Socioeconomic Institute for Advanced Studies (SIAS)

Pioneering Socioeconomic Solutions
& Development by Multidisciplinary Holistic Academic Programs

SIAS Quality Assurance Manaul

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One- Introduction

Broadly viewed, quality can be described as the totality of features and characteristics of a service or object that bear on its ability to satisfy the stated or implied needs. One of the most widely accepted definitions is "fitness for purpose". There are two fundamentally distinct approaches to viewing "fitness to purpose". One approach pays particular attention to intrinsic qualities, that is, basic values and ideals such as capacities of higher education to respond to the changing needs of society. The format of attention to quality will vary according to whether the emphasizes extrinsic qualities such as capacities of higher education to respond to the changing needs of society.

The format of attention to quality will vary according to whether the emphasis is on intrinsic quality i.e the development of an erudite class of individuals who are fascinated by knowledge for knowledge's sake or on the extrinsic quality i.e development of individuals directly responsive to socio-economic needs of society. The two approaches are in line with two dominant perceptions of higher education. One perception sees it as being a "social institution", whose main functions are the cultivation of good citizenship, the preservation, and transmission of cultural heritage and the formation of skills and character in the students.

The other perception emphasizes that higher education is an "industry" that sells goods and services, trains an important part of the workforce and fosters economic development. The quality of such goods and services, therefore, cannot be assumed to be good unless they are independently tested and proved to meet professionally set standards. In systems where the emphasis is on intrinsic quality, the mechanisms to check and monitor quality tend to be implied and systemic rather than explicitly stated and measured.

Therefore, this SIAS manual that focus on Quality Assurance and continual improvement focus on the systematic and comprehensive approaches to quality assurance processes and policies that affect all the institution essential services.

This manual help SIAS to be accurate in the academic planning and in line with the institutional mission and strategic goals while it is being adequately resourced. The quality assurance (QA) handbook addressing all the affected activities is in evidence and is available to all departments for consultation by all staff members.

SIAS management would depend on the QA processes and audits in its key quality improvement priorities, specially in regards to teaching and learning. The processes here help identify and have appropriate resources allocated to enable improvements within a given timeframe.

Following the law No 010/2021 of 16/02/2021 & the Ministerial Order No 001/MINEDUC/2021 of 20/10/2021, the QA processes also would ensure that SIAS staff development policies and strategies would lead to better staff competence. Regular reviews of the effectiveness SIAS systems would help in the following:
1. QA for support for learning and teaching;
2. The availability of up-to-date data to inform policy, planning, implementation and review of teaching and learning;
3. Clear and efficient systems are in place in SIAS for the design and approval of new programmes, courses and modules.

4. The requirements are consistently applied and regularly monitored.

The emphasis on the need to employ explicit and systematic measures to check and monitor quality a relatively new phenomenon and is a manifestation of a shift of emphasis in the perception of the purpose of higher education i.e the need to respond to societal demands comes first.

In this context SIAS Quality Assurance essentially means measures, or a set of measures, taken by an institution to satisfy itself and demonstrate to its clients that it has the constant capacity to keep its promise to deliver goods and services of the desired standard.

From its foundation to the present, SIAS has explicitly pursued a combination of the two approaches to higher education, i.e installing of intrinsic values and development of practical capabilities among its postgraduate students.

Two - Role of QA in Safeguarding the SIAS Outcome
2.1 QA Process
As a higher learning institutions, SIAS regards quality as a crucial factor in building a reputation and winning admiration and support from the public. Responsibility for maintaining and promoting the quality of academic programs would be vested with the SIAS Council/Senate.

This QA manual target to ensure the content and academic standard of any course of study offered by the institution. The manual helps to formulate by-laws regarding eligibility of persons for admission to any course of study. Also, the manual formulate the standard of proficiency to be gained in each examination.

The QA process reviews help decide whether any candidate has attained required proficiency and therefore fit for receiving the particular academic award. Such reviews largely focus on the academic contents and processes of the particular programs.

The QA procedures and policies would ensure that SIAS organs are that is responsible for monitoring and ascertaining academic quality have adequate representation from the broader public. The issues that the reviews tend to focus on are often abstract, theoretical and sometimes somewhat mechanical.

The establishment of QA mechanisms for monitoring and evaluating the soundness of what was happening inside SIAS. This QA manual assist and support SIAS internal quality assurance activities in order to improve the quality of their output. It also assess or evaluate designated processes and policies in SIAS against a set of standards, benchmarks or the intended outcomes and whether they are appropriate, adequate and effective.

The QA manual help SIAS to reach its specified purpose, including the type of recognition, and accreditation, besides funding. The QA focus on the curriculum contents and examination system and the capacity of the units to deliver in relevance to the intended products. The SIAS QA policy focus is on the institution's policies,

systems, strategies and resources for quality management of the core functions of teaching, research, and public service.

