quality assurance and resource allocation as it relates to its mission, aims and objectives.

ii) Clarity of function and responsibility in relation to its governance and management system.

iii) The institution's mission and associated policies and systems are understood, accepted and actively applied by staff and, where appropriate, students.

iv) Regular review of whether its educational strategies, activities, processes, and technologies enhance student learning.

v) The QA procedures, processes and results are documented.

5.4. ELEMENTS OF THE INTERNAL QA SYSTEM

The QA system shall encompass the entire institution with special attention to issues related to academic programmes and learning and shall comprise the following elements:

i)   QA constitutes part of the strategic efforts at the institution.

ii)   The institution has clearly stated objectives for its quality assurance system.

iii)   QA assurance efforts are organised in tasks and routines to ensure the broad participation of stakeholders, with defined roles and responsibilities for the various components of the system.

iv)   The collection of data is enabled to provide satisfactory assessments of the quality of all programmes.

v)   Collected data are analysed and bring evidence of the extent to which objectives are achieved.

vi)   Outcomes of current efforts are used as a basis for decisions on issues of quality enhancement.

vii)   QA endeavours contribute to the allocation of resources and prioritising efforts.

viii)   Students have a say in the QA process and issues of the learning environment are addressed.

ix)   An annual report on quality issues is submitted by the Academic Board to the Board of Directors.

5.5. STANDARDS AND GUIDELINES FOR INTERNAL QUALITY ASSURANCE

5.5.1. MISSION AND VISION

STANDARD: The institution's mission and vision are appropriate, gives direction to its activities and provide a basis for the assessment and enhancement of the institution's effectiveness.

GUIDELINES: The mission and vision defined by the institution are the fundamental basis of its educational and research activities. The mission is widely published and articulates a purpose appropriate for the institution, gives direction for its efforts, and is generally understood by its community.

In assuring quality in this area attention must be paid to how familiar constituents are with the mission and vision; ways in which the mission statement has been translated into achievable and operationalized aims and objectives; ways in which the mission and vision are integrated into activities of the institution; the extent to which the mission and vision guide the development of the institution.

5.5.2. **GOVERNANCE**

STANDARD: The institution has a system of governance that facilitates the accomplishment of its mission and vision and supports institutional effectiveness and integrity.

GUIDELINES: Through its organizational design and governance structure, the institution creates and sustains an environment that encourages teaching, learning, service, scholarship, research and creative activity. It demonstrates administrative capacity by assuring provision of support adequate for the appropriate functioning of each organizational component.

In assuring this area attention must be paid to

- the organizational structure, decision-making processes, and policies to ensure that they are clear and consistent with the mission and support institutional effectiveness. The institution's system of governance must involve the participation of all appropriate constituencies and include regular communication among them.
- the compliance of the institution with the legal requirements of the country;
- the extent to which the President, through an appropriate administrative structure, effectively manages the institution so as to fulfil its purposes and objective and establishes the means to assess the effectiveness of the institution;
- the realistic setting of targets against which progress and attainment are measured;
- the monitoring of the financial viability of the institution over time;
- the setting up and monitoring of mechanisms for competent academic monitoring and assurance of the integrity and quality of academic programming however and wherever offered;
- the identifying risks to the operation of the institution;
- the extent to which the members of the governing board understand, accept, and fulfill their responsibilities as fiduciaries to act honestly and in good faith in the best interest of the institution toward the achievement of its educational purposes in a manner free from conflicts of interest;
- the extent to which the Board has a clear understanding of the institution's distinctive mission and exercises the authority to ensure the realization of institutional mission and purposes;
- the extent to which the Board approves and reviews institutional policies, monitors the institution's fiscal condition, and approves major new initiatives, assuring that they are compatible with institutional mission and capacity;
- the extent to which the Board and appointed managers develop, ensure and enhance their own effectiveness through orientation, professional development and periodic evaluation and that their roles and functions are effectively carried out through appropriate committees and meetings and the provisions made for the consideration of student views and judgements in those matters in which students have a direct and reasonable interest and that

the institution's organizational structure and system of governance is improved through periodic and systematic review.

5.5.3. POLICY FOR QUALITY ASSURANCE:

STANDARD: The institution has a policy and associated procedures for the assurance of the quality and standards that is made public and forms part of its strategic management. The institution shall commit to the development of a culture which recognizes the importance of quality and quality assurance in all its activities.

GUIDELINES: Formal policies and procedures provide a framework within which institutions can develop and monitor the effectiveness of its quality assurance. Policies support the development of quality culture in which all internal stakeholders assume responsibility for quality and engage in quality assurance at all levels of the institution. Procedural guidance gives more detailed information about the ways in which the policy is implemented.

In assessing the strength of the infrastructure of an institution, attention shall be placed on the institution's vision, mission, strategic plan, structures such as the Academic Board, Faculty Boards, Administration, Human Resource, Guild of Students, Staff Association, and overall institutional autonomy.

