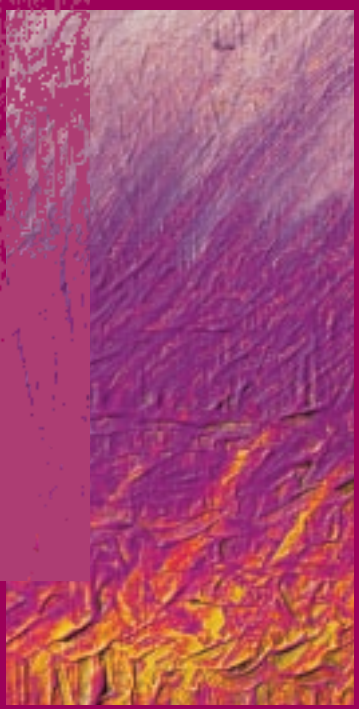
CHE

Higher Education Quality Committee

Criteria for Programme Accreditation



NOVEMBER 2004

CHE

Council on Higher Education
Higher Education Quality Committee

Criteria for Programme Accreditation

The Higher Education Quality Committee is a permanent committee of the Council on Higher Education

Published by:
The Council on Higher Education
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Website: http://www.che.ac.za

ISBN: 1-919856-42-0
Date of Publication: November 2004

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ACRONYMS

AUT	Universities and Technikons Advisory Council
CHE	Council on Higher Education
DoE	Department of Education
ETQA	Education and Training Quality Assurer
HEQC	Higher Education Quality Committee
MoU	Memorandum of Understanding
NPHE	National Plan for Higher Education
NQF	National Qualifications Framework
PQM	Programme and Qualifications Mix
RPL	Recognition of Prior Learning
SAQA	South African Qualifications Authority
SETA	Sector Education and Training Authority

1. INTRODUCTION

The Higher Education Act of 1997 assigns responsibility for quality assurance in higher education in South Africa to the Council on Higher Education (CHE). This responsibility is discharged through its permanent sub-committee, the Higher Education Quality Committee (HEQC). The mandate of the HEQC includes quality promotion, institutional audit and programme accreditation. As part of the task of building an effective national quality assurance system, the HEQC has also included capacity development and training as a critical component of its programme of activities.

Quality-related criteria constitute a crucial element in the execution of the HEQC's functions, fulfilling the dual purpose of serving as evaluative tools for the HEQC's audit and accreditation activities and setting broad benchmarks for quality management arrangements in higher education. The criteria are intended to enable institutions to analyse and reflect on their quality management arrangements and to guide the production of self-evaluation reports.

This document deals with the HEQC's criteria for programme accreditation and indicates the minimum standards for academic programmes. The criteria are intended to be used by:

(i) Higher education institutions:
- In applications for the accreditation of new programmes or the re-accreditation of existing programmes.[1]
- As guidelines for follow-up activities after HEQC decisions on accreditation or re-accreditation of programmes.

(ii) The HEQC's programme evaluators in evaluating applications for the accreditation of new programmes or the re-accreditation of existing programmes.

(iii) Stakeholders, especially students, as indicators of the minimum standards that the HEQC requires for programme quality.

The HEQC has taken the following contextual imperatives into account in developing the programme accreditation criteria:

- National policy for higher education as articulated in a range of government White Papers, legislation, regulations and planning documents.

1 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. An existing programme is one that is registered on the National Qualifications Framework (NQF) and has been accredited by the Universities and Technikons Advisory Council (AUT) or the South African Qualifications Authority (SAQA) or the HEQC.

- The HEQC's own policy positions as laid out in the F*ounding Document, Programme Accreditation Framework* and other policy documents.
- National benchmarks set by the higher education branch of the Department of Education (DoE) for institutional efficiency, which include increasing enrolments and graduate outputs, increasing research productivity and improving the diversity profile of graduates.
- The institutional quality landscape, which includes varying levels of capacity, as well as the fact that a number of institutions are involved in mergers and incorporations, and in changes of mission, focus or identity, as in the case of comprehensive institutions and universities of technology.
- Partnerships in higher education provision, which include collaboration between and among institutions on a regional basis, between public and private provider sectors, between universities and universities of technology, between higher education institutions and the business sector, and between institutions across national borders.
- Increasing instances of cross-border provision by foreign and South African higher education institutions, as well as the use of new modes of provision.

2. GENERAL REMARKS ON THE CRITERIA FOR PROGRAMME ACCREDITATION

The HEQC's criteria for programme accreditation should be used as the basis for an institution's self-evaluation of the programme(s) submitted for accreditation, along with additional benchmarks which the institution might set for itself. The HEQC will use the criteria, the self-evaluation report and supporting evidence provided by the institution, in the evaluation of applications for programme accreditation (new programmes) or re-accreditation (existing programmes).

The following should be noted:

(i) The HEQC's criteria for programme accreditation are categorised using an input, process, output and impact,[2] and review model. The different aspects of the model are to be viewed in terms of their internal relationships. A case in point is programme management, which has policy (input) aspects, but also entails a range of activities which have to do with the delivery (process) of the programme.

(ii) The criteria apply to all programmes at main campuses, satellite campuses and tuition centres.

2 This refers to the tracking of impact.

(iii) South African higher education institutions which offer programmes outside the country are subject to the HEQC's programme accreditation requirements for all their local as well as cross-border academic programmes. In addition, the quality requirements of the importing country have to be complied with. The HEQC will cooperate with national quality assurance agencies in countries where South African higher education institutions have an operational presence in order to share relevant accreditation and audit information.

(iv) Foreign institutions which offer higher education programmes in South Africa, including those institutions which are subject to the accreditation requirements of other national, regional or international agencies, are also subject to the HEQC's programme accreditation requirements. In addition, these institutions have to satisfy the registration requirements of the DoE and the qualification registration requirements of SAQA.

(v) The criteria apply to contact, distance education and e-learning programmes. Requirements pertaining specifically to distance education or e-learning are indicated, where applicable. Where necessary, additional criteria for distance learning provision, universities of technology and comprehensive institutions will be developed to supplement the criteria set out in this document.

(vi) The HEQC normally requires an accredited programme to establish itself reasonably well before the next higher level programme in the same field can be applied for. However, if an institution's mid-term progress report for a new programme (see below) is satisfactory, application could be made for the next higher level programme in the same field. For example, application could be made for a master's programme once an institution has submitted a satisfactory mid-term progress report for the honours programme.

(vii) In addition to the HEQC's criteria, programmes are required to comply with the following national requirements:

- In the case of public providers, the programme must be part of the institution's programme and qualification mix (PQM), as approved by the DoE.
- In the case of private providers, the institution must apply to the DoE for registration in terms of the requirements of the Higher Education Act No. 101 of 1997 and the Regulations of the Department of Education (2002), before the programme is provisionally accredited for the candidacy phase.
- The programme has to meet the national requirements pertaining to programmes which are at present being developed within the context of the NQF.
- The programme should be registered by SAQA on the NQF.
- The stipulations of the Labour Relations Act and conditions of service with regard to recruitment and employment of staff.
- Relevant labour legislation and regulations on health and safety in the workplace.

3. CRITERIA FOR NEW PROGRAMMES

3.1 Candidacy phase: Criteria for programme input

In its submission for candidacy status for a new programme, an institution has to demonstrate, firstly, that it meets the HEQC's criteria for the candidacy phase (the input criteria), or, alternatively, that it has the potential or capability to meet these criteria in a stipulated period of time. The institution's application for candidacy status should be based on a critical self-evaluation of the new programme measured against the requirements of the HEQC's programme input criteria.

