



The Mico University College
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INSTITUTIONAL RESEARCH POLICY

EFFECTIVE: DEC 2019

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Kingston 5, Jamaica
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The Mico University College

INSTITUTIONAL RESEARCH POLICY

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CHANGE HISTORY

DATE OF CHANGE	NATURE OF CHANGE	REVIEWER(S)
Nov 22, 2019	Version 01 accepted by Academic Board	J. McFarquhar

For more information about policy development, consult the Policy Formulation and Management Policy on The Mico website at themico.edu.jm/policies.

PLEASE NOTE

This document was developed to provide students, staff and other stakeholders with the policy position of The Mico University College and guidance on operations within the institution. Every care was taken to cover all facets within the scope of the policy and eliminate errors. Any comments, queries and suggestions may be sent - using your official email address of The Mico - to the manager of the Office of Accountability listed in the front table on the previous page of this document.

The Mico University College reserves the right to alter, amend or modify sections of this policy document in response to institutional or national needs, and is committed to doing so on a regular basis. Any amendments that are to take effect before the release of the next edition of this policy will be communicated through The Mico's email system using email addresses with themico.edu.jm domain in addition to any other appropriate means.



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1. INTRODUCTION

The Mico University College, as an institution of higher education with local, regional and global impact, routinely evaluates its standards, programmes, practices and special ventures to remain effective, ever-changing to preserve its legacy. Institutional Research (IR) is, therefore, an essential component of the quality assurance (QA) mechanism of this institution. Having clearly articulated and established its standards, and communicated these to the community for implementation, the institution gathers data on itself for the purposes of quality enhancement, through evidence-based strategic planning and decision-making. Institutional Research reports are available to stakeholders, thus providing for transparency and accountability.

Data on the institution may also be required by external entities for the purpose of sector and national reporting, accreditation, partnerships, funding, and research, among others. Institutional Research processes must, therefore, ensure that the information submitted is current and accurate.

2. PURPOSE

This policy provides the framework within which the institution conducts IR with respect to teaching and learning, academic support, administrative operations, research and community service. It communicates the principles that govern the practices related to IR at The Mico and its subsidiaries, done by The Mico as part of the QA mechanism of the University College.

3. SCOPE

This policy shall apply to all persons who, through enrolment, employment, contractual or other formal association or agreement, are under the authority of the University College's policies. It is applicable to IR in, on and by all facets of the institution.

4. DEFINITIONS

Unless the context suggests otherwise, the definitions below shall apply to this policy.

- i. Academic Programme** the approved curriculum, guided by a central philosophy, which consists of a number of credited courses, non-credit modules, volunteer hours and other non-credit criteria so organized to enable a student to progress through the programme levels and, on achievement of the learning outcomes and requirements associated with each stage of the programme, to qualify for the awarding of a University degree.
- ii. Course** A series of instruction on a particular subject that can be effectively assessed. A course is identified by a title, course code, credit hours, and other course attributes.
- iii. Institutional Accreditation** the process of granting 'accredited' status to an institution by an external authority, in our case, the University Council of Jamaica (UCJ),



- through robust and comprehensive evaluation of the programmes, systems and internal QA mechanisms of the institution
- iv. Institutional Effectiveness** the extent to which the institution is accomplishing its mission in meeting the needs of its stakeholders
- v. Institutional QA Cycle** a listing of QA activities, the time of the academic year in which they occur, and the responsible offices, facilitating planning throughout the institution.
- vi. Institutional Research** the internal process of collecting and analyzing information, and disseminating reports related to records and operations of programmes and organizational structures, as well as practices and perceptions of students and staff; for the purposes of accountability, planning and quality enhancement.
- vii. Internal Auditor** a full-time employee of The Mico charged with conducting independent and unbiased assessment of the institution's financial practices and business processes.
- viii. Internal Quality Assurance** activities of planning, evaluation and monitoring that collect evidence and information about mission fulfilment, goal achievement, efficiency of activity, and ways of ensuring continuous improvement within the institution.
- ix. Procedure** a step-by-step sequence of activities or course of action (with definite start and end points) regarding a specific operation that must be followed in the same order to correctly perform a task or to implement the established policy. It also designates and explains staff duties and responsibilities.
- x. Protocol** a standard set of rules guiding the process of an operation or activity, that occurs with varying frequency and at various times.
- xi. Record** any documented information regardless of format (physical or electronic) created or received by employees transacting business on behalf of the University College. When the records of a unit are accessed for IR purposes, they are referred to as data.
- xii. Staff** all persons employed through or by The Mico, full-time, part-time, or temporary.
- xiii. Regulatory Documents** all documented, approved and established guidelines and expectations for operations and conduct within The Mico, as detailed in core values, policies, procedures, regulations, codes, handbooks, manuals, official



