



National Reviews

Accreditation Outcomes and Procedures following HEQC National Reviews

Introduction

The following procedures and processes apply to National Reviews. The purpose of this framework document is to outline and make explicit the consequences and procedures associated with institutional choice and HEQC re-accreditation decisions.

1 A programme for which application for re-accreditation is *not* submitted

An institution's decision to withdraw from the National Review process is tantamount to forfeiture of the accredited status of that programme beyond the present cohort of students. In such a case, the institution is obliged to phase out (or 'teach out') the programme in question, and the HEQC monitors arrangements until remaining students have completed or exited the programme. The institution is required to furnish the HEQC with a 'teach out' plan. To assist institutions, the HEQC may offer comment on 'teach out' plans. As part of the monitoring process, the HEQC will conduct at least one two-day site visit to ensure that acceptable minimum academic and professional standards are being maintained, and that registered students are offered adequate support. A site visit of this kind is concerned only with the implementation of a programme; it does not review programme design. If deemed necessary, other HEQC monitoring and reporting processes may be put into place. The programme is 'deemed' accredited until the last students graduate from the programme. In order to reinstitute the programme, a new application for accreditation must be submitted via the HEQC Online system.

2 A programme for which application for re-accreditation is submitted

Panel reports with recommendations on each programme serve before an Accreditation Committee constituted by the HEQC. The Accreditation Committee's recommendations regarding the accreditation status of programmes are communicated to the relevant institutions that then have 21 days in which to respond. The Accreditation Committee's recommendations together with institutional responses are then considered by the HEQC Board which has responsibility for final decisions that are communicated to institutions by means of a report and letter.

Procedures in respect of each of the possible accreditation outcomes are outlined below.

2.1 HEQC Board decision: No Accreditation

In the case of a **NO ACCREDITATION** Board decision, institutions are required to phase out ('teach out') the relevant programme. The HEQC liaises with such institutions in order to ensure that current students are enabled to complete the programme with an appropriate level of support. In terms of HEQC procedures, the programme is 'deemed' accredited until the last students have completed the programme. An institution may reinstate the programme only after two years and a full and complete application for accreditation must be made through the HEQC Online system.

From the date of receipt of the HEQC Board letter informing the institution of a 'No Accreditation' decision, no new students may be enrolled in that specific programme. Institutions are required to furnish the HEQC with documentation containing the following information:

- I. Names of students in the relevant programme
- II. Year of registration
- III. Details of modules completed / pass marks
- IV. Details of modules required to be completed, and expected completion dates
- V. Expected date of completion of the qualification on the part of each student
- VI. Any other information that may be required by the HEQC to ensure that students are assured of quality 'teach out' arrangements

A site visit to verify the effectiveness of 'teach out' arrangements is conducted only if it is warranted.

Annual progress reports are required until all students have completed the programme.

2.2 HEQC Board decision: Accreditation with Conditions

This category is comprised of two subcategories.

Category (a) is referred to as **ACCREDITATION WITH CONDITIONS** applies to programmes that have shortcomings of a kind that do not seriously impact on the quality of the programme and the learning experiences of students. Such shortcomings can be addressed within a six month period. In such cases, a letter and a report are sent to institutions listing short- and long-term conditions, as well as due dates by which improvement plans are to be submitted. Institutions then provide the HEQC with an improvement plan within two months of the date of the report. Following receipt of the improvement plan, the HEQC provides the institution with comment on the adequacy of the plan. This comment is intended to serve a developmental function to ensure that conditions are met. The institution then reports back with improvements and progress made within six months.

Category (b) is referred to as **ACCREDITATION WITH CONDITIONS: PROGRAMME ON NOTICE FOR WITHDRAWAL OF ACCREDITATION**. This category applies to programmes with shortcomings that impact significantly on the quality of the programme, particularly in one or more of Criterion 2 (Programme

Design), Criterion 5 (Teaching and Learning), and Criterion 7 (Assessment). In such a case, an improvement plan must be submitted to the HEQC within 90 days of receipt of the report. Further action, including withdrawal of the accreditation status for the programme, will be considered if the programme is viewed as still non-compliant after the expiry of the stipulated time period attached to each condition, or if the improvement plan is adjudged as insufficient. Institutions may not enroll new students into the programme until they are adjudged to have met the conditions set out by the HEQC. Depending on the improvement plan, the specific programme may retain the status of 'Accredited with Conditions' for a longer period, with monitoring by the HEQC, as deemed appropriate.

In the case of both categories of accreditation with conditions, all improvement plans and progress reports must be sent to the HEQC via the office of the relevant DVC or registrar. In consultation with the institution, a site visit is arranged to verify that conditions have been met. For this purpose, the HEQC appoints a mini-panel of evaluators. This mini-panel will ideally have representation from the panel that conducted the original site visit. If for any reason it is not possible to appoint panel members from the original panel, the HEQC reserves the right to select other suitable academics. Names of panel members are forwarded to the institution for its approval. As mini-panels focus only on specified conditions, their work will normally be accomplished in a one-day site visit.

The report of the mini-panel serves before the HEQC Board for the final decision which is then communicated to the institution. If conditions have not been satisfactorily met, the HEQC Board may notify the institution of its intent to **WITHDRAW ACCREDITATION** from the programme. Should all conditions be met, the institution will be informed of the HEQC Board decision to award **FULL ACCREDITATION** to the programme.

2.3 HEQC Board decision: Full Accreditation

FULL ACCREDITATION decisions on the part of the HEQC *may* be accompanied by specification of areas for improvement or minor conditions. In such a case, the institution is required to ensure through internal processes that areas identified in the HEQC report are addressed. No further communication is required unless for any reason the HEQC has queries or concerns that may arise.