



HIGHER EDUCATION QUALITY COMMITTEE

***PROPOSED CRITERIA
FOR THE HEQC's PROGRAMME
ACCREDITATION CYCLE:
2004-2009***

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Discussion Document

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

1. Purpose of the document

This document sets out for consultation and comment the HEQC's proposals for criteria for the accreditation of higher education programmes in the cycle: 2004-2009.

2. Relevant issues for the development of criteria for programme accreditation

The following issues are regarded as relevant for the development of criteria for programme accreditation:

(i) Policy and higher education context

National policy and other regulatory frameworks (e.g. the HEQC's *Founding Document* and framework documents), national benchmarks, the institutional quality landscape, institutional missions and goals, partnerships and international comparability.

(ii) The model for programme accreditation as indicated in the *Programme Accreditation Framework*

The underlying principles and key elements of the programme accreditation model as set out in the HEQC discussion document *Programme Accreditation Framework*. This includes, for example, the distinction between new and existing programmes, between professional and non-professional programmes, and the use of standards and criteria.

(iii) Level of specificity of criteria for programme accreditation

Level of specificity of the criteria for programme accreditation, i.e. general vis-à-vis specific criteria. Specific criteria are preferred in order to clarify the basis for self- and external evaluation, promote justifiable programme judgments, and provide a solid and explicit basis for the training of programme evaluators.

3. General objectives of HEQC programme accreditation

The general objectives of the HEQC with regard to programme accreditation are indicated in the *Programme Accreditation Framework* (p. 11), namely -

- (i) To identify and grant recognition status to programmes that can satisfy the HEQC's minimum standards for provision, or demonstrate their potential to do so in a stipulated period of time.
- (ii) To protect students from poor quality programmes through accreditation and re-accreditation arrangements that build on reports from self-evaluation and external

evaluation activities, including HEQC audits, and other relevant sources of information.

- (iii) To encourage and support providers to institutionalise a culture of self-managed evaluation that builds on and surpasses minimum standards.
- (iv) To utilise all available quality assurance capacity and experience in a co-operative approach to accreditation.

The following objective applies in addition to those specified in the *Programme Accreditation Framework*:

- (v) The cultivation of a culture of innovation and continuous improvement in higher education. This implies the implementation of innovative measures by institutions to move beyond the minimum requirements set by the HEQC.

4. The objectives of the programme accreditation cycle: 2004-2009

In addition to the general objectives of programme accreditation (see 3 above), the following objectives apply to the programme accreditation cycle: 2004-2009. The HEQC intends to:

- (i) Specify clearly, through the proposed common set of programme accreditation criteria, the minimum standards that it expects of all higher education programmes.
- (ii) Evaluate applications from higher education institutions for the accreditation of new programmes against the proposed criteria for new programmes.
- (iii) Re-accredit existing programmes, where applicable, utilising the proposed criteria for existing programmes.
- (iv) Conduct national reviews of selected programme areas (such as the present HEQC MBA review), utilising the proposed criteria for existing programmes.
- (v) Obtain by means of (ii) – (iv) above, together with data from the DoE and SAQA, a clear picture of the state of higher education programmes, in order to facilitate capacity development and improvement programmes by the HEQC and other role-players.
- (vi) Identify and disseminate good practices in programmes throughout the higher education sector.
- (vii) Utilise data obtained through the HEQC's programme accreditation and re-accreditation, national programme reviews and audits, as well as data from other sources (e.g. the DoE and SAQA), in considering applications from higher education institutions for the awarding of self-accreditation status in Phase B of the programme accreditation cycle¹.
- (viii) Utilise data obtained to undertake informed and systematic planning for the programme accreditation cycle: 2010-2015.

5. Programme accreditation activities in the cycle: 2004-2009

¹ See section 5 of the Executive Summary below.

The HEQC's programme accreditation activities during the cycle: 2004-2009 are structured into two subsequent periods, namely 2004-2006 (Phase A) and 2007-2009 (Phase B). These activities are as follows (audit activities during this cycle are also indicated, as these form an integrated system together with programme accreditation):

(i) Phase A (2004-2006)

- (a) Full-scale audits commence, except at merging institutions, where provision is made for a three-year "settling-down" period. The HEQC will undertake visits to merging institutions in the first year after the merger has been officially gazetted, in order to ascertain institutional preparations for institutional and programme quality management.
- (b) New programmes are accredited, in order to ensure that only programmes of good quality enter the higher education system.
- (c) Most existing programmes will not be re-accredited by the HEQC. Non-professional programmes will be re-accredited eventually by self-accrediting HEIs².
- (d) Self-accreditation status will not be granted. However, institutions intending to apply for self-accreditation status in Phase B (2007-2009) can use this opportunity to develop the necessary structures, processes and procedures for self-accreditation.
- (e) National reviews of programmes (such as the HEQC's present MBA review), which may be linked to accreditation decisions, continue in selected programme areas. The number of review areas *per annum* could be increased, depending on the need and the HEQC's internal capacity and resources.

(ii) Phase B (2007-2009)

- (a) Audits continue at all institutions, including at merged institutions.
- (b) Accreditation of new programmes continues at all institutions.
- (c) Institutions can now apply for self-accreditation status. This status will be granted on the basis of satisfactory evidence of the quality of their internal quality management systems and programme quality.
- (d) Re-accreditation of existing programmes will generally not be conducted by the HEQC, except if an institution performs consistently poorly in the accreditation of new programmes, during audits in those areas which will be scrutinised in depth, namely programme development and review, student assessment and performance, and research (in the case of institutions with a

² See Phase B under (ii) below.

specified research mission), and in re-accreditation of existing programmes through national reviews.

Full-scale re-accreditation of existing programmes will commence only at the beginning of the next quality assurance cycle (2010-2015). This applies to re-accreditation of existing non-professional programmes of institutions without self-accreditation status, which will be conducted by the HEQC, and re-accreditation of existing professional programmes, together with statutory ETQAs, in a range of co-operation modalities.

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.

6. Proposed criteria for programme accreditation

The proposed criteria for programme accreditation are classified in two major categories, namely criteria for new programmes and for existing programmes, in line with the programme accreditation model set out in the *Programme Accreditation Framework*. Within these categories, a further distinction is made between criteria relating to:

- Programme input.
- Programme process.
- Programme output and impact.
- Programme review.