5.5.4. INSTITUTIONAL RESOURCES

STANDARD: The institutional has sufficient human, financial, physical and technological resources and capacity to support its mission.

GUIDELINES: Through periodic evaluation, the institution demonstrates that its resources are sufficient to sustain the quality of its educational programmes and to support institutional improvement now and in the foreseeable future. The institution assures effective systems of enterprise risk management, regulatory compliance, internal controls and contingency management.

In assuring quality in this area attention must be paid to:
Human resources: the extent to which the institution employs sufficient and qualified personnel to fulfil its mission; the availability of HR policies that are consistently applied and periodically reviewed; the extent to which terms of employment are clear (job descriptions) and compensation is adequate to ensure that the institution can attract and retain qualified administrators, faculty and staff; the extent to which the institution employs effective procedures for the regular evaluation of all personnel, and ensures sufficient opportunities for professional development for administrators, faculty and staff.

Financial resources: the extent to which the institution preserves and enhances available financial resources sufficient to support its mission; the extent to which the institution allocate resources to support its educational, research and service programmes and activities; the extent to which the institution ensures the integrity of its finances through prudent financial management and organization, a well-organized budget process, appropriate internal control mechanisms, risk assessment and timely financial reporting internal and external constituents providing a basis for sound financial decision making.

Information, physical and technological resources: the extent to which the institution has sufficient and appropriate information, physical and technological resources necessary for the achievement of its purposes wherever and however its academic programmes are offered; the extent to which the institution provides access to library and information resources, services, facilities and qualified staff sufficient to support its teaching and learning environment and its research and public service mission as appropriate; the extent to which the institution demonstrates the effectiveness of its policies and procedures in ensuring the reliability of its technological systems, the integrity and security of data and the privacy of individuals; the extent to which the institution establishes and applies clear policies and procedures and monitors and responds to illegal or inappropriate uses of the technology systems and resources; the extent to which the institutionregularly updates its disaster planning and recovery policies and procedures; the extent to which the institution provides reliable and efficient connectivity to all its constituents; the extent to which the institution manages the general upkeep and improvement of the physical plant and amenities.

5.5.5. DESIGN AND APPROVAL OF PROGRAMMES:

STANDARD: The institution has formal mechanisms to maintain and update its programmes and develop methodologies to approve, control, evaluate and periodically enhance their quality, promoting good practice and enhancing the student experience.

GUIDELINES: The confidence of students and other stakeholders is more likely to be established and maintained through effective quality assurance activities which ensure that programmes are well designed, regularly monitored and periodically reviewed, thereby securing their continuing relevance and currency.

In assuring quality in this area, attention shall be paid to curriculum and programme design and content, different modes of delivery,the undertaking of academic planning and evaluation as part of the overall planning and evaluation to enhance the achievement of the institution's mission and programme objectives; the extent to which the institution develops, approves, administers and on a regular cycle review its academic programmes taking into account institutional policies as well as new developments in the field; the extent to which the institution assures that there is a reasonable consistency in quality among them; the extent to which the institution provides

sufficient resources to sustain and improve its programs; the extent to which formal programme approval procedures are followed in a timely manner; the extent to which there is consistent monitoring of the progress and achievement of students; the extent to which regular feedback is sought and encouraged from employers and the extent to which there is participation of students in quality assurance activities.

5.5.6. STUDENT LEARNING, TEACHING AND ASSESSMENT

STANDARD: The institution has mechanisms to assess students using published criteria, regulations and procedures which are applied consistently. The institution shall ensure that programmes are delivered in a way that encourage students to take an active role in creating the learning process and that their assessment reflects the same approach.

GUIDELINES: The assessment of students is one of the most important elements of higher education. The outcomes of assessment have a profound effect on students' future careers. It is therefore important that assessment is carried out professionally and that it considers the extensive knowledge which exists about testing and examination processes.

In assuring quality in this area, attention shall be paid to respecting and attending to the diversity of students and their needs, enabling flexible learning paths; considering and using different modes of delivery where appropriate; regularly evaluating and adjusting the modes of delivery; encouraging a sense of autonomy in the learner while ensuring adequate guidance and support from the teacher.

5.5.7. STUDENT ADMISSION, PROGRESSION, RECOGNITION AND CERTIFICATION:

STANDARD: The institution consistently applies predefined and published regulations covering all phases of the students' time in the institution.

GUIDELINES: The institution shall have mechanisms in place to guide the selection and admission of students ensuring that those selected meet the full matriculation requirements. As part of the on-going monitoring and through put, students shall be assessed using published criteria, regulations and procedures which are applied fairly and consistently. The institution shall ensure that the assessment strategies used are valid (i.e. they measure the student's ability to meet the course learning outcomes) and fair. The institution shall have policies in place that clarify for the students' issues of academic honesty and the prevention of plagiarism and collusion.

