



HIGHER EDUCATION QUALITY COMMITTEE

GUIDE FOR EVALUATORS:
ACCREDITATION
AND RE-ACCREDITATION
OF PROGRAMMES SUBMITTED TO THE HEQC

MAY 2009



The Higher Education Quality Committee is a permanent committee
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CONTENTS

Acronyms	iv
Introduction	1
Evaluation process	1
Contractual agreement between the HEQC and the evaluator	3
Background to the criteria used for evaluation purposes	3
Criteria for programme accreditation (candidacy) and re-accreditation	3
Documentation provided	7
Public higher education institutions	7
The evaluator's report form	8
The structure of the report form	8
The information table	9
Instructions	12
Judgments	13
Criterion specific instructions	14
Evaluator recommendations	21
Concluding note	22

ACRONYMS

CHE	Council on Higher Education
DoE	Department of Education
HEQC	Higher Education Quality Committee
HEQF	Higher Education Qualifications Framework
NQF	National Qualifications Framework
PQM	Programme and Qualification Mix
RPL	Recognition of Prior Learning
SAQA	South African Qualifications Authority

INTRODUCTION

This Manual is intended for the guidance of evaluators, appointed by the HEQC to evaluate institutional applications for the accreditation of new programmes or the re-accreditation of existing programmes. It summarizes the context for programme accreditation and re-accreditation and, within this context, addresses both the nature and purpose of programme evaluation. In particular, it deals with key aspects of the programme evaluation process, including the formation of professional judgements and the categories of judgement employed by the HEQC, and introduces the HEQC's evaluator's report form, offering some guidelines for its completion. In short, it aims to enable evaluators to understand what is expected and required of them in undertaking and completing a successful programme evaluation. (Note: This Manual should be read in conjunction with the CHE/HEQC's *Framework for Programme Accreditation* and the *Criteria for Programme Accreditation*.)

EVALUATION PROCESS

The HEQC has the legal obligation to ensure quality in higher education and is the only quality assurance authority for higher education programmes. In executing its accreditation function the HEQC evaluates programmes in terms of a set of criteria and minimum standards.

The HEQC evaluation process is an evidence-based process within which peers (either individually or as a group) assess the programmes submitted by higher education institutions to ensure that prescribed minimum standards have been met so that quality in higher education offerings can be maintained. The external evaluation process is predicated on the principle that it follows a rigorous self-evaluation by higher education institutions of the programmes which they submit for accreditation.

The HEQC does not accredit institutions *per se*, but the programmes that they intend to offer. The institutional context is of significance in so far as it should create an environment within which good quality higher education programmes can be offered. An evaluator's primary task is to evaluate the programme submitted for

accreditation or re-accreditation purposes. The evaluator needs to make an informed judgement both of the standards aspired to by the programme in terms of the provisions of the Higher Education Qualifications Framework (HEQF), the responsiveness of the programme to national needs and priorities – the ‘fitness-of-purpose’ of the programme – and the compatibility of the programme with the institutional vision, mission and goals, as well as any professional requirements that the programme may need to meet (the ‘fitness-for- purpose’ of the programme).

The evaluation and accreditation (or re-accreditation) process is illustrated graphically in Figure 1.

