



NCHE

LIBRARY STANDARDS FOR HIGHER EDUCATION IN MALAWI

September, 2019

**Promoting Quality,
Accessible, Relevant and
Inclusive Higher Education**

Published by:

National Council for Higher Education

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Lilongwe

MALAWI

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Website: <http://www.nche.ac.mw>

ISBN: X-XXXXXX-XX-X

Date of Publication: September, 2019

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Foreword

The National Council for Higher Education (NCHE) (hereinafter ‘the Council’) is committed to quality assurance and enhancement of higher education in Malawi. To achieve world class standards in higher education, quality assessment and continuous improvement are the necessary ingredients. This includes the accreditation of academic programmes and quality assessment of Higher Education Institutions (HEIs). In this regard, library standards for higher education are a necessary prerequisite for the achievement of quality higher education which ultimately contributes to the socio-economic development of the country.

The Council has developed library standards for higher education quality assurance in accordance with its functions. These library standards are recommended for quality assurance standards for the establishment, standardization, registration and accreditation of HEIs as defined in Section 15 (j) (iv) of the NCHE Act 15 of 2011. These library standards are subject to periodic reviews by the Council.

These standards seek to conform to and reinforce legislative requirements for regulating the HE sub-sector in Malawi and promote good governance and management of HEIs through structures that are clear and transparent with key responsibilities clearly defined. The other dimension is the desire to entrench appropriate delineation between oversight responsibilities and day to day management of HEIs; and commitment to the promotion of an environment conducive for the pursuit of academic excellence and freedom for both staff and students. It is envisioned that the standards will ensure that libraries effectively and efficiently contribute to the achievement of the goals of the institution for the socio-economic development of Malawi.

COUNCIL CHAIRPERSON

Preface

The National Council for Higher Education (NCHE) (hereinafter ‘the Council’) has developed library standards to support higher education institutions in improving educational standards through information settings in well-equipped libraries.

The aim of the Library Standards is to guide libraries in advancing and sustaining their role as partners in educating students, achieving their institutions’ missions, and positioning libraries on path to continuous improvement. The standards will also enable libraries to contribute to overall institutional effectiveness and address changes in higher education, including accreditation and other accountability measures.

These Standards were developed by a team of experts from some of the major libraries in the country. The process involved a series of consultative meetings where issues and trends in libraries and higher education both locally and internationally were critically considered. The experts also solicited input from librarians and library stakeholders at various types of institutions as well as drawing on research and best practices in the field.

We therefore call upon practitioners to draw upon these standards as they strive to build the capacity of libraries to achieve their missions and effectively support research and teaching in higher education institutions in Malawi.

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CHIEF EXECUTIVE OFFICER

Acknowledgements

The National Council for Higher Education (NCHE) involved librarians from some of the major libraries in Malawi to come up with these Library Standards. There were several meetings to develop these Library Standards. NCHE would, therefore, want to acknowledge with thanks valuable contributions from the following:

1. Dr. Kondwani Wella Librarian, Kamuzu College of Nursing
2. Mr. Geoffrey F. Salanje Librarian, Lilongwe University of Agriculture and Natural Resources
3. Dr. Augustine W. C. Msiska Librarian, University of Livingstonia
4. Mr. Gray L. Nyali National Librarian, Malawi National Library Services
5. Mr. Thomas Kaluvi Documentation Officer, National Commission for Science and Technology
6. Mr. Felix Majawa Librarian, Mzuzu University
7. Ms. Diana Mawindo Acting Librarian, The Polytechnic
8. Mr. Brian Sitima-Ndau Librarian, Chancellor College
9. Ms. Monica Maganga Librarian, African Bible College
10. Mrs. Ann Maliha Librarian, Daeyang University
11. Mr. Fatsani Chisiza Librarian, Exploits University
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Acronyms

CCTV	Closed Circuit Television
ICT	Information and Communication Technology
OPAC	Online Access Public Access Catalogue
LCD	Liquid Crystal Display
DVD	Digital and Video Display
ODeL	Open and Distance e-Learning
SDI	Selective Dissemination of Information

Definition of Terms and Glossary

Academic freedom : The conviction that the freedom of inquiry by faculty members is essential to the mission of the academy as well as the principles of academia, and that scholars should have freedom to teach or communicate ideas or facts (including those that are inconvenient to external political groups or to authorities) without being targeted for repression, job loss, or imprisonment.

