ACADEMIC PROCEDURES HANDBOOK

for

Sri Lankan Universities

Committee of Vice-Chancellors & Directors
and
University Grants Commission Sri Lanka

November 2003
## List of Contents

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Section</th>
<th>Page Number</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Purpose of the Handbook</td>
<td>1 - 2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Code of Practice on Assessment of Students</td>
<td>3 - 12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Code of Practice on Career Guidance</td>
<td>13 - 22</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Code of Practice on External Assessors</td>
<td>23 - 33</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Code of Practice on Postgraduate Research</td>
<td>34 - 50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Programmes</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Code of Practice on Programme Approval, Monitoring and Review</td>
<td>51 - 65</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Code of Practice on Student Support and Guidance</td>
<td>66 - 75</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Quality Framework</td>
<td>76</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Academic Procedures Handbook – Page 2
This handbook is complementary to the Quality Assurance Handbook published by the CVCD and UGC in July 2002.

Both handbooks are the result of collaborative work undertaken between the CVCD/UGC, universities and professional bodies in 2002 and 2003. This work builds on the successful project begun in 2001 to develop and implement a comprehensive quality assurance system for Sri Lankan higher education.

The Academic Procedures Handbook is made up of six Codes of Practice on:

- Assessment of students;
- Career guidance;
- External assessors;
- Postgraduate research programmes;
- Programme approval, monitoring and review;
- Student support and guidance.

The purpose of the Academic Procedures Handbook is to provide a reference point for all universities, covering the main aspects of academic standards and the quality of education. The six Codes reflect consensus amongst universities and other groups on the key elements of good practice, which support the student learning experience.

The Codes may be added to over time, to reflect developments nationally and in universities.

The existence of an Academic Procedures Handbook providing guidance on good practice at national level greatly facilitates the implementation of Quality Assurance mechanisms and the sustenance and enhancement of quality in the Universities.
within the overarching quality framework described at the end of the book. Individual universities will be expected to use the Academic Procedures Handbook to guide their own developing practice and to supplement it with local handbooks that reflect particular context and requirements of individual institutions. Ms Carole Webb (University of the West of England, Bristol, U.K.) and Ms Gill Clarke (University of Bristol, U.K.) served as Consultants to the Quality Assurance Project. Professor K Tillekeratne served as the Chairman of the Committee on Quality Assurance, which spearheads the Quality Assurance Project in the Universities.
Code of Practice on
Assessment of Students
Code of Practice on Assessment of Students

Foreword

As part of its programme of work, the CVCD/UGC Quality Assurance Committee has developed Codes of Practice covering key aspects of quality assurance in higher education.

This is one of six Codes, all of which have been developed in consultation with university staff through workshops and seminars during 2002 and 2003.

Purpose

The Codes are intended to be used:

- to guide and inform institutional activity;
- to promote and disseminate good practice;
- to encourage a commitment to continuous improvement.

Structure

Each Code is divided into three sections, covering general principles, institutional by-laws and regulations and specific guidance. Some have additional appendices, where more detail is required.

Development

The Codes are intended to be dynamic documents, which continue to develop over time. This will enable them to take account of national developments and to capture changing university practice.

Feedback is therefore invited on any aspect of the Codes, via the Quality Assurance Committee.

Introduction

Assessment processes have a fundamental influence on the student learning experience. They measure the outcomes of student learning, including:

- the knowledge acquired;
- the understanding developed;
- the skills (personal and practical) gained.

Assessment results determine the decisions taken on whether students progress to the next stage of a programme, whether they pass or fail, and what grades they are awarded. They also enable students to show whether they have achieved the intended learning outcomes or objectives for the module or programme.
Assessment is also linked to the maintenance of academic standards and is normally tested or moderated by an individual external to the university in which the student is studying. There are three broad types of assessment, as follows:

**Diagnostic**
This provides information to the assessor on the student's aptitude and preparedness for a module or programme of study. Diagnostic assessment can be used to identify gaps in the student's knowledge, understanding or skills and to identify additional support needed by the student.

**Formative**
This provides learners with feedback on their performance and progress. It should inform learners about how they can improve their performance. Formative assessment results do not always contribute to the final assessment marks.

**Summative.**
This measures achievement or failure of the learner to fulfill stated learning outcomes.

Any assessment can be used for any or all of the above purposes. For example, much coursework assessment is formative because it enables tutors to give students feedback on their performance; it might also be summative because the results might contribute to the credit collected by students that contributes to the final award. End of programme or end of module formal examinations are normally used to provide summative judgments on the student's ability (knowledge and understanding at a certain point. Diagnostic assessment is closely linked with formative assessment, but would normally not contribute to summative results.

This code should be read in conjunction with the Codes of Practice on External Assessors and Postgraduate Research Programmes.

The guidance it contains is outlined in three sections:

A  General principles
B  Institutional by-laws and regulations
C  Specific guidance

The Code sets out a framework within which institutions are expected to develop their own procedures and practice, consistent with the overall guidance in the Code.

**A. General Principles**

As bodies responsible for academic standards, institutions should have effective procedures for:

1. Designing, approving, monitoring and reviewing the assessment methods for programmes and awards;
2. Implementing rigorous assessment practices which ensure that the academic and/or professional standard for each award and award element is set and maintained at the appropriate level;

3. Ensuring that the principles, procedures and processes of all assessment are explicit, valid, and reliable;

4. Ensuring that assessment regulations are applied and that there are suitable procedures for dealing with student complaints and grievances and breaches of assessment regulations by students, for example absenting oneself from an examination;

5. Evaluating uniformity and comparability of standards across the institution.

B. Institutional By-laws and Regulations

It is suggested that the following areas should be covered in institutional by-laws and regulations and standing orders.

6. Mandate and composition of boards of examiners and assessment panels: guidance should cover membership, operating procedures, powers and accountability. Where more than one such body contributes to the assessment of a cohort of students, the relative powers of each should be defined.

7. Criteria for the conduct of assessment, covering rigour, fairness, confidentiality and security.

8. Guidance on the timing of the examination period, for the treatment of the results, and the release of grades/marks and degree results to students.

9. Institutional requirements for the recruitment, appointment and role of external examiners, including their involvement in the assessment process and the maintenance of academic standards (see also the Code of Practice for External Assessors).

10. The procedures to be followed in cases of student complaints and grievances (covered in detail in the Code of Practice on Student Support and Guidance).

11. Guidance for staff on examination regulations should be provided to all staff, and to all new staff upon arrival. Junior staff should receive training in appropriate assessment methods as part of their induction process.

12. Criteria on what constitutes a conflict of interest in assessment, to be used by staff and external assessors. These should be made available to all those involved in the assessment process.

13. The procedures to be followed in incidentals of cheating of other breaches of assessment regulations by students, including a description of what action
should be taken.

c. Specific Guidance

It is recommended that formal institutional regulations be supplemented by more specific guidelines on the matters below. Individual faculties or schools may in turn wish to provide additional advice for students and staff that directly relates to the subject being studied, e.g. the conduct of the oral examination in a performing arts discipline, or the assessment of scientific research projects carried out by more than one student.

14. Guidance on the amount and weighting of assessment, taking account of level of study, intended learning outcomes of the programme. The amount of student time contributing to the assessment should be considered in relation to the total amount of student input required for the credit obtained on successful completion of the module or programme.

15. Students should be given adequate notice of examination periods and scheduling, i.e. as early as possible in each year of their programme.

Setting, marking and grading

16. Staff should be provided with guidance on the design of assessments (e.g. what types of assessment are appropriate for testing different forms of learning and learning outcomes), and the setting of examinations. Institutions should consider establishing scrutiny boards for checking and vetting examination questions.

17. Institutions should ensure that there are robust mechanisms for marking and for the moderation of marks by internal examiners and external assessors.

18. Institutions should evaluate periodically the maintenance and development of their academic standards, normally by reference to external assessors' comments and, if relevant, their written reports, and by benchmarking student achievement against other universities' results.

19. There should be clear criteria for the aggregation of marks and grades and the rules and regulations for progression, final awards and classifications. These should be understood by staff and students.

20. Institutions should ensure that rules for compensation and standardization of marks are clear and consistent and that applying them does not undermine academic standards.

21. Coursework should be returned to students in a timely manner, normally within four working weeks.
Feedback to students on performance

22. Students should receive constructive feedback on assessed work in a way that promotes learning and facilitates improvement. Particular care should be taken to support weaker students by providing full feedback on their work in a way that gives them every encouragement to improve their performance.

Staff development and training

23. Institutions should ensure that all staff involved in the assessment of students are competent to undertake their roles and responsibilities. Where training is required, it should be provided.