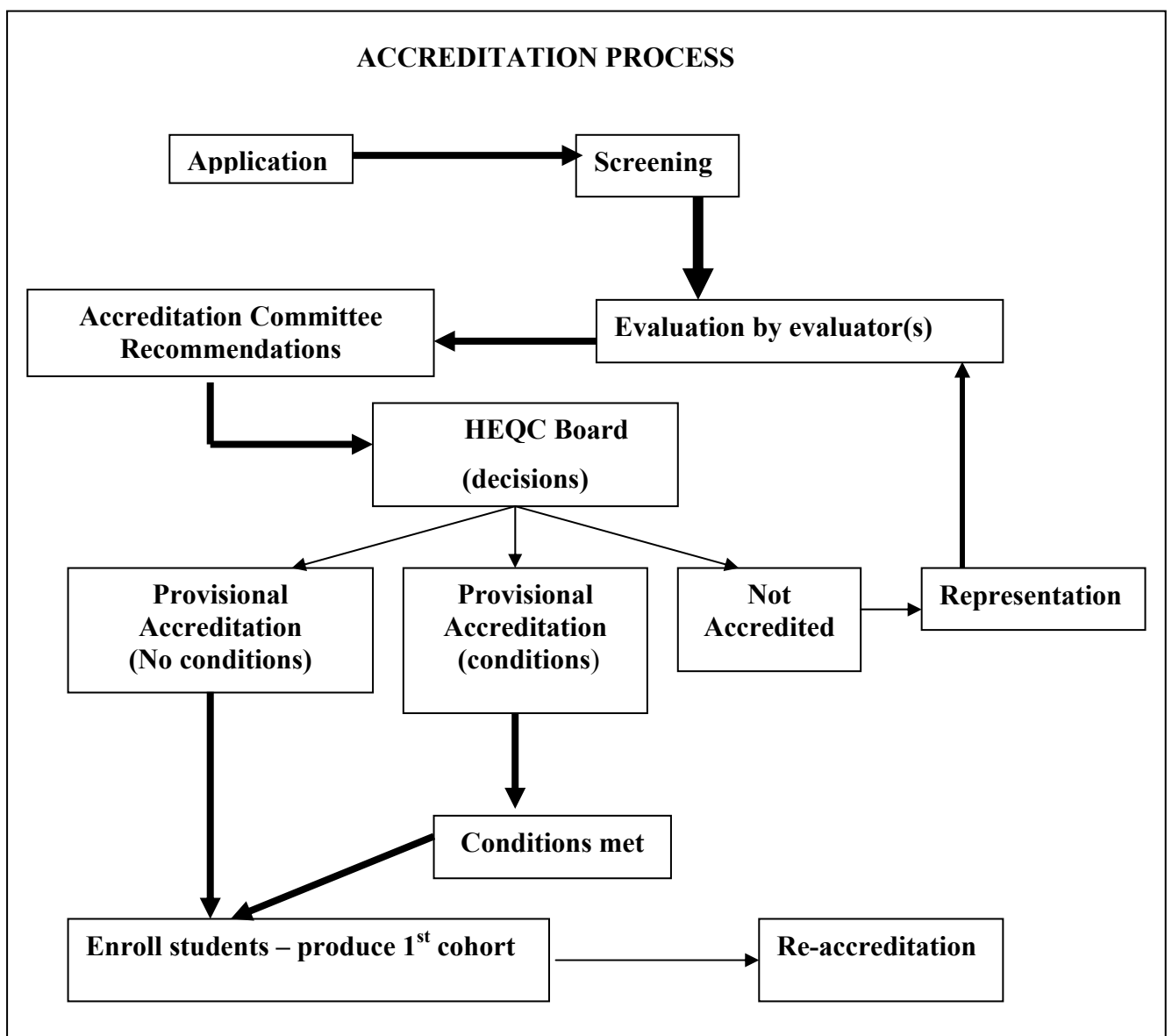


Figure 1: Graphic illustration of accreditation process

CONTRACTUAL AGREEMENT BETWEEN THE HEQC AND THE EVALUATOR

An evaluator is nominated and selected by the HEQC on the basis of experience in higher education and knowledge and expertise in the relevant academic field or discipline. For this purpose, the HEQC requests from each potential evaluator a detailed *curriculum vitae*. Once an agreement in principle has been reached between the HEQC and a nominated evaluator, the parties enter into a contract in terms of which the evaluator acts, for the purposes of the evaluation, as a consultant to the HEQC. The evaluator agrees to provide an objective report which is not influenced by any personal, institutional, sectoral or regional interests. The contract specifies the programme(s) to be evaluated, the format of the evaluation, and the date by which it is to be submitted to the HEQC. The contract specifies also that the evaluation report is the property of the HEQC. The evaluator is required to sign an agreement of confidentiality, as well as a declaration of any interests s/he may have in respect of the institution that intends to offer the programme. These interests could include financial interest, recent employment by the institution, or any other advisory or consultancy involvement. Current or recent external examination of other programmes offered by the institution *may* be deemed to be an interest.

BACKGROUND TO THE CRITERIA USED FOR EVALUATION PURPOSES

The HEQC uses quality-related criteria both as evaluative tools in its accreditation activities and as benchmarks for quality assurance associated with institutional applications for accreditation and re-accreditation. Criteria are categorised using an input, process, output, impact and review model, the elements of which are interrelated. (*For further information, see 'Criteria for Programme Accreditation', pp. 1-3.*)

CRITERIA FOR PROGRAMME ACCREDITATION (CANDIDACY) AND RE-ACCREDITATION

The complete range of criteria used for programme accreditation, both in the candidacy and re-accreditation processes, in relation to the elements of the model, is set out on p. 28 of the *Criteria for Programme Accreditation*. Essentially, 9 'input'

criteria are employed in the candidacy or new application phase, and an application has to demonstrate either that the programme meets these criteria or has demonstrated the potential capability to meet them. All 19 criteria are employed in the re-accreditation process. A fuller definition of each criterion and an elaboration of the minimum standards required to meet them are summarized on pages 6 and 7 of the *Criteria for Programme Accreditation* and are addressed in detail from pages 7 to 15.

