CHE

Criteria for Institutional Audits

Higher Education Quality Committee

Criteria for Institutional Audits

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CHE

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

CONTENTS

ACRONYMS

CHE	Council on Higher Education
DoE	Department of Education
ETQA	Education and Training Quality Assurer
HEQC	Higher Education Quality Committee
NQF	National Qualifications Framework
RPL	Recognition of Prior Learning
SAQA	South African Qualifications 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 component in the execution of the HEQC's functions, fulfiling the dual purpose of serving as evaluative tools for the HEQC's audit and accreditation activities, as well as setting broad benchmarks for quality management 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 institutional self-evaluation reports.

This document sets out the criteria which will be used in the HEQC's audits of higher education institutions. The HEQC audit will focus on an institution's policies, systems, strategies and resources for quality management of the core functions of teaching and learning, research and community engagement, including the relevant academic support services. The criteria are evaluative tools that enable the institution, the audit panel and the HEQC to focus on important institutional signals and indicators of quality and quality management.

Quality management entails a number of elements of institutional planning and action to address issues of quality. These include institutional arrangements for:

- Quality assurance – the policies, systems, strategies and resources used by the institution to satisfy itself that its quality requirements and standards are being met;
- Quality support – the policies, systems, strategies and resources used by the institution to support and sustain existing levels of quality;
- Quality development and enhancement – the policies, systems, strategies and resources used by the institution to develop and enhance quality; and
- Quality monitoring – the policies, systems, strategies and resources used by the institution to monitor, evaluate and act on quality issues.

The HEQC's criteria encompass all the above dimensions of institutional quality management and cover aspects of input and process as well as outcomes. Where appropriate, the criteria will be supplemented by open-ended questions pertaining to the intellectual identity and culture of the institution.

The HEQC will look at the development and operation of quality management policies and systems, the extent of institutional knowledge about and engagement with them, and their effective use in promoting, developing and improving quality. Institutions have to

provide evidence for claims made in their self-evaluation report about quality-related inputs, processes and outputs. The institutional audit will be conducted by a review panel of peers and experts, supported by senior HEQC personnel. Sampling will be used by audit panels to follow up on institutional judgements about quality management systems. The requirement to provide indicators of success and evidence of effectiveness takes the criteria beyond a checklist of policies and procedures. However, it is recognised that the achievement of quality requires not only effective quality management systems but the professional expertise, competence and commitment of those who are actually engaged in teaching and learning, research and community interactions.

The HEQC's audit criteria address the different stages of academic planning and operations at institutional level where quality considerations should play a role. These stages include policy development, resource allocation, policy implementation, the evaluation of the extent and impact of implementation, and the identification of interventions for improvement and enhancement. Depending on the institution's self-evaluation judgements, the audit panel could focus on quality considerations and the requisite evidence at any or all of the above stages of academic management, as well as enquire about the coordination and/or integration of quality concerns of the different stages indicated above.

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

- National policy for higher education as articulated in a range of Government White Papers, legislation, regulations and planning documents;
- The HEQC's own policy positions as expounded in the *Founding Document,* the *Institutional Audit 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 industry/companies, and between institutions across national borders; and
- Increasing instances of cross-border provision by foreign and South African higher education institutions, as well as the use of new modes of provision.