In assuring quality in this area, the institution shall pay attention not only to entrance and matriculation requirements, but to entrance and admission procedures; students' suitability for programme selected; availability of advising/counselling for new students; the appropriateness of the assessment tasks, whether formative or summative; ensuring that the assessment procedures are designed to measure achievement of the intended learning outcomes and other programme objectives; ensuring that assessments are conducted securely in accordance with the institution's

stated procedures; ensuring that students are informed about the assessment strategy being used for their programme, what examinations or other assessment methods they will be subject to, what will be expected of them and the criteria that will be applied to the assessment of their performance; ensuring that students receive feedback in a timely manner especially where the assessment is carried out by more than one examiner, and that a formal procedure for student appeals is in place; ensuring that adequate academic counselling is available especially for students with special needs including the needs of exceptional students. Faculty, with administrative support, ensure the academic integrity of the award of grades and certification of competencies. The institution works to prevent cheating and plagiarism as well as to deal forthrightly with any instances in which they occur as it works systematically to ensure an environment supportive of academic integrity,

Participation by students is a key element of quality management processes and their feedback shall be used to inform the development, improvement and enhancement of the academic provision. Student engagement in academic quality takes several forms including involvement in course evaluation each semester, membership on select committees and takes place both directly and through the student representative system.

The Administration shall make adequate arrangements to maintain students' records, so that they can be easily accessed by the authorized staff. The institution has mechanisms in place to ensure that graduation requirements are published and are consistently applied in the degree certification process.

The quality of outputs: The institution shall develop procedures to ensure that outcomes (of learning, employment and satisfaction of different stake-holders groups) can be measured, analysed and used for decision-making and the enhancement of the quality of all its programmes.

In assuring quality in this area, the institution shall measure and evaluate its outputs including but not limited to quality of graduates, performance of alumni in the job market. Timely access to data relating to student outcome (progression, attainment, withdrawal etc.) serves three key purposes; to permit the analysis of trends and patterns in student outcome overtime and across courses; to provide up-to-date information about how well students in a particular cohort are doing in order that action planning can happen in a timely fashion and to inform the process of continuous monitoring and reporting.

To assure quality of outputs the following shall be examined: the period it takes graduates to get full employment after graduation; the existence of a system of 'tracing' where graduates go; the time students take to graduate.

5.5.8. **STUDENT SUPPORT SERVICES:**

STANDARD: The institution provides services that support teaching and learning and the welfare of students and encourage their completion of their studies.

GUIDELINES: The institution shall have mechanisms to monitor and address student welfare and shall put systems in place to ensure that attention is paid to students' mental health and welfare while enrolled; to ensure the availability of counselling and other support for students in need; ensuring that mechanisms are in place to deal with special needs of exceptional students and to ensure that student concerns are dealt with in a timely manner and support is given to student governance.

In assuring quality in this area, the institution shall systematically identify the characteristics and needs of its student population and then make provision for responding to them. The institution shall offer an array of student services, including physical and mental health services, appropriate to its mission and the needs and goals of its students. The institution shall ensure that it provides sufficient interaction with students outside of class to promote students' academic achievement and provide academic and career guidance. Newly enrolled students are provided with an orientation that includes information on student services as well as focus on academic opportunities, expectations and support services. Scholarships and other kinds of financial assistance are available to students through equitable application of clear and published criteria. The institution shall also offer recreational and athletic programmes that are conducted in a manner at adheres ti institutional mission, sound education policy and standards of integrity.

5.5.9. TEACHING STAFF:

STANDARD: The institution assures itself of the competence of its academic staff. Fair and transparent processes for the recruitment, conditions of employment and professional development of staff should be applied.

GUIDELINES: Teachers are the single most learning resource available to students. The teacher's role is essential in creating high quality student experience and enabling the acquisition of knowledge, competences and skills. It is important that those who teach have a full knowledge and understanding of the subject they are teaching, have the necessary skills and experience to transmit their knowledge and understanding effectively to students in a range of teaching contexts, and can access feedback on their own performance.

The institution shall have ways of satisfying itself that staff involved with the teaching of students, are engaged in reflective practice and critical self-evaluation. Sharing of good practice, and responsiveness to the ideas of others, are central features of quality enhancement. The quality of the academic staff is key to the quality of an institution's programme offerings. The institution shall have mechanisms in place to improve the educational skills of lecturers as this enables them to maintain high standards, meet their individual goals and respond to their evolving roles in education. The institution shall encourage scholarly activity to strengthen the link between education and research where applicable. The institution shall ensure that its staff recruitment and appointment procedures include a means of making certain that all new staff

have at least the minimum necessary level of competence and then providing a supportive environment that allows them to carry out their work effectively.

There shall be a clearly defined and implemented appraisal system for faculty and support staff based on pre-determined, explicit criteria and supported by a programme of professional development and/or training which is linked to appraisal outcomes and other school priorities for student learning.