ACRONYMS

CHE	Council on Higher Education
DoE	Department of Education
ETQA	Education and Training Quality Assurer
HEQC	Higher Education Quality Committee
NAP	New Academic Policy
NPHE	National Plan for Higher Education
NQF	National Qualifications Framework
PQM	Programme and Qualification Mix
SAQA	South African Qualifications Authority

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1. Introduction

The Higher Education Quality Committee (HEQC) is a permanent committee of the Council on Higher Education (CHE), which was established by the Higher Education Act, 1997 (Act No. 101 of 1997). In terms of the Act, the HEQC has responsibility to accredit programmes of higher education, audit the quality assurance mechanisms of higher education institutions and promote quality in higher education.

In order for the HEQC to execute the above responsibilities, the development of criteria for its audit and accreditation system constitutes a crucial component. The criteria not only have to serve as evaluative instruments against which judgements can be made about quality management and assurance, but also set broad benchmarks for quality management and assurance in higher education. The criteria should enable institutions to analyse and reflect on their quality management and assurance arrangements and guide the production of their institutional self-evaluation report.

The HEQC released in March 2003 a discussion document on audit criteria, titled *Proposed criteria for the HEQC's first cycle of audits: 2004-2009*. The audit criteria dealt with standards expected of institutional policies, systems, structures and activities for the quality management of teaching and learning, research and service learning. The present document deals with proposals for criteria for programme accreditation³ and indicates the standards which the HEQC requires with regard to higher education programmes. Programme accreditation criteria are intended to be used by -

- (i) Higher education institutions in applying for accreditation of new programmes⁴ or re-accreditation of existing programmes⁵.
- (ii) HEQC programme evaluators in evaluating applications for accreditation of new programmes or re-accreditation of existing programmes.
- (iii) Higher education institutions as guidelines for follow-up activities after HEQC decisions on accreditation or re-accreditation of their programmes.
- (iv) Members of the public, in particular students, as indicators of the standards that the HEQC sets for programme quality and educational effectiveness.

The audit and accreditation criteria are intended to constitute together a meaningful and coherent instrument for the HEQC's quality related responsibilities as integral and mutually reinforcing parts of one quality assurance system. This intended symbiosis should be especially evident in the presentation and evaluation of evidence in institutional applications

³ A programme is understood as a purposeful and structured set of learning experiences that leads to one or more qualifications. Accreditation is the recognition status granted for a stipulated period of time to a programme after an evaluation indicates that it meets or exceeds minimum thresholds of educational quality (*Programme Accreditation Framework*, p. 22).

⁴ A new programme is one which has not existed before or is a programme that has been significantly changed, i.e. when its purpose, outcomes, field of study, mode or site of delivery has been changed to a considerable extent.

⁵ Existing programmes are programmes leading to qualifications that are registered on the NQF and have been accredited by the Universities and Technikons Advisory Council (AUT), SAQA or the HEQC.

for awarding self-accreditation status⁶. The HEQC's decision about self-accreditation status will be informed, in each instance, by evidence deriving from audit visits, together with a representative range of programme and other information. Self-accreditation status is one of the HEQC's major instruments for moving the higher education system towards a greater measure of self-regulation. A credible system of institutional self-accreditation for existing programmes will eventually lessen the amount of direct external HEQC scrutiny and restore the responsibility for quality assurance of programmes to institutions, where it belongs. A more detailed exposition of the requirements for self-accreditation status will be released by the HEQC at a later stage.

The following general points of departure are appropriate in developing criteria for programme accreditation. The criteria should be-

- (i) Developed with due attention to the social and educational context within which the HEQC's activities take place.
- (ii) Developed for the higher education sector as a whole, in line with the vision of *Education White Paper 3: A programme for the transformation of higher education*, 1997 of a single, coordinated higher education system. Quality is, in fact, the only instrument at national level which can bring about a coordinated system for public and private providers alike. A measure of flexibility should, however, be built into the criteria to allow for diversity relating to issues such as institutional mission, scope of work, etc.
- (iii) Useful for institutions in developing and enhancing the quality of provision in a way that advances the achievement of national goals and priorities in higher education in South Africa. They should serve diagnostic as well as improvement purposes in respect of the core functions of institutions, viz. teaching and learning, research and service learning.

It should also be noted that the proposed criteria for programme accreditation will function as an integral part of the HEQC's accreditation system and specific programme accreditation model. It is, therefore, strongly suggested that the criteria should be read in close conjunction with the final version of the HEQC's *Programme Accreditation Framework*.

With regard to the intended scope and depth of scrutiny of the HEQC's programme accreditation system, the real danger of system overload has to be borne in mind and the amount of scrutiny that institutions are able to handle needs to be carefully balanced against the requirements and legal obligations of the HEQC. Apart from this, vast differences in

⁶ Self-accreditation status is applied for and attained for a period of six years after an HEQC evaluation has found the institution to satisfy its audit requirements, successfully manage institutionally arranged internal and external programme evaluations and on the basis of other relevant information supplied by the Department of Education (DoE), the South African Qualifications Authority (SAQA), etc. Self-accreditation status will allow institutions to accredit their own non-professional programmes for the duration of the period of self-accreditation.

quality exist between higher education institutions and the concomitant level of preparedness for internal and external quality management processes differs considerably. Many institutions are also in the process of merging, which have implications for their preparedness for internal and external programme evaluation.

In the light of the above, the HEQC has decided that accreditation activities will be phased in gradually in two subsequent phases during the cycle: 2004-2009. The same applies also to HEQC audit activities. Details of this process are provided in Section 4.2 below. The findings from the 2004-2009 cycle will be carefully reviewed by the HEQC and fully integrated into preparations for the next accreditation cycle.

It is important to note that a quality assurance system for South African higher education have to take broader transformation imperatives into account. Both audit and programme accreditation criteria have to deal with how higher education institutions are engaging with the legacies of inequity, lack of opportunity and poor quality provision in many parts of the system. They will also have to address the adaptability, responsiveness and innovativeness of institutions in relation to new knowledge and skills requirements and new modalities of provision. Ultimately, they will have to enable or encourage institutions to demonstrate that they are improving continuously as teaching, research and social institutions and are socially responsive without compromising their intellectual identity as higher education institutions.

2. Definition of criteria for programme accreditation

The HEQC views criteria for programme accreditation as indicators of the minimum standards required for programmes. More formally, the criteria can be defined as follows:

Criteria for programme accreditation indicate the minimum standards which are necessary to support and enhance the quality of teaching and learning, research and service learning programmes.