Language of assessment

24. The languages of assessment and teaching will normally be the same. If, for any reason, this cannot be achieved, institutions must ensure that their academic standards are not consequently put at risk. Some institutions offer students the option of being assessed in a different language from the one in which they are taught.

Professional 'and accreditating body requirements

25. Where a programme forms part of the qualifications regime of a professional or statutory body, clear information should be made available to staff and students about specific assessment requirements that must be met for the award of the professional qualification.

Review of regulations

26. Institutions should have effective mechanisms for the review and development of assessment regulations. This might be done as part of an annual programme review procedure, through periodic department review, or by university quality assurance committees as a result of feedback from internal examiners or external assessors.

Recording, documentation and publication of assessment decisions

27. Institutions should ensure that assessment decisions are recorded and documented accurately and systematically. Before releasing marks to students, they should be checked carefully by staff before being submitted to results boards. If results are made available to students in advance of approval of examination / results' boards, it must be made clear that these are provisional.

28. Institutions should ensure that the decisions of relevantly examinations / results boards are published as quickly as possible, consistent with rigour of assessment and accuracy.
29. Institutions should implement clear guidance on the conduct of examination / results boards and on the way final assessment decisions should be arrived at. The role of the external assessor should be clearly articulated.

30. Institutions should make available to students and staff the procedures for student complaints and grievances in relation to assessment decisions.

Appendix to CODE OF PRACTICE on Assessment of Students

Further guidance on assessment information, which might be published/provided for students and/or examiners

The following list is illustrative of the type of information that institutions should consider including in their published documentation for students and/or examiners:

- the purpose, methods and schedule of assessment tasks during, and at the end of, a module or programme of study;
- provision for exemptions based on previous experience, and the processes involved in evaluating it;
- the criteria for assessment including, where appropriate, descriptors of expected standards of student attainment: what is expected in order to pass or to gain a particular grade or classification;
- what assessment events will, and which will not, count towards interim or final assessment and with what weighting or exemption procedures;
- the marking and grading conventions that will be used;
- the consequences of assessment, such as decisions about progression to the next level, and final awards;
- what is expected of students in terms of attendance at examinations and the implications of non-attendance;
- how and when assessment judgments are published;
- any opportunities for re-assessment;
- the mechanisms provided by the university for enabling graduates to access their results at a later date, including requests for transcripts;
- the length of time the university expects students' examination scripts to be stored post-examination, for example, for five years.
Code of Practice on
Career Guidance
Code of Practice on
Career Guidance
**Foreword**

As part of its programme of work, the CVCD/UGC Quality Assurance Committee has developed Codes of Practice covering key aspects of quality assurance in higher education.

This is one of six Codes, all of which have been developed in consultation with university staff through workshops and seminars during 2002 and 2003.

**Purpose**

The Codes are intended to be used:

- to guide and inform institutional activity;
- to promote and disseminate good practice;
- to encourage a commitment to continuous improvement.

**Structure**

Each Code is divided into three sections, covering general principles, institutional by-laws and regulations and specific guidance. Some have additional appendices, where more detail is required.

**Development**

The Codes are intended to be dynamic documents, which continue to develop over time. This will enable them to take account of national developments and to capture changing university practice.

Feedback is therefore invited on any aspect of the Codes, via the Quality Assurance Committee.
Introduction

The Code of Practice on Career Guidance is intended to help universities to ensure that:

- they are meeting students' expectations in preparing them for their future career
- they are producing graduates who are equipped to be successful, flexible and adaptable in the employment market.

Development of the Code has taken place with the assistance of academic and support staff working in Sri Lankan higher education and is intended to provide a framework for career guidance within which institutions can work.

The employment market is changing in ways that make it more important than ever before for students and graduates to take responsibility for managing their career development. To achieve this successfully they need to develop career management skills, being able:

- to reflect on their individual learning, practice and personal development;
- to plan effectively and make timely and good decisions;
- to be proficient in using a range of information technology applications;
- to create and take opportunities;
- to prepare themselves for lifelong learning.

Other skills graduates need for successful careers are:

- to be able to communicate effectively and articulately, orally and in writing;
- to work successfully as part of a team;
- to be able to assess their own performance accurately and to know when to ask for help;
- to be able to continue to develop in their career.

Career guidance is one of the components of the support that students need while studying at university. It is important that career education, information and guidance and the development of employability and career management skills are considered as interdependent parts of a whole area of support provided for students.

The role of technology (information and communications technology - ICT) is crucial to the effective provision of career advice and guidance, and for communicating career opportunities to students and graduates. Universities need to ensure that their strategy for ICT provides a sustainable basis for the communication of career-related information for students and access; especially graduates who need to access this information remotely.

Universities need to make clear to students and graduates their entitlements in terms of career guidance and information at the various stages in their career, during their programme and after graduation. Separate provision for first degree graduates and postgraduates is often advisable. In making information available to students and graduates, universities should demonstrate their commitment to equality of opportunity and access.
It is important that there is an institution-wide commitment to preparing students for their future careers. This involves the integration of skills development, especially those in career management, with programmes of study, which should be supported through the university's learning and teaching strategy, or equivalent. Successful integration will involve developing and maintaining strong links between career guidance and information services, academic departments, personal tutors, admission tutors, student employment offices and other student support and welfare services.

Career staff should ensure that there are productive and cordial links between universities and external agencies and organizations, locally, regionally, nationally and internationally. They should also foster good relationships with a wide range of employers, some of whom should be encouraged to participate in career events for students and graduates.

The guidance this Code contains is outlined in three sections:

- **A General principles**
- **B Institutional by-laws and regulations**
- **C Specific guidance**

The Code sets out a framework within which institutions are expected to develop their own procedures and practice, consistent with the overall guidance in the Code.

### A. General Principles

1. Institutions should have a clear written, accessible policy for careers education, information and guidance, including aims and objectives and details of students' entitlements.

2. Careers guidance should be impartial; student focused, personal, and easily accessed by students and should meet equal opportunities policies. It should cater for students with special needs, and generally be focused on those who may be disadvantaged in the labour market.

3. Institutions should have a mechanism for assuring the quality of careers guidance.

### B. Institutional By-laws and Regulations

4. Each university should ensure that careers guidance is provided by a unit or group that reports to one or more of its senior academic planning committees. Membership of the group should include at least one representative from each faculty, for example faculty careers guidance officers.

5. The unit should have a board or steering group whose membership includes alumni and representatives from outside academia, e.g. employers in industry and professional organisations.
6. The institution should ensure that its Information and Communications Technology provision facilitates distant/distributed access to careers advice and guidance.

7. In line with UGC advice, all students should be required to take a careers guidance module during their programme of study.

c. Specific Guidance

Institutions should provide specific guidance in relation to careers activities under the following headings:

8. Students

8.1 Career-related skills and knowledge

Students should have access to seminars, workshops, meetings with potential employers, chambers of commerce, and any other activities that provide them with career-related skills and knowledge.

Students should also have access to printed materials and other resources, e.g. video, CD-ROM, etc., to enable them to see practically what a career choice might entail in practical terms.

They should be supported by a careers guidance officer, at faculty level and also at university level, through the careers guidance unit.

Careers guidance should be available to students from the second semester of the first year until the end of their programme of study.

Careers guidance units should work with faculties and schools to ensure that there is a career orientation programme in each faculty and that careers guidance modules are integral to each students programme.

8.2 Range of services available

Each university's careers guidance unit should develop web-based databases covering career opportunities and contacts, employment and placement opportunities and self-employment information and skills.

In addition, careers guidance units should publish newsletters, notices about employment opportunities, and posters advertising the range of opportunities and services they provide.

Students should be encouraged to participate in practical careers-related activities, including: experience of and advice on drafting a curriculum vitae/presenting bio-data, employer aptitude tests, mock interviews, etc.
8.3 Accessibility

Careers guidance units should have opening hours that are convenient for student access, providing as much flexibility as possible.

Students should be given wide access to information technology that enables them to use the career databases at all times.

Workshops, seminars, career guidance days, etc should be arranged at times that are suitable for students and they should be held at locations that are widely accessible to students.

Careers guidance units should, wherever possible, liaise with student union officers to maintain and improve accessibility for students to career materials and events.

8.4 References for students

It should be the responsibility of each university's careers guidance unit to encourage closer relationships between teachers and students and to raise student awareness of the need for references when they seek employment or further training.

Careers guidance officers might wish to issue career-oriented certificates, to students or their heads of department, to record students' involvement in career-related activities.