In assuring quality in this area, the following should be assessed/reviewed: the regulations regarding the appointment, promotion and dismissal of staff; Staff/student ratio; recruitment policies that include safeguards for the employment of staff with the necessary level of competence; the use of adjunct staff; students' assessment of teaching staff; provision of a supportive environment that allows staff to carry out their work effectively; encouragement of innovation in teaching methods and use of new technologies; availability of opportunities to develop and extend their teaching capacity and procedures to separate from those who continue to be ineffective. Staff shall commit to the institution to assure the accomplishment of class and out-of-class responsibilities essential for the fulfilment of the institution's mission and vision. Responsibilities include instruction, accessibility to students and the systematic understanding of effective teaching/learning processes and outcomes in courses and programmes for which they share responsibility; additional duties may include student advising, academic planning, and participation in policy-making, course and programme development, research and institutional governance.

5.5.10. LEARNING RESOURCES AND STUDENT SUPPORT

STANDARD: The institution has appropriate funding for learning and teaching activities and ensure adequate and readily accessible learning resources and student support are provided.

GUIDELINES: Learning resources and other support mechanisms should be readily accessible to students, designed with their needs in mind and responsive to feedback from those who use the services provided. The institution shall routinely monitor, review and improve the effectiveness of the support services available to students. Resources vary from physical resources such as libraries or computing facilities to human support in the form of tutors, counsellors and other advisers.

In assuring quality in this area, the institution shall ensure that there is adequate funding for learning and teaching activities; that there is access to relevant and up-to-date texts and other books (printed and digital) as well as articles in journals; access to computer networks and the Internet; access to general educational equipment, including projectors, videos, video cameras, etc. that students are satisfied with the academic guidance and supporting services provided. All resources should be 'fit for purpose' and students should be informed about the services available to them. In delivering support services, the role of support and administrative staff is crucial and therefore they need to be qualified and have opportunities to develop their competencies.

5.5.11. **RESEARCH**

STANDARD: The institution develops a research strategy consistent with its nature and its mission.

GUIDELINES: The management of the institution's research must be conducted within an approved framework of its strategies, policies and arrangements to enable the institution to develop a robust research culture.

In assuring quality in research and publications the institution shall ensure that a percentage of the institution's budget is devoted to research and publications; that there are articles published in local and international journals; that expectations for involvement in research and scholarly activities by teaching staff is clear and provide for widespread participation; that encouragement and support are provided to encourage research activity by both teaching staff and students; that there is generation of research projects that earn funds for the institution; that it ensures that its research activities conform to internationally accepted methodological standards and that it has mechanisms to ensure compliance with ethical standards.

5.5.12. **INFORMATION MANAGEMENT**

STANDARD: The institution ensures that it collect, analyse and use relevant information for the effective management of its programmes and other activities.

GUIDELINES: Reliable data is crucial for informed decision-making and for knowing what is working well and what needs attention. Effective processes to collect and analyse information about programmes and other activities feed into the internal quality assurance system.

In assuring quality in this area, attention shall be paid to student progression and success rates; employability of graduates; students' satisfaction with their programmes; profile of the student population and the institution's performance indicators.

5.5.13. **PUBLIC INFORMATION:**

STANDARD: The institution publishes information about its activities, including   programmes, which is clear, accurate, objective, up-to-date and readily accessible.

GUIDELINES: information on the institution's activities is useful for prospective and current students as well as for graduates, other stakeholders and the public. The institution shall have a web site where it publishes all the information of interest for future and current students, for academic and non-academic staff and the public.

In assuring quality in this area, the institution shall ensure that information is available for prospective students to enable them to make an informed decision. Information shall also be made available regarding programme offerings, application dates, matriculation requirements, information to assist students in planning their course of study and participation in extra and co-curricular activities; information about the obligation of students, recognition of prior learning, grading, completion, academic integrity etc.

5.5.14. **ON-GOING MONITORING AND PERIODIC REVIEW OF PROGRAMMES:**

STANDARD: The institution monitors and periodically reviews its programmes to ensure that they achieve the objectives set for them and respond to the needs of students and society. These reviews shall lead to continuous improvement of the programme.

GUIDELINES: Regular monitoring, review and revision of programmes aim to ensure that the provision remains appropriate and to create a supportive and effective learning environment for students. There is a defined process for periodic review and revision of programme mission, goals and expected student outcomes.

In assuring quality in this area, attention shall be paid to the evaluation of the content of the programmes considering the latest research in the given discipline thus ensuring that the programme is up to date; evaluation of the students' workload, progression and completion; the effectiveness of procedures for assessment of students, the student expectations, needs and satisfaction in relation to the programme.