notices, and the like. This includes those established by The Mico as well as those established externally, such as by the University Council of Jamaica, government ministries and professional entities.

- xiv. Student Leaders** duly elected members of the Executive of the Guild of Students, and Executive members of individual clubs and societies, houses, religious fraternities and other recognized student groups of the institution.
- xv. Survey** data collection activity, including but not limited to interviews and self-response forms, intended to acquire information on stakeholders, their practices and/or perceptions. These may be administered in person or remotely, in tangible form, or in electronic format.
- xvi. Unit** a department, section, institute, office, or other discrete, permanently established organizational subgroup within the institution. A unit may also refer to an academic programme or a special project. Committees are temporary constructs and are not included in this definition.
- Unit of responsibility** – the unit in which the IR team is conducting the assessment activity, which has primary responsibility for the collection, organization and storage of records.

5. POLICY STATEMENT

The effectiveness of an institution is determined through the assessment of its various products, outcomes and processes against its mission, goals and plans. Institutional Research is the process of evaluation and monitoring that plans and implements assessment activities, following clear articulation and communication of the institution’s standards, policies, procedures and regulatory frameworks.

To achieve the goals of IR - continuous improvement, transparency and accountability – a structured approach within a context of equity, freedom and ethical practice is essential. This approach also fosters a culture of quality, which is critical to achieving the mission of the institution to “support national and regional development”.

6. APPLICATION

6.1. GENERAL CONSIDERATIONS

- i) Institutional Research assesses institutional effectiveness towards continuous improvement of academic programmes, staff and student support, administrative operations and systems, research, and community service at The Mico. Through IR, good practices are recognised and can be used to inform similar operations throughout the institution and areas needing improvement may be specifically identified for appropriate attention. In short, it is assessment for improvement.



- ii) The focus of IR is the effectiveness of operations and systems of The Mico. Personnel decisions are the remit of the Department of Human Resources and though they may consider IR findings, decisions are not based solely on them. All staff and students may participate freely in IR without fear of participation impacting their employment and academic status.

6.2. RECORDS MANAGEMENT

- i) All units of the institution regularly collect information and create records. The manner in which these records are created, stored and used in IR must respect the security of personal information and strictly adhere to the [Records Management Policy and Guidelines](#) and any other relevant regulatory documents of The Mico.
- ii) Raw data and records shall remain with the unit of responsibility, and samples borrowed by the IR team only as necessary.
- iii) A detailed log of samples shall be maintained within the unit of responsibility, with the head of the IR team signing out the records and signing again upon their return.
- iv) Tangible records shall be out of the unit of responsibility for periods not exceeding 10 working days. The unit of responsibility shall be ultimately responsible for the maintenance of accurate records and appropriate backup systems. Digitally shared records shall therefore normally be deleted from the IR team's devices after submission of the IR report.

