

**Open letter addressed to the HEQC auditors and evaluators  
concerning the 2008 institutional audit of the University of KwaZulu-Natal**

18 February 2011

Dear Colleagues,

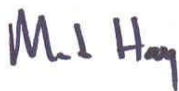
I am writing to you with respect to the Council on Higher Education's decision to withdraw the draft report of the 2008 institutional audit of the University of KwaZulu-Natal. A number of articles and letters on the topic have recently been published in some national and local newspapers.

It is a matter of great concern to me, my CHE colleagues, HEQC members, and some auditors and evaluators, that as a consequence of the withdrawal of the draft audit report, questions have been raised about the credibility of both CHE and HEQC. At a recent HEQC meeting the matter was again discussed in depth.

Mr Ahmed Essop, the CHE Chief Executive Officer, released a statement (available on the CHE website [http://www.che.ac.za/auditing/instaudited/reports/UKZN\\_Statement\\_Feb2011.pdf](http://www.che.ac.za/auditing/instaudited/reports/UKZN_Statement_Feb2011.pdf)). The statement is frank about the contribution of CHE/HEQC in dealing with the matter. There are a number of lessons which can be drawn and matters which could be further discussed and elaborated, including detailing the quality assurance processes more precisely; anticipating contestation and establishing appropriate avenues to resolve such issues; establishing clearly where the responsibility for final decisions rests; as well as establishing processes for dealing with issues relating to confidentiality, to approval of reports; to institutional autonomy and to external quality assurance boundaries.

The HEQC has built the national quality assurance system on a peer-based system (through the contribution made by auditors, evaluators and stakeholders in the national higher education sector) that is predicated on respect, trust, professionalism and probity. It is important that the national quality assurance system operates with fairness, transparency and integrity. I trust that you will continue to support and assist the HEQC in meeting its national quality assurance mandate through your active participation in the activities of the HEQC. It is my hope that we will use this as an opportunity to reflect on, rectify and strengthen our national quality assurance processes. Your contribution and views in this regard would be most welcome.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in dark ink that reads 'Mark Hay'.

Dr Mark Hay  
Executive Director: Quality Assurance