5.5.15. **COMMUNITY INVOLVEMENT:**

Stakeholders' feedback: The University College is accountable to its stakeholders for the quality and standards of its academic provision and awards. Stakeholders are an important element in any organizational structure, as stakeholder satisfaction is critical for successful institutions in any competitive environment. It is therefore imperative to determine stakeholder requirements and devise strategies to have these met. The stakeholders at The Mico are –

Key Stakeholders	What they want from the institution
Students / Parents	• Valuable programmes leading to recognised degrees. • A good learning environment, therefore high standards of teaching and academic support. • Good physical environment and adequate resources.
Staff	• A successful, financially sound and well managed University with good, long-term prospects. • Successful career development.
Employers Businesses	• Students with right skills and capabilities. • Students that are adaptable, and are always learning • Research with beneficial, measurable impact on their organisation.
Alumni	• A University College to be proud of and with which to remain involved.
Ministry of Education	• An institution that continually has a positive impact on governmental goals and the Jamaican society at large.
External Quality Assurance Agencies	• Processes that are efficient resulting in outputs that and meet with acceptable standards.
Advisory Boards	• An opportunity to make a meaning contribution • An institution that will recognize the value in the recommendations

	made and implement as is necessary.
Suppliers of goods and services	• Clear briefs • Efficiencies • IT-enabled processes. • Opportunity to develop deeper/broader relationships with the University College.
Communities	• A successful flourishing university college, raising the profile of the community improving businesses and employment.

The institution shall establish relationships with the community to provide services, drawing on the skills and resources available in the institution so that the institution's activities impact and benefits the surrounding communities. Staff is encouraged to participate in forums in which community issues are discussed and plans for community development are considered. Students are also encouraged to volunteer their time and efforts in community activities.

5.5.16. **EXTERNAL QUALITY ASSURANCE:**

STANDARD: The institution undergoes external quality assurance checks on a cyclical basis.

GUIDELINES: External quality assurance in its various forms can verify the effectiveness of the institution's internal quality assurance, act as a catalyst for improvement and offer the institution new perspectives. It will also provide information to assure the institution and the public of the quality of the institution's activities.

The institution has established processes for the appointment and involvement of external examiners in providing on-going assurance that academic standards are being maintained. External Examiners act as independent and impartial advisors and provide informed comment on the standards set and student achievement in relation to those standards. External examining is therefore an integral and very important part of institutional quality assurance. In ensuring quality in this area, attention will be paid to the appointment of external examiners for programmes, attention to the reports of the External Examiner as well as actions taken in response to suggestions they make.

The national accreditation board, the University Council of Jamaica, has as its mission the increasing of the availability of tertiary level training in Jamaica through a robust quality assurance system that ensures excellence, transparency, integrity and adherence to standards. Its main relationship with the institution is related to the accreditation process.

Accreditation is the status granted to an institution or programme that has been found, through self-study and peer review, to meet or exceed stated guidelines of educational quality. Accreditation is a voluntary activity that promotes self-evaluation, self-regulation and accountability. The role of the accrediting body is to ensure quality through encouraging the improvement of educational standards.

The institution has established Advisory Committees within the Faculties, Graduate School and ITER, to advise on development of the areas to enhance quality and to ensure relevance, currency and

sustainability. The Committee is expected to be an active advocate for exemplary practice and innovations throughout the institution.

In assuring quality in this area attention needs to be paid to continuous improvement, ensuring that the institution pays attention to areas of its strategic plan and that stakeholders' concerns are addressed. Quality assurance is a continuous process that does not end with the external feedback or report or its follow-up process within the institution. Therefore, the institution ensures that the progress made since the last external quality assurance activity is taken into consideration when preparing for the next evaluation.

(Adapted from: Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurancein the European Higher Education Area; Commission on Collegiate Education; National Assessment and Accreditation Council; Commonwealth of Learning)

6.0   Responsibilities

The Board of Directors

The Board of Directors has responsibility for considering and approving the QA Policy, receiving annual quality reports from the Academic Board and shall support the process by allocating adequate resources.

The Academic Board

The Academic Board shall:

i)   Formulate the institution's QA Policy and make recommendations to the Board of Directors.

ii)   Ensure the implementation of the processes and procedures that contribute to internal QA and that staff and students adhere to the policy.

iii)   Establish a QA Team/Committee to have the responsibility and authority tooversee the process.

iv)   Delegate responsibilities /authority to specific personnel and hold them accountable by including QA responsibilities in performance criteria as appropriate.

v)   Monitor and evaluate the QA processes and procedures and effecting change as necessary on a continuing basis.

vi)   Submit annual quality reports to the Board of Directors.

The Quality Assurance Team/Committee

The QA Team/Committee shall:

i)   Manage the process, to ensure the dissemination of information relevant to QA and to ensure compliance with the Policy and Procedures.

ii) Develop procedures to carry out the Committee's functions, taking into account the requirement of the institution's needs and welfare.

iii) Promote the QA Policy and Procedures among staff, students and other stakeholders.

iv) Recommend and facilitate training of staff in QA Procedures and Processes.

v) Monitor resources to support student learning (e.g. laboratories, IT services, library services) and make recommendations.

vi) Evaluate quality processes and procedures continuously and make suggestions for change as necessary.

vii) Provide a report on the Team/Committee's activities, at least twice per year to the Academic Board.

viii) Conduct research on a continuous basis on all aspects of quality throughout the institution and disseminate findings to assist in improvement and enhancement.

ix) Invite external stakeholders' opinion on courses, programmes and services.

x) Participate in accreditation activities and other external reviews.

