



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

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

**AUDIT REPORT
ON
HELDERBERG COLLEGE**

Report of the HEQC to the Helderberg College

March 2006

HEQC Audit Report Number 6

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Appendix A: Objectives of the HEQC Audit System

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ACRONYMS

AU	Andrews University
BBA	Bachelor of Business Administration (Management)
BTh	Bachelor of Arts (Theology)
CEC	Community Engagement Committee
CHE	Council on Higher Education
DoE	Department of Education
ETQA	Education and Training Quality Assurer
GPA	Grade Point Average
HBC	Helderberg College
HE	Higher Education
HEQC	Higher Education Quality Committee
HOD	Head of Department
NQF	National Qualifications Framework
PHEI	Private Higher Education Institution
PLAC	Programme of Learning Advisory Committee
PQM	Programme and Qualification Mix
QA	Quality Assurance
QAM	Quality Assurance Manager
QM	Quality Management
QMS	Quality Management System
RDC	Research Development Committee
RPL	Recognition of Prior Learning
SAQA	South African Qualifications Authority
SAU	Southern Adventist University
SAUC	Southern Africa Union Conference of Seventh-day Adventists
SDA	Seventh-day Adventist
SRC	Student Representative Council
UNISA	University of South Africa

Overview of the Audit

Introduction

The Higher Education Quality Committee (HEQC) of the Council on Higher Education (CHE) has statutory responsibility to conduct institutional audits as mandated by the Higher Education Act of 1997. This responsibility of the HEQC is also recognised by the South African Qualifications Authority (SAQA) through its accreditation of the CHE as the Education and Training Quality Assurer (ETQA) for the higher education (HE) band.

The audit visit to Helderberg College (HBC) was conducted by the HEQC in terms of the above mandate. This document reports on the audit visit to HBC, which took place between 18 and 21 April 2005.

The report¹ contains an overview of the audit process and a list of the commendations and recommendations made by the HEQC, based on the findings of the Audit Panel using the audit criteria set by the HEQC.

The Audit Process

In 2004 the Executive Director of the HEQC secured the consent of the President and the management team at HBC that HBC would participate in an institutional audit between 18 and 21 April 2005.

Helderberg College conducted its institutional self-evaluation in the agreed time and produced an Audit Portfolio in February 2005 for review by the Audit Panel.

In the Portfolio (p.24) the College indicates that the self-evaluation process was conducted by an audit portfolio committee assisted by a number of task groups established for the purpose. The task groups were allocated various areas of responsibility determined by the different criteria. Each task group submitted its reports and working papers to the office of the Academic Dean. The office of the Academic Dean compiled and collated the Audit Report, which was referred back to the Audit Portfolio Committee. The Audit Portfolio Committee submitted the report to the President's Council for approval. The approved Audit Portfolio was submitted to the HEQC in February 2005.

The HEQC constituted an Audit Panel (hereafter 'the Panel') consisting of peers and experts from the higher education community, all of whom had participated in auditor preparation workshops arranged by the HEQC. An Audit Portfolio meeting took place in Pretoria on 10 March 2005. At the Audit Portfolio meeting, the Panel decided to request additional documents from HBC (see Appendix C).

The audit visit took place at HBC's campus in Somerset West from 18 to 21 April 2005.

¹ The report includes four appendices: Appendix A lists the objectives of the HEQC audits; Appendix B provides the names of the members of the Audit Panel; Appendix C lists the documents submitted by HBC and Appendix D contains the audit visit schedule.

On 18 April 2005, the members of the Panel met the President and senior members of staff of HBC and conducted a tour of some of the facilities of the College, including its main buildings, the library and the information technology section. The Panel also examined a range of documentation provided on-site by HBC.

From 19 to 21 April 2005, the Panel conducted interviews with a range of individuals and groups. In addition, sub-panels visited facilities as per prior arrangement with HBC (see Appendix D).

An open session was made available on 21 April 2005 for any member of staff or student of the institution or the institution's community to make submissions to the Panel. No one made use of this opportunity.

The Vice-President for Academic Administration was recalled for an additional interview on 21 April 2005 to clarify aspects of HBC's policies, procedures and practices.

