



TERMS OF REFERENCE FOR ACDE INTERNAL QUALITY ASSURANCE ASSESSORS

AFRICAN COUNCIL FOR DISTANCE EDUCATION (ACDE) INTERNAL QUALITY ASSURANCE REVIEW OF INSTITUTIONAL SUBMISSIONS

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Background

The African Council for Distance Education (ACDE) is committed to promoting quality practices in open and distance learning (ODL) across Africa. As part of its institutional certification process, ACDE has established a six-stage process for assessing and enhancing the quality assurance systems of member institutions. One of these stages is the Gap Analysis stage, during which internal Quality Assurance Assessors conduct a preliminary review and gap analysis of the applying institution's documentation and readiness for formal review.

Purpose of the Assignment

The purpose of this Terms of Reference (ToR) is to outline the roles, responsibilities, and expectations of ACDE Internal QA Assessors during the Gap Analysis Stage of the institutional certification process. The gap analysis focuses on evaluating the availability, completeness, adequacy, and inclusion of verifiable evidence in key institutional documents, and on identifying gaps in relation to the specified quality standards. The goal is to ensure an objective, thorough, and consistent initial review of the institution's application and supporting documentation against ACDE's established quality assurance standards.

Objectives of the Gap Analysis

The Gap Analysis aims to:

- Verify completeness and adequacy of submitted documentation.
- Identify gaps or areas requiring improvement or clarification.
- Assess the institution's level of readiness to proceed to the review stage.
- Support institutions in addressing deficiencies prior to formal external review.

Scope

The scope of the analysis includes all relevant documents aligned with the specified quality standards. It involves identifying gaps, verifying the presence of required documentation, and assessing each document for availability, completeness, adequacy, and inclusion of verifiable evidence. Based on the findings, the review will determine the institution's readiness to proceed to the full external review stage.

Roles and Responsibilities of ACDE Internal QA Assessors

During the gap analysis stage, the ACDE QA Assessors will:

- a. Document Review
 - Review all application materials and evidence submitted by the institution.

- Ensure all required documents are present and appropriately completed.
 - Assess the quality, accuracy, and completeness of the submission.
- b. Gap Identification
 - Conduct a detailed gap analysis to identify any gap or areas of non-compliance in meeting the ACDE QA standards.
 - Document findings clearly, with reference to specific standards and criteria.
- c. Engagement with the Institution
 - Communicate with the institution to request additional documents or clarifications as needed.
 - If necessary, conduct a virtual site visit to verify the information provided in the self-assessment report and documentation.
- d. Reporting and Recommendation
 - Compile findings in a structured Gap Analysis Report.
 - Compile findings and makes recommendations or decisions regarding the institution's readiness to proceed to the full external review stage
 - Share feedback with the ACDE, outlining whether the institution is ready for the external review or requires further development.

Expected Deliverables

A completed Document Review Gap Analysis Checklist (as provided by ACDE). A comprehensive Gap Analysis Report, detailing:

- Areas of compliance and non-compliance.
- Recommendations for improvement.
- Required follow-up actions.

A readiness recommendation for moving to the next certification stage.

Timeframe

The ACDE QA Assessors are expected to complete the review within 4 weeks of receiving the full institutional submission.

Qualifications and Competencies

Assessors must:

- Have expertise in quality assurance in ODL higher education.
- Be familiar with ACDE's QA Framework and certification process.
- Demonstrate strong analytical, communication, and report-writing skills.
- Operate with impartiality, confidentiality, and professionalism.

Reporting Line

QA Assessors report to the ACDE Secretariat. All findings, recommendations, and reports will be submitted to the Secretariat for further action and communication with the institution.

Confidentiality and Ethical Conduct

All information reviewed during the Gap Analysis is confidential. ACDE QA Assessors must sign a confidentiality agreement and declare any potential conflicts of interest prior to the review.

Amendment of ToR

This ToR may be reviewed and revised by ACDE as necessary to reflect evolving practices, standards, or organizational needs.

Budget

Each assessor will be paid USD 200 upon successful completion of the assignment for one institutional assessment

Approval

This Terms of Reference is approved by:

Name: Professor Solomon Shibairo

Position: President ACDE & Vice Chancellor MMUST

Date: 25th May 2025

Appendices

To facilitate the review process, the following documents are attached as appendices to this Terms of Reference and are to be used by ACDE Internal Quality Assurance Assessors. A report must be submitted using the Document Review Gap Analysis Report Template, accompanied by the completed Document Review Checklist:

- i. Appendix A: Document Review Checklist
- ii. Appendix B: Criteria for Determining Readiness Rating per Quality Standard
- iii. Appendix C: Criteria for Determining Overall Readiness Rating
- iv. Appendix D: Document Review Gap Analysis Report Template

i. **Appendix A**
DOCUMENT REVIEW CHECKLIST

Institution: _____

Assessment Period: From _____ To _____

Assessor: _____

Instructions for Assessors

1. Fill in the Yes/No columns based on the availability, completeness, adequacy, and inclusion of verifiable evidence for each document.
2. Under “Document Title”, include any additional documents relevant to the corresponding Quality Standards that may not have been listed.
3. Use the “Provided” column to indicate whether the required document has been submitted.
4. Use the “Complete” column to assess whether the document is comprehensive and up to date.
5. Use the “Evidence-Based” column to indicate whether the document includes verifiable evidence such as data, performance metrics, referenced policies, feedback results, or other factual support to substantiate claims or statements made.
 - Yes – If the submitted document includes supporting data, references, or any factual evidence to back up its content.
 - No – If the document outlines claims or policies without providing supporting documentation or evidence.
6. Use the “Comments / Identified Gaps” column to note strengths, gaps, or issues (e.g., outdated policy, lack of implementation evidence).
7. Use the “Readiness Rating” to indicate whether the institution is Fully Ready, Partially Ready, or Not Ready for each of the quality standards (see Appendices B & C for more details).