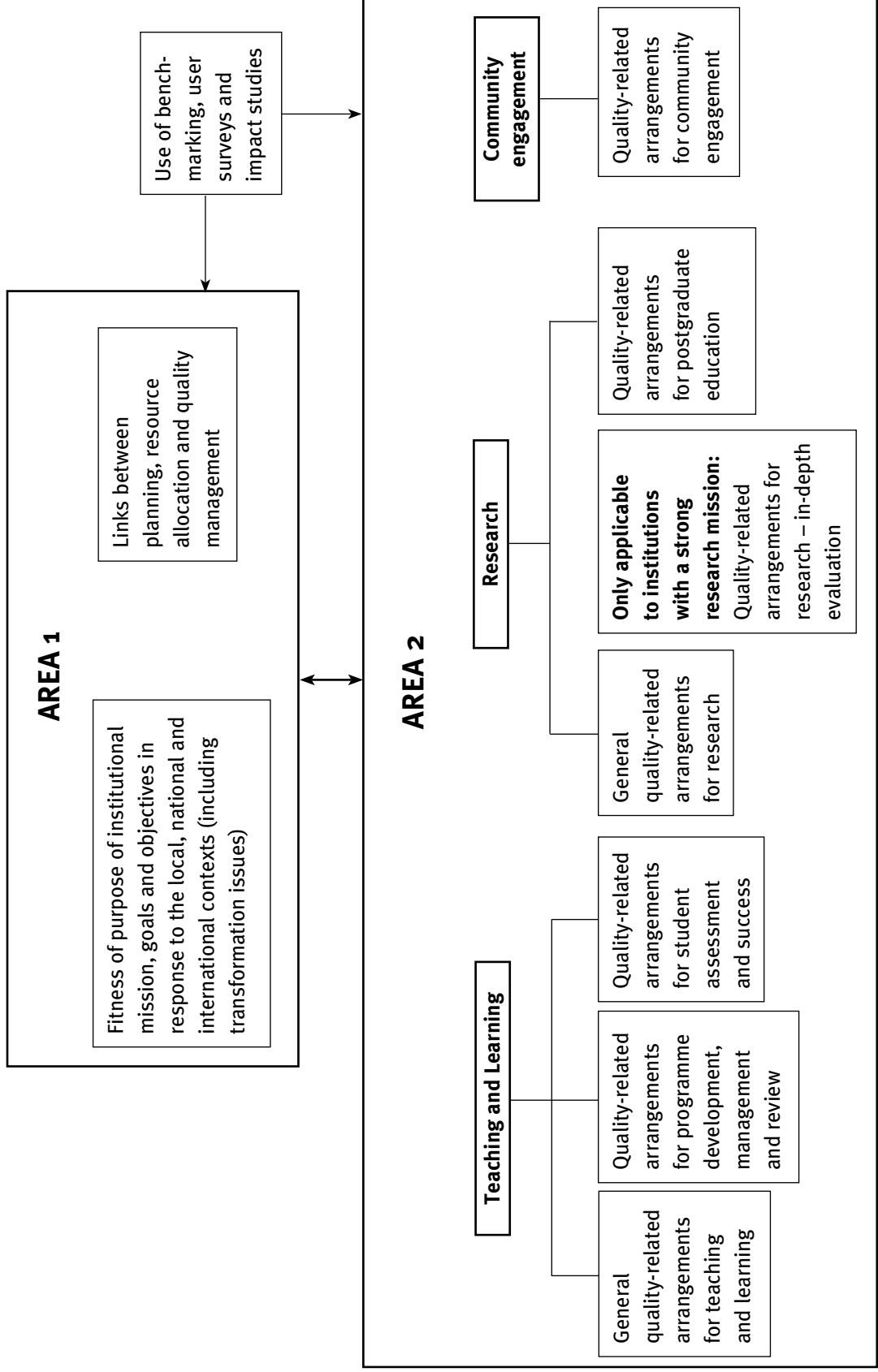# 2. HEQC CRITERIA FOR INSTITUTIONAL AUDITS

The following should be noted:

(i)   The criteria cover two broad areas which will form the focus of evaluation in the audit:

        Area 1: Mission of the institution; links between planning, resource allocation and quality management.

        Area 2: Teaching and learning, research and community engagement. Benchmarking, user surveys and impact studies apply to both broad areas.

(ii)   The criteria will guide the evaluations of the peer and expert review teams during audit visits and will form a critical component of auditor training. Audit panels could choose to focus on specific audit areas during the visit, given the mission and goals as well as the level of development of the institution to be audited.

(iii)   The criteria should guide institutional self-evaluation in preparation for an HEQC audit, together with additional quality benchmarks that an institution has set for itself.

(iv)   Over a period of time, data on institutional performance in specific audit areas will assist the HEQC in monitoring system-level quality support and development, and enable the institution to monitor its own quality improvement trajectory.

(v)   Quality issues in community engagement are evaluated primarily in relation to mission specification and to possible academic connections with teaching and learning, and research.

(vi)   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.

(vii)   Although the HEQC has delegated responsibility for quality arrangements with regard to short courses, recognition of prior learning (RPL), moderation of assessment and certification to institutions themselves, it will use the audits to evaluate quality-related institutional arrangements in these areas.

(viii) The criteria in this document will inform all HEQC audits in the first cycle from 2004 to 2009. The HEQC may amend the criteria or the scope and focus of institutional audits in the second cycle, depending on prevailing needs and priorities.

2.1 INSTITUTIONAL MISSION: LINKS BETWEEN PLANNING, RESOURCE ALLOCATION AND QUALITY MANAGEMENT

The fitness of purpose of the mission, goals and objectives of an institution is determined in relation to institutional responsiveness to the local, national and international contexts. The transformational role that institutions are required to play within the national higher education agenda is of key importance in this regard. A range of policy and legislative instruments have laid down transformational purposes and objectives for higher education. These include increased equity and access opportunities for previously marginalised groups, and greater responsiveness to local, regional and national needs in and through teaching and

Figure 1: Scope of the HEQC's audit system

AREA 1

Fitness of purpose of institutional mission, goals and objectives in response to the local, national and international contexts (including transformation issues)

Links between planning, resource allocation and quality management

Use of bench-marking, user surveys and impact studies

AREA 2

Teaching and Learning

General quality-related arrangements for teaching and learning

Quality-related arrangements for programme development, management and review

Quality-related arrangements for student assessment and success

Research

General quality-related arrangements for research

Only applicable to institutions with a strong research mission: Quality-related arrangements for research – in-depth evaluation

Quality-related arrangements for postgraduate education

Community engagement

Quality-related arrangements for community engagement

research. Engagement with the local and broader community is one of the core functions of higher education through which institutions use their resources and expertise to address issues relevant to their communities. Mission issues also have to be related to international quality benchmarks, where appropriate, in order to establish broad comparability and articulation possibilities with reputable institutions of higher learning abroad.