It should be noted that, although programme accreditation criteria express minimum standards, institutions should constantly strive to attain higher levels of quality than the minimum.

3. Relevant issues for the development of criteria for programme accreditation

The following issues are relevant to the development of criteria for programme accreditation:

- (i) Policy and higher education context.
- (ii) Model for programme accreditation as indicated in the *Programme Accreditation Framework*.
- (iii) Level of specificity of the criteria.

3.1 Policy and higher education context

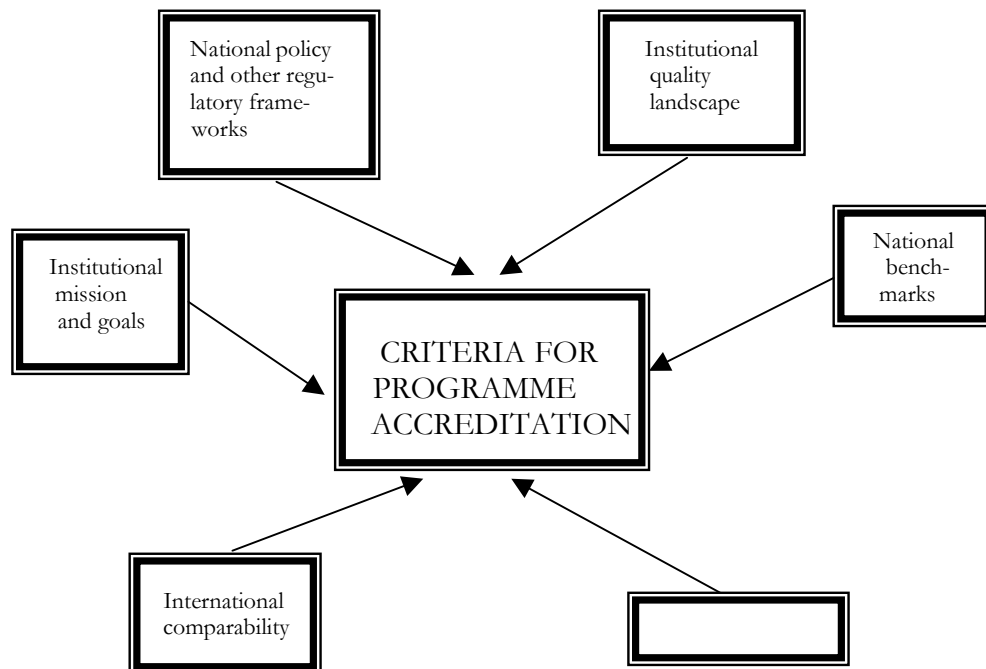
Criteria for programme accreditation have to be fully contextualised within the circumstances of South African higher education, while also taking into account international trends and benchmarks. The criteria cannot be taken over simply from other contexts and/or quality assurance agencies. They are clearly dependent on and linked to a number of contextual issues, which of necessity shape and mould their development and use.

The following are some contextual issues which are addressed in this section:

- (i) National policy and other regulatory frameworks.
- (ii) National benchmarks.
- (iii) Institutional quality landscape.
- (iv) Institutional mission and goals.
- (v) Partnerships.
- (vi) International comparability.

This is represented in Figure 1.

Figure 1: Policy and higher education context



3.1.1. National policy and other regulatory frameworks

3.1.1.1 National policy

National policy relating to higher education⁷ provides not only the broad conceptual and legislative context for the HEQC's work, but also have clear implications for the development of the HEQC's criteria for programme accreditation. The criteria have to be consonant with national policy on matters such as the purposes of higher education, national needs and challenges, issues like access, standards, etc. The criteria are, in fact, one of the main vehicles for giving practical effect to these policies.

3.1.1.2 HEQC policy and frameworks

(i) *The Founding Document*

The criteria have to be informed by the HEQC's own policy positions as expounded in its *Founding Document* and other documents, for example, its views on the nature and definition of quality in higher education, accountability and improvement, ways of dealing with the historical legacy of apartheid in the higher education system, etc. For example, according to the *Founding Document* (p. 14), the HEQC will develop a quality assurance framework and criteria based on:

- Fitness for purpose in relation to specified mission within a national framework that encompasses differentiation and diversity.
- Value for money as judged in relation to the full range of higher education purposes as set out in the White Paper. Judgements about the effectiveness and efficiency of provision will include but not be confined to labour market responsiveness and cost recovery.
- Transformation in the sense of developing the capabilities of individual learners for personal enrichment, as well as the requirements of social development and economic and employment growth.”

The *Founding Document* also states (p. 14) that the criteria will be located within a “fitness of purpose” framework based on national goals, priorities and targets.

⁷ This includes, *inter alia*, the following: Education White Paper 3: A programme for the transformation of higher education, 1997, Higher Education Act, 1997 (Act No. 101 of 1997), as amended by Act 55 of 1999 and Act 54 of 2000, South African Qualifications Authority Act, 1995 (Act No 58 of 1995), Skills Development Act, 1998 (Act No. 97 of 1998), Regulations under the South African Qualifications Authority Act, 1996 (Act No 58 of 1995), Criteria and Guidelines for ETQAs, 2000 (SAQA), *National Plan for Higher Education*, 2001 (Dept. of Education), *New Academic Policy for Programmes and Qualifications in Higher Education*, 2002 (Dept. of Education), *Development of Level Descriptors for the National Qualifications Framework* (SAQA), the *Human Resources Development Strategy* (2001), and *A New Institutional Landscape for Higher Education in South Africa*, 2002 (Dept. of Education).

The *Founding Document* thus provides a diversity of “lenses” for looking at quality assurance. This multi-faceted view necessitates a diversified range of criteria with which to evaluate the quality of programmes.

(ii) ***The Programme Accreditation Framework and the Proposed Criteria for the HEQC’s First Cycle of Audits: 2004-2009***

The criteria for programme accreditation have to be developed within the context of the *Programme Accreditation Framework*. This will be discussed in more detail in 3.2 below. At the same time, the criteria for programme accreditation cannot be developed in isolation from the audit criteria as in the *Proposed Criteria for the First Cycle of HEQC’s Audits: 2004-2009*.

3.1.2 National benchmarks

The development of the criteria should take the national benchmarks set by the DoE for institutional efficiency into consideration. These include increasing enrolments and graduate outputs in general and in specified areas, increasing research productivity and improving the diversity profile of graduates. These benchmarks pertain to efficiency as well as to the transformation requirements of the higher education system.

