QUALITY OF PROVISION SEEN THROUGH THE RE-ACCREDITATION CRITERIA

As seen in the previous chapter, the 37 programmes submitted for re-accreditation are offered by 27 institutions of which 18 are public higher education institutions and 9 are private providers. Public providers offered 23 programmes distributed between universities (18 programmes) and technikons (5 programmes). Private providers offered 14 programmes of which 10 were offered by local providers and 4 by transnational providers. Each programme was assessed against 13 criteria which, for the purpose of this analysis, can be grouped into the following three categories:

Governance criteria (Criteria 1-4) focused on:

- The nature and level of the insertion of providers into the national higher education system in terms of its legislative framework and regulations as well as its broad social and developmental objectives.
- The relationship between the unit offering the MBA and the higher education institution within which it is located, whether this is local or transnational.

Learning programme criteria (Criteria 5-12) focused on:

- The processes that guarantee the integrity and intellectual coherence of a programme and the mechanisms to monitor and review it.
- The actual intellectual coherence and appropriateness of the programme content in relation to its purposes.
- The structure and articulation of the teaching and learning processes, including assessment, and research education.
- The availability of adequate human resources (academic, support and administrative) to fulfil the objectives of a programme according to its specific mode of delivery. This includes the translation of the national goals of equity and redress to institutional and programme level policies for appointments.
- The manner in which programmes guarantee students access to sufficient and adequate physical and educational infrastructure according to their specific mode of delivery.

Contextual criteria (Criterion 13) focused on:

- The programmes' relationships with employers and the world of business.
- The ways in which programmes articulate with broader societal needs and goals that fall within their sphere.
- The programmes' contribution to the world of business and management in general.

The degree to which each programme met these criteria was assessed in terms of four categories. *Commend* indicates that a programme has achieved a criterion to a degree above the minimum standards and therefore deserves to be commended; *meets minimum standards* indicates that a programme has achieved the minimum necessary requirements in relation to one criterion; *needs improvement* indicates that a programme has not yet achieved the necessary minimum requirements in relation to a criterion but that it might be able to improve on this; and *does not comply* means that a programme has failed to meet the necessary minimum requirements in relation to a criterion.

From the point of view of the re-accreditation process, different combinations of 'commend', 'meets minimum standards', 'needs improvement' and 'does not comply' resulted in the full accreditation, conditional accreditation or the de-accreditation of each MBA programme. Taking this into account, out of the 37 programmes submitted for evaluation 7 programmes (19 percent) were given full accreditation, 15 programmes (40.5 percent) were given conditional accreditation, and a further 15 programmes (40.5 percent) were de-accredited.

As much as an analysis of the aggregated profiles of each group gives an indication of the differences between programmes in the four groups, it actually hides both the areas of excellence and the problems that characterise the provision of MBAs in South Africa. Thus, the focus of this chapter is not on the accreditation status achieved by the different programmes at the end of the re-accreditation process but on the areas of strengths and weakness shown by the programmes in relation to the 13 criteria developed by the HEQC.

This chapter takes the actual results of the evaluation of MBAs as the point of departure for a more detailed analysis of the nature of the programmes and the overall quality of the MBA in South Africa. We argue three points. First, that the 13 evaluation criteria are interrelated and that the quality of a programme can only be assessed in relation to the combined criteria. Second, we argue that there are correlations[1] among criteria within one category which show the importance of the different constitutive elements of, for example, the learning programme. Finally, we identify correlations across different categories of criteria. The analysis of these correlations and the trends that can be discerned in relation to each of them taking into account institutional history and how long the programme has been offered, together with a range of other contextual variables, allows for a better understanding of the nature of the South African MBA.

RE-ACCREDITATION RESULTS BY CRITERION

The analysis presented in this section takes into account the information provided by institutions in their submissions to the HEQC and the evaluation reports of each programme,

1 The word 'correlation' is used often in this chapter. Its meaning is strictly non-statistical. It is used as in *The New Oxford Dictionary*, 2001: 'a mutual relationship or connection between two or more things'.

as well as specific information and data requested for the purpose of this report. The section is organised into three parts that focus on the three categories of criteria identified in the introduction to this chapter.

Governance criteria

Criterion 1: Organisation setting (external)

This criterion refers to the integration of a programme into the South African higher education system and into the higher education institution that offers it. In other words, this criterion evaluates the degree of providers' compliance with national higher education legislation and regulations and the extent to which their structure, organisation and funding are in practice a constitutive part of the university, technikon, or private provider which houses them. In the case of transnational providers whose headquarters and central administrative and academic structures operate abroad, the questions of integration and sustainability (both academic and financial) are of great importance. In order to meet this criterion all programmes were expected to show:

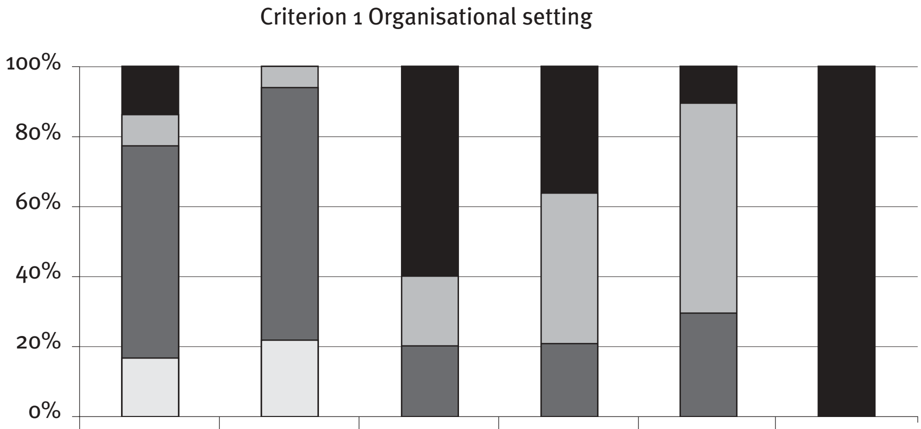
- A linkage between the MBA programme and the institution.
- The registration of the institution by the Department of Education (DoE) in the case of private providers both local and transnational.
- That the MBA programme is part of the Programme and Qualifications Mix (PQM) issued by the DoE (public providers).
- That all MBA programmes were registered by the South African Qualifications Authority (SAQA) on the National Qualifications Framework (NQF).
- That the programme has adequate financial resources to be sustainable.
- The link between the institution's overall planning process and the MBA programme.[2]

The minimum standards of this criterion have a double focus: the compliance with national policies and regulations, and the relationship between the academic unit offering the MBA and the broader institution in which it is located. Both aspects are equally important and both have a bearing on the quality of the programme offering. The first aspect of the criterion looks at the modes of insertion of institutions into the South African higher education system, and analyses the degree of compliance with fundamental aspects of the local system, such as the existence of a national qualifications framework. The second aspect takes care of the consistency of the operation of the business school with the institution's mission, budget and overall planning structures, all of which are seen as preconditions for the quality of the programmes offered.

2 For a complete version of the minimum standards see Appendix 1. For the complete version of criteria, minimum standards and specific reporting requirements, with an outline of the submission and assessment process see: Higher Education Quality Committee, 2003. Manual for the Re-Accreditation of MBAs.

Figure 1 shows that, overall, public providers did better than private providers in relation to Criterion 1. Among public providers universities did better than technikons while among private providers local institutions fared better than transnational ones.

Figure 1: Criterion 1 by type of provider



	Public providers	Universities	Technikons	Private providers	Local providers	Transnational private providers
Do not comply	13%	0%	60%	36%	10%	100%
Need improvement	9%	6%	20%	43%	60%	0%
Meet minimum standards	61%	72%	20%	21%	30%	0%
Commend	17%	22%	0%	0%	0%	0%

Source: Re-accreditation reports.

The close relationship between the type of provider and the result of the assessment of the external organisational setting suggests that the insertion of business schools into the national higher education system is related to the history of the institutions in the country as well as to their institutional mission or profile. With some exceptions, the MBA programmes offered by public universities were older than those offered at both ex-technikons[3] and private providers. The ex-technikons only started offering higher education degrees with the passing of the Higher Education Act No. 101 of 1997. For the MBA, technikons entered into partnership agreements with either Curtin University, Wales University, or Hull University, which allowed them to offer these foreign institutions' degrees in a partnership model. However, the Higher Education Act provided a definition of a higher education institution, which soon obliged technikons to renegotiate their relationships with transnational providers and to start offering their own degrees. This, given the configuration and history of the

3 With the approval of the Minister of Education, most technikons have been renamed as from November 2003 as 'universities of technology'. Committee of Technikon Principals (CTP) 2003. Reflections on the Restructuring of Higher Education and the Renaming of Technikons. Pretoria: CTP. Available at www.technikons.co.za (19 August 2004).

restructuring of higher education in South Africa, implied compliance with a range of policies and regulations affecting the provision of higher education after 1995. Technikons had to register their MBA programmes on the NQF, had to be accredited by the HEQC, and since 2002 MBAs have also had to be part of the PQM of each institution approved by the DoE.

Private providers of higher education have a different history. In the case of the MBA, private providers are to a large extent (six out of nine) specialist institutions[4], the majority of which have only recently been established. Those which have been operating for a number of years have done so in a largely unregulated situation. As seen in Chapter 1, private providers of MBAs have flourished in the last two decades in South Africa, and especially since the mid-1990s. In general, the mushrooming of private providers in the country during that period can be explained according to two complementary socio-political trends. On the one hand, South Africa's new democratic policies created new expectations of individual progress and unprecedented opportunities for the majority of the population. On the other, there was a strong international sanctioning of higher education as a creator of life opportunities, which generated a greater demand for degrees. Those who for various reasons could not or did not want to enter the public higher education system turned to private providers. That the reform of South African higher education under way since 1994 aimed not only to break the stronghold of apartheid on education but also to redefine the relationships between the state, higher education institutions and civil society had pervasive consequences for the insertion of private higher education providers into the national system of higher education.