The nine '**input**' criteria, relating to resources and conditions, which need to be in place for a programme to be offered, are summarized on page 28 of the *Criteria for Programme Accreditation*, and are covered in detail between pages 6 and 15. (It should be noted that Criterion 9, relating to postgraduate policies, procedures and regulations, may not have application for some programmes.) These nine criteria are used in the evaluation of new programme applications for initial accreditation (**candidacy phase**). For candidacy phase applications it is assumed that no students, as yet, have been enrolled and the application is an indication of what the institution *intends to offer, and its ability to do so*. In this case special emphasis is placed on Criterion 1 (Programme Design), Criterion 2 (Admission Requirements), Criteria 3 & 4 (Staffing), Criterion 5 (Teaching and Learning) and Criterion 6 (Assessment). Should a proposed programme display serious flaws in the majority of these criteria, this will result, most probably, in a recommendation that the programme should not be accredited. In the case of a postgraduate programme, special attention must be paid also to Criterion 9 (Postgraduate Research).

The seven '**process**' criteria, which pertain to processes and activities relating to programme delivery, are summarized on page 28 of the *Criteria for Programme Accreditation* and are addressed in detail between pages 16 to 22. (It should be noted that Criteria 15 & 16 may not apply in the case of some programmes.) The criteria are used mainly to evaluate existing programmes that are submitted for re-accreditation. In the case of an **application for re-accreditation**, it is assumed that the programme has been offered for a number of years and should have produced at least one cohort of students. Although attention will be paid to the first nine criteria (to evaluate the extent to which the potential of the institution to offer the programme, as indicated in the application for a new programme, manifests itself in

quality assured delivery), the main emphasis now moves to Criteria 10-19. In terms of the first nine criteria, attention should be given to whether or not the institution has aimed continuously at improving the programme offering by reviewing it and adjusting it to changing academic and market needs (Criteria 1, 5 and 6), that it has ensured that the required levels of staff capacity to service the programme have been ensured and that staff development takes place (Criteria 3, 4 and 8). The institution should be able now to produce evidence of the *programme in action* and precedence should be given to how the programme is coordinated (Criterion 10), strategies that have been introduced to ensure academic development and student academic support (Criterion 11), teaching and learning interaction (Criterion 12) student assessment practices and the integrity of the assessment process (Criteria 13 & 14). In cases where work-based learning is relevant, attention should be given to the effectiveness of the system used. Work-based learning may not be relevant to all programmes (e.g. Bachelor of Arts); attention should be given to the 'purpose and characteristics' of qualifications as described in the HEQF. In the case of postgraduate programmes, Criterion 16 should receive special attention in terms of the management of postgraduate studies, the development of student research competence, student supervision, and assessment.

The two '**output/ impact**' criteria, which pertain to what is *actually* delivered and attained by the programme, are summarized on page 28 of the *Criteria for Programme Accreditation* and are dealt with fully between pages 22 and 23. These criteria relate to the employability of graduates and relevant external acknowledgement of the programme.

Finally, the one '**programme review**' criterion, which deals with the institution's ongoing evaluation of the programme with the aims of improvement, staff development and student support, is dealt with between pages 23 and 24 of the *Criteria for Programme Accreditation*. Institutions which apply for the re-accreditation of a programme should be able to produce evidence of meeting the minimum standards in terms of student retention and throughput (Criterion 17), demonstrating programme impact (Criterion 18) and conducting regular programme reviews (Criterion 19).

Notwithstanding the fact that, in the accreditation phase, a programme might have been judged to have met the input criteria, this does not mean that they should not be re-evaluated according to these criteria in the re-accreditation process. For example, it might appear that, if the 'programme design' criterion (1) had been judged to have been met during the candidacy phase, it would be difficult to offer any alternative judgement in the re-accreditation phase. However, given that a number of years would have elapsed between the two processes, it will be necessary to check if the programme design remains as it was described initially or if changes have been made which, in any way, have compromised its quality or integrity. Furthermore, it will be necessary to determine whether or not the design is still serving its original purpose in respect of student success, teaching and learning, and impact, and if it has been kept 'up-to-date' in relation to developments in the subject(s), disciplinary fields and any policies that may affect the aims and outcomes of the programme. A similar case could be made in respect of the other input criteria. For example, there might have been changes in relation to academic staffing and programme administration.

In general, information relating to the input/ candidacy phase criteria also provides background for evaluation in the re-accreditation phase, and the criteria for re-accreditation do not displace them. For example, the teaching and learning strategy criterion for the candidacy phase (Criterion 4) provides a context for the teaching and learning interactions criterion of the re-accreditation phase (Criterion 12), and the student assessment policies and procedures criterion of the candidacy phase (Criterion 6) provides background for the student assessment practices criteria of the re-accreditation phase (Criteria 13 & 14).

Please note that the re-accreditation process applies to *existing* programmes, as accredited by the HEQC and registered by SAQA. Only those programmes that are alignable with the HEQF are being considered for re-accreditation purposes in 2009. However, any changes to a programme that alter substantially its design, credit weighting or exit-level outcomes would constitute a new programme, for which application should be made for accreditation in the candidacy phase.

