

**PERFORMANCE AUDIT REPORT ON THE
MANAGEMENT OF EXAMINATIONS BY
THE UNIVERSITY OF SIERRA LEONE**


DECEMBER 2021

FOREWORD

In submitting this Performance Audit Report for tabling in Parliament, we refer to Section 11 of the Audit Service Act of 2014 which defines the key role of the Audit Service Sierra Leone (ASSL) thus: “to audit and report on all public accounts of Sierra Leone and all public offices including the Judiciary of Sierra Leone, the central and local government institutions, the University of Sierra Leone and other public sector institutions of like nature, all statutory corporations, companies and other bodies and organisations established by an Act of Parliament or statutory instrument or otherwise set up wholly or in part out of public funds”.

Section 11 (2c) of the Audit Service Act of 2014 confers on the Audit Service the right to carry out value-for-money and other audits to ensure that efficiency and effectiveness are achieved in the use of public funds. Section 65 (6) of the Public Financial Management Act of 2016 states that, “nothing in this section shall prevent the Auditor-General from submitting a special report for tabling in Parliament on matters that should not await disclosure in the annual report”.

In line with our mandate as described above, we have the pleasure and honour to submit a detailed performance audit report relating to the Management of Examinations by the University of Sierra Leone.



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ACTING AUDITOR-GENERAL

ABBREVIATIONS AND ACRONYMS

LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS AND ACRONYMS	
COMAHS	College of Medicine and Allied Health Sciences
DVC	Deputy Vice-Chancellor
FBC	Fourah Bay College
GoSL	Government of Sierra Leone
HOD	Heads of Department
ICT	Information and Communication Technology
IPAM	Institute of Public Administration and Management
MEST	Ministry of Education, Science and Technology
NCES	National Center for Education Statistics
PFM	Public Financial Management
TEC	Tertiary Education Commission
USL	University of Sierra Leone
VC	Vice-Chancellor

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Examinations are essential in the overall assessment of students in the University of Sierra Leone (USL). The proper conduct or execution of examinations therefore involves several departments/units and individuals. Students desire to work very hard to earn good grades. In their quest to pass well, some students would however resort to irregular means to attain their goals. These means include cheating during examinations.

The USL has its origins in the Fourah Bay College (FBC) which was established on 18th February, 1827. Shortly after that, the FBC became a magnet for Africans seeking higher education in British West Africa. No doubt it was called, the “Athens of West Africa.”¹

Today, that title or accolade seems to have been lost because over the years, there has been a downward trend in the country's educational system. In recent times, the University like all other institutions of learning in the country has been marred with issues of inadequate infrastructural facilities and examination malpractices.

Taking cognisance of the numerous challenges faced by the USL, the current Government of Sierra Leone made education its flagship development programme. The strategic objectives of this flagship programme include increased access to quality technical and higher education to enable graduates to engage in meaningful and productive economic activities.

The USL therefore has the responsibility to rebrand itself in line with the nation's current aim to deliver quality education and to put in place the necessary mechanisms that will not only restore the past glory of our educational system, but to also take it to even greater heights.

It is against this background and the Auditor-General's mandate as enshrined in section 119 (2) of the 1991 Constitution of Sierra Leone, that the Audit Service Sierra Leone (ASSL) carried out this audit to ascertain whether due diligence were followed in the management of examinations by the University of Sierra Leone.

¹ University of Sierra Leone Manual

The following is a summary of the main findings, recommendations and conclusion arising from the audit:

MAIN FINDING

The USL has put measures in place including expulsion of students and dismissal of staff found wanting of any form of examination malpractices. This is in order to uphold its high standards and curb academic malpractices in all its constituent colleges. Despite these strides, the undermentioned findings of this report have led to the conclusion that academic malpractice is still prevalent in the University.

Registration of Students

Students without registration numbers

According to the revised USL Academic, Research and Student Affairs Policy – students must register during the official registration period at the time announced in the college calendar. Annex 2 of the USL harmonised policy states the penalties for breaches of examination/invigilation rules and regulations. Student who fail to register should lose the academic year.

A review of sample examination scripts at IPAM and FBC noted that students attempt the examinations even when they had not been registered. This was confirmed during interviews with various officers who revealed that, some students had not paid their fees during the registration period, contrary to the USL policy.

Management of Grades and Examinations

Submission and collection of examination questions and grades

According to the harmonised assessment policy, submission and vetting of examination questions and marking schemes to the HoDs shall be done on a secured platform. Lecturers should collect the scripts for marking two days after the examination.

The auditors noted the following:

- Some lecturers at FBC did not submit examination questions to the Heads of Departments (HoDs) as per policy. Rather, submissions were made to the Exams Office for printing a day before the exams and sometimes printing were done by the lecturers. There is a possibility of leakage of questions to students by the lecturers.

- Lecturers at IPAM submitted their questions to the Dean through a designated email address. The questions were modified by the Deans before printing and sealed thereafter.
- Module lecturers at both IPAM and FBC did not collect scripts for marking from the exams Office as the policy requires, i.e., ‘not later than two (2) days after an examination is taken’; and
- Lecturers did not mark and return examinations grades and scripts on time which affected the publication of students’ grades.

Conduct of Examinations

Physical observation by the auditors during the June 2021 first semester examinations at IPAM and FBC, revealed that over 170 students were placed in every examination hall. At IPAM for instance, there was only one space created at the edge of the hall, whereas, no other space was created between rows for ease of movement of invigilators. This arrangement made it easy for comparison and exchange of materials, during the conduct of exams, to go unnoticed.

Continuous Assessment

The students’ performance constitutes examination grades and continuous assessment which are 70% and 30% respectively of the overall grades. Collated continuous assessment grades, which accounts for 30% of the total grade shall be submitted to the Examinations Office two weeks before the end-of-semester exams according to the USL harmonised policy. The audit team noted that continuous assessment grades were not submitted at the stipulated time and sometimes after the semester examinations and therefore caused chaos for both students and lecturers.

We also found out from the review of collated grade sheets that grades given by lecturers for continuous assessment were not reflective of the students’ performance during examinations. Students who performed badly in the examinations were given high continuous assessment grades to enable them have the minimum pass mark of 40% as prescribed in the policy.

Publication of Cumulative Results

Examinations are conducted at the end of every semester in the academic year. The results of these examinations form part of the criteria for progression to the next level.

Interviews with Deans of faculties revealed that there were undue delays in the publication of results due to late submission of examination grades by lecturers for the period under review. The team noted that the final results for the reviewed period were not published until the following academic year and sometimes up to a month or two in the new academic year. For example, final results for the past two academic years were not published after the end of the faculty and examinations board meeting, which was six weeks after the examination (as per the guidelines of USL Harmonisation Assessment Policy) rather, the results were published during the new academic year. This observation was mainly for IPAM and FBC.

During a focus group discussion with students at IPAM and FBC, it came out clearly that continuing students moved to the next levels of their courses without knowing their outcome in the examinations. It was also disclosed that, when the results are eventually published, some students were disappointed to see that they had not fulfilled the requirements to progress to the next level after they had already spent a month or two in the new classes. Others also noticed that some of their grades were not published leading to a whole new chaotic episode of “Missing Grades.”

Missing Grades

According to the harmonisation assessment policy, students should fill a form from the Dean’s Office to report missing grades. The faculty in collaboration with the Exams Office will search for the script. If missing grades are not found and verified, students should be allowed to rewrite the examination at no cost and not as a reference.

During the audit, the team observed situations of missing grades. Interviews with college authorities revealed the causes of missing grades as follows:

- students did not register at the beginning of the semester and therefore may not have been included in the class lists for the modules they offered;
- some students did not attend classes during the semester and only came for exams even without records of their attendance, and therefore no continuous assessment grades for them;
- the Registry failed to update the students class lists to reflect incoming students and repeaters;
- some students went into the examination hall and filled out the attendance register but did not write the exams when they noticed that the questions were difficult;

- some students walked away with their examination scripts unknown to the invigilators and claimed at the end to have written the exams;
- some students wrote their correct names and registration numbers on the exams register but not on the answer booklets;
- some lecturers marked scripts and did not enter the grades into the grade sheets; and
- when different modules were taken in the same exam hall, at the same time, the scripts are mixed-up during collection.

A focus group discussion with students at FBC and IPAM disclosed that even though students examination booklets were lost and found, their grades were still missing for the 2018/2019 academic year. These students were required to take another exam at a reference cost of Le150,000, in contravention with the USL harmonized assessment policy.

ACADEMIC MALPRACTICES

The USL harmonised policy outlines sanctions for examination malpractice and penalties for breaches of examination/invigilation rules and regulations.

During this audit, interviews with university authorities revealed that academic malpractices were on the rise and had become endemic in the university. According to them, there were instances wherein lecturers gave out grades (unchecked and at will) to give unfair advantage to some students. Hand written scripts and typed lecture notes were also presented to the audit team as evidence of foreign materials taken into the examination halls by students to aid them answer questions.

Interviews with Deans and HoDs disclosed methods used by students to cheat during examination:

- Leakage – illegally getting examination questions before the examination time; which sometimes come from lecturers, faculty officers and examination officers.
- Cheating – transgressing any of the rules governing the conduct of examinations.
- Taking foreign materials into the examination room.
- Collusion – malpractice performed in cooperation with others, such as passing notes, or receiving or giving assistance to other candidates in the examination room, use of mobile phones and facemasks to spy/cheat.

Capacity of Lecturers

Goal 6.6.1 of the USL Strategic Development Plan 2019-2023, requires the university authorities to enhance the colleges competitiveness in recruitment and retention of high quality personnel.

It was however noted from a review of over 350 personal files, USL staff list and database of profiles of lecturers that there were only 12 professors (FBC and COHMAS) as opposed to best practices which requires each faculty of a University to have a professor.

Interviews conducted with Deans of faculties of all the constituent colleges in the University confirmed that there were few qualified personnel lecturing specific disciplines in the faculties. As such, demonstrators, teaching assistants and more part-time lecturers were employed to complement the staff strength.

Lecturer to student ratio

It was noted from the review of student database that the number of students was far disproportionate to the lecturers. For instance, we noted that some modules were taken as joint classes, wherein over 500 students were assigned to a single lecturer.

Inadequate Infrastructural Facilities

Interviews with Deans of faculties at the USL and physical inspection revealed that there were inadequate lecture rooms at the campuses and this had led to overcrowding, despite the construction of new classroom blocks. The team also observed that Social Work as well as Law students were having lectures at the same time and in the same classroom at FBC with each set of students facing opposite directions.

The team further observed that the colleges lacked: adequate lecture room space to accommodate the number of students, well equipped laboratories, well-resourced libraries, effective internet connectivity and modern technology for teaching and learning.

OVERALL CONCLUSION

Academic malpractices gravely undermine the credibility of the University and the quality of their certificates, diplomas and degrees. This is a contributing factor to underdevelopment and corruption in the country. The issues of academic malpractices are as a result of institutional inefficiencies and

lack of integrity in some officers and students. The University does not have adequate mechanisms in place to monitor the conduct of assessment and grading, thereby giving unfair advantage to dishonest students over diligent and honest students.

Despite the fact that the USL had policies guiding its admission and examinations, the auditors noted irregularities due to the fact that the USL does not comply with or adhere to these policies.

Detailed work revealed that the major causes of all these irregularities in examinations could be attributed to the following:

- i. The USL compromising its admission policy by admitting students who do not meet the University's departmental requirements;
- ii. Congestion of students in examination halls as a result of inadequate infrastructure in the colleges;
- iii. Inadequate qualified teaching and administrative personnel coupled with the lack of integrity in some of these personnel; and
- iv. Breaching of examination policies with regard to grading, submission and vetting of questions.

At the end of the audit exercise, the team received a blanket response from the University without supporting documents to further verify whether the audit recommendations had been implemented. The responses received by the university did not single out what actions had been taken by the individual colleges since audits were carried out in that manner (individual audit of the colleges). During verification on Wednesday, 24th November, 2021 no evidence, by way of supporting the audit response, was provided to the team. In that regard, the issues remain unresolved.

OVERALL RECOMMENDATION

The USL administration should engage key stakeholders including the Ministry of Technical and Higher Education to address the causes raised above and implement the undermentioned recommendations relating to the cause of these issues as follows:

- Heads of Departments (HODs) of the various colleges must ensure that students results are properly scrutinised to meet the University's departmental requirements;

- Registrars of the various colleges should ensure that students strictly comply with the registration procedures, by registering during the official registration at the time announced in the college calendar.
- Registrars should update class lists at the beginning of every academic year to reflect repeaters and incoming students and to also plan with the available resources.
- Deputies Vice Chancellors should ensure that capacity building opportunities are available to those that are already employed by the University. This should be done by creating budget lines for research, create avenues for sabbatical leaves and write and publish research.
- The HODs of the various colleges should ensure that the admission of students are properly scrutinised so that the available facilities could accommodate the required number of students.
- Punitive measures are taken against lecturers who fail to submit their grades on time as stipulated in the University's Harmonised Assessment policy.
- Invigilators should ensure that the number of answer scripts/booklets are reconciled with the number of students in the attendance register before leaving the hall.
- Invigilators should ensure that the names and registration numbers on the submitted answer scripts agree with those on the exams attendance sheets.
- The principals should ensure existing measures are scaled up to curb the issues of academic malpractices.
- The HODs should be more concerned about quality and regularise the intake of students until they are able to invest in infrastructural facilities as this will also enhance quality of degrees awarded.

1 INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background

Examinations are essential in the overall assessment regime in the University of Sierra Leone (USL) and the proper conduct or execution involve several departments/units and individuals. Students desire to work very hard to earn good grades. In their quest to pass well, some students however resort to irregular means to attain their goals, such as cheating during examinations.

The USL is the name of the former unitary public university system in Sierra Leone. It has its origin in the FBC. This College was established in February 1827 as an Anglican missionary school by the Church Missionary Society with support from Charles MacCarthy, the Governor of Sierra Leone. Samuel Ajayi Crowther was the first student to enroll at Fouray Bay.²

The FBC soon became a magnet for Africans seeking higher education in British West Africa. These included Nigerians, Ghanaians, Ivorians and many more, especially in the fields of theology and education. It was the first western-style university in West Africa. Under colonialism, Freetown was known as the "Athens of West Africa" as an homage to the college³.

Higher education in Sierra Leone was restructured in May 2005 by the Universities Act of 2005 which provides for the establishment of private universities. The Act restructured the USL to include the FBC, the Institute of Public Administration and Management (IPAM), and the College of Medicine and Allied Health Sciences (COMAHS). The restructured USL is superintended by a Vice-Chancellor and Principal (VC&P) who is the chief academic and administrative head of the University. The Act also makes provision for a Registrar.