3.1.3 The institutional quality landscape

The following aspects regarding the institutional quality landscape have to be taken into account when developing the criteria for programme accreditation. The issues are briefly mentioned without any in depth discussion.⁸

- (i) Restructuring of the higher education system: Formal arrangements for quality management are being introduced in an environment where the entire higher education landscape is being restructured. Much attention will be devoted by institutions in the following years to restructuring issues, including mergers, which could be to the detriment of quality provision. On the positive side, quality concerns could be used to help shape and build the new higher education system.
- (ii) Maintenance of standards in a competitive environment: There is a strong pressure for attaining, maintaining and improving standards in institutions, in a difficult climate of declining funding, rising expectations, changing priorities and increased competition between different higher education sectors and institutions.
- (iii) Available expertise: The implementation of national policies for quality management in higher education is a complex matter which will require the combined efforts of the relatively small number of knowledgeable people in the

⁸ This section draws on the report of the Centre for Higher Education Studies and Development (CHESD), titled Report on the CHESD/HEQC Audit Manual Project, 2002, pp. 198-201.

field of quality assurance in South Africa, as well as capacity development initiatives for this purpose.

- (iv) Differences in quality among institutions: There are, for historical and other reasons, many differences in the quality of provision among institutions, as well as between programmes within institutions. The development of benchmarks for an acceptable level of quality provision becomes critical.
- (v) Different interpretations of quality management: Different histories and interpretations of quality management exist in various higher education sectors. Technikons and agricultural colleges have focused largely on minimum standards, programme evaluation and statutory compliance, whereas the universities favoured a developmental approach in which self- and peer evaluation was based on fitness for purpose, relating to the institution's mission and goals. The private provider sector has indicated a strong interest in the quality requirements of vocational education. A common understanding of and approach to quality issues are needed, which will of necessity have an influence on the development of the criteria.

3.1.4 Institutional mission and goals

The mission and goals of an institution provide the overarching context within which its core educational activities ought to take place ("fitness for purpose"). Institutional missions and goals have themselves to be determined in relation to the needs of the local and national context within which the institution finds itself ("fitness of purpose"). The criteria can help to ascertain the extent to which an institution's core educational activities, i.e. teaching and learning, research and service learning, are informed and directed by its mission and goals in a way that enhances quality in all these core functions.

In addition to the above, institutional missions and goals have to be congruent with the purposes of higher education in general. They should also be appropriately responsive to international developments and trends in higher education.

3.1.5 Partnerships

Responsible partnerships in higher education provision can greatly facilitate the effective utilisation of academic expertise and human resources, especially in specialised fields at the postgraduate level. Such partnerships include collaboration between and among institutions on a regional basis, between the public and private provider sectors, between universities and technikons, and between higher education institutions and industry / companies. It also includes collaboration between institutions across national borders. Within an environment where higher education co-operation is encouraged, the criteria for programme accreditation will have to address the quality requirements of collaborative provision of higher education, to ensure that responsibility for quality and quality management is clearly assigned and monitored.

3.1.6 International comparability

International trends and requirements for the internationalisation of programmes are important benchmarks for developing the HEQC's criteria for programme accreditation, in order to ensure programmes which have good reputation in a global higher education market and which produce graduates and diplomates who are internationally competitive, marketable and respected.

3.2 The model for programme accreditation as indicated in the *Programme Accreditation Framework*

The criteria for programme accreditation have to be embedded in the broad framework for accreditation as set out in the *Programme Accreditation Framework*. Pertinent aspects of this framework are briefly discussed below.

3.2.1 Objectives of the programme accreditation model

The following general objectives of the HEQC's programme accreditation model are indicated in the *Programme Accreditation Framework* (p. 11):

- (i) To identify and grant recognition status to programmes that can satisfy the HEQC's minimum standards for provision, or demonstrate their potential to do so in a stipulated period of time.
- (ii) To protect students from poor quality programmes through accreditation and re-accreditation arrangements that build on reports from self-evaluation and external evaluation activities, including HEQC audits, and other relevant sources of information.
- (iii) To encourage and support providers to institutionalise a culture of self-managed evaluation that builds on and surpasses minimum standards.
- (iv) To utilise all available quality assurance capacity and experience in a co-operative approach to accreditation.

The following objective should be added to the above:

- (v) The cultivation of a culture of innovation and continuous improvement in higher education. This implies the implementation of innovative measures by institutions to move beyond the minimum requirements set by the HEQC.

3.2.2 Underlying principles of the programme accreditation model

According to the *Programme Accreditation Framework* (p. iv), the principles underlying the HEQC's accreditation model are the following:

- (i) The model presumes strong accountability within the context of a developmental trajectory and requires the observance of minimum standards and requirements. The stipulation of minimum standards is intended to protect

- students from poor quality programmes, safeguard the credibility of qualifications and facilitate articulation between programmes and providers.
- (ii) External expert evaluations by academic peers constitute a fundamental component of the accountability requirements of the model.
 - (iii) The achievement of self-accreditation status by a provider will lessen HEQC scrutiny of non-professional programmes and place quality assurance responsibility for the re-accreditation of existing programmes with the institution itself. Self-accreditation status will be awarded by the HEQC upon application by an institution, if it has a good track record of audit and programme evaluations, together with satisfactory evidence from other sources.
 - (iv) Co-operation with other Education and Training Quality Assurers (ETQAs) in the case of professional and work-related programmes will be based on a range of partnership models, depending on the nature of the provider and the level of the programme or qualification.

3.2.3 **The programme accreditation model's approach to quality assurance**

The HEQC's model for programme accreditation is premised on a distinction between new and existing programmes. Within existing programmes, a further distinction is made between professional and non-professional programmes.

Although the model starts with clear accountability requirements for minimum standards and external evaluation, it intends moving the system towards a self-accreditation philosophy that strongly embraces an institutionally managed evaluation system.

In the case of new programmes, the emphasis is on accountability through evaluation activities that are mainly external. There is also a strong improvement trajectory which is facilitated by a gradual build-up towards the accreditation phase through the candidacy and mid-term check phases, which provide opportunities for incremental development and improvement.

In the case of existing programmes, the emphasis is on sustained improvement through institutionally managed evaluation. This will allow institutions which can clearly demonstrate reasonably effective internal quality management systems to take the initiative and responsibility for programme re-accreditation on the basis of trust in their commitment to continuous quality maintenance and improvement. External accountability will be satisfied through HEQC scrutiny linked to institutional audits and programme-related information from sources such as the DoE and SAQA. Within the audit cycle, institutions will be free to arrange the timeframes and approaches to programme evaluation and accreditation activities, subject to HEQC guidelines. In this way, the HEQC intends moving the higher education system towards a greater measure of self-regulation.