6.3. ETHICAL CONSIDERATIONS

- i) All staff and students, by virtue of their membership in The Mico, are participants in IR. Upon implementation of this policy, and at the start of each academic year, the community shall be advised of the need for their full participation in IR activities and of this policy. They shall participate by providing access to institutional records, submission of accurate reports, participation in interviews, surveys, questionnaires and other data collection efforts.
- ii) Persons who design methodologies and who provide, collate, curate and analyse the data shall be free to do so without fear of their participation or the findings being used to negatively influence their employment, enrolment or academic or professional progress, provided no breaches of policies or national laws are revealed in the process. Anonymity shall be guaranteed unless precluded by the nature of the data collection exercise.
- iii) Staff and students have the right to refuse direct participate as a subject or part of a sample in any IR data collection activity. This does not apply to anonymous demographic, and other statistical information that is routinely collected or readily available as a normal part of employment or enrolment.
- iv) The unit to have its operations assessed shall be advised of the focus of the assessment, including criteria, ahead of IR assessment activity. Evaluation criteria and relevant instruments shall be determined before the assessment activities of any unit begins. Modification of the criteria, shall occur only by consensus of the IR team, with due notice given to the head of the unit to be assessed. General areas of assessment include, but are not limited to:



- policies for which compliance is being determined,
 - goals of the institutional strategic plan,
 - standards to be met for accreditation or other accountability purposes,
 - assessment plans within the strategic and/or operational plans of the unit.
- v) All ethical guidelines governing research practice and The Mico's Code of Ethical Practice shall be adhered to, without compromise. These include, but are not limited to:
- fairness, equity and non-discrimination
 - conflict of interest
 - informed consent, especially the explicit advisement of the purpose and procedures of the IR activity
 - privacy and confidentiality, including security of records and anonymity in reporting

6.4. INSTITUTIONAL QUALITY ASSURANCE CYCLE AND PLANNING

- i) The Institutional QA Cycle is a document that advises of the semesters in which specific QA activities are conducted throughout the institution. The Cycle is organized in accordance with the academic year, that is:
- Semester 1 – September to December
 - Semester 2 – January to May
 - Summer – June to August

All planning and evaluating units contribute to the Institutional QA Cycle, with the OQA being the Office of Responsibility, collating and communicating the cycle to all units, as well as reviewing the cycle annually. The activities to be included are those that impact the operations of other departments and those that contribute data for the preparation of reports, including for accreditation-related purposes. All units are to use this cycle in their planning activities to ensure that they meet deadlines.

- ii) Strategic and operational planning shall be participatory, with stakeholder participation being as wide as feasible, and shall include an assessment plan that will assess the progress toward long-term goals and short- to medium-term targets.
- iii) Targets and Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) set forth in department operational plans are to be consistent with the priorities of the Institutional Strategic Plan and the University College's Mission. IR activities conducted by the OQA, Curriculum Unit, Internal Auditor, or any other internal monitoring entity will not assess operations unrelated to policy compliance or evaluation of progress toward goals as stated in strategic or operational plans. Therefore, the plans of all units shall be provided to the OQA through the Executive Management Committee.

6.5. OWNERSHIP AND USE OF RECORDS AND DATA OF THE INSTITUTION

- i) All records and institutional data of The Mico belong to the institution.
- ii) Records and data shall be used solely for purposes related to the operations of the institution.



- iii) To generate and/or use data for any research that is not IR or done by ITER prescribed channels shall be used for appropriate, such as that for External Researchers.
- iv) Stakeholders shall not publish or otherwise make accessible, records and data of the institution without authorisation from the University College President, or his/her designate.

6.6. DATA COLLECTION

- i) Institutional Research may be quantitative or qualitative and is primarily descriptive.
- ii) Key data collection times are scheduled on the Institutional QA Cycle and include normal reporting periods. Where regular reporting practices are established, data collection efforts will not duplicate the efforts of the office(r) preparing the reports.
- iii) In the case of special projects, new initiatives or significant revision of existing programmes or procedures, impact assessments shall be done.
- iv) Data collection methods commonly include, but are not limited to: examination of records and reports, surveys, interviews and site visits. Site visits may be scheduled, unscheduled or responsive to the request of a unit. Covert investigations may be used no more than twice per semester per unit, and only in situations where the Hawthorne Effect or other such impact on the findings is reasonably anticipated, for example, in assessing the quality and effectiveness of customer service.
- v) Collection of data for fulfilment of course assignment requirements shall be permitted and shall be in accordance with the standards of the institution for reasonable assessment workload, ethical practice and other related standards.