The FBC is comprised of four faculties: Arts, Engineering & Architecture, Pure & Applied Sciences, and Social Sciences & Law. In 2000, the College introduced the modular system with two semesters in each academic year, which replaced the terminal system which constituted three terms in an academic year. The College is currently located on Mount Aureol, a picturesque view overlooking Freetown, the capital of Sierra Leone. The beautiful landscape and serene learning environment

²wikipedia.org/wiki/University_of_Sierra_Leone

³ University of Sierra Leone Manuak

etched in a beautiful green scenery provides a panoramic view of much of the capital city. Elevated 300 meters above sea level with low carbon foot-print, the location is ideal for learning and ecotourism.

The IPAM was established on 5th November, 1980. It has two faculties, the Faculty of Management Sciences; comprising four departments: Accountancy & Finance, Business Administration, Banking & Finance and Public Administration. The Faculty of Information Systems & Technology; comprises the Department of Information Systems and the Department of Technology.

The COMAHS was the first medical school in Sierra Leone and was founded on 12th April, 1988 by the Government of Sierra Leone with the help of the Nigerian Government and the World Health Organisation. The COMAHS is mandated to produce doctors, nurses, pharmacists, biomedical scientists and laboratory technicians with a view to improving the healthcare delivery system in Sierra Leone. It has four faculties: Basic Medical Sciences, Clinical Sciences, Nursing and Pharmaceutical Sciences.

1.2 Motivation of the Audit

The Sustainable Development Goal 4 (SDG 4) states: “ensure inclusive and equitable quality education and promote lifelong learning opportunities for all.” Target 4.3 states: “By 2030, ensure equal access for all women and men to affordable and quality technical, vocational and tertiary education, including university”. This was translated in the Government of Sierra Leone Medium-Term National Development Plan 2019 – 2023 where the Government aims to strengthen tertiary and higher education.

Sierra Leone previously housed what was known as the “Athens of West Africa.” The USL was the first western-style university in West Africa and had its origin at the FBC. Today, that title or accolade seems to have been lost because over the years, there has been a downward trend in the country's educational system. This is worsened by the inadequate and dilapidated infrastructure of the constituent colleges of the University.

The state of the oldest constituent college of the USL which is the FBC lies in ruins. It has been described in the Sierra Leone's Premier Online News Portal as “in total shambles, derelict and a precarious state”. Students had stopped using the FBC hostel facilities since 2010 on the grounds of rehabilitation. The situation has since then left many students arriving on campus late for academic work. Others coming from the provinces across the country find it very difficult to get

accommodation in Freetown. The images below are photos of the structure of the college in its dilapidated condition as presented in this article⁴:

Figure 1: FBC in its dilapidated condition.



The Government, through the University of Sierra Leone, on Wednesday 27th August, 2014 signed an agreement with the Arab Bank for Economic Development in Africa (BADEA) for the rehabilitation of the FBC campus, including the renovation of the College's hostels as well as providing more infrastructural facilities. It was disclosed that this project cost US\$36.65 million and was funded by the International Development (DfID) (US\$13 million), Saudi Fund (US\$12 million), BADEA (US\$8 million), with the Government of Sierra Leone accounted for US\$3.65 million. This rehabilitation/construction was to last for 18 months but is still not completed. Société Générale de Fella (SOGEFEL) won the bid as the contractor⁵.

Over a long period of neglect, the country has witnessed an erosion of standards in its educational system and the University of Sierra Leone is no exception to this. The curricula are mostly not relevant to the needs of the society, and the mission and vision of the University require that modalities be put in place to ensure and maintain quality of its programmes.

⁴ Sierra Leone's Premier Online News Portal

⁵ Concord Times online, August 29, 2014

In recent times, the University like all other institutions of learning in the country has been marred with issues of examination malpractice. An article dated 3rd December, 2017 written by Ishmael Sallieu Koroma & Yusufu S. Bangura states that the USL instituted investigations into alleged examination malpractices at both the IPAM and the COMAHS. A press release issued by the USL at the end of this investigation informed the public that three lecturers from IPAM were summarily dismissed for alleged examination malpractice (fraudulently changing grades after examinations). At COMAHS, according to this release, two students were rusticated for one year, five rusticated for two years, and three expelled with immediate effect.

A shocking public notice released by the Council of Legal Education; the governing authority for the Conduct of Legal Education in Sierra Leone, nullified the results of the 2012/2013 Bar Final Exams and called on those former candidates to return their certificates since a special investigation report has revealed that massive fraud and examination malpractices took place during the conduct of the 2012/2013 Bar Final Exams.

In another development, the USL rusticated sixty-five students following the conclusion of investigations into examinations malpractice between 2017 and 2019. According to the statement issued by the USL, forty-five of the sanctioned students were from the FBC whilst the remaining twenty were from IPAM.

Taking cognisance of all these challenges, the current Government of Sierra Leone made education its flagship development project. The strategic objectives of this flagship project include increased access to quality technical and higher education to enable graduates engage in meaningful and productive economic activity. To achieve this objective, the President in his State Opening of Parliament policy pronouncement in May 2018 increased budgetary allocation to education to a minimum of twenty percent (20%) of the national budget⁶.

The USL therefore has the responsibility to rebrand itself in line with the nation's current aim to deliver quality education and to put in place the necessary mechanisms that will not only restore the past glory of our educational system, but to also take it to even greater heights.

⁶ Sierra Leone's Medium-term National Development Plan 2019–2023

Considering all these, the ASSL conducted a performance audit to assess whether due diligence was followed in the management of examinations by the USL so that recommendations can be proffered to improve the situation.

1.3 Audit Objective

The objective of the audit was to assess whether due diligence are followed in the management of examinations by the University of Sierra Leone.

1.2 Audit Questions

1. Does the USL ensure that students comply with registration procedures?
2. To what extent does the USL ensure that laid down policies on the management of grades and examinations are followed?
3. How effective are the measures instituted for preventing or controlling academic malpractice?
4. Does the USL have sufficient human resource capacity (lecturers)?
5. How adequate are the infrastructural facilities of the USL to meet its student population?

1.4 Scope

The audit focused on the management of examinations by the USL, which includes FBC, IPAM and COMAHS, all located in Freetown, and IPAM (extra mural classes) in Bo and Kenema covering the period between 2017 to 2019 academic years.

1.5 Audit Methods

The audit was conducted in accordance with International Standards of Supreme Audit Institutions (ISSAIs) which were issued by the International Organisation of Supreme Audit Institutions (INTOSAI).

Those standards require that, the audit is planned and performed in order to obtain sufficient and appropriate evidence, to provide a reasonable basis for the findings and conclusions based on the audit objective. During the conduct of the audit, we collected data through interviews held with key stakeholders, issued questionnaires to students, reviewed relevant documents, physically verified lecture rooms, buildings and analysed data collected.

Interviews

Stakeholders that are involved in the admission and management of examinations at the University were interviewed to know their roles and responsibilities and to obtain an in-depth knowledge with regard the management of examinations by the USL. **(See Appendix 1 for the list of stakeholders that were interviewed)**

Documents Review

Relevant policies, laws and regulations were reviewed to assess the degree of care taken in ensuring procedures and processes are followed in the management of examinations. **(See Appendix 2 for the list of documents reviewed)** Other reports were also looked at to gain a broader knowledge on the subject matter. One of such reports was the Needs Assessment Study on Higher Education Institutions by the Tertiary Education Commission which was questionnaire based and one of the criticisms by the validators was that the facts were not verified.

Physical Observation

Observations were done at the three selected colleges under the USL in order to assess conduct of exams, facilities, structures and the learning environment of students. Professional judgement was used to carry out physical observation as there were no standards set to measure specific performances such as lecture rooms, student-lecturer ratio, proper ventilation and other facilities.

Focus Group Discussion

The team used focus group discussion to gather information on their knowledge and opinion on the audit topic.

Sample Selection

The USL has the following faculties:

FBC: Arts, Social Sciences & Law, Pure and Applied Sciences, and Engineering and Architecture.

COMAHS: Basic Medical Sciences, Clinical Sciences, Pharmaceutical Sciences and Nursing.

IPAM: Faculty of Management Sciences.

The report did not look at every faculty/department in the three colleges. Rather, it was based on selected faculties/departments in the three colleges that make up the USL. These includes department of accountancy, business administration, Nursing and social sciences. The audit team also used the purposive sampling method (a method based on judgment and the objective of the study)

1.6 Assessment Criteria

The criteria for the audit were obtained from relevant policies, regulations and acts that govern the operations of the University. Best practices/international standards were also used as criteria.

See appendix 3 for assessment criteria.

1.7 Limitation of Scope

A list of relevant documents was requested from the constituent colleges in order to enhance the auditors in gathering and analysing information for the period under review. Several correspondence as well as verbal requests made to the various colleges in respect of documents proved futile. Up to the time of finalising the draft report, these documents had not been tendered for audit. Below is a list of cross-cutting outstanding documents for 2017-2019 academic years.

1. Collated grade sheets;
2. Students attendance register during examinations;
3. Marking schemes;
4. Student time sheets;
5. Student feedback forms;
6. CCTV reports;
7. Number of classrooms and capacity per classroom

Apart from the challenge of presentation of documents, COMAHS restrained the auditors from taking photos of their facilities at Kossoh Town. Cooperation from Fourah Bay College, specifically the Faculty of Law, was also a challenge as no documents were tendered by this unit up to the time of finalising the draft audit report.

The non-submission of documents had not only impacted negatively on the timely completion of the audit but hindered the objective of the audit.

2 DESCRIPTION OF THE AUDIT AREA

This chapter gives a brief description of the subject matter including the Government's undertakings during the period under review. It outlines the pre and post examination processes and the examination rules and grading system by the USL.

2.1 MISSION AND VISION OF THE UNIVERSITY OF SIERRA LEONE

MISSION

A university that demonstrates its commitment to generating and transmitting knowledge through quality teaching and research for sustained development and whose products are nationally competitive.

VISION

A friendly world-class centre of excellence responsive to the needs of society.

2.1.1 Core Values

- **Excellence** - as is evident in our academic staff's teaching, research and publications.
- **Integrity**, which we maintain by transparently executing academic standards and administrative procedures, yet assuming all users of our adherence to the principles of confidentiality.
- **Discipline** - through the firm and fair application of codes, conduct and sanctions, where and when appropriate.
- **Academic freedom** - by which our academic staff and students present and discuss the credibility of their ideas.
- **Partnership** - which we promote through linkages and networking with other tertiary institutions, private and public institutions and with the alumni.
- **A student focus** - demonstrated through our response to students' needs and demands and assistance with their career management.

2.2 REGULATORY FRAMEWORK

The relevant laws regulating the provision of education in Sierra Leone are;

- i. The Education Act, 2004
- ii. The University Act, 2005
- iii. The Tertiary Education Commission, 2001

The Education Act of 2004 is the key piece of legislation that guides educational policy in Sierra Leone. This Act outlines the structure of the educational system from pre-primary to tertiary level for all categories of learners including those with special needs. The responsibility for the provision of educational facilities is however under the overall supervision and control of the Ministry of Technical and Higher Education.

The University Act of 2005 reconstitutes the University of Sierra Leone, establishes the Njala University, provides for the establishment of other public and private universities and to provide for other related matters. The universities are responsible to award degrees, diplomas and certificates in various disciplines.

The Tertiary Education Commission Act of 2001 being an Act to establish the Tertiary Education Commission for the development of tertiary education in Sierra Leone and to provide for other matters connected therewith.

The USL is faced with several challenges in carrying out its assessment functions. These relate to setting of examination question, efficient examinations administration; including conduct of examinations, marking of scripts, and above all curbing the menace of examinations malpractice.

2.3 ENTRY REQUIREMENT

2.3.1 Undergraduate

The University entry requirement for degree programmes is five credits with a minimum of C5 in English Language at the General Certificate Examination (GCE) O' Level, or the West African Senior School Certificate Examination (WASSCE), obtained in not more than two sittings. In addition, applicants must satisfy faculty and departmental requirements for admission into the various faculties and departments.

In the case of the GCE O' Level Exams, only grades ranging from 1 to 6 are recognised as GCE O' Level credit passes; for WASSCE, it is A1 to C6, while for the Associate Examinations Board (London GCE O' Level) only C or better is recognised.

2.3.2 Post Graduate & Professional Studies

Admission into the Postgraduate School is done twice a year- in the first and second semesters. For a master's degree programme (e.g. M.A., M.Sc., M.Phil., M.B.A., M.F.A.) the admission is a two-step process. First, you must possess a Bachelor's Degree (*Division II or better*) and second, you must be accepted by the institute or department in which you wish to pursue the course. For the Ph.D. programme, the minimum entry qualification is an M.Phil. (or its equivalent) in the relevant area of specialisation.

2.3.3 Diploma and Certificate Programmes

For admissions into the Diploma and Certificate programmes, applicants must obtain the following: 4 credits including English Language at WASSCE/GCE O' Level, except for the Certificate in Population Analysis and Social Statistics, the Special Certificate in Mass Communication, and the Special Certificate in Library Archive and Information Studies.

The USL Policy on the Harmonization of Assessment process spelt out the pre and post methods of managing examinations.

2.4 EXAMINATIONS PROCESS

FBC

Pre exam

The examination process starts with a correspondence that is sent from the exams office to the estate officers in order to organise the exam halls and classrooms for easy allocation of students. A draft timetable is then prepared by the exams office and sent to the students through their HoDs for feedback. The final timetable is thereafter published on the notice board and through various student WhatsApp forums two to three weeks before the exams. A standard memorandum for the submission of questions is sent to the Deans of Faculties and HoDs two weeks before exams.

Lecturers are supposed to submit their questions to the exams office through their Deans of Faculties and HoDs. The examination questions are to be printed in a secured manner using the College letter head.

Exam

The size of the classroom determines the number of students, supervisors and invigilators. The invigilators distribute the questions after the students have signed the attendance register and the examination attendance form. The examination is normally slated for three hours. The answer booklets are thereafter collected and reconciled with the attendance list, signed, sealed and submitted to the exams office. All unused spaces in the answer booklets are crossed out with two lines to avoid any malpractice. Exam malpractice forms are also given to invigilators to report malpractices during the exams.