Secondly, the institution has to submit a plan for the implementation of the new programme. The plan could specify, for example:

- Implementation steps for the new programme, together with time frames and budgetary allocations for each phase and the human resources for managing the implementation. This includes implementation of the policies, strategies, conditions, etc. specified in the criteria for the candidacy phase, as well as provision of the required infrastructure.
- Institutional strategies to ensure that the HEQC's criteria for programme progress, output and impact, and review are met in the accreditation phase of the new programme.

An HEQC panel of peers will evaluate applications for new programmes. The peer panel or the HEQC secretariat may also undertake a site visit, if necessary. If the requirements for candidacy status are met, the HEQC will award provisional accreditation to the new programme.[3]

Midway through the programme, the institution will be required to submit a progress report for evaluation by the HEQC secretariat. A site visit will be undertaken only where circumstances warrant it. The progress report should provide details of the following:

- Steps taken to address issues identified by the HEQC for urgent attention when the candidacy submission was approved have been addressed.
- Progress with the implementation of the programme in relation to the implementation plan submitted to the HEQC. This includes implementation of the policies, strategies, conditions, etc. specified in the criteria for the candidacy phase, as well as provision of the required infrastructure. This will provide an early warning (to the institution and to the HEQC) about problem areas, and an opportunity for appropriate developmental intervention, where necessary.
- Structures, strategies, processes, etc. which are in operation or in development to ensure that the HEQC's criteria for programme process, programme output and impact, and programme review in the accreditation phase of the programme are met.

3 A new programme receives full accreditation only after the requirements for the accreditation phase have been met.

The input criteria for a new programme indicate the minimum standards for activities which should take place and resources, conditions, etc. which should be available or present in order to offer the programme. Proper conceptualisation and design of a programme are important first steps towards achieving high quality educational provision. Design policies and procedures should ensure that the programme is part of the institution's mission and planning and is provided for in its resource allocation, is academically sound, takes the needs of students and other stakeholders into consideration, and articulates with other programmes, where possible.

Student recruitment needs to be undertaken as part of the marketing of the programme, and admission and selection policies and practices should be commensurate with its academic nature, within the framework of widening access and promoting equity in higher education.

Staff competence and effectiveness are critical for programme quality. An institution should provide incentives, resources and development opportunities for staff to meet professional goals, to contribute to realising the institution's mission through the programme, and to respond to the challenges currently facing professionals in higher education.

A strategy for teaching and learning is important in facilitating student learning. It should be appropriate for the institutional type and student composition and make provision for appropriate teaching and learning methods and the upgrading of teaching methods. It should set targets, develop plans for implementation, and find ways to monitor, evaluate and effect improvement in teaching and learning.

Student assessment and success are central indicators of teaching and learning effectiveness. An effective assessment system can support the goals of widening access, improving retention and throughput rates, and producing graduates with appropriate knowledge and skills. Although the curriculum may target knowledge, skills and attitudes appropriate to the goals of social and economic transformation, if assessment procedures fail to prioritise and test these competences, students are unlikely to acquire the intended learning outcomes. Assessment also has a critical influence on the quality of teaching and learning and can be used as a powerful point of leverage for change and improvement in education.

Suitable and adequate infrastructure, including library resources, support and access, is indispensable for supporting quality teaching and learning in a programme. Codes for clinical conduct and laboratory practice and safety are also necessary in the relevant programmes.

Programme administrative services play an important role in providing information to students on programme issues, managing the programme information system that keeps records of students in the programme, and ensuring the integrity of processes leading to the certification of the qualification.

Postgraduate studies and research training in the context of these studies constitute a core academic activity for many higher education institutions worldwide. Enabling policies and procedures must be in place in order to maintain and enhance the quality of postgraduate programmes.

Table 1: Criteria for programme input: Areas and relevant aspects

Areas	*Relevant aspects*	*Criterion*
1. Programme design	• Relation to institution's mission and planning • Needs of students and other stakeholders • Intellectual credibility • Coherence • Articulation • Characteristics and needs of professional and vocational education • Learning materials development	Criterion 1
2. Student recruitment, admission and selection	• Recruitment • Legislative issues • Widening of access • Equity • Assumptions of learning • Professional needs • Capacity of the programme to offer quality education	Criterion 2
3. Staffing	• Qualifications • Teaching experience • Assessment competence • Research profile • Staff development • Size and seniority • Full-time and part-time staff • Legislation and conditions of service • Procedures for selection, appointment, induction and payment • Contractual arrangements • Administrative and technical staff	Criterion 3 Criterion 4
4. Teaching and learning strategy	• Importance of promotion of student learning • Institutional type, mode(s) of delivery and student composition • Appropriate teaching and learning methods • Upgrading of teaching methods • Targets, implementation plans, and ways to monitor, evaluate impact, and effect improvement	Criterion 5

Areas	*Relevant aspects*	*Criterion*
5. Student assessment policies and procedures	• Internal assessment • Internal and external moderation • Monitoring of student progress • Validity and reliability of assessment • Recording of results • Security • Recognition of prior learning (RPL)	Criterion 6
6. Infrastructure and library resources	• Venues • IT infrastructure and training • Size and scope of library resources • Integration of library resources into curriculum • Management and maintenance of library resources • Library support and access to students	Criterion 7
7. Programme administrative services	• Provision of information • Identifying non-active and at-risk students • Dealing with the needs of a diverse student population • Ensuring the integrity of certification	Criterion 8
8. Postgraduate policies, regulations and procedures	• Policies, regulations and procedures • Equity and access • Preparation of students	Criterion 9

3.1.1 Programme design

CRITERION 1: *The programme is consonant with the institution's mission, forms part of institutional planning and resource allocation, meets national requirements, the needs of students and other stakeholders, and is intellectually credible. It is designed coherently and articulates well with other relevant programmes, where possible.*

In order to meet the criterion, the following is required at minimum:

(i) The programme is consonant with the institution's mission and goals and was approved by the appropriate institutional structures, including Senate/equivalent structure. Provision is made for the programme in the institution's planning and resource allocation processes.
(ii) The programme meets the national requirements pertaining to programmes which are at present being developed within the context of the NQF.
(iii) Learning outcomes, degree of curriculum choice, teaching and learning methods, modes of delivery, learning materials and expected completion time cater for the learning needs of its target student intake. Competences expected of students who successfully complete the programme are made explicit.

(iv) The design maintains an appropriate balance of theoretical, practical and experiential knowledge and skills. It has sufficient disciplinary content and theoretical depth, at the appropriate level, to serve its educational purposes.

(v) The design offers students learning and career pathways with opportunities for articulation with other programmes within and across institutions, where possible.

(vi) Modules and/or courses in the programme are coherently planned with regard to content, level, credits, purpose, outcomes, rules of combination, relative weight and delivery. Outsourcing of delivery is not permitted.

(vii) There is a policy and/or procedures for developing and evaluating learning materials and ensuring their alignment with the programme goals and underpinning philosophy. Where necessary, members of the academic staff are trained to develop learning materials.

(viii) Programme outcomes meet national and/or regional labour market, knowledge or other socio-cultural needs. The requirements of professional bodies are taken into consideration, where applicable. Relevant stakeholders, including academic peers from outside the institution, and employers and professional bodies where applicable, are involved in the development of the programme.

(ix) The characteristics and needs of professional and vocational education are catered for in the design of the programme, where applicable. This includes the following, in addition to (i) – (vii) above:

- The programme promotes the students' understanding of the specific occupation for which they are being trained.
- Students master techniques and skills required for a specific profession or occupation.
- Work-based learning and placement in a work-based environment form an integral part of the curriculum, where possible.[4]

(x) In the case of institutions with service learning as part of their mission:

- Service learning programmes are integrated into institutional and academic planning, as part of the institution's mission and strategic goals.
- Enabling mechanisms (which may include incentives) are in place to support the implementation of service learning, including staff and student capacity development.

