



University of Malawi
The Polytechnic

Introduction of
Diploma in Information
Technology,
&
Diploma in Business
Information Systems

Presented to the Faculty of Applied Studies

Presented by the
Department of Computing and Information Technology

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1. Background

- 1.1. The Polytechnic is one of the constituent colleges of the University of Malawi. The college is made up of five faculties:
 - Faculty of Applied Studies
 - Faculty of Commerce
 - Faculty of Education and Media Studies
 - Faculty of Engineering
 - Faculty of Postgraduate Studies
- 1.2. The Department of Mathematics and Computing was one of the departments in the Faculty of Applied Studies. In June 2002, the department of Mathematics and Computing was slit to form two departments - The Department of Mathematics and Statistics and The Department of Computing and Information Technology. Both departments are under the Faculty of Applied Studies.
- 1.3. At this time there were four IT programmes running under the defunct Board of Governors. There were Diploma in Information Technology, Diploma in Business Information Systems, B.Sc. in Information Technology and B.Sc. in Management Information Systems.
- 1.4. It was envisaged that the Department of Computing and Information Technology (CIT) would have more focus on the technological changes in Information Technology (IT). Apart from offering degrees and diplomas in IT, the department was charged with the responsibility of spearheading research, development and implementation of IT solutions to the college. Staff and students in the department are expected to be frontiers in the technical know-how of IT, Computing and IT related developments.
- 1.5. The department is also responsible for the development of all Internet related activities at the college. This includes development and maintenance of the college database, web servers and e-mail services. The department was therefore designed to be the centre of excellence in IT and therefore pass-on the expertise to students at the college.
- 1.6. The department has therefore scrutinised the four programmes beefing up where there were shortfalls, minding the state of technologies now. More Internet and Networking modules replaced the tradition application packages emphasis.
- 1.7. The department also services other departments in areas of computing. The departments include
 - Electrical Engineering
 - Civil Engineering
 - Mechanical Engineering
 - Applied Sciences

- Environmental Health
 - Accountancy
 - Business Administration
- 1.8 The department is thus mandated not only to provide teaching services but also assume an advisory role to the college.

2 Vision Statement

- 2.1 One major area in which the department feels challenged is the on going quest for IT knowledge by the community. Staff at the college, students and the community as a whole, are constantly enquiring to know more about the computer, the Internet and the services it offers. The Department of Computing and Information Technology, therefore has the vision:

“To become a centre of excellence in IT training in Malawi and the region. It has the vision to become computer frontiers in IT research, development and implementation of Computer Solutions, Web & Internet Solutions and Software Engineering and Information Technologies in Malawi.”

- 2.2 This vision starts with the introduction of the two high quality degrees in **Information Technology** (IT) and **Management Information Systems** (BIS). This will be followed by the introduction of *Computer Network Engineering, Computer Hardware and Software Engineering* programmes.

3. Mission Statement

- 3.1 The mission of the department is
- “To advance the technical skills, knowledge and wisdom; to develop deeper understanding on Computer usage, Information sharing, Web and Internet, e-business and e-commerce; to harness the power of the computer in commerce and industry in Malawi and to provide the highest possible quality of education, training, research, consultancies in response to the needs of Industry, Commerce and the Malawi nation”.*

4. Departmental SWOT Analysis

- 4.1 Following several interactions with concerned sectors, government as well as non-governmental organizations, the department has noted with concern that there are strengths, weaknesses, opportunities as well as threats to be the aspirations of the department in its quest to introduce degree programmes in IT and BIS. These have been outlined as follows:

