UNIVERSITY *of*
RWANDA

University of Rwanda Quality Assurance Standards for ODeL

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Background and Instructions for the Guidelines

The guidelines are intended for the University to conduct quality reviews of their Open, Distance and eLearning (ODeL) courses.

The guidelines consist of the following 14 quality standards that define good practice in rolling out technology supported distance education:

- Programme design and development

- Module design and development

- Materials Development

- Learner support systems

- Student Assessment

- Admission and Certification processes

- Staffing and capacity building

- Academic promotion and incentives

- Teaching and Learning strategy

- Teaching and Learning Environment

- Partnership and Collaboration

- Physical / Virtual Infrastructure resources

- Research and Community services (Outreach) / Engagement

- Information dissemination

The following guidelines are provided on how to use the quality assurance (QA) standards. Those choosing to review modules only, will have to select the relevant sections such as programme design, materials development and student assessment.

Method to be used

a) Select the ODeL programme and module to review for quality.

b) For learner support, it is recommended to include a minimum of 5 students currently enrolled.

c) For materials development, it is recommended to include a minimum of three "materials- course contents".

d) For student assessment, it is recommended to interview staff responsible for course development and the exam officers*

e) For infrastructure and facilities, it is recommended to include the IT staff, library staff and other relevant staff.*

f) For staffing, if possible, it is recommended to include a brief report from the HR pertaining to the overall discussions on the staff in addition to the completed guidelines.

g) For open and distance education systems and structures, it is recommended to include in your interviewees, the director of CODeL, the Director of Teaching and Learning Enhancement, the Principal, the Deputy Vice Chancellor in charge of Academic Affairs and Research and the VC as well.

* Ensure random sampling as far as possible

The table indicates the rating to be used and how to measure the levels of performance for the standards. Scoring the quality criteria is a matter of choice; one can conduct self-reviews without necessarily doing any scoring.

Rating	Level of Performance	Description
3	Exceeds/Always	Criterion evidence is clear, appropriate for the course, and demonstrates "best practices."
2	Meets/Often	Criterion evidence is clear and appropriate for the course, but there is some room for enhancement
1	Partially meets/Sometimes	Criterion evidence exists but needs to be presented more clearly and/or further developed.
0	Does not meet/Rarely or Never	No criterion evidence exists or is present but not appropriate for the course.
NA	Objective does not apply	It may be something only a fully online course would need and you are teaching a blended course for example.

Quality Standards

Below are the 14 quality standards that form the quality assurance framework for quality delivery of distance education at the University of Rwanda.

It is also important to note that some quality criteria are more important than others, thus have greater weighting when it comes to programme approval. For example, it does not matter how good the infrastructure is and how well qualified staff is, if the design of the programme is faulty, then it cannot be accredited. So, a programme or a module can score very highly in some areas but may still fail to meet accreditation requirements.

1. Programme design and development.

Academic programmes are flexible and relevant to the needs of the society and those of prospective learners and employers; are responsive to the changing environment; provide appropriate articulation; and have assessment strategies that are effective and in line with relevant outcomes. Programmes are reviewed on a regular basis as per institutional policy.

Criterion	Evidence	Rating
1. Programme is aligned to the institution's vision and mission.		
2. There is a sound rationale and justification for offering the distance/ blended/eLearning programme.		
3. The aims and objectives of the distance/blended/eLearning programme are clearly articulated.		
4. Module outcomes, objectives, activities and assessments are well aligned.		
5. Programme outcomes are well stated and are in line with the NQF level of the qualification.		
6. The distance/ blended/eLearning programme is sustainable.		
7. The programme enhances access and success, including for learners with special needs		
8. Programme regulations (admission requirements, progression, assessment etc) are clearly outlined.		

	Criterion	Evidence	Rating
9.	The Distance/blended/eLearning programme embraces emerging issues in a discipline		
10.	Programmes development, validation and approval follow a clear and established process.		
11.	The Distance/ blended/eLearning programme is reviewed on a regular basis to ensure that it keeps up-to-date with developments in the field and with latest technology.		

