THE STRATEGIC PLAN

FOR

UGANDAN UNIVERSITIES QUALITY ASSURANCE FORUM (UUQAF)

2015 - 2020

CHAPTER ONE

STRATEGIC FOCUS, PURPOSE AND PRIORITIES

1.0 Background

Quality assurance is one of the critical practices necessary for any organization to exist sustainably. Competitive originations are those that employ total management practices. In universities too, quality assurance is a practice that demand critical attention. This has been appreciated and is a legal requirement that all universities institute quality assurance mechanisms.

All universities in Uganda have made an effort to established quality assurance offices, though still with different structures. A further effort by Ugandan universities is now being made to establish a national forum that would unite all quality assurance units to share experiences. After several meetings, it was resolved that a forum named "UGANDA UNIVERSITIES QUALITY ASSURANCE FORUM (UUQAF) be established.

In its startup stage, the UUQAF is operating on volunteers funding. This is a practice that cannot be sustained since all activities are still implemented on adhoc basis. This strategic plan will not only ensure that day-to-day activities of the forum are run in a systematic way, but also guarantee a proper coordination of all the forum's activities.

1.2 VISION

The **vision** of UUQAF is to promote efficient planning, management and provision of quality services in order to achieve excellence, nationally, regionally and internationally

1.3 MISSION

The **mission** of UUQAF is to strengthen, consolidate and maintain Total Quality Assurance in Ugandan Universities and Other Degree Awarding Institutions of learning.

1.4 GOAL ONE

The **goal** of UUQAF is to establish and maintain quality standards in Ugandan universities and other degree awarding institutions in line with national, regional and international regulations

1.5 GOAL TWO

To establish a network of quality assurance coordinators in order to enhance quality assurance in Higher education Institutions in Uganda and beyond

1.6 OBJECTIVES

a) Share experience on quality assurance issues among Quality Assurance Officers
b) Promote awareness on the relevance of quality assurance matters in institutions of higher learning
c) Build capacity of Quality Assurance Officers through training
d) Share expertise on quality assurance processes
e) Monitor implementation of quality assurance improvement plans
f) Mobilise resources for quality assurance activities
g) Mentor Quality Assurance Officers
h) Carry research on quality assurance related issues

1.7 THE CORE VALUES

The underlying values that underpin the functioning of UUQAF include the following best practices;

a) Excellence and innovation

The Forum is dedicated to ensuring excellence and innovativeness in its approach towards quality assurance in universities.

b) Teamwork

The Forum is aiming to create a family of QA officers who can work together as a single entity to promote the provision of high quality education at Ugandan Universities. In this 21st Century teamwork is seen as a key driver to the success of many organisations the world allover.

c) Openness and Transparence

The Forum aspires to be extremely open and transparent in all its interactions with both the universities and QA members to foster prosperity of higher education in Uganda.

d) Time Management

The Forum being a cornerstone of universities' development, time is valued since it is the only aspect in organisational development that can't be recovered when lost. Reports, tasks and assignments are supposed to be delivered as and when scheduled. This ensures that decisions are implemented as planned.

e) Integrity

The Forum maintains high levels of integrity since it is a representation of all Universities in Uganda. We value personal and organisational integrity.

f) Sustainability

The Forum is bent on a robust resource mobilisation to ensure sustainability and self-reliance. This is the only way it can implement all its activities and achieve its intended objectives without any hindrances.

1.8 PURPOSE FOR STRATEGIC PLANNING

This strategic plan has been developed to provide an on-going process of examination and self-evaluation of the forum's performance, strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, threats, goals, resource requirements and future prospects and to set out a coherent plan to respond to the developments therefrom in order to ensure a stronger and more effective forum is developed. The strategic plan shall put into perspective and respond to emerging issues and developments in universities and encourage systematic thinking and stimulate quick responses to needs as they unfold, with the aim of guiding the Universities in Uganda in establishing new initiatives and priorities in quality assurance. The expected benefits upon implementation of this strategic plan are anticipated as follows:

a) Create a conducive environment for quality assurance committees of universities through the various Forum's activities

b) Coordinate the Ugandan Universities Quality Assurance Committees with the government institutions and, with other development partners interested in quality assurance.