3.2.3.1 **New programmes**

New programmes are required by the HEQC to undergo a three-step evaluation process that includes a candidacy phase, a mid-term check and a final accreditation phase. The

three phases provide also development and improvement opportunities for the proposed programme(s), gradually building up to final accreditation. All three phases will be mandatory for new private institutions which want to offer new programmes. Existing public and private institutions may not be required to undergo all the steps of the HEQC's requirements.

The methodology followed in each phase will include programme self-evaluation and peer review, based on the self-evaluation report. At least one site visit is mandatory for accreditation, but such site visits may occur in any or more than one phase of the process. The HEQC reserves the right to implement all or only some of the steps of the accreditation process.

In all three phases, development opportunities will be available for providers if programmes are found to be problematic, on the expectation that these providers have the ability to remedy the problem areas and attain minimum standards within a stipulated period of time.

(i) The candidacy phase

In this phase, the HEQC/and other co-operating ETQA will focus on evaluating the evidence submitted by an institution on its capacity and institutional support to start offering a programme. The evidence presented on the arrangements for the quality of teaching and learning for a specific programme will also be scrutinised. If a programme satisfies the HEQC's requirements for the candidacy phase, it will receive provisional accreditation for that programme.

Institutions should only apply for the accreditation of new programmes if all legislative requirements have been met, or if the institution can demonstrate that it has the potential to meet these requirements.

(ii) Mid-term check phase

This phase constitutes a performance and compliance check midway through the programme to ensure that the institution has implemented the stated programme plan and has identified and addressed areas for urgent attention. This step provides an early warning system (to the institution and to the HEQC) about problem areas as well as an opportunity for appropriate developmental support, where necessary.

(iii) Accreditation phase

Within one year of the first cohort of students having graduated from a new programme, the institution must demonstrate compliance with conditions set by the HEQC during the previous phases (where applicable). It must also supply to the HEQC the success rates at the different year levels and throughput rates for the whole programme, a self-analysis of the strengths and weaknesses of the quality of the programme against the HEQC criteria and an improvement plan. The award of accreditation will be valid for a maximum of six

years, depending on the duration of the new programme. Until a successful outcome in the third phase of the accreditation process, programmes will be designated as having “provisional accreditation”.

3.2.3.2 Existing programmes

According to the *Programme Accreditation Framework* (pp. 16-18), existing programmes will be re-accredited as follows:

(i) Non-professional programmes

Non-professional programmes will be re-accredited by the provider, if granted self-accreditation status by the HEQC. Institutions can apply for self-accreditation status for a period of six years, which will depend on the assessment made by the HEQC Accreditation Committee of the reports of both the institution’s self-evaluation and external evaluation of programmes and departments, the results of the HEQC’s institutional audit reports, a sample of HEQC programme evaluations, information provided by the DoE, SAQA, other ETQAs, and any other related reports. Institutions should work towards attaining self-accreditation status as part of an institutionally driven improvement trajectory.

If self-accreditation status is not achieved by the provider, the HEQC will undertake re-accreditation of the institution’s non- professional programmes.

(ii) Professional programmes

Existing professional programmes in which statutory bodies are involved, have to satisfy all the statutory and other professional requirements for licensure and professional practice. Depending on DoE and SAQA policies and regulations, including co-operation agreements entered into by the HEQC with statutory professional councils, which include compliance with conditions set by the HEQC, such statutory bodies may, therefore, be involved in the re-accreditation of an existing professional programme or qualification. The model of collaboration agreed upon by the HEQC and the individual bodies will determine the nature of their involvement.

3.2.4 Standards and criteria in the *Programme Accreditation Framework*

The *Programme Accreditation Framework* represents standards as follows (p. 18):

Table 1: Standards as represented in the *Programme Accreditation Framework*

General provider standards (HEQC)	HEQC’s institutional efficiency standards, linked to those of the DoE as well as the institution’s own governance structures (e.g. in the area of infrastructural capacity).
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General programme standards (HEQC)	Relating to quality management standards developed by the HEQC.
Specific programme/qualification standards	Relating to standards registered on the NQF and/or the requirements of the relevant ETQAs or statutory professional councils and/or programme standards set by institutions ⁹ , as well as level descriptors and qualification descriptors in the proposed New Academic Policy.

General provider or institutional standards relate to the HEQC's standards for institutional structures, processes and procedures for the management of quality. These standards are informed also by the DoE's requirements.

General programme standards are the HEQC's standards which apply across all higher education programmes and are informed also by policies of the DoE, SAQA and by the *New Academic Policy* (NAP)¹⁰. The present document makes proposals for such general programme criteria and standards.

Specific programme/qualifications standards relate to standards for specific programmes or qualifications, such as for the MBA, MBChB, etc. Statutory professional councils are also involved in setting standards for professional programmes.

3.3 Level of specificity of criteria for programme accreditation

The level of specificity of the criteria has important consequences for their interpretation and use, for example in accreditation visits, institutional self-evaluation and the training of programme evaluators. Criteria can be devised in a number of ways and formulated on different levels of generality, ranging from general to more specific and detailed.

The HEQC has opted to use specified criteria for programme accreditation, in order to make its requirements for programme areas explicit. This should clarify the basis for self- and external evaluation and promote justifiable programme judgments¹¹. It would also provide a solid basis for the training of programme evaluators.

⁹ The accreditation system presupposes that a standards generating process for qualifications and programmes is operative and that standards exist on which judgments can be based. The HEQC supports the notion of standards setting for qualifications and programmes in terms of the "nested approach" proposed in the *New Academic Policy*. The final version of the *New Academic Policy* is expected to provide detail on the process of standards design, standards setting and standards registration and clarity on the roles of the various authorities involved. The resolutions following the proposals of the NQF Study Team will determine the context and system in which the HEQC will have to operate.

¹⁰ The NAP still has to be finalised.

¹¹ In the *Proposed Criteria for the First Cycle of HEQC Audits: 2004-2009*, the HEQC proposed both general and specific criteria. The two types of criteria correlate with the depth of scrutiny during audits, i.e. either general or in depth scrutiny at specified levels in an institution.