Summary of Strengths and Areas for Improvement Within this Quality Standard:

Overall Evaluation of quality standard 1:

Strengths identified:

Areas for improvement identified:

Recommendations:

	Overall Score:	

2. Module design and development

A module is a component of a broader programme of study. The module content is underpinned by research. The module clearly presents objectives and learning outcomes, content, approaches to teaching, learning and assessment, learner support and the use of technology. There is an identified process of development and review of modules collaboratively where necessary.

Criterion	*Evidence*	*Rating*
1. The Modules are designed according to the stated programme objectives.		
2. Module design takes into consideration and incorporates advances in ICT.		
3. Modules are designed based on learner-centred principles.		
4. The Module encourages the development of creative and critical thinking, independent and lifelong learning and interpersonal communication and team work.		

5. Modules design follows existing formats for instructional design and development.		
6. Instructional design recognizes diversity of learners' learning contexts and learning styles, and ensures realistic scheduling of activities.		
7. The Module development process incorporates a range of relevant expertise.		
8. Instructional design enables assessment of learning against stated graduate attributes and learning outcomes		
9. Module design uses appropriate technology and strategies to engage and support learners.		
10. A complete instructional and learning package and information to demonstrate the appropriate scope, sequence and depth of each Module in relation to the stated graduate attributes and learning outcomes.		
11. A variety of learning activities is provided in the Module to encourage active learning, collaborative self and peer assessment.		
12. Appropriate personnel and procedures are in place to ensure the quality of Module instructional materials and their timely production processes.		
13. Existing mechanisms are complied with as far as collaboration, agreement for adoption and adaptation of module instructional materials and delivery amongst national, regional and international bodies.		
Summary of Strengths and Areas for Improvement Within this Quality Standard:		
Overall Evaluation of quality standard 2:		
Strengths identified:		
Areas for improvement identified:		
Recommendations:		
	Overall Score:	

3. Materials Development

Learning materials are in appropriate formats that allow easy access by learners; there is coherence between learning materials, graduate attributes and learning outcomes, course content and assessment. Learning materials support teaching in a coherent way, engage learners, and promote development of problem solving and critical thinking skills. Learning materials are evaluated and updated on a regular basis.

Criterion	Evidence	Rating
1. There is enough lead-in time for the various processes to take place, (for example, content review, language editing; type setting appropriateness, quality checks through peer reviews).		
2. Academics in ODL are trained in instructional materials design for print and online delivery.		
3. Relevant materials (print/online) for the programme are developed.		
4. An in-house materials development manual is developed for material developers to follow and adhere to.		
5. The development of learning materials is based on sound instructional design principles in order to promote active and deep learning that engages learners.		
6. The content is accurate and up-to-date,		
7. The content is in line with graduate attributes and learning outcomes of the course and uses relevant examples.		
8. The content reflects the multicultural diversity of the learners.		
9. All instructional materials, in the form of guides including assignments are ready prior to registration of students.		
10. Materials development is a team exercise and involves people with disciplinary expertise.		
11. Materials are reviewed by subject specialists prior to using them on a module.		
12. There is active use of OERs in supporting learning.		

Summary of Strengths and Areas for Improvement Within this Quality Standard:

Overall Evaluation of Standard 3:

Strengths identified:

Areas for improvement identified:	
Recommendations:	

Overall Score:		

4. Learner support systems

There is a wide range of learner support mechanisms that cater for the variety of learners with different needs. Learner support takes care of both academic and non-academic needs of learners; makes use of student data in order to enable timely provision of support where needed; makes effective use of appropriate of technology; and puts learner success at the centre.

