



**COUNCIL ON HIGHER EDUCATION
HIGHER EDUCATION QUALITY COMMITTEE**

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

**AUDIT REPORT
ON THE
MANAGEMENT COLLEGE OF SOUTHERN
AFRICA**

Report of the HEQC to MANCOSA

May 2005

**Didacta Building, 211 Skinner Street, Pretoria, 0002, P O Box 13354, The Tramshed, 0126,
Telephone: +27 12 392 9132, Fax +27 12 392 9120, E-mail: singh.m@che.ac.za
Visit our website at <http://www.che.ac.za>**

HEQC Audit Report Number 1

© 2005 Council on Higher Education

211 Skinner Street
Didacta Building
P.O Box 13354
The Tramshed
0126
South Africa

Tel: +27 12 392 9132
Fax: +27 12 392 9120

Website: <http://www.che.ac.za>

Introduction

The audit visit to the Management College of Southern Africa (MANCOSA) was conducted by the HEQC between 30 August and 2 September 2004. In all, the Audit Panel interviewed about 60 people during the audit visit, either as a full panel or as subgroups of the panel. The interviewees included:

- ❑ Senior management of the institution
- ❑ Full-time and part-time academic staff as well as academic support staff;
- ❑ Institutional co-ordinators from two of the participating SADC countries;
- ❑ Undergraduate and postgraduate students from the Durban campus as well as international students (telephonically) from two of the SADC countries served by MANCOSA;
- ❑ External representatives from the MANCOSA Board of Governors and from two advisory panels;
- ❑ Employers of graduates; and
- ❑ Alumni.

In May 2005, the HEQC Board approved and released the full report of this audit to the head of the institution. The audit report reflects conclusions reached about the quality management arrangements evident at the institution at the time of the audit visit. The HEQC publishes the executive summary of this report, which provides a brief overview of MANCOSA and the main findings from the audit, including a list of the commendations and recommendations.

Overview of Institution

The Management College of Southern Africa (MANCOSA) was established in 1995 in partnership with the Buckinghamshire Chilterns University College (BCUC), which is a College of the University of Brunel in the United Kingdom. In terms of this partnership, MANCOSA offered the BCUC distance education MBA in Southern Africa. The MANCOSA programme was quality assured by BCUC. This partnership was terminated in 1999 as MANCOSA applied to the South African regulatory bodies for accreditation and registration in its own right. In 2000, the Department of Education registered MANCOSA as a private higher education institution in terms of the Higher Education Act of 1997.

MANCOSA offers two Master of Business Administration (MBA) programmes, which together account for about 25% of student registrations at the institution. It also offers three certificate programmes, three diploma programmes and one Bachelor of Business Administration (BBA) programme, all of which potentially provide access routes to the MBA programmes. All of these programmes are offered through distance education to students registered in South Africa (about 65% of student enrolments) as well as in nine other countries¹ (35% of student enrolments), all - with

¹ These countries are: Angola, Botswana, Lesotho, Mozambique, Malawi, Mauritius, Swaziland, Zambia, and Zimbabwe

the exception of one country – from the SADC region. There has been a steady increase in student numbers since the year 2000 with approximately 1 500 students studying at MANCOSA in 2004. With the rise in student numbers there has been a concomitant increase in the number of full-time (12) and part-time academic (62) staff as well as academic support staff (35). The increasing number of activities and staff at MANCOSA necessitated the recent acquisition of a building in central Durban.

Summary of Findings

The Panel's deliberations during the audit process, which included a review of MANCOSA's audit portfolio and other documentation, and the interviews conducted during the audit visit, enabled the Panel to arrive at the conclusion that MANCOSA has established many internal quality management systems, and that it continues actively to develop and institutionalise such systems. It also noted that MANCOSA's Quality Assurance Committee performs a pivotal role in the functioning of the institution's extended committee system. The continuing effectiveness of these arrangements will necessitate close monitoring by MANCOSA. The Panel also took note of the development of a Management Information System (MIS) that has the potential to assist the institution in monitoring all aspects of its core activities. The Panel expects that the information obtained from the MIS will be used primarily to enhance and monitor quality on an ongoing basis.