DOCUMENTATION PROVIDED

You will receive the following programme documentation to assist you in your task:

- The evaluator's contract with the HEQC.
- The programme submission containing the institution's self-generated profile and the programme details, with supportive evidence submitted by the institution.
- The HEQC *Criteria for Programme Accreditation*.
- The *HEQF* document.
- Guidelines for programme evaluation (this document).
- An evaluation report template.
- In the case of a programme submitted for re-accreditation, background on the programme accreditation (history) and an HEQC-generated institutional profile listing all the programmes accredited for the institution.

Please note that programmes that are under consideration for re-accreditation may have had certain **conditions** attached to them when first they were accredited. Should you be required to evaluate a programme submitted for re-accreditation the initial conditions set will be made available to you. Institutions must have submitted evidence that these conditions have been met.

PUBLIC HIGHER EDUCATION INSTITUTIONS

You will note that, in the *Framework for Programme Accreditation* document of the HEQC, mention is made of the fact that certain institutions may be awarded self-accreditation status. The HEQC is still in the process of finalizing a framework, policy and procedures for the awarding of self-accreditation status to institutions, whether public or private. At present, no institution has been awarded this status. However, since most of the public higher education institutions have gone through a rigorous audit process, these institutions normally are exempted from completing certain parts of the standard HEQC Online application form as it pertains to specific criteria and minimum standards. These criteria and minimum standards are indicated clearly in the Online application form (i.e. Criteria 3 and 4 dealing with staffing; Criterion 7 on

infrastructure and Criterion 8 on Administrative services). It is the responsibility of the Quality Assurance Office of the institution to ensure that all minimum standards pertaining to these criteria have been met by the programme for which accreditation sought. As an evaluator, you do not need to evaluate these criteria in the case of a public higher education institution. However, the HEQC reserves the right, at any stage during the accreditation process, to verify that these standards have been met. Should you as an evaluator feel that information on any of these aspects is needed, you may request the HEQC to obtain the information from the institution. This may pertain particularly in cases where the institution intends to enter a new discipline, which may require a specific staffing profile, resources and facilities (for example, unique teaching resources or laboratories).

At this stage, the exemption does not apply to any private higher education institution and these institutions are required to provide evidence of compliance with all the minimum standards as set out in the *Criteria for Programme Accreditation* document.

Note: Public institution programmes are not included in the re-accreditation process for 2009.
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THE EVALUATOR'S REPORT FORM

Templates of the Evaluator's Report Form (Candidacy Phase) and the Re-accreditation Evaluator's Report Form are included in this Manual as Annexures 'A and B'.

THE STRUCTURE OF THE REPORT FORM

The main elements in the Evaluator's Report Form are as follows.

1. On the first page is the programme identification table into which information relating to the institution and the programme for accreditation must be entered.
2. This is followed by a section in which the evaluator records his/ her details and records the date on which the report is submitted.

3. Also on the first page, is a list of ‘instructions’ for evaluators, which will be commented on below.
4. It will be seen that pages 2 to 8 of the template relate, in turn, to the 9 criteria for candidacy phase evaluations or the 19 criteria employed in the re-accreditation process. For each, a summary of the focus of the criterion is provided together with a space for the evaluator’s comments. In addition, boxes are provided for the overall recommendation in respect of each criterion to be recorded (see relevant section of this Manual on judgements for fuller discussion.)
5. Page 9 of the template includes a table in which evaluators are asked to indicate a summary of the judgements made in respect of all the criteria.
6. Finally, pages 9 to 11 of the template provide space for evaluators to record their summary and comments with regard to the overall recommendation for the programme. Note that provision is made for the evaluator to recommend conditions to be met prior to the commencement of the programme, short-term conditions and long-term conditions (see relevant section of this Manual for a fuller discussion).

THE INFORMATION TABLE (first page of the Evaluator’s Report Form)

Evaluators are asked to ensure that all the cells of the table are populated with the correct data, as supplied in the Online programme application form. If any piece of information appears to be unavailable, please contact the HEQC Secretariat. Care should be taken to indicate accurately the level of the programme (NATED/ HEQF) and the number of credits. In respect of the mode(s) of delivery and site(s) of delivery, evaluators are reminded that if there is more than one in either case, the application must incorporate information covering *all* modes or sites.

