



EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

OF THE

INSTITUTIONAL AUDIT

OF

INSTITUTE FOR OPEN LEARNING (IOL)

18-22 JANUARY 2021

The National Council for Higher Education (NCHE) conducted an institutional audit at the Institute for Open Learning (IOL) during the period 18-22 January 2021.

The first step in the preparation of an institutional audit is the development of the institutional portfolio by the institution. This process involves continuous consultation between the quality assurance system functionaries and the quality assurance managers at the institution. The institutional portfolio is a self-evaluation appraisal of the institution's quality assurance mechanisms against NCHE's audit criteria. In it, the institution reflects on its policies, processes, systems, and practices and how they align to national norms and standards.

Prior to the audit, NCHE appointed an independent audit panel that comprised individuals selected on the basis of their experience and expertise in higher education nationally and internationally.

IOL duly presented an institutional portfolio to NCHE as part of the institutional audit process. The panel examined the institutional portfolio against the four themes of the institutional quality assurance system:

1. Institutional vision, mission and goals and general management processes;
2. Teaching and learning;
3. Research; and
4. Community engagement.

The panel undertook a site visit of the institution to verify against the audit criteria and the statements made by the institution in the self-evaluation report. The evaluation process carried out by the panel involved a combination of document analysis, visual verification and analysis of feedback from stakeholder interviews. The panel then triangulated the outcome of these processes with the outcome of the panel's initial discussion (prior to the site visit) and determine whether the audit criteria have been met.

The report, which was produced by NCHE after factual verification by IOL, contains the following commendations and recommendations:

NCHE underscored the following areas as the strength of IOL:

- excellent financial management and human resources management systems
- the integration of ICT into the education processes, systems and procedures

NCHE, on the other hand, highlighted the following areas as desiring improvement:

- The need for the development and implementation of an IOL specific Strategic Plan, using the normal processes, which may still speak to the TRUSTCO Group Overall strategy, but which reflects IOL nature as an education institution;

- Putting into effect a Quality Assurance Management System and structure which speaks to the quality assurance system for higher education in Namibia;
- Addressing the financial sustainability of IOL as it is highly dependent on the holding company, perhaps by developing and implementing a long-term sustainability plan.
- Establishment of an academic decision-making body consisting of appropriate expertise to oversee the academic enterprise, which would align more with the requirements of higher education, and to assign approval of awards to such academic body;
- Enhancement of the quality function in the regional offices to become part of the responsibility of the Regional Manager as they are accountable for services in the regions;
- Addressing, at institution-wide level, the problem of plagiarism in assignments by introducing appropriate system(s);
- Reconsideration of the weight of assignment marks and/or introducing additional assessments under controlled conditions;
- Formalisation of consultations with stakeholders and deeper enhancement of programme consultation reviews by establishing an advisory body for each field of study;
- Improved international benchmarking and interactions, perhaps, by joining an international body in distance education such as Distance Education Association of Southern Africa (DEASA);
- Development and promotion of a research culture for staff and for students; and
- Development of a system of community engagement that is appropriate to an educational institution i.e. community development projects that does not necessarily cost money but utilises staff or students' expertise.

IOL, should submit an improvement plan to NCHE within a period of six months from the date of the feedback (06 May 2021) and subsequently work on the recommendations made in the report. IOL is required to submit an implementation report within two years.