3.1.2 Student recruitment, admission and selection

CRITERION 2: *Recruitment documentation informs potential students of the programme accurately and sufficiently, and admission adheres to current legislation. Admission and selection of students are commensurate with the programme's academic requirements, within a framework of widened access and equity. The number of students selected takes into account the programme's intended learning outcomes, its capacity to offer good quality education and the needs of the particular profession (in the case of professional and vocational programmes).*

4 In some professional fields of study, work-based learning traditionally occurs after the award of the qualification, for example, in accountancy.

In order to meet the criterion, the following is required at minimum:

(i) Advertising and promotional materials contain accurate and sufficient information about the programme with regard to admission policies, completion requirements and academic standards. Marketing and advertising are done according to DoE and SAQA regulations and accurate information is provided about the NQF level and the accreditation status of the programme.
(ii) Admission, matriculation exemption, age exemption, etc. adhere to current legislation.
(iii) The programme's admission criteria are in line with the National Plan for Higher Education's (NPHE's) goal of widening access to higher education. Equity targets are clearly stated, as are the plans for attaining them. Provision is made, where possible, for flexible entry routes, which includes RPL with regard to general admission requirements, as well as additional requirements for the programme, where applicable. Admission of students through an RPL route should not constitute more than 10 percent of the student intake for the programme.[5]
(iv) Admission requirements are in line with the degree of complexity of learning required in the programme, within the context of widening access and promoting equity.
(v) Selection criteria are explicit and indicate how they contribute to institutional plans for diversity. The number of students selected for the programme does not exceed the capacity available for offering good quality education. The number of students is balanced against the intended learning outcomes of the programme and takes into account the mode(s) of delivery and the programme's components (modules/courses).
(vi) In the case of professional and vocational programmes, the quality and number of students admitted takes into account the needs of the particular profession, consonant with the appropriate equity considerations.

3.1.3 Staffing

CRITERION 3: *Academic staff responsible for the programme are suitably qualified and have sufficient relevant experience and teaching competence, and their assessment competence and research profile are adequate for the nature and level of the programme. The institution and/or other recognised agencies contracted by the institution provide opportunities for academic staff to enhance their competences and to support their professional growth and development.*

5 Only in exceptional circumstances and only in undergraduate programmes will admission of students through an RPL route be allowed to exceed 10% of the total number of students in the programme.

In order to meet the criterion, the following is required at minimum:

(i) Academic staff for undergraduate programmes have relevant academic qualifications higher than the exit level of the programme, but at minimum a degree. Academic staff for postgraduate programmes have relevant academic qualifications at least on the same level as the exit level of the programme. At least 50 percent of the academic staff for postgraduate programmes have relevant academic qualifications higher than the exit level of the programme.[6] The qualifications of academic staff were awarded by recognised higher education institutions.

(ii) The majority of full-time academic staff has two or more years of teaching experience in a recognised higher education institution, and in areas pertinent to the programme. In the case of professional programmes, a sufficient number of academic staff members also have relevant professional experience. Qualified and experienced academic staff design the learning programme, although junior or part-time tutors may act as facilitators of learning.

(iii) Academic staff are competent to apply the assessment policies of the institution. Some of the academic staff responsible for the programme have at least two years' experience of student assessment at the exit level of the programme. There is ongoing professional development and training of staff as assessors in line with SAQA requirements.

(iv) Academic staff members have research experience through their own research and/or studies toward higher education qualifications. The research area(s) of some of the academic staff members are relevant to the subject areas of the programme. In the case of postgraduate programmes, the research profile of the staff includes recognised research outputs.

(v) The institution and/or other recognised agencies contracted by the institution provide orientation and induction opportunities in which new academic staff members participate. Provision is made for regular staff development opportunities in which relevant academic staff participate.

CRITERION 4: *The academic and support staff complement is of sufficient size and seniority for the nature and field of the programme and the size of the student body to ensure that all activities related to the programme can be carried out effectively. The ratio of full-time to part-time staff is appropriate. The recruitment and employment of staff follows relevant legislation and appropriate administrative procedures, including redress and equity considerations. Support staff are adequately qualified and their knowledge and skills are regularly updated.*

In order to meet the criterion, the following is required at minimum:

(i) The staff:student ratio expressed as full-time equivalents is suitable for the nature and field of the programme and number of enrolled students. Sufficient support staff dedicated to the programme are available, where appropriate.

6 This does not apply to doctoral programmes, or to master's programmes in certain fields of study, for example medicine, where MMed degrees are regarded as adequate.

(ii) The programme has an appropriate full-time:part-time staff ratio to ensure working conditions conducive to teaching and learning and research. Part-time and junior staff and tutors are trained, where necessary, and monitored by full-time staff.
(iii) Recruitment and employment of staff adhere to the stipulations of the Labour Relations Act and to conditions of service, and there are appropriate administrative procedures for the selection, appointment, induction and payment of staff members and tutors. Redress and equity considerations receive due attention in the appointment of staff.
(iv) The academic staff complement is such that it ensures that students are exposed to a diversity of ideas, styles and approaches.
(v) Contractual arrangements relating to the hours and workload of staff ensure that all programme quality assurance, teaching, research, learning support, materials development, assessment, monitoring of part-time staff (where applicable), counselling and administrative activities take place.
(vi) Administrative, technical and academic development support staff are adequately qualified for their duties, and opportunities exist for staff development.
(vii) For distance learning programmes, sufficient administrative and technical staff are employed to handle the specialised tasks of registry, dispatch, management of assignments, record-keeping, and other issues in relation to student needs.

3.1.4 Teaching and learning strategy

CRITERION 5: *The institution gives recognition to the importance of promoting student learning. The teaching and learning strategy is appropriate for the institutional type (as reflected in its mission), mode(s) of delivery and student composition, contains mechanisms to ensure the appropriateness of teaching and learning methods, and makes provision for staff to upgrade their teaching methods. The strategy sets targets, plans for implementation, and mechanisms to monitor progress, evaluate impact and effect improvement.*

In order to meet the criterion, the following is required at minimum:

(i) Recognition of the importance of the promotion of student learning is reflected in the institution's central operating policies and procedures, including resource allocation, provision of support services, marketing, appointments and promotions.
(ii) A teaching and learning strategy is in place which:
- Is appropriate for the institutional type as reflected in its mission (programme types, research, teaching), mode(s) of delivery (contact/distance/e-learning), and its student composition (age, full-time/part-time, advantaged/disadvantaged), etc.
- Has mechanisms to ensure that teaching and learning methods are appropriate for the design and use of learning materials and instructional and learning technology.
- Provides for staff development opportunities where staff can upgrade their teaching methods.

- Contains targets, plans for implementation, ways of monitoring progress and evaluating impact, and mechanisms for feedback and improvement.

3.1.5 Student assessment policies and procedures [7]

CRITERION 6: *The different modes of delivery of the programme have appropriate policies and procedures for internal assessment; internal and external moderation; monitoring of student progress; explicitness, validity and reliability of assessment practices; recording of assessment results; settling of disputes; the rigour and security of the assessment system; RPL; and for the development of staff competence in assessment.*

In order to meet the criterion, the following is required at minimum:

(i) The programme has appropriate policies and procedures in all modes of delivery for:
- Internal assessment of student learning achievements by academic staff responsible for teaching a course/module of the programme in a system that includes internal moderation.
- External moderation of students' learning achievements by appropriately qualified personnel. Moderators are appointed in terms of clear criteria and procedures and conduct their responsibilities in terms of clear guidelines.
- Monitoring student progress in the course of the programme.
- Ensuring the validity and reliability of assessment practices.
- Secure and reliable recording of assessment results.
- Settling of student disputes regarding assessment results.
- Ensuring the security of the assessment system, especially with regard to plagiarism and other misdemeanours.
- Development of staff competence in assessment.