In all, the Panel interviewed approximately 90 people, either as a whole Panel or as subgroups of the Panel. The interviewees included:

- The President and the Senior Management Team
- Members of the Board of Trustees
- Members of the President's Council
- The Academic Administration Committee/Academic Policies Committee
- The Student Council, and students from different fields of study
- Academic Department Chairpersons, and members of the teaching staff
- The Honours Committee, and staff involved in Recognition of Prior Learning, Advisory Committees and Community Engagement
- Human Resources staff
- Administrative and support services staff
- Research Development Committee members
- Stakeholders, including co-examiners, moderators and alumni.

The visit concluded with a brief feedback session during which the chairperson of the Panel gave spoken feedback to the President, senior managers and Faculty Chairpersons/Heads of Department. The Panel Chairperson also indicated the HEQC process that would follow the audit visit.

This report reflects the audit process and findings based on the Audit Portfolio provided by HBC, supplementary documentation requested from the institution, and interviews and observations made during the audit visit. Every effort was made to understand the arrangements for quality management at the institution at the time of the audit visit, and to base the Panel's conclusions on the documentation submitted, the interviews conducted and the observations made. A draft copy of the report was sent to Helderberg College for correction of factual errors and for comment on gaps or omissions. The Report was finalised by the HEQC after taking the institution's comments into account where appropriate.

A synopsis of the HEQC's evaluation of the state of quality management at HBC is found in the summary of findings, together with the commendations and recommendations. It is expected that HBC will use these findings to strengthen its internal quality management systems in order to facilitate improved quality in its core academic activities. The commendations of the HEQC indicate areas of strength which need to be sustained and built upon. The recommendations indicate priority areas for improvement. Other areas of strength or in need of improvement are indicated in the main body of the report. Decisions about forms of implementation of the recommendations and their further prioritisation are the responsibility of the institution.

It is expected that five months after the receipt of the final report, HBC will submit to the HEQC an improvement plan based on the HEQC audit report. The institution will be expected to submit a mid-cycle progress report about three years after the audit.

Summary of Findings

This section provides a brief overview of the main findings of the audit, including a list of the commendations and recommendations for easy reference.

Helderberg College was established to serve the educational needs of the Seventh-day Adventist (SDA) Church in South Africa, and is owned and operated by the SDA Church. It is one of a network of 90 SDA-related institutions providing higher education world-wide. The College was first established in 1893 as Claremont Union College in Cape Town, but changed location in 1919 and again in 1928, resulting in the establishment of the HBC.

The Panel's interaction with staff at different levels, as well as with the documentation provided on institutional policies and practices, led the Panel to take into account the distinctive character and identity of HBC as a faith-based institution, serving as it does some of the educational needs of the Seventh-day Adventist Church. Like all other higher education providers, however, HBC was evaluated within the national requirements of higher education policy and the HEQC audit framework and criteria.

HBC is registered with the Department of Education (DoE) as a private higher education institution and is conditionally accredited by the HEQC to offer the following programmes:

- Diploma in Office Administration
- Diploma in Business Management (Accounting)
- Diploma in Business Management (Management)
- Diploma in Business Management (Marketing)
- Bachelor of Arts: Communication
- Bachelor of Business Administration (Management)
- Bachelor of Business Management (Accounting)
- Bachelor of Arts (Biblical Studies).
- Bachelor of Arts (History)
- Bachelor of Arts (Theology)
- Bachelor of Arts (Music).

The College's programmes have all been submitted to SAQA for registration on the NQF. In addition, at the time of the audit, the College was considering applying for accreditation for a Bachelor of Education programme.

In April 2005, HBC had a student population of 320 students (head count), and a staff complement of 97 permanent full time staff members (of whom 24 are academic staff members), and 7 on part-time contract (of whom all are academic employees).

The Panel was informed by the management of HBC about a number of challenges confronting the institution. The most significant challenge facing HBC in recent years has been the disaffiliation in 2001 from the United States-based universities with which the College had been associated in the past. This disaffiliation resulted in the need for a re-orientation of the College's educational operations within the requirements of the South African higher education system. The College perceives itself as continuing to be in this process of transition.

The Panel's interaction with HBC further led the Panel to conclude that the College has responded to the changes in the legislation affecting the quality management arrangements of its core activities. Recent steps to formalise the quality management system through, for example, the appointment of a Quality Assurance Manager are encouraging. The Panel also learned that HBC has recently reconsidered its strategic priorities in relation to its programme offerings and noted that these initial steps require consolidation.