6.7. DATA ANALYSIS AND REPORTING

- i) Approaches to data analysis shall be such that researcher bias is removed or negligible.
- ii) Data analysis methods and tools shall be fully described to be available for scrutiny.
- iii) Where third party data analysis services are used, due care shall be taken to prevent mining and/or unauthorized use of and/or access to The Mico's data.
- iv) The only persons named in summary reports shall be the members of the IR team and possibly the head of the unit evaluated, if relevant. Anonymity of participants shall be observed as much as possible.



7. RESPONSIBILITIES

All staff and student leaders of the institution have a responsibility to maintain appropriate records, making them available to the relevant internal monitoring authority for the purposes of IR, and in accordance with the relevant standards of The Mico University College. All staff and students shall participate in the provision of data for IR events through various means as outlined in the **Error! Reference source not found.** below.

7.1 THE OFFICE OF QUALITY ASSURANCE (OQA)

The Office of Quality Assurance shall:

- i) promote a culture of quality ownership in the institution and routinize data-driven decision making processes;
- ii) disseminate approved regulatory documents or revised portions thereof, to the community;
- iii) establish, in collaboration with the relevant departments, an annual IR agenda and Institutional QA Cycle in relation to non-academic programmes, departments and operations of the institution;
- iv) develop and distribute data collection instruments for the monitoring and evaluation of practices and perceptions within the institution towards the achievement of the strategic objectives;
- v) review and approve, prior to distribution, all data collection instruments developed outside of the OQA that will be used solely for internal monitoring, evaluation and decision-making within the institution, i.e. for institutional research;
- vi) receive copies of academic and non-academic reports relevant to IR;
- vii) work closely with the Curriculum Unit, Internal Auditor, Human Resources Department, and other units responsible for assurance and monitoring;
- viii) conduct periodic IR activities in accordance with the Institutional QA Cycle;
- ix) analyse data from IR activities;
- x) ensure the setting of an evaluation plan during institutional strategic planning; and
- xi) report to the Executive Management Committee and the Academic Board on IR activities, findings, and recommendations at least once per year.

7.2 THE CURRICULUM UNIT

The Curriculum Unit shall:

- i) establish and articulate institutional standards in relation to academic programmes;
- ii) ensure the integrity of the programme development and review processes;
- iii) in relation to academic programmes, promote awareness of internal QA mechanisms among faculty and students;
- iv) collaborate with the OQA to establish an annual IR agenda and institutional QA cycle;
- v) develop instruments for monitoring and evaluation of academic practices and perceptions within the institution;
- vi) conduct rigorous evaluations of programmes and courses and provide feedback to academic departments;



- vii) review all instruments developed by faculties and schools for the purpose of internal monitoring and evaluation of academic programmes, standardizing where appropriate;
- viii) ensure the setting of an evaluation plan during institutional strategic planning; and
- ix) report to the Vice President (Academic Affairs) and the Executive Management Committee on IR activities, findings, and recommendations at least once per year.

7.3 THE INTERNAL AUDITOR

The Internal Auditor shall:

- i) ensure that audit-relevant institutional regulatory documents are drafted and reviewed in accordance with the Policy Formulation and Management Policy of The Mico;
- ii) review existing policy and procedural regulatory documents as scheduled;
- iii) ensure that standards drafted and reviewed are in accordance with acceptable standards of the auditing professions and applicable laws of Jamaica;
- iv) collaborate with the OQA to establish an annual IR agenda and institutional QA cycle;
- v) independently assess the internal financial processes to monitor compliance with the institution's standards and financial reporting framework;
- vi) assess other operations of the institution with respect to risk assessment and financial sustainability;
- vii) make recommendations for reducing risk and enhancing sustainability in the institution; and
- viii) report to the Executive Management Committee, Audit Committee of the Board of Directors on audit activities, findings, and recommendations at least once per year.