- 4.2 **Strengths:** The department and the programmes have the following strengths
- The Department has the expertise, experience and potential to adequately train persons in Computer courses
 - IT related courses are hot area at the moment and attracts a lot of students.
 - The department has easier access to Internet facilities which will be used for teaching most components on the programmes as well as supplying the literature and reference materials for delivery of the programmes.
 - The Information Technology programme is closely likened to the Electrical Engineering programme, while the Management Information Systems is closely likened to the Management, Business and Accounting programmes at the college. Some modules would be shared. This would ensure that highly specialised lectures from other faculties deliver these courses.
 - The Polytechnic is in the heart of commerce and Industry in the country, this would ensure that there is close liaison between industry and the college
 - Since the college is centrally placed, it is possible to mount day release diploma programs as well as certificate courses.
- 4.3 **Weaknesses:** Despite the strengths as outlined above the department has the following weaknesses:
- There is a shortage of teaching staff for some courses that are to be offered,
 - There are inadequate equipment (PCs) for teaching.
 - Funding from the college as well as university budget is not satisfactory,
 - There are inadequate books and periodicals for teaching, research, and consultancy,
 - Above all, we have unpredictable academic calendar due to frequent disputes between staff and students, staff and administration and students and administration.
- 4.4 **Opportunities:** There are quite a number of opportunities that can help the department realise its dreams and some of them are as follows:
- There is an insufficient number of adequately trained persons in both public and private sectors to run, manage, service, and maintain computer related technologies.
 - IT planning, management and development for the commercial sector is not adequately covered in the education curriculum at any level in Malawi. The lack of technical capacity is a barrier to advancement in use of the computer as a tool in government and the private sector.
 - The few IT experts we have in the country have either been trained outside the country which has a bearing on our foreign currency or have been trained in the country by some private institutions which are poorly facilitated for the training.
 - There is growing use of Computers, Internet and IT related equipment in public and private sectors.
 - That the Vision 2020 document which outlines the aspirations of Malawians and was launched on 24 March, 1998 singled out the use of

Information Technology as one of the priority areas to be considered by the country.

- the Polytechnic is situated in the centre of commercial city of Blantyre, making it an opportune place for interacting with industry and capturing/attracting students for parallel programmes as well as for short courses.
- Government subsidies will make it cheaper for the department to offer its courses at a cheaper rate than other institutions in the country thereby attracting more customers.

4.5 **Threats:** The success of the programmes is going to be threatened if the following issues are not addressed properly:

- The growing number of both public and private institutions offering IT related courses
- The stiff competition due to the availability of other institutions attracting our staff and offering them better packages.
- Lack of staff training. Training used to be a weapon to attract staff to join Polytechnic, but are now reluctant to join because of the difficulties we have in training staff
- Physical security of PCs in a Computer Lab is threatens to wipe out the few facilities we have for training.
- Economic environment is hostile and unpredictable
- Staff are responding to the economic threats by venturing into their own businesses
- There is inadequate research due to heavy teaching loads

4.6. However, in order to take advantage of our strengths and opportunities and at the same time reduce threats and overcome our weaknesses, the Department of Computing and Information Technology wants to take the necessary steps through the following objectives to build and improve the quality of Information Technology and Business Information Systems experts in the country.

5.0 Objectives of The Department of Computing and Information Technology

5.1 The main objectives of the Department of Computing and Information Technology are

- i. to offer relevant, high-quality, IT training to students in the department
- ii. to provide first-class service training to other students on various programmes in the college
- iii. to provide technical experience to students in running and maintenance of the latest Computer Networks, Computer Applications and Information Technology equipment and facilities.
- iv. to offer short and long-term training particularly through developing relevant curricula as an integral part of University programmes, provision of seminars and workshops, trainers of trainers courses as well as community outreach programs.

- v. to offer advisory and consultancy services in the areas of IT to stakeholders, starting with the college, The University, The Government, NGO's, Parastatals, the private sector and the general public.
 - vi. to establish a national and regional networking centre.
 - vii. to continue to offer teaching services to other departments in the college.
- 5.2 To achieve some of the objectives above the department established a *Regional Networking Academy* under the sponsorship of **Cisco**. This offers first-class training in Computer Networking. Six *Local Academy* have now been setup at the following locations: Lilongwe Technical College, Chancellor College, Bunda College of agriculture, Mzuzu University, Our Lady of Wisdom and National College of IT (Blantyre). Under the Department of Computing and Information Technology, the Polytechnic is the Regional Academy and Local Academy for Cisco Networking Programmes..
- 5.3 The department has hereby designed two degree programmes, Bachelor of Science Degree in Information Technology and Bachelor of Science Degree in Business Information Systems to help it meet its objectives. However, for these degrees to run smoothly, the department requires the following:

6.0 Requirements of the department of Computing and Information Technology

- 6.1 **Teaching staff:** Currently, the department has only five permanent teaching staff members namely:
- i. Mr. F. B. Kamwaza, M.Sc, Head of Department and Senior Lecturer
 - ii. Mr. K Kamwendo, M.Sc. (Lecturer)
 - iii. Mr. D Chigama, M.Sc. (Lecturer)
 - iv. Mr. P. A. Chikumba, B.Sc., (Assistant Lecturer)
 - v. Mr. T.V.E. Chinkono, B.Sc., (Assistant Lecturer)
 - vi. Mr. D. Chinguwo, B.Sc., (Staff Associate)
 - vii. Mr. P Mussa, B.Sc., (Staff Associate)
 - viii. Mr. M Nyirenda, B.Sc., (Staff Associate)