The success of quality management at institutions is, to a considerable extent, dependent on the integration of mechanisms for quality assurance and quality development with institutional planning and resource allocation. Quality management mechanisms need to be appropriately integrated with institutional planning at all relevant levels of institutional operation. Similarly, financial planning should ensure adequate resource allocation for the development, implementation, review and improvement of quality and quality management mechanisms for the core activities of teaching and learning, research and community engagement. The objective-setting, planning and resource allocation dimensions of institutional operations as set out in Area 1 of the criteria are seen as essential foundational elements for the quality objectives of Area 2 to be achieved (see p. 4, Figure 1).

The HEQC approach to quality assurance seeks to encourage institutions to contribute actively to the enrichment of the higher education sector and the broader society within which it operates. Based on their missions, institutions realise these contributions in a variety of ways including the introduction of pedagogical and scientific innovations, and the creation of an intellectual culture where these contributions can take place and take effect. Audit criteria may not fully account for the complexity and nuances of these activities and the thinking and approach that inform them. Thus, as a lead up to the criteria on institutional mission and planning, the audit panel will engage members of relevant institutional constituencies in discussion on the following open-ended questions:

- What are the unique and distinctive ways in which the institution enriches and adds excellence to the higher education sector and society – nationally, regionally and internationally?
- What does the institution do to produce a vibrant intellectual culture within the institution and in society at large?
- In what ways does the institution act as an incubator of new ideas and cutting-edge knowledge and technologies within the national system of innovation?
- What are some of the notable examples in the last three years of institutional success in promoting and enhancing quality?

Table 1

Area	Sub-Areas	Criterion
Institutional mission; links between planning, resource allocation and quality management	Fitness of purpose of the mission of the institution in response to local, national and international context (including transformation issues)	1
	Links between planning, resource allocation and quality management	2

CRITERION 1

The institution has a clearly stated mission and purpose with goals and priorities which are responsive to its local, national and international context and which provide for transformational issues. There are effective strategies in place for the realisation and monitoring of these goals and priorities. Human, financial and infrastructural resources are available to give effect to these goals and priorities.

In order to meet this criterion, the following are examples of what would be expected:

(i)   Engagement with local, regional, national and international imperatives (including national policy frameworks and objectives) in order to establish the fitness of purpose of the institution. Involvement of internal and external stakeholders in this process.

(ii)   Adequate attention to transformational issues in the mission and goal-setting activities of the institution, including issues of community engagement.

(iii)   The translation of the mission into a strategic plan with clear timeframes and resources for the achievement of goals and targets in its core functions.

(iv)   Allocated responsibilities at senior management level for implementation, monitoring and responsive action.

(v)   Regular review of the nature and extent of institutional responsiveness and of the strategies and resources used to give effect to institutional goals and priorities.

CRITERION 2

Objectives and mechanisms for quality management are integrated into institutional planning. Financial planning ensures adequate resource allocation for the development, improvement and monitoring of quality in the core activities of teaching and learning, research and community engagement.

In order to meet the criterion, the following are examples of what would be expected:

(i)   Key quality-related priorities in the core functions of teaching and learning, research and community engagement aligned with the mission and strategic goals of the institution.

(ii)   Links between planning, strategic choices, resource allocation and quality management.

(iii)   Institutional planning which includes:
- Quality management prioritisation and target-setting at all critical decision-making levels.
- Goal-setting and allocation of responsibilities for developmental issues.

(iv)   Adequate resource allocation through financial planning for the development, implementation, review and improvement of quality management mechanisms at all relevant levels.

(v)   Regular review of the effectiveness and the impact of the integration of the objectives and mechanisms for quality management with institutional and financial planning.

2.2 TEACHING AND LEARNING, RESEARCH AND COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

2.2.1 Teaching and learning

Criteria for the support and enhancement of the quality of teaching and learning are divided into two categories:

(i)   General quality-related arrangements for teaching and learning; and

(ii)   Programme development, management and review as well as student assessment and success.

2.2.1.1 General quality-related arrangements for teaching and learning

Efficient and effective institutional arrangements to support and assure the quality of teaching and learning are crucial to facilitate quality, especially at the point of delivery. In order to achieve this, appropriate policies, strategies and procedures have to be in place. The quality of academic services also requires attention in order to ensure that academic provision is appropriately supported.

Given the increase in the number of short courses offered in higher education, mechanisms are necessary to ensure their quality and to evaluate the impact of these courses on student success rates for whole qualifications and on the mission of the institution.

The quality of programmes offered by South African higher education institutions beyond the borders of South Africa has to be equivalent to those offered in South Africa. Programmes offered in partnership with other institutions, as well as those at tuition centres and satellite campuses, have to be of equivalent quality to those offered at the main campuses of institutions.

The processing and issuing of certificates, as well as security measures to avoid fraud or the illegal issuing of these certificates, is a crucial element in ensuring the credibility of an institution's qualifications.

Table 2

Area	Sub-Areas	Criterion
Teaching and learning	Management of the quality of teaching and learning	3
	Academic support services	4
	Short courses	5
	Exported programmes	
	Partnership programmes	
	Programmes offered at tuition centres and satellite campuses	
	Certification	6

CRITERION 3

The arrangements for the quality assurance of and support for teaching and learning enhance quality and allow for its continuous monitoring.

In order to meet this criterion, the following would be expected:

(i)   An academic planning framework which articulates well with the institutional mission and strategic goals, and is adequately resourced.

(ii)   Quality management systems and initiatives for teaching and learning at both undergraduate and postgraduate levels.