Qualification title, NQF level, credit value, purpose and characteristics

Please verify that the title of the qualification, NQF exit level, credit allocation, purpose and characteristics are aligned with the specifications laid down by the HEQF. The HEQF makes provision for nine qualification types mapped onto the six levels of the NQF occupied by higher education qualifications (levels 5 – 10). Note

that some levels have more than one qualification type. The framework outlines the following qualification types:

Undergraduate

- Higher Certificate
- Advanced Certificate
- Diploma
- Advanced Diploma
- Bachelor's Degree

Postgraduate

- Postgraduate Diploma
- Bachelor Honours Degree
- Masters Degree
- Doctoral Degree

Each qualification type has a unique descriptor stating the purpose and how it relates to other qualification types. A *qualification descriptor* specifies the exit level of the qualification type, its minimum credit rating, its purpose and characteristics, its minimum admission requirements, and what options it provides for progression into advanced studies. The basic qualification types, namely certificates, diplomas and degrees, are used as points of reference for the design of specialised qualifications and the programmes that deliver them.

The *designator* is the second name (i.e. the next layer of qualification specialisation) given to a qualification, to indicate its broad area of study, discipline or profession. ***Designators are applicable to degrees, but not to certificates or diplomas.*** A designator indicates a variant of the qualification type. For example, a Bachelor of *Science* degree is a variant of the generic Bachelor's degree. The HEQF has mandated the CHE to determine criteria for appropriate degree designators, and evaluators will be advised of developments in this respect. In the case of bachelor degree programmes, designators should be either (a) Arts, Science, Commerce or Social Science, or (b) should be consistent with a first order or second order CESM category as contained in the 2008 CESM Manual.

The third layer of qualification specification is the *qualification specialisation*. This is reflected in the *qualifier*. Qualifiers may be used in all qualification types in order to indicate a field of specialisation. For example, the learning outcomes and specifications for a BSc (Hons) *in Geology* meet the learning demands and specifications laid down for a BSc (Hons) and include specialised learning outcomes related to the field of Geology. The HEQF specifies a maximum number of qualifiers for each qualification type. For example, Bachelor degrees have a maximum of two qualifiers, while a Masters degree is limited to one. The second *qualifier qualifies* the first: for example, a Bachelor of Science in Engineering in Electronics (abbreviated as BSc (Eng) (Electronics)). In the case of a higher certificate or diploma where designators are not used, the *qualifier* specifies the specialisation (e.g. Higher Certificate in Accounting or Diploma in Web Design). ***For a qualifier to be used, at least 50 per cent of the minimum total credits for the qualification, and at least 50 per cent of the minimum credits at the qualification's exit level, must be in the specialisation denoted by the qualifier.***

Qualifiers should be consistent with a first or second or third order CESM category as contained in the 2008 CESM Manual.

Mode(s) of tuition

A programme is accredited ***per mode of delivery (tuition)***. Where only one mode of delivery is proposed, the application must provide evidence that the programme meets all minimum standards in respect of the specified mode. Where more than one mode of delivery is proposed (contact, distance, mixed, e-learning), all minimum standards need to be met in respect of **each** mode. It is possible, in certain cases, that accreditation may be recommended in respect of one mode but not of another, or that the conditions for accreditation recommended by the evaluator may differ from one mode of delivery to another.

Site(s) of delivery

A programme is accredited per site of delivery. Where more than one site of delivery is proposed, the application must provide evidence that the programme meets all minimum standards in respect of **each** site. Accreditation may be recommended for

all sites, for none of the sites, or, where certain minimum standards are deemed to have been met in the case of one site but not in the case of another (for example, standards relating to infrastructure, staffing, library and IT resources), accreditation may be recommended for some sites but not for others.

INSTRUCTIONS

1. Evaluators are asked to write their reports, in respect of each criterion, in a *narrative* style, which addresses the substance of the application as a whole. While evaluation must address all the minimum standards specified for each criterion, these should not be addressed through a simple listing. Compliance with one minimum standard might well be related to compliance with another.
2. In writing their reports, evaluators are asked to make sure that it is made clear to which minimum standards the comments refer. It is suggested that at the end of any given paragraph in the report, the minimum standards to which reference has been made are indicated in brackets (e.g. *ms. i & iv*).

Example:

Criterion 10

The institution has not appointed an academic to act as programme coordinator, but one of the administrative staff members was appointed to deal with programme coordination (ms i). Although this person is able to look after the coordination of logistic issues, clearly she is not in a position to provide academic leadership.

3. Evaluators are asked to indicate, with an 'X', a rating for each criterion in the box provided for this purpose (e.g. C, MMS, NI or DNC) (For fuller discussion of these ratings, see page 11 of this Manual.)
4. Evaluators are reminded that, although addressed serially, the criteria do not exist in isolation from each other. Findings related to one criterion may have relevance to those under another and so *cross-referencing* between criteria is both permissible and encouraged, where appropriate or necessary.

