

11. QUALITY ASSURANCE OF CONSULTANCY SERVICES

11.1 Policy Document

The conduct of consultancy at the University shall be governed by the University of Zambia Consultancy Policy. The aim of the policy is to provide guidelines that promote and foster the environment conducive for undertaking consultancy and community services in order to solve problems of the local industry, avail industry with specialised expertise and facilities for design, adaptation and development of new technologies and processes.

11.2 UNZA Gateway

The University established the Business Development Unit (BDU) as a support unit under the Vice-Chancellor's Office to manage and develop new businesses and consultancy work. The BDU consists of a Director, Business Development and a Manager.

The business name for the BDU is “*UNZA Gateway*”. UNZA Gateway developed a business plan that is based on the premise that all business and contractual matters regarding consultancy, contract research and other business activities of the University will be managed by the BDU.

UNZA Gateway shall be the primary centre of the University's consultancy function and shall fulfill a supporting, coordinating, facilitating, capacity-building, empowering and quality assurance role. UNZA Gateway itself may not implement projects, but will initiate partnerships with industry and communities and facilitate and support processes that will strengthen contract research, consultancy and community interaction.

The objective of centralising the coordination and management of consultancy, contract research and international projects is to create more transparency and synergy in the University's business relationships with external parties as well as to support the implementation of the Research Policy and the Consultancy Policy. Therefore, UNZA Gateway shall:

- (a) provide a secretariat which will liaise with various schools, directorates, institutes and departments to assess institutional and schools' capacity to undertake consultancy;
- (b) promote the institutional capacity of staff to undertake various consultancy work;
- (c) promote consultancy practice throughout the University;
- (d) develop a database of staff and associate consultants expertise;
- (e) identify the physical resources such as laboratories and equipment that can be utilised for consultancy work;
- (f) assist various schools and staff to identify and bid for various consultancy opportunities within Zambia and elsewhere;
- (g) pay the upfront fees for tender documents, bid bonds insurance and any other costs necessary for processing consultancies;
- (h) develop the staff capacity to carry out consultancies through seminars and workshops;
- (i) develop guidelines and procedures for efficient and effective execution of consultancy work;
- (j) evaluate and monitor all consultancies being undertaken under the auspices of the University;
- (k) scout for consultancies announced and advertised in various media and provide an online searchable database of open and available consultancies to staff;
- (l) create a database of consultancy awarding institutions such as the Government, World Bank and donors; and

- (m) develop a web based information sharing system on consultancies to keep the staff fully informed.

11.2.1 Management of Consultancy Service Projects

Each consultancy service project shall have a project management structure. A team member must be identified who will act as the Principal Consultant. The precise functions of the Principal Consultant may vary and be influenced by the demands of individual projects. However, in general, the functions of the Principal Consultant are as follows:

- (a) project design, intellectual leadership and development of project tools;
- (b) day-to-day management, coordination of sub-consultants and client engagement;
- (c) client liaison at key meetings and presentations to clients and other stakeholders;
- (d) management and coordination of team members' activities;
- (e) monitoring progress and performance;
- (f) resolving problems;
- (g) coordinating the production of project outputs (reports, presentations, products, etc.); and
- (h) quality assurance of outputs.

The names, contact details and precise roles of the project members shall be identified and agreed in the project proposal.

11.3 Quality of Consultancy Services

11.3.1 Approval of Consultancy Services

11.3.1.1 General Guidelines

The University shall promote a culture in which high standards of personal conduct and integrity are manifested in the provision of consulting services. The University shall require that all those engaged in consulting services adhere to good and professional practices. Guidelines for reviewers of quality assurance and project approval shall take into account the following aspects:

11.3.1.2 Knowledge and Intellectual Abilities

- (a) Knowledge base
- (b) Cognitive abilities
- (c) Creativity
- (d) Registration with statutory professional bodies

11.3.1.3 Personal Attributes and Effectiveness

- (a) Honesty
- (b) Ethics
- (c) Openness
- (d) Accountability
- (e) Responsibility
- (f) Diligence
- (g) Commitment
- (h) Self-management
- (i) Contribution to professional and career development

11.3.1.4 Governance and Organization

- (a) Professional conduct
- (b) Consultancy management
- (c) Management of financial resources

11.3.1.5 Engagement, Influence and Impact

- (a) Working with other professionals
- (b) Communication and dissemination
- (c) Impact of the outcomes

11.3.1.6 Ethical Approval

As outlined in the Consultancy Policy of the University, if there is cause to believe that a consultancy project requires special ethical consideration it should be presented to the relevant School Ethics Committee for approval before work begins. The client shall need to agree to the University's scrutiny of their activity with respect to the proposed consultancy for the purpose of deciding whether or not to engage in the contract.

11.3.2 Quality Control

The scope of services to be provided, including methods to be followed and outputs to be generated, should be discussed and agreed with the client at the commissioning and project inception stages. Each project will begin with an inception phase, during which the Principal Consultant will explore client requirements and how these will be met in greater detail, scoping out study challenges and responses. This inception phase will culminate in the production of a project inception report which, together with a project brief, contract and proposal or tender documents, will provide the framework for the delivery of the consultancy. It will be the agreed reference document for methodology, deliverables and timescales for the commission.