Criterion	*Evidence*	*Rating*
1. Blended/eLearning provider has an accurate profile of learners in order to decide on the appropriate support for the different learners.		
2. Clear, consistent instructions about the type and extent of student technical support are defined		
3. Students are informed through appropriate channels on the timetable to be followed at the beginning of the year/semester.		
4. Learner satisfaction surveys are conducted on a regular basis to determine the appropriateness of the support mechanisms that are provided.		
5. Learner support services are improved/increased with increasing numbers of students enrolled.		
6. Teaching staff provides comprehensive and timely feedback on assignments to students to enhance effective learning.		
7. There are guideline on turnaround time for students' queries.		
8. There is provision on the LMS for students to raise queries and receive responses from responsible people in the university.		
9. The institution conducts regular reviews of resource usage in order to establish which		

	Evidence	Rating
support services are used and which ones are not.		
10. Regular visits are made by support staff to remote centres to meet with students who study in adverse conditions.		
11. There are effective communication systems with all students registered on the programme		
12. Where blended courses are provided, cognisance is taken of those disadvantaged students who cannot access the relevant technology.		
13. Counselling services for students' academic and personal issues and carrier guidance are provided		

Summary of Strengths and Areas for Improvement Within this Quality Standard:

Overall Evaluation of Standard 4:

Strengths identified:

Areas for improvement identified:

Recommendations:

	Overall Score:	

5. Student Assessment

An effective assessment strategy that is valid and reliable is in place; appropriate security and quality assurance measures are in place to ensure the integrity of assessment processes. There is policy on student appeals and turn-around times for such appeals are clearly defined in the policy and followed in practice.

Criterion	*Evidence*	*Rating*
1. Anti-plagiarism mechanisms are used to authenticate assessment processes.		

2. A variety of assessment strategies are used in order to make assessment in blended/eLearning rigorous and authentic.		
3. Communication of information relating to assessment is clear and timely received by all students.		
4. There is moderation of assessment.		
5. The goals of assessment are clearly mapped out and students are made aware of them right at the beginning.		
6. The assessment is aligned to module outcomes and learning units.		
7. Assessment covers a wide range of the revised Bloom taxonomy levels.		
8. There is appropriate weighting of summative and formative assessment.		
9. Mechanisms are in place to ensure that the right candidates take distance online assessment.		

Summary of Strengths and Areas for Improvement Within this Quality Standard:

Overall Evaluation of Standard 5:

Strengths identified:

Areas for improvement identified:

Recommendations:

	Overall Score:	

6. Admission and Certification processes

The institution's admission process reflects its academic commitments and the needs of society. The admission and registration processes are transparent and handled efficiently. The processing of students' results and certification processes are efficient and transparent.

Criterion	*Evidence*	*Rating*
1. The institution publishes its policies on the admission and recruitment of students and staff		
2. The admission process is transparent and is made available for scrutiny by relevant stakeholders.		
3. The institution makes special provision to ensure equity and access to disadvantaged groups within its target student population.		
4. The university makes provision for students who study remotely to register away from campus.		
5. Information to prospective learners regarding details of admission requirements, the procedure for enrollment and the requirements for progression through the programme is clear and efficient.		
6. Enrolment to the programmes is strictly in line with specified norms and admission guidelines.		
7. The institution's admission policy has adequate provision for learners with special needs.		
8. Students are provided with complete study packages on registration, including assignment due dated and examination dates.		
9. Learners have access to counselling and guidance services. Particular attention should be paid to learners with special needs.		
10. The access and entry requirements for the programme are open with appropriate recognition for prior knowledge and experience.		
11. The institution maintains an accurate database of studentsfrom registration to graduation, and of alumni to allow regular contact with past students and maximise their contribution to the life of the university.		

Summary of Strengths and Areas for Improvement Within this Quality Standard:

Overall Evaluation of Standard 6:

Strengths identified:

Areas for improvement identified:		
Recommendations:		
Overall Score:		

7. Staffing and capacity building

ODeL providers have an appropriate staffing structure and learning programmes are supported by enough administrative, academic, technical and other support staff with appropriate qualifications and experience. Responsibilities and job descriptions of such staff are clearly defined. There is systematic development of staff in order to ensure that it is kept up to date with developments and performs its duties effectively.

Criterion	*Evidence*	*Rating*
1. Relevant staff with appropriate qualifications are recruited in a transparent way for an open, flexible and distance mode of delivery;		
1. Staff recruitment is commensurate to enrolments and the requirements of the programme;		
2. Technical and support staff is adequately qualified for the job they are doing.		
3. There is policy on continuous staff development in order to keep staff up to date with latest developments in their disciplines.		
4. Staff have the resources, research facilities and conducive working conditions to provide rich and coherent learning experiences through a variety of open, distance and flexible delivery modes;		
5. Staff is recruited, monitored, supported and coordinated for the specialised roles and tasks they perform		
6. Workload allows for the development and re-development of open and distance education curricular materials, as well as orientation, tutoring and remedial services for all students;		

7. Staff is supported to utilise appropriate resources including learning management systems that enhance learning within open, flexible and distance educational contexts.		

