No. 17/2012 MMG/HR/28/3

The Permanent Mission of the Republic of Mauritius to the United Nations Office and other International Organisations in Geneva presents its compliments to the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights and with reference to the letter dated 10 November 2011 and the questionnaire on norms and standards for quality of education of the Special Rapporteur on the right to education, has the honour to submit the responses of the Government of Mauritius as follows:

The Tertiary Education Commission, as the Regulatory Body for Tertiary Education in Mauritius is mandated to implement a Regulatory Framework for Post-Secondary Education, to assure quality in the Sector. There are no rigid criteria which are applicable concerning norms and standards although Tertiary Education institutions are expected to adhere to different guidelines on quality, copy of which can be downloaded from the following website: www.tec.mu.

The Permanent Mission of the Republic of Mauritius has further the honour to enclose herewith copies of the following documents:

(i) Copy of guidelines on registration and on programme accreditation; and
(ii) A write-up on “Promoting Equality of Opportunity in Higher Education in Mauritius”

The Permanent Mission of the Republic of Mauritius to the United Nations Office and other International Organisations in Geneva avails itself of this opportunity to renew to the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights the assurances of its highest consideration.

Geneva, 26 January 2012

Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights
Palais des Nations
1211 Geneva 10

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GUIDELINES FOR THE REGISTRATION OF POSTSECONDARY EDUCATIONAL INSTITUTIONS

1. Introduction

The purpose of registration is to ascertain that a postsecondary educational institution is adequately equipped to fulfill its mission. As such, it must demonstrate that it has the necessary infrastructure on an appropriate site and that it has all the necessary wherewithals to offer and sustain the programmes it is proposing to offer for a pre-determined period.

2. Form of organisation

A postsecondary educational institution should exist as a legal entity such as:

i. Registered company
ii. Trust
iii. Registered association
iv. Société

3. Building infrastructure:

i. The postsecondary educational institution has to be located in an environment, which is conducive to teaching and learning.

ii. It has to be easily accessible to learners.

iii. The workspace per learner should be of an appropriate size depending on the course of study.

iv. There should be proper lighting and ventilation as per health and safety requirements.

v. The postsecondary educational institution should have proper clearance from the Fire Services.

vi. It should also have all clearances from Local Authorities (Licence to operate a postsecondary educational institution, issued by the relevant Municipality or District Council).

vii. There has to be adequate separate male and female toilets.

viii. It should adequately provide electricity, water points and telephone facilities.

ix. The classrooms and the laboratories should be adequately sited and it should meet health and safety requirements.

x. The Resource Centre/library should be adequately equipped to support the kind of programmes being offered.

xi. There has to be appropriate common areas for learners.

xii. There has to be good standard of housekeeping, hygiene, cleanliness and sanitation.
xiii. The location should be clear from external disturbances and noise pollution.

4. Teaching/Learning Facilities:

i. The postsecondary educational institution should provide the required equipment, tools and materials as per the requirements of the programmes.

ii. There should be appropriate photocopying facilities.

iii. Teaching aids such as overhead projector, board, multimedia computer, multi-projector, video & audio equipment, language laboratory etc as required for the delivery of the programme should be available.

iv. The postsecondary educational institution should have internet facilities.

v. A copy of the registration application form together with the rules and regulations should be forwarded to the Tertiary Education Commission. The refund policy should be included in the rules and regulations. The responsibilities of the students and of postsecondary educational institution should be made explicit.

vi. A progress report for the students should be made available to the Tertiary Education Commission, whenever requested.

vii. Student pack (manuals, etc) should be made available to the Tertiary Education Commission.

5. Management/Staffing:

i. Every postsecondary educational institution shall have a Manager.

ii. The Manager shall ensure that academic standards are up to the level and are in line with the requirements of the programme as approved.

iii. The Manager should maintain evaluation/assessment reports of the programmes, which should be submitted to the Tertiary Education Commission, on demand.

iv. Support staff should be present for the day-to-day operation of the postsecondary educational institution, wherever applicable.

v. The Manager should ensure that only appropriately qualified academic staff dispenses both theory and practical classes.

vi. The postsecondary educational institution should provide as far as possible in advance, a calendar of programmes to be dispensed on an annual basis.

vii. The academic staff student ratio should be at a level acceptable to the Tertiary Education Commission.
viii. It is desirable for every postsecondary educational institution to have a web site.

ix. The Manager should keep attendance records of all staff.

x. Information regarding fees and statistics on programmes conducted by the postsecondary educational institutions should be made available on demand.

xi. Insurance cover should be taken for all staff and students against accidents/hazards occurring within the premises of the training institution. Special Insurance Cover should be made available for on-the-job training e.g training attachment where applicable.

xii. The Manager must ensure the upgrading/maintenance of building where appropriate and the maintenance of equipment.