4. The HEQC's programme accreditation cycle: 2004-2009

The criteria which are proposed in this document are intended for use in the programme accreditation cycle: 2004-2009, within the framework of the HEQC's accreditation model discussed in 3.2 above. Before discussing the contents of the criteria, the general objectives of programme accreditation and those of the programme accreditation cycle: 2004-2009, as well the intended accreditation activities during this cycle, should be briefly indicated.

4.1 General objectives of HEQC programme accreditation

The general objectives of the HEQC with regard to programme accreditation are indicated in the *Programme Accreditation Framework* (p. 11), namely -

- (i) The HEQC intends to signal clearly to the higher education community, through the programme accreditation criteria, the minimum standards that it expects of all higher education programmes. The criteria will also provide explicit benchmarks against which institutions can measure their existing programmes, develop new programmes and develop or maintain the necessary internal mechanisms to ensure their quality. Institutions should constantly strive to attain higher levels of quality than the minimums specified in the criteria.
- (ii) The common set of quality requirements for all higher education programmes which will be used in the cycle 2004-2009 will enable the HEQC to obtain baseline information on higher education programmes. Such information will -
 - a. Provide a clear picture of the state of higher education programmes, thus facilitating capacity development and improvement programmes by the HEQC and other role-players.
 - b. Enable the HEQC to identify and disseminate good practices in programmes throughout the higher education sector.
 - c. Constitute part of the evidence, together with data derived from audit outcomes and other sources, for the granting of self-accreditation status to institutions that apply for it.
 - d. Enable the HEQC to do informed and systematic planning for the next programme accreditation cycle.

4.2 Objectives of the programme accreditation cycle: 2004-2009

In addition to the above general objectives of programme accreditation, the following objectives apply to the programme accreditation cycle: 2004-2009. The HEQC intends to:

- (i) Specify clearly, through the proposed common set of programme accreditation criteria, the minimum standards that it expects of all higher education programmes.

- (ii) Evaluate applications from higher education institutions for the accreditation of new programmes against the proposed criteria for new programmes.
- (iii) Re-accredit existing programmes, where applicable¹², utilising the proposed criteria for existing programmes.
- (iv) Conduct national reviews of selected programme areas (such as the present HEQC MBA review), utilising the proposed criteria for existing programmes.
- (v) Obtain by means of (ii) – (iv) above, together with data from the DoE and SAQA, a clear picture of the state of higher education programmes, in order to facilitate capacity development and improvement programmes by the HEQC and other role-players.
- (vi) Identify and disseminate good practices in programmes throughout the higher education sector.
- (vii) Utilise data obtained through the HEQC’s programme accreditation and re-accreditation, national programme reviews and audits, as well as data from other sources (e.g. the DoE and SAQA), in considering applications from higher education institutions for the awarding of self-accreditation status¹³.
- (viii) Utilise data obtained to undertake informed and systematic planning for the programme accreditation cycle: 2010-2015.

4.3 Programme accreditation activities in the cycle: 2004-2009

The HEQC’s programme accreditation activities during the cycle: 2004-2009 are structured into two subsequent periods, namely 2004-2006 (Phase A) and 2007-2009 (Phase B). These activities are as follows (audit activities during this cycle are also indicated, as these form an integrated system together with programme accreditation):

- (ii) Phase A (2004-2006)
 - (a) Full-scale audits commence, except at merging institutions, where provision is made for a three-year “settling-down” period. The HEQC will undertake visits to merging institutions in the first year after the merger has been officially gazetted, in order to ascertain institutional preparations for institutional and programme quality management.
 - (b) New programmes are accredited, in order to ensure that only programmes of good quality enter the higher education system.
 - (c) Most existing programmes will not be re-accredited by the HEQC. This will be done eventually by self-accrediting HEIs.
 - (d) Self-accreditation status will not be granted. However, institutions intending to apply for self-accreditation status in Phase B (2007-2009) can use this opportunity to develop the necessary structures, processes and procedures for self-accreditation.

¹² See footnote 1 for conditions under which existing programmes will be re-accredited in the cycle: 2004-2009.

¹³ See section 4(i)(c) and 4(2)(c) below for more details on self-accreditation status.

- (e) National reviews of programmes (such as the HEQC's present MBA review), which may be linked to accreditation decisions, continue in selected programme areas. The number of review areas *per annum* could be increased, depending on the need and the HEQC's internal capacity.

(ii) Phase B (2007-2009)

- (a) Audits continue at all institutions, including at merged institutions.
- (b) Accreditation of new programmes continues at all institutions.
- (c) Institutions can now apply for self-accreditation status. This status will be granted on the basis of satisfactory evidence of the quality of their internal quality management systems and programme quality.
- (d) Re-accreditation of existing programmes will generally not be conducted by the HEQC, except if an institution performs consistently poorly in the accreditation of new programmes, during audits in those areas which will be scrutinised in depth, namely programme development and review, student assessment and performance, and research (in the case of institutions with a specified research mission), and in re-accreditation of existing programmes through national reviews.

Full-scale re-accreditation of existing programmes will commence only at the beginning of the next quality assurance cycle (2010-2015). This applies to re-accreditation of existing non-professional programmes of institutions without self-accreditation status, which will be conducted by the HEQC, and re-accreditation of existing professional programmes, together with statutory ETQAs, in a range of co-operation modalities.

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.

5. **Classification model for programme aspects and criteria**

The proposed criteria for programme accreditation could be classified in numerous ways. The HEQC will use programme *input*, *process*, and *output* and *review* as a classification model, since it closely reflects aspects typically involved in programmes.

Programme input comprises activities, resources, conditions etc. which should take place/ be available or present with a view to the actual offering of the programme. This includes programme aspects such as programme design, student recruitment, staffing, learning resources, etc.

Programme process includes activities which have to do with or take place as part of the delivery of the programme as such. This includes programme aspects such as management, teaching and learning interactions, assessment, etc.

Programme output and impact includes what is delivered and attained by the programme, for example, student throughput and output, representivity in output, etc.

Programme review comprises activities which have to do with the evaluation of the programme in terms of various aspects, such as its attainment of outcomes, curriculum alignment, graduation and retention rates, use of results of review as input, etc.

The above model does not always allow categorisation of programme aspects and their criteria into watertight compartments. A case in point is programme management, which has a policy aspect, which would properly be classified under input, but also entails a range of activities which have to do with the delivery of the programme. On the whole, however, the model offers a useful classificatory grid.

The proposed criteria for programme aspects will be classified as follows under the input, process, output and impact, and review categories.