Similarly to technikons, local private providers initially offered their MBA programmes in partnership with a transnational provider. The Higher Education Act of 1997 and Regulation No. 1564 forced private providers to revise the nature of their relationship with their transnational partners.[5] Thus the historical trajectory made compliance with national legislation more of a problem for private providers and technikons than for public universities. This said, it is noteworthy that, as the results of the re-accreditation exercise showed, not all private providers and technikons experienced the same difficulties in complying with the regulatory and legislative aspects of Criterion 1.

Typical examples of the problems found among providers are the following:

- The DoE had registered most transnational private providers on condition that they complied with a range of national regulations. Yet none of these providers had met the stipulated conditions by the time of the re-accreditation of the MBA by the HEQC.
- Problems with public providers included cases where contact institutions had disregarded the cap the DoE had put on the number of students they could enrol for distance education programmes, and cases where certain institutions did not have the MBA included in their PQM and had not yet resolved this situation with the DoE.

4 Specialist institutions are providers that offer education in a single programme or in a particular niche area.
5 Ministry of Education, 1997. Higher Education Act No. 101 of 1997 (as amended), and Ministry of Education, 2002. Regulation No. 1564. Government Gazette 24143, 13 December 2002.

- In the case of local private providers, at least one provider was not registered with the DoE for the programmes it was actually offering.
- Programmes were not registered on the NQF, or if registered, the level, credits and exit points were not registered appropriately.

The importance of those aspects of Criterion 1 that focus on the articulation between the unit offering the MBA and the broader institution should not be underestimated in comparison to issues of compliance with the national legislative framework. The academic governance of a programme is vital in assuring quality of provision. At the institutional level, whether or not the MBA programme received Senate approval or whether or not the academic unit offering the MBA applied the same quality assurance norms and procedures as the rest of the higher education institution are important considerations, given that these are fundamental safeguards of the quality of the programme.

The participation of the unit in academic governance structures (which prevents the unit from becoming wholly independent) carries a number of crucial functions. For example, such participation facilitates the benchmarking of the MBA against other master's degrees offered at that particular institution, including how resources are allocated to the MBA programme and to the business school in general, in such a way that it guarantees the unity and consistency of the learning programme and the teaching experience. This is particularly true, as we will soon see, when it comes to the appointment of faculty to the programme and the application of broad institutional frameworks and policies and research procedures, because this participation imposes the same output and reporting demands on the business schools as it does on other academic and research units at the institution.

This participation, which clearly applies to public higher education institutions, is equally important in the case of local and transnational private providers. The fact that local private providers have different governance structures does not mean that academic governance, with its focus on quality and the relation between resource allocation and the programme integrity, should not be a concern. Similarly, in the case of transnational private providers, their structures of academic governance at home should be just as concerned with the quality and resource allocation of their offshore programmes.

Criterion 2: Mission, goals and objectives

This criterion refers to the motivation for the existence of the unit and the MBA programme, and to the goals and objectives that give direction to both. With regard to this criterion the business schools were expected to, as minimum standards:

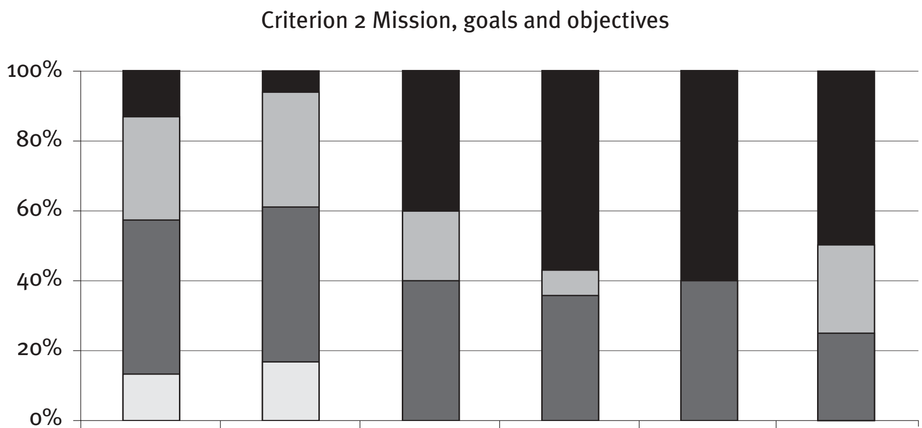
- Have a clear mission, goals and objectives that support the MBA programme.
- Undertake systematic, broad-based and integrated evaluation of the programme's activities, to determine its effectiveness in achieving its stated mission, goals and objectives.
- Link the outcomes of the unit evaluation with the programme planning process.

- Have regular means of data collection, benchmarks and user surveys to provide information needed for evaluation, planning and management.

As the minimum standards indicate, the focus of this criterion is the correlation between intent and practice. In other words, the criterion probed the extent to which business schools had objectives consistent with the purposes of the MBA and the means to ascertain their success in achieving them. At a more general, conceptual level, compliance with Criterion 2 indicates the schools' clarity about the purpose of the degree they offer. It indicates, in other words, the ability of the unit to translate its mission into realisable objectives, revised from time to time in relation to the actual performance of the programme and the significant changes that might have taken place in the world of business.

In this criterion, as in the previous one, the age of the programme and its institutional history play a central role in differentiating between various types of providers. Newer programmes, in general, fared less well with respect to this criterion than older and more established ones. Yet, despite these differences, the analysis of the information indicates that public and private providers' respective performances in relation to the mission, goal and objectives of the unit offering the MBA were not as far apart as in the previous criterion.

Figure 2: Criterion 2 by type of providers



	Public providers	Universities	Technikons	Private providers	Local providers	Transnational private providers
Do not comply	13%	6%	40%	57%	60%	50%
Need improvement	30%	33%	20%	7%	0%	25%
Meet minimum standards	44%	44%	40%	36%	40%	25%
Commend	13%	17%	0%	0%	0%	0%

Source: Re-accreditation reports.

Figure 2 shows that among public providers there was a higher degree of compliance with the minimum standards of Criterion 2 than among private providers. While universities did better than technikons, local private providers fared relatively better than their transnational counterparts in identifying and implementing their mission, goals and objectives.

Units commended in relation to this criterion not only had clearly stated aims and objectives supported by adequate financial resources but also had monitoring mechanisms that allowed them to ascertain the extent to which their aims were being attained and to make decisions for the improvement of the units. In contrast, the units that were found wanting in relation to Criterion 2:

- Had goals and objectives that bore no relation to an implementation plan.
- Had no structured monitoring systems or any form of data collection which could help units to ascertain the degree of their success in achieving their goals and objectives.
- Were restricted to student satisfaction surveys if they applied surveys or benchmarking at all, and in cases where the surveys were done their recommendations were not implemented.
- None had been externally evaluated.

As suggested in the Introduction, accreditation criteria do not exist in isolation but in relation to each other in the context of a comprehensive notion of quality. Criterion 2, with its emphasis on the clarity of the programme's objectives, monitoring and evaluation, has strong links with another criterion from the group focused on governance, and with a criterion from the group focused on the learning programme. Thus, in relation to the governance criteria, Criterion 2 has a strong link to the minimum standard of Criterion 1 that examines the integration of the unit offering the MBA with the broader higher education institution. As mentioned in the analysis above, business schools' participation in and adherence to institutional governance structures and processes seems to have an important role in guaranteeing the quality of the programme in two fundamental aspects: first, the comparability of master's degrees across disciplines, and, second, the relationship between the allocation of resources and the structure of the learning programme.

The focus on the existence of systematic forms of monitoring and evaluation of the programme, which have a bearing on management and planning, introduces a new dimension of accountability into institution-wide governance: the management of quality. This, important in any academic programme, has particular relevance for the MBA. Often business school directors suggest that the need to be responsive to business requirements necessitates faster decision-making than that characteristic of public higher education institutions. This has, in some cases, been translated into claims for independence, direct reporting lines to deans and deputy vice-chancellors, etc. However, such arrangements run the risk of weakening accountability for a programme's achievements and lessening the need to change or revise its objectives, methodologies, etc. In this sense, the fruit of the deliberation intrinsic to wide governance networks is not only accountability but also the improvement of the quality of decisions and thus of the quality of provision and the programme itself.

While financial governance was not a focus of the HEQC re-accreditation exercise, the re-accreditation process has indicated quite clearly that there is a trend at business schools to, for example, offer salaries above those within the same higher education institution. This practice, which schools explain through the demands of a multidisciplinary degree that requires specialised input directly provided by business people, can have two undesirable consequences. On the one hand, it can cause distortion among academic salaries at the institution. On the other, it can make possible the employment of part-time lecturers who, with a few exceptions, have little or no input into the learning programme as a whole.[6] This then introduces the relationship between Criterion 2 and Criterion 4: programme governance. Strong accountability in institutional governance, including the management of quality at the programme level, is more likely to guarantee the introduction of systems for the management, monitoring and evaluation of programmes based on the active involvement of the academic staff which teaches the programme.

With regard to the group of criteria that focuses on the learning programme, the clarity of mission, goals and objectives (Criterion 2) has a close relation with the transparency and consistency with which entrance requirements are applied to new student intakes (Criterion 7), and this, in turn, has a bearing on the quality of the students' learning experience.

Criterion 3: Organisational setting (internal)

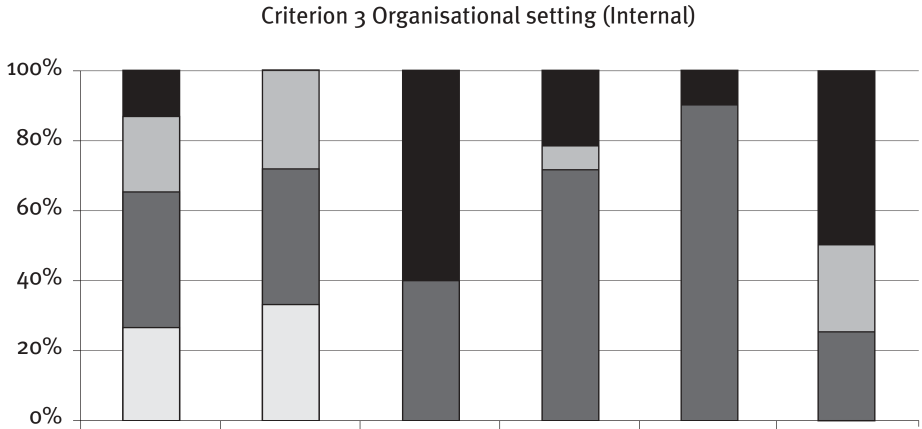
This criterion refers to the ways in which the internal organisation of the unit offering the MBA programme is conducive to the teaching, learning and research required by the programme. Compliance with this criterion implies that units could demonstrate that:

- Their organisational structures enhance the potential for the fulfilment of the stated mission, goals and objectives and provide for the effective participation of faculty and learners.
- The environment (in each unit) is characterised by commitment to the integrity of the institution, high ethical standards in the management of its affairs, fairness in dealing with relevant constituencies, and support for the pursuit and dissemination of knowledge and accountability.
- There are effective communication channels, accountability frameworks and cohesive committee structures to support the work of the unit.