2.2 Quality Assurance in the Policies and Procedures at SIAS
Evidence that the SIAS cares for quality is available in the rules, regulations, and guides governing inputs, processes, and outputs of academic programmes as well as other facets of SIAS operations. Thus there are:
    (i) Formal admission conditions and requirements that filter out candidates.
    (ii) Recruitment, appraisal, and staff development requirements and procedures that ensure that only quality staff members are allowed to teach;
    (iii) Stipulations regarding course contents, structure and assessment; and
    (iv) Examination regulations and degree classification procedures.

There is clear evidence that the SIAS wants to make quality a matter of central concern in all its endeavors. The statements of vision, mission, and objectives stated in the Strategic Plan are a testimony of this commitment.

Three- Main Objectives of QA Policy
The main goal of the quality assurance policy is to ensure that relevant and appropriate academic standards are achieved and good quality education is provided to students by encouraging and supporting continuous quality improvement in institutional as well as in programmes and research management. In particular, the QA policy aims to achieve the following objectives:
    (i) To safeguard and improve the academic standards and quality of education at the SIAS;
    (ii) To ensure the integrity of the academic awards of the SIAS ;
    (iii) To develop and maintain, through enhanced support processes, quality academic programmes appropriate to the academic strengths of the SIAS where a recognizable market has been clearly identified;
    (iv) To ensure that all programmes are of high standard and of continued relevance to graduate labor markets and the needs of the workforce in the country;
    (v) To continually improve quality of community service programmes offered by the SIAS;
    (vi) To enhance constant improvement of internal support services provided to students and staff;
    (vii) To develop and refine internal quality assurance and enhancement mechanisms that are appropriate and to apply such mechanisms systematically across all programmes offered by the SIAS, all services rendered to the society and all support services provided to students and staff; and
    (viii) To develop and sustain a culture of quality seeking and quality assurance among members of the SIAS community.

Four- Scope of the QA Policy and Strategy
Quality is the outcome of interactions of many factors. All such factors are within the scope of this Policy. However, certain factors tend to stand out conspicuously as major determinants of quality in higher education processes. The policy therefore embraces, applies and is of particular interest and relevance to the following:

(i) All SIAS staff, temporary and permanent, who are active in teaching, research and providing any form of support service to the core functions of the SIAS;

(ii) All students registered with the SIAS;

(iii) All infrastructure, learning resources, governance/ institutional setup, information dissemination structure and social amenities belonging to the SIAS Ultimately attention to quality has to become an embedded feature of the institutional culture. The entire institution has to view quality as an overarching principle of all its operations.

SIAS quality strategy seeks to establish and assure appropriate standards for its awards and to enhance the student learning experience. It is evidenced through a variety of mechanisms and processes at all levels within the institution. Although special circumstances may apply to specific programmes, these underlying principles apply to all programmes of study. Thus, SIAS quality strategy has four major objectives:

1. To ensure the integrity of the academic awards of the Institution;
2. To enable Senate to execute responsibility for the academic standards of the Institution's awards;
3. To enhance the student experience in the context of the achievement of the Institution's mission and its educational objectives;
4. To enable and support staff in the delivery of the highest quality provision;

In achieving these objectives to:

a. Utilise rigorous and effective quality mechanisms that locate responsibility at an appropriate level within the Institution;
b. Review the Institution's procedures to ensure efficient and effective processes and;
c. Ensure the engagement of staff with quality improvement.

Five- Quality Assurance Structures

The Rector, as the institution's Chief Executive, is assisted by the Executive Council. The principal organs of the Institution are the Board of Directors and the Senate. The Quality Committee, which reports to the Senate, and is chaired by the Vice Rector Academic, has delegated responsibility for academic quality assurance. The Institution's academic structure is based upon Faculties, which may be composed of Departments. Deans of Faculty are responsible for academic leadership and management in their faculty. They report to the Vice Rector Academic.

5.1 QA Procedures For The Validation Of Modules And Programmes

All SIAS new taught programmes must be validated, using an approval process set out by the Institution. Validation or revalidation of programmes involves four stages:

1. Programme teams fill in a Programme Proposal Form (Appendix A), with the advice of Quality Office.
2. Programmes are 'costed' in terms of staff input by the Programme Team; Finance later translate this into a staff cost in terms of salaries/money. The Programme Proposal Forms are approved within Faculty, and the Dean 'signs them off' as fitting within the Faculty Plan. The forms are also scrutinised by the DVC (Academic & Research) to ensure they conform to the Institution's overall strategy for taught programmes, and the DVC (Admin & Finance) to confirm resources. Permission is given to proceed.