Post Exam

Notifications on completion of the exams are sent to the HoD. These notifications inform lecturers to collect the answer booklets from the exams office for marking with dates for submission of grades. Lecturers are then required to submit grades to the exams office **three weeks after collecting** the answer booklets from the exams office for marking. There are only three (3) staff in the exams office responsible to collate the grades and present to the Faculty Board (comprising all HoDs and departmental lecturers) for verification. Upon approval, the final grades are then published. The grades are processed in access software to generate students' transcripts. Any malpractice during the exams are forwarded to the Deputy Registrar for action.

IPAM

Pre Exam

The examination process starts with the release of time tables by the Student and Academic Affairs Body, two to three weeks before the exams. Lecturers submit their questions to the Dean through a designated email address. The Dean moderates (i.e., fit into context the questions) with the help of a specialist in that course area. The questions are prepared in a secured manner with a code using IPAM

letter head. The questions are then printed and sealed by the exams office a day before the exam (for morning papers) or the day of the exam (for afternoon papers).

Exam

The size of the classroom determines the number of students, supervisors and invigilators. The invigilators distribute the questions after the students have signed the attendance register. The examination is normally slated for three hours. The answer booklets are thereafter collected and reconciled with the attendance list, signed, sealed and submitted to the exams office. All unused space in the answer booklets are crossed out with two lines to avoid any malpractice.

Post Exam

Lecturers collect the answer booklets from the exams office for marking. In cases of modules that are over 100 students conference marking is done. Lecturers are required to submit grades to the HoD, three weeks after collecting the answer booklet from the exams office. The HoD singularly collate all the grades and present to the Departmental Board (comprises all departmental lecturers) for verification. After verification, the grades are sent to the exams office for printing. The printed grades are sent to the Deans of Faculties (Deans, HoD, Head of Exams and lecturers) for Faculty Board meeting. Upon approval, the final grades are then published.

2.4.1 Pre-Examination

1. Collated continuous assessment grades shall be submitted to the Examinations Office two weeks before the end-of-semester exams.
2. Submission and vetting of examination questions and marking schemes to the Heads of Departments (HoDs) shall be done on a secured platform.
3. In the case of final year exams, the assigned External Examiner through the HoD shall vet exams questions.
4. 75% class attendance by students is required to be eligible for the end-of-semester exam.

2.4.2 Post-Examinations

1. Module lecturers should collect for marking, all scripts from the examinations office not later than two days after an examination is taken.

2. The lecturer should count all scripts and tally them with the attendance sheet for that examination before he signs for and collects the scripts.
3. Lecturers shall mark and return grades through the portal for every script collected or state in the comment column why a grade is missing.
4. He should return marked scripts to the HoD for second marking, where necessary, within 4 weeks.
5. All second marking shall be done in the 5th week after end of examinations.
6. Departmental Board meeting shall be held in the 6th week after the end of examinations.
7. Faculty and Examiners Boards meeting shall be organised in the 6th week after end of examinations. The rules and regulations governing academic progression should be read out at the start of each meeting. Final grades are approved at this meeting.
8. The Deans shall ensure that approved grades are forwarded through the portal for publication by the examinations office.
9. Only authorised personnel (the Dean or his assignee) are permitted to alter approved grades, following due process.
10. All reference examinations shall go through the same procedure as the normal examinations.
11. Reference examinations shall be marked and grades returned to the HoD and Dean within four weeks, for publication.
12. Students should fill a form from the Dean's office to report missing grades.
13. The faculty in collaboration with the examinations office will search for the script.
14. If missing grades are not found and verified, students should be allowed to rewrite the examination at no cost and not as a reference.
15. The departments shall forward names and curriculum vitae of proposed external examiners to the Deans, who will send the names to the Deputy Vice Chancellor for approval. The Deputy Registrar will contact approved external examiners several weeks before the start of the examination.
16. External examinations shall be done on all final year scripts (grades) and dissertations.
17. All grades and registration must be processed in the portal.
18. Every student with examination or registration issues after the deadline shall be treated as backlog and shall wait for the next congregation.

2.5 EXAMINATION RULES AND REGULATIONS

General

1. It is the responsibility of all academic staff and the relevant examination personnel to ensure that all forms of assessments, including end-of-semester examinations, are robust enough to deter if not eliminate all forms of examination malpractice.
2. It is the responsibility of the college administration and especially the Examinations Officer to ensure that the venues for all examinations are appropriate in terms of the size of the room/hall, lighting and ventilation, and sitting arrangements including spacing of desks.
3. Only candidates who have met all the university requirements for eligibility to take examinations shall be allowed into the examination hall.
4. Candidates who require special support during examinations due to disability, medical conditions or otherwise should contact the relevant authorities in their campuses, including the Examination Office, at least 2 weeks before the start of the examination period.

2.5.1 Grading System

The following ten-point grading system is adopted for FBC and IPAM students. Refer to appendix 4 for detailed student progression and grading system.

Table 1: Grading system for FBC and IPAM

Letter Grade	% Grade	Points	Remarks
A	≥70%	4.00	Excellent
B+	65 – 69%	3.75	Very Good
B	60 – 64%	3.25	Good
B-	55 – 59%	3.00	Good
C+	50 – 54%	2.75	Credit
C	46 – 49%	2.50	Credit
C-	40 – 45%	2.00	Pass
D	35 – 39%	1.50	Conditional Pass
E	30 – 34%	1.00	Fail
F	<30%	0	Fail

2.5.2 Grading System at COMAHS

Distinction: 70% and above

Credit: 65% to 69%

Pass: 50 to 64%

Fail: less than 50%

Continuous assessment (CA) and end-of-semester assessment

1. The CA is done throughout the semester and may consist of assignments, quizzes, multiple-choice questions (MCQs), short-answer questions (SAQs), book and article reviews, field trips, practical classes/lab work, seminars and so on. Continuous Assessment constitutes 30% of the total semester grades for the student.
2. The end-of-semester exam may also take a variety of forms, ranging from essay questions to SAQs. This exam constitutes 70% of the total semester grades for the student.

Table 2: Harmonised classification of degrees, diplomas and certificates

Honours degrees	General degrees	Diplomas/Certificates
First Class CGPA of 3.50 or better	Division One: CGPA of 3.20 or better	Distinction: CGPA of 3.20 or better
Second Class, First Division: CGPA of 3.00 – 3.49	Division Two: CGPA of 2.60 – 3.19	Credit: CGPA of 2.60 – 3.19
Second Class, Second Division: CGPA of 2.60 – 2.99	Division Three: CGPA of 1.50 – 2.59	Pass: CGPA of 1.50 – 2.59
Third Class CGPA of 2.00 – 2.59	Fail: CGPA of below 1.50	Fail: CGPA of below 1.50
Pass: CGPA of 1.50 – 1.99		
Fail: CGPA of below 1.50		

Refer to Annex 2: for detailed penalties for breaches of examination/invigilation rules and regulations.

2.6 VARIOUS POLICIES OF THE UNIVERSITY

I. The USL's Financial Management Policy

The Policy is designed to provide further guidance on the proper accounting for all financial and accounting transactions of the USL. It is the responsibility of every staff of the USL to ensure maximum transparency and integrity of the University's financial transactions and systems.

II. The USL's Administrative and Human Resources Policy

This manual is a working document for the management and a reference document for all staff/employees of the University of Sierra Leone. The primary intention is to adequately inform all staff/employees within the University on various HR aspects of working relationship. As and when staff/employees take up appointment within the University, it is obligatory to use the manual appropriately. This document is an integral part of the employment contract between the employer and employees and completes the internal regulations of the University.

III. The USL's ICT Policy - 2018

This policy outlines the guidelines on Information and Communication Technology (ICT) management in the University of Sierra Leone (USL).

IV. The USL's Quality Assurance and Performance Management Policy - 2018

In a bid to address the foregoing, higher education institutions have put in place quality assurance procedures in order to assess whether they meet the objectives from policy level to programme and course levels. Quality assurance is not identical to quality, but it checks the quality of processes and outcomes against international benchmarks with the aim of enhancing standards.

V. The USL's Strategic Plan 2019-2023

The Strategic Plan 2019 – 2023 is designed to address the current challenges in the education sector in the country. The University has the responsibility to rebrand itself in line with the nation's current aim to deliver quality education and to put in place the necessary mechanisms that will not only restore the past glory of our educational system, but to take it to even greater and enviable heights.

VI. The USL's Harmonised Assessment Policy

This policy outlines the guidelines on grading and penalties on examinations management in the University of Sierra Leone (USL).

VII. The Revised USL's Academic, Research and Students' Affairs Policy - October 2018

The Academic Integrity Policy is one of the instruments governing the conduct of faculty, staff and students of the University of Sierra Leone.

Academic integrity is founded upon the following values: honesty, trust, fairness, respect, professionalism, customer responsiveness and responsibility. Rigorous implementation of these values is propitious in promoting and maintaining a high level of academic integrity. Every member of the academic community must stand accountable for his or her actions. As a result, a community develops in which students learn the importance of transparency and accountability; and how to contribute honourably to their professions and national development.

The members of each university shall be the following, with their main functions stated in sections 11 to 28 of the University Act of 2005.

- (a) the Chancellor (b) the Pro Chancellor (c) the Vice-Chancellor and Principal
- (d) the Pro Vice-Chancellor (e) the Deputy Vice-Chancellor (f) the Court (g) the Senate
- (h) the academic staff (i) all senior officers of the University (j) all graduates
- (k) the convocation (l) the Congregation.

2.7 ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES OF KEY PLAYERS IN THE MANAGEMENT OF EXAMINATIONS

The Campus Registry/Examinations Office

Is the principal custodian with overall responsibility for all security arrangements pertaining the proper storage of exam-related materials and the conduct of exams.

The exams office must ensure the following:

1. Exam rules and processes are credible and transparent.
2. Answer booklets are printed weeks before the start of exams.
3. A draft exam timetable is displayed at least four weeks and the final timetable at least two weeks before the start of the semester exam.
4. Question papers are printed and sealed at least 48 hours before the start of the exam.
5. The examination environment is conducive – there are adequate and well-ventilated halls with good lighting system and proper seating arrangements to prevent spying and other malpractices.

Dean of Faculty

It is the responsibility of the Dean to ensure the following:

1. Assessment methods and practices of all academic staff (full-time and part-time) in his/her Faculty comply with this Policy and other related university policies and regulations.
2. Correct and timely processes are followed by the Heads of Department.
3. Appropriate quality checks are carried out in relation to the preparation, marking and moderation of exam papers.
4. Lecturers assigned to invigilate exams carry out their duties in a timely and efficient manner.
5. Faculty Board meetings are summoned to discuss and agree on the exam grades before final submission to the exams office for publication.

Head of Department/Director of Institute

Has overall accountability for all assessments in their department/institute.

It is the responsibility of the Head/Director to ensure the following:

1. Lecturers actively participate in all scheduled educational activities (such as lectures, seminars, tutorials, practicals and field trips).
2. Each module in the department/institute has a properly structured course outline, with clear objectives and learning outcomes.
3. Academic staff conscientiously complete their syllabuses, develop question banks, prepare marking schemes (or model answers) and grade students' exam papers objectively and promptly.
4. Exam questions are written in clear and unambiguous language and they sufficiently, fairly, validly and reliably measure students' performance of intended learning outcomes.
5. Qualified external examiners are appointed, and question papers sent to them for moderation several weeks before the start of the exams.
6. Continuous assessment grades are turned in at the right time.
7. Exam scripts are second marked, and the different grades harmonised.
8. Departmental meetings are held to moderate student grades.

Lecturers

1. Must always display the highest level of integrity in the performance of their functions. Acting otherwise (either by commission or omission) will attract severe penalties.
2. Must diligently perform their academic functions, including teaching and assessment of their students (see 1, 2, 3, 4 and 6 above: *Responsibilities of Heads of Department/ Directors of Institutes*).
3. Should input their grades into the portal, but cannot unilaterally alter these grades once they have been validated at a Board of Examiners' meeting.
4. Should provide timely feedback to students after an assessment.
5. Should make every effort to be available to students seeking information regarding their grades.

Exam Supervisors

The exams office shall appoint supervisors who will help oversee the conduct of the exams. They shall do the following:

- a) Visit any examination room of their choice during the examinations (and at other appropriate times before and after the examinations) to inspect the arrangements made for the security of examination material and for conducting the examinations.
- b) Ensure that invigilators are in their respective halls and performing their duties diligently throughout the duration of the paper/s.
- c) Ensure that seating arrangements prevent candidates from overlooking (intentionally or otherwise) the work of others, and that each candidate has enough space to hold question papers and answer booklets.

Students

Students have a responsibility to:

1. Ensure they understand the University's policies, requirements, including timetables, for examinations and other assessment tasks.
2. Actively participate in the learning process.
3. Follow the lecturer's guidelines and instructions for the submission of assignments (including term papers, projects and dissertations).
4. Submit assignments on time.

5. Notify the lecturer if they have difficulty submitting their assignment in time.
6. Undertake all assessment tasks ethically, and refrain from exam malpractice.
7. Collect all graded continuous assessment assignments and read the lecturer's feedback.
8. Inform the lecturer or other appropriate person if they have a disability or ailment that will negatively affect their academic performance.
9. Attend classes for at least 75% of the time, to be eligible to take the end of semester exam.

Main function of the Ministry of Higher and Technical Education

The Ministry of Higher and Technical Education is responsible for the formulation, implementation and monitoring of policies. Selected paragraphs of sections 6, 7, 8 and 14 of the 2004 Education Act specify that: "The Minister shall have control and supervision of the educational system."

Main function of the University of Sierra Leone

For the purposes of its functions, each University shall have power, subject to this Act, to—

- (a) provide instruction in such branches of learning as it may think fit and make provision for research and for the advancement and dissemination of knowledge in such manner as may be determined by it;
- (b) provide the appropriate manpower needs, consistent with the overall socio-economic aims and aspirations of the country;
- (c) provide, as may be determined by it, external or extension services for persons who are not regularly enrolled in the University;
- (d) grant degrees, diplomas and certificates and such other awards as the University may determine;
- (e) preserve academic freedom and avoid discrimination in teaching and research, in the admission of students, the appointment of staff and in the granting of degrees, diplomas, certificates and other awards;
- (f) provided that it shall be lawful for the University to charge different fees for the admission of citizens and non-citizens;
- (g) preserve, enrich and assist in the development of the economy and welfare of Sierra Leone, in particular, and humanity in general, holding out the benefits of its endeavours to all nations without discrimination; and
- (h) do all acts or things as are conducive to the attainment of the object stated in subsection 1.