Conceptually speaking, this criterion refers to the manner in which the academic unit delivering the MBA applies the general rules governing quality and administrative procedures in the rest of the institution, the structures and procedures on which the administration of the programme as a whole rests, the modes in which academic staff is attached to the unit, and the way communication takes place within the unit and how effective this communication is. As can be seen, this criterion directly addresses specific aspects of the articulation between the unit offering the MBA and the higher education institution where it is located that are implicit in the previous two criteria.

6 This issue will be analysed in detail in Chapter 4.

Figure 3: Criterion 3 by type of provider



	Public providers	Universities	Technikons	Private providers	Local providers	Transnational private providers
Do not comply	13%	0%	60%	21%	10%	50%
Need improvement	22%	28%	0%	7%	0%	25%
Meet minimum standards	39%	39%	40%	71%	90%	25%
Commend	26%	33%	0%	0%	0%	0%

Source: Re-accreditation reports

Figure 3 shows that public and private providers' performance in relation to this criterion was not as far apart as in Criterion 1. It is interesting to note that, looking at the disaggregated data, technikons and transnational private providers showed similar performances. Given that the minimum standards for this criterion focused on the organisation and structures that support the organisation of the academic unit (including the availability of academic staff), it is not surprising that older and more established units did better than newer ones. This can explain the similar performance of technikons and transnational private providers. But what lies behind the statistics?

The detailed analysis of the evaluation reports of different programmes points to a trend among business schools to organise their work with very limited permanent full-time staff, and shows that there are cases in which the responsibility for maintaining the coherence of a unit and, by implication, of the programme(s) it offers, depends on administrative staff. This situation is both cause and consequence of the fact that many units had almost no full-time academic/lecturing staff attached to them. It is interesting that in almost all cases where programmes were commended in relation to this criterion, they had comparatively large numbers of full-time academic staff and the units were overseen by experienced senior academics.

Units argued that given the many disciplines involved in teaching an MBA programme it was not feasible to have full-time staff covering all areas. Some had chosen to keep full-time staff for core and fundamental courses and to rely on part-time staff for electives.

The impact that the reliance on part-time specialists to staff this kind of unit, which we have called a matrix system, has on the academic governance of a programme, its integrity and the research outputs produced by the unit will be discussed in detail in Chapters 3 and 4. Suffice it to say for now that although not all programmes structured on a matrix system show poor quality, this form of internal organisation more often than not has a negative impact on the structure of the learning programme and the teaching experience. Units staffed with part-time specialists were more common in newer business schools, and this practice seemed to define most particularly programmes offered by private providers, although here there were also exceptions.

Programmes commended in relation to their internal organisational settings showed some or all of the following features:

- Functioning and cohesive committee structures which support programme delivery.
- Committees dedicated to governance, planning, budget and resources, and admissions.
- Frequent and regular meetings of finance committees.
- All academic staff (full- and part-time) meeting biannually with management.
- Large number of full-time permanent staff.
- Existence of an advisory board.
- Existence of an academic planning committee.
- Adequate structures for the allocation of workloads.
- Good communication between management and staff and between staff and students. Use of an electronic delivery system to provide information.
- Organisation of pre-term meetings with academic staff.
- Existence of a curriculum design committee.
- Dependable administrative structures.
- Effective feedback loops.

Programmes found wanting in relation to this criterion were characterised by:

- Poor administrative systems.
- Lack of an advisory board.
- Lack of committees responsible for fundamental aspects of the programme, e.g. curriculum, planning, etc.
- Lack of communication procedures between management and academic staff.

- Complete reliance on part-time staff to deliver the programme without participation in governance structures.
- Committee and governance structures located in the home country in the case of transnational providers.

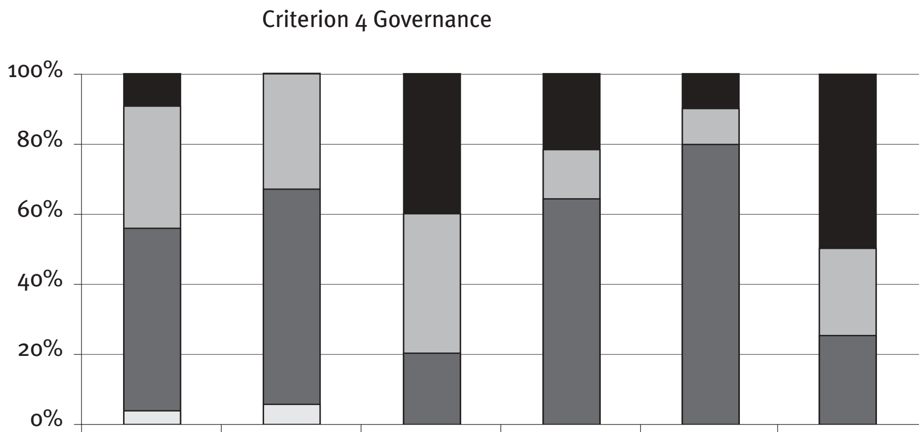
Criterion 4: Governance

This criterion focuses on the existence of clearly defined policies and processes for the governance of the programme and academic policies. Programmes were expected to be able to demonstrate the existence of the following policies and processes to meet minimum standards:

- Rules and regulations enabling the programme administration and faculty to assure the integrity of the programme and the achievement of its mission, goals and objectives.
- Faculty members given formal opportunities to provide input in decisions affecting admissions, progress, resource allocation, faculty policies, curriculum design and evaluation, research and consultancies, and degree requirements.
- A quality management system that is revised periodically.
- Learners' participation in governance structures.
- Mechanisms that permit learner involvement in programme formulation and review.

As can be seen from Figure 4, differences in the performance of public and private providers in Criterion 4 are in relation to programmes that needed improvement or that did not meet minimum standards. Overall, academic governance seemed to be a particularly weak point in the case of programmes offered by transnational private providers. The submissions of these providers suggest that the ways in which parent institutions relate to their local branches does not leave space for any engagement on issues of the academic governance of the programme. What does this mean? Why is it important and what trends can be discerned behind these figures?

Figure 4: Criterion 4 by type of provider



	Public providers	Universities	Technikons	Private providers	Local providers	Transnational private providers
Do not comply	9%	0%	40%	21%	10%	50%
Need improvement	35%	33%	40%	14%	10%	25%
Meet minimum standards	52%	61%	20%	64%	80%	25%
Commend	4%	6%	0%	0%	0%	0%

Source: Re-accreditation reports

The analysis of the re-accreditation reports and the institutions' submissions suggests that to a large extent the actual quality of a programme is predicated on its ability to meet some of the minimum standards attached to academic governance, which are distributed between Criteria 1, 2, 3 and, especially, 4. In the case of Criterion 4, the only commended programme had the following characteristics in terms of academic governance:

- Regular meetings of its advisory board.
- A structured system to avoid conflict of interest between part-time staff consultancy work and the interest of the business school.
- Specific quality assurance policies focused on course content and materials.
- Formal student participation and input on academic matters.
- An academic council that meets regularly with the executive management.
- An internal quality assurance system, and structured opportunities for faculty meetings and students to provide input on the programme.

On the other hand, the submissions suggest that programmes that did not comply with minimum standards were characterised by:

- A lack of clarity in the rules of combination of the programme, bedevilled by the fact that some programmes have several modes of admission and exit points.

- A lack of internal quality assurance systems, or the existence of a policy on quality assurance without visible signs of implementation, or the existence of informal policies only.
- The predominance of administrative staff over full-time academic staff, often focused predominantly on marketing and finances.
- Informal or non-existent opportunities for staff to give feedback on the programme at the academic level.

As pointed out in the analysis of Criterion 3, there seems to be a strong relation between the internal organisational setting of a unit and the academic governance of the programme it offers. The analysis of the re-accreditation reports shows that all programmes that did not meet minimum standards in relation to organisational setting (Criterion 3) did not meet minimum standards in relation to academic governance (Criterion 4) either. Meanwhile, with one exception, all those programmes that were commended in terms of their internal organisational settings only met minimum standards in relation to governance. Similarly, in a descending curve, some programmes that met minimum standards in relation to organisational setting were found to need improvement in relation to academic governance. What this analysis highlights are the relations between the soundness of the structure of a unit in terms of modes of integration of academic staff, the availability and applicability of quality assurance procedures and the quality of the academic governance of a programme.

The re-accreditation criteria focused on governance (Criteria 1, 2 and 3) examined:

- The nature and level of the insertion of providers into the national higher education system in terms of its broad social and developmental objectives as well as its legislative framework.
- The relationship between the unit offering the MBA and the higher education institution within which it is located.

Criterion 4, which focuses on the academic governance of a programme by examining the processes that guarantee the integrity and intellectual coherence of a programme and the mechanisms to monitor and review it, acts as a conceptual transition that allows entry into the criteria specifically focused on the learning programme.