5. Finally, at the end of the evaluation form, evaluators are asked to record their overall judgements about the programme. Statements related to the various categories of judgement should derive from a reading across the comments for all criteria and should be fully explicit. The bases from which overall judgements are derived should be made clear. When a recommendation is made evaluators are reminded that it is desirable, if possible, to cite instances of good practice as well as weaknesses and, when making a recommendation for not accrediting or re-accrediting the programme, reasons advanced should provide reference to relevant criteria and specific minimum standards. Finally, in cases where conditions are set, evaluators are asked a) to distinguish between conditions that should be met **prior to commencement of the programme** [i.e., conditions that should be met before any students are recruited or admitted], in the **short-term** [within up to six months] or in the **long-term** [generally a year to eighteen months], and b) to ensure that conditions are described clearly and succinctly. (See the section on making judgements in this Manual.)

JUDGEMENTS

For each criterion a judgement is required as whether or not the minimum standards relevant to the criterion have been met. This judgement should be based on, and supported by, the narrative produced for each criterion. All decisions to be taken regarding possible programme accreditation must be substantiated through the evidence produced in the narrative. For each criterion the following possible outcomes could be recommended:

Commend: Such a judgement can be made only if there is evidence of a best practice that could be emulated profitably by other providers of similar programmes. Where an institution has an excellent staff complement, it does not lead automatically to a judgement of 'commendable'. Where an institution has an innovative approach to student assessment that constitutes a best practice, it should be commended for that. (As candidacy phase applications for accreditation provide details of *potential* for delivery, commendations would

normally be less frequent than might be the case in applications for re-accreditation, where evidence is required of *actual* delivery.)

Meets minimum standards: *All* the minimum standards attached to the specific criterion have been met. There are no issues to be flagged for attention.

Needs improvement: One or more of the minimum standards pertaining to a specific criterion have not been met, but the institution could rectify this. Here you need to decide how material is the problem to the success of the programme. If students should not be enrolled **prior** to fixing the problem, it needs to be set as a condition to be met prior to the introduction of the programme. If the problem is something that could be fixed while the programme is running (e.g. acquiring more library books, or revising the brochure that advertises the programme), it should be set either as a short- or long-term condition. A **short-term** condition relates to something that could be fixed within 90 days, but no longer than six months (e.g. fixing an inconsistency regarding the number of credits in the course). A **long-term** condition implies that it would require more than six months to fix (e.g. relatively minor adaptations to the programme design, upgrading of infrastructure or ensuring employment equity).

Does not comply: In this case the minimum standard(s) that has/have not been met is/are of such a nature that it/they cannot be fixed (e.g. the programme design does not comply with the purpose, characteristics or level of the qualification, the programme [Higher Certificate] is embedded in another programme [Diploma]), or there are no academics in the institution with qualifications in the field within which the proposed programme is to be offered, meaning that there is no academic expertise within the institution to drive the programme and the development of learning materials.

CRITERION SPECIFIC INSTRUCTIONS

CRITERION 1:

The *Programme Accreditation Framework* defines a programme as a **purposeful and structured set of learning experiences** that lead to a qualification. In terms of the *CHE Criteria for Programme Accreditation*, a new programme is one that has not been offered before, or one whose purpose, outcomes, field of study, mode or site of delivery has been considerably changed.

Institutions need to provide evidence that the programme addresses national or regional needs and priorities (e.g. based on market research or economic growth trends) and be able to indicate how the programme articulates horizontally and vertically with other higher education programmes. In the case of a professional qualification, evidence must be included that the relevant professional body has approved the programme (e.g. HPCSA, SANC, etc.). In the case of a more vocationally oriented programme, provision must be made for work-based or experiential learning.

Please verify that the programme is aligned with the requirements of the HEQF. These are summarized in the table below.

Quick Reference: HEQF Programme Types, Credits and NQF Levels

Programme Type	NQF Exit Level	Minimum Total Credits	Minimum Credits at NQF Level:
Higher Certificate	5	120	NQF 5=120
Advanced Certificate	6	120	NQF 6= 120
Diploma	6	360	NQF 7= 60 (and maximum NQF5=120)
Advanced Diploma	7	120	NQF 7= 120
Bachelor's Degree	7	360	NQF 7= 120 (and maximum NQF5=96)
OR Professional Bachelors	8	480	NQF 8= 96, NQF 7= 120 (and maximum NQF 5= 96)
Bachelor Honours Degree	8	120	NQF 8= 120
Postgraduate Diploma	8	120	NQF 8= 120
Master's Degree	9	180	NQF 9= 120
Doctoral Degree	10	360	NQF 10= 360

The annexure pertaining to the institutional profile must be read in conjunction with the programme specific information. In this regard you need to consider the following aspects:

- The mission and vision of the institution and the degree to which the programme is aligned with these (related to Criterion 1).
- The main goals of the institution and whether they are supportive of the programme proposed (related to Criterion 1).
- Provision has been made in the budget of the organization for learning material development.