(iii)   Key quality improvement priorities with regard to teaching and learning with appropriate resources, time-frames and indicators of success.

(iv)   Ongoing discussions and initiatives on new approaches to and innovations in teaching and learning.

(v)   Staff development policies and strategies which promote the professional competence of academic staff and give particular attention to the development needs of new personnel.

(vi)   Mechanisms which promote access to students from previously disadvantaged groups, for example, through the provision of academic development programmes.

(vii)   A system which stores and updates relevant student information in order to inform policy, planning, implementation and review of teaching and learning.

(viii) Regular review of the effectiveness of systems of quality assurance and support of teaching and learning.

CRITERION 4

Academic support services (e.g. library and learning materials, computer support services, etc.) adequately support teaching and learning needs, and help give effect to teaching and learning objectives.

In order to meet this criterion, the following are examples of what would be expected:

(i) Academic support services which adequately provide for the needs of teaching and learning, research and community engagement, and help give effect to teaching and learning objectives. Efficient structures and procedures facilitate the interaction between academic provision and academic support.

(ii) Academic support services which are adequately staffed, resourced and have the necessary infrastructure in place. The institution provides development opportunities for support staff to enhance their expertise and to enable them to keep abreast of developments in their field.

(iii) Regular review of the effectiveness of academic support services for the core functions of the institution.

CRITERION 5

5

The institution has effective systems in place for the quality management of short courses, exported and partnership programmes, and programmes offered at tuition centres and satellite campuses.

In order to meet this criterion, the following are examples of what would be expected:

(i) Policies and mechanisms which record and quality assure all short courses offered by the institution. These policies and mechanisms are widely known at the institution.

(ii) Mechanisms which evaluate the impact (both positive and negative) of offering short courses in relation to:
- The mission, goals and priorities of the institution; and
- Student success rates in whole qualifications.

(iii) Quality management mechanisms which ensure that exported programmes are of equivalent quality to those offered in South Africa and comply with the national quality requirements of the receiving country.

(iv) Clear allocation of quality management responsibility for all programmes offered in partnership with other institutions.

(v) Quality management mechanisms which ensure that programmes offered at tuition centres and satellite campuses are of equivalent quality to those offered at the main campus.

(vi) Regular review of the effectiveness of the quality management of short courses, exported and partnership programmes, and programmes offered at tuition centres and satellite campuses.

CRITERION 6

6

Clear and efficient arrangements ensure the integrity of learner records and certification processes. Oversight and monitoring responsibility is clearly allocated and acted upon.

In order to meet this criterion, the following are examples of what would be expected:

(i) Effective mechanisms which:
   • Ensure the integrity of learner records; and
   • Quality assure the processing and issuing of certificates.
(ii) Effective security measures to avoid fraud or the illegal issuing of certificates.
(iii) Regular review of the effectiveness of quality arrangements for ensuring the integrity of learner records and certification processes.

2.2.1.2 Quality-related arrangements for programme development, management and review as well as for student assessment and success

Programme development and review, and student assessment and success represent critical aspects of the teaching and learning process.

The arrangements for institutional planning, design and management of academic programmes are important indicators of the effectiveness of educational provision. Effective procedures in this area could ensure that programmes meet the needs of students and other stakeholders, are intellectually credible, and facilitate ongoing improvement in design and delivery.

Student assessment and success is a central indicator of teaching and learning effectiveness. The transformation-related goals of widening access, improving retention and throughput rates, and producing graduates with appropriate knowledge and skills, can be supported by an effective assessment system. Assessment 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.

2.2.1.2.1 Programme development, management and review

Table 3

Area	Sub-Areas	Criterion
Programme development, management and review	Programme management	7
	Programme design and approval	8
	Staffing	9
	Programme review	10

CRITERION 7

7

The administration of academic programmes is conducted within the framework of an effective programme management system. Responsibility and lines of accountability are clearly allocated. Management information systems are used to record and disseminate information about the programme, as well as to facilitate review and improvement.

In order to meet this criterion, the following are examples of what would be expected:

(i) Dedicated structures and line managers who have responsibility for the quality management of academic programmes.

(ii) Clearly defined procedures, time-frames, reporting and communication arrangements for the administration of programmes.

(iii) In the case of work-based learning:

- Learning contracts or agreements by which the student, higher education institution and employer can negotiate, approve and assess the objectives and outcomes of the learning process. The roles and responsibilities of the various parties, i.e. the institution, students, mentors and employers, are clearly spelled out in the contract or agreement;

- Regular and efficient communication between the institution, students, mentors and employers;

- A system (both at the institution and at the place of employment) to record and monitor regularly and systematically the content and progress of the student's learning experience in the workplace; and

- A mentoring system which 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.

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

- Service learning programmes which are integrated into institutional and academic planning, as part of the institution's mission and strategic goals;

- Adequate resources and enabling mechanisms (including incentives) to support the implementation of service learning, including staff and student capacity development; and

- Review and monitoring arrangements to gauge the impact and outcomes of service learning programmes on the institution, as well as on other participating constituencies.

(v) Capturing and continual updating of all necessary information about programmes, including their accreditation status, in the management information system. Relevant aspects of this information are regularly available to staff and students in order to support improvement. At-risk students can be identified and supported timeously.