Learning programme criteria

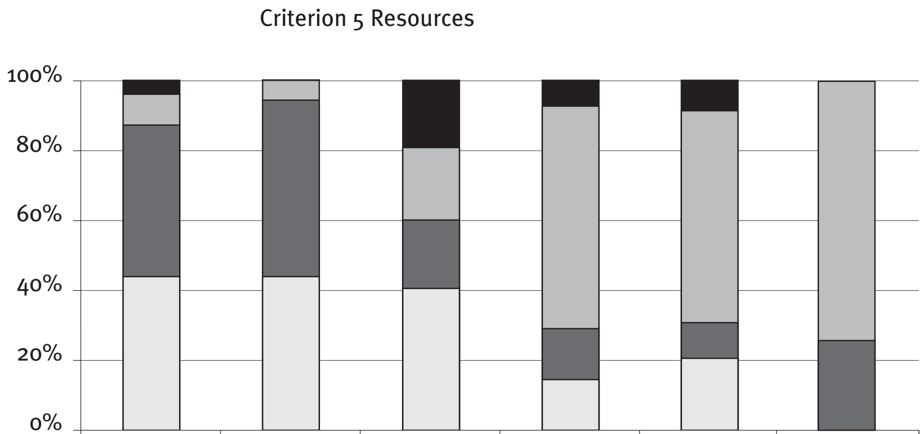
Of the total 13 criteria, 8 are focused on the learning programme. The learning programme criteria have a double focus. On the one hand, they look into the elements that support the quality of a programme, such as resources, staff and students. On the other, they look at the learning programme (curriculum), the actual learning experiences and their components, such as assessment and research. This section examines each of these criteria individually to unpack how they relate to each other and what their relationship is to the issues of institutional and programme governance discussed above.

Criterion 5: Resources

This criterion deals with the availability of appropriate physical and educational resources to support the programme's mission and goals. The minimum standards indicated for this criterion expect that a programme would comply with the following:

- There are suitable premises for long-term use. There are favourable conditions for successful learning. This applies to the school's main campus as well as its other sites of delivery.
- Learners have access to comprehensive and up-to-date library facilities with access to the latest relevant databases.
- There is a sufficient number of teaching venues and computer laboratories. Full-time faculty have suitable office space and access to computers.

Figure 5: Criterion 5 by type of provider



	Public providers	Universities	Technikons	Private providers	Local providers	Transnational private providers
Do not comply	4%	0%	20%	7%	10%	0%
Need improvement	9%	6%	20%	64%	60%	75%
Meet minimum standards	43%	50%	20%	14%	10%	25%
Commend	44%	44%	4%	14%	20%	0%

Source: Re-accreditation reports

The importance of the availability of teaching and infrastructural resources for the MBA can be related to two sets of issues. On the one hand, in marketing their MBA programmes, units often profile themselves as 'up-to-date with business practices', using 'state-of-the-art facilities', etc. as the selling points of the degree. On the other hand, there is also a critical relation between resources and mode of delivery. This is especially important in the case of distance, block release and open learning MBA programmes where access to IT facilities, library holdings and adequate physical space are constitutive elements of the quality of the learning experience. As can be seen from Figure 5, except for the programmes offered by transnational private providers, all other providers had at least one programme commended for its teaching and infrastructural resources. However, in the allocation of resources, as the same figure indicates, there was a marked difference between public and private providers taken as broad categories.

Institutions whose programmes were commended for the resources available to staff and students were characterised by the following:

- Information centres or equivalent structures available to students for extended hours.
- Multimedia resources that support teaching (in the case of distance programmes).
- Journals and databases accessible online.
- Contractual agreements to allow students to make use of other institutions' libraries.
- Appropriate venues for syndicate work.
- Office space for part-time academic staff.
- Adequate teaching venues.
- Competent support staff to help students.
- Enough computers available for students.

Programmes that did not meet minimum standards had some combination of the following characteristics:

- Libraries or resource centres with restricted business hours unsuitable for working students.
- Access to resources conditioned by geographical location in distance programmes.
- Insufficient and incomplete access to journals and databases.
- Lack of agreements with appropriate libraries to provide students with access to books, journals and databases.
- Lack of appropriate venues for syndicate work.
- Lack of office space for part-time academic staff.
- Inappropriate teaching venues.

What emerged from the analysis of the re-accreditation reports and the programmes' submissions is that access to specialised resources is fundamental to a quality MBA programme and that in distance mode programmes this becomes even more the case. While there were programmes that had state-of-the-art resources and others that guaranteed adequate access to sufficient resources, there were yet others where lack of access to appropriate venues, library facilities, software, etc. compromised the overall quality of the learning experience.

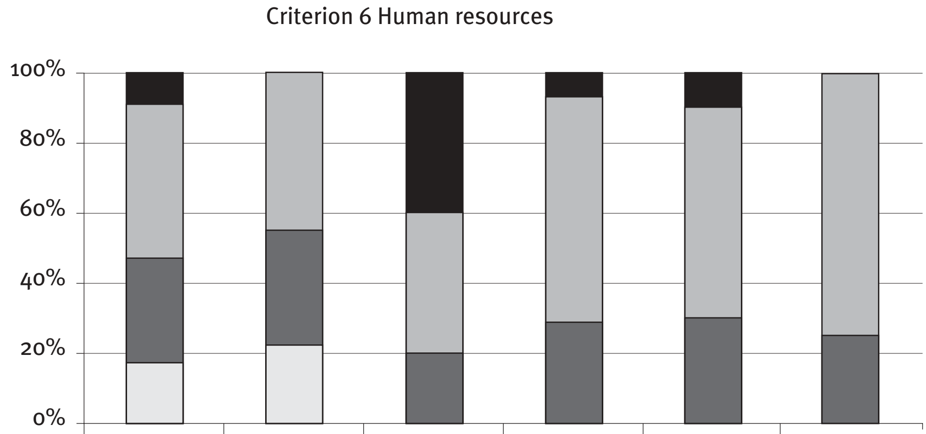
Criterion 6: Human resources

This criterion focuses on the availability of adequate and dedicated faculty to support the goals and objectives of a programme. Programmes were expected to comply with a number of human resources regulations, such as clear communication of conditions of service and responsibilities, explicit criteria used for appointment, advancement and promotion, etc. On a more specific level programmes were expected to:

- Have a number of permanent staff and contractual arrangements that ensure that all the teaching, research, learning support and counselling activities can be done.
- Offer subjects taught by specialists with adequate qualifications.
- Undertake formal performance evaluations of staff.
- Ensure that 75 percent of staff have a master's degree or higher, and business experience.

As indicated in relation to Criteria 3 (organisational setting) and 4 (governance), MBA programmes in South Africa seem to be built to an extent on specialist part-time faculty in a matrix system that relies on few full-time staff and which depends to a high degree on the ability of the head of the unit to uphold the integrity of the learning programme. This trend, which as we will see has a number of detrimental consequences for the overall quality of the programme, is reflected quite clearly in the contractual nature of the human resources on which MBA programmes rely.

Figure 6: Criterion 6 by type of provider



	Public providers	Universities	Technikons	Private providers	Local providers	Transnational private providers
Do not comply	9%	0%	40%	7%	10%	0%
Need improvement	44%	45%	40%	64%	60%	75%
Meet minimum standards	30%	33%	20%	29%	30%	25%
Commend	17%	22%	0%	0%	0%	0%

Source: Re-accreditation reports

Figure 6 shows that, overall, public providers offered programmes that had a better resourced faculty than private providers. Private providers of MBAs showed a similar proportion of programmes that met minimum standards in relation to human resources, while they had a greater proportion of programmes in need of improvement. Programmes commended in relation to Criterion 6 showed the following characteristics:

- All necessary human resource policies in place and utilised.
- Initiatives for staff development and training through both internal structures and exchanges with other units.
- Strong full-time complement to teach courses.
- Systems for the allocation of workloads.
- All staff fully qualified to teach the programme.

In contrast, programmes found wanting in relation to their human resources were characterised by:

- Inconsistent application of some human resource policies.
- Employment of part-time staff with no obligation to participate in staff development.
- Overemphasis on the employment of non-academic staff to teach courses.
- Employment of non-specialist staff to teach specialist courses.
- Lack of sufficient full-time staff to support a majority of part-time lecturing staff.
- Staff contracts specifying payment on an hourly basis for actual contact time with students.

The weak compliance with Criterion 6 becomes particularly worrying when it takes place in distance education programmes where the quality of the materials is a fundamental aspect of the quality of the teaching experience, and where this quality is in turn dependent on the availability of staff sufficiently experienced and trained not only in a particular subject area but also in materials development.

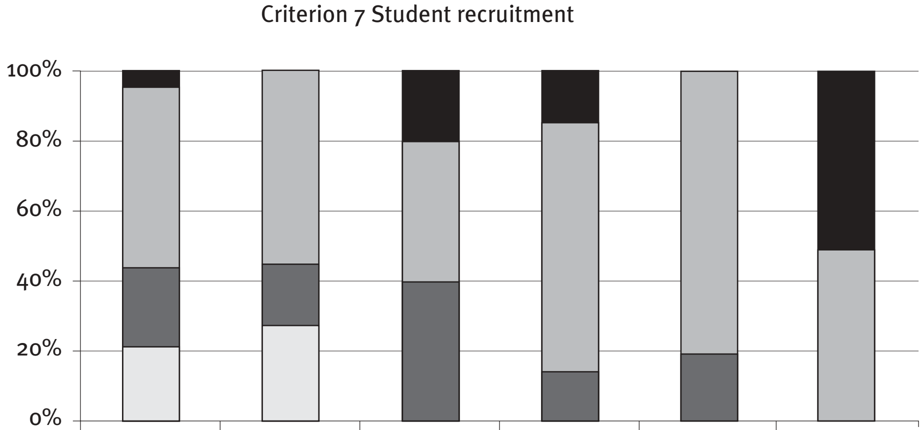
Criterion 7: Student recruitment

This criterion deals with the programme's admission policies and their relation with the business management competencies which students in the programme are expected to develop. According to the minimum standards defined for this criterion, a programme is expected:

- To have criteria and processes for the acceptance of prospective students that include a variety of formats.
- To require that 90 percent of the entrants of any enrolled cohort have at least NQF level 7 on entry and that no more than 10 percent of a cohort enter into the programme via Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL) or other alternative admission mechanisms.
- To have clearly documented admission criteria and procedures, policies, requirements and academic standards.
- To have publicity material that describes the programme accurately.

