

TAKORADI TECHNICAL UNIVERSITY



**QUALITY ASSURANCE & ACADEMIC PLANNING
DIRECTORATE**

**PEER AND PROFESSIONAL REVIEW
POLICY**

2021

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1.0 PREAMBLE

One of the ironies of higher education is that while peer review of research is a firmly established and internationally recognised cornerstone of academic scholarship, peer review of core duties of both teaching and non-teaching staff has little or no prominence in university policies and does not feature strongly in academic cultures and practices. A number of universities have adopted or experimented strategies to encourage peer review of teaching, including the incorporation of peer review in academic development programmes, references in human resources policies and, in some cases, the implementation of systematic programmes at institutional, faculty or departmental levels. Despite these, peer review is an infrequent and generally piecemeal activity.

Nonetheless, the Takoradi Technical University's quest for excellence in all its activities and the need to fulfil a requirement by the National Accreditation Board (NAB), now Ghana Tertiary Education Commission (GTEC), for all tertiary institutions to have a policy on peer evaluation of teaching, have necessitated the formulation of this policy. Peer review capitalises on a valuable and under-utilised resource – the expertise and experience of academic peers. Drawing as it does on the knowledge and insights of university colleagues, peer review can recognise and accommodate diversity in approaches to teaching, curricula, disciplinary and other non-teaching contexts. The process further complements systematically collected evaluation

from students, which tends to focus on their experience in the classroom. It is hoped that the implementation of this policy will ensure that best practices are shared among peers in teaching and learning settings such as classrooms, studios, workshops, laboratories, clinics, field work and offices.

2.0 PURPOSE

To ensure that the University, through the activities of its staff, students and offices, maintains quality standards, improve performances and provide credibility for its academic and professional programmes.

3.0 GOALS

1. Create a culture with a positive approach to peer review by recognising excellence and identifying improvement opportunities.
2. Monitor and evaluate the teaching and practical skills of teaching staff and technicians.
3. Provide accurate and timely performance data for staff feedback.
4. Provide accurate ongoing and focused review on admissions, registration and examination processes and procedures.
5. Ensure that the process for peer review is clearly defined, fair, defensible, timely and useful.

4.0 DEFINITIONS

4.1 PEER REVIEW

Peer review is the assessment of work by an individual or group of people who have similar competencies or qualifications as those who produced the work. It typically involves providing feedback on a particular quality of output under consideration. Peer review is based on the fundamental assumption that quality in higher education is best served through a process that enables peers of the institution, informed by standards created and applied by professionals in higher education, to make the judgments essential to assuring and advancing the quality of higher learning.

Peer review methods may be conducted to appraise individual performance, teaching and learning, moderation and standardisation of examination questions, assessment of curricula, development of new programmes for accreditation and re-accreditation. Others include admission processes, procedures and quality of students' intake, registration systems, processes and procedures and publication of scholarly papers.

4.2 PEER

A "peer" is an individual practicing in the same profession and who has expertise in the appropriate subject matter. The level of subject matter expertise required to provide meaningful evaluation of another's performance will determine what "practicing in the same profession" means on

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a case-by-case basis. For quality issues related to Higher Educational Institutions (HEIs), professors, doctors (PhD holders), senior lecturers, deputy registrars, senior assistant registrars and assistant registrars may review the work of other senior members, senior staff and junior staff. For specialty-specific professional issues, a peer is an individual who is well-trained and competent in that specialty area.

An academic department seeking to enhance teaching quality through in-house measures may define a peer as another teaching member of the department, with or without teaching experience or seniority.

The university community using peer review of teaching to assess promotion application to senior academic positions may restrict the definition of a peer to some level of experience and seniority.

For programmes such as medical laboratory technology and other technology-related programmes, peers from clinical and industrial backgrounds may be included as reviewers. Peers from a different faculty or discipline may be chosen as reviewers to provide a different perspective on teaching.