9. External relations

9.1 Collaboration with employers, external organisations and other groups

Careers guidance units should work with employers to ensure students have up to date information about employer requirements.

They should use their contacts with external organisations to help students to establish career oriented societies and clubs.

Wherever possible, employers and alumni should be invited to work with careers guidance units to offer practical activities for students, e.g. employers offering mock interviews, or alumni returning to the university to talk about their chosen careers.

Students wishing to pursue an academic research career should be given guidance as to the opportunities available in their subject, both academic and financial. Careers guidance units should work in partnership with academic departments to provide advice on research careers.

9.2 Placements and work experience

Careers guidance units should facilitate placement opportunities and work experience for students, making available details of vacancies through websites, newsletters and posters.
They should be pro-active in establishing links with a range of employers, to try to cater for as wide a range of careers as possible. It is recognised that there are some limitations to be overcome in this area, in particular geographical constraints.

9.3 Publication of information

Careers guidance units should use the media listed above in 8.2 (databases, newsletters, notices about employment opportunities and posters) and 8.3 (information technology, workshops, seminars and career guidance days), to publicise external relations and enable students to contact employers and other external bodies directly.

10. Staff

10.1 Staff training and development Careers guidance units have been established in all universities.

Staff should have opportunities for specialized careers training, locally and overseas and staff development programmes for new academic staff should include elements on providing good careers guidance.

There should be awareness programmes in careers guidance for existing staff, to keep them up to date with career knowledge and skills generally, as well as subject-related careers information.

Staff in academic departments should be the principle source of advice on academic research careers in the relevant subjects.

11. Monitoring, feedback, evaluation and improvement

11.1 Incorporation of feedback from employers

Careers guidance units should try to encourage employer feedback at every opportunity, although this may sometimes be difficult to arrange.

Employers could be asked to complete a short, structured questionnaire, which may be more practical to administer than other methods and provide useful information about the qualities they are looking for in their graduate employees.

Practical employer links are desirable, such as asking employers to conduct mock interviews (see final paragraph of 8.2 above), or to give presentations.

11.2 Evaluation of progress against objectives and targets. All careers guidance units should have a strategy and action plan, which should be reviewed and, if necessary, updated annually.

The annual report produced by each unit should map progress and achievements against targets set in the action plan.
11.3 Annual reports

Annual reports should, in addition to evaluating progress against targets, outline new developments and directions in the unit's work.

If the careers guidance unit has a steering group, or a careers board to which it reports, the annual report should be considered and approved by that body.

11.4 Data collection and presentation

Careers guidance units should ensure that statistical data on student destinations and careers is collected annually.

A mechanism should be found that enables graduates to respond in a timely manner to a brief set of questions about the next step in their career following university.

The data arising from graduate feedback should be analysed and presented annually as part of each careers guidance unit's annual report (see above).

In addition, careers guidance units should be responsible for undertaking tracer studies on alumni of the university, using a sampling process. This will enable them to track trends, ask the alumni how well their education prepared them for their career, and to maintain useful links so that alumni can be asked to provide input to careers activities.
Code of Practice on
External Assessors
Code of Practice on External Assessors

Foreword

As part of its programme of work, the CVCD/UGC Quality Assurance Committee has developed Codes of Practice covering key aspects of quality assurance in higher education. This is one of six Codes, all of which have been developed in consultation with university staff through workshops and seminars during 2002 and 2003.

Purpose

The Codes are intended to be used:

- to guide and inform institutional activity;
- to promote and disseminate good practice;
- to encourage a commitment to continuous improvement.

Structure

Each Code is divided into three sections, covering general principles, institutional by-laws and regulations and specific guidance. Some have additional appendices, where more detail is required.

Development

The Codes are intended to be dynamic documents, which continue to develop over time. This will enable them to take account of national developments and to capture changing university practice.

Feedback is therefore invited on any aspect of the Codes, via the Quality Assurance Committee.
Introduction

Assessment is a key function of higher education. Through the assessment of students' work, universities set and maintain their academic standards and safeguard their awards and qualifications. External assessors enable universities to compare their own standards and expectations of student achievement with university and professional practice elsewhere, nationally and internationally. One of the aims of this code of practice is to identify where and how external assessors can strengthen a university's internal assessment procedures by drawing upon subject knowledge and experience of assessment elsewhere in higher education to promote good practice and contribute to sound quality assurance across the university sector.

The code of practice recognises that not all universities may yet use external assessors in the ways described, or that some may have limited experience in certain subject areas. It seeks to provide a framework to help universities define and develop external assessors' roles, to clarify their function, powers and responsibilities in relation to internal marking and examining arrangements and to suggest how their involvement, including through written reports and feedback direct to university staff, might help to maintain common standards and ensure fair and equitable treatment for students.

External assessors are essentially a part of, not separate from, a university's own quality assurance procedures. They are appointed by universities to assist and support them in their role as assessing and awarding bodies.

External assessors - definition

External assessors are appointed by universities to assist with the maintenance and comparability of academic standards and student achievement across all universities in Sri Lanka. They provide an expert, independent view of subject standards and of the fairness and rigour of the assessment process. Their role is not to be a first or second marker of examinations, but to act as an external moderator of a university's assessment processes and outcomes. Their primary role is to evaluate marking standards and student achievement with reference to comparable programmes in other universities and to national standards and subject benchmarks.

The guidance this Code contains is outlined in three sections:

A General principles
B Institutional by-laws and regulations
C Specific guidance

The Code sets out a framework within which institutions are expected to develop their own procedures and practice, consistent with the overall guidance in the Code. It provides guidance on the role of external assessors and their contribution to the safeguarding of standards of student assessment.
A. General Principles

1. Universities appoint external assessors to contribute their expert judgment by reporting on:

   • The appropriateness of the academic standards set by a university for its awards, by reference to published national guidance

   • The standard of student progression, performance and achievement and how these compare with standards achieved on similar programmes in other Sri Lankan universities

   • Whether assessment and examination processes are operated in accordance with stipulated criteria and marking schemes.

2. External assessors complement, but they do not substitute for, a university's internal examiners and markers. Universities may appoint internal staff as second markers in order to maintain consistency and objectivity in their marking systems. In addition, or alternatively, they may designate a group of senior staff to be responsible for ensuring that all internal examination marking is accurate and fair. External assessors can support and strengthen internal marking systems. The appointment of at least one external examiner for each subject/discipline is strongly recommended as this would greatly facilitate the maintenance of common standards within and across universities.

B. Institutional By-laws and Regulations

3. It is suggested that the following be covered in institutional regulations and by-laws, as appropriate:

   • roles, powers and responsibilities of external assessors;
   • differences between external assessors and internal (first or second) markers;
   • policies and regulations for the nomination and appointment of external assessors, and the conditions under which their contracts may be terminated.

C. Specific Guidance

Nomination and appointment

4. External assessors should be appointed by the Senate of the university for a defined period, ideally for not less than one year and not more than three years. The selection of individuals for appointment should take account of recommendations from the faculty and/or department.

5. Universities should ensure that their external assessors are competent to undertake the responsibilities defined in their contract, including having relevant and current subject expertise and recent experience as an examiner at university level. To be nominated as an external assessor, an academic staff member will normally be required to be at least Senior Lecturer Grade I and to have had at least five years experience of
university teaching after completing a postgraduate qualification.

6. Universities should require full information (normally a CVI to be submitted by proposed external assessors as part of their consideration for appointment.

7. Where a university wishes to appoint an individual other than a practicing academic as an external assessor (for example, a member of a professional body it should ensure that the person is not the sole external assessor.

8. University procedures should ensure that any potential conflict of interest (for example, arising from an external assessor's recent or current contact with the university, its staff or the programmed are identified arid resolved prior to the appointment of external assessors.

Role, powers and responsibilities of external assessors

9. Universities should clearly define the role, powers and responsibilities of external assessors and communicate these in writing.to assessors, to internal markers and members of examining boards. It is recommended that information on the role of external assessors, how they work with internal markers and their role in examining boards is included in a university's written procedures for quality assurance.