Given the nature of the institution, its primary mode of delivery, and its stated objectives and commitments, the Panel flagged three general areas in need of development attention:

1. The Panel observed that one of the major challenges that the institution faces is the adequate and equivalent provision of academic support services in the various regions and countries where students are registered. This includes the development of a sustainable model for access to resources, such as library resources, especially for students located at a distance from metropolitan areas. The Panel was unable to reach a judgement on the equivalence of tutorial and other support provided by MANCOSA in regions elsewhere in South Africa, and in other countries, as the audit visit was conducted in Durban. The Panel holds the view that an increase in programme offerings, as well as new enrolments in remote sites, should be accompanied by appropriate academic support to facilitate educational provision of comparable quality.
2. The centrality of study materials in the provision of distance education – which is the mode of delivery used by the institution – dictates that specialised expertise is required to ensure intellectually rigorous content and pedagogically appropriate instructional design. The Panel encourages MANCOSA to ensure that its educational materials development is adequately resourced and strengthened, thus providing for consistency in the quality of the learning materials, both content and presentation, across all programmes and modules.

3. After reviewing the documentation and as a result of comments made during the interviews, the Panel noted the need for the formalisation of MANCOSA's strategic planning process in a manner that provides for directed resource allocation to enable the institution to assure itself of the quality of its core activities. This includes the development of an institutional transformation framework, linked to institutional goals and priorities, which could enhance MANCOSA's pledged responsiveness to national (including Southern African regional) development priorities, as well as the development of a coherent policy and model for community engagement that is better integrated with teaching and learning, and research across the institution.

In the full report, the HEQC makes recommendations in a number of areas to signal to MANCOSA those issues that may require attention with regard to quality provision. The HEQC notes that MANCOSA has itself identified some of these for attention, but these and a number of other issues identified in the report will need to be incorporated into the overall quality assurance planning and practice at MANCOSA. A summary of the commendations and recommendations follows.

Commendations

1. The HEQC commends MANCOSA for the active role that the Quality Assurance Committee plays in enhancing quality objectives through its oversight and monitoring of the institution's committee system.
2. The HEQC commends MANCOSA for establishing and providing an adequate and effectively functioning physical and technological infrastructure appropriate to a distance education institution.
3. The HEQC commends MANCOSA for developing and implementing a successful postgraduate support and supervision system.

Recommendations

1. The HEQC recommends that MANCOSA consider the development of a comprehensive institutional transformation framework that is linked to institutional goals and priorities, and that is adequately resourced and monitored.
2. The HEQC recommends that MANCOSA, in order to enhance access, success and the achievement of credibly high exit standards, implement a system to determine student academic preparedness, and assess the adequacy and effectiveness of the current measures to support student learning needs in a systematic way.
3. The HEQC recommends that MANCOSA develop rigorous programme design and review processes which also formally involve peers from other institutions and representatives from business and which seeks systematic feedback from employers (through, for example, employer surveys) to assure itself of the optimal quality of its programmes.
4. The HEQC recommends that MANCOSA put in place measures to enable the institution to assure itself that consistent procedures are in place for the validation of all study guides and that module reading lists are validated by appropriate disciplinary peer-communities, including peers from the institutions that MANCOSA uses for benchmarking purposes, either locally or internationally.
5. The HEQC recommends that MANCOSA strengthen and formalise the systems by which it assures itself that the intellectual and pedagogic leadership in each of its subject areas is consistently strong, and aims, where practical, to include colleagues elsewhere in South Africa and in the SADC region, in relevant quality development activities.
6. The HEQC recommends that MANCOSA consider initiatives and strategies to more actively establish and build relationships with the business community in a way that could strengthen its management training programme.
7. The HEQC recommends that MANCOSA establish measures that would enable the institution to monitor the quality of student performance and assure itself of

the reliability of the marking of coursework assignments, especially where these scores contribute towards the final course results.

8. While recognising that first steps have been taken to develop research capacity at the institution, the HEQC recommends that MANCOSA actively encourage staff to make use of research opportunities provided by MANCOSA and external research agencies, and that MANCOSA closely monitor developments in this area of its work.
9. The HEQC recommends that MANCOSA consider ways to underpin its responsiveness to national (including regional) development priorities through a clear and coherent policy and model for community engagement that is better integrated with its teaching and learning programmes, and its research initiatives.