(vi) Regular review of the effectiveness of the programme management system, especially in relation to making students into independent learners.

CRITERION 8

Clear and efficient systems and procedures are in place for the design and approval of new programmes, courses and modules. The requirements are consistently applied and regularly monitored.

In order to meet this criterion, the following are examples of what would be expected:

(i) Alignment of programme planning and budgeting.

(ii) Programme planning and approval arrangements which are linked to the operation-alisation of the institution's/academic unit's mission and goals, Teaching and Learning Plan (as appropriate), agreed 'Programme and Qualification Mix' (as appropriate) and the HEQC's Criteria for Programme Accreditation. These are used to guide the internal approval of new programmes.

(iii) Reasoned coherence between the aims and intended learning outcomes of the programme on the one hand, and the scope of the learning materials and strategies for teaching (for example, delivery modes like face to face, distance, mixed modes of provision), on the other.

(iv) Specified procedures and realistic time-frames for the design and approval of academic offerings as well as guidelines for academic staff and programme teams to work from.

(v) Approval on the basis of transparent criteria by an institutional authority that is inde-pendent of the programme team. Consistency of standards across the institution is monitored.

(vi) Where appropriate, consultation between programme teams and external stakeholders, such as professional bodies, potential employers, government departments and local communities, to ensure that graduates meet employability requirements and labour market needs in the short and long terms.

(vii) Where appropriate, accounting for the characteristics and requirements of professional and vocational education in the development of the programme. This includes the following:
   - The programme promotes an understanding on the part of the student of the specific occupation for which he/she is being trained;
   - The programme has a balance of theoretical and practical or applied knowledge. The student has opportunities to master the techniques and skills which are required by a specific profession or occupation; and
   - Work-based learning forms an integral part of the curriculum, and placement in a work environment is regarded as an essential component of the programme.

(viii) Consideration of national and regional aspects in the planning and offering of programmes.

(ix) In the case of distance learning programmes, tested systems, technologies and support arrangements for materials development and delivery for distance learning.

(x) In the case of e-learning, tested systems, technologies and support arrangements which provide an effective platform for quality delivery.

(xi) Regular review of the effectiveness of systems and procedures for the design and approval of new programmes, courses and modules.

CRITERION 9

Recruitment, selection, development and support policies and procedures facilitate the availability of suitably qualified and experienced academic and support staff to deliver the programme. Staff capacity in relation to programme needs is regularly reviewed.

In order to meet this criterion, the following are examples of what would be expected:

(i) Clear recruitment, selection and appointment procedures to provide for a sufficient number of academic and support staff who have the necessary qualifications and expertise to teach and support the programme so that its outcomes are attainable at the appropriate levels of quality.

(ii) Availability of opportunities for the scholarly and professional development of the academic and support staff.

(iii) Redress and equity issues receive adequate attention in the recruitment, selection, appointment and development of academic and support staff.

(iv) Regular review of the effectiveness of staff recruitment, selection, development and support in relation to programme needs.

CRITERION 10

Clear and effective systems are in place (including internal and external peer review) to evaluate programmes on a regular basis. Review findings are disseminated appropriately and utilised for staff development, curriculum improvement and increasing student access and success.

In order to meet this criterion, the following are examples of what would be expected:

(i) Review of learning materials, teaching and learning strategies, modes of assessment, management of moderation, etc. which is utilised for staff development, curriculum improvement and increasing student success.

(ii) Credible and consistent methods and processes for programme and course/module review, including user surveys which allow for the triangulation of information and data in order to produce valid outcomes.

(iii) Training and support of academic managers and teaching staff to ensure the rigour and consistency of the review process.

(iv) Findings from graduate tracking and employer surveys integrated into processes of programme review.

(v) Regular review of the effectiveness and impact of programme review systems and procedures.

2.2.1.2.2 Student assessment and success

Table 4

Area	Sub-Areas	Criterion
Student assessment and success	Management of assessment	11
	Moderation system	12
	Explicitness, fairness and consistency of assessment practices. Security of recording and documenting assessment data	13
	Recognition of prior learning	14

CRITERION 11

The institution has an assessment policy and clear and effective procedures for its implementation. The policy and its procedures ensure academic and professional standards in the design, approval, implementation and review of assessment strategies for programmes and modules, and for the qualifications awarded by the institution.

In order to meet this criterion, the following are examples of what would be expected:

(i)   Institutional/faculty/professional rules and regulations governing assessment. These include the following: assessment procedures; provision of timeous feedback to students; weighting of class marks and examinations; security procedures; disciplinary and appeals procedures; regulations for marking, grading, aegrotats, supplementary examinations, condoned passes, etc.

(ii)   Responsibility allocated for the implementation of institutional assessment policy to faculties and departments/schools. Implementation is monitored at different institutional levels.

(iii)   Assessment procedures for distance learning programmes which are appropriate for the delivery mode and the circumstances in which the programmes are offered.

(iv)   With regard to work-based learning, procedures whereby academics as well as workplace-based assessors (e.g. mentors and/or supervisors) provide input into assessment.

(v)   Procedures to ensure that academic staff responsible for official decisions on assessment are experienced and competent to assess, and appropriately trained. Development opportunities exist for teaching staff to improve and professionalise their assessment practices.