The department needs to recruit seven more permanent staff members in order to meet the demand of its services. These will include

- ix. One Computer Engineer Specialist with a Masters Degree
 - x. One Database Engineer Specialist with a Masters Degree
 - xi. One Internet Specialist with a Masters Degree
 - xii. One Information Specialist with a Masters Degree
 - xiii. One Computer Network Specialist with a Masters Degree
 - xiv. One Software Engineer Specialist with a Masters Degree
 - xv. One Business Systems Specialist with a Masters Degree and
 - xvi. THREE staff associates with first degrees
- 6.2 Due the proximity of the IT related companies and organizations in Blantyre, we have managed to attract a number of adjunct staff who serve the department as part-time lecturers, from time to time. The problem with part-

timer lecturers is that they are not in a position to contribute effectively to the development of the programmes of the department. We would like to have the vacant posts field as soon as possible.

- 6.3 **Computer Laboratories and Equipment:** Presently, the department has three computer laboratories with 20 computers each lab. We have just received 25 PCs and a Server from USAID under the Cisco Project. The department also recently purchased 10 PCs from its income generating activities. This brings the total number of Computer to 95. The major challenge the department is facing is replacement of worn out PCs and Network facilities. At the same time there is pressure to introduce IT courses to all programmes at the college starting at year one. It is now the policy of the department to run introductory computer lessons to all students of the college as they come in at year one. We believe computer access will enhance communication at the college by use of e-mail services, for instance, and will provide all students with the necessary computer skills for basic computation, research skills on the Internet and report drafting.

However, to maintain the level of computer numbers we need a working replacement policy that could be honored by the college. We need a more reliable server for the students work as well as staff material.

- 6.4 **Computer Technicians:** The department has five computer technicians who are responsible for all computers at the college. These are also required to man the Labs when students are running their assignments without the responsible lecturer. In order to increase access time to the students, the department was mandated to open late hours which meant that the technicians will be required to work on shifts. For this to happen the department requires five additional technicians.
- 6.5 **Teaching Books:** The department also requires teaching books in the areas of computer software, programming, networking, hardware, mathematics, accounting and management, electronics and physics. Most of these are available on the Internet in soft form. A subscription fee is required to access/download some of them while a lot more others are free to download. The free copies will be copied free to all students for their reference.

Diploma in Information Technology

7.0 Introduction

- 7.1 This programme is designed to replace the City and Guilds programmes in IT. It will equip students with an understanding of both hardware and software concerns of the computer at advanced technical level. With the basic knowledge of electronics, microprocessors, communications and the operating systems, students who successfully complete training on this programme should be able to diagnose and maintain all computer-related equipment and networks sharing information with other devices on a network.
- 7.2 **Career Opportunities:** Successful candidates should end up as Technical Staff with adequate technical knowledge to diagnose and fix most prevalent IT problems. They should also be able to serve as Network Engineers. Some graduates should be able to go into personal business maintaining and fixing IT and network.
- 7.3 **Programme Delivery:** In first year the students will follow a set of studies laying foundations for more specialised studies at the higher levels. Most courses will be common to both Diploma and Degree programmes in the department. In second year, students will deepen their knowledge with a range of core modules of fundamentals of IT and Networks. In third year students will be introduced to the state-of-the-art technologies and techniques in Networks, and Operating Systems. There will end up with a project that should summarise the range of knowledge and ability acquired so far.
- 7.4 **Teaching and Assessment:** Teaching methods to be used shall include lectures, practicals, tutorials, discussion groups; online resource-based learning, projects and group work. Assessment shall be carried out through a combination of examinations, tests, project reports and a dissertation.
- 7.5 **Intake:** The programme shall recruit its students through the normal entry into University. Since this is a Science-strong programme, candidates will be required to have at least 5 credits at MSCE including Physics and Mathematics.
- 7.6 **Parallel Entry:** The programme shall recruit as parallel students those candidates with 4 credits including Mathematics and Physics.
- 7.7 **Mature Students:** Mature students with the relevant background and those with relevant Certificate requiring upgrade will be allowed to join the programme at year 2.
- 7.8 **Under normal circumstances no students will be allowed to join the programme in year 3.**