5.2 Anticipated benefits of the QA Policy

It is anticipated that successful implementation of this policy will result in:

  (i) Improved student performance and success in learning;
  (ii) Improved work performance of academic and other staff;
  (iii) Fuller satisfaction of society's and stakeholders' interests, expectations and needs;
  (iv) Enhanced transparency, society's confidence, and thus internal and external material support;
  (v) Improved institutional and public image, and thus enhances relations with stakeholders and the wider society;
  (vi) Enhanced capacity to compete with other higher learning institutions nationally, regionally and globally; and
  (vii) More focused approach to the implementation of the SIAS's mission activities.

5.3 Policy Statements And Assumptions
5.3.1 Policy statements

In the effort to realize its vision, mission and objectives, SIAS shall consistently monitor and systematically evaluate the implementation of all its existing policies, regulations and procedures and, where such instruments are lacking, develop appropriate ones, so as to ensure that all these guides are in line with its vision, mission, and overall objectives.

In addition, the SIAS shall ensure that at all times it has in place well stipulated and widely understood criteria for judging performance standards in all its core mission activities. This entails compilation and distribution of a comprehensive quality assurance handbook. In line these guides, SIAS shall constantly monitor and evaluate all its day to day activities in the core mission areas of teaching/learning, research, service to the public and support services to students and staff:

5.3.2. Teaching/ Learning

To ensure quality in the area of teaching and learning, SIAS shall:

(i)   Periodically review teaching programmes in order to confirm the extent to which:
(ii)   Programmes are meaningfully structured and organized;
(iii) The goals and learning objectives are achieved;
(iv)   Programmes not only meet student needs but actually provide an experience that lives up to their highest expectations;
(v)   Programmes help in the attainment of the SIAS's academic vision and mission;
(vi)   Teaching and learning constantly address critical national human resources requirements;
(vii) The quality and quantity of available human, material and financial resources meet the programme requirements; and
(viii) Programmes are both viable and relevant.
(ix)   Ensure that establishment and running of teaching programmes/ units proceed on the principle of rational use of resources and cost effectiveness;
(x)   Regularly arrange an external evaluation of the quality of the teaching programmes offered by its units in terms of their contents, delivery methods, and internal assessment processes. This will entail a reconsideration of the

suitability and effectiveness of existing practices, such as an external examination system and academic audits, with a view to improving their efficacy or/and introducing new appropriate procedures;

(xi) Involve professional bodies, potential employers and other relevant sections of the society in reviewing and evaluating academic programmes through curriculum review workshops, tracer studies and other appropriate mechanisms;

(xii) As a matter of procedure, ensure that all major curriculum reviews or introduction of new programmes are informed by stakeholder inputs; and

(xiii) Every programme shall undergo at least one review within a span of five years.

5.3.3 QA in Research

In fulfilling the obligation to ensure high quality in the various research undertakings carried out in its constituent units, SIAS shall consistently monitor and evaluate the quality and quantity of the research activities conducted, with a specific focus on:

(i) Relevance and appropriateness of the set priorities;

(ii) Adequacy of financial allocations to research activities;

(iii) Proper structuring of research projects/ programmes to ensure relevance in graduate teaching and training of junior staff;

(iv) Adequacy in quality and quantity of research outputs;

(v) Effectiveness of dissemination channels and impacts of research results;

(vi) Adherence to existing SIAS policies and procedures relating to research and publications; and

(vii) Integration of research outputs into teaching/learning.

5.3.4 QA in Public services

SIAS shall constantly monitor and frequently evaluate the quality and quality of public services rendered by its staff and students, with a view to assuring the highest possible quality in terms of:

(i) Relevance of the priorities set institutionally and by individual units;

(ii) Adequacy and quality of outputs in public service provision; and

(iii) The overall impact of SIAS services to the public.

5.3.5 Policy Assumptions

SIAS has set goals that help provide quality contribution of the postgraduate programs that address the needs assessment and skills gaps results. The programs address labor market and development needs of Rwanda, the EAC and then the rest of the world.

SIAS abide by rules, regulations and quality criteria developed internally to guide the implementation of its set objects in all spheres of its operation, particularly in teaching/ learning, projects, research, and service to the community.

In ensuring quality in the area of teaching and learning, SIAS commits itself to continue seeking the highest possible standards in respect of input resources, implementation processes and the final outputs.