Table 2: Classification of criteria for programme aspects under input, process, output and impact, and review

	CRITERIA FOR PROGRAMME ASPECTS
INPUT	Programme design Student recruitment, admission and selection Staffing Policies and procedures for student assessment Venues and IT infrastructure Library resources Programme administrative services Postgraduate policies and procedures
PROCESS	Programme coordination Student academic development Teaching and learning interactions Student assessment Work-based learning Postgraduate studies
OUTPUT AND IMPACT	Student retention and throughput rates Equity of outcomes / representivity Integrity of certification Employment data / external acknowledgement

REVIEW	Attainment of outcomes Curriculum alignment Stakeholder feedback Retention and throughput rates, equity and representivity in output Use of results of review
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The proposed programme accreditation criteria for the cycle: 2004-2009 are listed in Appendices 1 and 2 below, using the above categories. It should be noted that the criteria apply equally to programmes at main campuses, satellite campuses and tuition centres. They apply to contact as well as distance education programmes. Where necessary, conditions pertaining to distance education specifically are indicated. The criteria apply also to exported and partnership programmes. In the case of exported programmes, the quality requirements of the importing country have to be complied with as well.

6. Use of criteria in judgements on programme accreditation

Higher education programmes will be evaluated against the criteria proposed in this document. The HEQC intends using a scale of judgment in order to indicate the outcome of programme evaluation, in order to make the level of the outcome explicit. The following classification is proposed within the framework of the HEQC's programme accreditation model, differentiating between new and existing programmes and phases of accreditation (in the case of new programmes).

Table 3: Use of criteria in judgements on the outcome of programme accreditation

1. NEW PROGRAMMES			
(a) Candidacy phase	Criteria fully met	Good	Provisionally accredited
	Criteria only generally met	Satisfactory	Provisionally accredited (Conditional)
	Criteria generally not met	Not satisfactory	Not provisionally accredited
(b) Mid-term check phase	Criteria fully met	Good	Provisional accreditation extended
	Criteria only generally met	Satisfactory	Provisional accreditation extended (Conditional)
	Criteria generally not met	Not satisfactory	Provisional accreditation not extended

(c) Accreditation phase	Criteria fully met	Good	Accredited
	Criteria only generally met	Satisfactory	Accredited (Conditional)
	Criteria generally not met	Not satisfactory	Not accredited

2. EXISTING PROGRAMMES	Criteria fully met	Good	Accredited
	Criteria only generally met	Satisfactory	Accredited (Conditional)
	Criteria generally not met	Not satisfactory	Not accredited

If the quality of a programme generally exceeds the HEQC's requirements, it will be commended as an example of excellence.

APPENDIX 1

PROPOSED CRITERIA FOR NEW PROGRAMMES

NOTE: The following should be noted:

- (i) As indicated above, a new programme is one which has not existed before or is a programme that has been significantly changed, i.e. when its purpose, outcomes, field of study, mode or site of delivery has been changed to a considerable extent.
- (ii) Criteria are proposed below for the candidacy, mid-term check and accreditation phases for applications for new programmes, as set out in the HEQC's *Programme Accreditation Framework*. The proposed criteria are to be read in close conjunction with the *Programme Accreditation Framework*¹⁴.
- (iii) The criteria should be used as the basis for an institution's self-evaluation in each of the three phases and will be used by the HEQC in the evaluation of submissions from institutions in each of the phases in the programme accreditation cycle 2004-2009.
- (iv) Institutions are required to supply both qualitative and quantitative (statistical) data, where applicable, with reference to the issues dealt with in the criteria, as well as an analysis and interpretation of these.
- (v) It should be noted that the HEQC normally requires an accredited programme first to establish itself before the next higher level programme in the same field can be applied for. However, if an institution satisfies all the criteria for the mid-term check phase of the programme (see below), 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 in a field of study once the honours programme in the same field of study has satisfied all the criteria in the mid-term check phase.
- (vi) Apart from the proposed criteria below, programmes are required to comply with the following national requirements:
 - (a) Public providers: The proposed programme should be part of the institution's 'Programme and Qualification Mix' (PQM), as approved by the DoE.
 - (b) Private providers: The provider should have applied for registration to the Department of Education in terms of the requirements of the Higher Education Act, 1997 (Act No. 101 of 1997) and the Regulations of the Department of Education (2002).
 - (c) The programme should meet the requirements of the New Academic Policy, in keeping with national and international standards. This includes:

¹⁴ A summary of some important aspects of the Programme Accreditation Model is provided in 3.2 above.

- General qualification standards as specified in the level descriptors (e.g. Level 7 for a degree).
 - Qualification type descriptors (e.g. for a bachelor's degree).
 - Generic qualification standards (e.g. for the B Sc).
 - Specific qualification standards (e.g. the B Sc (Geology)).
- (d) The programme should be registered by SAQA on the NQF.
- (e) The stipulations of the Labour Relations Act and conditions of service should be adhered to with regard to recruitment and employment of staff.

I. CANDIDACY PHASE

In order to fulfill the HEQC's requirements for the candidacy phase of a new programme, an institution has to provide evidence that it has the *potential* and *capability* to offer the programme, i.e. the required *input resources, conditions, etc.* This includes aspects such as programme design, student recruitment and admission, staffing, etc.

Secondly, the institution has to submit a *plan* with details regarding the implementation of the programme. The plan should specify the following

- (i) Implementation phases for the proposed programme and attached time-frames.
- (ii) How progress will already be made during implementation towards meeting the criteria for programme progress (especially teaching and learning interactions), output and impact, and review in the accreditation phase of the new programme.
- (iii) Budgetary allocations for each implementation phase.
- (iv) Person-power for managing the implementation.