The Quality Assurance (QA) Unit

The QA Unit shall be responsible for assisting with the planning and directing of the institution's QA Programme to ensure that the highest quality standards are maintained and consistent with international standards. The QA system shall be driven by the QA Unit but responsibilities are shared between the QA Unit, The Quality Assurance Team/Committee, Deans and Heads of Department as appropriate.

The Unit shall have the following roles and responsibilities:

i) Address all issues of internal QA in the broadest sense, that is, issues related to governance and administration, programmes, students, resources (physical and financial), staffing, assessment methods and support systems.

ii) Promote quality achievement and enhancement throughout the institution.

iii) Review and evaluate constantly all QA related policies, procedures, processes and documents.

iv) Develop working relationships with all departments / faculties.

v) Develop working relationships with appropriate QA bodies nationally, regionally and internationally.

vi) Ensure effective communication with regard to QA throughout the institution.

The Human Resource Department

The HR Department shall:

i) Ensure that information from the QA Policy and Procedures is incorporated in the employment process (orientation).

ii) Facilitate the training of staff through workshops, seminars, conferences, etc.

Institute of Technological and Educational Research (ITER)

ITER shall conduct research on a continuous basis on all aspects of quality throughout the institution and disseminate findings to assist in improvement and enhancement.

Deans, Department Heads and Supervisors

Deans, Department Heads and Supervisors shall:

i) Adhere to the QA Policy by complying with the procedures and processes outlined in the Quality Assurance Manual.

ii) Document the procedures established for the on-going monitoring of quality in the Faculty using the following quality indicators:
   - Mission, Aims, Objectives
   - Organisational Structure
   - Development and Review of Courses / Programmes
   - Management and Delivery of Courses / Programmes
   - Assessment and Outcomes of Courses / Programmes
   - Student Profile
   - Provision of Resources / Student Support Services
   - Student Feedback
   - Staffing and Staff Development
   - Research and Outreach
   - Quality Assurance and Enhancement

Other Academic Staff

Other Academic staff, including full time and adjunct staff shall:

i) Familiarize themselves with the QA policy, procedures and processes.

ii) Participate actively in preparing the Quality Manual and ensuring its currency.

iii) Ensure compliance with the policy.

iv) Participate in QA seminars, workshops, conferences etc.

Administrative, Technical, Clerical and Ancillary Staff

Administrative, Technical, Clerical and Ancillary staff shall:

i) Familiarize themselves with the QA policy, procedures and processes.

ii) Participate actively in the execution of the policy by providing the necessary support services.

Students

Students shall:

i)   Participate actively in the quality processes by:
- Adhering to the rules and regulations of the institution pertaining to all aspects of teaching and learning.
- Serving on QA Committees.
- Providing input and feedback on courses, programmes and services as necessary and appropriate.

7.0   Guidelines

7.1. CORE PRINCIPLES

The Mico University College shall adopt the following core principles in the execution of its QA activities:

- An open and explicit commitment to quality is entrenched in the institution.

- A rigorous approach to sustaining and improving standards is consistent across the institution.

- Processes and outcomes are learner focused.

- Stakeholders' views are sought, valued and used.

- Communication is open and inclusive.

- **The system is evidence based.**

7.2. PROCEDURES FOR IMPLEMENTATION OF THE QA SYSTEM

The institution shall establish a Quality Plan which shall be all inclusive and shall incorporate functions, services or issues that have to be managed with a focus on quality. The plan shall be used to prioritize certain functions, services and issues strategically, recognizing that quality will influence the University College as a whole on a continuous basis. (See Appendix I)

i)   Areas to be quality assured are agreed on.

ii)   Standards are set, and procedures and processes established.

iii) Systems are established to gather evidence and evaluate provision against the agreed standards.

iv)   Systems are in place to share findings and take action to ensure standards are met.

v)   Stakeholders' views, including those of learners, parents, and employers are taken into account and form an important plank of evidence.

vi)   Outcomes for learners are analysed and evaluated.

vii) Quality assurance leads to collaborative improvements.

viii) Appropriate documentation is maintained.

B.   QUALITY ASSURANCE (QA) TEAM/COMMITTEE

1.0   Statement

The purpose of the QA Team/Committee is to oversee and manage the promotion and implementation of the QA system in the institution.

2.0   Organisation of the QATeam/Committee

i)   A QA Team/Committee shall be established at the institution, with the VP Academic Affairs having the overall responsibility for the Committee.

ii)   The composition of the Team/Committee shall not exceed **12** persons, with the membership including the VP Academic Affairs, who shall be the Chairman of the Committee, The Head of the QA Unit, the Quality Assurance Officer, the HR Director, the Registrar, the VP Administration, the Librarian, a representative of ITER,a representative of Student Services, a student representative and any other persons determined by the Committee to complete its membership.

iii) The Team/Committee shall hold regular meetings, the frequency to be determined by the Committee. The Committee shall maintain minutes of its meeting, as well as, records of correspondence and activities.

iv)   The Team/Committee shall establish a system by which it obtains QA-related suggestions and reports directly from staff and students.

v)   The Team/Committee shall ensure that its members are trained in all aspects of QA.