5.3.4 QA Input Resources

The major inputs into the teaching/ learning process are academic and technical staff, students, teaching programmes and materials, and an efficient administrative structure. SIAS is committed to ensuring that its inputs are of the highest possible quality, and to this end, it shall:

(i) Recruit and engage the best available academic and technical personnel, selected on the basis of established and regularly updated quality criteria, and through an absolutely transparent procedure;

(ii) Admit its students from among the highest qualified candidates available, by using set and frequently reviewed selection criteria, following a fair and absolutely transparent procedure;

(iii) Offer academic programmes that are relevant locally and internationally, in terms of both academic content and planned professional training;

(iv) Seek adequate financing of the SIAS's core mission activities: teaching/learning, research, public service and provision of internal support services; and

(v) Strive to provide the necessary learning materials and teaching/learning infrastructure for effective delivery of all teaching programmes on offer.

5.3.5 Implementation Processes

In carrying out its core function of facilitating learning SIAS shall ensure that:

(i) Its teaching programmes are effectively delivered through the use of appropriate technologies and pedagogic skills;

(ii) Delivery of its teaching programmes emphasizes practical training where appropriate, and therefore provides for the development of a good balance between academic knowledge and practical skills; and

(iii) Its academic and technical staff is sufficiently motivated to effectively fulfill their leadership obligations in the teaching/learning process.

5.3.6 QA of Outputs

The ultimate goal for the SIAS's engagement in its core activities of teaching and learning is the production of knowledgeable and skilled graduates and, through the post-graduation activities of these products, impact on the society notably and positively. SIAS therefore always anticipates that its graduates shall demonstrate excellent knowledge, skill, creativity and appropriate social values in their post-graduation engagements and that they will, therefore, make significant contributions towards the common imperative of improving the quality of life in society.

Because research and teaching/learning are so inextricably intertwined, SIAS gives equal weight to the two processes and is thus equally committed to achieving the highest possible quality of research outputs. In ensuring quality in research SIAS shall ensure that:

(i) The policy priorities and regulations guiding research at the SIAS are at all times relevant, operational and effective;

(ii) Conscious efforts are constantly made to secure and rationally utilize research funding and facilities;

(iii) At all times the existing research policy and agendas are implemented vigilantly and successfully in light of the set objectives and performance criteria;

(iv) All research activities undertaken in various units and by individuals are properly managed, conducted and evaluated;

(v) Implementation of the various research projects constantly take into account ethical and environmental consideration;

(vi) A robust system is in place for ensuring that research outcomes are effectively disseminated, leading eventually to tangible contributions towards the improvement of quality of life in society;

(vii) Research results are continually integrated into teaching/ learning and, where applicable, their commercial value enhanced and exploited.

Six- QA of Institutional Set-up

6.1 Ensuring Governance of SIAS

To achieve its core mission goals, SIAS shall operate on the basis of an effective governance structure, consisting of administrative structures and participatory organs or committees. SIAS shall maintain clear lines of authority and accountability while maximizing transparency and legitimacy through the effective and efficient participation of stakeholders in major decisionmaking processes. In creating and constantly improving such a governance system, SIAS shall abide by the provisions of its charter and the principles emanating there from.

6.2 Student and Staff Support Services

A favorable general environment is needed for students and staff to effectively engage in a productive education process. SIAS, therefore, takes the responsibility to continually strive to create and maintain this environment. In this regard, the SIAS shall ensure that:

(i) Its physical infrastructure sufficiently supports the core mission activities of teaching/learning, research and provision of services to the public;

(ii) Reasonably good and accessible social services are made available to students and staff. These shall include catering, healthcare, recreational, academic advising and mentoring, social counseling and other services; and

(iii) Students' learning is continually enhanced through the constant adoption of the latest innovations in educational media and technology and in the professional field of pedagogy.

6.3 Administrative Structure

6.3.1 SIAS-wide Quality Assurance Office

Whereas the SIAS and its various operational units shall continue to strive to meet set quality standards in carrying out their day to day activities, there shall be a SIAS-wide Quality Assurance Office (QAO), whose task will be to constantly monitor and evaluate Quality Assurance processes at SIAS.

The pivotal role of this organ is to determine whether or not quality standards set internally for measuring performance in all core operational areas of the SIAS are constantly met and updated. The QAO shall spearhead the SIAS QA system, which includes all implementation units and all measures they take to maintain high-performance standards.

6.3.2 Constitution of the QAO

The QAO shall be headed by a SIAS Quality Assurance Director (QAD), who shall be assisted by a deputy. The Office shall, in addition, have a small secretariat consisting

of an administrative secretary and two auditors. The QAD will be appointed by the SIAS Vice Chancellor (VC)

6.3.3 Functions of the QAO

The QAO shall be a SIAS level organ, responsible for the overall management of quality assurance activities at SIAS which help its activities to focus on monitoring and evaluation of all Quality Assurance operations at SIAS, including the following:

(i) Ensuring that set performance standards in all aspects of SIAS functions are appropriate and relevant;

(ii) Developing and periodically updating general operational manuals to guide SIAS level QA operations, as well as instruments for use in internal evaluations;

