

Divine Word University

The Office of the Vice President Academic Quality Assurance and Accreditation

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23 February 2016

Dear APQN

I submit this letter as evidence of the University's standing and commitment to quality assurance.

National quality assurance agency

The relevant national quality assurance agency for Divine Word University (DWU) in Papua New Guinea is the national Department of Higher Education, Research, Science and Technology (DHERST).

The University is on the DHERST National Register of Higher Education Institutions, available at:
<http://www.dherst.gov.pg/national-register-of-institutions-programs/>

Under the provisions of the *Higher Education (General Provisions) Act 2014*, the University is required to undergo an external quality assessment every five years. The next external institutional quality assessment is expected in 2017.

History

See: <http://www.dwu.ac.pg/en/index.php/about-dwu#historical-background>

Divine Word University (DWU) began in 1958 with two Divine Word Missionaries, Archbishop Adolf Noser and Fr Paul McVinney, wanting to carry on the Society's traditional involvement in tertiary education in areas to which its members were assigned.

In 1964, a 99 year lease was secured on an old rubber plantation and negotiations for funding began with the Government. Failure to secure government assistance for a university project forced the SVD planners into a reassessment of their commitment and led to the development of a Catholic coeducational high school.

Fr Kenneth Feehan, SVD, became the director of the project in 1967. As headmaster for the next 14 years, he shaped the schools development and philosophy. The high school, with an enrolment of almost 600, emphasised academic excellence and self-reliance and consistently ranked in the top 10% of PNG high schools.

The Society undertook a feasibility study in 1977 to look into the possibility of returning to its original idea of tertiary education. The encouraging results of this study led to the phasing out of the high school and the gradual development of a tertiary level University.

In 1979 students began enrolling in four-year diploma programs in Business and Communication under the Divine Word Institute. The first class of pioneer students graduated in 1982.

Early in November 1980, Fr Kenneth Feehan SVD, who had been appointed President of the Institute until the end of 1981; when the High School would finish, asked to be relieved of the office at the end of 1980, so that a permanent president could be appointed. His resignation was accepted and Fr Paul McVinney SVD was named his successor and the second President of Divine Word Institute. Fr Paul McVinney SVD, took office in November 1981 till 1983.

In November of 1983, Fr Kees van der Geest, SVD was appointed as the third President of Divine Word Institute. He was the President till 1992. In November of 1992, Fr Jurgen Ommerborn, SVD was appointed as the fourth President of Divine Word Institute till November 1995.

On the 13th of November 1995, Fr Jan Czuba, SVD became the fifth President of Divine Word Institute and the founding President of Divine Word University in 1996. A new President, Professor Cecilia Nembou, assumed office in January 2016.

DWU is a recognized partner university in the development of higher education in PNG under National Executive Council (NEC) Decision No: 134/96 of 21st August 1996. It was established by an Act of Parliament as a University in 1999. Divine Word University was recognized as an Agency of Higher Education in Papua New Guinea by the National Executive Council on the 6th of November 2003 (National Executive Council Decision No: 221/2003) and meeting No. 49/2003.

Commitment to Quality Assurance

The University publicly states its commitment to quality assurance on its home page:

Quality Assurance at DWU (<http://www.dwu.ac.pg/en/index.php/home/quality-assurance>)

Assuring the public, DWU benefactors, the professions and Papua New Guinea Government of the integrity and quality of DWU's academic awards is of paramount importance to the standing of Divine Word University both nationally and internationally. Therefore, DWU takes quality assurance seriously. DWU's quality assurance and enhancement framework covers a wide range of strategies and policies, all of which are in place to ensure that DWU continues to develop and maintain high standards of academic excellence. The strategies include international benchmarking of programs through twinning partnerships international universities, and cyclic external independent audits at both program and institutional levels. Internal strategies include annual program and unit reviews as well as appraisal of new programs for standards compliance prior to implementation.

Until 2016, the University supported a full-time Director of Quality Assurance, who chaired the University's Academic Quality Assurance Committee. In 2015, the Council of the University established a new **Division of Quality Assurance**, under the leadership of a new full-time position of **Vice President for Academic Quality Assurance and Accreditation**.

DWU has well-established systems and processes for external and internal quality assurance. Its Strategic Plan 2006-2016 places particular emphasis on establishing the conditions for quality in

higher education, including qualified staff and resources. DWU has been active in twinning and partnership arrangements with overseas institutions and academics, to benchmark and improve quality.

DWU took the initiative in 2011 to be the first university in PNG to undergo an external institutional quality audit. The wholly international panel made a series of findings in the form of commendations, affirmations and recommendations. In 2013, DHERST managed a detailed two-year follow up audit, which confirmed that most of the affirmations and recommendations had been well-addressed by the University.

Other internal quality assurance processes at DWU include: a policy library for all the University's policies; rigorous review of academic program proposals by faculty committees, faculty board and Academic Board; sound processes for review of grades through the academic committee structures; rolling five-yearly program reviews with external input; student evaluation of units and tracer studies of graduates.

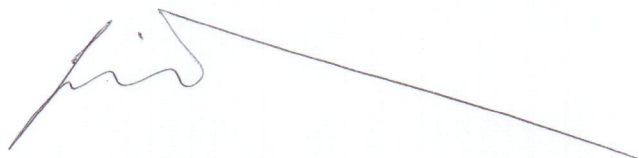
How membership of APQN will benefit DWU's quality assurance activities

DWU expects to benefit from APQN membership by the opportunities afforded for better networking with other institutions in the region that have demonstrated a commitment to quality and for visibility among APQN members that are external quality agencies. We recognise that we can learn from APQN, and from member organisations and institutions, more about emerging good practices in higher education quality assurance, to improve our own internal QA. Membership of APQN, and attendance at meetings and conferences, will make it easier to establish good relationships with universities that share our belief that higher education quality improvement is essential for developing countries.

The University is internationalising rapidly and will be offering more programs online soon. For purposes of accountability and transparency, it will be important for potential students outside PNG, and potential teaching partners, to be aware of our commitment to quality and our commitment to sharing and making a positive contribution to higher education in the region. Membership of APQN, therefore, is viewed by DWU as a public and transparent signal to internal and external stakeholders of the University's focus on quality. Through its willingness to associate with a respected regional network, the University can show that it is serious about maintaining and enhancing quality in all areas of operation.

Please do not hesitate to contact me if you require any further information.

Yours sincerely



Professor Jeanette Baird
Vice President, Academic Quality Assurance and Accreditation

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