6. Period of Registration

Registration of postsecondary educational institutions will be for an initial period of up to 5 years after which it will be renewed subject to criteria existing at the time of the renewal and performance during the previous registration period. Each subsequent renewal will not exceed 5 years, and will be subject to the following:

- Periodic review of programmes
- Facilities offered by the postsecondary educational institution
- Approval of any change with regard to the location of the postsecondary educational institution and programmes

7. Accreditation

At the time of registration, any programme to be delivered by the postsecondary educational institution will be accredited as per the existing accreditation of programme guidelines and procedures.

8. Renewal of Registration

Application for renewal of registration should be made on the prescribed forms three months before the date of expiry of registration.

9. Other Obligations

i. Postsecondary educational institutions will be visited on a regular basis. Postsecondary educational institutions should allow access to premises and provide any information related to these activities whenever required.

ii. Any change in location of the postsecondary educational institution after being registered should receive prior approval to the TEC. The postsecondary educational institution should give one month's notice for the change of location.
TERTIARY EDUCATION COMMISSION
Regulatory Framework For Postsecondary Education

GUIDELINES FOR PROGRAMME ACCREDITATION

1. Purpose of the Guidelines

These guidelines have been prepared to facilitate institutions in mounting their application for accreditation of programmes. It covers the essential features that need to be addressed in a programme. Providers of postsecondary education are advised that, as per the Education and Training (Miscellaneous Provisions) Act 2005 only programmes accredited by the Tertiary Education Commission (TEC) can be offered by them.

2. Programmatic Accreditation

A programmatic accreditation is concerned with the quality of a programme or course which is intended to be offered by an institution. An accreditation panel is appointed for the purpose of examining a programme. Such a panel consists of subject specialists and other academics conversant with tertiary education. They are supported by technical staff. Usually the professional courses/programmes are accredited by professional bodies and in practice such accreditation can be done jointly between the TEC and the professional organisation. Thus, programmes in Accountancy would be accredited by the TEC with the assistance of a body like the ACCA Mauritius. Similarly the Medical and allied programmes would be accredited by the TEC with the assistance of the Medical/Dental Council. All programmes must mandatorily be accredited prior to their offer.

Following an accreditation exercise, the programme is either given provisional approval with or without recommendations to be offered for a fixed period, to be followed up by further accreditation, or the provider is asked to make a resubmission taking into account the recommendations made or it is rejected. In all cases the explicit intention of accreditation is to ensure that minimum standards are being met.

3. Processes Involved in Programmatic Accreditation

In assessing a programme for the purpose of accreditation the appointed panel will look at the following:

3.1 Justification for the programme

The application must have a synopsis giving rationale for programme, who it is intended for, how they will benefit from it, what pre-requisites they must fulfil and what job prospects exist with clear indications on which employer recognises/will recognise the programme.

3.2 Aims and objectives of the programme

What the students will learn in this programme, skills and attitude they will develop which will prepare them adequately for employment.
3.3 Detailed programme content with rationale for all modules/units on a subject basis

Learners must have a clear understanding of the modules they will take right from the very beginning of the programme and the programme co-ordinator must state unequivocally the core modules that students must take together with electives that must necessarily complement the programme.

3.4 A resume of module/unit content with indicative lectures, seminars, tutorials, practical/laboratory work and reading (recommended textbooks)

A time table must be provided giving details of who will teach the subject and how it will be taught with accurate contact time for all methods of teaching, details of classrooms/laboratory etc and time.

3.5 Details of assessments and indicative weighting of the different modes of assessments

Students must have a clear understanding of the different types of assessments and their weightings that will contribute to the award. They must know when assessments or assignments will be set. Rules and regulations concerning assessments must be made explicit and transparent

3.6 Details of how quality of teaching and learning will be ensured

Mechanisms for monitoring teaching and learning must be in place. Comprehensive methods for evaluating teaching must be evident. Who will have responsibility for ensuring quality and what happens to feedback received from students must be clearly stated. The organisation will be expected to have complete records of all evaluations, their analysis and steps taken to improve teaching practices in the light of the feedback.

3.7 Curriculum Vitae of lecturers, including full particulars of other employments engaged in

Full CVs of all lecturers must be provided, together with teaching and other experience they have. Their full time occupation with full details must be provided.

3.8 Details of support services, including library

a. Academic

Facilities for use of IT with ratio of PC:learner for IT programmes and non-IT programmes at the specified times, access to Internet - number of stations for such access and their ratio with student population, whether Internet use is chargeable and the amount applicable. Library must have a collection of adequate textbooks prescribed for the programmes on offer. Provision should also be made for journals.

Provision must be made for remedial help where students encounter difficulties in their studies. Nature of this arrangement must be made explicit and transparent.
b. Non-academic

Provision must be made for pastoral care and student counselling for those experiencing emotional problems associated with difficulties with their studies.