(iii) Monitoring /implementation of quality assurance activities in all units as per the set standards;

(iv) Providing advice and guidance to implementation units in the execution of QA activities;

(v) Coordination of internal self-evaluation of quality assurance systems;

(vi) Analysis of all QA reports (students' course evaluation, External Examiners 'reports, external audit reports, etc.) and identification of issues arising from them for the attention of the management at departmental, faculty/school, college and SIAS levels;

(vii) Facilitation of external evaluation of SIAS and its academic programmes;

(viii) Provision of external evaluation results to management and units; (ix) Monitoring of implementation of internal and external evaluation recommendations;

(ix) Advising the VC on QA matters relating to teaching/learning, research, and consultancy, and matters relating to internal support services and provisions in general;

(x) Synthesis of topical QA matters in higher education (arising from debates and practices in the regional and global contexts) and updating the SIAS community and Management accordingly;

(xi) Updating the VC on the functioning of the SIAS QA system and on the overall quality status of the SIAS;

(xii) Linking SIAS with professional bodies that are relevant to its various curricula.

6.3.4 Role of the QAD

The Quality Assurance Director shall be the chief executive of the QAB and shall, in that capacity:

(i) Oversee the functions and responsibilities of the QAB;

(ii) Be accountable to the Chairman of Board of Promoters and Chairman of BoD;

(iii) Maintain a working contact with the DVC-Academic & Research, and DVC-Admin & Finance on QA matters touching on their respective jurisdictions;

(iv) Forward to the DVCA, Quality Assurance matters requiring tabling at senate, SMB and Executive Committees;

(v) Provide technical support on QA matters at Senate, SMB and EC;

(vi) Represent SIAS at regional and other international forums on higher education QA matters;

(vii) Constantly updating SIAS on new global developments in Quality Assurance matters for Higher Education Institutions.

6.3.5 Responsibilities of QA Directors

The deputy of the QAD shall assist the QAD in all day to day activities and responsibilities. His/Her tasks shall, among other things, include:

(i) Initiating action plans and carrying out activities falling under their respective sections;

(ii) Working hand in hand with respective unit Heads on QA matters falling under their respective sections;

(iii) Carry out all duties assigned to them from time to time by the QAD; AND

(iv) Deputize for the QAD whenever the need arises.

6.3.6 QAO Linkage with Other Units

The QAO shall be a pivotal technical unit responsible for QA at the institutional level. It shall be directly accountable to the SIAS's Board of Promoters, the Chairman of Board of Directors, and shall serve as the latter officer's secretariat on QA matters.

The QAO shall maintain a close working relationship with the two DVCs by keeping them informed of newly arising QA issues falling under their respective jurisdictions and by providing them with technical advice on such issues. During the deliberations on QA issues by various council committees the VC may severally or jointly call upon the QAO's chief executive or his/her deputy to make a technical presentation on their behalf.

The QAO shall also maintain a close working relationship with all units, academic and non academic, on matters pertaining to quality assurance in their spheres of operation. It shall update the unit heads with new information on QA issues as well as supplying them with various evaluation schedules and instruments. It will facilitate unit and programme evaluations and provide the unit heads with feedback on external and internal evaluation results; and shall advise them on proper implementation of improvements recommended by review teams.

In its monitoring role, the QAO shall ensure that the units adhere to established QA procedures and carry out scheduled activity appropriately and in a timely fashion. In the evolving era of increased external monitoring and harmonization of quality standards in higher education provision, the QAO shall be a link organ between the SIAS and external QA agencies. It shall prepare and submit SIAS portfolios to the HEC and other external bodies involved in mandatory or voluntary accreditation/ re-accreditation of the institution and its programmes. Accordingly, the QAO shall organize and coordinate all external evaluation activities, and shall ultimately report (to units and the SIAS Management) on the results of such external evaluations. The Office shall also link SIAS with professional bodies whose concerns and interests have bearing on the SIAS's curricula development and implementation.

6.4 QA Roles of the Implementation Units

For the purpose of this policy the caption "implementation unit" refers to a school, faculty, institute, center, directorate or any other basic segment of the SIAS establishment, with a primary responsibility for planning and carrying out activities aimed at meeting a set of established institutional objectives.