10. The key role of external assessors is to provide expert and objective comment on the standard of assessment, the standards actually achieved by students and the fairness and rigour of the assessment process and the award decisions that flow from it. External assessors will therefore be responsible for some or all of the following:

   • commenting on proposed assessment arrangements and forms of assessments (including examination papers, proposed assignments, essays, laboratory and other similar assessed work) before these are finalized;
   
   • confirming that such arrangements and forms of assessment are fair, are of a standard that matches the level of award and that meets the learning objectives of the course, and are comparable with similar courses and qualifications with which the external assessor is familiar in other universities;
   
   • moderating marks and assessment outcomes given by internal markers to students' work, on a sample or full set as agreed with the faculty/department, to ensure that marks and assessed outcomes are fair, consistent, and that they accord with the faculty/department's declared marking criteria;
   
   • resolving disputed or conflicting marks on assessed work given by internal markers;
   
   • confirming, if possible by attendance at examining boards, that decisions on the outcome of assessment are fair and rigorous.
11. Universities may also invite external assessors to bring their expert judgment to bear on course design and modification where such involvement does not conflict with their judgment on how such courses are assessed. They may invite external assessors to reflect annually and at the end of their period of appointment more generally on the standards set in subjects and the quality of courses from evidence of assessment and the actual achievement of students.

Powers of external assessors

12. External assessors are appointed to assist universities to maintain standards through the application of their expert knowledge and by drawing on their experience of assessment elsewhere in higher education. It is important that the powers of external examiners are carefully and precisely defined in relation to:

- adjusting marks awarded by internal markers for individual students and for groups of students, on the basis of external assessor scrutiny of all or a sample of assessed work;
- access to all assessed work, including work undertaken outside the university which is assessed as part of a course;
- overruling decisions made by internal markers;
- agreeing or being required to confirm by co-signature decisions of examining boards;
- selecting students for and involvement in oral examinations to determine borderline performance;
- involvement in inquiries and decision-making arising from suspected cases of cheating, plagiarism and other assessment offences.

Preparation of external assessors

13. Universities should ensure that nominated external assessors are provided with sufficient information to enable them to identify whether they can carry out their responsibilities effectively.

14. Universities should seek to prepare their external assessors fully for their role by providing them with documented information on the university's policies for assessment and external examining and with relevant programme documentation.

External assessment arrangements

15. At least one external assessor should be appointed for each programme or (as appropriate) for each part of a programme that contributes to an award. Universities will need to consider the programme structure and frequency of examinations (in particular in semester and credit-based awards) in determining the number and extent
of involvement of external assessors in examining board activity.

16. Universities should discuss with their external assessors the sample of student work the assessor will be asked to moderate in order to evaluate marking standards and student achievement, and other arrangements necessary to enable them to fulfill their responsibilities.

17. Where programmes are offered in partnership with other institutions, external assessor arrangements should be the same as those used by the awarding institution for its own programmes. The procedures should be clearly specified and documented, and rigorously and consistently applied.

External assessors' reports

18. Universities should require external assessors to prepare regular, written reports, normally annually. Reports should comment on the assessment process and the standards of student attainment.

19. Universities should provide guidance to external assessors on the format, coverage and deadlines for receipt of their reports: Such guidance might include request for comment on:

• stated intended learning outcomes;
• rigour and coverage of examination papers according to the stated curriculum;
• clarity and consistency of marking criteria;
• standards actually achieved by students;
• quality of teaching and learning support with reference to students' actual achievement;
• appropriateness of assessment strategies with reference to intended learning outcomes;
• balance and coherence of curriculum with reference to students' actual achievement;
• rigour, fairness and efficiency of examining board procedures and their consistency with stipulated rules and procedures.

20. Universities should request external assessors to send their reports to the head of the institution. External assessors' reports should be circulated to designated staff for consideration and response.

21. Universities should require a written response to external assessors' reports to be
forwarded to external assessors, including actions taken to follow up recommendations, taking account of the views of staff at the subject level.

22. There should be a central mechanism (e.g. consideration by a committee of Senate), to provide an overview of all external assessors' reports and responses to them. This should provide opportunities to monitor trends, take remedial action where necessary and disseminate good practice.

Feedback to external assessors on their reports

23. Universities should ensure that external assessors are given within a reasonable time a response to their comments and recommendations, including information on any actions taken.
Appendix to CODE OF PRACTICE on External Assessors

Further guidance on the respective roles of external assessors and subject reviewers

External assessors and UGC/CVCD subject reviewers perform different roles:

- External assessors moderate university student assessment processes: subject review has no part to play in the assessment of individual students;

- External assessors undertake their moderation normally on an annual basis, following the student assessment cycle; subject reviewers scrutinize the quality and standards of subject provision approximately every five years;

- External assessors are expected to sample the outcome of assessed work, to advise on assessment procedures and to offer their expert judgment on marks or grades where internal markers are unable to agree. Subject reviewers will expect to see evidence of the general effectiveness of assessment procedures, including with reference to assessed student work. They do not change any marks. They also seek evidence of how external assessor procedures are managed in respect of the guidance in this Code.
Code of Practice on
Postgraduate
Research Programmes
Code of Practice on Postgraduate Research Programmes

Foreword

As part of its programme of work, the CVCD/UGC Quality Assurance Committee has developed Codes of Practice covering key aspects of quality assurance in higher education.

This is one of six Codes, all of which have been developed in consultation with university staff through workshops and seminars during 2002 and 2003.

Purpose

The Codes are intended to be used:

- to guide and inform institutional activity;
- to promote and disseminate good practice;
- to encourage a commitment to continuous improvement.

Structure

Each Code is divided into three sections, covering general principles, institutional by-laws and regulations and specific guidance. Some have additional appendices, where more detail is required.

Development

The Codes are intended to be dynamic documents, which continue to develop over time. This will enable them to take account of national developments and to capture changing university practice.

Feedback is therefore invited on any aspect of the Codes, via the Quality Assurance Committee.
Introduction

This code provides guidance on the support and supervision of postgraduate research students in particular. While the document is not specifically targeted at students following taught postgraduate programmes, institutions may consider that parts of it are relevant to both research and taught postgraduate programmes.

Development of this Code of Practice has taken place in stages over a two year period. It has involved input from academic staff and practitioners in a range of disciplines and is based on existing good practice in universities, in Sri Lanka and elsewhere. Drafts of the Code have been subject to consultation by groups of academic staff, whose comments and contributions have contributed to this final version.

As with the other Codes of Practice that together form the Academic Procedures Handbook, the Code for postgraduate research programmes is intended for use as a good practice guide for institutions and as a reference point for academic reviewers, at subject and institutional level. With effect from 200? academic reviewers will ask institutions how they are meeting the expectations and guidance provided in this Code.

The Code of Practice for postgraduate research programmes covers quality assurance matters that relate principally to postgraduate research. It does not cover more general matters that are relevant to all students. Other Codes of Practice, including the Codes for Assessment of Students and External Examining, contain sections that are widely relevant to the assessment of all types of students.

The guidance this Code contains is outlined in three sections:

A. General principles
B. Institutional by-laws and regulations
C. Specific guidance

The Code sets out a framework within which institutions are expected to develop their own procedures and practice, consistent with the overall guidance in the Code.

A. General Principles

1. Full-time and part-time postgraduate research programmes should only be offered to students who, on the basis of prior learning and achievement, can be expected to meet the academic standards of the institution. Those standards should reflect national and international standards and benchmarks, which should be measured through more than one mechanism, including external examiners.

2. Regulations governing such programmes should be clear, made easily available to students and staff and be sufficiently comprehensive to cover the progression of research students from initial registration through to the final examination and receipt of the award.
3. Regulations should be subject to regular review, at the level of the subject and the institution.

4. It is recommended that all postgraduate research programmes should have multiple entry and exit points to enable candidates to be rewarded for achievement at different stages of the programme. Such stopping off points might be: Postgraduate Certificate, Postgraduate Diploma, Master's degree. Each of these qualifications will indicate successful completion of part of the programme, with the volume and level of study previously determined.

B. Institutional By-laws and Regulations

5. It is suggested that the following areas should be covered in written institutional by-laws and regulations:

5.1 information provision, including student handbook, prospectuses and university calendar;

5.2 admissions arrangements;

5.3 criteria for registration including evidence of prior academic achievement, e.g. accreditation of prior learning at another institution (specifying award, classification and level of credit), or a level of professional achievement, accredited by a professional body where appropriate;

5.4 procedure for obtaining ethical clearance, where relevant;

5.5 requirements attaching to particular postgraduate research awards;

5.6 specific requirements for the conduct of postgraduate research in the institution, which will be conveyed to students during their induction and will enable them to understand the academic and social environment within which they will be working;

5.7 arrangements -for progression through the programme;

5.8 supervision and monitoring arrangements, including written criteria for the appointment of supervisors and any external consultants involved in the supervision of students, e.g. in cases of interdisciplinary research;

5.9.1 arrangements concerning any study undertaken in collaboration with external agencies, including intellectual property agreements;

5.10 assessment requirements and examination procedures, including criteria for the appointment of thesis examiners / evaluations, taking account of intellectual property rights;

5.11 procedures for dealing with detected instances of plagiarism or fraud;
5.12 complaints and grievances mechanisms with reference to the Code of Practice on Student Support and Guidance).