(ii) There are appropriate policies and procedures for RPL, including the identification, documentation, assessment, evaluation and transcription of prior learning against specified learning outcomes, so that it can articulate with current programmes and qualifications. Assessment instruments are designed for RPL in accordance with the institution's policies on fair and transparent assessment.

3.1.6 Infrastructure and library resources

CRITERION 7: *Suitable and sufficient venues, IT infrastructure and library resources are available for students and staff in the programme. Policies ensure the proper management and maintenance of library resources, including support and access for students and staff. Staff development for library personnel takes place on a regular basis.*

7 Student assessment practices are discussed in the Accreditation Phase, section 3.2.1.4

In order to meet the criterion, the following is required at minimum:

(i) Suitable and sufficient venues are available at all official sites of learning where the programme is offered, including teaching and learning venues, laboratories and clinical facilities, where appropriate. There are codes for clinical conduct, laboratory practice and safety, where appropriate. Venue allocation and timetabling are carefully planned to accommodate the needs of students.

(ii) Suitable and sufficient IT infrastructure, as determined by the nature of the programme, is available at all sites of learning. This includes functionally appropriate hardware (computers and printers), software (programmes) and databases. The infrastructure is properly maintained and continuously upgraded and adequate funds are available for this purpose. Students and staff are trained in the use of technology required for the programme.

(iii) Suitable and sufficient library resources exist which:
- Complement the curriculum.
- Provide incentives for students to learn according to their own needs, capacity and pace.
- Support appropriate professional and scholarly activities of students and staff involved in the programme.

(iv) Policies exist for the proper management and maintenance of library resources, and for their continuous renewal and expansion. These policies are integrated into the institution's financial plan.

(v) On- and off-campus students have adequate library support and adequate access to library research and computing facilities.

(vi) Staff development takes place on a regular basis to update the library staff's knowledge and skills.

3.1.7 Programme administrative services

CRITERION 8: *The programme has effective administrative services for providing information, managing the programme information system, dealing with a diverse student population, and ensuring the integrity of processes leading to certification of the qualification obtained through the programme.*

In order to meet the criterion, the following is required at minimum:

(i) The programme information system is managed effectively in order to provide reliable information on the following:
- Venues, timetables, access to library and IT facilities, availability of academic and support staff for student consultations, and student support services. Information and communication needs of students in remote (rural) areas receive due attention.
- Records of the students in the programme, including admission, progression, grades/marks, fees and graduation.
- Records of students in the programme for the National Learner Records Database (NLRD) of SAQA.

(ii) Effective administrative systems are in place for:
- Identifying academically non-active students, particularly in distance education programmes.
- Monitoring student performance in order to ensure timely identification of at-risk students. There are strategies for advising students on improving their chances of success and for referral to appropriate academic development programmes. Rules for re-admission to programmes are clear and are sensitively applied.
- Dealing with the needs of a diverse student population.

(iii) Clear and efficient arrangements are in place for ensuring that the integrity of certification processes for the qualification obtained through the programme is not compromised. These include:
- Effective mechanisms to quality assure the processing and issuing of certificates.
- Effective security measures to prevent fraud or the illegal issuing of certificates.

3.1.8 Postgraduate policies, procedures and regulations [8]

CRITERION 9: *Postgraduate programmes have appropriate policies, procedures and regulations for the admission and selection of students, the selection and appointment of supervisors, and the definition of the roles and responsibilities of supervisors and students, etc.*

In order to meet the criterion, the following is required at minimum:

(i) Appropriate policies, procedures and regulations are in place for student admission, selection and assessment. These are communicated to all postgraduate students, and academic and administrative staff, and implemented consistently across the institution and programme.

(ii) The selection and appointment criteria in place for postgraduate supervisors are acceptable to the research community in the area of study. These include the following:
- The supervisor has a qualification in a relevant field of study higher than, or at least at the same level as, the exit level of the postgraduate programme he/she is supervising.
- The supervisor has an appropriate research track record, as well as experience, expertise and peer recognition in the field of study.
- In the case of inexperienced or new supervisors, there is ongoing staff development and support, and joint supervision is explored as an option.

(iii) Explicit guidelines exist on the roles and responsibilities of supervisors and students and other matters relevant to the performance of research. These include the following:
- The nature, format and expected turnaround time for work submitted to the supervisor.
- Forms of assessment, and the communication of feedback to the student, which includes:

8 The delivery of postgraduate programmes is dealt with in the Criteria for Process in section 3.2.1.6.

- The periodicity of contact between student and supervisor, and the schedule for the submission of progress reports and written work.
- Research ethics, code of conduct, regulations on plagiarism and intellectual property rights.
- Examination and qualification requirements.

3.2 Accreditation phase

The following steps lead to accreditation:

(i) Within one year of the first cohort of students graduating from the new programme, the institution must demonstrate that it has met the conditions set by the HEQC during the candidacy phase, which include conditions relating to the evaluation of the mid-term report from the institution. Acceptable reasons and relevant evidence have to be provided in instances where the conditions have not been met.
(ii) The institution is also required to conduct a self-evaluation of the programme, using the HEQC's criteria for the accreditation phase, which include those for programme input,[9] process, output and impact, and review.
(iii) The institution must submit a programme improvement plan to address areas in need of attention as identified in the self-evaluation.
(iv) A site visit may be conducted, if necessary.

If the institution's submission is approved by the HEQC, the programme obtains accreditation status.

It should be noted that in both phases of accreditation institutions will have the opportunity to further develop the programme where it does not meet the required criteria, on the expectation that they have the ability to remedy the problem areas and attain minimum standards within a stipulated period of time.

3.2.1. Criteria for programme process

These criteria pertain to processes and activities which relate to the delivery of the programme.

The programme has to be effectively coordinated in order to facilitate the attainment of its intended purposes and outcomes. Opportunities should also exist for student input and participation in the process, where relevant.

9 The institution also has to evaluate whether the policies, strategies, conditions, etc. specified in the criteria for the candidacy phase of the programme have been implemented and whether the required infrastructure is in place.

Academic development plays an important role in addressing the social imperatives of greater access and equity. Student and staff academic development can play a role in improving retention and graduation rates, as well as in increasing the number of students completing postgraduate qualifications, especially under-prepared students from historically disadvantaged backgrounds.

It is important that teaching and learning interactions are effective and based on sound insights into the processes of teaching and learning. Teaching and learning methods and learning materials should be appropriate in order to facilitate achievement of the purposes and outcomes of the programme.

Effective assessment practices, which include internal and external assessment and moderation, are critical for testing student competence to acquire the intended learning outcomes and to improve the quality of teaching and learning. The assessment system should also be reliable, rigorous and secure.

Work-based learning forms an essential part of many professional and vocational programmes. Coordination of work-based learning should be effective and contribute to achieving the purposes of the programme.

Table 2: Criteria for programme process: Areas and relevant aspects

Areas	*Relevant aspects*	*Criterion*
1. Programme coordination	• Mandate and responsibilities of the programme coordinator(s) • Student input and participation • Implementation of policies for ensuring the integrity of certification	Criterion 10
2. Academic development for student success	• Student and staff development • Curriculum development • Additional student academic support	Criterion 11
3. Teaching and learning interactions	• Guidance to students on programme integration and outcomes • Teaching and learning methods • Suitable learning opportunities • Student involvement	Criterion 12
4. Student assessment practices	• Integral part of teaching and learning • Internal (or external) assessment • Internal and external moderation • Reliability • Rigour and security	Criterion 13 Criterion 14

Areas	*Relevant aspects*	*Criterion*
5. Coordination of work-based learning	• Communication • Recording system • Monitoring system • Mentoring system	Criterion 15
6. Delivery of postgraduate programmes	• Management of the postgraduate programme • Assessment • Implementation of policies for student admission and selection • Implementation of criteria for selection and appointment of supervisors • Implementation of guidelines on roles and responsibilities of supervisors and students	Criterion 16

3.2.1.1 Programme coordination

CRITERION 10: *The programme is effectively coordinated in order to facilitate the attainment of its intended purposes and outcomes.*

In order to meet the criterion, the following is required at minimum:

(i) An academic is identified as programme coordinator and operates within the framework of an agreed-upon mandate and defined procedures and responsibilities. This includes responsibility for:
- Ensuring the academic coherence and integrity of the programme and that all conditions for the delivery of the programme are met.
- Coordination of logistical and other issues regarding:
  - The day-to-day delivery of the programme.
  - All aspects of the programme quality management system, including the provision of resources.
  - The review of the programme and feedback with a view to improvement.
  - Monitoring of expenditure.