3.0   Committee Procedures

i)   <u>Schedule</u>
The Committee shall meet regularly, the frequency to be determined by the Committee. The Committee shall maintain minutes of its meeting, as well as, records of correspondence and activities.

ii)   <u>Agenda</u>
Any member may place items on the agenda for discussion at a Committee meeting. Relevant papers shall be circulated in advance to allow members adequate time for preparation.

iii) Minutes

Minutes shall be sent to each Committee member, and may be posted for all employees, where it is deemed necessary to advise personnel of decisions taken. Minutes may be retained for three years.

iv) Conduct of Meetings

Meetings shall be conducted by the Chairperson. In the absence of the Chairperson, the members in attendance will select a member as Acting Chair, who will conduct the meeting.

v) Quorum

At regular meetings, a quorum shall be one half of the appointed members. In the absence of a quorum, a Committee meeting may continue except that no formal votes shall be conducted.
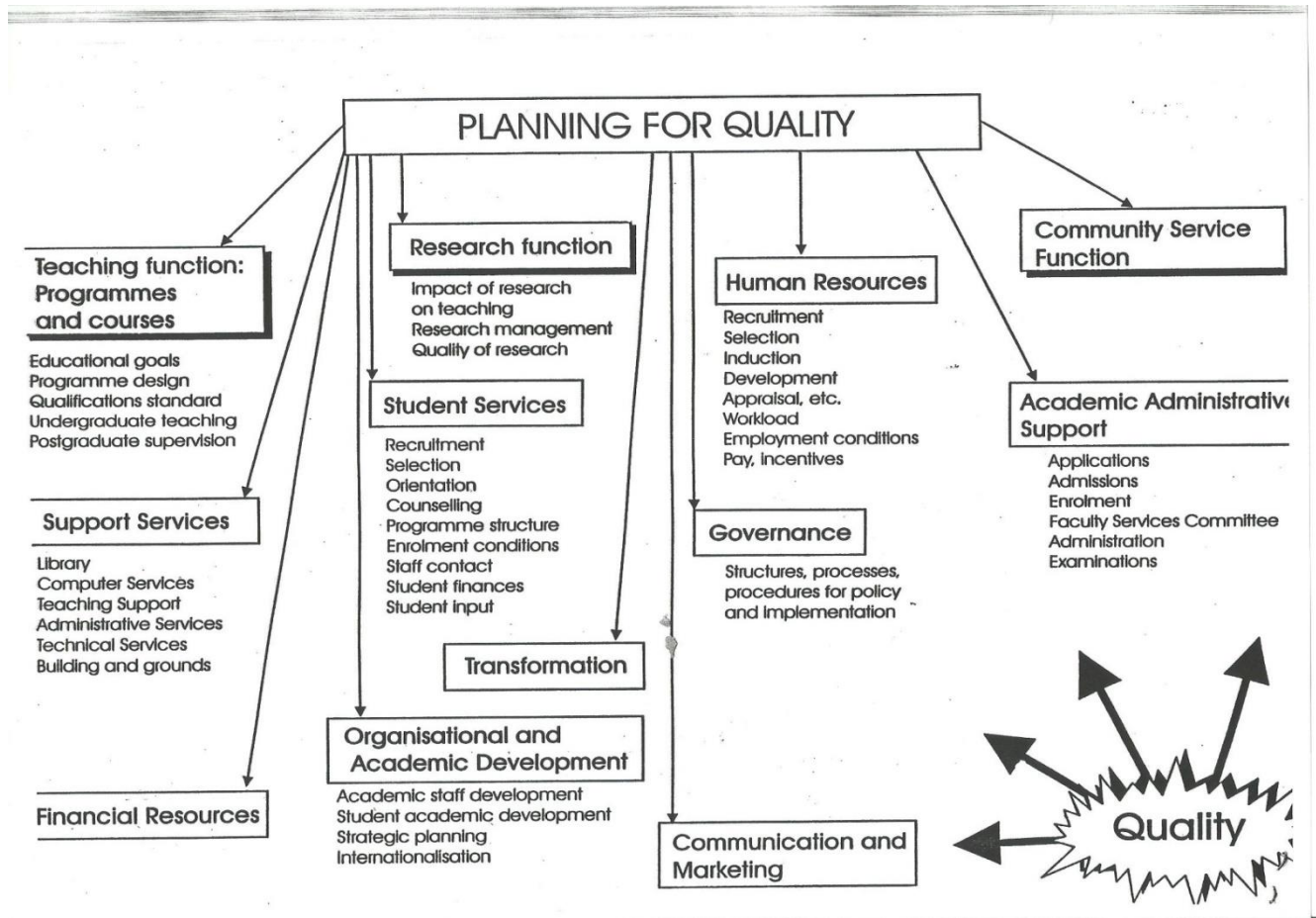
vi) Sub-Committees

Sub Committees may be formed to carry out tasks on behalf of the Committee as required.

vii) Reporting

The Committee shall provide bi-annual reports to the Academic Board on its activities, its observations and evaluations and its recommendations.