**Institutional regulations should be communicated at least annually to:**

- those registering as research students;
- staff directly involved with supervising research students;
- staff involved with assessment and progression arrangements for research students, such as graduate deans of faculties or schools; and
- third parties such as sponsoring organisations and research councils.

To ensure that all parties are aware of their responsibilities and to encourage transparency of procedures.

c. **Specific Guidance**

It is recommended that formal institutional regulations be supplemented by more specific guidelines on the matters below. Individual schools or faculties may in turn supplement institutional guidelines with advice for students and staff that directly relates to the subject being studied, e.g. the conduct of the oral examination in a performing arts discipline such as music or drama.

6. **The research environment**

An appropriate research environment is likely to include:

- Academic staff with a high level of research expertise and achievement in their subjects;
- Good quality infrastructure within which research can take place.

Research opportunities should only be offered where students can be adequately supported within an appropriate research environment. Universities should define what in their view constitutes a sufficient community of academic staff and students engaged in research (critical mass, level, resources, etc. in each subject, to provide a successful research environment.

In evaluating this environment, the following should be considered:

6.1 the quality of supervision available, criteria for the appointment of supervisors and guidelines on the supervisory role;

6.2 the availability and adequacy of research methods training;
6.3 whether the facilities and equipment made available to research staff and students are adequate;
6.4 whether students have sufficient access to academic and pastoral support;
6.5 whether there are opportunities for effective student representation;
6.6 the extent of support available for management of research grants and projects;
6.7 the volume of research income being generated and whether this could be increased;
6.8 the amount of research output, as indicated by publications or other tangible products;
6.9 whether facilities exist for postgraduates and academic staff to present research developments, e.g. through symposia, journals, etc.;
6.10 the implementation and monitoring arrangements that need to be applied where a project is undertaken in collaboration with another organization.

7. **Publicity**

All publicity materials associated with postgraduate research programmes should be clear, accurate and of sufficient detail to inform student choice.

In advertising postgraduate research opportunities, institutions should ensure that advertising material:

7.1 is accurate and provides information on what the institution will provide by way of resources and support, and the financial and other demands that will fall on the student;
7.2 includes relevant admissions criteria, as used by academic staff to select students.

8. **Selection and admission procedures**

8.1 Admissions procedures should be clear both to applicants and university staff and consistently applied across each institution.
8.2 Only suitably qualified and/or prepared students should be admitted to programmes of study. Where the programme involves ethical issues, there should be a clearly stated procedure for obtaining ethical clearance.
8.3 Evidence should be obtained to demonstrate the candidate's academic capabilities, normally a certificate of academic achievement from an appropriate institution.
8.4 Admissions decisions should always involve the judgment of more than one member of institutional staff. All staff contributing to such decisions should possess relevant expertise, as determined by the institution.
8.5 Institutions should make provision for ensuring that admissions procedures are followed and for checking that this occurs.

8.6 It is considered good practice to interview candidates where practical and where resources allow.

8.7 Where prior learning is to contribute towards the qualification for which the student is registering, there should be previously determined criteria for evaluating the extent to which such prior learning is taken into account, and at what level. Where an applicant lacks a first degree, appropriate mechanisms should be found to assess suitability and preparedness for studying towards the higher degree. This may have been achieved through work-based learning.

8.8 External references should be used to provide guidance on the extent to which the candidate's intellectual and personal skills make them suitable for following the chosen programme of study. Where relevant, this should cover ethical clearance (see 8.2 above)

8.9 Steps should be taken to ensure the applicant's language ability where study is to be undertaken in a language that is not his or her native language. Proficiency levels should be made clear to staff and applicants in advance through publication. Institutions should endeavour to provide in-house language training for applicants who need it.

8.10 Allocation of responsibilities in the admissions procedures should be clear to all concerned, in particular the balance of duties between staff in departments and those in central administration.

8.11 Confidentiality of applicants' personal details should be maintained throughout the admissions process.

8.12 Applications and admissions procedures should promote equality of opportunity.

9. Student enrolment and registration

9.1 Entitlements and responsibilities of students should be defined and communicated to all students and relevant staff.

9.2 The formal offer letter (and any electronic communications used instead) made to successful candidates should cover:

- the total fees, including additional charges such as 'bench' fees;
- a brief outline of the programme of research and study to be undertaken, together with a description of the facilities to be made available;
- the name of the student's supervisor and a description of supervisory arrangements;
the institution's requirements in terms of attendance, progress reports, extent of contact with the supervisor, arrangements for registration;

the institution's code of research conduct, including ethical considerations and discipline specific requirements laid down by subject groups;

health and safety regulations and procedures with respect to plagiarism and scientific misconduct;

the institution's expectations of students in terms of social conduct and performance;

guidance to students on taking responsibility for their studies;

the nature and extent of any teaching and/or demonstrating to be undertaken by the student during the programme of study;

the institution's requirements with property; policy, respect practices and to intellectual conditions and/or requirements of the student's sponsor, where relevant;

university policy and practice on the granting of leave for postgraduates, including arrangements for the extension and suspension of the period of study;

the implications for the student should he/she fail to meet the requirements of the institution, i.e. what penalties will be imposed for defaulting.

A copy of the University by-laws and / or regulations governing the degree should be sent to the student with the formal offer letter.

10. Student information and induction

10.1 All students registering for postgraduate research degrees should receive appropriate induction, which should include opportunities to understand the academic environment within which they will be working.

10.2 The induction should be arranged in advance of the student's starting date and the programme communicated to the student before he or she arrives in the institution. The induction period should normally occur within a short period of enrolment (to be determined by the institution).

10.3 The induction programme should include briefing on the following:

- the research environment of the discipline in which the student will be studying;
the institution's registration, enrolment, appeals and complaints procedures, assessment requirements, and research degree regulations;

challenges that students are likely to encounter and how to overcome them, including practical guidance and where to find it;

facilities that will be available to the student during the period of study;

relevant health and safety information;

details of training courses available to the student / subject-specific, research methods and personal skills training, including ICT);

welfare and pastoral information;

arrangements for supervision;

opportunities for meeting other research students and for sharing and understanding the student's immediate area of study;

social opportunities.

11. **Supervision**

11.1 Institutions should ensure that all staff undertaking supervisory duties have recognized subject expertise, and that their capability and qualifications are recognized by their peers in their own subject.

11.2 In addition to subject expertise, supervisors should have appropriate skills and experience to enable them to support, monitor and direct research students' work.

11.3 Where a supervisor withdraws or is unable to perform his or her supervisory duties for a period of time, alternative arrangements must be made that enable 'the supervisor's students) to receive adequate support, monitoring and direction during the period of absence.

11.4 Wherever possible, training should be made available to supervisors before they begin their role. At the same time, appropriate institutional guidance should be made available to supervisors, outlining the institution's expectations, summarizing good practice in supervision, and providing background information on the supervisor's role.

11.5 Heads of department or research groups should ensure that individual supervisors are not overloaded. In some areas, it may be advisable to set a maximum number of research students for whom one supervisor is responsible. It is advisable for research student supervision to be included as one of a number of activities that form a balanced portfolio for an individual.
11.6 Supervisors should receive additional support when addressing serious concerns of student ability or failure to complete work on schedule.

11.7 Supervisors should ensure that research students have the following opportunities:

- regular supervisor/student interaction, with a minimum number of scheduled review meetings;
- meetings with other researchers in their field, including opportunities for collaboration;
- participation in research forums relating to their subject area;
- access to advice on health and safety, ethical and other issues;
- access to independent advice if the supervisor/student relationship breaks down.

12. Student progress and assessment

12.1 Research student progress should be regularly and consistently monitored and the outcomes of the monitoring process communicated to students in a timely manner.

12.2 Universities should provide supervisors and departments with a framework that defines:

- the nature and frequency of contact between supervisor and student;
- the content and format of monitoring reports, and the timing for their submission to the department or faculty;
- the processes through which students are advised that academic standards have not been, and/or are not likely to be achieved;
- guidance and counselling services available to students;
- how students may transfer between different registration categories and awards;
- how decisions on suspension or termination of a research student's registration are made and how they are communicated to students.

13. The approval of research projects

13.1 Care should be taken by the institution (and the student's sponsor, if appropriate), to ensure the feasibility of full-time and part-time students undertaking and successfully completing a research project.
13.2 Students should be given opportunities to discuss their proposed research project with their supervisor and, if relevant, their sponsoring organization, to help to determine that their chosen project is both suitable and feasible. In establishing the feasibility of the project, it is good practice for the student to provide a written outline of the project for discussion with his/her supervisor/sponsor.