Student recruitment is a fundamental element in the shaping of the teaching and learning processes in any programme. Clarity in the entry requirements and explicitness in the assumptions about the prior knowledge that students are expected to have at the time of registration have the double function of guaranteeing the achievement of learning outcomes and maintaining the quality of the individual and collective learning experience. As we will see in Chapter 4, MBA programmes apply a range of standards and procedures for the selection of students and have a variety of ways to help students who are admitted without meeting all the academic or experience requirements needed to cope with the degree.

Figure 7: Criterion 7 by type of provider



	Public providers	Universities	Technikons	Private providers	Local providers	Transnational private providers
Do not comply	4%	0%	20%	14%	0%	50%
Need improvement	52%	55%	40%	71%	80%	50%
Meet minimum standards	22%	17%	40%	14%	20%	0%
Commend	22%	28%	0%	0%	0%	0%

Source: Re-accreditation reports

The information gathered during the HEQC re-accreditation exercise indicates that student recruitment is an area where many programmes need improvement. Taking all 37 programmes together, only 5 were commended for their approach to recruitment, 7 met minimum standards, 22 needed improvement, and 3 did not comply with minimum standards. Figure 7 shows a disaggregation of these results by type of provider. Although, as can be seen, both private and public providers had difficulties with the recruitment of students, there were a variety of approaches to recruitment among the different types of providers. Issues of recruitment in turn speak of changes in enrolments in the MBA itself, of targeted marketing and of the broader social changes that have occurred in South Africa during the last decade, which have brought younger students with minimal experience and very different levels of management experience to the programmes.

The cases of best practice in recruitment, all among public providers, included a combination of the following:

- Weighing of academic achievement.
- Focus on experience (at least four years) assessed through an application form and referee reports.
- Use of admission tests e.g. GMAT or in-house tests.

- Interviews with the head of the school or an admission committee.
- Psychometric tests specially prepared and applied by psychologists in residence.
- No more than 5 percent of a cohort admitted through RPL or alternative admissions.
- Students who show potential but do not qualify for admission to the MBA given the opportunity to enter other courses, where their performance is monitored to see whether they can be selected into the MBA.
- Monitoring of the relation between admission and selection criteria and the results of each cohort.
- Provision of accurate information on admission and selection criteria in prospectuses and brochures.

At the other extreme, the majority of programmes needed improvement or failed to meet minimum standards. The most common problems were a combination of some or all of the following:

- 90 percent of students are admitted with NQF Level 6 which does not necessarily include whole qualifications.[7]
- A first-come-first-served approach to admissions.
- No limit placed on the number of students per cohort, which strains a school's capacity to offer quality teaching and resources.
- Students admitted into postgraduate diplomas or other qualifications which are seen as the first year of the MBA.
- Erratic utilisation of any of the following: letters of recommendation; written essay; personal statement; interview; resumé or CV; evidence of computer literacy; admission tests such as the General Management Admission Test or equivalent.
- Misrepresentation of admission criteria and entrance requirement in brochures.

Problems with admissions among private providers were similar to those encountered in programmes offered by public providers. The consequences of non-adherence to entry requirements for all provider types seem to be low throughput rates, high drop-out rates, and exits from the programme with a qualification awarded other than the MBA.

The consequences of the utilisation of inappropriate student recruitment practices, such as high drop-out rates, and the relationship between admission criteria and the structure of the learning programme, are further analysed in Chapter 4.

7 The National Qualification Framework was created by the South African Qualifications Authority (SAQA) Act of 1995. The main purposes of the NQF are to facilitate access to and mobility and progression within education, training and career paths, and to accelerate the redress of past and unfair discrimination in education, training and employment opportunities. The NQF covers eight levels which correspond to three training and education bands. The higher education training and education band includes levels 6, 7 and 8 of the NQF, with level 8 being divided into sub-levels to account for different types of postgraduate education.

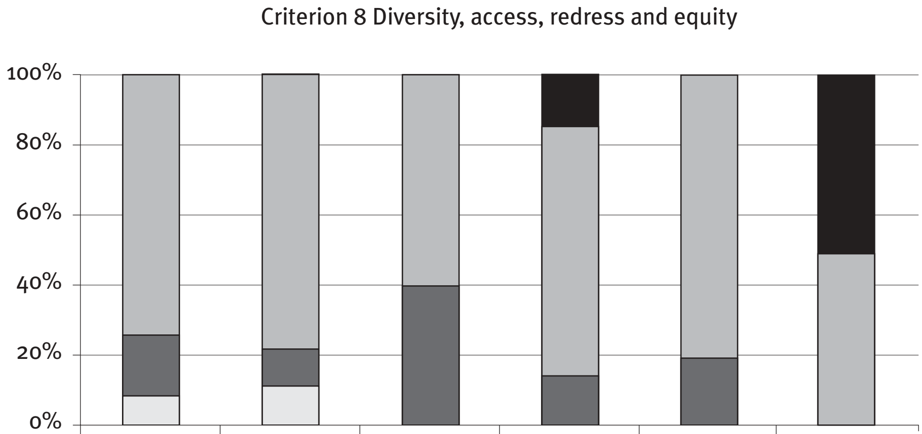
Criterion 8: Diversity, access, redress and equity

This criterion focuses on some of the broader issues in the higher education transformation agenda such as access, redress and equity in relation to both staff and students. Minimum standards in relation to this criterion expect a programme:

- To set target rates for disadvantaged groups and accordingly to ensure adequate throughputs.
- To encourage diversity in its admissions.
- To provide support so that students can succeed in numerical and language skills.
- To set and actively pursue equity targets in relation to staff.

The results of the evaluation of MBA programmes in relation to equity and redress confirm the effect of apartheid education on most institutions and how much work still needs to be done in order to arrive at a higher education system which is not de facto arranged along racial lines. Out of 37 programmes, 27 needed improvement to meet minimum standards, 6 met minimum standards, 2 did not comply, and 2 were commended.

Figure 8: Criterion 8 by type of provider



	Public providers	Universities	Technikons	Private providers	Local providers	Transnational private providers
Do not comply	0%	0%	0%	14%	0%	50%
Need improvement	74%	78%	60%	71%	80%	50%
Meet minimum standards	17%	11%	40%	14%	20%	0%
Commend	9%	11%	0%	0%	0%	0%

Source: Re-accreditation reports

As can be seen from Figure 8, private providers overall did not perform very differently from public providers in relation to equity and diversity. The analysis by sub-types, however, indicates that transnational providers did worse in this criterion than their local counterparts. The most common problems found among programmes that needed improvement were:

- Very low diversity among staff in terms of race and gender.
- Absence of an equity plan in relation to staff.
- Although there is intake of students from previously disadvantaged groups there are no mechanisms of support to help these students through the programme. In particular the programme lacks mechanisms to support the development of numerical and language skills.
- Inadequate recruitment drive.
- Lack of equity targets.
- Lack of a diversity policy in the constitution of syndicate groups.

Besides the issues mentioned above, programmes that did not comply with minimum standards also had a very small number of students from previously disadvantaged groups enrolled in their programmes, had no equity targets or equity plans, and made no visible and tangible efforts to address these issues. Their staff profiles did not reflect diversity and, fundamentally, in terms of both student and staff recruitment, they operated outside national policy goals, in the sense that these issues were not considered intrinsic to the higher education enterprise.

The complexity of diversity, access and equity can only be understood if this criterion is analysed together with the admission and recruitment policies practised at each programme. Admission policies that cater for previously disadvantaged students without providing the necessary support for students to succeed in the programme in practice undermine the diversity profile of a programme. High drop-out rates undo the equity profile achieved through large intakes of previously disadvantaged students. Hence the importance attached to special programmes to develop numerical and writing skills for students admitted via alternative admissions (AA) and Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL).

Superficial, and sometimes opportunistic, approaches to recruitment have serious implications for the actual quality of the learning programme in two senses: the level at which the actual content of the programme is taught to all students, and the effect that underprepared students have on the general quality of the teaching and learning that takes place in the programme. These issues will be examined in greater depth later in this report.

Finally, there is an issue that has a bearing on access although it does not strictly belong to the admissions and equity profiles of the MBA programmes: the cost of the MBA. As we will see, cost is one of the criteria used by students in selecting a programme. The cost of a programme can act as a mechanism of exclusion for students who come from disadvantaged backgrounds and who lack support from their employers to pursue further studies. The costs of MBA programmes in South Africa and the effects that these costs have on access and equity will be analysed later in this report.

Criteria 5, 6, 7 and 8 focused on:

- The availability of adequate human resources (academic, support and administrative) to fulfil the objectives of a programme according to its specific mode of delivery.
- The manner in which programmes guarantee students access to sufficient and adequate physical and educational infrastructure, taking into account different modes of delivery.
- How programmes translate the national goals of equity and redress into recruitment and appointment policies and procedures.

From the point of view of the criteria that focused on the learning programme, if one of the purposes of the MBA is to educate managers to operate within their contextual reality, diversity in the classroom both in terms of students and lecturers is as important a feature as the accessibility of up-to-date library collections in the making of a good MBA.