2.8 FUNDING

The University is mainly funded by the Government of Sierra Leone through a budgetary allocation from the Ministry of Finance, tuition fees and Grant-in Aid. These funds are utilised for the operations of university. Table 3 shows subvention and fee subsidies received from the GoSL for the period under review.

Table 3. Subvention and fee subsidies for USL

Year	Actual (Le)
2017	49,056,000,000
2018	49,056,000,000
2019	29,100,000,000
Total	127,212,000,000

Source: expense analysis

2.9 CURRENT DEVELOPMENT

To meet the growth in population, the colleges have undertaken developmental projects to improve the learning standards. Below are the projects the constituent colleges have embarked on.

Infrastructural Development

The IPAM has embarked on infrastructural development including the construction of a seven storey building at the main campus on A J Momoh Street. The construction of a four storey building is in progress at the FBC, sponsored by the college alumni.

Installation of CCTV Cameras in Examination Halls

In a bid to improve on the quality of education and to eradicate examination malpractice, the University has introduced and installed CCTV cameras in examination halls across the three constituent colleges.

Extra Mural Classes

Another stride taken by the USL is the introduction of extra mural classes (courses of studies arranged for people who are not full time members of the University) by IPAM and FBC. FBC holds its extra mural classes in their main campus at Mount Aureol, whilst IPAM holds its extra mural classes in four

district head quarter towns (Koidu, Makeni, Bo and Kenema). These campuses offer certificate and diploma courses.

Business Centres

In an effort to rebrand the University, a business centre was established as a partnership among the three constituent colleges. This centre was also established to raise funds to complement the University's financial needs so as to reduce the over reliance on government subvention.

3 FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

This chapter presents the findings (i.e., a comparison between the audit criteria and the observation noted during the audit exercise) to ascertain whether due diligence was followed in the management of examinations by the USL. It also brings out the causes and effects linked with these findings and gives recommendations that could help alleviate the identified problems in the management of examinations.

3.1 REGISTRATION OF STUDENTS

3.1.1 Students without Registration Numbers

The USL policy defines a student as: ‘a person who has formally registered for a course of study or research in the USL’.

According to section 11.5 (1) of the Revised USL Academic, Research and Student Affairs Policy of 2018, students must register during the official registration period at the times announced in the college calendar. (2a) Only students who have paid their fees and properly completed registration for a course will be allowed to take examinations.

Annex 2 of the USL harmonised policy states: ‘A student who fails to register should lose the academic year’.

Registration numbers are unique numbers assigned to students upon their admission. The absence of a registration number makes it difficult to confirm whether the individual is a student at the University or not.

From review of sample examination scripts at IPAM and FBC, we noted that students attempt the examinations without assigned registration numbers. This was confirmed during interviews with various officers who revealed that, some students do not pay their fees during the registration period and were therefore without assigned registration numbers. The fees were only paid at the commencement of the examinations or during the examinations. The college authorities were left with no choice but to allow the students take the exams, which was contrary to the USL policy.

This situation may have arisen due to negligence on the part of the college administration, i.e., allowing students to be matriculated (enrolled as students) in the first instance, attending lectures, and further attempting the examinations without being registered. In effect, the college authorities are unable to

plan for the available resources (infrastructure and human resources). The table below shows examples of examination booklets without registration numbers.

Table 4: Examination booklets without registration numbers (2020 Academic Year)

Department	Script no.
Human Resources Management (Year 2)	0085592
	0085569
	0085574
	0085591
	0085589
Customer Relationships Management	0085736
Business Management	0082946
	0082957
	0082720
	0082724
	0082711
	0082718
	0082719
	0082716

Recommendation

Registrars of the various colleges should ensure that students strictly comply with the registration procedures, by registering during the official registration at the time announced in the college calendar.

Management Response

This is a major perennial challenge that the university is working to address. Over the years, the unfortunate practice of allowing unregistered students to attend classes and take exams, after appeals and interventions from stakeholders on their behalf, has indeed greatly affected the quality of the examination process.

The University now has a Learning Management System in place that would henceforth eliminate or at least significantly reduce the possibility of unregistered students attending classes and attempting to take exams.

Auditor's Comment

The auditee's response on the strive to reduce the possibility of unregistered students is noted. Evidence of the Learning Management System put in place was not provided for verification. The issue there remained unresolved.

3.2 MANAGEMENT OF GRADES AND EXAMINATIONS

3.2.1 Submission and collection of Examination Questions and grades

According to the harmonisation of Assessment policy, submission and vetting of examination questions and marking schemes to the HoDs shall be done on a secured platform. Lecturers should collect the scripts for marking, two days after the examination.

Interviews with Deans and exams officers at IPAM and FBC, revealed the following:

- Some lecturers at FBC do not submit their questions to the HOD as per policy. Rather, they submit to the exams office for printing, a day before the exam or sometimes personally print their questions. There is a possibility of leakage of questions to students by the lecturers.
- Lecturers at IPAM submit their questions to the Dean through a designated email address. The questions are then modified by the Deans before printing and sealed.
- Module lecturers at both IPAM and FBC do not collect scripts for marking from the examinations office as the policy requires, i.e., not later than two days after an examination is taken.
- Lecturers do not mark and return grades on time which affects the publication of grades.

According to the authorities of the different colleges, most of the lecturers are part-timers and associates, and as such the colleges do not have control over them. The reluctance of people with requisite qualifications to take up full time appointment with the University is as a result of the demotivating conditions of service on which the University operates. The part-time lecturers do not exhibit adequate commitment to the service as they have their commitments elsewhere.

The auditors observed that lecturers were assigned modules across departments which catered for a large number of students and as such, resulted in the late submission of grades as well as the publication of results.

Recommendation

The DVCs should apply penalties for breaches of the USL examination rules as stated in the harmonised assessment policy to lecturers (part-timers and associates) who fail to comply.

Management Response

As rightly pointed out, the university has a harmonised assessment policy which clearly outlines how grades and the entire examinations processes are to be managed.

During the conduct of the 2020/2021 session's examinations of both first and second semesters, IPAM implemented a same day collection of scripts.

Stringent measures are being put in place to ensure that lecturers submit their questions through their heads of departments, pick up their scripts within 48 hours of their papers being taken, mark and turn in their grades, together with the marked scripts and marking scripts, not later than three weeks after the paper is taken. There has already been significant progress in this direction.

Auditor's Comment

We noted the university's response which will be followed up in subsequent audits.

3.2.2 Conduct of examinations at IPAM and FBC

We used professional judgement to carry out physical observation as there were no standards set to measure specific performances such as lecture rooms, proper ventilation and other facilities.

Interviews with the Deans and exams officers at IPAM and FBC revealed that, the exams were conducted in shifts (morning and afternoon) due to the large number of registered and unregistered students. Physical observation by the auditors during the June 2021 examinations at IPAM and FBC, revealed that over 170 students were placed in every of the examination hall inspected. At IPAM for instance, there was only one space created at the edge of the hall, whereas, no other space was created between rows for ease of movement of invigilators during the conduct of exams. This situation made it easy for comparism and exchange of materials during the conduct of exams to go unnoticed. This may be as a result of the large intake of students coupled with the fact that the registration process was not being scrutinised by the college authorities. See evidence in the photos below.

Figure 2. Year 2 Social Work Intervention Exam at Chemistry Building - FBC



Photo Credit. ASSL: *Photo taken on the 30/6/21*

Figure 3: Year 1, Sociology Exam at Strasser King Building E. J. Hall - FBC



Photo Credit. ASSL: *Photo taken on the 30/6/21*

Figure 4: Year 2 Ethics and Responsibilities Exam at IPAM



Photo Credit. ASSL: *Photo taken on the 29/6/21*

Recommendations

The HODs of the colleges must ensure that the admission of students is properly scrutinised to meet the University's departmental requirements, so that the available facilities accommodate the required number of students.

Management Response

We acknowledge the significant challenge of our physical infrastructure/ space challenge which becomes more pronounced during examinations. IPAM has already taken action to rent a large outside location that will now become its second campus in Freetown. At Fourah Bay College, a number of new buildings have been constructed both within the main campus area and the periphery of the Leicester Road/ Tree Planting end of its campus. We are confident that the space challenge is being comprehensively addressed, especially with IPAM working towards the establishment of a full residential campus at Bureh Town.

We wish to point out that the description of an examination hall having only one space created at the edge of the hall, "whereas no other space was created between rows for ease of movement of invigilators" is exaggerated. In all our exams halls, invigilators move round with attendance register for the candidates to sign on, pick up their attendance slips and indeed move around the hall to check. It is therefore inconceivable that there are exams halls without space for movement.

Auditor's Comment

The University's claim has not addressed the audit recommendations as the photos above show the situation viewed by the auditors during the audit on the 29th and 30th June 2021. In addition, the tenancy agreement for rented building, as requested by the auditors during the verification, was not provided for review. We had already acknowledged the measures put in place by FBC. We will however verify the outstanding issues in subsequent audits.

3.2.3 Continuous Assessment Grades

The USL Policy on the Harmonisation of Assessment states: "Continuous Assessment should be done throughout the semester; and may consist of assignments, quizzes, multiple-choice questions, short-answer questions, book and article reviews, field trips, practical classes/lab work, seminars and so on. Collated Continuous Assessment grades, which accounts for 30% of the total grade shall be submitted to the examinations office two weeks before the end-of-semester exams".

The accuracy and timely submission of continuous assessment grades is very important as this affects the academic success of students.

During interviews with the Deans of faculties, it was revealed that Continuous Assessment grades were not submitted at the stipulated time. In some instances, grades were submitted after the semester examinations thereby causing chaos for both students and lecturers. According to the interview, this was as a result of the large number of students as most of the lecturers were part-time and associates.

Further review of sample Continuous Assessment grades from IPAM and FBC revealed that, grades given by lecturers for Continuous Assessment were not reflective of their performance in the examinations. Students who performed badly in the examinations were given high Continuous Assessment grades to enable them have the minimum pass mark of 40%. For instance, a student will score **23%** during examinations and **78%** as Continuous Assessments. This automatically enables him/her to have the minimum pass mark of 40% as prescribed in the USL harmonised policy. See examples in the tables below.

IPAM

Table 5: Examples of examination and continuous assessment marks of students

No.	Student no.	Continuous Assessment Grades (30%)	Examination Grades (70%)	Final
1	19689	78	23	40
2	20641	78	24	40
3	20434	76	25	40
4	20630	78	23	40
5	18713	76	24	40
6	20587	74	25	40
7	20429	78	23	40
8	19841	85	25	43
9	20146	74	25	40
10	19099	76	24	40
11	20704	74	25	40
12	19253	74	25	40

FBC

Table 6: Examples of examination and continuous assessment marks of students

No.	Student no.	Continuous Assessment Grades	Examination Grades	Final
1	36513	22	14	36
2	39877	22	16	37
3	34330	26	14	40
4	28490	26	14	40
5	34414	26	14	40
6	34413	24	16	40
7	32858	25	16	41
8	34458	24	16	40
9	39877	22	16	37
10	39897	20	15	35
11	39917	22	15	37
12	36130	23	12	35

The delay in the submission of Continuous Assessment grades might have resulted to lecturers manipulating the grades in favour of students who may have scored very low marks in the exams as there may not be any mechanism to check how continuous assessment grades are allotted to students when submitted late.

Recommendation

The HODS should ensure that lecturers submit the continuous assessment grades in line with the harmonised policy to avoid manipulation of continuous assessment grades after semester exams.

Management Response

As rightly pointed out in the report, continuous assessment Grades should be submitted two weeks before the commencement of the semester examinations. The university Management notes that compliance in this area has been minimal and is therefore putting in place stringent measures to ensure that all lecturers abide by this critical regulation, in order to avoid any possibility of manipulation of continuous assessment grades.

Auditor's Comment

The University's comment is noted. There was however no evidence of action or plan of action attached to the response. The issue therefore remains unresolved.

3.2.4 Publication of Cumulative Grades (Results)

Examinations and Continuous Assessment grades form the cumulative grade and is the major determinant in the University for progression to the next level. Normally, this should be published before the start of the next academic year to indicate who progresses to the next level or failed any of the modules.

Interviews with Deans of faculties revealed that there were undue delays in the publication of results due to late submission of examination grades by lecturers for the period under review. The team noted that the final results for the reviewed period were not published until the following academic year and sometimes up to a month or two in the new academic year. For example, final results for the past two academic years were not published after the end of the faculty and examinations board meeting, which is six weeks after the examination (as per the guidelines of USL Harmonisation Assessment Policy.) Rather, the results were published during the new academic year. This situation is mainly linked with the IPAM and FBC.

It was also disclosed that, when the results are eventually published, some students are disappointed to see that they had not fulfilled the requirements to progress to the next level after they had already spent a month or two in the new class. Others will find out that some of their grades were not published leading to a whole new chaotic episode of “Missing Grades.”

The delay in the publication of results, according to interviews, was attributed to the reluctance of some lecturers, especially the part-time lecturers, to submit their grades on time. In addition, the volume of work done in computing the grades manually compared to the number of staff assigned to do the job is extremely disproportionate. For example, at FBC three exams officers are responsible for the computation of over 10,000 students’ final grades (continuous assessment and examination grades) for submission to the Faculty Boards. At IPAM, the HODs are responsible for the computation of over 3,500 students per department. This situation at both colleges may be prone to mistakes of allotting wrong grades to students and omission of grades. This may likewise hinder the progress of students thereby making them spend more years than required.

Management Response

Delay in publication of cumulative result is one of the most pronounced challenging areas the University is faced with. Serious action is being taken to penalize lecturers who fail to submit their grades within the stipulated period. At IPAM for example, the incentive of lecturers who fail to submit grades for the first semester examination was withheld and eventually forfeited by the defaulting lecturers. The University is resolved to ensure that the sanction for not submitting grades in time will be fully implemented henceforth.

Auditor's Comment

We noted the University's response. The management has however not provided evidence of incentives that were withheld and eventually forfeited. The issue therefore remains unresolved.

3.2.5 Missing Grades

According to the harmonisation assessment policy, students should fill a form from the Dean's Office to report missing grades. The faculty in collaboration with the examinations office will search for the script. If missing grades are not found and verified, students should be allowed to rewrite the examination at no cost and not as a reference.