(ii) Opportunities exist for student input and participation in relevant aspects of programme coordination.

(iii) Policies for ensuring the integrity of certification processes for the qualification obtained through the programme are effectively implemented.[10] These include:
- Mechanisms for monitoring the eligibility of candidates for the award of certificates.
- Mechanisms for quality assuring the processing and issuing of certificates.
- Security measures for preventing fraud or the illegal issuing of certificates.

10 See also 3.1.7 above.

3.2.1.2 Academic development for student success

CRITERION 11: *Academic development initiatives promote student, staff and curriculum development and offer academic support for students, where necessary.*

In order to meet the criterion, the following is required at minimum:

(i) Staff responsible for academic development are adequately qualified and experienced for their task, and their knowledge and skills are regularly updated.
(ii) Student and staff development initiatives are responsive to the needs of the students and staff. This includes foundational and skills-oriented provision for students.
(iii) Curriculum development at programme and course/module levels includes strategies for language skills development, numeracy and cognitive skills which enhance the use of disciplinary discourse and skills by students.
(iv) Additional student academic support is offered where necessary.
(v) The effectiveness of academic development initiatives is regularly monitored and feedback is used for improvement.

3.2.1.3 Teaching and learning interactions

CRITERION 12: *Effective teaching and learning methods and suitable learning materials and learning opportunities facilitate the achievement of the purposes and outcomes of the programme.*

In order to meet the criterion, the following is required at minimum:

(i) Students are provided with guidance on how the different components of the programme (for example, subjects, courses and/or modules) contribute to the learning outcomes of the programme.
(ii) There is an appropriate balance between, and mix of, different teaching and learning methods. Teaching and learning methods are appropriate to the design and use of the learning materials and instructional and learning technology.
(iii) Suitable learning opportunities are provided to facilitate the acquisition of the knowledge and skills specified in the programme outcomes, and within the stipulated time.
(iv) Students actively participate in the teaching and learning process.
(v) The staff have opportunities to upgrade their teaching methods and there is facilitation of suitable learning opportunities.
(vi) The effectiveness of teaching and learning interactions is regularly monitored and the results are used for improvement.

3.2.1.4 Student assessment practices

CRITERION 13: *The programme has effective assessment practices which include internal (or external) assessment, as well as internal and external moderation.*

In order to meet the criterion, the following is required at minimum:

(i) 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.

(ii) The learning achievements of students are internally assessed by the academic staff responsible for teaching a course/module in terms of a system that includes internal moderation. This includes:
- Academic staff who teach a course/module are responsible for designing, implementing and marking both formative and summative student assessments, for recording results and for feedback to students.
- For summative assessment, especially where more than one marker is involved, internal moderation checks are undertaken to ensure the reliability of the assessment procedures.
- Procedures are in place and are followed to receive, record, process, and turn around assignments within a time frame that allows students to benefit from feedback prior to the submission of further assessment tasks.

(iii) The learning achievements of students on the exit level of a qualification are externally moderated by appropriately qualified people who have been appointed according to clear criteria and procedures and who conduct their responsibilities in terms of clear guidelines. External moderation includes the following:
- External moderators are recommended by the examining academic department, are independent experts in their fields, have qualifications at least on the same level as the qualification being examined, are changed regularly, are not appointed as part of reciprocal arrangements (where possible), and are approved by and responsible to Senate/equivalent body.
- The institution provides information on the curriculum and on continuous assessment, and guidelines to assist external moderators in the completion of their reports.
- External moderators mark fully at the exit level of the programme at least 10 percent of the examination scripts for each paper written and do random checks of at least 20 percent of examination scripts for each paper.
- Completed external moderator reports are returned to the lecturer concerned and also to the programme coordinator or head of department/school. Problems are discussed with the lecturer concerned and the programme coordinator monitors the implementation of agreed improvements. External moderators approve the final marks list for the qualification concerned.

- External moderators are expected to comment on the validity of the assessment instruments, the quality of student performance and the standard of student attainment, the reliability of the marking process, and any concerns or irregularities with respect to the observation of institutional/professional regulations.

(iv) Assessment practices are effective and reliable in measuring and recording student attainment of the intended learning outcomes. This includes the following:

- Assessment criteria are commensurate with the level of the qualification, the requirements of SAQA and, where appropriate, professional bodies, and are made explicit to staff and students.
- Learning activities and the required assessment performances are both aligned with learning outcomes at the programme and modular level.
- Learning outcomes for a programme/module and their link to assessment criteria and judgements are clearly stated and communicated to students. A range of appropriate assessment tasks is effective in measuring student attainment of the intended learning outcomes. There is at least one integrated assessment procedure for each qualification which is a valid test of the key purposes of the programme.
- A system is in operation for maximising the accuracy, consistency and credibility of results, including consistency of marking and concurrence between assessors and external examiners on the nature and quality of the evidence which indicates achievement of learning outcomes.
- Students' assessment records are reliable and secure. Assessment data is accessible to academic coordinators, administrators, teaching staff and students, as appropriate.

(v) RPL is done in an effective, reliable and consistent manner.

CRITERION 14: *The programme has taken measures to ensure the reliability, rigour and security of the assessment system.*

In order to meet the criterion, the following is required at minimum:

The assessment system is rigorous and secure. This includes:

- Institutional/faculty/professional rules governing assessment are published and clearly communicated to students and relevant stakeholders.
- Evidence is provided to demonstrate that these rules are widely adhered to.
- Breaches of assessment regulations are dealt with effectively and timeously.
- Students are provided with information and guidance on their rights and responsibilities regarding assessment processes (for example, definitions of and regulations on plagiarism, penalties, terms of appeal, supplementary examinations, etc.).
- Student appeals procedures are explicit, fair and effective.
- There are clear and consistent published guidelines/regulations for:
  - Marking and grading of results.
  - Aggregation of marks and grades.
  - Progression and final awards.
  - Credit allocation and articulation.

3.2.1.5 Coordination of work-based learning [11]

CRITERION 15: *The coordination of work-based learning is done effectively in all components of applicable programmes. This includes an adequate infrastructure, effective communication, recording of progress made, monitoring and mentoring.*

In order to meet the criterion, the following is required at minimum:

(i) Learning contracts or agreements are implemented through which the student, the higher education institution and the employer can negotiate, approve and assess the objectives and outcomes of the learning process. Various parties, i.e. the institution, students, mentors and employers, adhere to the contract or agreement on their roles and responsibilities.
(ii) Regular and effective communication takes place between the institution, students, mentors and employers involved in work-based learning. Good working relations are maintained between the various parties involved.
(iii) A system (both at the institution and at the place of employment) is in operation to record and monitor regularly and systematically the progress of the student's learning experience in the workplace.
(iv) A mentoring system enables the student to recognise strengths and weaknesses in his/her work, to develop existing and new abilities, and to gain knowledge of work practices.

