Quality Assurance: Activities & Progress

The Open University of Sri Lanka (OUSL)

18th July 2014

Steps in Presentation

- **Quality Management at OUSL**

- **Institutional arrangement for Quality Assurance Activities**

- **Major QA activities conducted in 2013**
    - Monitoring follow up on recommendations of the subject reviews
    - 2nd cycle of the Institution review
    - Continuous improvement practices based on Commonwealth of Learning tool (COL-RIM)

- **Challenges**

Quality Management at OUSL

- Since its inception, the OUSL consciously maintained quality standards in its activities through sub-committees of the Senate and Faculty committees
  Eg.
  - Curriculum Development Committees
  - By-laws committee
  - University/Faculty Course Development Committees

- OUSL has procedures for

  - planning activities for existing study programmes
  - introducing new programmes of study
  - designing and developing courses (Print, Audio-visual and Online)
  - conducting examinations.

Quality Management at OUSL ...

For students

- Procedures for learner support – hand books/ brochures specific to the programmes of study, orientations / induction programmes, academic counseling etc.

- Procedure for administering bursaries, scholarships and prizes for best performance

- Procedure and a mechanism for obtaining career advice, guidance on career advancement by the Career Guidance Unit

Quality Management at OUSL ...

For staff

- Introduced Norms for teachers

- Procedures for dissemination of research at the annual academic sessions

- Procedures for recognition of excellence in producing learning material and research by awarding annual awards

- Procedure for training and retraining academic and non-academic staff members by the Staff Development Centre

- Procedure for training and retraining academic staff members on ODL methodologies, writing course materials, producing audio-visual materials and introducing new technologies including online learning by CETMe.

Institutional arrangement for Quality Assurance (QA) Activities
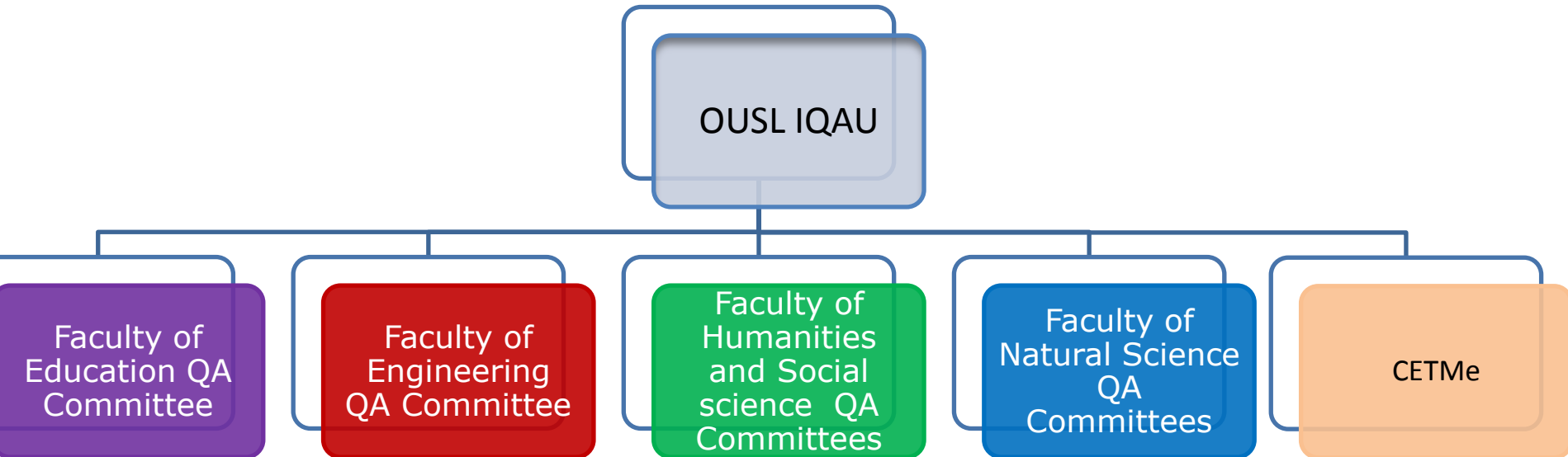
Major QA activities at OUSL

2013

1. Monitoring the recommendations of the subject reviews

Objective for monitoring was two fold:

- To check on the progress made by different departments

- To identify issues that has still not been addressed and reasons for non – implementation

- Monitoring was carried out at the end of 2011 and at the end of February 2014 by circulating a checklist (designed by IQAU) among the Heads of 19 academic departments in the University.