During the audit, the team observed instances of missing grades. Interviews with college authorities revealed the causes of missing grades as follows:

- some students do not register at the beginning of the semester and therefore their names may not be included in the class lists for the modules they offer;
- some students do not attend classes during the semester and only come to take exams, even though there will not be records of their attendance and no Continuous Assessment grades;
- the Registry also fails to update the students class lists to reflect incoming students and repeaters;
- some students go into the examination hall and fill the attendance register but do not write the exams when they notice that the questions are difficult;
- some students walk away with their examination scripts unknown to the invigilators and claim at the end to have written the exams;
- some students write their correct names and registration numbers on the exams register but they do not do same on the answer booklets;
- some lecturers mark the scripts and the grades are not entered into the grade sheets; and

- when different modules are examined in the same hall at the same time, the scripts are mixed-up during collection.

It was explained during a focus group discussion with students at FBC and IPAM that even though their examination booklets were found, their grades were still missing for the 2018/2019 academic year.

These students were required to take another examination at a reference cost of Le150,000, in contravention with the USL harmonized assessment policy which states that if missing grades are not found, students should be allowed to retake the exams at no cost.

The progress of students may be hindered if the USL policies are not adhered to by lecturers as well as students.

Recommendations

The DVCs of the various colleges that make up the USL should ensure the following:

- Punitive measures are taken against lecturers who fail to submit their grades on time.
- Registrars update class lists at the beginning of every academic year to reflect repeaters and incoming students.
- Invigilators should ensure that the number of answer scripts submitted by students are reconciled with the number of students' signatures in the attendance register before leaving the hall.
- Invigilators should ensure that the names and registration numbers of the submitted answer scripts agree with the exams attendance sheets.

Management Response

The report expertly captures the issue around this matter. The University, through the Colleges, has already largely addressed the matter. At IPAM, an interdepartmental examinations committee was set up to help address the factors of missing grades and to bring out greater effectiveness of the examinations process. A similar committee was also set up at Fourah Bay College and the College of Medicine and Allied Health Sciences. We are highly confident that the missing grades challenge has largely been address, and hopefully with the full use of the Learning Management System, will be eventually eliminated.

Auditor's Comment

We noted the University's response. The management has however failed to provide evidence (Terms of Reference, Letters of appointments, list of committee members, etc) of the existence of interdepartmental examination committee members. The issue therefore remains unresolved

3.3 ACADEMIC MALPRACTICES

Despite efforts by the USL to curb the practice of cheating in examinations by students, examination malpractice still continues. Annexes 1 and 2 on the harmonisation of assessment processes by the University of Sierra Leone outline sanctions for examination malpractice and penalties for breaches of examination/invigilation rules and regulations. Refer to annexes 1 and 2 for details.

Malpractices occur throughout the examination cycle, beginning with the drawing up and submission of exam questions, during the conduct of the exams (in the halls), during marking of the scripts and computing of the grades.

During this audit, interviews with university authorities revealed that academic malpractices are on the rise and have become endemic in the University. According to them, there are instances wherein lecturers give out grades (unchecked and at will) to give unfair advantage to some students.

A review of reports on academic malpractice, revealed that every year the USL deals with cases of lecturers, administrative staff and students involved in examination fraud. It was noted that, as the cases of malpractice increased, penalties have also become more severe. Students have had their results nullified.

A review of the Investigation Committee Report of 29th August, 2019 on examination malpractice revealed that the USL instituted investigations into alleged examination malpractices at the COMAHS. At the end of the investigation the following were recommended:

- Two students were to re-sit a mathematics examination during the re-sit period.
- Two students were to be expelled from COMAS and its sister colleges.
- Six students were to be rusticated for one academic year and will only be eligible to reapply in the ensuing academic year.

Interviews with Deans and Heads of Department disclosed methods used by students to cheat during examination:

- Leakage – illegally getting examination questions before the examination time; which sometimes come from lecturers, faculty offices and examination officers.
- Cheating – transgressing any of the rules governing the conduct of examinations.
- Taking foreign materials into the examination room.
- Collusion – malpractice performed in cooperation with others, such as passing notes, or receiving or giving assistance to other candidates in the examination room, mobile phones and facemask.

3.3.1 Leakage of examination questions

It was revealed that examination malpractices start from this level. Questions drawn by module lecturers for the purpose of assessing the aptitude of the students to determine progression to the next level are leaked mostly by the authors and other stakeholders along the line to relatives, loved ones and other set of students in exchange for money or sex.

3.3.2 Cheating during the exams (in the exams halls)

Evidence of foreign materials taken to the examination halls by students to aid them in the examinations were presented to the audit team. Some were cell phones used during the examinations with photos of answers to the examination questions. Those that were caught in the act had their phones impounded and were still with the administration. Below are samples of phones impounded during examinations:

Figure 5: Phones impounded during examinations

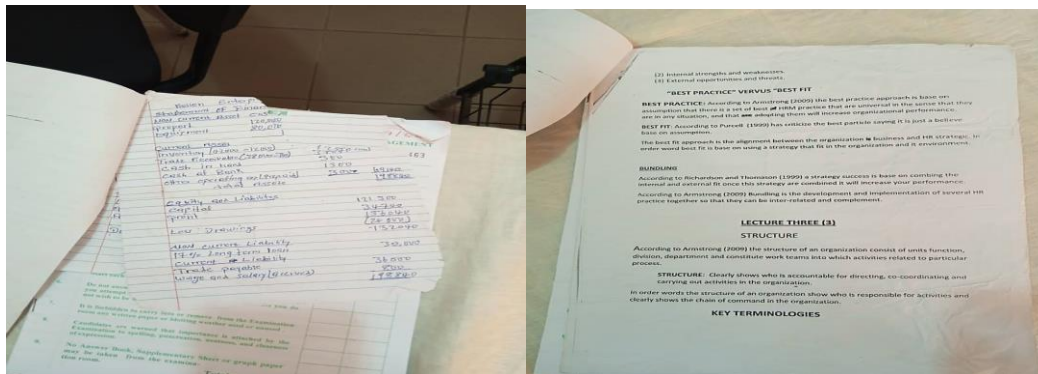


Source –IPAM Administration: Photo taken on 30/03/21 by auditors

Hand written scripts and typed lecture notes were also presented to the audit team as evidence of foreign materials taken to the examination halls by students to aid them answer questions.

It was also explained that some ladies wrote answers to questions on their thighs but no evidence was presented by the interviewees. During the audit, a photo made rounds on social media showing how this was done. Below are photos of the samples:

Figure 6: Notes taken to examination halls by students



Source –IPAM Administration: Photo taken on 30/03/21 by auditors



Source – IPAM Administration: Face mask Social media (WhatsApp)

From the explanations, it was noted that some invigilators also compromised the conduct of the exams by providing information and materials to candidates during the examinations to aid them in answering the questions.

Students have also, in some instances, been caught in collusion during the examinations. For instance, a student with leakage will share answers among colleagues to assist them during the exam.

The issue of academic malpractice may affect the credibility of degrees awarded by the USL and also lower the standard of education in the country as a whole.

Recommendation

The DVCs must ensure strict adherence to the harmonised policy as regards examination malpractice and breach of examination rules and regulations.

Management Response

The University Administration has made the fight against Academic/Exams Malpractice an integral part of its operation. Students as well as faculty and staff have been subjected to investigation and appropriate sanctions. The perceived increased in exams malpractice is, in our view, a manifestation of the enhanced vigilance against exams malpractice.

Robust measures have been put in place to detect, disrupt and expose attempts at exams malpractice at every level. Moreover, action is been taken to ensure that no culpable persons escape the approved sanctions. Before now, investigations used to linger for years. That is now a story. Investigations, approval process, and implementation of sanctions are now fully completed within a semester.

Auditor's Comment

We had already acknowledged the University's measures to eradicate/reduce examination malpractice during the audit. The University has however failed to provide evidence of robust measures claimed to have been taken, especially for current malpractices. The issue therefore remains unresolved.

3.3.3 Operations of CCTV Cameras

During the audit, the team requested the list of CCTV cameras and reports from officers in charge at the various campuses. Despite several efforts by the team to obtain these information, it was not provided. The team could therefore not verify the functionality of the available cameras. This revealed that monitoring during examinations were not effective and may lead to malpractice during the examination.

Recommendation

We recommend the submission of CCTV reports so as to verify monitoring during examinations.

Auditor's Comment

Management of the University did not respond to this finding. The issue remains unresolved.

3.3.4 Marking of the Scripts

In order to check whether the USL had measures in place to avoid academic malpractice during the marking of examination scripts, the audit team decided to conduct a work through test and therefore requested for the following documents: students' attendance list, marked scripts, questions, marking schemes, continuous assessment grades and collated grade sheets. The sample examination envelopes submitted for review at IPAM and FBC did not have complete students' attendance list, questions, marking schemes, continuous assessment grades and collated grade sheets. Refer to Appendix 6 for sampled scripts reviewed at the different colleges.

We found out that the USL had not put effective measures in place to avoid academic malpractice during the marking of examination scripts. This was evidenced by the fact that lecturers collected the examination booklets and took them to their various homes for marking thereby increasing the risk of malpractice at that point.

From the review of 6,107 marked examination booklets for various modules at **IPAM**, we noted the following:

- Grades were being manipulated as lecturers changed grades over written scripts.
- Summary grades on the cover page of the booklets were altered, giving a variance with individual grades inside the answer booklets.
- Lecturers give grades based on their discretion as specific questions were not given specific marks.

From a review of 4,756 marked examination booklets for various modules at **COMAHS**, collated grade sheets and attendance registers were not provided. The auditors could therefore not identify significant issues relating to the marked scripts.

From a review of 6,067 marked examination booklets for various modules at FBC, we noted the following:

- Lecturers were discretionary in giving extra marks to students; some students may be allotted up to five additional marks whereas others may be allotted two extra marks.

- A policy did not exist on the issuance of extra marks to students who scored below the pass mark.
- No internal controls were put in place as marked scripts were held in the custody of the lecturers.

Interviews with Deans of Faculties revealed that the subject lecturers did not return the marking scheme with the answer booklets. According to the interviews conducted, examination scripts were mostly marked by the subject lecturers though in some cases where the classes were very large, conference marking was instituted.

The non-submission of the requested documents limits the auditors from ascertaining whether marks were in line with the marking scheme, correct questions were answered, and whether the students actually got the marks recorded.

Recommendation

In order to avoid the incidence of manipulation of grades, we recommend the introduction of second marking and the possibility of conference marking for departmental core subjects.

Auditor's Comment

The management of the University did not respond to the finding. The issue therefore remains unresolved.

3.3.5 Inconsistency in the Award of Extra Grades

From a review of sample scripts, we observed inconsistencies in the award of extra marks to students. The team requested for the policy on the award of extra marks but was not available. Moreover, a minute of a meeting with respect to decisions reached in the award of extra marks was also not available. It would have been justifiable if the extra marks were awarded based on second-marking for which the harmonised policy makes it discretionary. The auditors noted few scripts at FBC that had been second-marked with no extra marks were awarded. The table below shows examples of extra marks given to students during our review.

Table 7: Examples of students that were awarded extra marks

No.	Students Registration No.	Continuous Assessment Grades	Actual Examination Grades	Extra Marks awarded for Exams	Final Marks	Total Grade Scored
1	36002	12	29	5	34	46
2	36012	13	29	4	33	46
3	34881	13	23	4	27	40
4	35943	13	32	4	36	49
5	36796	7	18	4	22	29
6	34915	12	24	4	28	40
7	36032	8	20	5	25	33
8	37033	8	20	4	24	32
9	32620	3	8	5	13	16
10	30865	5	13	4	17	22

Recommendations

The HODs of the USL should ensure the existence of a laid down policies for the award of extra grades with limits that must be adhered to.

Auditor's Comment

Management of the University did not respond to this finding. The issue therefore remains unresolved.

3.4 CAPACITY OF LECTURERS

3.4.1 Inadequate Qualified Personnel

The Strategic Development Plan 2019 - 2023, goal 6.6.1 requires the University authorities to enhance the colleges' competitiveness in the recruitment and retention of high quality personnel.

It was however noted from a review of over 350 personal files, USL staff list and database of profiles of lecturers that there were only 12 professors (FBC and COHMAS) as opposed to best practices which requires each faculty of a University to have a professor.

Interviews conducted with Deans of faculties of all the constituent colleges in the University confirmed that there were few qualified personnel lecturing specific disciplines in the faculties. As such, demonstrators, teaching assistants and more part-time lecturers were employed to complement the staff strength. This was also noted in the USL Strategic Plan 2019 - 2023 that the number of lecturers with the requisite terminal degrees (PHD, professorship, other higher degrees) at IPAM were

minimal and this currently affected the image and performance of these institutions⁷. The tables below show analysis of lecturers, qualifications and their employment status.

Table 8: Analysis of Lecturers Qualifications per College

	FBC	COMAHS	IPAM	TOTAL
PROFESSORS	8	4	-	12
PHD	94	11	18	123
MSC	152	119	100	371
BSC	30	18	1	49
ACCA/CIMA	-	-	5	5
Others	25	-	2	27
TOTAL	309	152	126	587

Table 9: Analysis of Lecturers' Employment Status - IPAM AND FBC

College	Full time	Part time	Associate	Contract	Temporary	RTA	Gratis staff	Total
FBC	170	49	40	10	2	1	20	292
IPAM	72	27	25	-	-	-		124

Table 10: Analysis of Lecturers' Employment Status - COMAHS

College	Associate lecturer -1	Associate lecturer 11	Lecturer 1	Lecturer 11	Demonstrator	Parttime lecturers	Others	Total
COMAHS	22	57	6	10	34	39	26	194

Recommendation

The DVCs of the various colleges should ensure that capacity building opportunities are available to those that are already employed by the University. This should be done by creating budget lines for research, create avenues for sabbatical leaves (going on exchange programs with other universities) write and publish research, and encourage lecturers to access the internet for ease of research.

⁷ USL strategic plan 2019-2023 pg 85

3.4.2 Lecturer to student ratio

Globally, there is no standard Lecturer-student ratio. Best Practice however requires that lecturers in large classes should be able to: control the class; assess students fairly; and know the ability of students. From the review of student database, the team noted that the number of students far outweighs the number of lecturers. For instance, we noted that some modules were taken as joint classes, wherein over 800 students were assigned to a single lecturer. Focus group discussion with students at IPAM and physical inspection revealed that students most times are without seats as a result of the large number of students placed in shifts. The lecturers were therefore unable to take control the class, assess students fairly; and know the ability of students. This situation was due to the large intake of students without the requisite qualification as shown in appendix 7. In effect, learning may not be enhanced, as lecturers may not pay attention to students' educational needs thereby leading to poor performance.