c) Conduct quality assurance projects within the Legal framework of the country

d) Act within the National Quality Assurance Policy Framework

e) Facilitate the financing of quality assurance processes through workshops and networking

f) Support the development and dissemination of innovative quality assurance practices

g) Collect and collate information on important quality assurance case studies as a basis for networking, information exchange and capacity-building

h) Perform any other activity related to the quality assurance function in higher Education

1.9 STRATEGIC AREAS

This strategic plan focuses on the following priorities as strategic aspects from which the strategic objectives will be drawn for the five year period

a) Building the capacity of QA Officers of higher education institutions in Uganda;

b) Developing QA Standard Operational Manuals

c) Promoting QA culture in higher education institutions

d) Promoting research on QA matters

e) Developing and maintaining a robust higher education QA information management system

f) Establishing the Forum secretariat to coordinate all the Forum activities

1.10 STRATEGIC OBJECTIVES

a) To develop guidelines for quality teaching, infrastructure and administrative systems through which students' expectations are met

b) To ensure that Universities adhere to the set standards of higher education through monitoring and evaluation

c) To develop and sustain internal quality assurance systems known to both students and staff of universities

d) To develop self-assessment systems for staff in universities to enhance internal appraisals of staff.

CHAPTER TWO

THE STRATEGIC POSITION OF THE UUQAF

UUQAF intends to continue growing over the next decade. This requires a reliable process of evaluation of the current status of the Forum through a SWOT analysis to provide the context for planning for this growth. This analysis has been greatly used to develop this strategic plan, which identifies the strategies, activities and resources that contribute to the continued vitality and excellence of the Forum.

The Forum is committed to a strong and guiding vision of its role and character in building higher education in Uganda. All decisions regarding the improvement in the relevance of academic programmes, development of operational policies and other capital works in Ugandan universities are to be tested against its vision, and contribution to its enrichment. The Forum's vision, as earlier mentioned is to:

"to promote efficient planning, management and provision of quality services in order to achieve excellence nationally, regionally and internationally" , must be supported by a systematic understanding of its current status and where it ought to go in the future.

Therefore, as we move forward the strategic plan of the next decade should celebrate and safeguard the Forum's vision with all physical development whether they are "invisible" infrastructure, small elements in the landscape, or buildings and structures created over time.

2.1 STRENGTHS

a) Recognition of the Forum by Ugandan universities, NCHE, IUCEA and other institutions directly concerned with quality assurance in higher education institutions.

b) Wide pool of members and potential members from the many existing universities

c) Existence of a core team of experienced QA experts to guide the Forum in matters of higher education dialogue forums at local, regional and international levels.

d) Exposure to and Interaction with a number of local, regional and international organisations with diverse knowledge, experience and profiles

e) Adequate support from NCHE, IUCEA, DAAD and other bodies nationally, regionally and internationally

f) Adequate support from all Ugandan universities

g) Positive attitude of QA officers in moving the Forum's agenda forward

h) Increased publicity through the website

2.2 WEAKNESSES

a) Low financial resources that makes it difficult to implement all the Forum's activities

b) Lack of adequate guiding manuals for the Forum

c) Inadequate Human Resource capacity to implement the various activities of the Forum

d) Lack of office space to host the secretariat

e) Weak monitoring system to ensure that members in the various universities are implementing the Forum's decisions

f) Lack of Forum quality assurance handbook to guide quality assurance processes

g) Inadequate knowledge about the Forum activities and how stakeholders can benefit from it

2.3 OPPORTUNITIES

a) Mobilizing more members from the existing over 45 universities, university colleges and degree awarding institutions

b) Increasing number of universities and degree awarding institutions

c) Increasing support from the existing universities

d) Availability of ever willing partners to support UUQAF activities such as DAAD, NCHE, IUCEA

e) Ability to engage in country wide research and training to raise revenue

2.4 THREATS

a) Increasing private universities that have little regard to quality assurance

b) Insufficient budgets in universities also affect UUQAF revenue

c) Increasing work schedules to UUQAF members makes them unavailable to pursue the Forum's agenda

d) Over expansion of some universities into campuses with no representatives in the Forum

e) Lack of prioritization on quality assurance issues in universities

f) Low internet connectivity makes it difficult to coordinate UUQAF members in their accomplishment of the Forum activities.

g) Inadequate ICT skills of the UUQAF members hinders their productivity

CHAPTER THREE
STRATEGIC ASPECTS, OBJECTIVES AND ACTIONS

This strategic plan is premised on five strategic priorities that have been identified within the most immediate needs in the universities. Accomplishment of each and every target will help in the setting of the next targets.