Criterion 9: Learning programme

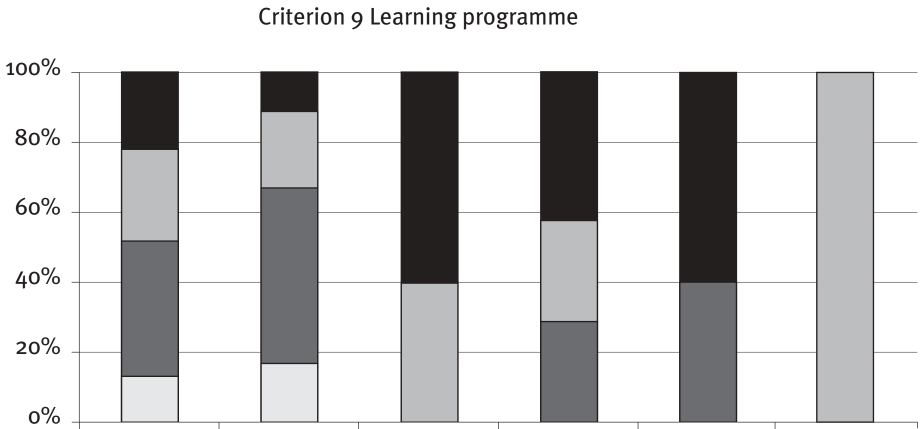
This criterion deals with the content of the MBA programme from the point of view of its NQF level, its coherence, its structure, and its completeness, as well as with the mechanisms that different schools have in place to review the programme. The following are the minimum standards which programmes were expected to meet in relation to this criterion:

- The MBA must display clear practical relevance and be well grounded in current theory.
- The MBA is a postgraduate degree at the master's level and must conform to minimum standards for those degrees.
- The minimum credit value of the MBA is 240 credits at Level 7/8.
- The MBA has a minimum duration of one year full-time study or two years part-time.
- The MBA programme provides coverage of the main functional areas of management: accounting, finance, marketing, operations management, information systems management, human resource management, economics and quantitative analysis. (European standard)
- The core content should include the areas of knowledge underpinning management: concepts, processes and institutions in the production and marketing of goods and services and the financing of business; the impact of environmental forces on organisations; change management; concepts and applications of accounting; quantitative methods; management of information systems, including IT; organisational theory and behaviour; and human resource management. (Association of MBAs (AMBA) standard)
- Not more than 33 percent of the content should be directed to a specialisation.

The rest of the minimum standards refer to the quality assurance of the programme including its periodic review and evaluation.

The learning programme (Criterion 9), teaching and learning (Criterion 10) and assessment (Criterion 11) constitute three fundamental criteria that focus on the quality of an MBA programme. It is in relation to these criteria that some of the problems encountered when analysing the organisational setting of a business school and the academic governance of a programme manifest themselves more clearly. At a conceptual level it is important to distinguish between Criteria 9 and 10 to understand why some units might offer a commendable learning programme and yet meet only minimum standards in relation to teaching and learning or vice-versa. The *learning programme* refers to the ways in which the content of a programme is structured: the relationship between course content and course weight; the level at which content is pitched; the demands made of students; and the specific knowledge, competencies and skills to be developed through the programme. *Teaching and learning*, on the other hand, is focused on the manner in which programmes structure the pedagogical experience. What do students learn? How do they learn? What pedagogical devices are utilised to ensure that the unity of a programme is actually transmitted to students in the classroom situation or through the materials they use?

Figure 9: Criterion 9 by type of provider



	Public providers	Universities	Technikons	Private providers	Local providers	Transnational private providers
Do not comply	22%	11%	60%	42%	60%	0%
Need improvement	26%	22%	40%	29%	0%	100%
Meet minimum standards	39%	50%	0%	29%	40%	0%
Commend	13%	17%	0%	0%	0%	0%

Source: Re-accreditation reports

As can be seen from Figure 9, differences in the quality of the learning programme can be related to the different constraints and possibilities operating in each type of provider. The most pronounced differences operate between programmes offered by public and private providers. Comparatively speaking, programmes offered by technikons fared worst, followed by programmes offered by local and transnational private providers.

Programmes commended in relation to this criterion presented a combination of the following characteristics:

- The programme is structured to immerse students in the core functional areas during the first two terms.
- All core functional areas are covered in the programme.
- The course content is well grounded in current theory and knowledge.
- Company analysis, group assignments and research projects afford students the opportunity to apply managerial, leadership and entrepreneurship skills in actual companies and organisations.
- There is evidence of systematic work on programme design and review.
- The process of programme design is clearly defined and uses a team approach.
- Programmes are evaluated on a regular basis and changes are translated into content and course materials.

Programmes that need improvement had a combination of the following characteristics:

- The units offer postgraduate qualifications whose articulation with the MBA is not clear. In practice this means that the actual MBA qualification is splintered and has multiple exit levels with little or no coherence between them.
- There is no external evaluation or benchmarking of the programme. This, as we will see in the analysis of Criterion 11, often implies an erratic use of external examination that also acts as a benchmarking system.
- There is no integrated assessment strategy to test the overall outcomes of the qualification.
- The content of the specialisations is too thin to actually count as a specialisation.
- There is no correlation between programme reviews and the implementation of changes in the content of the programme.

The newness of the programme, the need to capture a market and the entry requirements used in each programme (Criterion 7), the composition of the faculty in terms of their contracts i.e. full-time or part-time, and staff qualification level and experience (Criteria 3 and 6), combined with the mode of academic governance (Criterion 4), all have a bearing on the manner in which programmes are structured. A cursory look at best and worst practices in Criterion 9 confirms this. As will be examined in Chapter 4, the learning programme, teaching and learning and assessment constitute core issues in the differentiation of MBA programmes, and it is in relation to these issues that the impact of the different programmes' modes of organisation can be seen.

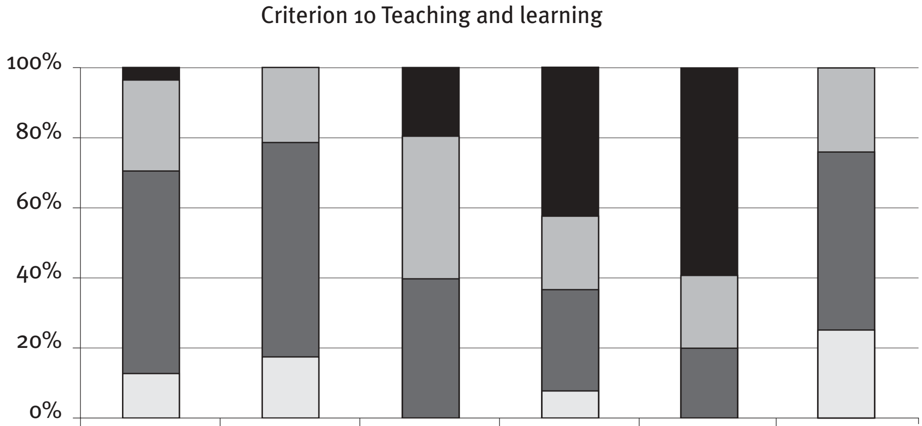
Criterion 10: Teaching and learning

This criterion focuses on the students' actual pedagogical experience of the programme and therefore on how much and what they learn, and on how the learning experience is structured. It examines students' understanding of the various areas of knowledge of the MBA, their application of skills and experience, and the extent to which the programme creates pedagogical situations for students to demonstrate the integration of the knowledge acquired. The minimum standards for this criterion take into account different modes of delivery and indicate that programmes would be expected to:

- Provide guidance to students about course integration.
- Put theory into practice by focusing on the development of specific competencies in the students.
- Involve the students actively in the teaching process following the most recent teaching and learning approaches.
- Provide proactive learning reflected in case studies, group work, etc.
- Apply teaching and learning to real-life working situations.
- Have a minimum of 476 teaching/contact hours and 1 000 hours of preparatory study.

An analysis of the relation between Criteria 9 and 10 indicates that while there is no direct correspondence between a programme being commended in terms of its overall structure and it obtaining the same grade in relation to teaching and learning, no programme that received 'needs improvement' or 'does not comply' in the former was actually commended on its teaching and learning. Given the elusive relation between the two, it is necessary to make more explicit how and when the learning programme and teaching and learning influence each other and when they do not. This will be done in Chapter 4. In this section we will concentrate on how different providers did in relation to Criterion 10 and on what are recognised as best practices and major weaknesses in this area.

Figure 10: Criterion 10 by type of provider



	Public providers	Universities	Technikons	Private providers	Local providers	Transnational private providers
Do not comply	4%	0%	20%	43%	60%	0%
Need improvement	26%	22%	40%	21%	0%	25%
Meet minimum standards	57%	61%	40%	29%	40%	50%
Commend	13%	17%	0%	0%	0%	25%

Source: Re-accreditation reports

As can be observed from Figure 10, the majority of programmes offered by public providers met minimum standards in relation to this criterion; 6 programmes needed improvement, 5 did not comply with minimum standards and only 3 were commended. Universities did better than technikons. The majority of the programmes offered by private providers did not comply with minimum standards in relation to teaching and learning (6 programmes). The main difference in the performance of local and transnational private providers was that among the latter there was a programme that was commended for its teaching and learning approach. Programmes whose teaching and learning practices were commended had some of the following characteristics:

- The programme ensures that students display an understanding of the core areas of management, and acquire skills and experiences in an application context.
- Appropriate documentation explaining course integration is provided to students.
- Theories are put into practice through case studies and assessment tasks.
- The methodology used in lectures reflects the importance of case studies in teaching and learning.
- In at least one case the unit has a case study development centre.
- Case studies incorporate South African context experiences.
- Teaching methodology helps to develop real-world competencies.

- Non-accredited personal development sessions are fully integrated into the MBA programme.
- Lecturers and courses are regularly evaluated by students.
- Visiting speakers create scenario-based discussion and learning.
- Multimedia resources are used.
- Contact time exceeds minimum standards.
- There is online communication for members of syndicate groups.

Programmes that did not meet minimum standards presented some combination of the following features:

- There is no separate development of study guides and course materials taking into account modes of delivery. This implies that course materials and study guides are not aligned to modes of delivery.
- There is no training for staff in how to develop distance learning materials.
- Study guides tend to spoon-feed students.
- The way in which teaching takes place allows neither for the achievement of the outcomes of the qualification within a reasonable time frame nor for the facilitation of learning nor for the incorporation of critical cross-field outcomes.
- The actual contact time in the programme is below standard.
- Cross-field outcomes such as oral communication, negotiation skills and verbal presentation skills are not pursued in distance learning programmes.
- There is either no overall coherence in the programme or it is not overtly explained to students.
- The programme can be stretched out for a maximum of six years between the year one and the year two courses.
- Distance programmes do not take into account the complexity of learning in the different modules. Interactive learning is minimal.