S/N	Quality Standard	Document Title	Provided (Yes/No)	Complete (Yes/No)	Evidence-Based (Yes/No)	Comments / Identified Gaps	Readiness Rating
1	Vision, Mission and Planning	Vision and mission statements Strategic plan Annual operational plans Monitoring and evaluation Reports					

2	Organizational Management, Culture, and Leadership	Organogram Governance structure Leadership profiles Internal communication policy Decision-making processes					
3	The Learners	Student demographics Enrollment and graduation rates Student satisfaction surveys Equity and inclusion policies					
4	Human Resource and Development	Staff recruitment policy Staff development and training records Performance appraisal reports Human resource manual					
5	Programme Design and Development	Curriculum development framework Programme approval guidelines Stakeholder consultation records Curriculum review reports					
6	Teaching and Learning	Teaching and learning policy Course delivery strategies Use of technology in instruction Teaching evaluation reports					

7	Course Design and Development	Course development guidelines Sample course materials Instructional design standards Peer review reports					
8	Learner Support and Progression	Learner support policy Academic Advising Records Counseling services Retention and progression data					
9	Learner Assessment and Evaluation	Assessment policy Marking guides and rubrics Feedback mechanisms (e.g., surveys) External examination reports					
10	Learning Infrastructure and Resources	ICT infrastructure reports Library resources Accessibility reports Technical support services					
11	Research, Publications, and Consultancy Services	Research policy Staff research output Institutional journals or publications Consultancy reports					
12	Collaboration and Partnership	MOUs and partnership agreements Records of collaborative projects Exchange and					

		mobility programmes Industry linkage reports					
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ii. Appendix B

Criteria for Determining Readiness Rating per Quality Standard

To assess the institution's level of readiness for each quality standard, the following criteria will be used to assign a Readiness Rating of Fully Ready, Partially Ready, or Not Ready:

Readiness Rating	Description
Fully Ready	All required documents and evidence are available, complete, and adequate
Partially Ready	Most required documents are submitted but may be incomplete, partially adequate, or lack some verifiable evidence
Not Ready	Key documents or evidence are missing, incomplete, or inadequate

iii. Appendix C

Criteria for Determining Overall Readiness Rating

To assess the institution's overall readiness to proceed to the next stage of review, the following criteria will be used to assign an overall readiness rating of Fully Ready, Partially Ready, or Not Ready. This assessment is based on the aggregated readiness ratings of all quality standards, considering the number and significance of standards rated as Fully Ready, Partially Ready, or Not Ready, as well as the impact of any identified gaps on the institution's capacity to meet the ACDE Quality Assurance Framework requirements. Below is Readiness Decision Matrix showing how overall readiness ratings are determined based on the distribution of per-standard readiness ratings.

Institutional Overall Readiness Decision Matrix

Number of Standards Rated Ready	Percentage of Standards Ready (%)	Overall Readiness Rating	Comments / Actions
10 – 12	83% – 100%	Ready	Institution is ready to proceed to full review stage.
6 – 9	50% – 82%	Partially Ready	Institution should address gaps before full review.

0 – 5	0% – 49%	Not Ready	Institution requires significant improvements before review.
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iv. Appendix D

Document Review Gap Analysis Report Template

1. Executive Summary

- Brief overview of the purpose of the document review and gap analysis.
- Summary of key findings and overall readiness status.
- Recommendations for next steps.

2. Introduction

- Purpose and scope of the review.
- Brief description of the institution under review.
- Reference to the applicable quality standards/framework (e.g., ACDE QA Framework).

3. Methodology

- Description of the document review process.
- Tools and templates used (e.g., Document Review Checklist, Gap Analysis Template).
- Criteria for assessing document availability, completeness, adequacy, and verifiable evidence.
- Approach to assigning readiness ratings (Fully Ready, Partially Ready, Not Ready).

4. Summary of Document Review Findings

- Overview of document submissions.
- General observations about document quality and compliance.
- Identification of common issues or trends.

5. Gap Analysis by Quality Standard

Quality Standard 1: Vision, Mission and Planning

- Assessment Summary: Strengths and weaknesses observed in the submitted documents.
- Gaps Identified: Specific missing, incomplete, or inadequate documents or evidence.
- Readiness Rating: Fully Ready / Partially Ready / Not Ready
- Recommendations: Actions needed to address gaps.

Quality Standard 2: Organizational Management, Culture, and Leadership

- Assessment Summary: Strengths and weaknesses observed in the submitted documents.
- Gaps Identified: Specific missing, incomplete, or inadequate documents or evidence.
- Readiness Rating: Fully Ready / Partially Ready / Not Ready
- Recommendations: Actions needed to address gaps.

(Repeat this section for each of the 12 quality standards)

6. Overall Readiness Assessment

- Consolidated readiness rating for the institution based on individual standard ratings (see Appendix C).
- Summary of critical gaps affecting overall readiness.
- Institutional capacity to address gaps before the full review stage.

7. Recommendations

- Prioritized list of actions for the institution to improve document quality and compliance.
- Suggested timelines or milestones for addressing gaps.
- Any support or resources needed from ACDE or other bodies.

8. Conclusion

- Final remarks on the institution's preparedness.
- Next steps for the review process.

9. Appendices

Appendix A: Completed Document Review Checklist

Appendix B: Document Review Gap Analysis Report

Appendix C (if applicable): Additional supporting evidence or reference documents