13.3 Guidance should be available to supervisors and students, indicating how to evaluate whether a research proposal is at the right level, for example, whether the student should register for an MPhil or a PhD.

14. Professional conduct of research students

14.1 Ethical practice

- Research involving patients, care professionals, volunteers or their organs, tissue or data should be reviewed independently by an ethics committee, to ensure that the proposed research meets ethical standards.

- Approval must be sought from relevant regularly bodies, national and/or international

- Researchers should ensure the confidentiality of personal information of participants in research activities.

- Research must support national frameworks and any government concerning ethical practice.

- Research training should include guidance on research design and ethics approval.

- Researchers should take into account the active involvement of patients and consumer groups in research and in the dissemination of findings.

- Insurance for carrying out clinical trials should be put in place by institutions to cover research activities involving patients.

- Universities should provide guidance to researchers on ethics applications for human clinical research and provide facilities for such applications to be archived in the university administration.

14.2 Research misconduct

Universities must take seriously any allegation of research misconduct and should have a policy on public interest disclosure. University regulations should include clear guidance on the nature of research misconduct and how this will be dealt with, at both the investigative and disciplinary stages. There should be an appeals process that involves independent and objective review.
15.  Assessment

15.1 The assessment processes for postgraduate research programmes should be transparent and clearly communicated to students, supervisors and examiners, before the student's assessment begins.

15.2 Institutions should ensure that assessment processes are operated rigorously, fairly, reliably and consistently, in respect of all students and all programmes.

15.3 Supervisors may not be appointed as the international examiner for the students they supervise.

16.  Evaluation

16.1 Institutions should ensure that, as part of their quality assurance procedure, there are mechanisms to monitor the extent to which they are discharging their responsibilities for the standards of the research awards granted in their name.

16.2 Institutions should also put in place procedures to assure the quality of the education provided to enable research students to achieve the necessary standards to receive the awards for which they are studying.
Code of Practice on Programme Approval, Monitoring and Review
Code of Practice on Programme Approval, Monitoring and Review

Foreword

As part of its programme of work, the CVCD/UGC Quality Assurance Committee has developed Codes of Practice covering key aspects of quality assurance in higher education.

This is one of six Codes, all of which have been developed in consultation with university staff through workshops and seminar during 2002 and 2003.

Purpose

The Codes are intended to be used:

- to guide and inform institutional activity;
- to promote and disseminate good practice;
- to encourage a commitment to continuous improvement.

Structure

Each Code is divided into three sections, covering general principles, institutional by-laws and regulations and specific guidance. Some have additional appendices, where more detail is required.

Development

The Codes are intended to be dynamic documents, which continue to develop over time. This will enable them to take account of national developments and to capture changing university practice.

Feedback is therefore invited on any aspect of the Codes, via the Quality Assurance Committee.
Introduction

This code of practice draws on the wide experience and developing procedures in many universities aimed at ensuring that all courses are well conceived and designed, are subject to rigorous scrutiny and approval before they are actually offered to students, are regularly monitored and reviewed by teaching staff and are responsive to student feedback.

The code covers a range of procedures and processes, which in practice may be described differently in different universities. How these processes are labeled and managed inside each university is not as important as adherence to certain basic principles. Important amongst these are: openness to peer scrutiny; commitment to explicit course approval supported by academic and resource planning; acceptance of the discipline of defining course aims, objectives and expected student learning outcomes; and a commitment to improvement through learning from practice.

The broad coverage of the code of practice reflects the view that course design, approval and review are all closely linked and inform each other. Effective course-design should lead to good and attractive courses, which enable students to achieve expected learning outcomes, and help them to maximize their potential and meet required standards. These are important dimensions of a course approval process and they apply equally to a review of a course's effectiveness in operation. Annual monitoring of a well designed course should be relatively straightforward, while a review of course objectives and actual student performance at regular intervals offers the opportunity to reflect more deeply on changes affecting student and employment markets, subject developments and innovations in teaching and learning.

There is a direct connection between the good and recommended practice described in this code and the external quality review procedures of the CVCD. Universities with clear procedures for course approval, monitoring and review should be well placed to demonstrate their commitment to high standards and to maintaining the quality of students' learning by presenting evidence in their self-evaluation documents of these processes in operation and of action taken as a consequence.

The guidance this Code contains is outlined in three sections:

A  General principles
B  Institutional by-laws and regulations
C  Specific guidance

The Code sets out a framework within which institutions are expected to develop their own procedures and practice, consistent with the overall guidance in the Code. It covers arrangements for approving programmes to lead to university awards and for monitoring and reviewing programmes as they are offered to students. Programme monitoring and review should operate at regular intervals to ensure that programmes continue to meet defined academic standards and provide a good learning experience for students, taking account of curriculum change and innovation, feedback from students and other external bodies and changes in student employment prospects and markets. This Code is applicable to undergraduate and postgraduate taught programmes.
A. General Principles

Programme approval

1. Universities set academic standards and signal the quality of their teaching and learning through programmes offered in their name to lead to university degrees and other awards. The formal act of programme approval is therefore a key point in setting and maintaining academic standards. Programme approval procedures should therefore:

- be binding and precise, and open to scrutiny within the university;
- incorporate approval of resources, learning infrastructure and related matters affecting the feasibility and sustainability of the programme;
- incorporate clear guidance on curriculum design and development to assist staff in preparing programmes for formal scrutiny and approval;
- require that a programme be approved in accordance with the stated procedures before student recruitment commences;
- involve detailed scrutiny of proposed curricula, teaching and learning arrangements and assessment;
- match the proposed curricula and learning objectives with the appropriate national subject benchmarks;
- include provision for rejecting proposed programmes and arrangements for resubmission of amended proposals.

Programme monitoring and review

2. All programmes, once approved, should be monitored and reviewed at regular, defined intervals. Such monitoring and review should:

- be of an appropriate depth and range to reflect the content and length of the programme;
- take into account the number of student groups admitted each year;
- take into account the nature and requirements of the intended employment markets where appropriate;
- be documented, including agreed actions and follow-up;
- be open to scrutiny within the university and by external subject or university reviewers.
B. Institutional By-laws and Regulations

3. It is suggested that university regulations, and by-laws as appropriate, should specify the following.

- The authority and formal procedures for programme approval. The power to approve new programmes should belong with the Senate, perhaps assisted by a quality assurance board reporting directly to the Senate. Where the Senate delegates any tasks related to programme approval to a committee, the scope and limits of the delegated power should be precisely stated.

- The procedures for approving entry requirements to the programme. The boundaries of faculty and departmental authority. Any procedures, which enable faculties or departments to approve their own programmes without reference to, or without explicit approval from, the Senate would not meet the expectations of this code of practice.

- Formal procedures for regular (normally annual) monitoring of programmes once they have been approved and are offered to students. These should provide guidance for departments on the timing, scope and process for monitoring and they should specify reporting procedures so that monitoring outcomes are declared at departmental and university levels.

- Formal procedures for more substantial review of programmes at periodic intervals (normally every four to five years). These should state the purpose of periodic reviews, the role of peers from outside the department in the review process and the requirements for reporting review outcomes at departmental and university levels.

- Arrangements and procedures for programme approval, monitoring and review should, where appropriate, take account of requirements of professional bodies that accredit or recognise university programmes for professional employment. They should enable departments to synchronise their documentation and reporting so that it addresses the requirements of the university and of the relevant professional bodies, avoiding duplication and building on effective internal quality assurance.

4. Regulations for programme approval, monitoring and review should be widely communicated across the institution.
c. Specific Guidance

5. It is recommended that university regulations should be supplemented by specific guidelines covering the topics below. Departments or faculties may supplement university guidelines with additional advice and guidance on local practice.

Curriculum design and programme development

6. Design criteria

Curriculum and programme design should be consistent with the academic standards set for the programme, reflect clear aims and objectives and facilitate student progression. They should incorporate:

- identification of students' learning objectives and reasons for changes proposed;
- specification of teaching, learning and assessment strategies;
- key study skills appropriate to the subject and transferable to employment;
- evidence of consultation with students, including alumni (where possible).

7. Level

Consideration should be given to the level of a programme and to the level of the stated intended learning outcomes at different points in the programmes. The level is an indicator of the intellectual/skills demand, complexity, depth of study and learner autonomy involved in a programme of study. The introduction of a national qualifications framework will assist institutions to define the level of their programmes.