The project inception report will identify the:

- (a) agreed project objectives;
- (b) project timetable;
- (c) a statement of methodology or approach;
- (d) outputs to be delivered;
- (e) agreed budget and payment schedule;
- (f) initial findings or recommendations resulting from scoping tasks; and
- (g) project risks and risk management measures to be put in place.

Once agreed, the project inception report will be signed off by the Principal Consultant and the client's representative.

11.3.3 Contract Monitoring

The Principal Consultant will be responsible for the ongoing monitoring of the contract with reference to the project inception report and project contract document. The Principal Consultant will:

- (a) assess progress against the objectives, deliverables and timescale set out in the project inception report;
- (b) provide ongoing liaison with client representatives via email and telephone as required (responding to requests for discussion and information promptly);
- (c) be responsible for the day-to-day management and co-ordination of sub-consultants, just as he or she is responsible for the day-to-day management and co-ordination of University staff within the project team; and
- (d) receive concerns about the performance or conduct of sub-consultants for resolution.

11.3.4 Performance Monitoring and Reporting

At intervals agreed in the project inception report, and at least once every two weeks, the Principal Consultant will provide the client with a formal update on progress. The proofing and quality assurance of all outputs will be undertaken in-house by the Project Team (and if required, by senior staff outside of the project team) prior to sign-off and submission to the client. Final outputs (reports, presentations, products, etc.) will be agreed with the client representative or client group.

11.3.5 Complaints Procedure

Complaints should be addressed to the Principal Consultant, who will seek to address and resolve any problems together with the Project Team. Where no resolution of issues is forthcoming within an agreed or acceptable time, complaints should then be addressed to the Dean of the appropriate school. If issues are still not resolved to the satisfaction of the client the issue will be subjected to the legal provisions in the contract document.

11.3.6 Post-Commission Review

The University is committed to continuous improvement and to learning lessons from each commission its staff undertake. At the end of each commission a member of the School Consultancy Committee will undertake a questionnaire with the client representative to assess performance and gather project feedback. Questionnaire findings shall be disseminated to the consultant team for discussion, review and action to ensure improvement where it is necessary or beneficial. The outcome of post-commission review informs the identification of staff training and development priorities.

11.3.7 Integration with Other Responsibilities and Commissions

The School or Unit Consultancy Committee shall monitor the workloads of all staff engaged in the delivery of consultancy services closely. The University recognises the importance of ensuring that staff delivering these services are able to provide the highest standards of service. The following shall be considered in approving consultancy commissions:

- (a) in putting forward a team for any commission the University takes into account known future commitments to ensure that no member of staff is over-committed and that sufficient flexibility is retained;
- (b) before agreeing or tendering for a project, the Principal Consultant will make an assessment of the time required to deliver high quality outputs that meet the needs of the client. Where possible, they will seek to confirm this understanding with the client;
- (c) the Principal Consultant will also make an assessment of the other demands on their time and that of other members of the study team. These other demands may include existing consultancy and contract research commitments, teaching, and research; and
- (d) the capacity of all of the University's staff is monitored and assessed through regular discussions with line managers and heads of department. A longer term assessment of capacity and priorities is provided through the Annual Academic Review process through which staff and line managers identify, and then monitor, commitments.

11.3.8 Quality Assurance Management Framework Review

This Quality Assurance Framework for Consultancy and Community Services shall be reviewed every 12 months in order to ensure that it continues to be fit for purpose and evolves to meet client expectations. This annual review shall be based on:

- (a) workshops with staff engaged in the management and delivery of consultancy and contract research services;
- (b) analysis of project performance metrics;
- (c) the results of client satisfaction surveys;

11.4 Quality Assurance of Continuous Professional Development Courses

11.4.1 Background

A Continuous Professional Development (CPD) short course is a presentation or skills development programme that requires less than 80 hours of teaching contact or does not extend over a period of more than 12 consecutive weeks. All courses that exceed the 'short' course limits will be required to have quality assurance procedures (including approval, modification, monitoring and review) aligned with procedures for award-bearing courses or alternatively a customised set of procedures agreed by Senate.

Reference should be made to Appendix D1 for more details on quality assurance procedures for non-credit bearing short courses.

11.4.2 Approval of Short Courses

Short courses presented under the name of the University shall be approved by the Deans on recommendation of the Heads of Departments. The responsibility for the quality assurance of short courses shall reside in schools, which shall act on behalf of the Senate. The QCC in schools shall assess the processes for the academic quality assurance of short courses and recommend those processes to the Dean.

Short courses presented by support service units, such as the Centre for Information and Communication Technologies, shall be approved by the Director or Head of the unit on behalf the Senate. During the approval process, and at his or her own discretion, the head may consult experts in an appropriate academic department. The heads therefore accept the same responsibilities as those of the Deans of schools regarding short courses presented by support service units.

11.4.3 Certification and Verification

Participants who successfully complete the requirements of a short course must be presented with either a certificate of competence or certificate of attendance which shall bear the University logo and be signed by the Dean or Head of a unit in which the course was offered. A register of all participants of the course and their overall performance must be kept by the unit for future reference and verification.