7.4 THE ACADEMIC BOARD

The Academic Board shall:

- i) examine all new and reviewed academic standards, recommending approval to the Board of Directors as appropriate;
- ii) identify gaps and inadequacies that may be measured through institutional assessment and resolved through writing and/or modifying standards; and
- iii) use data from IR activities to guide decision-making.

7.5 EXECUTIVE MANAGEMENT COMMITTEE

The Executive Management Committee shall:

- i) examine all new and reviewed administrative and governance standards, recommending approval to the Board of Directors as appropriate;
- ii) provide guidance for institutional self-studies and the report(s) thereof in relation to accreditation and other purposes;
- iii) approve the IR agenda and institutional QA cycle
- iv) through the University College President, or his/her designate, authorise the publishing and/or dissemination of records and data of the institution, where appropriate;
- v) require periodic reports in accordance with the institutional QA cycle; and



- vi) use data from IR activities to guide strategic planning and decision-making.

7.6 ACADEMIC AND ADMINISTRATIVE MANAGERS

Academic and Administrative Managers shall:

- i) ensure the implementation and adherence to standards of The Mico within their units;
- ii) ensure the maintenance of accurate records of planning and evaluation activities, as well as those related to regular operations;
- iii) ensure the preparation of assessment plans along with the operational plans of their units;
- iv) ensure that guidelines, formats and/or templates are available to employees in their direct line of supervision to facilitate consistent and accurate collection of records;
- v) submit to the OQA, for review and approval, all data collection instruments intended to be used for IR towards reporting or planning purposes;
- vi) use the institutional QA cycle to plan for unit activities;
- vii) engender a participatory culture of planning and evaluation for quality enhancement;
- viii) accommodate internal QA teams for IR visits, scheduled and unscheduled, and invite such visits as deemed beneficial to quality enhancement; and
- ix) submit requested information and regular reliable reports to senior management in a timely manner.

7.7 THE DIRECTOR OF HUMAN RESOURCES

The HR Director shall:

- i) conduct periodic HR audits;
- ii) ensure that professional development and training activities are determined in accordance with needs identified in appraisals, HR audits, and the like; and
- iii) report to the Executive Management Committee at least once per year.

7.8 THE BURSAR

The Bursar shall:

- i) ensure maintenance of secure and accurate financial records;
- ii) provide the internal and external auditors with access to records as required;
- iii) prepare financial reports as scheduled and as requested;
- iv) prepare budget(s) for the institution as scheduled, using input from various units;
- v) inform the strategic planning process, with respect to risk management and sustainability; and
- vi) report to the Executive Management Committee at least once per year.

7.9 ALL STAFF AND STUDENT LEADERS

All Staff and Student Leaders shall:

- i) maintain appropriate records on their operations as stewards of records and data, noting that all records belong to The Mico University College;



- ii) participate in IR through the provision of complete and accurate records and reports within the stated deadlines provided by the QA team;
- iii) seek permission to transfer, archive, delete or destroy records of the institution in accordance with the [Records Management Policy and Guidelines](#).

8. SUPPORTING DOCUMENTS

- Academic Assessment Policy
<https://themico.edu.jm/oqa/documents/policies/Academic%20Assessment%20Policy.pdf>
- Employee Code of Conduct (draft)
- Communications Policy <https://themico.edu.jm/oqa/documents/policies/Communications%20Policy.pdf>
- Curriculum Unit Operations Framework Policy
- Intellectual Property Policy
- Protocol for Department Monitoring Visits
- Protocol for External Researchers
<https://themico.edu.jm/oqa/documents/policies/Researchers%20External%20to%20the%20Mico.pdf>
- Records Management Policy and Guidelines
<https://themico.edu.jm/oqa/documents/policies/Records%20Management%20Policy%20and%20Guidelines.pdf>
- Academic Research Policy
<https://themico.edu.jm/oqa/documents/policies/ITER%20Research%20Policy.pdf>

9. MICO STANDARDS

- Governance and Planning
- Quality Assurance
- Design and Management of Academic Programmes
- Information Management