CRITERION 2:

Please verify that the admission requirements of the programme are in line with those specified in the *Government Gazette* (11 July 2008). These are:

Higher Certificate

The minimum admission requirement is a National Senior Certificate (NSC) with a minimum of 30% in the language of learning and teaching of the higher education institution as certified by the Council for General and Further Education and Training (Umalusi).

Institutional and programme needs may require appropriate combinations of recognized NSC subjects and levels of achievement.

Diploma

The minimum admission requirement is a National Senior Certificate (NSC) with a minimum of 30% in the language of learning and teaching of the higher education institution as certified by Umalusi, coupled with an achievement rating of 3 (Moderate Achievement, 40-49%) or better in four recognised NSC 20-credit subjects. Institutional and programme needs may require appropriate combinations of recognized National Senior Certificate subjects and levels of achievement.

Bachelor's Degree

The minimum admission requirement is a National Senior Certificate (NSC) with a minimum of 30% in the language of learning and teaching of the higher education institution as certified by Umalusi, coupled with an achievement rating of 4 (Adequate Achievement, 50-59%) or better in four subjects chosen from the recognized 20-credit NSC subjects.

Students who completed their schooling prior to 2008 may gain admission provided that the minimum admission requirements are as defined in NATED Reports 150 and 116 respectively (e.g. matriculation exemption for admission to degree studies).

Institutions should provide evidence of how they intend to widen access and address equity. In this regard it is also important to establish if the institution will have the capacity in terms of staff, resources and facilities to accommodate and ensure quality of teaching and learning for the number of students enrolled in the programme.

CRITERIA 3 & 4

The staff development policy framework of the institution should be included in the institutional profile documentation and annexure(s). Please consult the annexure(s) in forming a judgement on the criteria. In the case of a new programme, it is accepted that not all the academic staff may have been appointed at the time when the application for accreditation is made. Institutions, however, should have available a core of academic staff specialized in the field of the programme to provide academic leadership and to be able to oversee the development of good quality learning materials.

Academic staff teaching on the programme should hold qualifications one level higher than that of the programme being taught and should have some teaching experience in higher education environments. There should be at least a core of full-time permanent staff members teaching on the programme. The workload allocation of staff should be in line with what is reasonable in a higher education environment,

not only in terms of the number of modules for which they are responsible, but also in terms of student numbers. Academic staff involved in supervision of postgraduate students should have a track record of research activities and research supervision.

Information on the selection, appointment and development of staff, as well as contractual arrangements, will be included as part of the institutional profile.

CRITERIA 5 & 6

Institutional policies regarding teaching and learning and assessment must be consulted. These are included as part of the institutional profile documentation. Please verify that these institutional policies have been adapted appropriately to the *programme-specific* level. The teaching and learning strategy should be commensurate with the level of the programme, the mode of delivery, and composition of the student cohort.

Assessment practices must be consistent with the institutional policies and should make provision for continuous assessment, appropriate for the mode of delivery. Provision must be made for internal and external moderation of assessment. In the case of programmes submitted for re-accreditation, evidence, in the form of moderators' reports, may provide a good indication of the assessment practices of an institution. Security in assessment practices and capturing of marks should be evident.

Note that this criterion also deals with RPL. Verify that the policy and practices are in line with the minimum standards and norms for RPL.

CRITERION 7

Information pertaining to the infrastructure available forms part of the institutional profile documentation. Please consult the relevant information and annexures in reaching a judgement. It is important to verify that student access to these facilities supports effective learning. This does not apply only to the number of computers, or books available but also to the hours during which these could be accessed. In the

case of training in specialized technical fields, the hardware and software should keep abreast with technological advances and this should be reflected in the budget allocated for this purpose in the institutional profile.

CRITERION 8

In reaching a judgement on administrative support, it is important to consider the number of administrative staff available to the programme, their level of training and expertise and how they fit in and are supported by the institutional structures and processes. Information pertaining to the latter is contained in the institutional profile documentation.

CRITERION 9

The HEQF prescribes supervised research from the level of an honours degree and this criterion must be evaluated for all degree programmes at level 8 or higher. For a Postgraduate Diploma (level 8) programme, a research report is not compulsory, but the programme may include supervised research.

An honours degree qualification should prepare students for research-based postgraduate study and should serve to consolidate and deepen the student's expertise in a particular discipline, and to develop research capacity in the methodology and techniques of that discipline. It must include conducting and reporting research under supervision, worth at least 30 credits, in a manner that is appropriate to the discipline or field of study.

A master degree must include a minimum of 60 credits at level 9 devoted to conducting and reporting research. A doctoral degree is entirely research-based. Any course work required as preparation or value addition may not contribute to the credit value of the qualification.