3.2.1.6 Delivery of postgraduate programmes

CRITERION 16: *The postgraduate programme is managed properly, offers opportunities for students to develop research competence, and ensures that research is properly assessed. Policies for student admission and selection, criteria for the selection and appointment of supervisors, and guidelines on the roles and responsibilities of supervisors and students are effectively implemented.*

In order to meet the criterion, the following is required at minimum:

(i) The postgraduate programme is managed properly and offers students opportunities to develop research competence. This includes the following:
- A senior academic with research and postgraduate supervision experience:
  - Coordinates research programmes, monitors the progress of postgraduate students and oversees assessment procedures.
  - Coordinates structured master's and doctoral programmes, monitors the progress of postgraduate students and oversees assessment procedures.

11 In some professional programmes, e.g. law and theology, work-based learning does not traditionally form part of the curriculum. In some professional fields of study, work-based learning takes place after the award of the qualification, as, for example, in accountancy.

- Training is provided in research skills, including guidance on research design and methodology. Training is also provided in language, writing and numeracy skills, where required. Employment-related skills are developed, where appropriate.
- Monitoring and review of the postgraduate system takes place regularly and includes student feedback on the quality of the learning experience, supervision and support infrastructure.

(ii) Research is properly assessed, which includes the following (in addition to the requirements for assessment specified in 3.2.1.4):
- At least one examiner external to the institution is appointed per dissertation/thesis.
- Without undermining the principle of assessment based on academic judgement, assessment decisions are made transparently and students are afforded reasonable access to information (e.g. examiners' reports).
- There are opportunities for students to defend their theses (e.g. through an oral defence).
- Higher degree committees or similar structures consider examiners' reports and make considered decisions about examination outcomes.

(iii) Policies for student admission and selection are effectively implemented (see 3.1.7).

(iv) Criteria for the selection and appointment of postgraduate supervisors are effectively implemented, as well as guidelines on the roles and responsibilities of supervisors and students (see 3.1.7).

3.2.2 Criteria for programme output and impact

These criteria pertain to what is delivered and attained by a programme. Programmes have to be effective with regard to student retention and throughput rates, especially in relation to race and gender equity. The programme should contribute to enhancing the employability of students and alleviating shortages of expertise in relevant fields, in cases where these are the desired outcomes of the programme.

Table 3: Criteria for programme output and impact: Areas and relevant aspects

Areas	*Relevant aspects*	*Criterion*
1. Student retention and throughput rates	• Monitoring of information • Remedial action • Profiles of entering and qualifying class	Criterion 17
2. Programme impact	• Employability of students • External acknowledgement of programme	Criterion 18

CRITERION 17: *Student retention and throughput rates in the programme are monitored, especially in terms of race and gender equity, and remedial measures are taken, where necessary.*

In order to meet the criterion, the following is required at minimum:

(i) The programme coordinator has access to and monitors information on retention and throughput rates for the programme, also in terms of national benchmarks. Appropriate remedial action is taken where necessary.
(ii) The race and gender profile of the qualifying class increasingly resembles that of the entering class.

CRITERION 18: *The programme has taken steps to enhance the employability of students and to alleviate shortages of expertise in relevant fields, in cases where these are the desired outcomes of the programme.*

In order to meet the criterion, the following is expected at minimum:

(i) There is evidence that the programme attempted to have an impact on the employability of students, where these are the desired outcomes of the programme.
(ii) Conscious efforts are made to get the programme acknowledged in the workplace/ community and by other institutions. An improvement plan is put into operation, where necessary.

3.2.3 Criteria for programme review

User surveys which gather and analyse information from different stakeholders are important instruments in evaluating the effectiveness of the programme. Examples are student satisfaction surveys, graduate tracking surveys and employer satisfaction surveys.

Reviews of the effectiveness of benchmarking in the programme against equivalent quality reference points, both nationally and internationally, are a useful source of information for goal-setting and continuous self-improvement in the programme.

Impact studies are important instruments for measuring and evaluating the impact of the programme on the employability of students and in alleviating shortages of expertise in relevant fields, where these are the desired outcomes of the programme. Impact studies could also ascertain the degree of acknowledgement of the programme in the community, by other institutions, and in the workplace, where applicable.

Table 4: Criterion for programme review: Area and relevant aspects

Areas	*Relevant aspects*	*Criterion*
Programme review	• User surveys • Reviews • Impact studies • Use of results	Criterion 19

CRITERION 19: *User surveys, reviews and impact studies on the effectiveness of the programme are undertaken at regular intervals. Results are used to improve the programme's design, delivery and resourcing, and for staff development and student support, where necessary.*

In order to meet the criterion, the following is required at minimum:

(i) User surveys are undertaken at regular intervals for feedback from academics involved in the programme, graduates, peers, external moderators, professional bodies and employers, where applicable, to ascertain whether the programme is attaining its intended outcomes.
(ii) There are regular reviews of the effectiveness of benchmarking in the programme against equivalent national and international reference points, with a view to goal-setting and continuous self-improvement in the programme.
(iii) Student throughput and retention rates are regularly reviewed, also with regard to national requirements.
(iv) Impact studies are regularly undertaken to measure and evaluate the impact of the programme and its graduates on the employability of students and in alleviating shortages of expertise in relevant fields, where these are the desired outcomes of the programme. Impact studies could also ascertain the degree of acknowledgement of the programme in the community, by other institutions, and in the workplace, where applicable.
(v) Results of user surveys, reviews and impact studies are used in a regular evaluation of all programme aspects and to develop improvement plans.

4. CRITERIA FOR EXISTING PROGRAMMES

It should be noted that, in general, existing programmes will not be re-accredited by the HEQC in its schedule of activities planned for 2004 – 2009. Where statutory councils require the re-accreditation of programmes, the HEQC will undertake this jointly with these bodies in a range of cooperation modalities. The HEQC will undertake re-accreditation of existing programmes in the period 2007 – 2009, if audits or the re-accreditation of existing programmes through national reviews point to serious problem areas.

The criteria for the re-accreditation of existing programmes are identical to those for new programmes and comprise the same categories of programme input, process, output and impact, and review. The criteria should be used as the basis for an institution's self-evaluation of the programme(s) concerned, along with additional benchmarks which the institution might set for itself. HEQC panels of peer reviewers will use the criteria, together with the self-evaluation report and supporting evidence provided by the institution, in the evaluation of existing programmes.

5. CRITERIA AND THE OUTCOMES OF PROGRAMME EVALUATION

Academic programmes will be evaluated by HEQC-appointed peer review panels of subject specialists against the criteria indicated above. All the criteria are regarded as relevant for ensuring and enhancing programme quality. The HEQC also recognises the need for flexibility in the interpretation of the criteria, since the relative importance and weight to be attached to specific programme areas and their related criteria may differ between programmes. For example, the availability of advanced computer hardware and software should be more crucial for a programme in computer science than for one in philosophy. Members of the peer review panel have the responsibility for using their discipline and subject knowledge to make these judgements within the context of the programme that is evaluated.

The review panel will first evaluate the programme against each individual criterion, using the following categories to classify the results in each instance:

(i) *Commend:* All the minimum standards specified in the criterion were fully met and, in addition, good practices and innovation were identified in relation to the criterion.
(ii) *Meets minimum standards:* Minimum standards as specified in the criterion were met.
(iii) *Needs improvement:* Did not comply with all the minimum standards specified in the criterion. Problems/weaknesses could be addressed in a short period of time.

(iv) *Does not comply:* Did not comply with the majority of the minimum standards specified in the criterion.