Africana : A Library collection for publications on Africa or by Africans

Cataloguing tools : A collection of links and websites for all types of cataloging resources, useful for a cataloging department or technical services area in an academic library.

Classification system: The way that books, videos, and other items are put in order on the shelf. In other words, it is how we find the things we have in the library

Digitization : the process of converting information into a digital format

Information Literacy: The ability to know when there is a need for information, to be able to identify, locate, evaluate, and effectively use that information for the issue or problem at hand.

Institutional Repository: An archive for collecting, preserving, and disseminating digital copies of the intellectual output of an institution, particularly a research institution.

Intellectual property rights: Exclusive legal rights over creations of the mind. They give the owner rights from which to exploit their intellectual creation. They are considered crucial to fostering innovation by providing a financial incentive to stimulate creativity, whereby businesses can reap the benefits from their inventions and will be more willing to invest in research and development. IPRs do not protect ideas but the expression of the idea.

Inter-library loan : Abbreviated ILL, and sometimes called inter-loan, inter-lending, document delivery, or document supply is a service whereby a patron of one library can borrow books, DVDs, music, etc. and/or receive photocopies of documents that are owned by another library

Knowledge Management (KM): A systematic management of an organization's knowledge assets for the purpose of creating value and meeting tactical & strategic requirements; it consists of the initiatives, processes, strategies, and systems

that sustain and enhance the storage, assessment, sharing, refinement, and creation of knowledge.

Librarian : A person who works professionally in a library, providing access to information and sometimes social or technical programming. In addition, librarians provide instruction on information literacy.

Library systems : A central organization created to manage and coordinate operations and services in or between different centers, buildings or libraries branches and library patrons.

Malawiana : A Library collection for publications on Malawi or by Malawians.

Open and Distance e-Learning (ODEL): A general term for the use of telecommunication to provide or enhance learning. Around the world, the academic community is discovering and exploring the Internet, teleconferencing, and related means to achieve an extended classroom or learning experience.

Remote access : Connection to a data-processing system from a remote location

Special collection : Materials requiring specialized security and user services. Materials housed in special collections can be in any format (including rare books, manuscripts, photographs, archives, ephemera, and digital records), and are generally characterized by their art factual or monetary value, physical format, uniqueness or rarity, and/or an institutional commitment to long-term preservation and access. They can also include association with important figures or institutions in history, culture, politics, sciences, or the arts

Selective Dissemination of Information (SDI): Tools and resources used to keep a user informed of new resources on specified topics.

Cooperative learning: A form of active *learning* where students work together to perform specific tasks in a small group.

Introduction

Libraries play a very important role in teaching and learning. Libraries are community hubs. They connect people to information and connect people to people. There can never be development without information that is accurate and accessible to the users. The development of the Library Standards is a way of responding to the fast-changing digital landscape. Admittedly, libraries serve as vital hubs of knowledge, learning, and community engagement. Establishing robust library standards is essential to ensure that these institutions can effectively meet the diverse needs of their users while promoting equity, accessibility, and innovation. These standards not only guide the development and delivery of library services but also foster collaboration among libraries, ensuring that they remain relevant and responsive in an ever-evolving information environment. By adhering to established benchmarks, libraries can enhance their operational effectiveness, improve user experiences, and ultimately contribute to the lifelong learning journeys of individuals and communities alike. The standards and guidelines contained in the document cover all important aspects including governance and management; library infrastructure including ICT equipment; access to library resources; budget; health, safety and security; library policies; monitoring and evaluation of library effectiveness; among other elements.