At a master degree or higher level, a judgement must be formed on the policy context that should guide research within the institution. Secondly, the appointment of supervisors, their suitability in terms of expertise, experience and research

activeness must be assessed, as should the process of research supervision and assessment. There should be a core of full-time academic staff available for teaching and supervision at this level and the programme should not rely solely on part-time academic staff. The institution must have a policy on research ethics and plagiarism and this must be commensurate with the programme level.

CRITERION 10

Programme coordination is an academic function and a full-time academic staff member should be allocated to this role. In the case of a programme being offered at multiple sites, one programme coordinator may suffice, provided that effective mechanisms exist to liaise and communicate with academics across the various sites. The role of the coordinator must be indicated in terms of *ms i*. Also, note that evidence should be provided of opportunities for student input in programme development and improvement.

CRITERIA 11 & 12

Evidence regarding programme development should be included. This goes beyond the mere policy level to the level of concrete examples of staff and student involvement in programme development. Institutions should indicate the strategies adopted to ensure a balance between, and mix of, different teaching and learning methods, and that suitable learning opportunities are provided to facilitate the acquisition of the knowledge and skills specified in the programme outcomes, and within the stipulated time. This criterion is linked also to Criterion 3 regarding staff opportunities to upgrade their teaching methods and skills. Institutions should indicate also how student feedback is used to improve the programme offering.

CRITERIA 13 & 14

Criterion 13 is directly linked to Criterion 6 on assessment. Under Criterion 13, institutions need to provide evidence that assessment is an integral part of the teaching and learning process and is systematically and purposefully used to generate data for grading, ranking, selecting and predicting, and for providing timely

feedback to inform teaching and learning and to improve the curriculum. Particular attention should be given to the integrity and security of the assessment system. Apart from the institutional policy context, the narrative offered should elaborate on how the policy is implemented at programme level. Student appeal and grievance procedures, in the event of a dispute regarding marks allocated, should be indicated clearly.

CRITERION 15

Some qualifications will be designed to incorporate periods of required work that integrate with classroom study. Where Work-Integrated Learning (WIL) (or experiential learning) is a structured part of a qualification the volume of learning allocated to WIL should be appropriate to the purpose of the qualification and to the cognitive demands of the learning outcomes and assessment criteria. The HEQF makes it clear that it is the responsibility of institutions that offer programmes requiring WIL credits to place students into WIL programmes. Such programmes must be appropriately structured, properly supervised and assessed.

CRITERION 16

Criterion 16 is related directly to Criterion 9 on postgraduate research. Here, the focus is on how the policies and procedures discussed under Criterion 9 have been applied in the programme. It focuses on the coordination of the postgraduate programme, the assessment of the research conducted by students and how the institution deals with examiners reports.

CRITERIA 17, 18 & 19

Criteria 17 and 18 deal with student throughput and employability and institutions should provide evidence that these aspects are monitored and managed to ensure that they meet the standards set. Criterion 19 deals with programme impact and evidence should indicate that the programme is reviewed regularly and its impact measured.

EVALUATOR RECOMMENDATIONS

On conclusion of the evaluation of all the criteria, the evaluator should come to a final recommendation. Evaluators could come to one of three recommendations:

The programme should be provisionally accredited, without conditions.

In this case, the programme has met all the minimum standards and could be awarded an accreditation status. Should there be any evidence of commendable practices, these could be cited here as a comment. Should there be specific aspects that do not warrant conditions to be set, these could be stated here in the form of recommendations for action (e.g. the institution should consider offering a wider range of electives for students to choose from).

The programme should be provisionally accredited, subject to conditions.

This recommendation is based on certain minimum standards that have not been met and require conditions to be set. These conditions must be met either **prior to** the institution enrolling students into the programme (e.g. it is a professional qualification and documentary proof that it is approved by the relevant body has not been submitted), or within a set period of time. **Short-term conditions** assume that the condition could be met within a ninety day period (e.g. revising the assessment policy to make provision for external moderation). **Long-term conditions** will require a longer period, of up to a year or more, to fix (e.g. widening access to the programme). You are required to use your discretion in deciding whether conditions should be short-term or long-term.

The programme should not be accredited

A recommendation for the non-accreditation of a programme is based on the consideration that the majority of important criteria have not been met. The reasons for non-accreditation should be formulated clearly and based on the narrative produced per criterion. A recommendation for the non-accreditation of a programme is based normally on a programme design that is seriously flawed, or a lack academic staff to develop the teaching and learning material or to provide academic leadership, or on the absence of an appropriate infrastructure for offering the programme. These aspects, which cannot be fixed in the short-

term, will result in a poor quality programme if it were allowed to be offered, and will put students at a disadvantage. The recommendation thus requires a rethinking of the offering.

CONCLUDING NOTE

If evaluators experience any difficulties in understanding the contents of this Manual, or are in need of further elaboration or clarification on any of the issues covered, contact should be made with the HEQC before the report is finalized.