The outcomes of the programme evaluation as a whole should be determined in a holistic manner and not by merely calculating the sum total of the evaluations against individual criteria. The following classification will be used for the accreditation outcomes of the programme as a whole:

Table 5: Criteria, judgements and outcomes

	Evaluation against HEQC criteria	***Classification of accreditation outcomes***
1. New programmes (a) Candidacy phase	**Exceeds minimum standards:** All minimum standards specified in the criteria were met and, in addition, examples of good practice and innovation were identified in relation to several criteria.	Provisionally accredited.[12]
	Complies with minimum standards: All minimum standards specified in the criteria were met.	Provisionally accredited.
	Needs improvement: Not all minimum standards specified in the criteria were met. Problems/ weaknesses could be addressed in a short period of time.	Provisionally accredited (with conditions).
	Does not meet minimum standards: Did not meet the majority of minimum standards specified in the criteria.	Not provisionally accredited.
(b) Accreditation phase	**Exceeds minimum standards:** All minimum standards specified in the criteria were met and, in addition, examples of good practice and innovation were identified in relation to several criteria.	Accredited.
	Complies with minimum standards: All minimum standards specified in the criteria were met.	Accredited.

12 New programmes are only provisionally accredited during the candidacy phase. Full accreditation is granted if the criteria for the accreditation phase are met.

	Evaluation against HEQC criteria	*Classification of accreditation outcomes*
	Needs improvement: Not all minimum standards specified in the criteria were met. Problems/ weaknesses could be addressed in a short period of time.	Accredited (with conditions).
	Does not meet minimum standards: Did not meet the majority of minimum standards specified in the criteria.	Not accredited.
2. Existing programmes	**Exceeds minimum standards:** All minimum standards specified in the criteria were met and, in addition, examples of good practice and innovation were identified in relation to several criteria.	Accredited.
	Complies with minimum standards: All minimum standards specified in the criteria were met.	Accredited.
	Needs improvement: Not all minimum standards specified in the criteria were met. Problems/ weaknesses could be addressed in a short period of time.	Accredited (with conditions).
	Does not meet minimum standards: Did not meet the majority of minimum standards specified in the criteria.	Not accredited.

SUMMARY OF CRITERIA FOR PROGRAMME ACCREDITATION

	Programme areas	*Criterion*	*Section*
INPUT	Programme design	1	3.1.1
	Student recruitment, admission and selection	2	3.1.2
	Staffing	3 & 4	3.1.3
	Teaching and learning strategy	5	3.1.4
	Student assessment policies and procedures	6	3.1.5
	Infrastructure and library resources	7	3.1.6
	Programme administrative services	8	3.1.7
	Postgraduate policies, regulations and procedures	9	3.1.8
PROCESS	Programme coordination	10	3.2.1.1
	Academic development for student success	11	3.2.1.2
	Teaching and learning interactions	12	3.2.1.3
	Student assessment practices	13 & 14	3.2.1.4
	Coordination of work-based learning	15	3.2.1.5
	Delivery of postgraduate programmes	16	3.2.1.6
OUTPUT AND IMPACT	Student retention and throughput rates	17	3.2.2
	Programme impact	18	
REVIEW	All of the above programme areas	19	3.2.3

HEQC ACCREDITATION PROCESS FOR NEW PROGRAMMES

Candidacy phase

Submission to HEQC of application for candidacy status for new programme

(i) Self-evaluation of new programme against HEQC's criteria for programme input.

(ii) Plan for implementation of new programme.

↓

Evaluation by HEQC panel of peers (site visit, if necessary)

↓

Decision by HEQC Board

↓

Publication of decision only on HEQC website

Mid-term progress report

(i) Submission of institutional progress report on programme for evaluation by HEQC secretariat.

(ii) Site visit only where circumstances warrant it.

(iii) Communication of outcome of evaluation to institution.

↓

Accreditation phase

Submission to HEQC of application for accreditation status for programme with candidacy status

(i) Demonstration that conditions set during candidacy phase have been met.

(ii) Self-evaluation of programme using HEQC's criteria for programme input, process, output and impact, and review.

↓

Evaluation by HEQC panel of peers (site visit, if necessary)

↓

Evaluation reports to institution for comments on factual errors, discrepancies and omissions

↓

Evaluation reports to HEQC Board, together with institution's comments

↓

Decision by HEQC Board

↓

Final report to institution

↓

Publication of summary of report on HEQC website. The summary will be updated, where necessary, as progress is made with the implementation of the institution's improvement plan.

HEQC ACCREDITATION PROCESS FOR EXISTING PROGRAMMES

Programmes where no statutory council is involved

Institutions with self-accreditation status

Self-evaluation of existing programmes using HEQC criteria and institutional benchmarks

Institutions without self-accreditation status

Self-evaluation of programme by institution using HEQC criteria for existing programmes

↓

Evaluation by HEQC panel of peers (site visit, if necessary)

↓

Evaluation reports to institution for comments on factual errors, discrepancies and omissions

↓

Evaluation reports to HEQC Board, together with institution's comments

↓

Final report to institution

↓

Publication of summary of report on HEQC website. The summary will be updated, where necessary, as progress is made with the implementation of the institution's improvement plan.

Professional programmes

Programmes where statutory council and SETA ETQA have interest

Process and requirements as specified in MoU between HEQC and statutory council and SETA ETQA

Where no statutory council or SETA ETQA is involved

Self-evaluation of programme by institution, using HEQC criteria for existing programmes, with input from interested parties

↓

Evaluation by HEQC panel of peers in association with interested parties (if necessary, with site visit)

↓

Evaluation reports to institution for comments on factual errors, discrepancies and omissions

↓

Evaluation reports to HEQC Board, together with institution's comments

↓

Final report to institution

↓

Publication of summary of report on HEQC website. The summary will be updated, where necessary, as progress is made with the implementation of the institution's improvement plan.

PROGRAMME ACCREDITATION WITHIN THE HEQC'S QUALITY ASSURANCE SCHEDULE: 2004 – 2009

The HEQC's quality assurance activities during the period 2004 – 2009 are structured into Phase A (2004 – 2006) and Phase B (2007 – 2009). The details below indicate how programme accreditation fits into the envisaged schedule:

Phase A (2004 – 2006):

(a) Full-scale audits commence at all public and private higher education institutions where no mergers are under way.

(b) In the case of merged institutions, provision is made for a three-year settling-down period. The HEQC will undertake visits to merged institutions in the first year after the merger date, in order to ascertain the nature and level of planning for institutional and programme quality management.

(c) New programmes from all public and private higher education institutions undergo accreditation processes that may include site visits, in order to ensure that only programmes of good quality enter the higher education system. This includes new programmes from merged institutions.

(d) In general, existing programmes are not re-accredited by the HEQC. Where professional councils or other statutory bodies require existing programmes to be re-accredited, the HEQC will undertake such re-accreditation jointly with other relevant ETQAs in a range of cooperation modalities.

(e) National reviews (such as the HEQC's MBA re-accreditation exercise) are undertaken in selected programme, qualification or disciplinary areas.

(f) Self-accreditation status is not granted to higher education institutions. However, institutions intending to apply for self-accreditation status in Phase B (2007 – 2009) can use this opportunity to develop the necessary structures, systems and capacity for self-accreditation.

Phase B (2007 – 2009):

(a) Audits continue at all institutions not affected by mergers.

(b) Audits commence at merged institutions.

(c) Accreditation of new programmes of all institutions continues.

(d) Re-accreditation of existing programmes is generally not conducted by the HEQC, except if an institution performs consistently poorly in the accreditation of new programmes, or if the audits or the re-accreditation of existing programmes through national reviews point to serious problem areas.

(e) Institutions can apply for self-accreditation status. This status will be granted on the basis of satisfactory evidence of the effectiveness of internal quality management systems and programme quality.[13] The HEQC could undertake selective re-evaluations of existing non-professional programmes in institutions which apply for self-accreditation status, in cases where this is deemed necessary by the HEQC.

(f) National reviews continue as required.

13 For more details on self-accreditation status, see the Glossary.

Academic development Also known as educational development. A field of research and practice that aims to enhance the quality and effectiveness of teaching and learning in higher education, and to enable institutions and the higher education system to meet key educational goals, particularly in relation to equity of access and outcomes. Academic development encompasses four interlinked areas of work: student development (particularly foundational and skills-oriented provision), staff development, curriculum development and institutional development.