3.1 QUALITY ASSURANCE CAPACITY BUILDING FOR QA OFFICERS

Notwithstanding the commitment to QA by many university managers in the country, challenges in the institutionalization of QA systems due to limited capacity are evident in many institutions. For instance, QA officers in most institutions are not formally trained for the job, since there is currently no provision for such training programs in mainstream HEIs. Efforts by IUCEA and DAAD to train some Quality Assurance Officers in the region have certainly increased the demand for trained quality assurance officers by many universities. These efforts can be sustained through continuous national QA trainings and mobilisation.

Consequently, training for QA managers of higher education institutions has been identified by UUQAF as requiring special attention for quality assurance systems to be successfully implemented in Uganda and to build a "quality culture" at the individual university institution.

Hence UUQAF, in collaboration with the NCHE, IUCEA, DAAD and Higher Education Institutions has embarked on a continuous process of capacity building in quality assurance for higher education institutions by training staff from these institutions. So far over 50 staff engaged in quality assurance management in 20 higher education institutions have been trained. UUQAF wish to roll out this training programme to increase the number of knowledgeable and skilled quality assurance managers.

Strategic Aspect	Strategic Objectives		Strategic Actions
QA Trainings	To provide training UUQAF members to enhance their knowledge and capacity in QA Processes	1	Undertake regular training for the UUQAF members on QA emerging issues
		2	Organise seminars intended for sensitisation of Ugandan universities' staff to share best practices in the area of QA
		3	Organise follow-up sessions in different universities to be able to appreciate overall QA processes

3.2 DEVELOPMENT OF QUALITY ASSURANCE MANUALS

The development of appropriate quality assurance instruments is one of the major efforts to build sustainable quality assurance systems. The operationalisation of the National Quality Assurance Framework for Universities in Uganda requires the development of relevant standard operations manuals. UUQAF has embarked on the task of developing a quality assurance manual for managers working in QA Units. This manual is intended to provide a quick guide to QA managers on their roles, functions of QA Units and basic tools for conducting routine QA activities. UUQAF seeks to allocate funds for the full development, printing and distribution of this QA Manual.

Strategic Aspect	Strategic Objectives		Strategic Actions
Dev't of Manuals	Development of Quality Assurance Manuals	1	Undertake the selection of a five member team to draft the manual
		2	Organise a one day seminar for the five members to brief them of the task ahead and the commence the activity
		3	Define reporting time lines
		4	Report to the Forum with draft manual
		5	Adopt manual

3.3 QUALITY ASSURANCE AWARENESS

Creating a sustainable quality culture in higher education institutions is a continuous process. Quality Assurance meetings and awareness workshops have been major actions by UUQAF to create and sustain awareness on quality assurance in Uganda.

Aware of the lack of resources, the Forum has been holding its meetings and workshops in the member institutions on a rotational basis. These meetings have provided Forum members with the opportunity to share experiences on QA practices; consider and approve Forum documents and to create awareness on QA matters in the host institutions through workshops. UUQAF will continue to organise these meetings and workshops on regular basis in order to realise these benefits.

Strategic Aspect	Strategic Objectives		Strategic Actions
Quality Assurance Awareness	Creating a sustainable quality culture in higher education institutions	1	Undertake Quality Assurance meetings and awareness workshops in institutions on a rotational basis
		2	Circulate quality assurance materials such as fliers and booklets
		3	Enrich the Forum website with QA information
		4	Hold conferences on Quality Assurance Issues
		5	Carry out research and disseminate findings to member institutions

3.4 PROMOTING RESEARCH ON QUALITY ASSURANCE PRACTICES

Aware of the fact that research plays a crucial role in the promotion of knowledge, UUQAF has identified and defined strategic research actions to promote research on higher education quality assurance. In view to achieve its research agenda, the Forum established The Research and Publications Committee (RPC) as one of the working committees of the Uganda Universities Quality Assurance Forum (UUQAF). The primary mandate of the Committee is to undertake reputable research related to quality assurance in institutions of higher learning; and publish the findings of the Forum locally, regionally and internationally. The Committee will also support member universities in strengthening their respective Research Units or Directorates.

