



**MID-TERM REVIEW OF THE
AAU 2016 – 2020 STRATEGIC PLAN**

TERMS OF REFERENCE

DECEMBER 2018

1. BACKGROUND

The Association of African Universities (AAU) is the representative organisation of universities and other higher education institutions in 46 African countries. The Association plays a crucial role in influencing policies on higher education, research and innovation in Africa. By interacting with a range of other African and international organisations, the Association ensures that the voice of African universities is heard, in the higher education-sustainable development nexus.

The AAU was founded on 12th November, 1967. In 1970, it set up its headquarters in Accra, Ghana, with a membership of 34 public universities. Over the years, membership has grown from the initial 34 institutions in 1967 to 400 member institutions from 46 African countries.

As its niche, AAU enjoys a unique capacity for convening the vast majority of the African higher education community to reflect and consult on key issues affecting education in Africa, and for promoting cooperation and collaboration among its member institutions. The thrust of its base is the nimble deployment of advocacy, strategic research, commissioning studies, acting and becoming the clearing house and intelligence arm for Higher Education Institutions (HEIs) in Africa and maintaining and creating platforms for networking.

The current AAU Strategic Plan began in 2016 and is expected to run till 2020. Preparation of the current AAU 2016 – 2020 Strategic Plan was undertaken following conclusion of implementation of the previous AAU Strategic Plan that ran from 2011 to 2015. The purpose of the current five-year plan is to guide AAU management decisions and actions during the period, to achieve maximum efficiency, productivity, and growth in programmes in a collaborative manner. The plan also provides an opportunity for AAU to deeply reflect on its achievements and constraints during its 50th anniversary in the year 2017. Furthermore, it will also assist AAU to chart the path towards the next 50 years. This will be achieved through mainstreaming the new strategies necessary for ensuring sustainable development of Africa through the programmes identified and prioritised in the Plan. The Plan has also addressed the critical issue of capacity building in resource mobilisation for leaders of the African HEIs and recognises the implications of the increasing youthfulness of the African workforce. It has to be further noted that as a continental body, AAU has a very close working relationship with the African Union (AU) in view of its recognition as its Implementing Agency for Higher Education in the continent and where AAU has an Observer status.

Implementation of the various component activities of the AAU 2016 – 2020 Strategic Plan has been ongoing since 2016 and has generally followed AAU's established processes with regard to management, monitoring and evaluation. Implementation has also been geared towards meeting the Association's Mission Statement and developmental objectives. As part of monitoring procedures, the AAU 2016 – 2020 Strategic Plan specifies that a mid-term review of the Plan be undertaken no later than two years after its commencement. It is against this background that the current call is being made.

2. OBJECTIVES OF THE MID-TERM REVIEW

The Mid-Term Review (MTR) will assess the progress of AAU 2016 – 2020 Strategic Plan. It will also highlight issues and challenges affecting effective and efficient implementation of the Strategic Plan and recommend changes where necessary.

The review is being undertaken at the midpoint of Strategic Plan's implementation and will pave the way for improved delivery for the remaining Plan's duration and propose amendments (if any) required in the Strategic Plan's implementation arrangements and/or institutional linkages in order to effectively and sustainably contribute to improved performance of African HEIs and the AAU Secretariat.

3. SCOPE OF THE EVALUATION

The evaluation will review the performance of the AAU 2016 – 2020 Strategic Plan since its inception to date. Specifically, it will review the Plan's goal and strategies, objectives, outcomes and impact as outlined in the Strategic Plan and other relevant documents to determine their relevance and compatibility with the constitutional mandate and mission of the AAU. It will cover work done by AAU in line with the three broad goals, seven key result areas and 29 strategic objectives of the AAU 2016 – 2020 Strategic Plan.

The assessment will focus on but not be restricted to the issues outlined below:

Relevance

- i. Assess the contribution of the Strategic Plan towards the achievement of organizational mandate of AAU.
- ii. Analyze whether the Strategic Plan's implementation strategies address the needs and demands of the African higher education stakeholders.
- iii. Assess the relevance of the Strategic Plan's activities, including capacity building for higher education leaders and managers, and AAU Staff.

Effectiveness

Review whether the Strategic Plan has accomplished its outputs. In particular the mission should:

- iv. Assess the qualitative and quantitative achievements of objectives, strategies, activities, targets, indicators, and partners as defined in the Association's Strategic Plan Matrix, as well as other documents and work-plans.
- v. Based on the progress so far suggest / recommend any changes to the current arrangements.

Efficiency

- vi. Analyze the role of the AAU Governing Board as the Supervisory Organ of the Secretariat and assess whether this body is optimally being used for Strategic Plan implementation and decision making.
- vii. Assess the timeline and quality of the reporting followed by the Association.
- viii. Analyze the performance of the Monitoring and Evaluation mechanism of the Association and the use of various M&E tools.
- ix. Assess the qualitative and quantitative aspects of management and other inputs (such as equipment, monitoring and review and other technical assistance and budgetary inputs) provided by the Association vis-à-vis achievement of objectives, strategies, activities, targets, indicators of the Strategic Plan.
- x. Identify factors and constraints which have affected the Strategic Plan's implementation including technical, managerial, organizational, institutional and socio-economic issues in addition to other external factors.

Sustainability and Impact

- xi. Assess preliminary indications of the degree to which the Strategic Plan's results are likely to be sustainable and provide recommendations for strengthening sustainability.
- xii. Based on the findings (relevance, efficiency, effectiveness, sustainability and impact) as well as taking into account new emerging initiatives at both regional and continental level, recommend whether continuation of the Strategic Plan is warranted.