Implementing units shall have the primary responsibility not only to achieve and maintain high-quality standards in carrying out their mandated roles but also to

regularly conduct self-evaluations. Their role in the SIAS QA system shall therefore include:

(i) Implementation their mandated roles effectively and in the most cost-effective manner so as to contribute to the effort to achieve the umbrella SIAS goals and objectives;

(ii) Developing and periodically revising unit-specific performance standards, and striving to meet those standards in practice;

(iii) Preparing unit-specific QA procedures, operational manuals, and measurement instruments, and providing the QAO with copies of such documents;

(iv) Conducting regular self-evaluations to determine the extent to which it meets the set performance standards in practice, and using the results of such evaluations to improve practice;

(v) Providing the QAO with self-assessment reports in readiness for SIAS-level and external evaluations;

(vi) Implementing the recommendations resulting from internal and external evaluations and providing the QAD with timely reports on the status of such implementation; and

(vii) Keeping staff, students and other stakeholders informed of the evaluation results and efforts being made to implement the recommended improvements.

6.5 QA Roles of Participatory Organs

Participatory Organs include SIAS program dean, faculty, SIAS boards and Senate. The core QA role of these organs shall be to oversee quality in their respective areas of jurisdiction, taking into account the concerns that gave rise to the promulgation of this policy, among other roles, their specific functions shall include:

(i) Ensuring that their respective unit/operational area has in place appropriate quality standards to guide the implementation of its mandated functions and that the standards are regularly reviewed for sustaining relevance;

(ii) Regularly assessing the performance of implementers in the respective units/operational area in light of the set quality criteria and recommending improvement measures to implementers and /or relevant organs within or above the implementation unit concerned; and

(iii) Frequently uprising implementation of recommended improvements and directing corrective measures against poor implementation.

The QAO shall constantly monitor and periodically evaluate the functioning of these participatory organs to determine the extent to which they play their roles as per established regulations and schedules. The QAO shall also provide technical guidance to the organs wherever the need arises.

6.6 Implementation Strategies

SIAS shall utilize a variety of strategies and instruments to evaluate the implementation of its core mission activities. The main strategies include surveys of students', alumni, employer and community satisfaction, as well as institutional audits and programme reviews, both external and internal.

6.7 Student Satisfaction Surveys

The Quality Assurance Office (QAO) shall regularly and systematically organize student satisfaction surveys. These surveys will aim at giving the students an

opportunity to provide feedback on their experience with individual modules, courses and teaching programmes as a whole. In carrying out this task, the QAO shall design appropriate tools for collection views, coordinating data collection activities and analyzing the results.

Capturing of student experiences and opinions may be done by use of a questionnaire, a structured interview or any other appropriate method. The QAO shall eventually disseminate the survey results to teaching units and staff and shall coordinate the formulation and implementation of strategies to improve on problem areas revealed by the evaluation results.

6.8 Employer Satisfaction

Surveys Departments, faculties, and schools, in collaboration with the QAO, shall conduct employee satisfaction surveys on regular basis. The surveys will provide vital information on the relevance of the teaching programmes on offer and on ways in which they can be made more responsive to the market needs. The SIAS-wide employer satisfaction surveys shall be conducted by the QAO every five years, but units may do their own surveys more frequently, and the QAO may ask particular units to carry out employee satisfaction surveys with respect to particular teaching programmes.

6.9 Alumni Satisfaction

Surveys In addition to the employee satisfaction surveys, the teaching units and QAO shall regularly conduct alumni satisfaction surveys on a regular basis. The purpose of such surveys shall be to know from former students the extent to. Which their studies at SIAS have been relevant to their post-graduation needs and challenges. The information from these surveys shall be used in curricula reviews and in improving approaches to teaching. The surveys shall ordinarily focus on recent graduates (2-3 years), but older alumni may be surveyed for specific purposes.

Alumni satisfaction surveys shall go hand in hand with employee satisfaction surveys, to be conducted by the entire SIAS once every five years. Faculties and departments may conduct surveys more frequently, and the QAO may ask particular units to carry out alumni satisfaction surveys with respect to particular teaching programmes.

6.10 Surveys of Academic Staff Opinions

The QAO shall also occasionally conduct academic staff opinion surveys, specifically aimed at assessing the level of academic staff satisfaction with the current quality of teaching and learning at the SIAS and collecting suggestions on required interventions and possible improvement measures. The QAO shall communicate the results of such surveys to individual units and the SIAS Management, and shall coordinate discussions at both the unit and general SIAS levels, aimed at streamlining the improvement proposals and strategizing on their implementation. The Office shall also monitor the implementation of SIAS improvement strategies and report progress and the VC.

6.11 Surveys of External Community's Perceptions

The QAO shall periodically run surveys to collect information about the neighboring communities' feelings and attitudes towards the SIAS. The exercise shall aim at assessing the general social acceptability of the institution by the broader society as

well as identifying specific program areas in the SIAS-local community linkage. The resulting data shall be used to improve the SIAS's relationship with the surrounding communities as well as designing activities that involve neighboring communities in a mutually beneficial manner.