Diploma in Business Information Systems

8.0 Introduction

- 8.1 This programme is designed to equip students with an understanding of Computer applications and software concerns of the computer at Technician level. The students will end up with the basic knowledge of business procedures and practice with the technical know-how to enable them analyse and identify software problems. They will also acquire basic knowledge in Networking that should help them maintain a medium-size network in business concerns.
- 8.2 **Career Opportunities:** Successful candidates should end up as Technical staff with enough technical background to maintain sound practices on applications in a business concern. With the knowledge they gain on this programme they should also serve as Site Engineers or Help-Desk Officers assisting users to use the PCs, Business Applications and the Internet. Some graduates should be able to go into personal e-business and developing Business Information Systems for clients.
- 8.3 **Programme Delivery:** The delivery of the programme is similar to the Diploma in Information Technology. In the first year the students will follow a set of studies laying foundations for more specialised studies at the higher levels. Most courses will be common between these two Diplomas. They will be introduced to most Application Packages in Business and Commerce.
- 8.4 **Teaching and Assessment:** Teaching methods are also similar. These shall include lectures, practicals, tutorials, discussion groups; online resource-based learning, projects and group work. Assessment shall be carried out through a combination of examinations, tests, project reports and a dissertation.
- 8.5 **Intake:** The programme shall recruit its students through the normal entry into University. Since this is a not Science-strong programme, candidates will be required to have at least 5 credits at MSCE including Physics and Mathematics. Those with a minimum pass of 7 points in either Mathematics or Physical Sciences but not both, will be considered.

9.0 Regulations for the Diploma Programmes

Although the courses have been designed as modules, the Department has adopted the general college regulations for the assessment of students on the two programmes. This was done simply to be inline with the current college regulations. For courses that are not continuing in semester two, the grades are curried forwards to be presented at the end of the academic year. Below is the set of guidelines that are followed:

- 9.1. Quality Marks on a 101-point scale are used to describe the grades achieved as follows:

Marks	Remarks
75 to 100	Undoubted Distinction
70 to 74	Marginal Distinction
60 to 69	Credit
50 to 59	Clear Pass
40 to 49	Bare Pass
35 to 39	Marginal Failure
0 to 34	Undoubted Failure

However, Colleges may recommend higher cut-offs between the categories above if a programme justifies such consideration.

- 9.2. A Student who has no mark lower than a bare pass in the courses prescribed and taken for the year is deemed to have passed in that year and will proceed to the next year, or in the case of final year student, qualify for an award.
- 9.3. The number of courses vary for the different Diplomas, Degrees, and Certificates in the different years of study as do other special requirements such as choice of courses, standard of achievement, compulsory courses, pre-requisites, attachments and teaching practices. Students are advised therefore, to consult the relevant Faculty regulations.

9.4 Referrals and Repeats

- 9.4.1 (a) Students whose average is less than a bare pass and who have not been seriously warned, must repeat the year if they have not already done so.
(b) Students who obtain failing marks in at least 40% of their courses or fail at least 3 courses shall repeat, if they have not already done so, and their average is within the range 45 - 49 (or 55 - 59 in the case of Kamuzu College of Nursing).
- 9.4.2 Students with failing grades, provided they are not withdrawn under # 9.9 and are not repeating 'under # 9.4.1 or compensated under # 9.4.3 may elect either:
(a) to repeat the year or

(b) to write supplementary examinations if their mean mark is at least 50% (No compensation will be allowed in compulsory courses). Students should be aware that this option is subject to # 9.4.6.

- 9.4.3 Students who have a marginal failure in only one course may be compensated by two clear passes or by a credit in another course. Students will not be permitted to continue with the course in which they obtained a marginal failure (or another course for which it is a pre-requisite) without taking and passing a supplementary examination. Some programmes may contain courses in which no compensation is allowed. Students are advised to consult the relevant Faculty regulations. Furthermore, if a student has a marginal failure in one course and therefore cannot take the required number of courses in the following year he/she will not be compensated and will not be allowed to proceed to the following year without taking and passing a supplementary examination.
- 9.4.4 Provided that they are not recommended to repeat or to withdraw, students with one undoubted failure must be referred in that course however good their other marks, and must pass the course on re-examination except in year 1 where a marginal failure may be compensated as in # 9.4.3.
- 9.4.5 Normally, the re-examination and assessment of a course in which a student has been referred must be completed before the beginning of classes in the subsequent year.
- 9.4.6 Students who are referred in one or more courses should regard their initial failure as a serious warning and therefore: will be withdrawn after writing supplementary examinations if they satisfy criteria for withdrawal under #9.