Summary of Strengths and Areas for Improvement Within this Quality Standard:

Overall Evaluation of Standard 7:

Strengths identified:

Areas for improvement identified:

Recommendations:

Overall Score:	

8. Academic promotion and incentives

The recruitment, promotion and incentives of academic staff are appropriate for the education and training services provided. The institution avails appropriate rules, guidelines and procedures for recruitment, promotion and incentives of academic staff.

Criterion	*Evidence*	*Rating*
1. Adequate, qualified and skilled academic staff are employed and promoted to meet the institution's objectives for the learners		
2. The academic staff possess appropriate qualifications, skills and expertise required for their positions, more specifically those related to Open, Distance, and e- Learning (ODeL).		
3. Appropriate training is provided to academic staff on the use and maintenance of new technology, equipment, facilities, and communication and information systems available/deployed in the Institution		
4. There is policy on continuous academic staff development in order to keep them up to date with latest developments in their disciplines.		
5. Academic staff has the resources, research facilities and conducive working conditions		

	Evidence	Rating
to enable their academic promotion.		
6. Academic workload allows for conducting research, development and re-development of open and distance education curricular materials.		

Summary of Strengths and Areas for Improvement Within this Quality Standard:

Overall Evaluation of Standard 8:

Strengths identified:

Areas for improvement identified:

Recommendations:

	Overall Score:	

9. Teaching and Learning strategy

Teaching and learning strategy are effect if they allow achieving learning outcomes; there is coherence between teaching and learning strategy and teaching and learning materials, module content and assessment. The strategy used in teaching and Learning in effective way, engages students and increase the collaboration among students, and critical thinking skills. Teaching and Learning strategy are evaluated and updated on a systematic basis.

Criterion	Evidence	Rating
1. Cooperative learning which encourages students of mixed abilities to work together by promoting small group as well as collaboration in different activities.		
2. Inquiry-based instruction which inspires students to think for themselves and become more independent learners.		

3.	Differentiation/Individualization in teaching and learning which differentiates teaching by allocating tasks based on students' abilities, to ensure no one gets left behind.		
4.	Allow use of various Technologies in teaching-learning process.		
5.	Behaviour management strategy is promoted to gain learners respect and ensure they have an equal chance of reaching their full potential.		
6.	Promotes the Continuous Professional development through new educational technologies and online safety trainings.		

Summary of Strengths and Areas for Improvement Within this Quality Standard:

Overall Evaluation of Standard 9:

Strengths identified:

Areas for improvement identified:

Recommendations:

	Overall Score:	

10. Teaching and Learning Environment

The institution ensures that the environment is conducive to teaching and learning and basic resources are available for ODeL students.

Criterion	*Evidence*	*Rating*
1. Collaborative toolsets in a distributed web-based environment are used to enhance teaching and learning in ODeL		
2. Teaching materials are well-designed and well-integrated in study material		

creating rich environments for active learning and promoting dialogue between teacher and student in order to decrease the distance between student and study materials	17	
3. Face-to-face contacts are used to guide students through their modules, mediating the packaged learning materials and facilitating the learning process. They also give students an opportunity to engage in argument and debate with their peers and lecturers		
4. Peer support is encouraged through group work assignments or students who live around the same area can work together to help each other. Students can also form virtual communities of practice where they participate in discussion forums		
5. Administrative support in the form of timely, accurate and accessible information from institution to students about all aspects of the learning process, from registration to graduation is in place		
6. ICT infrastructure is used to support Virtual Learning Environments for supporting teaching and learning. Management Information System is also used for student administration and finance purposes.		
7. ODeL centres are established and equipped to help learners getting necessary support whenever needed.		