5.0 TEACHING AND LEARNING

One of the inconsistencies of higher education is that while peer review of research and publication is an internationally recognised and established cornerstone of academic

scholarship, peer review of teaching – the practice of colleagues providing feedback on one another’s teaching – has little or no prominence in university policies. Peer review of teaching has the ability to make a valuable contribution to the improvement of higher education. Among its numerous benefits, peer review can play a significant role in assisting persons to improve their teaching, in recognising and rewarding skills and achievements in teaching and in developing individuals’ academic careers. The more widespread and systematic the use of peer review of teaching, the greater the opportunities to enhance the quality of teaching and learning in universities.

Peer review in teaching and learning is used to achieve certain learning objectives, particularly as a tool to reach higher order processes in the affective, cognitive and sensory domains, as defined by Bloom’s taxonomy (Krathwohl, 2002). Peer review in the teaching and learning field will take three forms:

- **Formative/Informal reviews** – Formative reviews are intended to improve teaching. They are for the personal use of the observed instructor. Regular interaction about teaching should be a culture of all faculties. In every department, faculty may pair themselves for the purpose of peer review of teaching and inform the Head of Department. It is recommended that a junior faculty pair with a senior colleague of their choice. The evaluation should be done before the mid-semester examinations

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and the same process repeated before the end-of-semester examinations. The essence is to determine if there is any change in the evaluation after the first one. Feedback given could be on teaching style or technique, management of the class, comprehension by students, design, execution, production etc.

- Summative/Formal evaluations – This is the situation where parameters are set, peer review is regulated and feedback is communicated in writing. Summative reviews are intended for contract renewals, promotions and other management decisions. Teaching is one of the main functions of all academic staff. They should, therefore, be evaluated on it before promotion. It is recommended that this Policy be adopted and used as a criterion for evaluating teaching. The Dean shall empanel three (3) senior colleagues, one within the concerned department who preferably should have taught the course(s) that the lecturer being evaluated is currently teaching, one within the faculty but outside the department and one outside the College. The panel will assess the applicants and the results attached to the application for promotion documents. The results should also serve as criteria for assessing applicants for TTU staff awards (Teaching Category).
- Mentorship – This involves the use of experienced professors, doctors (PhD holders,) senior lecturers to mentor and review the work of new lecturers (and lower

ranks) to help them grow, adapt to the new systems and environments, as well as, climb up the academic ladder.

For the purpose of this policy, evaluation of teaching shall be conducted for all categories of academic (teaching) staff of the University, including:

1. Full-Time lecturers;
2. Part-Time lecturers;
3. Adjunct lecturers;
4. Visiting lecturers (where necessary);
5. Post-Retirement Contract/Part-time lecturers; and
6. Facilitators of Institute of Distance Learning (IDL) programmes.

6.0 MODERATION AND STANDARDISATION OF EXAMINATION QUESTIONS AND MARKING SCHEMES

To ensure the quality, credibility and integrity of the University's examinations, departmental and faculty review committees will be in charge of ensuring that examination questions and marking schemes of the University are up to the standards of HEIs. Teaching staff will be required to submit their questions and marking schemes within the first few weeks of reopening to allow both the departmental and faculty review committees to do a very good work of standardisation. The review committees will write a report on the results of the moderation, stating areas which need to be improved, areas which need to be changed, as well as, giving

timelines for the submission of all corrected versions. Where necessary, reviewers and reviewees will have to meet to discuss the way forward.

A reviewee who disagrees with some comments will have to state reasons for the disagreement, and also include a cover letter or memorandum, explaining point by point how they handled reviewers' comments and the changes they effected.

7.0 VETTING OF MARKED SCRIPTS

Examination results/grades released must be authentic, accurate, fair and precise. For this reason, marked examination scripts must be periodically vetted/evaluated to ensure that students/learners are awarded what they deserve. Vetting of marked scripts will be done by departmental review committees. Should there be any unresolved issues between reviewers and the lecturer, the issue should be referred to the faculty review committee for settlement. Should the faculty review committee uncover any malfeasance involving the lecturer, the issue must be referred to the Disciplinary Committee for action.