Seven - SIAS Audits and External Programme Reviews

The QAO shall regularly arrange and coordinate external institutional audits and programme reviews. In facilitating these external evaluations the QAO shall each time appoint a panel of up to three experts. Two-thirds or more of the panelists shall be drawn from outside Rwanda and shall act on the basis of specific Terms of Reference prepared by the QAO.

External institutional audits and programme reviews shall be carried out with the fifth year since the last evaluation. Institutional audits shall focus on the structure and functioning of administrative and governance organs of the SIAS, while programme audits shall evaluate the relevance of the teaching programmes on offer and the effectiveness of the delivery and evaluation strategies employed.

The QAO shall disseminate the results of institutional audits and programme reviews to the teaching units, each of which shall discuss the report and draw strategies to implement the subsequent recommendations. The QAO shall centrally coordinate institutional and programme reviews and monitor implementation of the resultant recommendations.

7.1 Internal Programme Reviews

The principals of SIAS building campus, and faculty deans shall be responsible for the implementation of the SIAS policy on regular self-evaluation of the units. In each case, the dean shall appoint a team of up to three people from among the staff in the school/faculty to constitute a school or faculty Review, Team.

The Team shall execute its tasks under the guidance of the Terms of Reference and modalities centrally drawn by the QAO. The Review Teams shall generate and submit reports to school/faculty deans and college principals, who shall, in turn, communicate them to the QAO for scrutiny of their completeness. In consultation with the DVC, the QAO shall arrange and conduct a verification visit to respective units.

The committee shall execute its task based on the terms of Reference prepared by the QAO and approved by the Senate. It shall review pertinent documents and contact staff and students in the unit concerned. The Committee's focal tasks shall be to:
1-Validate the self-assessment document;
2- Examine and provide recommendations on the structure, organization, and contents of the programme or unit concerned;
3- Make any observations on any issue that may affect the present and future well-being of the programme or unit concerned; and
4- Complete its work within the period specified.

The committee shall submit its report to the QAO which, upon consultation with the DVC-Academic & Research, shall forward it to the respective unit with comments and directives on the improvements recommended by the committee.

Upon receipt of the improved report, the QAO shall transmit it to Senate to discussion and approval. The QAO shall subsequently monitor the implementation of the approved recommendations/directives by the respective unit. All mandatory external programme reviews by the HEC shall be preceded by these internal programme reviews; and shall be coordinated and facilitated by the QAO at the institution level.

7.2 Improvement Plan

The evaluation reports shall be discussed at the department, faculty and college levels, where strategies for addressing the shortfalls emanating from these reviews are drawn. The Units shall then forward these improvement plans to the appropriate DVCA, who shall arrange the discussion of the same by appropriate participatory organs at the institutional level and direct the implementation of its resultant recommendations and improvement strategies.

At the same time, the QAO shall study the improvement strategies approved by the participatory organs at the institutional level. It shall subsequently monitor the implementation of all approved improvement plans and evaluate the outcomes. The QAO shall prepare and present implementation status reports to relevant Unit Heads, relevant DVCs and the VC, and shall execute directives given by the VC in connection with the reports.

7.3 Program Accreditation

Whenever applicable, SIAS teaching programmes shall be accredited by qualified and legally competent agencies. However, the internal procedures for such accreditation shall be coordinated and overseen by the QAO. In this context, the QAO shall cause the concerned unit to prepare an application portfolio based on the guidelines given by the accrediting agency, and shall advise on the proper filing of such applications. It shall coordinate and facilitate the activities of the accrediting agency.

Ultimately, it shall receive verdicts on accreditation applications and, upon consultation with the DVC-Academic & Rerearch, pass the verdict on to the concerned units, together with advice or directives on the way forward.

7.4 Policy Implementation, Review, And Amendments

6.1 Policy scope and Implementation This policy provides a general guide to the process of monitoring and evaluating quality in all aspects of SIAS operations. It does not specify modalities or procedures for the actual process of ensuring quality, a task left to individual units and the SIAS Senior Management Team.

The policy assumes that the units and the SIAS shall continually set and review quality standards in all the major fields of operation. The task of the quality assurance process is to constantly determine the extent to which SIAS achieves the standards it set for itself, and to advise on ways of improving quality at both the institutional and unit levels.

The QAO shall continually execute this task using appropriate evaluation instruments. It is the duty of the QAO to constantly develop and review these instruments with a view to ensuring that they are capable of capturing sufficient

evidence to show the extent to which SIAS is achieving its set quality standards in all major spheres of operation.

7.5 Validity of the Policy Provisions

These policy provisions shall become operational immediately upon approval by the Board of Directors, and shall remain valid until when they are revoked by the same authority. However, given the changing circumstances under which the SIAS operations, this document is subject to periodic reviews and alterations, and, whenever such alterations happen, the revised version of the document shall take precedence over the previous one.