(vi)   Regular review of the effectiveness of assessment policies, strategies and practices.

CRITERION 12

The institution has effective procedures which facilitate the quality of the internal and external moderation of its assessment procedures and results, in order to ensure their reliability and to ensure the integrity of the qualifications it awards.

In order to meet this criterion, the following are examples of what would be expected:

(i) Procedures which regulate internal moderation in order to provide a reliability check on the marking process, and to provide developmental feedback to students and to staff on their assessment practices.

(ii) Procedures which regulate external moderation which include the following:
- Criteria for the appointment of moderators;
- Information provided to moderators on the curriculum, assessment procedures, etc. of the programme;
- Guidelines on the standards of achievement required of students in the programme;
- Format for and handling of moderator reports;
- Adjustment of marks by moderators; and
- Approval of final mark lists.

(iii) Regular review of the effectiveness of internal and external moderation procedures and practices.

CRITERION 13

The principles, procedures and practices of assessment are explicit, fair and consistently applied throughout the institution. Security arrangements for recording and documenting assessment data are in place to ensure the credibility of outcomes.

In order to meet this criterion, the following are examples of what would be expected:

(i) Institutional/faculty/professional regulations and rules to ensure the explicitness, rigour, fairness and consistency of assessment procedures and practices.

(ii) Regulations and rules governing assessment which are clearly communicated to students, staff and other relevant stakeholders. This includes information and guidance to students on their rights and responsibilities regarding assessment processes.

(iii) Student appeals procedures which are fair, effective and timeous.

(iv) Adequate security measures for the recording, documenting and storing of assessment data to ensure the credibility of outcomes.

(v) Regular review of the:
- Explicitness, fairness and consistency of application of the principles, procedures and practices of assessment; and
- Security arrangements for recording and documenting assessment data.

CRITERION 14

The institution has an RPL policy, and effective procedures for recognising prior learning and assessing current competence.

In order to meet this criterion, the following are examples of what would be expected:

(i)   Institutional policy to support access, through RPL measures.
(ii) Effective procedures stipulated for RPL. This includes the identification, documentation, assessment, evaluation and transcription of prior learning against specified learning outcomes, so that it can articulate with current academic programmes and qualifications.
(iii) Assessment instruments designed for RPL and implemented in accordance with the institution's policies on fair and transparent assessment.

2.2.2   Research

The White Paper and the NPHE place strong emphasis on the need to develop research capacity and increase research productivity to ensure both open-ended intellectual inquiry and the application of research activities to social development. The DoE has set an increase in postgraduate enrolments and research outputs as a strategic goal for the South African higher education system.

The HEQC audit will focus on the institutional arrangements for assuring, developing and monitoring the quality of research and postgraduate education. Although not all higher education institutions have research as a defining aspect of their mission, it is assumed that some measure of research activity is underway at all higher education institutions (e.g. research undertaken to inform teaching, and research by postgraduate students).

2.2.2.1   General quality-related arrangements for research (for all higher education institutions)

Criterion 15 below deals with general quality-related arrangements for research which will be evaluated during audits of all higher education institutions.

CRITERION 15
Effective arrangements are in place for the quality assurance, development and monitoring of research functions and postgraduate education.

In order to meet this criterion, the following are examples of what would be expected:

(i)   A research policy and/or plan which indicates the role and nature of research conducted at the institution, is adequately resourced, and consistently implemented and monitored.
(ii) Appropriate strategies for research development, including capacity development for researchers, which are implemented and monitored.

(iii) An effective research information system that captures appropriate data for research-related planning.

(iv) Appropriate strategies for the support and development of postgraduate education, including effective postgraduate supervision, which are implemented and monitored.

(v) Regular review of the effectiveness of arrangements for the quality assurance, development and monitoring of research functions and postgraduate education.

2.2.2.2   Quality-related arrangements for research (in depth evaluation for research-intensive institutions)

Criteria 16 below will apply in the case of institutions with a specified research mission.

CRITERION 16

Research functions and processes are supported and developed in a way that assures and enhances quality, and increases research participation, research productivity and research resources.

In order to meet this criterion, the following are examples of what would be expected:

(i)   Clear policies and regulations which indicate the role and nature of research conducted at the institution, and which are effectively implemented and adequately resourced. These include:
   • Research policies and plans that clearly state the institutional goals for research. This includes research on teaching and learning;
   • Criteria for the evaluation and approval of research proposals;
   • Policies that support and monitor the development of new researchers, especially black and women researchers;
   • Policies that encourage and support collaborative and problem-solving research at the local/regional/national level;
   • Policies and criteria for access to and allocation of funding for research; and
   • Policies and regulations governing research outputs.

(ii)   Effective structures and mechanisms for the quality assurance of research. These include structures which:
   • Apply clear criteria against which to evaluate and approve research proposals, as well as establish research programmes/groups/teams/units; and
   • Manage and monitor the commercialisation of research.

(iii)   An efficient research information system which captures information on research capacity, research funding and research outputs. This includes:
   • Capturing essential information on research issues through a central research information system; and
   • Linking captured data in a way that allows for meaningful reporting on and planning for research at the institution.