Library Standards for Higher Education in Malawi

SN	Thematic Area	Standards	Guidelines
1	Strategic Plan	The strategic Plan shall be compatible with the institutional strategic plan.	<p>The library shall develop</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a) A strategic plan to drive the realization of its vision, mission, goals and objectives which shall be derived from the institution's strategic objectives. b) Guidelines on assessment and achievement of the strategic plan.
2.	Vision, Mission and Objectives	The library shall develop an explicit statement of its vision, mission and objectives that are aligned with those of the institution.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> a) The vision and mission statements shall be reviewed periodically and revised as necessary. b) They shall be compatible with the institution's vision, mission, its goals and objectives. c) The Library shall orient new users, from time to time, on its mission, vision and objectives. d) d) The library's vision, mission and objectives shall be displayed in the library.
3.	Infrastructure	The library shall provide adequate library facilities for students, lecturers, staff and other authorized users.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> a) The library building and its furnishings shall create conducive environment for learning, learning and research. b) The library shall have appropriate furniture such as shelves, journal display racks, circulation desks, reading tables, reading chairs, trolleys, and office furniture.

			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> c) The library shall have appropriate equipment such as computers, printers, scanners, photocopiers, LCD projectors and DVD players. d) The design of the building shall enable the library to develop and provide services that are responsive to the library and information needs of learning and scholarship. e) The library building shall have adequate natural and artificial lighting, good ventilation, secure windows, and sufficient doorways that can be opened outward to facilitate exit in case of fire and other emergencies. f) The library shall provide spaces for the collection, display, reading, meetings, space for electronic workstations, multimedia workstations, viewing rooms and listening rooms, open use seating, user instruction rooms, staff areas including staff lounges and kitchenettes, space for special use preservation and conservation such as bindery. g) Each stack area for books shall be at least 10.75 square meters. h) The library building shall be regularly maintained. i) The library building shall incorporate ICT needs and functions as an integral part of the design concept including trunking, cabling and wireless connectivity. j) The library designs shall provide pedagogical spaces to facilitate cooperative learning and the creation of new knowledge.
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			<p>k) The library shall provide facilities to enable people with physical disabilities access library building and facilities.</p> <p>l) The library’s physical space shall have up-to-date, adequate, well maintained equipment and furnishings.</p> <p>m) Library building designs shall be approved by relevant authorities</p> <p>n) The total Library seating space for users shall be at least 15% of the total population of all the Library users</p> <p>o) The Library shall have adequate toilets for both staff and users as stipulated in the Minimum Standards for Higher Education.</p> <p>p) The Library shall be located at a place without any noise coming from within and outside.</p>
4.	Administrative structure	The Library shall have an administrative structure that is fully integrated with the institutions’ organizations’ structure.	<p>a) The Librarian/Director shall be designated in the Proposal, Act/Charter as head of the University library and as a member of the senior management team.</p> <p>b) The place of the Library in the University shall be clearly stipulated in the Proposal, Act or Charter of accreditation issued to the institution.</p> <p>c) The Library shall be a fully-fledged academic organ within the University structure.</p> <p>d) The Library shall be formally represented in the Senate and other relevant Committees of the University.</p>

			<p>e) The University Librarian/Director shall report to the Deputy Vice Chancellor responsible for academic Affairs of the institution or equivalent.</p> <p>f) The University shall establish a Library Advisory Committee, which shall be responsible to the Senate for considering all aspects of Library policies, their development and integration in the University's academic programmes.</p> <p>g) There shall be an organogram indicating hierarchy and relationship of the components of library. The supervision and control of the academic library shall be clearly defined within the organizational structure of the parent institution.</p> <p>h) There shall be a library management committee or equivalent comprising senior library staff.</p> <p>i) There shall be faculty-liaison librarians to serve as main channel of communication between the library and its users.</p> <p>j) The Librarian shall have academic status and shall participate actively in curricular, instructional and research matters.</p> <p>k) Entry level for para-professionals shall be at least a certificate in library studies.</p>
4.	Library staffing	The library shall have appropriate, qualified and adequate staff commensurate with the academic	<p>a) The library shall be headed by a University Librarian/Director of Library Services with a minimum of Master's degree in Library and Information Science.</p>