7.6 Revision of the Policy Document

In the event that any statement in the policy provision is outdated or a need to introduce new statements arises as a result of the changing SIAS environment, or market forces, or any other reason, such statements may be changed or modified at the direction and approval of the Board of Directors. In any case, the entire document will be reviewed after every 5 years.

Program teams fill in a module descriptor Form (Appendix B) for each module on their proposed programme. These are discussed with Quality Office, considered by the Faculty in conjunction with the Programme Proposal Forms, and given preliminary approval.

Program teams fill in a Programme Specification Form. This is considered at a Institution-level Validation Panel attended or advised by an external adviser (nominated by the Dean and approved by the Quality Office), and the module descriptions for the programme and the c.v.s of staff are also made available to the meeting. The Panel considers whether the programme is likely to meet the quality threshold of the Institution and international norms for equivalent qualifications elsewhere. The Panel recommends to the Quality Committee and Senate whether the programme be validated, with or without conditions, which the Faculty must meet within six months.

The Quality Committee receives the reports from Validation Panels and, later, annual quality monitoring reports from Faculties. Membership is the Vice Rector Academic (Chair), Director of Quality, other central staff who may be deemed relevant, and one representative from each Faculty. This Committee will receive a shortened Programme Description and reports from the Validation Panel and the module meetings. After discussion an abstract of these will be passed to Senate for approval.

The Quality Office holds the definitive versions and the amendment history of all Programme Specifications and Module Descriptors.

7.7 Amendment of Programs

Changes which do not alter the basic nature of the programme, either singly or incrementally, can be approved through the Minor Change Process. Changes CANNOT be made retrospectively. The Minor Change Process is managed by Quality Office. All changes must be approved by the Dean before they are submitted to Quality Office.

Changes which do not materially affect the learning outcomes or assessment of a module, for example booklist updates, do not require external approval. Changes which materially alter the size, learning outcomes or assessment of a module; or which modules a programme contains, must receive the approval of the external examiner for the programme. The Quality Office will confirm to the Faculty that the change has been approved.

Changes to the title, awards, learning outcomes or structure of the programme require revalidation. Changes to more than one third of the validated modules will also require a revalidation.

7.8 QA Policy Assessment
Assessment is an essential part of the learning process of the student in that it provides:
1. a means of feedback to tutors and students;
2. a diagnosis of student potential;
3. a method of evaluating student progress and potential problems; and
4. a summative measure of achievement.

Assessment strategies are approved as part of the programme validation process in relation to their ability to demonstrate that learning outcomes have been achieved. Programme Specifications identify the learning outcomes of the programme and those modules which deliver and assess those learning outcomes. Module descriptors identify module learning outcomes and their means of assessment and are made available to students.

The Institution's General Academic Regulations set down the standard marks scheme, principles on feedback, constitution of examination boards, penalties for late submission of work, scheme for considering exceptional circumstances and the process for academic appeals.

7.9 Policy On Moderation And Verification
All assessments will be internally verified before they are released to students. Internal verification is the confirmation by a tutor who is not involved with the module that the proposed assessments are in line with regulations, pitched at the appropriate standard, and assess all the learning outcomes of the module. Faculties will publish their internal verification/ marking/ moderation processes.

Marks of all assessments contributing more than ten per cent to the module score shall be moderated internally, by second marking by another academic or by marking of a sample of scripts to assure the validity of the standard. All assessments at higher education Level 4 or higher or any other level leading to a specifically validated exit award, and carrying a mark of more than twenty per cent of the module score, shall be moderated by an external examiner.

Proposed examination papers must be approved by the external examiner of the programme, under conditions of complete confidentiality and secrecy.

Appendix 1 - QA Action Plan

Actions listed below should be in line with those identified in the body of the report.

	Issue	Activity	Activity Lead (eg Head of Dept)	Target	Date Target to be achieved	Update (as actions are completed)
1.						
2.						
3.						
4.						
5.						
6.						

VERSION CONTROL

Version Number	2
Prepared by	Dr. Mohamed Buhijji
Version Reference number	SP/28/2022
Description	SIAS QA Manual
Policy owner	Quality Assurance Coordinator & SIAS Council
Responsible division	Yes
Internally validated	1/11/2022
Approved by	SIAS Governance Board
Date of approval & Update	18/12/2022 and 1/4/2023
Amendments	1
Proposed Review date	2024
Web address of this policy	http://www.sias.rw/

APPROVAL FORM

Checked by:
Signature:

DR. Donya Ahmed
Vice Chancellor
Socioeconomic Institute for Advanced Studies

Approved by:
Signature:

DR. Mohamed Buhijji
Founder & Chairman of the Board of Trustees
Socioeconomic Institute for Advanced Studies