The Panel was informed that the institution has committed itself to ensuring the overall suitability and quality of its academic staff by providing sustained development opportunities and clear equity targets. The Panel noted that there has been growing investment in the provision of staff development opportunities.

The Panel heard that service to the community is an integral part of HBC's mission, and learned of a variety of activities that involve interaction by HBC's students and staff with constituencies outside the institution.

The Panel noted the evident commitment of staff to facilitating a quality student learning experience. Staff members provide students with extensive academic, personal and spiritual counselling. Issues of student diversity are being addressed. Measures to deal with academic under-preparedness and other learning needs are in place, although given their newness, it was not possible for the Panel to judge their effectiveness. HBC also offers an accelerated learning option within its various programmes².

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

1. The Panel noted the need for HBC to complete a strategic review of its programme offerings and to consolidate the offerings within the College's current vision and mission. The panel encourages HBC to ensure that a thorough investment is made in the intellectual, pedagogic and market responsiveness dimensions of its programme mix.
2. The Panel encourages HBC to take the necessary steps to ensure that its staff recruitment policy enables the College to secure appropriate academic staff to enable it to meet the intellectual and educational requirements of its new programme mix. While the Panel acknowledges

² HBC refers to this option as an Honours programme, although this is not the same as an Honours qualification as usually understood in South Africa. HBC is urged to consider other nomenclature for this option as a matter of urgency.

HBC's investment in recent years in improving the academic qualifications of academic staff, the Panel encourages HBC to consider measures to deepen the professional understanding within the College of a range of educational and academic management challenges confronting contemporary higher education. HBC is encouraged also to monitor closely the activities of part-time staff to ensure that their contributions are consistent with the standards expected at HBC of full-time staff.

3. In relation to the College's process of intended programme review, the Panel encourages HBC to review the current capacity of its staff to undertake research for programme development and review purposes, and to explore issues of teaching and learning. Once the findings of the review have been ascertained, HBC is urged to ensure that all programme areas are staffed by academics with appropriate research capacity.

The HEQC makes recommendations in a number of areas to signal to HBC those issues that may require attention with regard to quality provision. The HEQC acknowledges the fact that HBC has itself identified some of these for attention, and urges that these be incorporated into the overall quality management planning and practices at HBC.

A summary of commendations and recommendations follows. Please note that they are not listed in order of importance. They are clustered below to provide a quick overview for the reader. The body of the report also draws attention to other issues for attention and consideration by HBC.

Commendations

1. The HEQC commends HBC for the professional, dedicated and extended counselling service offered by the staff members to the student body in order to improve their overall learning experience.

Recommendations

1. The HEQC recommends that HBC pursue its current process of strategic review so as to clarify the College's mission in the current South African context. The mission and core activities of HBC should be appropriately aligned.
2. The HEQC recommends that HBC clarify the roles and responsibilities of the governance and management structures to ensure the effectiveness of the College's core functions.
3. The HEQC recommends that the College implement a strategy to enhance understanding at all staffing levels of broad academic and academic management issues in higher education, and how these could be given effect in the structures and systems of the College.

4. The HEQC recommends that HBC develop an integrated quality management strategy for the overall quality management of its academic functions. HBC's academic planning framework should support the institution's core functions and draw appropriately on the institution's management information systems.
5. The HEQC recommends that HBC's intended review of its programme and qualification mix is accompanied by a similar review of the academic strengths of its current staff complement as well as its staff recruitment strategies, to ensure that all the College's programmes are adequately staffed. HBC should not expand into additional programmes until it has qualified academic staff to support such expansion.
6. The HEQC recommends that HBC review its programme management system to ensure that it includes processes for periodic programme review and for the introduction and approval of new programmes. The programme management system should seek to align the institution's offering with its mission and strategic objectives, as well as providing the College with the assurance that all its programmes offer optimal levels of intellectual rigour and educational design.
7. The HEQC recommends that HBC develop comprehensive staffing policies and strategies to address employment equity, and ensure the appropriate professional development of its staff.
8. The HEQC recommends that HBC develop a formal policy on assessment to support the quality of teaching and learning, and ensure that all its assessment processes are consistent with this policy.
9. The HEQC recommends that HBC formalise its policy and strategy on community engagement within the overall quality management system. Systematic planning, coordination and monitoring to support departmental initiatives are recommended to integrate community engagement with the curriculum to enhance teaching, learning and research.