8. Progression

Consideration should be given to the way in which the curriculum promotes an organised progression through a programme so that the demands on the learner in respect of intellectual challenge, skills, knowledge, conceptualisation and learning autonomy increase over time.

9. Balance

Consideration should be given to achieving a good balance of elements, within a programme, for example balancing: academic with practical elements; opportunities for personal development with academic outcomes; and of breadth with depth of subject material.
10. **Flexibility**

Programme design should take account of the full range of requirements of learners likely to be admitted.

11. **Coherence and integrity**

Consideration should be given to the overall coherence and intellectual integrity of programmes. It should be designed to ensure that the student's experience has a logic and integrity that are clearly linked to the programme's aims and purpose. The expectations given to students and others about the intended learning outcomes of the programme should be honest and deliverable.

**Programme approval**

12. Programmes should be subject to explicit and systematic scrutiny before they are approved by the Senate. Such scrutiny is often described as 'validation', that is the testing of the validity of a programme's aims, curriculum and arrangements for teaching and assessment with reference to clear criteria and subject benchmarks.

12. Programme validation and recommendations for approval should be undertaken by an authoritative and expert panel, drawing on appropriate expertise within and outside the university.

13. The panel should consist of staff drawn mainly from outside the department responsible for teaching the programme, but including at least one member of staff from the department responsible for the programme. Staff should be selected for panel membership in such a way that will promote confidence that the standards and quality of programmes are appropriate to the level of the award and to the university's objectives.

15. Programme approval panels should include external peers from outside the institution, selected to provide an independent view of the proposed programme, and informed by academic and (where appropriate) professional standards as recognised nationally in Sri Lanka and, as appropriate, internationally.

**Programme monitoring and review**

16. Institutions should establish procedures requiring each programme to be monitored at least once a year to check that programme aims, management of programme delivery, intended student learning and progression, and assessment outcomes match planned objectives.

17. Departments should be encouraged to use a common template for programme monitoring so that consistent information is gathered and considered for all
programmes and to encourage consistent written reports for consideration by the subject/programme team.

18. Regular monitoring of programmes should aim to gather information about the programme in operation, as experienced by students and staff. It should address matters such as:

• programme organisation and administration;
• delivery of teaching and its evaluation by peers;
• support for students' learning;
• availability of facilities and resources;
• assessment and examining processes;
• external examiners' comments on the programme and conduct of assessment;
• student feedback obtained during and at the end of the monitoring period, including student evaluation of teaching;
• any staff development issues arising.

19. Departmental consideration of programme monitoring reports should always lead to agree action plans to remedy any deficiencies identified and promote improvement.

20. Monitoring reports should identify matters, which can be addressed and resolved at departmental level and matters needing consideration/resolution at a higher level within the university.

21. Monitoring reports and action plans should be received and considered by the university's quality assurance board/committee and the responsibilities and timescales for responses and actions agreed.

22. In addition to annual monitoring, programmes should be reviewed in greater depth at periodic intervals, normally not exceeding five years. Periodic programme reviews encourage programme teams to stand back and reflect on programme objectives, on the scope and depth of student learning and 'market' /employment requirements.

23. Periodic programme review should be undertaken by a panel drawn from staff representing the department offering the programme, staff outside the department and independent peers from outside the university, drawing in representatives of professional and other external bodies with an interest in the standards and quality of graduates. Such reviews should aim to:
• stand back from the immediacy of the programme delivery and management;

• consider whether the curriculum and teaching and learning styles remain valid and appropriate in the light of developing knowledge in the discipline;

• consider changes affecting the application of knowledge to practice and employment;

• consider any changes affecting student entry patterns and demand, including the specified entry requirements to the programme;

• consider student feedback obtained from students at different points on the programme.

24. Programme approval and review processes should be clearly described, documented and communicated to all staff who are involved with them, including external members of review panels.

25. Concise description of how programmes are approved, monitored and approved should also be available to students, including prospective and postgraduate students.
GUIDELINES FOR VALIDATION PANELS

The questions below are designed to help validation panels and departmental staff to prepare for the validation and approval of new programmes. They draw on the text of the Code of Practice for programme, approval and review and suggest questions to help validation panels and departmental staff teams to focus on a common set of issues. Institutions may wish to adapt or refine the questions to meet their own circumstances.

Evaluation of intended learning outcomes

1. What are the intended learning outcomes for the programme?
2. How do they relate to external reference points? (The reference points are likely to include relevant subject benchmark statements, a national qualifications framework when developed and relevant professional body requirements?
3. How do any stated learning outcomes relate to the overall aims of the programme?
4. Are the intended learning outcomes appropriate for the aims of the programme?

Curriculum design and achievement of intended learning outcomes

5. How does the curriculum content enable students to achieve the intended learning outcomes?
6. How effective is the design and organisation of the curriculum in promoting student learning and achievement?
7. How do the design and content of the curricula encourage development and demonstration of a variety of learning skills? (Examples of learning skills might be: subject knowledge and understanding; cognitive skills; practical/professional skills; skills transferable across different types of employment; preparation for postgraduate study; and personal development skills).
8. Is there evidence that curricular content and design are informed by recent developments in teaching and learning; by current research and scholarship of teaching staff; and by any changes in relevant occupational or professional requirements?

Communication of intended learning outcomes to students and external assessors

9. How will students know what is expected of them in the programme? How and by whom are these expectations communicated to students?
10. How will the intended outcomes of a programme be communicated to external assessors to inform their moderating role?

**Evaluation of the assessment process and the standard it demonstrates**

11. Does the assessment process enable learners to demonstrate achievement of intended outcomes and encourage students to acquire good learning skills?

12. Are there criteria and marking schemes that enable internal examiners and external assessors to distinguish between different levels and qualities of student performance?

13. What safeguards and mechanisms exist to promote confidence in the security and integrity of assessment procedures?

14. What evidence is there that the standards achieved by learners meet the minimum expectations for the award, as measured against relevant subject benchmarks and the qualifications framework?

**Reviewing and improving standards achieved by students**

15. Are there departmental mechanisms in place to enable the standards actually achieved by students to be reviewed? How does the review process lead to improvement?

**Quality of teaching provided and of student learning opportunities**

16. Are the proposed teaching strategies aligned with the curriculum content and programme aims?

17. Where and how in the programme design and teaching are staff encouraged to draw upon their research, scholarship or professional activity to inform their teaching?

18. How good are the materials provided to support learning?

19. Are students encouraged to engage actively with and participate in the structure and content of the programme?

20. Is the quality of teaching maintained and enhanced through effective staff development, peer review of teaching, integration of part-time and visiting staff, effective team teaching and induction and mentoring of new staff?

21. Are student workloads likely to support or inhibit effective learning?

**Student progression and academic support**

22. Is the academic support available to students to assist them in their learning consistent with the student entry profile and the overall aims of the provision?
23. Are the arrangements for student admission and induction clear and understood by staff and applicants?

24. How effectively is student learning facilitated by academic guidance, feedback and supervisory arrangements?

25. Are the arrangements for academic guidance and support clear and generally understood by staff and students?

Learning resources and their deployment

26. Do staff have opportunities for staff development appropriate to the aims of the programmes they teach?

27. Is appropriate technical and administrative support available to teaching staff and to students?

28. Is there a departmental or university strategy for the creation, operation and improvement of library laboratory and other learning resources?

29. Is suitable teaching and learning accommodation available to match the requirements of the programme?

30. Are book and periodical stocks appropriate and accessible?

31. Are suitable equipment and appropriate IT facilities available to learners?
Code of Practice on

Student Support and

Guidance
Code of Practice on Student Support and Guidance

Foreword

As part of its programme of work, the CVCD/UGC Quality Assurance Committee has developed Codes of Practice covering key aspects of quality assurance in higher education.

This is one of six Codes, all of which have been developed in consultation with university staff through workshops and seminars during 2002 and 2003.

Purpose

The Codes are intended to be used:

- to guide and inform institutional activity;
- to promote and disseminate good practice;
- to encourage a commitment to continuous improvement.

Structure

Each Code is divided into three sections, covering general principles, institutional by-laws and regulations and specific guidance. Some have additional appendices, where more detail is required.

Development

The Codes are intended to be dynamic documents, which continue to develop over time. This will enable them to take account of national developments and to capture changing university practice.

Feedback is therefore invited on any aspect of the Codes, via the Quality Assurance Committee.
**Introduction**

Provision for student support and guidance is likely to vary across universities, reflecting differences in the requirements and the cultures of subjects and departments, and the characteristics of the student population in different institutions. This code of practice is intended to inform and guide students about what to expect when they begin their studies, how and from whom they will receive support for their learning and their personal development, and how to seek help if things go wrong. The code of practice is also intended to support staff and universities by providing a benchmark for university procedures and to assist staff responsible for academic support and guidance to develop and share good practice.