Summary of Strengths and Areas for Improvement Within this Quality Standard:

Overall Evaluation of Standard 10:

Strengths identified:

Areas for improvement identified:

Recommendations:		
	Overall Score:	

11. Partnership and Collaboration

A strategy and a formal relationship between the institution and another institution or agency that engenders cooperation for the benefit of both parties and for the learners need to be developed. This increases the visibility of the institution towards potential employers and allows mobility of students and faculties within the country, region and the world.

Criterion	*Evidence*	*Rating*
8. Collaborative partnership with ODeL institutions in the country and abroad to develop an organized and credible ODeL system in Rwanda is engaged.		
9. Collaborative arrangements with other institutions and organisations in order to ensure that institution's dispersed ODeL students have access to learning facilities are formalised through MOUs		
10. MOUs are effectively implemented with tangible results.		
Summary of Strengths and Areas for Improvement Within this Quality Standard:		
Overall Evaluation of Standard 11:		
Strengths identified:		

Areas for improvement identified:	
Recommendations:	

	Overall Score:	

12. Physical / Virtual Infrastructure resources

Physical / Virtual Infrastructure resources that commensurate with student numbers are in place to facilitate effective rolling out of learning programmes. Institutional facilities take into account the dispersed nature of the student body in both open and distance learning and in eLearning. Where the institution has arrangements with other stakeholders to allow students to have access to their facilities, the responsibility for quality provision of such services still lies with the providing institution (i.e. the institution where the student is registered).

Criterion	*Evidence*	*Rating*
1. There are adequate and appropriate facilities to run the academic programme.		
2. Learning infrastructure takes into account the decentralised nature of distance education students.		
3. Appropriate technological innovations are used in educational transactions to enrich the learning experiences provided to students		
4. Appropriate technology is used for effective institutional functioning, like learner support, examination processing and student records.		
5. The growth of the infrastructure keeps pace with enrolment growth in the programme.		
6. There are procedures and mechanisms in place for the provision, maintenance and replacement of the infrastructural facilities in the programme.		
7. There are mechanisms to regularly evaluate the adequacy and accessibility of resources and services for learners and appropriate remedial measures are taken to address inadequacies.		
8. There are written agreements where facilities of other institutions are made available to learners.		
9. Where arrangements are made for students to use facilities belonging to other organisations, the institution remains accountable for the quality provision of services to students.		

Summary of Strengths and Areas for Improvement Within this Quality Standard:	
Overall Evaluation of quality standard 12:	
Strengths identified:	
Areas for improvement identified:	
Recommendations:	
	Overall Score:	

13. Research and Community services (Outreach) / Engagement

Continuous development of educational programmes and services is influenced by research. The institution supports community outreach by ensuring consultancy and extension services.

Criterion	*Evidence*	*Rating*
1. The institution actively encourages and promotes research by staff.		
2. Findings of research underpin the development of the programmes and the courses of the institution.		
3. There are appropriate procedures and measures to ensure ethical practices in research.		
4. There are relevant mechanisms and procedures to monitor and evaluate research within the institution.		
5. There are appropriate mechanisms and procedures to facilitate and encourage consultancy services to the wider community		
6. The institution is responsive to community needs and conducts relevant extension and awareness programmes.		
7. Research, consultancy and extension services are actively promoted to build linkages with industry and community		

Summary of Strengths and Areas for Improvement Within this Quality Standard:		
Overall Evaluation of Standard 13:		
Areas for improvement identified:		
Recommendations:		
	Overall Score:	

14. Information dissemination

Credible information dissemination tools are appropriate for the dissemination of information

Criterion	*Evidence*	*Rating*
1. Dissemination of factual and credible information to the benefits of learners		
2. Effective and accountable mechanism for the communication and dissemination of information on credit transfer policies and practices		
3. Formal mechanism for liaison to ensure proper coordination and dissemination of information		
4. Regular collection, analysis and dissemination of information for appropriate action.		
5. Research committee minutes and findings of research dissemination seminars		
Summary of Strengths and Areas for Improvement Within this Quality Standard:		
Overall Evaluation of Standard 14:		
Areas for improvement identified:		

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Recommendations:		
	Overall Score:	