Lessons Learnt/ Conclusions

- xiii. Analyze areas for improved programme planning, especially with respect to setting targets, relevance and capacity of AAU for decision making and delivery.
- xiv. Identify significant lessons or conclusions which can be drawn from the Strategic Plan in terms of effectiveness, efficiency, sustainability and networking.

4. EXPECTED OUTPUTS

The Mission's findings and recommendations will be thoroughly discussed with AAU. The Mission will complete and submit a draft final report in soft copy at the end of the mission. Key stakeholders (AAU Secretariat and the Governing Board) will provide comments on the Draft Final Report, based on which the Mission will finalize the report. The key outputs of the MTR are:

Deliverables

- (i) **Inception report** that includes methodology and work plan
- (ii) **A draft MTR report**
- (iii) **A comprehensive final report** that incorporates the following:
 - An analysis of achievements, strengths, weaknesses and challenges of the mid-term performance of the AAU 2016 – 2020 Strategic Plan.

- An analysis of the changes realised with emphasis on synthesised and verified quantitative and qualitative evidence.
 - Recommendations on how the AAU will build on its strengths and achievements to overcome its weaknesses and challenges.
 - Recommendations if things were to be done differently
 - Feedback from various AAU constituencies
- (iv) **Validation Workshop Presentation:** For presenting and discussing the draft final report interactively, the consultants will facilitate a discussion session during the 2019 Conference of Rectors, Vice Chancellors and Presidents (COREVIP) of African universities in Cairo, Egypt in 2019.

Reporting Guidelines

- (v) The MTR Final Report: The report should be logically structured, contain an analysis of achievements, strengths, weaknesses and challenges of the mid-term performance of the AAU 2016 – 2020 Strategic Plan; evidence-based findings, conclusions, lessons and recommendations, and should be free of information that is not relevant to the overall analysis. The report should respond in detail to the key focus areas described above. It should include a set of specific recommendations formulated for the Plan, and identify the necessary actions required to be undertaken, who should undertake those and possible time-lines (where possible).
- (vi) The main body of the report **should not exceed 30 pages** excluding table of contents, annexes, and the executive summary. Technical details should be confined to appendices, which should also include a list of informants and the evaluation team's work schedule. Background information should only be included when it is directly relevant to the report's analysis and conclusions.
- (vii) The final evaluation report should incorporate, the following **subsections**:
- Title page
 - Acronyms and table of contents pages
 - Acknowledgment (if any)
 - Executive Summary not more than four pages with findings and related recommendations
 - Introduction (maximum of two pages):
 - Background and the Description of the Strategic Plan
 - Purpose of the Evaluation
 - Evaluation Methodology
 - Limitation of the study
 - Findings: highlighting the key questions set under section three
 - Lessons learnt
 - Recommendations
 - Annexes (all relevant documents)

5. CONSULTANT

The Mission will consist of an individual consultant, with at least a doctoral degree in a management related discipline, at least 15 years of experience related to reviews, capacity building in higher education, and a strong background in the evaluation of higher education related projects.

6. METHODOLOGY

The mission will adopt a consultative and participative approach. This will include desk review of relevant documents including AAU 2016 – 2020 Strategic Plan, Constitution, Annual Reports, Annual Work Plans and Budgets, Mission Reports and meetings (both face-to-face and virtual interactions). The mission will also meet with the AAU Secretariat team, some Governing Board Members, relevant partners at both national and regional level if necessary, the mission may also meet other agencies engaged in similar interventions. The MTR will start with a meeting at the AAU Secretariat and conclude with a presentation at the 2019 COREVIP in Egypt. Specifically, the MTR will be implemented in four stages as outlined below:

- **Stage 1:** Inception phase involves discussion with AAU Secretariat to define the scope of evaluation, refine the evaluation questions, conduct desk study and produce an inception report. This inception report will incorporate a detailed work plan, methodology for gathering, verifying and analyzing data and the criteria for the selection of grantees in the countries selected for this exercise.
- **Stage 2:** Desk review of relevant documents.
- **Stage 3:** Preparation of the preliminary evaluation report, submission to the AAU for comments, and validation meeting to present the findings and validate results at the 2019 COREVIP.
- **Stage 4:** Preparation of final evaluation report and submission to the AAU.

7. DURATION OF THE MID-TERM REVIEW

The mid-term review will be conducted over a total of 21 working days within February – May 2019. The tasks will be allocated time slots as follows:

- Review of documents and production of inception report 3 days
- Review of documents and other materials 8 days
- Preparation of draft Report 6 days
- Validation Meeting 1 day
- Finalisation of report 3 days

8. SCHEDULE OF PAYMENT

Financial Proposal must express the professional fees for the assignment. All other costs such as travel costs, living allowances, communications, etc. will be covered directly by the AAU. Payment shall therefore be made according to the following deliverables:

- Thirty per cent (30%) after submission and acceptance of the Inception report;
- Thirty per cent (30%) after submission and acceptance of the draft report;
- Forty per cent (40%) after submission and acceptance of the final report.

9. MANAGEMENT OF THE EVALUATION

The AAU Secretary General with the support of the Senior Management Staff will oversee and coordinate the Mid-term Review exercise. They will provide administrative support including compiling and forwarding all the necessary documents, organising meetings with stakeholders and coordinating travel and any other necessary logistical arrangements. They will also liaise with AAU Governing Board Members for inputs as needed. Funding of the MTR, dissemination of the evaluation report and any follow-up activities will be the responsibility of the AAU.

10. REFERENCE DOCUMENTS

- AAU 2016 – 2020 Strategic Plan
- AAU Annual Reports
- AAU Project Progress Reports
- Sida Evaluation Report
- SG Reports to the Governing Board
- Minutes of the Governing Board Meetings
- AAU Monitoring, Evaluation and Learning Framework

All applications should be sent to secgen@aau.org not later than 31st January, 2019.