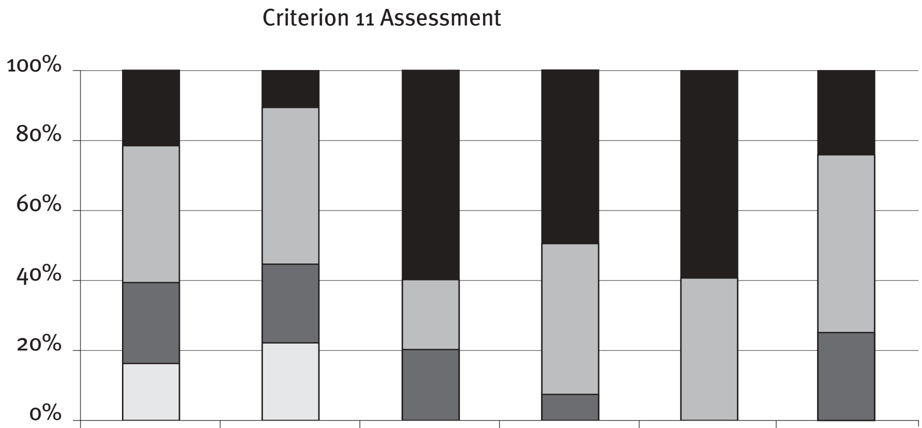
As can be seen from best practice, teaching and learning involve far more than merely transmitting the contents of core areas of knowledge at a level appropriate to the students' exit degree; they involve the integration of various areas of knowledge, the development of various competencies and skills, and the ability to translate content into the materials and instruments specific to various modes of delivery. As we have already indicated, the overall quality of the learning programme, teaching and learning and assessment, and the ways in which they relate to each other, seem to be connected to organisational aspects of the programme and its academic governance.

Criterion 11: Assessment

Criterion 11 focuses on how, taking into account teaching methods and different modes of delivery, the various types of assessment used in the MBA require students to demonstrate that they have been able to integrate the programme content at a theoretical and practical level. The minimum standards attached to this criterion indicate whether:

- Assessment is done in a rigorous, fair and explicit manner.
- Assessment is purposefully used to generate data for summative and formative purposes.
- Assessment is supported by policies that moderate and validate procedures.
- Assessment is conducted within a framework of rules and regulations.
- There is a system for RPL.
- Staff is competent in assessment practices and has the opportunity to be trained in them.

Figure 11: Criterion 11 by type of provider



	Public providers	Universities	Technikons	Private providers	Local providers	Transnational private providers
Do not comply	22%	11%	60%	50%	60%	25%
Need improvement	39%	45%	20%	43%	40%	50%
Meet minimum standards	22%	22%	20%	7%	0%	25%
Commend	17%	22%	0%	0%	0%	0%

Source: Re-accreditation reports

For a number of reasons which will be discussed in detail later, assessment appears to be one of the weaker areas in all MBA programmes submitted for re-accreditation. Figure 11 shows that the majority of the programmes needed improvement in this area. The few commended programmes were concentrated at universities. Among private providers, only a minority of programmes offered by transnational providers met the minimum standards for assessment practices, while half of the programmes did not comply and the rest needed improvement. The analysis of the institutions' submissions and the re-accreditation reports indicate the following best practices in assessment:

- Systematic use of external examiners' reports for adjusting the assessment process.
- Clearly stipulated rules and regulations about assessment.
- Use of assessment data for planning and feedback into programme development and design.
- Staff experienced in teaching and assessment.
- Academic staff trained in assessment.
- Continuous assessment practised by the unit.
- Core and full electives examined by means of an individual mid-term assessment, a group project, and a final examination or individual assessment.
- Faculty having comprehensive grading guidelines which detail the responsibilities of different examiners, procedures for oral examinations, etc.
- The unit having clear policies and guidelines for RPL.

Areas of concern about assessment practices include the following:

- The level of the assessment is too low for a master's degree.
- Modules are assessed through multiple-choice questions which are not at master's level or are not assessed summatively at all.
- The external examiner system is inefficient.
- Lecturers who teach on the programme also act as external examiners.
- The unit does not use external examiners at all.
- Academic staff responsible for assessment are not appropriately experienced.
- There are no formal guidelines to regulate assessment so it is determined by the faculty who teach the course.
- There is no emphasis on summative assessment.
- Students are allowed to fail modules three times.
- There is no formal use of assessment in the programme review.

The problematic issues to do with assessment seem to be concentrated in three areas:

- The level of the assessment and the form it takes.
- The lack of implementation of a rigorous assessment system that uses external examiners and internal moderation procedures and feeds back into student performance.
- The lack of utilisation of assessment for purposes other than grading, e.g. summative assessments, review of the programme, and monitoring of students' progress.

The problems underlined by the generally poor performance of MBA programmes in assessment will be examined in Chapter 4. Suffice it to say for now that weak assessment practices question the integrity of the actual qualification awarded and jeopardise the actual teaching and learning process.

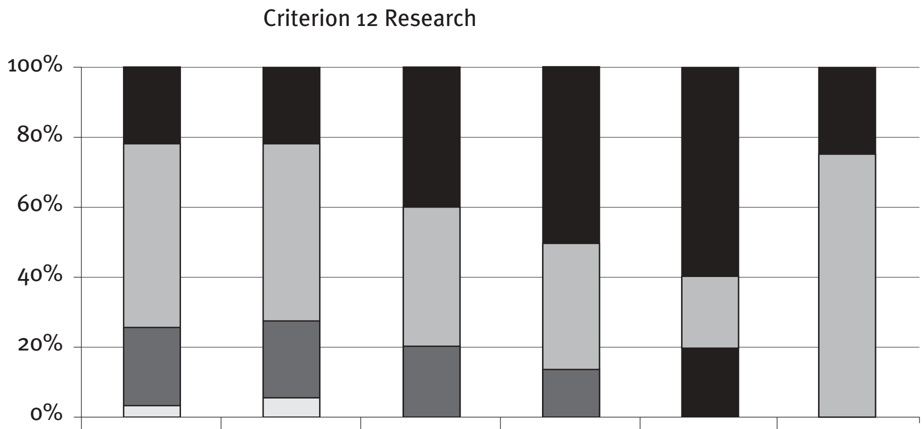
Criterion 12: Research

This criterion refers to both research education and staff knowledge production. The criterion focuses on the programme's contribution to the field of management. Accordingly, the minimum standards indicate the various elements of the management and production of research and research education which need to be present in a unit. These include:

- There should be adequate arrangements for the management of research which achieve the objectives of enhanced quality, increased participation, productivity and research funds.
- There should be strategies for research development.
- Faculty members should be active in research.
- The students' research projects should constitute at least one fifth of the overall pass mark and provide evidence of the students' ability to integrate the core subjects.
- The students' research projects should have a theoretical foundation and a practical application at the master's level
- There should be cooperation agreements with business for students to take up their research.
- There should be policies and regulations that support postgraduate education, especially the regulation of various aspect of supervision.

Research, both as research production by the unit's faculty and research education for students, is the second academic area where most MBA programmes seemed to be experiencing difficulties. The role, nature and extent of research in the MBA are the subject of an ongoing international debate which will be examined in the next chapter. This section focuses only on the different ways in which South African MBAs deal with the research components of the programme and to what extent faculty is active in research.

Figure 12: Criterion 12 by type of provider



	Public providers	Universities	Technikons	Private providers	Local providers	Transnational private providers
Do not comply	22%	22%	40%	50%	60%	25%
Need improvement	52%	50%	40%	36%	20%	75%
Meet minimum standards	22%	22%	20%	14%	20%	0%
Commend	4%	6%	0%	0%	0%	0%

Source: Re-accreditation reports

As can be seen in Figure 12, private providers' programmes did considerably worse than those of the public institutions. The latter, however, did not do very well in relation to this criterion either, both in terms of actual faculty research and in terms of students' research education. The majority of programmes offered by public providers needed improvement on this criterion and among the rest only one programme was commended. In the case of private providers an even larger proportion did not comply with minimum standards, with programmes offered by transnational providers performing the worst in this regard. That universities performed better than technikons and that public providers overall performed better than transnational providers in relation to this criterion is hardly surprising. Once again the history of the provision of higher education in South Africa, the specific history of the technikon sector and of historically disadvantaged universities, not to mention how long a programme has been offered, combine to explain why historically advantaged universities with 30 years of offering the MBA did better than technikons that started offering degrees in 1997 and MBAs in 2002.

The main problems found in the institutions' submissions in relation to knowledge production and research education were as follows:

- Students are given up to five years to finish the research project after the completion of the course work.
- The research component of the programme does not constitute 20 percent of the mark.
- Dissertations are not at master's level.
- There is no adequate tuition on research methods as a preparation for undertaking the research project.
- Units are staffed with predominantly part-time lecturers who do not have time for supervision.
- A business plan, which is a group project, replaces the completion of an individual research project or dissertation.
- The programme does not have a research component.

The matrix system of organisation of programmes, with its reliance on large numbers of part-time faculty and non-academic teaching staff, conspires not only against faculty's research productivity but also against good supervision. Dissertations, even in their minimal expression, are academic pieces that can hardly be supervised by non-academic staff. The concept of defence of a thesis proposal is underplayed or absent in most MBA programmes. The minor role that research methodology plays in the curriculum of most MBAs indicates that research education does not have a very large part in many programmes. What this means for the MBA as a master's degree will be discussed in the next chapter.

Staff research output, the second and related consideration, is one of the areas where part-time faculty has negative consequences for the units offering MBAs. At public higher education institutions research outputs are counted as activities of the academic unit where staff is employed full-time. Something similar can be observed at private providers of MBA programmes: if part-time staff is actually active in research, their research typically takes place at the institution where they are employed full-time. However, the question is not so much where members of staff do their research as the extent to which their research is cutting edge and informs their teaching and supervision at the master's level. A final issue to be discussed in Chapter 5 is whether or not research conducted in MBA programmes generates innovation in the practice and conceptualisation of various aspects of business management in South Africa.