A detailed research proposal has already been developed and is waiting for funding to be executed fully. The proposed research project is aimed at understanding the current quality assurance system and practices in light of the national QA Framework. Once completed, the research output will inform higher education managers and other decision makers on the status of higher education quality assurance in the country.

Strategic Aspect	Strategic Objectives		Strategic Actions
Research on Quality Assurance Practices	Promotion of Research on Quality Assurance Practices	1	Refresh the Research and Publications Committee (RPC)
		2	Develop the research agenda
		3	Train members on writing fundable proposals in quality assurance
		4	Train members on how respond to call for papers in quality assurance issues

3.5 QUALITY ASSURANCE INFORMATION MANAGEMENT SYSTEM

One of the core objectives of UUQAF is collection and sharing of information that is critical undertaking quality assurance work. Therefore, UUQAF is committed to developing platforms through which QA information is generated and distributed. The development of this website is indeed one of the ways. However, a robust information management system with different platforms is required to achieve the Forum objective.

Strategic Aspect	Strategic Objectives		Strategic Actions
Quality Assurance Information Management System	Develop a Quality Assurance Information Management System	1	Develop an e-communication platform on the website
		2	Develop email system based on the website
		3	Carry out seminar on how use e-communications

3.6 ESTABLISHING THE FORUM SECRETARIAT TO COORDINATE ALL THE FORUM ACTIVITIES

There is an increasing need than before for the Forum to have a fixed address and permanent staff to coordinate all the Forum activities since all the Forum members are permanent staff of the various Ugandan universities. Further still the following factors would also call for a secretariat to be in place;

a) Creation of a common meeting place for the members' interaction

b) Creation of a home where materials developed will be stored and accessed by any members who wishes so

c) Establishment of staff who will support all the other office bearers bearing in mind that they are limited by specific tenures in office

d) Creation of a physical presence of the Forum in the struggle for improving higher education in Uganda.

Strategic Aspect	Strategic Objectives		Strategic Actions
Establishment of a secretariat	Establishment of a secretariat to coordinate all the forum activities	1	Secure premises for the secretariat
		2	Acquire equipment for the offices
		3	Recruit support staff for the secretariat

CHAPTER FOUR

UUQAF'S STRATEGIC IMPLEMENTATION PLAN 2015 – 2020

4.1 PLAN IN ACTION

The aim of this section is to integrate all strategies developed across previous sections into a cohesive and balanced plan of highly focussed actions that will achieve the overarching purpose of this Strategic Plan.

The UUQAF Executive in conjunction with the Forum and key stakeholders implements each Goal and its supporting objectives, strategies and action/task plans. Balanced teams can be effectively employed to implement strategies and supporting action/task plans. This task is going to fall squarely to the UUQAF executive together with the selected committees.

The plan's performance should be assessed against its effectiveness in achieving its high priority goals and performance targets. To ensure the plan continues to provide a sharp focus and remain responsive to change it should be formally reviewed and updated every time needed, at the achievement of a Strategic Goal and at any other time deemed necessary. Implementation of this plan is to be a fixed agenda item at meetings of the Forum.

No	STRATEGIC ASPECT	STRATEGIC OBJECTIVES	STRATEGIC ACTIONS	INDICATORS	IMPLEMENTORS	TIME FRAME	FINANCIAL RESOURCES
1	QA training	To provide training to UUQAF members to enhance their knowledge and capacity in QA Processes	i) Undertake regular training for the UUQAF members ii) Organise seminars intended for sensitisation to share best practices iii) Organise follow-up sessions	UUQAF members trained in key QA issues	- UUQAF Executive	Annually	1,000,000 4,000,000/=
2	Dev't of Manuals	Development of Quality Assurance Manuals	i) Undertake the selection of a five member team to draft the manual	i) Members selected	UUQAF Executive & Forum	2015	