8.0 DEVELOPMENT OF CURRICULA FOR ACCREDITATION AND RE-ACCREDITATION

New programmes developed by the University to seek accreditation, and on-going programmes that need re-accreditation will have to be peer-reviewed by departmental and faculty review committees to ensure conformity to laid

down guidelines/standards of accrediting institutions, to ensure that the document is grammatically sound and to ensure that the curricula is reflective of the level of the programme. Others are to ensure that the programmes encompass new and emerging trends in teaching and learning, are progressive in that they prepare students to meet the challenges of a fast-paced and constantly changing industry and conform to the mandate of the University. Documents approved by the review committees will have to be approved and certified by the Quality Assurance Unit for onward submission to the accrediting institutions.

9.0 ADMISSIONS

The admission system, processes and procedures of institutions are critical to the overall performance/good-standing of institutions since the performances of students reflect on institutions, either positively or negatively. TTU is not an exception in this regard. It is, therefore, necessary that the admissions processes and procedures are rigorous enough to select the best candidates for the various programmes. Consequently, the admissions systems need to be peer-reviewed from time to time to ensure that only the best candidates are recruited for the University. The evaluation of the admissions systems (processes and procedures) will be done in two-fold:

1. The departments (faculties) will periodically evaluate the calibre of students admitted into their programmes vis-a-vis their requirements and write a review, giving reasons

for their decisions (good/bad), as well as giving suggestions on the way forward.

2. The Quality Assurance Unit will periodically assess the systems in place to determine the efficacy and effectiveness of the system and propose remedies for an excellent working system, if need be.

10.0 REGISTRATION

Due to the vital nature of registration in accounting for students for any particular semester, and the vital data that the process churns out, it is important that the registration process is evaluated regularly to improve it and to make it more attractive to students to participate fully. For this to be achieved, feedback is very much needed to improve it, and feedback in the form of peer review can go a long way in assuring a seamless and quick process. Review boxes/website survey pop-ups may be deployed at registration centres/sites to solicit feedback from ‘experts’ (students). Questions may include: time spent at a registration centre, attending officer’s personality and professionalism, challenges encountered, kind of service received and suggestions to improve the process.

11.0 PUBLICATION OF SCHOLARLY PAPERS

To publish an article in any University journal or to present a paper at any conference or publish a book, the said paper, article or book would have to be peer reviewed by at least two (2) experts in the author’s field. The article/paper/book will

have to conform to all rules established by the editorial board of the journal, the conference rules or publishing house/publishers.

12.0 ADMINISTRATIVE AND OTHER NON-TEACHING STAFF REVIEWS

All non-teaching staff such as administrators, security persons, staff of the transport office, labourers, conservancy will also be subject to varied peer review processes and procedures. These reviews will be both lateral and horizontal i.e, reviews from colleagues of same rank, as well as reviews from superiors. These reviews may be formal or informal. Formal reviews will be tied/linked to promotions while informal reviews will seek to help staff improve their day-to-day duties/functions such as a colleague editing the report of another, a security person helping a newbie learn the rudiments of the job or a labourer explaining to another the scope of the other's duties.

The already existing annual 360 review for evaluation and promotional purposes by the HR division will still be in force in addition to regular reviews of work done to help staff improve daily on skills, attitudes and professionalism.

Mentorship for non-teaching staff is also encouraged. The mentorship programme in place for senior members should be replicated across all non-teaching categories to enable staff learn, improve and excel.