The table below shows the total number of lecturers and students per faculty/department for the 2019/2020 academic year in the three constituent colleges. We however could not ascertain the number of lecturers per faculty at COMAHS and certain departments at IPAM.

Table 11 - Number of students and lecturers per faculty/department for 2019/2020 academic year

College	Department	Total no. of Students	Total no. of Lecturers
IPAM	Business Admin	3,616	34
	Applied Accounting	2,982	27
	Financial Services	1304	-
	Information system	183	11
	Governance & Leadership	911	21
	Banking & Finance	400	18
	Information Technology	308	5
	Postgraduate programmes		
	Business Admin	274	-
	Accounting	133	-
	Governance & Leadership	339	-
	Total	10,450	116
FBC	Engineering & Architecture	862	51
	Social Sciences & Law	5,819	93
	Arts	2,144	96
	Pure and Applied sciences	499	70
	Diplomas & Certificate	1,415	-
	Total	10,739	310

College	Department	Total no. of Students	Total no. of Lecturers
COMAS	Basic Medical Sciences	526	-
	Clinical Sciences	167	-
	Pharmaceutical Sciences	407	-
	Nursing	983	193
Total		2,083	193

Source: USL data base for staff and students

Recommendation

HODs should ensure that all students meet the requisite entry requirements before gaining admission into the University. This will improve learning as lecturers may be able to pay attention to students' educational needs

Management Response

The lecturer to student ratio is rightly reported to be very low. The situation is gradually improving with more highly qualified faculty being brought on board. The major challenge however remain funding to pay high level academics, especially with the difficulty in getting the Ministry of Finance to take on board the payment of salaries of new staff. The University is already overwhelmed with those it has to take care of, I.e., Associate Lecturers, staff on contract, and those who are yet to be taken on board by Government. However, we are hopeful of a much more improved situation, as the Ministry of Technical and Higher Education has given indication of mobilizing assistance for the recruitment and deployment of highly qualified academics in especially specialized areas to augment the faculty situation of the University.

Auditor's Comment

The auditee's comment is noted. The issue will however be kept in view for subsequent audit.

3.5 GENERAL FINDINGS

3.5.1 Monitoring of Lecturers

The USL HR policy states that members of staff must sign the attendance register when they report for work and account for their time. Employees who do not sign the attendance register will be considered absent for that day.

Focus group discussions with students revealed that there is hardly an attendance register to track punctuality of lecturers. The students also revealed that some lecturers provided course outlines at the

start of the semester and attended few classes during the semester. Moreover, examination guidelines were given close to the examinations for areas not covered during the semester. It was assumed that once the course outline was given, the syllabus was completed. In order to confirm this, a letter dated 30th November, 2020 was written to the USL and several verbal requests for the submission of students attendance registers which were normally counter signed by the lecturers. These were however not made available to the auditors for review.

This situation was as a result of inadequate monitoring of lecturers by the college authorities and since students were unable to complete the syllabus, they may be involved in academic malpractices based on the guidelines.

Recommendation

The Deans and HoDs should institute proper monitoring systems in order to ensure that all lecturers attended classes and sign the attendance register. This will enhance completion of syllabuses and adequate preparation of students for examinations.

Auditor's Comment

Management of the University did not respond to this finding. The issue is therefore unresolved.

3.5.2 Inadequate Infrastructural Facilities

It is widely believed that high-quality infrastructural facilitates and better institutions improve student outcomes, and reduce dropout rates, among other benefits. With this belief, the University's Strategic Plan 2019-2023 has more than one goal that appeals to this aspect. Below are the goals that address the issue of infrastructure:

- Provide students-friendly environment equipped with facilities and services that promote learning⁸.
- Provide the needed infrastructure and physical environment as well as improve the provision and utilisation of library services consistent with modern standards⁹.

⁸ University of Sierra Leone, Strategic Development Plan 2019-2023 (Goal 6.4 Pg. 12)

⁹ University of Sierra Leone, Strategic Development Plan 2019-2023 (Goal 6.8 Pg. 16)

- Upgrade, strengthen and mainstream distant, open, and e-learning delivery approaches in teaching and learning in all faculties¹⁰.

Inadequate infrastructural facilities are amongst the many challenges faced by the USL as highlighted in the Strategic Plan 2019-2023. This was confirmed through interviews with Deans of faculties at the USL and physical inspection during lectures that the colleges lacked: adequate lecture room space to accommodate the number of students, well equipped laboratories, well-resourced libraries, effective internet connectivity and modern technology for teaching and learning.

3.5.3 Construction of Lecture Rooms

Buildings, lecture rooms, laboratories and equipment are crucial elements of learning environments in universities. To accommodate the growth in student population, IPAM and FBC have embarked on a number of infrastructural development.

The IPAM has constructed a seven storey building at their main campus on A J Momoh Street in Freetown that accommodates all their students, and there is an ongoing construction of a residential campus at Bureh Town that will accommodate 4,000 students. Interviews with the DVC revealed that these buildings are done from internally generated funds. See photo below.

Figure 7: Partial view of IPAM seven storey building on A J Momoh Street Freetown



Photo Credit. ASSI: **photo taken 30/6/2021**

The FBC has embarked on series of infrastructural development including the refurbishment and expansion of the Amphitheatre hall, rehabilitation of laboratories, Civil Engineering, Biology,

¹⁰ University of Sierra Leone, Strategic Development Plan 2019-2023 (Goal 6.1 Pg. 7)

Electrical Engineering and Extra Mural Studies buildings which were in deplorable conditions.

In addition to the rehabilitation works, the College is also constructing a four storey building intended to be used as classrooms and offices for lecturers. Interviews with the DVC revealed that these buildings were sponsored by the FBC Alumni and internally generated funds. The photo below shows a partial view of the four storey building under construction at FBC.

Figure 8: Partial view of FBC ongoing construction



Photo Credit. ASSL: Photo taken on the 29/6/21

Interviews with the DVC at COMAS revealed that they are challenged with accommodation. We also noted that classes were held at the Connaught Teaching Hospital, 30 Wallace Johnson Street and the main campus in Kossoh Town, which was constructed from internally generated funds. We further noted from interviews with the DVCs that the colleges were challenged with funding which had subsequently affected the completion of ongoing structures.

Recommendation

The USL Authorities should adequately maintain the existing infrastructural facilities, whilst at the same time, engage alumni to support infrastructural development.

Management Response

This challenge is already discussed above. Whilst significant progress is being made, we acknowledge the limitation, which is largely due to funding challenge to enable us put up as many structures as are deservedly needed. That said, we note with unease the portrayal of an isolated incident of two separate classes (Social Work and Law) taken in one class as giving the impression that that is a normal occurrence in the University. We requested at the exit meeting for reconsideration of the inclusion of that episode in the final report, as it could only have been an isolated case.

Auditor's Comment

We had already acknowledged the measures put in place by FBC. The issues relating to the IPAM will be verified in subsequent audits.

3.5.4 Insufficient Lecture Rooms

In order to alleviate the problem of congestion at the various colleges, IPAM and FBC decided to construct new classrooms. The auditors however noted that even with the construction of additional classrooms, the campuses were still over crowded.

During physical inspection and review of student statistics for the 2019/2020 academic year for the three colleges visited, we noted that the sizes of their lecture rooms could not accommodate the number of existing students admitted.

In order to determine the capacity of the lecture rooms, the auditors measured the dimension of these classes and noted that a class that should accommodate at most 250 students had over 450 students after been divided into groups. For instance, there were over 300 students in a class offering Business Administration during our visit on the 21st April, 2021 at IPAM as shown in photo A.

The team witnessed a situation at FBC, on the 18th May, 2021 where in Social Work as well as Law students were having lectures at the same time in the same classroom with each set of students facing opposite directions with no screen divider. The Social Work students were over 230 as shown in photo C.

The audit team went further to conduct a brief inspection of classes that were in progress at IPAM, COMAHS and FBC campuses. The auditors observed that the classes were over crowded with no restrictions on class sizes even with the COVID 19 pandemic restriction measures. The auditors were reliably informed that some students were absent on that day. Below are photos of classes visited at IPAM, COMAHS and FBC during lectures.

A. IPAM Campus

Figure 9: Business Administration - Year 1



Photo Credit. ASSL: Taken on the 30/03/21

B. COMAHS Campus

Figure 10: B. Sc. Nursing - Year 2 - COMAHS Campus - Connaught



Photo Credit. ASSL: Photo taken on the 20/04/21

C. FBC Campus

Figure 11: Overcrowded Social Work and Law classes



Photo Credit. ASSL: taken on the 18th/5/2021



Photo taken by auditors on 18/5/2021 at FBC Campus, partial view of Social Work and Law classes facing opposite direction.

A review of over 6,000 students' application forms from IPAM, COMAHS and FBC for the period between 2017 to 2019 academic years revealed that applicants were given acceptance even though they did not meet the university/department entry requirements. The audit team noted from accepted application forms that, students with four credits were given acceptance, students apply with awaiting results, others apply for diploma and after two years apply for the degree programme without the requisite qualification, which is contrary to the USL undergraduate programmes and entry requirement policy for the 2017/2018 academic year. These situations have led to overcrowding of the various campuses and over use of the available facilities thereby reducing their life-span. IPAM for example has resorted to having three shifts per day. FBC sometimes make use of the library or Amphitheatre

hall; whereas COMAHS held classes at different locations as the existing infrastructure could not house the thousands of students they had at the same time.

Recommendation

The DVCs should reduce the number of intake until they are able to invest in infrastructural facilities as this will also enhance quality of degrees awarded.

Auditor's Comment

There was no response relating to the findings. The issues therefore remain unresolved.

4 CONCLUSION

The conclusion in this chapter is in line with the audit objective. It mirrors our explanation and views based on analysis and findings supported by audit evidence as presented in the previous chapter. Despite the fact that the USL has policies that guide the management of examinations, the auditors noted that the USL does not comply or adhere to these policies.

Examination is an important instrument that is used to objectively evaluate and assess students' learning outcomes and ability to demonstrate knowledge, understanding, and mastery of different concepts and ideas. Actions and practices that undermine the integrity of the examination process pose a serious threat to the quality and credibility of the students' learning outcomes.

Examinations administered by the USL assess the extent to which the cognitive capacities of candidates have been developed. Written examinations are the most dominant forms of assessment. The management of examinations by the USL poses a great threat to the credibility and reliability of degrees offered as students are allowed to carry forward references up to their fourth year.

This describes a trend that is harmful not only to the moral development but also to the intellectual development of the students. If the trend is not controlled, not only will the graduates lack the moral discipline, but will also lack the knowledge, skills and competence necessary to exploit the resources at their disposal.

The following are specific conclusions on the irregularities that have had a negative effect on the management of examinations by the USL.

4.1 REGISTRATION OF STUDENTS

Registration numbers are unique numbers assigned to students on their admission. The absence of a registration number makes it difficult to confirm whether the individual is a student at the University. The audit revealed that students do attempt the examinations without assigned registration numbers.

This situation may have arisen due to negligence on the path of the college administration. As a result, the college authorities are unable to plan for the available resources (i.e infrastructure and human resources).

4.2 MANAGEMENT OF GRADES AND EXAMINATIONS

There is a laid down policy regarding submission and collection of examination questions and grades at the University. The auditors however noted that lecturers in the various colleges did not adhere to this laid down policy. This situation has therefore led to the late submission and publication of grades, a situation that leads to chaos for both lecturers and students all the times.

Physical inspection during the June 2021 first semester examinations revealed that over 170 students were placed in every hall inspected. This was as a result of the large intake of students coupled with the fact that the registration process was not being scrutinised by the college authorities.

The auditors noted that Continuous Assessment grades were not submitted at the stipulated time. Moreover, some grades were submitted after the semester examinations which was against the prescribed USL harmonised assessment policy. It was further noted that grades given by lecturers for Continuous Assessment were not reflective of students' performance in the examinations.

The team observed situations of missing grades. This was also confirmed in a focus group discussion with students of the University that even though their examination booklets were found, their grades were still missing, a situation that hinders the progress of students.

4.3 ACADEMIC MALPRACTICES

Despite all efforts by the USL to curb examination malpractices, the situation is still on the rise as confirmed through interviews with university authorities and reports from the USL. Every year the USL deals with cases of lecturers, administrative staff and students involved in examination fraud such as leakage, cheating and collusion. According to them, there are instances wherein lecturers give out grades (unchecked and at will) to give unfair advantage to some students.

4.4 CAPACITY OF LECTURERS

Even though the Universities Act of 2005 makes provision for certain cadres, it is clear that, there is human resource gap.

We noted from a review of over 350 personal files, USL staff list and database of profiles of lecturers that there were only 12 professors (FBC and COHMAS) as opposed to best practices which requires each faculty of a University to have a professor.

The team noted that the number of students far outweighs the number of lecturers which was due to the large intake of students without the requisite qualifications.

4.5 GENERAL FINDINGS

We noted inadequate monitoring of lecturers by the college authorities, hence many a time, the lecturers have their personal commitments. Since students are unable to complete the syllabus, they most times involve in academic malpractices based on the guidelines given by lecturers.

Indequate infrastructural facilities are also amongst the many challenges faced by the USL as highlighted in the Strategic Plan 2019-2023.

The consequence of the highlighted shortfalls has significantly affected the management of examinations at the USL. In order to minimise or alleviate the existing problems, the management of the various colleges (IPAM, FBC, COMAHS) and the University as a whole should collaborate with key stakeholders including the Ministry of education to address the issues raised in this report. This is to ensure efficiency and effectiveness in the management of examinations by the University. The management of the University should also ensure that the existing laid down procedures for the management of examinations are appropriately followed.