- Response rate was rather low at the beginning in departments where the subject reviews had been carried out some time ago.
  - *Non availability of previous documents, reports etc. due to changes in leadership.*

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Checklist for monitoring subject review recommendations

Subject review recommendations	Recommendations		Reasons for non-implementation	Time frame for implementing recommendation that have not been implemented	Any other comments
	Implemented up to December 2011	Not implemented			
1. Establishment of systematic schedule of course revision	Revision of material for the Diploma in English is currently being implemented (as given in Corporate plan)				
2. Course guides to give system of awarding credits		Not implemented	GPA conversion carried out in 2011	From 2012 coordinators will specify date of publication, grade mark structures and awarding of credits, in hand books	
3. Reduce long delays between calling for applications and commencement of courses	Has been reduced to 2 months in case of Diploma in English				

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Checklist for monitoring subject review recommendations

No. Subject review recommendations	Recommendations		Reasons for non-implementation	Time frame for implementing recommendation that have not been implemented	Any other comments
	Implemented up to December 2011	Not implemented			
Practice of delayed feedback to be reviewed	Problem of delayed feedback has been reduced in some courses				Number of assignments per course might need to be re-considered
Delays in releasing results of final examinations to be minimized	Action taken at department level to expedite release of marks				Work of other admin departments is beyond our purview

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Findings of progress monitoring

- Findings are reported at the IQAU meetings and recorded in the minutes of the meeting.
- For eg. in the current year
  - Many departments in faculties of Education and HSS have implemented almost all recommendations
  - A few recommendations are not implemented due to lack of human and other resources.

Recommendations that needs to be addressed at the university level were

- To have a professional student counsellor in the university

- Increasing contact sessions with students

- Increasing hostel facilities

2. Institutional review 2013 (IR2013)

- 1st Institutional review was carried out in 2004, based on the QA framework developed by the Quality Assurance and Accreditation (QAA) Council of UGC

- The second institutional review was carried out in May 2013

- IQAU members were responsible in writing the Self-evaluation report (SER) and organising the review visit

- Review team's Opinion in June 2013 - OUSL could be given an overall judgment of "CONFIDENCE " in its QA arrangements

- Recommendations of the review are being followed up by the Senior Management Committee and the OUSL Council.

Concerns and Constraints in implementing IR2013

In writing the SER-2013

- It was not simply updating the previous report of 2004 (1st IR cycle report)
- Obtaining feedback and data from finance division was poor in comparison to other sections
- Compilation of final SER took time due to many styles of writing adopted by members of IQAU

Review visit

- Many of the reviewer's had a good knowledge about ODL methodology of teaching and learning
- Since teaching and learning system of the OUSL is comparatively complex and involves many aspects and it would have been better if the reviewers had more time
- Some academics were unaware about review process.

Commonwealth of Learning Review and Implementation (COL-RIM) Model (2010 –2011)

- Focused on performance (outcomes) of the university in five different areas, ie. communication, needs orientation, innovation and creativity, capacity building and quality management

- Action plans were proposed based on the recommendations of the review

- IQAU is monitoring the progress of action plans, especially on improving communication.

Challenges

- No proper mechanism to address quality issues in administrative divisions

- Inadequate support/resources/staff for the IQAU

- Heavy workload for the members of the IQAU/Faculty QA Committees as QA Activities are in addition to their routine academic/administrative work.

Thank you