3.9 Students Information Booklet

A Student's Information Booklet is available. It should have information on rules and regulations, fees, assessments, equivalence of courses/programmes in relation to their appeal, reimbursement of fees where the institution fails to provide the course/programme through to their completion or where it fails to provide the course/programme in the specified period.

On an appointed day the course providers will be asked to meet with the panel members and formally present their course/curriculum. Each programme must have a programme leader/co-ordinator who has overall responsibility for the delivery of the programme, including monitoring and evaluation. He/She would be expected to present the programme to the accreditation panel covering all the criteria applicable. The lecturers delivering the programme must also be present. The panel members will have an opportunity to probe into the course contents and its delivery. The panel must be satisfied that the course meets minimum requirements and with the overall integrity of the course/programme.

The panel will look at the infrastructure, including the laboratory (where applicable) and the support services. After the meeting the panel will deliberate and give an oral feedback on its findings. This will be followed up by a written report which will be made available within four weeks.

SPECIAL CONDITIONS

1. Where the provider is operating in collaboration with another institution, the nature of the collaboration must be made explicit and transparent and accessible by all stakeholders. The collaboration should be legally binding through a memorandum of understanding which should state the period of validity of the document.

A copy of the MoU must be submitted with the application.

2. The applicant must provide a sample of an authentic certificate, an exact copy of which will be issued on successful completion of the programme.

Any deviations from the authenticated version of the certificate will lead to IMMEDIATE DE-ACCREDITATION of the programme with attendant consequences on the status of the institution as addressed in the document concerning registration.
Promoting Equality of Opportunity in Higher Education in Mauritius

Access to tertiary education in Mauritius has considerably improved over the last decade. Tertiary enrolment has constantly increased from 16,735 in 2000 to 28,864 in 2005 and 44,334 in 2010, while the Gross Tertiary Enrolment Rate (GTER), calculated as the total tertiary enrolment over the population aged 20 to 24 years, rose from 15.1% to 28.4% to 45.1% over the same period.

Recently, a series of measures have been taken to increase opportunities in tertiary education targeting prospective students from outside the traditional secondary school feeder system, namely the introduction of Foundation courses for students with only 1 A-level, the implementation of a Recognition of Prior Learning Framework for learners who may not meet the initial entry requirements, as well as a Mature Student policy within the context of lifelong learning. However, two important milestones remain the introduction of free tertiary education in 1992, as a result of which students attending the University of Mauritius full-time do not have to pay tuition fees; as well as the provision of free public transport to all those attending full-time pre-primary to tertiary education. Both these measures have been instrumental in ensuring greater equity into the system by reducing the cost burden of the average family with regard to tertiary education.

The creation of a new ministry entirely dedicated to tertiary education in 2010 has further boosted the development of tertiary education in the country. Government's objectives are to raise the gross enrollment rate in tertiary education further still, so as to attain 72% by 2015. It wants, in parallel, to have at least one graduate per family by 2020. In its effort to democratize access to tertiary education, the government is in the process of building university campuses across the island.

Towards ensuring increased opportunity and greater equity, Government has set up the Human Resource Knowledge, Arts and Development (HRKAD) Fund to provide scholarships and loan guarantees to students from disadvantaged groups to enable them to pursue higher studies. Today all those qualified and eligible to undertake tertiary education are able to do so irrespective of their financial situation. Since the creation of the Fund in June 2008 to December 2011, some 1,119 students whose parents were earning less than Rs
10,000 monthly, have been awarded a scholarship and another 169 have been sponsored by the government to guarantee provided for student loans.

As from 2012, the government is increasing the number of state scholarships from 30 to 60. A Bursary for poor students (whose family income do not exceed Rs 5,000 monthly) has equally been created, which will provide 8 additional scholarships annually as from 2012. In view of the remoteness of the island of Rodrigues from mainland Mauritius, Government has also set up a Desk Office for tertiary education in Rodrigues; the University of Technology Mauritius is now offering Degree courses there.

The tertiary education landscape is, accordingly, fast changing. Today, it comprises:

(I) a greater number of institutions (from 41 in 2005 to 64 in 2010)
(II) a higher number of programmes (from 400 in 2005 to 700 in 2010), and
(III) a larger number of new subjects (for example actuarial science, sustainable environment management, sustainable agriculture, pharmacy, marine science & technology, criminal justice, corporate governance and corporate social responsibility and so on)

Contrary to expectation, no gender discrimination exists in tertiary education in Mauritius. Instead, a greater participation of girls is witnessed, with the latter accounting for 55.6% of total tertiary enrolment in 2010. The corresponding figure for 2000 was 53.4%.

In its quest to increase and widen access to tertiary education, Government is making no compromise on quality. In this regard the Tertiary Education Commission has been empowered since 2005, to implement a robust Quality Assurance Framework, through the registration of private providers of tertiary education and the accreditation of their courses as well as through the quality audit of public institutions. The Framework is being constantly improved to reflect international norms and standards.