		programmes offered, the institutional population, the number of service points, and the hours during which services are offered.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> b) The university Librarian/ Director shall be one of the Chief Officers of the university and member of management. c) The library shall have adequate staff (1 staff to 1000 users) to support entire scope of its operations. d) Library staff shall have access to different forms of ongoing/continuing education with a view to exposing them to new developments in all areas of information work. e) The library shall be adequately represented in the faculty senate or school boards and university senate or equivalent and other governing bodies. f) Library staff shall be sufficient in quantity and quality to meet the diverse teaching, learning and research needs of faculty and students. g) Entry level qualification for professional staff shall be a first degree in library and information science or a degree in any other area plus a post graduate qualification in library and information science.
6.	Professional values	Libraries shall advance professional values of academic freedom, intellectual property rights, and user privacy and confidentiality, and provide user centred services.	<p>The library shall:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a) Resist efforts to censor library resources. However, the librarian has discretion to allow certain materials to be accessed. b) Protect each library user's right to privacy and confidentiality.

			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> c) Respect intellectual property rights and advocate for balance between the interests of information users and rights holders through policy and education. d) Support academic integrity and deter plagiarism through policy and education. e) Commit to a user centered approach and demonstrate the centrality of users in aspects such as service design and delivery in the physical and virtual environment.
7.	Library information resources	The library shall provide for all academic programmes, varied, authoritative and up-to-date information resources, which facilitate teaching, learning, research and community services.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> a) The information resources shall be up-to date, relevant, adequate in quality and quantity. b) The library shall develop and implement a collection development policy which shall be reviewed within a period not exceeding 5 years. c) The library shall subscribe, facilitate access and availability of electronic information resources such as e-books, e-journals, professional websites, and databases. d) The library shall establish and sustain institutional repositories. e) The library shall be stocked with prescribed (1 book to 50 users) and recommended text books (1 book to 100 users), journals and other information resources that are aligned to the programmes offered by the parent institution.

			f) The library shall be stocked with Special Collection and equipment.
8.	Organization of library resources	Library information resources shall be organized, for effective and efficient access and retrieval, using internationally recognized conventions and standards.	<p>a) Library resources shall be catalogued and classified comprehensively according to an acceptable system of classification and cataloguing tools.</p> <p>b) Library shall have complete periodical records with indexes.</p>
9.	Access to library resources	The library shall have facilities that guarantee means to access library resources by all users including resource materials suitable to people with special needs.	<p>a) The library shall ensure reasonable access to library resources through convenient opening hours of at least 8 hours a day and, provision of functional ICT infrastructure.</p> <p>b) The library shall have effective systems and facilities to assist persons with special needs to support access and retrieval of resources e.g. large prints, braille materials.</p> <p>c) The library shall have tools for accessing resources such as OPAC, discovery software, etc.</p> <p>d) The library shall have facilities for remote access to library resources.</p>
10.	ICTs (Infrastructure and automation)	The library shall adopt and maintain Information Communication Technologies in information management and its operations.	<p>The library shall embrace opportunities created by Information and Communication Technology (ICT) by:</p> <p>a) Establishing ICT policies to guide adoption and maintenance of information.</p>

			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> b) Establishing library ICT infrastructure and systems that integrate with the campus-wide ICT environment. c) Installing Library Systems that support data exchange using standards protocols and formats. d) Establishing disaster recovery and business continuity plan. e) Establish ICT hardware and software that adequately facilitate the information management needs of the library. f) Providing for the digitization of information resources. g) Providing competent library professionals dedicated to the management of library ICT infrastructure. h) Providing reliable Internet access to the users of the library. i) Ensuring availability of power back-up in the library.
11.	Information Literacy and Competency	Libraries partner in the educational mission of the institution to develop and support information literate learners who can discover, access and use information effectively and efficiently for academic success, research and lifelong learning.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> a) The library personnel shall collaborate with faculty and others regarding ways to incorporate library collections and services into effective education experience for students in a variety of formats accessible virtually and physically. b) The library shall develop and implement the curriculum to meet the emerging information literacy needs of the students and faculty. c) The Information Literacy and competency programme shall be integrated in all the academic programmes of the university under common units at both undergraduate and post graduate levels.