			ii) Organise a one day seminar for the five members to brief them of the task ahead and the commence the activity	ii) Seminar organised, and writing the manual commences	- UUQAF Executive - Committee of the Five	2015	2,000,000/=
			iii) Define reporting time lines	iii) Timelines set	- Forum	2015	
			iv) Report to the Forum with draft manual	iv) Draft presented	- Committee of Five	2015	
			v) Adopt manual	v) Manual adopted	- Forum	2015	
3	Quality Assurance Awareness	Creating a sustainable quality culture in higher education institutions	i)Undertake QA meetings & awareness workshops in institutions	- Meetings & workshops held based on the UUQAF schedule	- Forum Executive	Annually	
			ii) Develop & circulate QA materials such as fliers and booklets	- Materials developed & circulated	- Forum Executive	Annually	2,000,000/=
			iii) Enrich the Forum website with QA information	- Website is updated regularly	- Website Administrator	Annually	600,000/=
			iv) Hold conferences on QA Issues	- At least one conference held	- Forum Executive	Annually	4,000,000/=
			v) Carry out research and disseminate	- At least 1 research a year	- Research Committee	Annually	2,000,000/=

			findings to member institutions	is carried out			
4	Research on Quality Assurance Practices	Promotion of Research on Quality Assurance Practices	i) Refresh the Research and Publications Committee (RPC)	- Committee refreshed (some changes in members)	- Forum	2015	
			ii) Develop the research agenda	- Agenda developed	- Forum	2015	
			iii) Train members on writing fundable proposals	- Members trained	- UUQAF Executive	Annually	
			iv) Train members on how respond to call for papers in quality assurance issues	- Members trained	- Forum Executive	2015	
5	Information Management System	Develop a QA Information Management System	- Develop an e-communication platform on the website	- Platform developed	- Forum Executive	2016	1,000,000/=
			- Develop email system based on the website	- emails developed & linked to other emails	- Website Administrator	2016	1,000,000/=
			- Carry out seminar on how to use the platform	- Seminar carried out	- Forum Executive	Annually	
6	Establishment of a secretariat	Establishment of a secretariat to coordinate all the forum activities	- Secure premises for the secretariat	- Offices secured	- Forum Executive	2015	2,000,000/=
			- Acquire equipment for the offices	- Equipment procured	- Forum Executive	2015	3,000,000/=

		- Recruit support staff for the secretariat	- Staff recruited	- Forum Executive	2015	7,400,000/=
						30,000,000

CHAPTER FIVE

MONITORING AND EVALUATION STRATEGY

A strategic plan is not itself sufficient for the implementation of an organization's mission, vision goals and objectives. The proper implementation of the laid down objectives and strategies is crucial to the success of an entity of clear performance indicators and mechanisms for monitoring, which is influenced by the setting of clear performance and taking corrective measures as and when necessary. The timing of each activity is important, as it is likely to affect the performance of other departments. It is, therefore, important to specify the expected timing of performance of each activity. This will also affect the planning for and allocation of the resources required for the performance of the respective activities.

Evaluation of performance will be based upon verifying whether the set activities and expected outcomes have been fulfilled. The extent to which the performance indicators have been satisfied and to which the set goals and objectives have been accomplished will be established as part of the evaluation. These performance indicators will be specified in the action plan. Also to be taken into account is whether the core values of the Forum, together with the mission and vision have been respected. Evaluation will be both quantitative and qualitative and will also take into account the quality of the activities and services of Forum.

The strategic areas identified above are capable of guiding the UUQAF in a series of annual action plans and will also offer guidance in the annual budgeting process within the period of the strategic plan. This part of the plan addresses that part of ensuring that whatever is planned for goes as required and if not, corrective actions be taken. This part presents the process on monitoring and evaluating the framework of this strategic plan as presented here-in;

5.1 MONITORING AND EVALUATION AREAS

5.1.1 Strategic Planning Process

The Forum Executive will organise a meeting to review and evaluate the strategic plan and the planning process in order to be able to plan better for the next period. The planning will be guided by how this particular strategic plan has performed.

5.1.2 Periodic checks of the strategic plan

The Forum Executive will monitor the progress of the implementation of the strategic plan regularly on six months basis and assess whether any major or minor adjustments to the plan are necessary. As part of the monitoring process, UUQAF will be guided by the following questions;

a) Is the strategic plan on course? What has or has not been accomplished?

b) Are there any challenges in the course of the implementation? If yes, do they warrant change or addition of priorities to the strategic plan?

c) Are there new performance targets that need to be integrated in this plan?

d) Is the current situation satisfactory as laid down in the strategic plan?

e) Are the strategic objectives of the plan still achievable or a revision is necessary?