Accreditation Recognition status granted to a programme for a stipulated period of time after an HEQC evaluation indicates that it meets minimum standards of quality.

Assessment Systematic evaluation of a student's ability to demonstrate the achievement of the learning goals intended in a curriculum.

Audit See Institutional audit.

Benchmarking Within a programme context, a process through which a programme is evaluated and compared against internal and external, national and international reference points, for the purposes of accountability and improvement.

Candidacy status Status granted to a provider that demonstrates capacity or potential to meet the minimum standards of provision determined by the HEQC for the intended programme and qualification. The provider can begin to offer the programme to the first cohort of students.

Cooperative education An approach to learning that promotes the concept of enhanced learning based on cooperation between education institutions on the one hand, and industry, commerce and the public sector on the other.

Course review Internal quality assurance procedures that a provider uses to monitor and reflect on the outcomes of the education it provides through a course. The findings from course reviews should feed into the reviews of the programmes of which they form part.

Credit Value assigned to a given number of notional hours of learning. One SAQA credit equals 10 notional learning hours; 120 SAQA credits are approximately equivalent to one year of full-time study.

14 The definitions of terms in the Glossary refer to their use in the text of the Criteria for Programme Accreditation, and may not necessarily include other possible interpretations of the same terms.

Criteria for programme accreditation Minimum standards necessary to support and enhance the quality of teaching and learning in a programme.

Critical outcomes Those generic outcomes determined by SAQA which inform all teaching and learning, including but not limited to:

a) Identifying and solving problems in which responses show that responsible decisions using critical and creative thinking have been made.
b) Working effectively with others as a member of a team, group, organisation, community.
c) Organising and managing oneself and one's activities responsibly and effectively.
d) Collecting, analysing, organising and critically evaluating information.
e) Communicating effectively using visual, mathematical and/or language skills in the modes of oral and/or written persuasion.
f) Using science and technology effectively and critically, showing responsibility towards the environment and the health of others.
g) Demonstrating an understanding of the world as a set of related systems by recognising that problem-solving contexts do not exist in isolation.
h) Contributing to the full personal development of each learner and the social and economic development of society at large, by making it the underlying intention of any programme of learning to make an individual aware of the importance of:
   (i) Reflecting on and exploring a variety of strategies to learn more effectively.
   (ii) Participating as responsible citizens in the life of local, national and global communities.
   (iii) Being culturally and aesthetically sensitive across a range of social contexts.
   (iv) Exploring education and career opportunities.
   (v) Developing entrepreneurial opportunities.[15]

Education and Training Quality Assurer (ETQA) Body responsible for monitoring and auditing the level of achievement of national standards or qualifications offered by providers and to which specific functions have been assigned by SAQA.

Evaluators See Programme evaluators.

Examination A written, oral or practical assessment of learning, including supplementary examination and re-examination, continuous evaluation, and evaluation of experiential learning.

15 Regulations under the South African Qualifications Authority Act, 1995 (Act No. 58 of 1995), Section 7(3).

Existing programme A programme that is registered on the NQF and has been accredited by AUT or SAQA or the HEQC.

Exit-level learning outcomes The outcomes to be achieved by a qualifying learner at the point at which he or she leaves the programme, leading to a qualification.

Experiential learning A term traditionally used within the former technikon sector for 'work-based learning'. (See Work-based learning.)

Formative assessment Type of assessment used to improve learning and to give feedback to students on progress made. It serves needs intrinsic to the educational process.

Institutional audit An improvement-oriented evaluation of the effectiveness of institutional arrangements for quality and quality assurance in teaching and learning, research and community engagement, based on a self-evaluation conducted by the institution. The external evaluation is conducted by a panel of peers and experts on the basis of the HEQC's criteria and other quality requirements set by the institution itself. The audit panel's findings form the basis of the HEQC's report to the audited institution, with commendations on good practice and recommendations for improvement.

Institutionally managed evaluation Evaluation activities which are initiated, managed and financed by the institution itself.

Integrated assessment A form of assessment which permits the learner to demonstrate applied competence and which uses a range of formative and summative assessment methods.

Minimum standards Requirements for a specific level of provision that a programme has to meet in order to be accredited by the HEQC.

Moderator A person, apart from the examiner, who is appointed by the institution to be responsible for ensuring the standard of the examination and its accompanying marking framework and response exemplars, and for marking a representative sample of examination responses.

Module review Internal quality assurance procedures that a provider uses to monitor and reflect on the outcomes of the education it provides through a module. The findings of module and course reviews should feed into the reviews of the programmes of which they form part.

New programme A programme which has not been offered before, or a programme whose purpose, outcomes, field of study, mode or site of delivery have been considerably changed.

Notional hours of learning The learning time that it is conceived it would take an average learner to meet defined learning objectives. It includes concepts such as contact time, time spent in structured learning in the workplace, and individual learning.

Professional programme A programme that has to meet the licensure and other professional and work-based requirements of statutory councils.

Programme Purposeful and structured set of learning experiences that leads to a qualification.

Programme evaluation The external quality assurance processes which are undertaken in order to make an independent assessment of a programme's development, management and outcomes, through the validation of the findings of an internal programme self-evaluation.

Programme evaluator Subject specialist with the expertise and training to undertake external evaluations of programmes.

Provisional accreditation Status granted by the HEQC to a new programme when it complies with the criteria set for the candidacy phase.

Qualification Formal recognition and certification of learning achievement awarded by an accredited institution.

Quality assurance Processes of ensuring that institutional arrangements for meeting specified quality standards or requirements of education provision are effective.

Re-accreditation Accreditation of an existing programme after its previous accreditation by the AUT or SAQA or the HEQC.

Recognised higher education institution (i) A higher education institution which has formal approval in terms of the Higher Education Act No. 101, 1997 to operate as a public or a private institution of higher education in South Africa. (ii) In the case of foreign institutions, an institution which has formal approval by an official body, set up or recognised by that country's government, to operate as an institution of higher education in that

country and to award higher education qualifications. Adequate quality assurance mechanisms and human resources exist in that country to safeguard academic standards of qualifications.

Recognition of prior learning Formal identification, assessment and acknowledgement of the full range of a person's knowledge, skills and capabilities acquired through formal, informal or non-formal training, on-the-job or life experience.

Self-accreditation status Status granted by the HEQC to an institution for a period of six years which enables the institution to re-accredit existing programmes where no statutory council has jurisdiction. Information which will be considered by the HEQC in order to grant self-accreditation status will include the audit findings for the institution, as well as programme quality information from HEQC sources, and other relevant information from the DoE and SAQA. The institution also has to present a quality management plan for the execution of its re-accreditation responsibilities during the period of self-accreditation.

Self-evaluation Within a programme accreditation context, self-evaluation refers to the process by which an institution critically reviews and evaluates its programmes using the HEQC's programme accreditation criteria and any other quality criteria that it deems relevant. The process leads to the development of the self-evaluation report.

Service learning Applied learning which is directed at specific community needs and is integrated into an academic programme and curriculum. It could be credit-bearing and assessed, and may take place in a work environment.

Summative assessment Formalised assessment which is used to certificate the attainment of a certain level of education. It is used to serve needs extrinsic to the educational process.

Universities and Technikons Advisory Council (AUT) This was the Minister of Education's advisory body for higher education before 1994.

Work-based learning A component of a learning programme that focuses on the application of theory in an authentic, work-based context. It addresses specific competences identified for the acquisition of a qualification, which relate to the development of skills that will make the learner employable and will assist in developing his/her personal skills. Employer and professional bodies are involved in the assessment of experiential learning, together with academic staff.