12.	Library services	The library shall establish, promote and sustain quality services that will facilitate teaching, learning, research and community outreach.	The established services shall include, not limited to: a) Reference and information services. b) Circulation services. c) Current awareness services. d) Inter library services. e) Information Literacy services. f) Reprographic services. g) Multimedia services. h) Knowledge management services such as institutional repositories. i) Preservation services. j) Archiving services. k) Community outreach services. l) Selective Dissemination of Information (SDI). m) E-library services.
13.	External relations	The library collaborates with other libraries to access each other's collections on inter-library loan arrangements, and offer services to researchers and the general public as part of social responsibility.	The library shall have: a) Inter-library loan agreements with other libraries. b) Outreach and community engagements as part of social responsibility. c) In its rules and regulations criteria for providing services to researchers and external users.

			d) Formalized agreements with other institutions on staff attachments, exchange and training.
14.	Open and Distance e-Learning library services	The University shall provide adequate resources to support open and distance learning library services with or without physical library building.	<p>a) The University shall provide facilities, equipment and communication links, sufficient in size, number, scope, accessibility to reach all users and to attain the objectives of the open and distance e-learning programs.</p> <p>b) The library services offered to the open and distance e-learning community shall be designed to ensure reliability and sustainability.</p>
15.	Health, safety and security	The library building shall have in place mechanisms to minimize or avoid security risks associated with staff, users, the collection, the equipment and data.	<p>a) The library building shall have adequate emergency and fire safety measures such as serviced fire extinguishers, fire and smoke detectors and fire assembly point.</p> <p>b) The library building shall be regularly maintained from time to time.</p> <p>c) The library shall have proper and functional sanitary facilities.</p> <p>a) The library shall put in place security check points to control pilferage of books.</p>
16.	Library budget	The University Librarian/Director of Library Services shall prepare, justify and administer an annual library budget covering the needs	<p>The library budget shall:</p> <p>a) Include five to ten percent (5% to 10%) of the total institutional operational annual budget for acquisition of information resources excluding personal emoluments and capital development.</p>

		and priorities of library in accordance with the existing priorities of the parent institution.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> b) Have adequate funds allocated for the maintenance and administration of the library. c) Take into consideration the instructional methods of the institution. d) Provide for the current and anticipated size of the user population. e) Explore other ways of augmenting financial resources of the library.
17.	Monitoring and Evaluation of Library Effectiveness	The library shall regularly and systematically evaluate the adequacy, utilization and impact of its library and use the findings to improve and increase the effectiveness and efficiency of the services.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> a) There shall be continuous monitoring and evaluation of library services periodic reports, library surveys and annual reports by the Library Committee. b) The library shall develop and maintain a systematic library improvement plan to address library needs. c) The library shall develop measures of effectiveness and efficiency that are aligned with vision, mission and objectives of the institution. d) The library shall report the findings of the evaluation to the Library Advisory Committee.
18.	Library Policies	The library shall develop and review relevant policies	<p>The library shall have document policies such as:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a) Collection Development Policy. b) Library Improvement Plan. c) Health, safety and Security Policy.

			d) ICT Policy. e) Risk and Disaster Management Policy. f) Library Rules & Regulations.
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Conclusion

The development of Library Standards is a huge milestone for HEIs in Malawi institutions. The Standards will guide libraries in advancing and sustaining their role as partners in educating students, achieving their institutions' missions, and positioning libraries on path to continuous improvement. The standards will also enable libraries to contribute to overall institutional effectiveness and address changes in higher education, including accreditation and other accountability measures.

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