5 APPENDICES

5.1 APPENDIX 1: LIST OF PERSONNEL INTERVIEWED

Institution	Personnel
IPAM	Dean, Information System
IPAM	Dean, Management Science
IPAM	Students
IPAM	HoD
FBC	Dean, Social Sciences and Law
FBC	Dean, Arts
FBC	Dean, Engineering
FBC	Students
FBC	HoD
COMAHS	Dean, Pharmaceutical Sciences
COMAHS	Dean, Basic Medical Sciences
COMAHS	Dean, Nursing
COMAHS	Students
IPAM & FBC	Examinations Officers
FOCUS GROUP	USL Students

APPENDIX 2: LIST OF DOCUMENTS REVIEWED

	Document	Reason for review
1	The University of Sierra Leone undergraduate programmes & entry requirements for the 2017/2018 academic year.	To understand the USL entry and departmental requirements
2	The USL Harmonisation of Assessment Policy	To understand the policy on exam and exam malpractice
3	The University of Sierra Leone Strategic Plan, 2019-2023	To obtain an overview of the USL direction and decisions made in terms of allocation of resources
4	The Revised University of Sierra Leone Academic, Research and Students' Affairs Policy - October 2018	To understand the rules and regulations governing the staff and students of the University of Sierra Leone
5	The Internal Audit Reports	To understand the internal audit issues raised, weaknesses in the internal control system and to know if recommendations have been implemented.
6	Education Act, 2004	To understand the policy that governs the education sector
7	National Education Policy 2010	To understand the policies in place for quality education
8	Report on Examination Malpractices	To understand the outcome and actions taken on students involved in examination malpractices
9	Accepted students application forms	To ascertain whether accepted students meets USL entry requirements
10	Lecturers files	To know whether lecturers have the requisite qualification
11	Marked Scripts	To determine whether the students deserved marks awarded.

5.2 ASSESSMENT 3 CRITERIA INCLUDING AUDIT QUESTIONS AND SOURCES

Sub-question	Criteria	Source of Criteria
Question 1. Does the USL ensure that students comply with registration?		
Does the USL ensure that students comply with registration?	<p>(1) students must register during the official registration period at the times announced in the college calendar.</p> <p>(2) (2a) Only students who have paid their fees and properly completed registration for a course will be allowed to take its examinations.</p> <p>student who fail to register should lose the academic year.</p>	<p>Revised USL Academic, Research and Student Affairs policy</p> <p>Annex 2 of the USL harmonised Assessment Policy</p>
Question 2: To what extent does the USL ensure that laid down policies are followed on the management of grades and examinations?		
How timely is the submission of Continuous Assessment grades?	Continuous Assessment is done throughout the semester and may consist of assignments, quizzes, multiple-choice questions, short-answer questions book and article reviews, field trips, practical classes/lab work, seminars and so on. Collated Continuous Assessment grades, which account for 30% of the total grade shall be submitted to the examinations office two weeks before the end-of-semester exams. Refer to appendix 5 for additional information.	The USL Harmonisation of Assessment Policy.
Are cumulative grades submitted prior to the next academic year?	Refer to appendix 5 for details	The USL Harmonisation of Assessment Policy
How are situations of missing grades handled?	Refer to appendix 5 for details	The USL Harmonisation of Assessment Policy
How effective are the procedures for missing grades?	Students should fill a form from the Dean's office to report missing grades.	The USL Harmonisation of Assessment Policy

Sub-question	Criteria	Source of Criteria
	<p>The faculty in collaboration with the examinations office will search for the script.</p> <p>If missing grades are not found and verified, students should be allowed to rewrite the examination at no cost and not as a reference.</p>	
Question 3. How effective are the measures instituted for preventing or controlling academic malpractice?		
What policies are available to control academic malpractices	Refer to annex 1 & 2 for details	USL Harmonisation of Assessment Policy
How are methods of academic malpractice prevented or controlled?	Refer to appendix 5 for details	The USL Harmonisation of Assessment Policy on the
Are there policies on the marking of scripts?		
Are there policies for the awarding of extra grades?		
Does the USL have sufficient human resources capacity (lecturers)?		
How qualified are the USL lecturers?	Enhance the colleges competitiveness in recruitment and retention of high quality personnel.	The USL Strategic Development Plan 2019 - 2023, goal 6.6.1
How efficient and effective are the monitoring of lecturers?	Members of staff must sign the attendance register when they report for work and account for their time. Employees who do not sign the attendance register will be considered to be absent for that day (s).	The USL HR Policy
Are the numbers of lecturers commensurate to the number of students?		
Question 5 How adequate are the infrastructural facilities of the USL to meet its student population?		
Are there adequate infrastructure to cater for all students admitted?	Provide students-friendly environment equipped with	USL Strategic Plan 2019-2023

Sub-question	Criteria	Source of Criteria
	<p>facilities and services that promote learning¹¹.</p> <p>Provide the needed infrastructure and physical environment as well as improve the provision and utilisation of library services consistent with modern standards¹².</p> <p>Upgrade, strengthen and mainstream distant, open, and e-learning delivery approaches in teaching and learning in all faculties.</p>	

¹¹ University of Sierra Leone, Strategic Development Plan 2019-2023 (Goal 6.4 Pg. 12)

¹² University of Sierra Leone, Strategic Development Plan 2019-2023 (Goal 6.8 Pg. 16)

5.3 ANNEX 1: SANCTIONS FOR EXAMINATION MALPRACTICE

Students

Offence	1 st Time Offender	2 nd Time Offender	3 rd & Final Time Offender
Taking into the exam hall, any books, notes or other unauthorised materials	Lose the academic year	Expulsion	
Written notes on oneself or having notes on oneself	Lose the academic year	Expulsion	
Having notes written in your identity documents or authorised examination materials e.g. logarithm tables, examination ticket	Lose the academic year	Expulsion	
Accessing information stored or written on electronic equipment	Lose the academic year	Expulsion	
Obtaining an examination paper ahead of its authorised release, fraudulently receiving examination papers/questions and answer booklets, which have been illegally procured or made available	Expulsion		
Paying or inducing another persons to illegally procure or make available examination questions/papers	Expulsion		
Copying from another candidate in an examination.	Lose the academic year	Expulsion	
Aiding or attempting to aid another candidate or obtaining or attempting to obtain assistance from another candidate	Lose the academic year	Expulsion	
Passing yourself off as another; (i.e. impersonation).	Expulsion or legal action for non-students		
Collusion e.g. exchange of question paper/answer booklets.	Lose the academic year	Expulsion	
Forging a university document for the purpose of examination	Expulsion		
Insult and assault of exam officials	Expulsion		
Taking an examination booklet outside the exam hall/room	Lose the academic year	Expulsion	
Failing to submit examination booklet after exam	Lose the academic year	Expulsion	
Using undue influence (including phone calls and 'gifts') to solicit unfair advantage	Lose the academic year	Expulsion	
Failing to subject to body search	Not allowed to take paper	Lose the academic year	Expulsion
'Giraffing' (spying)	Lose the academic year	Expulsion	

Lecturers/Invigilators/Examiners/Exam Officials

1. For the purposes of this section, Research/Teaching Assistants (RTAs), Teaching Assistants (TAs), Project Assistants (PAs) and Senior Supporting Staff (SSS) are considered as part-time lecturers.
2. An Exam Officer (EO) is any staff member working in the exams office.

Offence	1st Time Offender	2nd Time Offender	3rd & Final Time Offender
Fraudulently assigning the continuous assessment/examination grades to students.	1. Part-timer/ temporary lecturer – loss of honorarium and non-renewal of appointment. 2. Full-time lecturer/exam officer – Dismissal		
Selective dissemination of examination information or irregular assistance to a student/students or candidate/candidate	1. Part-timer/ temporary lecturer – loss of honorarium and non-renewal of appointment 2. Full -time lecturer/exam officer – Dismissal		
Failure to adequately secure examination materials	1 Part-timer/ temporary lecturer – loss of honorarium and non-renewal of appointment. 2. Full-time lecturer & exam officer – Warning letter and loss of 50% of monthly salary for a month	Full-time lecturer and exam officer – Dismissal	
Conducting and facilitating unauthorised forms of examination	Dismissal and legal action		
Unauthorised possession of examination materials	Dismissal		
Allowing someone to impersonate a student	Dismissal		
Swapping examination booklets/scripts	Dismissal		
Fraudulently conducting an examination outside the official scheduled period	Dismissal		
Fraudulently accepting any examination or course/work script outside the scheduled period	Dismissal		
Fraudulently changing/awarding grades	Dismissal		
Giving examination scripts to unauthorised person to mark	Termination of appointment		
Receiving monies and 'gifts' to influence student grades	Termination of appointment		
Any form of sexual harassment or inducement for grades	Termination of appointment		

5.4 ANNEX 2: PENALTIES FOR BREACHES OF EXAMINATION/INVIGILATION RULES AND REGULATIONS

Students

Offence	1st Time Offender	2nd Time Offender	3rd & Final Time Offender
Attempting to take/taking an exam without paying fees	Lose the academic year	Expulsion	
Paid fees but failed to register	Lose the academic year		
Not attended minimum of 70% of lectures/classes; 75% in the case of COMAHS for module	Lose the academic year	Expulsion	
Presenting oneself for an examination without a valid student ID card	Lose the academic year	Expulsion	

Lecturers

Offence	1st Time Offender	2nd Time Offender	3rd & Final Time Offender
Submitting Continuous Assessment grades after the deadline	Warning letter	One month suspension and loss of 50% of monthly salary	Termination of appointment
Failure to submit examination questions and marking scheme to the HoD as per policy requirement	Part-timer/temporary lecturer – loss of honorarium and non-renewal of appointment 2. Full -time lecturer - Warning letter and loss of 50% of monthly salary.	Full-time Lecturer – Termination of appointment	
Engaging in any activity that detracts from his/her duties, as an invigilator. E.g. reading personal document	Warning letter and loss of 5% of net monthly salary for a month	Warning letter and loss of 15% of one month's net salary	
Abandoning the examination room/venue without making proper arrangements for a replacement invigilator	Warning letter and loss of 12½% of net monthly salary for a month	Warning letter and loss of 25% of one month's net salary	
Reporting late for invigilation	Warning letter	Warning letter and loss of 5% of one month's net salary	

Offence	1st Time Offender	2nd Time Offender	3rd & Final Time Offender
Failing to report for invigilation without permission	Warning letter and loss of 25% of net monthly salary	Warning letter and loss of 50% of net monthly salary	Termination of appointment
Failure to officially report exam malpractice within two working days	Warning letter and forfeiture of a month's salary	Termination of appointment	
Failure to properly account for students' answer scripts received by the invigilator/lecturer	Dismissal		
Failure to act on a reported case of examination malpractice	Dismissal		

5.5 Appendix 4: EXAMPLES OF MARKED SCRIPT REVIEWED AT IPAM

DEPARTMENT	COURSE	MODULE	SEMESTER	YEAR	NO. OF SCRIPTS
ACCOUNTING DEPARTMENT	B.Sc. (Hons) in Applied Accounting	Public Sector Accounting	First Semester	1	121
		Business Policy and Strategy	Second Semester	3	330
		Mathematics	First Semester	1	328
		Principles of Auditing	First Semester	2	571
		Financial Reporting	First Semester	3	202
		Financial Accounting	Second Semester	1	621
		Global Banking and Finance	First Semester	3	325
		Quantitative Financial Analysis	Second Semester	2	756
DEPARTMENT OF BUSINESS ADMINISTRATION	B.Sc. (Hons) in Business Administration				
		Statistics	Second Semester	1	322
		Business Planning	First Semester	3	446
		Sales Negotiation	First Semester	4	173
		Small & Medium Enterprise	First Semester		56
		Principles of Management	Second Semester	2	648
		Marketing Management	Second Semester	3	394
		Operations Management	First Semester	2	814
					6,107

5.6 Appendix 5: EXAMPLES OF MARKED SCRIPT REVIEWED AT FBC

FACULTY	COURSE	MODULE	SEMESTER	YEAR	NO. OF SCRIPTS
SOCIAL SCIENCE AND LAW	Peace and Conflict Studies	International and Regional Organisation	Second Semester	1	150
		War, Healing and Peace Building	First Semester	2	157
		Natural Resource governance	Second Semester	2	107
		Gender, Conflict and Development	Second Semester	2	150
		NGO/CSO & Peace Building	First Semester	2	144
	Economics & Commerce	Elementary and Statistical Methods	First Semester	2	284
		Mathematics for Social Science	Second Semester	1	441
		Advance Micro Economics Theory	First Semester		94
	Accounting	Auditing	First semester	2	115
		Financial Management			18
		Marketing	Second Semester	2	69
		Insurance	Second Semester	4	54
		Procurement and Law	First semester		38
ENGINEERING	Mechanical and Maintenance Engineering	Manufacturing Process	First Semester	3	55
		Engineering Principles II	Second Semester	1	204
		Mechanical Maintenance	Second Semester	1	61
		Mechanics of Machines and Controls II	Second Semester	5	40
		Professional Ethics	First Semester	5	89
		Engineering Principles II	Second Semester	1	224
		Manufacturing Process	First Semester	3	44
		Mechanics of Machines and Controls II	First Semester	4	24

FACULTY	COURSE	MODULE	SEMESTER	YEAR	NO. OF SCRIPTS
	Electrical Engineering	Digital System Lab	First Semester	3	50
		Engineering Principles	First Semester	1	127
		Analysis and Design	First Semester	4	58
		Applied Electricity II	Second Semester	1	125
		Electronics	Second Semester	3	84
		Electronics Labs	First Semester	3	111
		Fundamentals of Digital System	Second Semester	2	68
		Electrical Circuits	First Semester	3	28
		Power Electronics	Second Semester	4	35
		Electrical and Electronics Labs	First Semester	3	28
		Control Systems	Second Semester	3	35
		Introduction to Electronics Engineering	First Semester	2	64
		Workshop Technology	Second Semester		66
		Surveying 2	Second Semester	4	38
		Data Processing	Second Semester	4	34
		Power Electronics	First Semester	4	21
		Control Systems	First Semester	4	33
		Signal Analysis	First Semester	4	38
		Engineering Principles	First Semester	3	42
		Applied Electricity	Second Semester	2	74
		Workshop Technology	First Semester		71
		Engineering Principles	First Semester	1	50
		Workshop Technology	First Semester		69
		Technical Report	Second Semester	3	34
		Digital System Lab	Second Semester	2	63
		Digital Electronics Labs	First Semester	2	54
		Measurement and Instrumentations	First Semester	2	63

FACULTY	COURSE	MODULE	SEMESTER	YEAR	NO. OF SCRIPTS
		Applied Electricity	First Semester	2	60
		Signal Analysis	First Semester	4	19
		Control Systems 1	First Semester	4	19
		Digital System	First Semester	4	20
		Electronics Practical	First Semester	2	32
		Control Systems	Second Semester	4	20
		Electronics	First Semester	3	33
		Digital System Lab	First Semester	3	33
		Electronics Engineering I	First Semester	2	35
		Applied Electricity	Second Semester	2	133
		Power Engineering	Second Semester	4	19
		Electrical Fields	Second Semester	3	34
		Fundamentals of Digital System	Second Semester	2	33
		Applied Electricity	Second Semester	2	133
		Digital System V	First Semester	5	11
		Data processing Labs	Second Semester	4	10
		Data processing	Second Semester	4	19
		Power Electronics	First Semester	5	11
		Micro Computer Engineering II	Second Semester	3	29
		Applied Electricity	Second Semester	2	133
		Power Engineering	First Semester	3	77
		Digital System 1	First Semester	3	32
		Engineering Principles	First Semester	1	170
	Civil Engineering	Theory and Design of Structures II	First Semester	4	32
		Transportation Engineering	First Semester	4	69
		Theory and Design of Structures II	First Semester	4	42
		Engineering Surveying	Second Semester	3	18
		Engineer in Society	First Semester	4	81