C.   APPENDICES

Appendix I – Planning for Quality

N. B.   This diagram is merely indicative and can be modified to suit the needs of the institution.

Appendix II – Guidelines for developing a QA Manual

GUIDELINES FOR
DEVELOPING AQUALITY ASSURANCE MANUAL

The following guidelines are intended to assist Faculties/Departments in the process of developing their Quality Assurance Manuals. The Manual sets out in detail the procedures used by the University College to safeguard standards(academic and otherwise) and assure/enhance the quality of the learning opportunities and learning environment it offers its students.

 The quality indicators are presented as follows, however Faculties/Departments may adjust as necessary.
- ∼ Mission, Aims, Objectives
- ∼ Organisational Structure
- ∼ Staffing and Staff Development
- ∼ Constituents
- ∼ Student Profile
- ∼ Development and Review of Courses/Programmes
- ∼ Management and Delivery of Courses/Programmes
- ∼ Assessment and Outcomes of Courses/Programmes
- ∼ Student Feedback
- ∼ Student Support Services
- ∼ Administration of the Faculty / Department / Programme
- ∼ Provision of Resources / Infrastructure
- ∼ Research and Outreach
- ∼ Quality Assurance and Enhancement

1. **Mission, Aims, Objectives**

State the mission, aims, objectives of the Department and the procedures for reviewing and updating them. Show how they relate to those of the University College. Describe the procedures in place for developing, reviewing, updating and monitoring achievements of the Department's Operational/Strategic Plans.

2. **Organisational Structure**

State the organisational structure of the Department. Provide an Organisational Chart.

3. **Staffing and Staff Development**

Describe the procedures for obtaining data on the profile of academic staff including:
- Publications, consultancy and research profile
- Developing and implementing staff development policies (full time and part time) particularly as it relates to supervision.
- Departmental staff development (Academic and administrative)
- Ensuring the participation of staff in developmental activities such as workshops, conferences, seminars.

4. **Constituents**

Describe the constituents that are offered services by the Faculty/Department including:

- Current Students
- Past Students or Prospective Students
- Staff
- Suppliers etc.

5. **Student Profile**

Describe the procedures for

- Collecting data on the profile of students for all courses and programmes
- Using, storing and retrieving the data collected

6. **Development and Review of Courses/Programmes**

Describe the procedures for:

- developing new courses and/or programmes
- reviewing existing courses and/or programmes

7. **Management and Delivery of Courses/Programmes**

Describe the procedures and systems for the delivery and management of courses and/or programmes to include:

- Course outlines and manuals
- Teaching support
- Assigning supervision
- Student records

8. **Assessment and Outcomes of Courses/Programmes**

Describe the procedures for

- Setting and marking Exam papers, Course Tests, Projects
- Appointment of External Examiners
- Roles of First and Second Examiners and External Examiners
- Maintaining records of
  - Examination results/ Grade distributions of all courses
  - Numbers Graduating and classes of Degree for each programme
  - Failure and Drop-out rates
  - Throughput and retention rates
  - Destination of graduates

9. **Student Feedback**

Describe the procedures and systems for

- Getting feedback / input from students
- Using feedback from students to enhance quality
- Administering the students' end of course evaluation instrument

- Analysing and using the students' end of course evaluation data
- Sharing the data with the Quality Assurance Unit
- Enlisting students' participation on committees

10. **Student Support Services**

Describe the procedures for

- Providing students with feedback on academic and other performance
- Ensuring availability of personal support to students (e.g. academic advising and tutoring)
- Co-curricular involvement in sports, social leadership, psychosocial developmental activities.
- Maintaining appropriate liaison with the Library
- Planning and implementing a programme of resource maintenance and development e.g. for laboratories and IT facilities.
- Documenting the proceedings of Departmental/Faculty Committees with responsibility for resources.

11. **Administration of the Faculty/Programme/Department(Admin/Academic)**

Outline the administrative and operating systems

- Procedures, policies, regulations, codes in place
- Guiding Principles
- Planning processes

12. **Provision of Resources/Infrastructure**

Describe the adequacy

- Physical resource / IT resources / Educational resources (books etc.)
- Maintenance of resources
- Upgrading resources

13. **Research and Outreach**

Describe activities in the following areas:

- Outreach activities
- Consultancies
- Publications

14. **Quality Assurance and Enhancement**

Describe the procedures for

- Reviewing and updating the Quality Manual
- Following up on Quality issues that arise including the time frame for taking necessary action
- Collaborating with the QA Unit.