9.5. Conditions Imposed on Students who are Repeating the Year

- 9.5.1 Throughout this document word "**repeat**" shall refer to repeating on academic grounds only.
- 9.5.2 Students may repeat only once during their studies in the University.
- 9.5.3 Any student repeating a year on academic grounds is on probation during that year. The repetition of a year is equivalent to a serious warning, and a student can be withdrawn without further warning at any time if his/her work is unsatisfactory.

9.6. Aegrotat

- 9.6.1 Students whose course work has been satisfactory, but are prevented by illness from completing the requirements of an examination, may be allowed to proceed as if they have passed, subject to satisfying eligibility conditions in cases of deferred examinations. In case of doubt a deferred examination would be given.
- 9.6.2 Students awarded an Aegrotat pass in their final year will not be eligible for any mark of credit or distinction in their awards, but they may elect to sit a deferred examination in those papers which they missed and thus become eligible for a mark of credit or distinction.
- 9.6.3 A recommendation for the award of an Aegrotat pass must be supported by the College Academic Assessment Committee and shall be brought to Senate by

the Principal.

9.7. Deferred Examinations

- 9.7.1 Deferred examinations should be administered concurrently with supplementary examinations and no supplementary examination should be administered thereafter.
- 9.7.2 Students who fail deferred examinations will be treated in the same manner as those who failed end of year examination. However since no further supplementary examination will be written, they will have to repeat the year if they fail and are not withdrawn under # 9.9.
- 9.7.3 A student who misses examination through illness would be eligible for deferred examination. The student's illness must be supported by medical evidence from the College Clinic. This evidence should normally be given to the College prior to the examination. Only in very exceptional cases such as incapacitation of the student while away from College will retrospective notification be considered.

9.8. Missing Examinations

- 9.8.1 Normally the only valid reasons for missing the examination are illness and bereavement. In particular, extramural activities and misreading of examination timetable are not valid reasons.
- 9.8.2 Students who miss an examination without valid reason will be awarded a grade of 'O' for that examination.

9.9. Withdrawal

- 9.9.1 Students whose overall average mark in their courses is less than bare pass shall be withdrawn, provided that they have been seriously warned by the College during the course of the year.
- 9.9.2 Students who obtain failing marks in at least 40% of their courses or fail at least 3 courses and whose average is within the range of 40 - 44 (50 - 54 in the case of Kamuzu College of Nursing) and have been seriously warned shall be withdrawn.
- 9.9.3 Students who get two marginal failures or one undoubted failure at the end of any term would be deemed to have been seriously warned. The onus of finding out grades at the end of each term and at the end of the year lies with the students. The College will make every reasonable effort to notify students of their results.
- 9.9.4 Students who have already repeated and subsequently obtain grades that would lead to another repeat will be withdrawn.

9.10. Appeals

- 9.10.1 Any appeal against withdrawal on academic grounds should be directed to the Vice-Chancellor who will in turn direct it to the Appeals Committee.
- 9.10.2 There shall be a standing Appeals Committee which shall hear and decide on appeals against the decision of Senate withdrawing students.
- 9.10.3 Students who wish to request that a particular grade be investigated or examination be remarked should direct their request to the Vice-Chancellor

who shall refer the matter to the relevant College.

9.10.4 The Head of department or the Lecturer affected by the appeal or his nominee shall be invited as witnesses.

9.10.5 The appellant shall be heard on his/her appeal either orally or in writing and he/she shall bear the cost of appearing for the purpose of being heard.

9.11. Final Award

9.11.1 Final awards are designated as follows:

General Degrees/Diplomas/Certificates: *Pass, Credit, and Distinction.*

Honours Degree: *First Class, Upper Second Class,*

Lower Second Class, Third Class

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9.11.2 The class of the final award is normally based on the last two years of the programme.

9.11.3 The criteria used by each College/Faculty/School are those of academic performance based on the marks scored.

9.11.4 A mark higher than bare pass in a supplementary examination is scaled down to the lowest mark of a bare pass for purposes of calculating the final award.

9.11.5 Students who for academic reasons repeated either of the last two years are not eligible for an award of Distinction, but will be awarded a Credit if their work is at least of Credit standing.