The code will be kept under review and will take account of changes and developments as these evolve across universities and as expectations of students themselves and of staff in relation to their own roles as guiders and mentors also develop. The code offers a broad framework for conceiving student support and guidance as an integral whole, aiming to cover the academic, pastoral and social needs of all students as individuals and in their life together in the student community.

The code emphasises the value and importance within universities of establishing and being attentive to timely, clear and accessible means of communication between staff and students so that confidence and trust are encouraged and both staff and students can see evidence that formal and informal processes do work and are seen to work.

The section on student complaints and grievances deliberately places emphasis upon general principles rather than detailed procedures in the knowledge that formal procedures and processes are still evolving in many institutions. The code aims to suggest how these might become more formalized over time whilst still remaining simple, straightforward and readily communicated to staff and students.

The guidance this Code contains is outlined in four sections:

A. General principles
B. Institutional by-laws and regulations
C. Specific guidance and examples of good practice
D. Student complaints and grievances

The Code sets out a framework within which institutions are expected to develop their own procedures and practice, consistent with the overall guidance in the Code.

**A. General principles**

1. Students will have high expectations of their university education. Support and guidance from university staff is essential to enable them to make a successful transition from school to university, to develop sound learning skills and to manage the demands and challenges of student life. Students may not be attending the university of their first choice; many will be experiencing living away from home for the first time; and many will find that they have to devote much more time to studying in English.

2. Support and guidance arrangements should anticipate and offer help with...
some of the more challenging aspects of student life, including:

- information and support for students in finding suitable residential accommodation;
- the possibility of harassment, in particular its effect on first year students;
- the possibility of disruption to studies from student unrest on campus;
- awareness and understanding of the demands and expectations of the teacher/student relationship and of the formal requirements of university and academic organisation;
- awareness and understanding of gender, social and community issues, including support for female students making the transition from home to university life;
- provision for the learning and pastoral needs of students studying off-campus through distance learning.

3. Arrangements for effective student support and guidance should aim to cover the academic, pastoral and social needs of all students as individuals and in their life together in the student community. At a minimum, these should give students ready access to information, guidance and support on:

- financial matters;
- psychosocial matters, including access to counselling on pastoral and personal issues;
- help and support for second language study.

B. Institutional By-laws and Regulations

4. The regulatory framework for student support and guidance should cover both formal and informal communication channels and be straightforward and accessible for students. It should define responsibilities at university and departmental levels and guide staff and students on how particular matters are dealt with at each level.

5. At university level, the framework should include:

- role and responsibilities of the Deputy Vice Chancellor for student affairs;
• role and responsibilities of the Academic Registrar for student welfare;
• role and responsibilities of the University Student Counsellor;
• role and responsibilities of the University Medical Officer;
• role and responsibilities of academic staff as academic counsellors;
• role and structure of the learning services (library, IT, laboratory support and practice) and how students are inducted and supported in their use of these services.

6. At faculty and departmental level, the framework should give guidance on:
• how students are expected to have access to and communication with teaching staff;
• assignment of students to academic/personal advisers;
• student access to and communication with administrative staff;
• student representation on faculty boards and the role of student representatives;
• the role of student support and advisory committees.

7. The framework should also refer to the student union organisation in the university and its role and contribution to student support and guidance.

c. Specific Guidance and Examples of Good Practice

8. It is recognised that provision for student support and guidance is uneven across universities and that students may not be aware of or choose to use formal channels and procedures. Much depends on the culture which is encouraged through day-to-day communication and feedback and on the confidence and trust of both staff and student that the processes work and are seen to work.

9. Examples of positive arrangements that are likely to increase awareness and understanding of students and promote mutual respect and confidence amongst students and teachers are:
• attractive induction programmes for all new students, informed by student needs and to which student representatives contribute;
• use of student mentoring, including drawing on the experience and interest of alumni representatives;
• publication of a student calendar of events for each semester/academic
• provision of training and support programmes for all staff responsible for student support and guidance. Basic support for staff should always include acquisition of listening skills; problem solving; record-keeping of student use of support services; tracking of resolution of issues raised and provision of feedback to students;

• use of student handbooks to convey key information to all students. This might include contact numbers for key staff;

• provision of facilities for psychological support.

D. Student Complaints and Grievances

10. Universities are large and complex organizations. From time to time students may feel dissatisfied or aggrieved with some aspect of their academic work or their life in the university community. When this happens it is important to the student that the dissatisfaction is resolved or responded to within the university community as quickly as possible. It is also important for the university to demonstrate through its culture and procedures that student dissatisfaction is taken seriously, that responses are aimed at finding solutions and that students making complaints are not treated or assessed differently.

11. Information and clear statements by universities on complaints procedures can help to promote respect and trust between staff and students and guide the student community on their responsibilities and duties as well as their entitlement to a reasonable and fair hearing of their complaints.

12. Complaints and grievances may arise when arrangements for student support and guidance have broken down, are ineffective or ignored, or where the complaint or grievance arises from a sense of injustice or unfairness causing students to challenge a formal rule or procedure. Complaints may be about:

• an aspect of the student's studies or assessment;

• the provision of a service;

• the way a student has been treated by other students or by members of staff;

• an aspect of University policy.

13. Both students and staff will benefit from arrangements for hearing and resolving complaints and grievances, which are open; accessible; timely; and operate as an integral part of the framework for student support and guidance.

14. This code of practice encourages universities to acknowledge that students
may have cause to complain, that they need guidance on how to take their complaint forward responsibly, and that staff need support and to provide guidance in listening sympathetically, giving advice, taking action or referring the student to the appropriate source for more specialist assistance.

15. In developing and reviewing procedures for dealing with complaints and grievances, universities are encouraged to take account of the following principles:

- to resolve student complaints **informally** whenever possible, and as close to the source of complaint as possible;

- to facilitate **early** contact and informal discussion between the student and a member of staff;

- to facilitate **student access** to specialist or senior staff, where procedures require, by listing staff responsibilities and how they might be contacted in student handbooks;

- to institute a formal complaints procedure **quickly** if the dissatisfaction cannot be resolved by informal means;

- to ensure that students are **supported** throughout the formal complaints procedure, and are kept informed of progress at each stage;

- to ensure that all **necessary information** about submission of formal complaints or grievances, timescales, completion of forms, attendance at meetings, and how the outcome or resolution is communicated to the student is provided to students in an accessible manner, preferably through a student handbook.

16. Universities should describe any differences between general student complaints procedures and a formal procedure for appeal against examining board decisions. The latter are likely to be restricted to grounds where a failure to observe the university's stated assessment rules and regulations has had a material effect on the outcome of a student's assessment or examination result, or to consideration of medical evidence affecting a student's examination performance. Where appeals against examination outcomes are permitted, they should be simply described, communicated in writing to all students on initial registration and a reminder given of deadlines and submission requirements to all students before they commence their examinations. It is particularly important that students are made aware of the specific grounds on which examination appeals are permitted and the permissible outcomes of examination appeals.

17. Formal procedures for student appeals against examination decisions should incorporate:

- an initial, impartial investigation of the claimed grounds for the appeal;
• referral of the appeal, if permitted, to an impartial panel, chaired by a Dean or senior member of staff from a faculty/department other than that involved in the appeal;

• a written record of the appeal hearing and written feedback to the student on its outcome;

• provision for the student to attend the panel hearing and to be accompanied if they wish;
• clear guidance to the panel on possible decisions open to it;

• reference back to the original examining board for reconsideration of the student's assessment if the appeal is upheld;

• review of examination arrangements, as necessary, to take account of appeal outcomes.
Quality Assurance Project – Sri Lanka

Universities
Institutes of Tertiary Education

University Grants Commission
Committee of Vice-Chancellors
Tertiary and Vocational Education Commission
Professional Associations

University Senates

Sri Lankan Qualifications Framework – guidance on the level, volume and nomenclature of academic awards
Sri Lankan Academic Procedures Handbook – guidance on academic practice e.g. programme approval

Quality Assurance Handbook*
Training of Reviewers*
Institutional and Subject Reviews*

Credit transfer system For Sri Lanka
Subject Benchmarking and academic standards

Institutes of Tertiary Education
University Senates

Faculty Boards
Employers

Inter University Subject Committees
Intra University Committees

* Already completed
+ Commenced in September 2002
* To be completed by December 2003
© Commenced in August 2003