13.0 CLASSROOM/STUDENT PEER REVIEW

This is the process whereby students review one another's work such as presentation, reports and seminars. Peer review among students/learners should be encouraged as the process helps them to learn to write constructive criticisms, learn about structures of review processes, learn different ideas for data presentation, serve as an eye-opener to higher academic pursuits, appreciate the value of the general comments from different perspectives made by non-experts etc.

The lecturer/technician supervises and guides the process by stipulating the guidelines for writing, reviewing and revising proposals and/or reviews in the classroom. Students are guided to be constructive, fair, objective (criticising the work and not the author) and confidential. In addition, they are to check for scientific soundness, originality, significance, rationale for assumptions and degree to which conclusions are supported by data presented.

Reviews from students are to be submitted first to the lecturer/technician handling the students. The lecturer/technician then reviews, edits and advises reviewees (authors) as to which comments to address and which to ignore. Open review among students should be done in an atmosphere of civility, trust, fairness and the highest professionalism so that no student's confidence is negatively impacted. Reviewees should rather be buoyed up for excellence.

14.0 TYPES OF REVIEW

1. Open peer review
 - Open identities (reviewer and reviewee are aware of each other)
 - Open participation (open to wider community and not just invited reviewers. An example conferences)
 - Open reports (review reports are published along the relevant article/publication)

2. Anonymous or double-blinded peer review

The University will adopt both types of reviews as and when the need arises. Open reviews may be used for curriculum development, introduction of new programmes, development of new policies, some aspects of evaluation for promotion or appointments to new offices, among others. Anonymous or double-blinded peer reviews may be used for confidential evaluation for appointments and/or promotions, publication of articles in journals, books, presentation of papers at conferences, et cetera.

15.0 CONFLICT OF INTEREST

- A member of staff requested to perform peer review may have a conflict of interest if he/she may not be able to render an unbiased opinion.
- An absolute conflict of interest would result if the reviewer is the one under review such as in a co-authored publication or review the work of a family member, et cetera.

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- Partial conflict of interest may arise in a situation where a reviewer is either involved in the work of the staff whose work is to be reviewed such as in a mentorship programme where the reviewer mentors the reviewee and would want the reviewee to do exceptionally well. A partial conflict of interest may also arise due to a relationship with the reviewee involved as a direct competitor, partner or key referral source.

It is the obligation of the individual reviewer or committee member to disclose to the committee the potential conflict. It is the responsibility of the peer review committee to determine on a case-by-case basis whether a relative conflict is substantial enough to prevent the individual from participating. When either an absolute or substantial relative conflict is determined to exist, the reviewer may not participate or be present during peer review committee discussions or decisions other than to provide specific information requested for.

16.0 GUIDELINES

Faculty/Departmental peer reviews which seek to enhance teaching quality must have:

- Specified criteria or criteria negotiated by both reviewers and reviewees.
- Clearly stated context in which peer review is to take place.

- Systematic processes to follow to undertake the peer review.
- Clearly defined feedback and documentation systems.
- Debriefing sessions to discuss both the results and the process of peer review.
- An action-minded approach i.e. implementation of some actions as a result of critical feedback such as enhancements to curriculum, teaching methods or assessment.

In addition:

- The responsibility for enhancing teaching (work) is shared by all.
- The peer review process must be carried out in an atmosphere of trust and mutual respect.
- Reviewers have an ethical responsibility to approach the evaluation of colleagues with sensitivity and moral integrity.
- All peer review information is **privileged** and **confidential** in accordance with the Statutes and existing policies and laws.

17.0 IMPLEMENTATION MECHANISMS

The Human Resource Division and the QAU, together with the Faculties, will sensitise all members of staff about this policy and its importance for individual staff development as well as that of the University. Workshops will be organised on this policy for all staff.

18.0 MONITORING, EVALUATION AND REVIEW OF THE POLICY

The implementation of this policy will be evaluated annually against performance measures that will include:

- Staff satisfaction
- Students' satisfaction and
- Productivity.

The policy shall be reviewed as and when necessary in line with other policies of TTU.

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