Contextual criteria

Criterion 13: External environment

This criterion looks at the relations between the unit and the broader world of business management and society as a whole and stipulates that units offering MBAs should have the following:

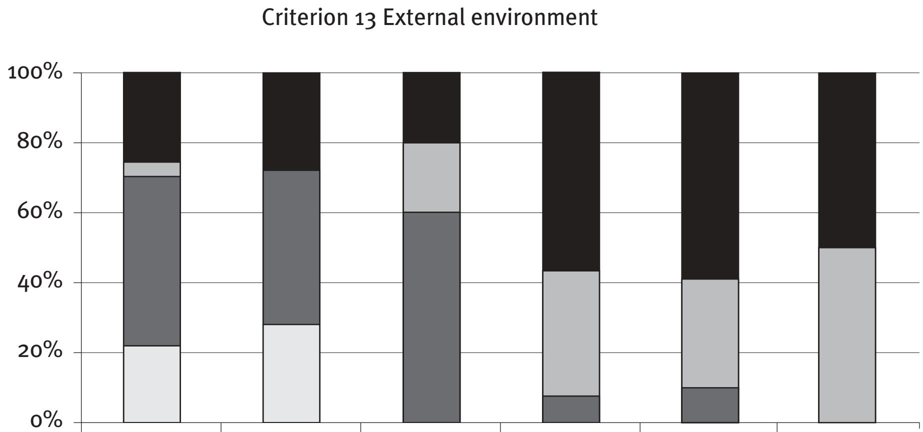
- Linkages with business to support and augment their work.
- A clear articulation and/or credit transfer with other higher education institutions.

- Partnership agreements focused on ensuring quality teaching and learning.
- A system to monitor their relationships with external stakeholders.

The relations between business schools and the external environment are largely conditioned by the history of each school. Taking this into account it is hardly surprising that longer-established public providers did better in this criterion than newer private providers.

As can be seen from Figure 13, public providers did much better than private providers in relation to this criterion, with five of the programmes offered by universities being commended in this regard. Technikon programmes met minimum standards in more than half of the cases. Private providers, on the contrary, performed rather poorly, with only a few programmes offered by local providers meeting minimum standards. The group with the weakest connection to the external environment was that of the transnational private providers, which are not only relatively new to the country but also lack a strong connection to the South African business environment.

Figure 13: Criterion 13 by type of provider



	Public providers	Universities	Technikons	Private providers	Local providers	Transnational private providers
Do not comply	26%	28%	20%	57%	60%	50%
Need improvement	4%	0%	20%	36%	30%	50%
Meet minimum standards	48%	44%	60%	7%	10%	0%
Commend	22%	28%	0%	0%	0%	0%

Source: Re-accreditation reports

As suggested earlier, the history of a business school, how long it has been in operation, who its alumni are and where they work, all define decisively the kind of networks to which a school belongs and upon whom they can call.

Schools that did not meet minimum standards seemed to be characterised by:

- A lack of advisory boards that bring stakeholder views together with their connections to the school.
- A lack of agreements for credit transfer with other higher education institutions.
- No visibly established partnerships with business or other stakeholders.
- No monitoring of the relations with stakeholders in the form of, for example, employer satisfaction surveys.
- No links with stakeholders in fields of specialisation.

Programmes that fulfilled the criteria to a commendable degree were characterised by:

- Links with private business and state-owned enterprises that help in the exploration of the needs of executive education.
- Provision of employment opportunities for graduates.
- Regular holding of seminars or special lectures with guest speakers from the corporate world.
- Visits from international academics who come to the school to teach specific courses or to take part in the school's activities.
- Regular debates on topical issues.
- Formal relations with international higher education institutions.
- Monitoring of relations with stakeholders through alumni.
- Well-established advisory boards.
- Participation in forums such as GMAT, the American Management Association (AMA), etc.
- Other measures to ensure that the business school straddles the worlds of both academia and business.

A closer look at both good practice and issues of concern suggests that, as with the previous criteria, Criterion 13 is also related to aspects of the governance of the programmes and of the business schools, and to aspects of the learning programme criteria. Lack of clarity in terms of goals and objectives (Criterion 2) and lack of advisory boards (Criterion 3) both have an impact on the extent and nature of the external relations of a business school. In turn a limited or non-existent relation with the outside environment, especially in the form of structured relations with the world of business, militates against the quality of teaching and learning, the quality and quantity of the research performed by faculty and, eventually, the content of the learning programme.

Schools' relationships with their external environment are crucial with regard to a number of issues: the content of the curriculum and its adaptation to changing practices and needs in the world of business; the recruitment of students, especially in the form of agreements with companies which send their employees to do MBAs at particular schools; the possibility of introducing innovative practices in management in real-life work situations; and, finally, the development of a curriculum or a series of activities which are more directly responsive to specific national developmental objectives in relation to business. This last is an area in which most MBAs were found wanting. Few included these kinds of issues in their curricula, and an even smaller number had any activities that showed a locally-grounded, innovative and proactive understanding of the social responsibility of higher education or prepared graduates for real-life business problems and corporate responsibility in South Africa.

Criterion 13 is focused on programmes' relationships with employers and the world of business; the ways in which programmes articulate with broader societal needs and goals that fall within their sphere; and programmes' contributions to the world of business and management in general. Over and above these issues, when the teaching of the master's of business administration is thought of in the context of the transformation of South African society it seems legitimate to ask whether it is perpetuating the legacy of skewed demographic representation or whether the MBAs are preparing a replacement for corporate boards and, if the latter is the case, whether such replacement will simply reflect the demography of the country, or whether they are ushering into corporate boards new models of thinking about business that fit a democratic society striving for social justice. This and other issues of business education and social responsibility will be discussed in the last chapter of this report.

CONCLUSION

This chapter has provided an overview of the results of the HEQC re-accreditation exercise from the perspective of the problems and best practices that can be found in relation to each of the 13 re-accreditation criteria. In order to produce this initial analysis of the state of provision of the MBA in South Africa, this chapter re-categorised the HEQC criteria into three groups: governance criteria, learning programme criteria, and criteria of context. In all cases the way in which a programme fared in relation to each criterion depended to a large extent on how long the programme had been offered and on the institutional context within which it operated. These two factors account partially for the differences between the performance of new and older programmes, and between the programmes offered by public and private providers, by universities and technikons, and by local private providers and transnational providers.

This chapter has shown that in relation to the governance criteria the areas of greatest concern are:

- The external environment (the manner in which business schools relate to the national higher education system from a legislative and regulatory perspective, and to the institutions within which they are located). (Criterion 1)

- The mission, goals and objectives of academic units offering MBAs and by implication of the programmes themselves. (Criterion 2)
- The manner in which business schools implement the principles and processes of quality management and how they relate to the quality management system in place at the institutions where business schools are located. (Criteria 3 and 4)
- The academic governance of the programme and the possible effects that a fairly generalised matrix system for organising faculty can have on the learning programme.

In relation to the learning programme criteria the areas of concern are:

- Predominance of part-time non-academic staff teaching most programmes, which often undermines the quality of the learning programme through a lack of integration of core, fundamental and elective courses. (Criterion 6)
- Student recruitment, especially in programmes where the lack of entrance requirements consistent with a master's level degree undermines the integrity of the teaching and learning experience for all students. (Criterion 7)
- Diversity, access, redress and equity: this, as we have seen, is a general problem which affects public and private providers in equal measure and which needs urgent attention, in relation to both student recruitment and faculty appointments. It implies, as discussed above, not only a change in the demographic profile of staff and students but also the setting up of appropriate mechanisms to support students through the teaching and learning process. (Criterion 8)
- Learning programme: The integrity of the learning programme is often undermined by a form of academic governance that acts as an obstacle to achieving the conceptual integration of core, fundamental and elective courses. It must be noted here that none of the de-accredited programmes met minimum standards in relation to this criterion. (Criterion 9)
- Assessment: This constitutes a fairly general problem in most programmes, where assessment below the master's level, lack of systematic assessment and poor or no utilisation of assessment as programme feedback combine to undermine the integrity of the degree. (Criterion 11)
- Research: The analysis indicated that few MBA programmes attach sufficient importance to students' research education or to faculty's knowledge production. As argued previously, the lack of research training jeopardises the master's level of the MBA, while poor or non-existent faculty research output acts as an obstacle to the renewal of the curriculum in relation to the learning programme. (Criterion 12)

Finally, in relation to the context criteria:

- External environment constitutes a particularly weak area in most MBA programmes, although this is especially marked in the case of private providers whose participation in the local socio-economic networks is very weak. (Criterion 13)

The examination of the re-accreditation reports and the institutions' submissions indicates that there is a strong correspondence between groups of criteria, and that in that sense the quality of a programme is the result not of meeting a discrete number of minimum standards but of the interaction between criteria that reinforce each other in positive ways when they are present, i.e. when programmes meet minimum standards, and in negative ways when programmes need improvement or simply do not meet minimum standards.

All correlations are important in establishing what a good MBA is in the South African context; however, there are three that need to be underlined.

First, the correlation between governance (Criteria 1, 2, 3 and 4) and the quality of the academic programme (Criteria 9, 10, 11 and 12). Governance of the academic unit, its insertion into the South African higher education system, and the articulation of its fitness for purpose and of purpose in relation to those of the higher education institution where the business school is located create a framework of accountability and transparency that supports the quality of the MBA programme. The academic governance of the MBA programme, in particular, has a decisive effect on the ability of a school to hold a complex multidisciplinary programme together as a whole, and it therefore affects the structure of the learning experience of the students, and the integrity of the degree.

Second, correlations among the learning programme criteria. The availability of adequate and sufficient staff and infrastructure, taking into account the demands of different teaching methodologies and different modes of delivery, directly supports the quality of the programme and the teaching and learning experience. Modalities and strategies for students' recruitment have a decisive impact on the kind of teaching experience offered to each cohort, the nature of the assessment practised, and the role that research may or may not have in the MBA.

Third, there is the correlation between criteria of context and the nature of teaching and learning, assessment and research and, to close the circle, the governance arrangement of the programme and the school.

The rest of this report will explore specific aspects of these relationships, keeping the focus on the most important finding of the re-accreditation exercise: namely, that the quality of a programme is independent neither of the governance of the academic unit that offers it nor of the broader socio-political context within which it operates.