(iv) Strategies which are effectively implemented for the support and development of research, including capacity development for new researchers. Support and development opportunities and incentives are available:

- To new researchers at all levels of research activity; and
- For collaborative and problem-solving research at local/regional/national level.

(v) Strategies which evaluate, monitor and track the outcomes and impact of research and research management at the institution.

2.2.2.3 Quality-related arrangements for postgraduate education

CRITERION 17

Efficient arrangements are in place for the quality assurance, development and monitoring of postgraduate education.

In order to meet this criterion, the following are examples of what would be expected:

(i) Clear policies, regulations and criteria in relation to the quality of postgraduate education. These include:

- Policies that indicate the scope and nature of postgraduate education at the institution, and stipulate clear admission requirements and procedures;
- Policies and criteria for the evaluation and approval of masters and doctoral proposals;
- Policies and criteria governing access to and allocation of funding for postgraduate education and research;
- Policies and regulations that specify the role and responsibilities of supervisors of postgraduate research;
- Policies and criteria for assessment of postgraduate education and research; and
- Policies and regulations regarding postgraduate publications.

(ii) Effective structures and processes that quality assure and monitor postgraduate education. These include structures which:

- Apply clear criteria against which to evaluate, approve and monitor postgraduate research;
- Evaluate and approve funding for postgraduate research;
- Enable postgraduate students to lodge complaints or appeals that are swiftly dealt with, as well as provide for opportunities to defend their research findings; and
- Track developments and trends in postgraduate education at the institution.

(iii) An effective research information system which supports the monitoring of postgraduate education. This includes:

- Capturing essential information on postgraduate research issues through a central research information system; and
- Linking captured data in a way that allows for meaningful reporting on and planning for postgraduate education and research at the institution.

(iv) Clear and effective policies and strategies which facilitate the development, support and improvement of postgraduate education. These include the availability of:
- Training and development opportunities for new supervisors;
- Research design and methods courses for postgraduate students;
- Access to support services for postgraduate students;
- Facilitation of regular access to supervisors and other researchers in the field;
- Special funds to support postgraduate research; and
- Additional support and development programmes for previously disadvantaged students.

(v) Regular review of the effectiveness of arrangements for the quality assurance, development and monitoring of postgraduate education.

2.2.3 Community engagement

Where community engagement is discharged through a range of activities, including service learning, quality considerations for institutional engagement with the local and broader community should be formalised within an institution's quality management policies and procedures. These arrangements should be linked to teaching and learning and research, where possible, and given effect through the allocation of adequate resources and institutional recognition.

CRITERION 18

Quality-related arrangements for community engagement are formalised and integrated with those for teaching and learning, where appropriate, and are adequately resourced and monitored.

In order to meet this criterion, the following are examples of what would be expected:

(i) Policies and procedures for the quality management of community engagement.
(ii) Integration of policies and procedures for community engagement with those for teaching and learning and research, where appropriate.
(iii) Adequate resources allocated to facilitate quality delivery in community engagement.
(iv) Regular review of the effectiveness of quality-related arrangements for community engagement.

2.3 BENCHMARKING, USER SURVEYS AND IMPACT STUDIES

Benchmarking institutional/faculty/departmental performance against other equivalent quality reference points, both nationally and internationally, is a useful source of information for goal-setting and continuous self-improvement.

User surveys conducted at different institutional levels which gather and analyse information from different stakeholders are important instruments in evaluating the effectiveness of

18

institutions. Examples are student satisfaction surveys, graduate tracking surveys and employer satisfaction surveys.

Impact studies are important instruments for measuring and evaluating the effects of institutional initiatives to enhance quality in its core functions.

CRITERION 19

The institution engages in benchmarking, where appropriate, and draws on user surveys and impact studies in the process of planning and setting of priorities for quality development and enhancement.

In order to meet this criterion, the following are examples of what would be expected:

(i)   Benchmarking on a regular basis against internal and external reference points for the purposes of goal-setting, improvement, and establishing institutional reputation and competitive edge.

(ii)   User surveys undertaken on a regular basis to obtain feedback for quality improvement from a range of stakeholder constituencies, e.g. student satisfaction surveys, graduate tracking surveys, employer satisfaction surveys, etc.

(iii) Impact studies undertaken on a regular basis to assess the effectiveness of quality assurance and quality enhancement systems for the core functions of the institution.

(iv)   Regular review of the effectiveness of benchmarking and the extent to which survey findings are utilised for priority setting and quality enhancement.

Appendix A

Summary of criteria for the heqc's audit system

Area	Sub-area	Criterion
Institutional mission; links between planning, resource allocation and quality management		
	Fitness of purpose of institutional mission, goals and objectives in response to local, national and international context (including transformation issues)	1
	Links between planning, resource allocation and quality management	2
Teaching and learning, research and community engagement		
General quality-related arrangements for teaching and learning	Management of the quality of teaching and learning	3
	Academic support services	4
	Short courses, exported and partnership programmes, programmes offered at tuition centres and satellite campuses	5
	Certification	6
Quality-related arrangements for programme development, management and review; and for student assessment and success		
Programme development, management and review	Programme management	7
	Programme design and approval	8
	Staffing	9
	Programme review	10
Student assessment and success	Management of assessment	11
	Moderation system	12
	Explicitness, fairness and consistency of assessment practices. Security of recording and documenting assessment data	13
	Recognition of prior learning (RPL)	14
Research		
General quality-related arrangements for research (for all higher education institutions)		15
Quality-related arrangements for research (in depth evaluation for research-intensive institutions)		16
Quality-related arrangements for postgraduate education		17
Community engagement		18
Benchmarking, user surveys and impact studies		19

INSTITUTIONAL AUDITS WITHIN THE HEQC'S SCHEDULE OF ACTIVITIES: 2004 TO 2009

The HEQC's quality assurance activities during the cycle from 2004 to 2009 are structured into Phase A (2004–2006) and Phase B (2007–2009). The details below indicate how institutional audits fit into the envisaged schedule:

Phase A (2004 to 2006)

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

(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 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 co-operation modalities.