FACULTY	COURSE	MODULE	SEMESTER	YEAR	NO. OF SCRIPTS
		Surveying II	First Semester	4	68
		Transportation Engineering	Second Semester	4	22
		Contract and Specification	First Semester	5	23
		Engineer in Society	First Semester	4	55
		Dynamics	Second Semester	2	67
		Surveying II	second Semester	4	35
		Transportation Engineering	First Semester	4	42
		Engineering in Society	First Semester	4	40
		Strength of Materials	Second Semester	3	66
		Statics and Strength of Materials	Second Semester	2	64
		Hydrology	Second Semester	4	36
		Fluid Mechanics	Second Semester	3	67
					6067

5.7 Appendix 6: EXAMPLES OF MARKED SCRIPT REVIEWED AT COMAHS

FACULTY	COURSE	MODULE	SEMESTER	YEAR	ACADEMIC YEAR	NO. OF SCRIPTS
Nursing	Diploma in Nursing	Reproductive Health Nursing	Second Semester	2	2018/19	561
		Microbiology	Second Semester	1	2018/19	533
		Pharmacology	Second Semester	1	2018/19	185
		Anthropology/Sociology	Second Semester	1	2018/19	123
		Fundamental Nursing	Second Semester	1	2018/19	239
		Public/Community Health	Second Semester	1	2018/19	1220
		Anatomy & Physiology	Second Semester	1	2018/19	252
		Family Planning	Second Semester	1	2018/19	241
		Psychology	Second Semester	1	2018/19	506
		Research	Second Semester	2	2018/19	288
		Public/Community Health	Second Semester	1	2017/18	304
		Anatomy & Physiology	Second Semester	1	2017/18	304

5.8

Appendix 7: ANALYSIS OF ACCEPTED STUDENTS' APPLICATION FORMS - IPAM

Analysis of Students Application Forms						
IPAM						
Dept.	Departmental Requirement	Examples of Accepted Application forms				
Business Admin	5(five) GCE O'level /WASSCE credit	Form no. 5989	Form no.	Form no. 3802	Form no. 365	Form no. 8765
	English (C5 or better)	History B2	Economics B3	CRK C6	English Lang C6	Economics C6
	Mathematic (C6) or better	Government B3	Government B3	English language C6	English Lit. C6	English C6
	Principles of Cost Accounting	Economics C6	History B3	Government C6	History C4	Math C6
	Financial Accounting	English B3	Literature C5	History C4	Government B2	Agriculture C6
	Commerce	Mathematic C6	English C6	Mathematics B3	Economics C5	Science B3
	Economics	Agriculture C6	Mathematics C6	Mgt. in living C5	Maths C4	Physics C4
	Business Management		Biology C4	Economics E8	Biology B3	
				Literature E8	C. R. S B3	
				Biology C6	M.I.L A1	
Applied Accounting	Same requirement for Business Admin	Form no. 4382	Form no. 835	Form no. 3808	Form no.	Form no. 5857
		Commerce B3	B.Mgt B3	B. Mgt C5	Fin. Accounting C6	Commerce D7
		Fin. Accounting D7	Fin. Accounting C6	Fin. Accounting C6	Prin. Cost A/C C6	Fin. Accounting C4
		Principles of Acc B3	Islamic studies C6	Biology C6	English Lang C6	Prin. Cost A/c F9
		History C5	English Lang. C4	English Lang C4	Maths C5	Economics C6
		English Language C5	Mathematic B2	Mathematic C4	Agriculture C5	English C5
		Mathematics C5	Commerce D7	Cost Accounting D7		Math C4
		Economics D7	Cost Accounting E8	Economics D7		

5.9 Appendix 8: ANALYSIS OF ACCEPTED STUDENTS' APPLICATION FORMS - COMAHS

COMAHS						
Faculty of Nursing						
Diploma in Nursing	/WASSCE credit, a minimum of C6 in	Form no. 0007635	Form no. 008	Form no. 825	Form no. 291	Form no.
	English Language	B. Mgt C6	English Lang C6	English Lang B3	C.R.S B3	Geography E8
	Biology	Commerce C6	Mathematics D7	Further Maths D7	English Lang. C6	English C6
	Physics	Fin. Accounting C6	Biology C6	Mathematics D7	Mathematics E8	Mathematics F9
	Mathematics	Economics C6	Physics C6	Biology C4	Agric C6	Biology C6
	Chemistry	Lit. in English E8	chemistry D7	Chemistry C6	Biology D7	Chemistry C4
		English lang C6	Agriculture C5	Science B3	Chemistry B3	Science B3
		Math C6	Geography C6	Physics C6	H. Science B3	Physics C5
		Agriculture C4	Economics C6		Physics C6	
		Biology D7				
		Chemistry C4				

5.10

Appendix 9: ANALYSIS OF ACCEPTED STUDENTS' APPLICATION FORMS - FBC

FBC						
Faculty of Social Sciences & Law						
	5(five) GCE O'level /WASSCE credit					
		Form no.	Form no. 2939	Form no. 4178	Form no. 6271	Form no.
Peace and	English 4/C5 or better)	CRS B3	Commerce E8	C.R.S C4	B. Management	Geography E8
Conflict	Mathematic 6/C6)	Government C6	Financial Acc C4	Government B3	Fin. Accounting	Government B3
	Cost Accounting	History C6	Principles C.A C6	History C5	Pri. Aounting C6	History B3
	Financial Accounting	Lit in English D7	Economics C6	Lit in English C6	Economics E8	Lit in English F9
	Economics	English E8	English Lang. E8	English Lang. C6	English Lang. C6	English Lang. C6
FBC						
Faculty of Engineering And Architecture						
	5(five) GCE O'level /WASSCE credit- A1-C6	Form no. 5377	Form no. 6282			
Engineering	English 5/C6	English lang D7	Geograpgy F9			
	Biology	Mathematics D7	English F9			
	Physics	Physics C6	Further math F9			
	Mathematics/Further Math	Science core D7	Mathematics F9			
	Chemistry	Further math F9	Agriculture F9			
	Science Core	Eng. Science F9	Biology F9			
	Technical Drawing	Chemistry F9	Science C6			
	Engineering Science		Physics F9			

APPENDIX 10: USL MANAGEMENT RESPONSES

**OFFICE OF THE VICE CHANCELLOR & PRINCIPAL
UNIVERSITY OF SIERRA LEONE**
Private Mail Bag, Freetown



VICE CHANCELLOR & PRINCIPAL
PROF FODAY SAHR, B.Sc. Ed.B.Sc. Hon. M.B.Ch.B M.Sc., D.Sc FWACP (Lab. Med)

Our ref: USL/3/EXT.
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Date: 15th November 2021

The Auditor -General
Audit Service Sierra Leone
2nd Floor Lotto Building
Tower Hill
Freetown

Dear Sir/Madam

**RE: DRAFT PERFORMANCE AUDIT REPORT ON THE MANAGEMENT OF
EXAMINATION BY THE UNIVERSITY OF SIERRA LEONE**

I refer to your letter of 1st November 2021 on the abovementioned subject, and write to submit for your attention the University Management's response to the issues raised in the report.

We indeed met with staff of the Audit Service on 26th October, 2021 in an exit meeting to discuss the issues before the release of the draft report. At that meeting we provided our initial reactions to the key findings.

Let me thank you and your staff for the comprehensive work done in covering the examination processes of the constituent colleges - Fourah Bay College, Institute of Public Administration and Management, and the College of Medicine and Allied Health Science, University of Sierra Leone between 2017 and 2019. The issues raised are indeed very pertinent and the limitations discovered, when fully addressed, as we are striving to, will definitely bring about greater efficiency and indeed higher quality of our products.

I wish to highlight some of the key findings and provide response to them for your attention and the records.

1. Registration of Students

This is a major perennial challenge that the University is working to address. Over the years, the unfortunate practice of allowing unregistered students to attend classes and take exams, after appeals and interventions from stakeholders on their behalf, has indeed greatly affected the quality of the examination process.

The University now has a Learning Management System in place that would henceforth eliminate or at least significantly reduce the possibility of unregistered students attending classes and attempting to take exams.

2. Management of Grades and Examinations

As rightly pointed out, the University has a harmonized assessment policy which clearly outlines how grades and the entire examinations processes are to be managed.

During the conduct of the 2020/2021 Session's examinations of both first and second semesters, IPAM implemented a same day collection of scripts.

Stringent measures are being put in place to ensure that all lecturers submit their questions through their heads of departments, pick up their scripts within 48 hours of their paper being taken, mark and turn in their grades, together with the marked scripts and marking scripts, not later than three weeks after the paper is taken. There has already been significant progress in this direction.

3. Conduct of Examinations

We acknowledge the significant challenge of our physical infrastructure/space challenge which becomes more pronounced during examinations. IPAM has already taken action to rent a large outside location that will now become its second campus in Freetown. At Fourah Bay College, a number of new buildings have been constructed both within the main campus area and at the periphery of the Leicester Road/Tree Planting end of its campus. We are confident that the space challenge is being comprehensively addressed, especially with IPAM working towards the establishment of a full residential campus at Bureh Town.

We wish to point out that the description of an examination hall having only one space created at the edge of the hall, "whereas no other space was created between rows for ease of movement of invigilators" is exaggerated. In all our exams halls, invigilators move round with attendance register for the candidates to sign on, pick up their attendance slips and indeed move around the hall to check. It is therefore inconceivable that there are exams halls without space for movement.

4. Continuous Assessment

As rightly pointed out in the report, Continuous Assessment Grades should be submitted two weeks before the commencement of the semester examinations. The University Management notes that compliance in this area has been minimal and is therefore putting in place stringent measures to ensure that all lecturers abide by this critical regulation, in order to avoid any possibility of manipulation of continuous assessment grades.

5. Publication of Cumulative Results

Delay in publication of cumulative result is one of the most pronounced challenging areas the University is faced with. Serious action is being taken to penalize lecturers who fail to submit their grades within the stipulated period. At IPAM for example, the incentive of lecturers who fail to submit grades for the first semester examination was withheld and eventually forfeited by the defaulting lecturers. The University is resolved to ensure that the sanction for not submitting grades in time will be fully implemented henceforth.

6. Missing Grades

The report expertly captures the issues around this matter. The University, through the Colleges, has already largely addressed the matter. At IPAM, an Interdepartmental Examinations Committee was set up to help address the factors of missing grades and to bring about greater effectiveness of the examinations process. A similar committee was also set up at Fourah Bay College and the College of Medicine and Allied Health Sciences. We are highly confident that the missing grades challenge has largely been address, and hopefully with the full use of the Learning Management System, will be eventually eliminated.

7. Academic Malpractices

The University Administration has made the fight against Academic/Exams Malpractice an integral part of its operation. Students as well as faculty and staff have been subjected to investigation and appropriate sanctions. The perceived increased in exams malpractice is, in our view, a manifestation of the enhanced vigilance against exams malpractice. Robust measures are being put in place to detect, disrupt and expose attempts at exams malpractice at every level. Moreover, action is being taken to ensure that no culpable person escapes the approved sanctions. Before now, investigations used to linger for years. That is now a story. Investigations, approval process, and implementation of sanctions are now fully completed within a semester.

8. Capacity of Lecturers/Lecturer to student ratio

The Lecturer to student ratio is rightly reported to be very low. The situation is gradually improving with more highly qualified faculty being brought on board. The major challenge however remains funding to pay high level academics, especially with the difficulty in getting the Ministry of Finance to take on board the payment of salaries of new staff. The University is already overwhelmed with those it has to take care of, i.e., Associate Lecturers, staff on contract, and those who are yet to be taken on board by Government. However, we are hopeful of a much more improved situation, as the Ministry of Technical and Higher Education has given indication of mobilizing assistance for the recruitment and deployment of highly qualified academics in especially specialized areas to augment the faculty situation of the University.

9. Inadequate Infrastructure

This challenge is already discussed above. Whilst significant progress is being made, we acknowledge the limitation, which is largely due to funding challenge to enable us put up as many structures as are deservedly needed. That said, we note with unease the portrayal of an isolated incident of two separate classes (Social Work and Law) taken in one class as giving the impression that that is a normal occurrence in the university. We requested at the exit meeting for reconsideration of the inclusion of that episode in the final report, as it could only have been an isolated case.

10. The State of the Oldest Constituent College of USL

We note, with disappointment, the old pictures of the old student hostels borrowed from a Sierra Leone's Premier Online News Portal portrayed as the current student hostels. The current student hostels are fully refurbished and are in what we can only describe as befitting standard state. The description of FBC lying in ruins, is in our view, is extremely

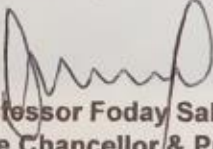
derogatory and the selection of the referred Portal's quote "in total shambles, derelict and a precarious state" for inclusion in the report when the structure referred to had been long refurbished, perturbing. We request that you reconsider that whole erroneous characterization of the College.

11. Compromise of the Admissions Policy

Under the Overall Conclusion on page 15, we struggle to understand the assertion of "The USL compromising its admission policy by admitting students who do not meet the University's departmental requirements". This gives the impression of an institutional compromise. Our analyses of the sample cases presented show that only accepted student application forms were analysed. A full tracer study to see whether they pursued the courses and were conferred the degrees or awarded the diplomas or certificates was not done. This was very necessary, given our periodic and mandatory exit verification mechanism, which makes it extremely tight for students who did not meet the entry requirement to graduate from the University. It would be appropriate if a fuller tracer study is conducted to verify whether these students ended up with the University's degrees, diplomas or certificates.

I will conclude by once again thanking you and your staff for a comprehensive work done, and appreciate the fact we identify with most of the issues raised and have been taking action to address most of them.

Please accept the assurances of our highest consideration.



Professor Foday Sahr
Vice Chancellor & Principal

Copy: The Deputy Vice Chancellors, FBC/IPAM/COMAHS
The Registrar, USL
The Finance Director, USL
The Internal Auditor, USL