(e) National reviews (such as the HEQC's present 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 to 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. The HEQC may 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.

GLOSSARY[1]

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-orientated 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 acquisition of the learning goals intended in a curriculum.

Audit – See Institutional audit.

Audit criteria – Audit criteria indicate the requirements for institutional policies, systems, strategies and resources for assuring, developing and monitoring the quality of teaching and learning, research and community engagement.

Audit cycle – A six-year period in which every higher education institution will be audited at least once.

Audit evidence – Information provided by the higher education institution in its audit portfolio and presented to the audit panel by institutional and other interviewees with regard to the claims made in the audit portfolio. Audit evidence is evaluated by the panel against the HEQC's audit criteria in order to make commendations and recommendations on the institution's quality management system.

Audit panel – External panel of peers and experts, selected by the HEQC, to conduct institutional audits on the basis of their relevant knowledge and experience, and who are trained by the HEQC for this purpose.

Audit portfolio – Self-evaluation report of the higher education institution to be audited in which evidence on the effectiveness of the institution's policies, systems, strategies and resources for quality management in the areas of teaching and learning, research and community engagement is described, analysed and evaluated against the HEQC's audit criteria.

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1 The definitions of terms provided in this Glossary refer to their use in the text of the *Criteria for Institutional Audits*, and may not necessarily include other possible interpretations of the same terms.

Audit report – Evaluation report from the HEQC to the audited higher education institution. On the basis of the quantitative and qualitative evidence gathered during the audit, the report is developed by the HEQC on the basis of panel deliberations and finalised in consultation with the chairperson and other members of the audit panel. The report provides an assessment of the adequacy and effectiveness of the internal quality arrangements of the institution, as well as commendations and recommendations in the various target areas of the audit.

Audit scope – Range of areas for evaluation during the institutional audit.

Audit visit – Site visit of two to five days, during which time the audit panel engages in various evaluative activities, such as conducting interviews and scrutinising documents in order to validate the claims that are made in the audit portfolio.

Benchmarking – A process by which a higher education institution, programme, faculty, school or any other relevant unit evaluates and compares itself in chosen areas agains internal and external, national and international reference points, for the purposes of monitoring and improvement.

Community engagement – Initiatives and processes through which the expertise of the higher education institution in the areas of teaching and research are applied to address issues relevant to its community. Community engagement typically finds expression in a variety of forms, ranging from informal and relatively unstructured activities to formal and structured academic programmes addressed at particular community needs (service learning programmes).

Co-operative education – A philosophy of learning that promotes the concept of enhanced learning based on co-operation between education institutions and industry, commerce and the public sector.

Criteria for programme accreditation – Minimum standards necessary to support and enhance the quality of teaching and learning, research and service learning programmes.

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 the South African Qualification Authority (SAQA).

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

Existing programmes – Programmes that are registered on the National Qualifications Framework (NQF) and have been accredited by the Universities and Technikons Advisory Council (AUT), SAQA or the HEQC.

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

Institutional audit – An improvement orientated, external evaluation of institutional arrangements for quality 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 against the HEQC's criteria and other quality requirements set by the institution itself. The audit panel's report forms 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.

Institutional quality management system – Institutional policies, systems, strategies and resources for assuring, developing and monitoring the quality of teaching and learning, research, and community engagement.

Moderator – A person, apart from the examiner, that 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.

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

Professional programmes – Programmes that have to meet the licensure and other professional and work-based requirements of statutory councils.

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

Programme evaluation – The external quality assurance processes undertaken to make an independent assessment of a programme's development, management and outcomes and to validate the findings of an internal programme review.

Quality assurance – Processes of ensuring that specified standards or requirements have been achieved.

Quality improvement plan – A plan developed by the audited institution specifying activities, designated responsibilities and time-frames in order to address the requirements and recommendations of the audit report.

Quality management – Institutional arrangements for assuring, supporting, developing and enhancing, and monitoring the quality of teaching and learning, research and community engagement.

Recognition of prior learning (RPL) – 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. Self-accreditation status will enable the institution to re-accredit existing programmes, where no statutory professional 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, 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 the context of an audit, self-evaluation refers to the process by which an institution reviews the effectiveness of its quality management system for assuring, developing and monitoring the quality of teaching and learning, research and community engagement against the requirements of the HEQC's audit criteria and any other quality criteria that the institution deems relevant. The self-evaluation process leads to the development of an audit portfolio by the institution for submission to the HEQC.

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 or may not take place in a work environment.

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.