The criteria for *programme input* which are dealt with below are classified in areas, their relevant aspects and numbers of the corresponding criteria in Table 4 below:

Table 4: Classification of criteria for programme input into areas, relevant aspects and numbers of corresponding criteria

AREAS	RELEVANT ASPECTS	CRITERION
1. Programme design	(a) Relation to institution's mission and planning	Criterion 1
	(b) Needs of students and other stakeholders	
	(c) Intellectual credibility	
	(d) Coherence	
	(e) Articulation	
	(f) Characteristics and needs of professional and vocational education	Criterion 2
	(g) Learning materials development	
2. Student recruitment, admission	(a) Recruitment documentation	Criterion 3
	(b) Legislative issues	

and selection	(c) Widening of access (d) Equity (e) Assumptions of learning (f) Professional needs (g) Capacity of the programme	
3. Staffing	(a) Qualifications (b) Teaching experience (c) Assessment competence (d) Research profile (e) Staff development (f) Size and seniority (g) Diversity (h) Full-time and part-time staff (i) Time and activities	Criterion 4 Criterion 5 Criterion 6
4. Student assessment	(a) Internal assessment (b) External examination (c) Security (d) Explicitness and level of assessment criteria (e) Validity and reliability of practices (f) Recording of results	Criterion 7
5. Venues and IT infrastructure	(a) Suitable and sufficient venues (b) Venue allocation (c) Office space and access to computers (d) Sufficient and suitable technology (e) Training in technology (f) Access to technology (g) Maintenance of technology	Criterion 8
6. Library resources	(a) Integration into curriculum (b) Size and scope (c) Management and maintenance (d) Student support (e) Access	Criterion 9
7. Programme administrative services	(a) Provision of information (b) Management information system (c) Dealing with a diverse student population (d) Identification of active students (e) Communication systems	Criterion 10
8. Postgraduate policies, regulations and procedures	(a) Policies, regulations and procedures (b) Equity and access (c) Preparation of students	Criterion 11

The criteria below are proposed for programme input areas.

1. Programme design

The high quality conceptualisation and design of a programme is an important first step towards achieving high quality educational provision. Effective design policies and procedures should ensure that programmes meet the needs of students and other stakeholders and are intellectually credible. In the case of professional and work-based learning in vocational programmes, input from stakeholders such as industry and professional bodies is critical. The clear definition of the purpose of a programme and its exit-level outcomes provide also key reference points against which the effectiveness of the programme and the performance of its students can be evaluated at a later stage.

CRITERION 1: *The proposed programme is designed as an integral part of the institution's mission and planning, meets the needs of students and other stakeholders and is intellectually credible. It is designed coherently and articulates well with other programmes.*

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

- (i) The proposed programme falls within the institution's mission and goals and was approved by the appropriate institutional structures, including Senior Management.
- (ii) Provision is made for the proposed programme in the institution's planning and resource allocation processes.
- (iii) The proposed programme's design, learning outcomes, degree of curriculum choice, expected completion time, teaching methods and modes of delivery cater for the learning needs of its target student intake. The competences expected of students successfully completing the proposed programme are made explicit.
- (iv) The proposed programme outcomes meet national or regional labour market, knowledge or other socio-cultural needs. All relevant stakeholders, including employers and professional bodies, where applicable, were involved in the development of the proposed programme. This includes academic peers from outside the institution.
- (v) The proposed programme's 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 purpose.
- (vi) The proposed programme's modules or courses are coherently planned with regard to contents, level, credits, purpose, learning outcomes, rules of combination, relative weight, etc.
- (vii) Assessment tasks are coherently linked to specified learning outcomes. Integrated assessment strategies are employed at key exit points from the proposed programme.
- (viii) The proposed programme is designed also to offer learning and career pathways to students with opportunities for access and articulation with other programmes within and across institutions, where possible.
- (ix) In the case of professional and vocational education, in addition to (i) – (viii) above, the proposed programme has to cater for the characteristics and needs of professional and vocational education. This means -

- The proposed programme is designed to promote an understanding on the part of the student of the specific occupation for which he/she is being trained.
- The proposed programme has a balance of theoretical and practical or applied knowledge. Techniques and skills are mastered which are required by a specific profession or occupation.
- Work-based learning forms an integral part of the curriculum and placement in a work-based environment is an essential component of the proposed programme.

CRITERION 2. *There is an implemented policy for development and evaluation of learning materials and their alignment with proposed programme goals and underpinning philosophy.*

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

- (i) Learning material for the proposed programme was developed and evaluated in terms of its underpinning teaching and learning philosophy, the required learning outcomes, and their appropriateness for the target learners. The materials encourage the critical and reflective approach to learning.
- (ii) Academic staff are trained, where necessary, for the development of learning materials.
- (iii) There is proper acknowledgement of the source of all quotations and no breach of local or international copyright laws.

2. Student recruitment, admission and selection

Recruitment needs to be done as part of the marketing of the proposed programme, using recruitment literature and other means which accurately provide the necessary information in terms of the academic calendar, admissions policies, completion requirements and academic standards.

The promotion of equity of access and outcomes and the redress of past inequalities through ensuring that student, graduate and staff profiles reflect the demographic composition of South African society is one of the DoE's strategic objectives for the transformation of the higher education system (NPHE: 2001: 3.2). A participation rate of the 20-24 year old cohort of at least 20% should be achieved over the next 10-15 years. Institutions are urged to establish targets and strategies to ensure equity in the demographic composition of their student bodies. Equity targets should also ensure that black and women students are selected and placed in those programmes where they are currently under-represented.

However, in the medium-term, the DoE wants to focus on improving the efficiency of the system in terms of improving graduation and retention rates, especially the disproportionately high black student failure and drop-out rates, by means of comprehensive, sustained, high quality curriculum interventions.

CRITERION 3. *Recruitment documentation will inform potential students of the proposed programme accurately and sufficiently, and will not be misleading. Admission and selection of students will be regulated within equity-driven enrolment targets. Admission criteria are commensurate with the assumptions of learning stipulated. Due regard is paid to the needs of the particular profession in the case of professional and vocational programmes.*

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

- (i) Advertising and promotional materials contain accurate, sufficient and not misleading information regarding the proposed programme with regard to admission policies, completion requirements and academic standards. Marketing and advertising will be done according to DoE and SAQA regulations.
- (ii) Legislation regarding admission, for example, matriculation exemption, age exemption, etc., is adhered to. Equity targets are clearly stated and the plans to attain them.
- (iii) The proposed programme's admission criteria are in line with the NPHE's goal of widening access to higher education. Provision is made, where possible, for flexible entry routes to the proposed programme, including recognition of prior learning (RPL).
- (iv) Admission requirements are in line with the degree of complexity of the learning required in the programme.
- (v) Selection criteria are explicit and account for 'representivity in enrolment' (NPHE 2001: 3.2) and contribute to 'broadening the social base of students' (NPHE 2001: 2.4).
- (vi) In the case of professional and vocational programmes, the needs of the particular profession are taken into account in the quality of students admitted, the structure of the curriculum and the number of students trained.
- (vii) The number of students selected will not exceed the available capacity to offer a quality programme. The number of students enrolled will be balanced against the intended learning outcomes of the programme and will take into account the modes of delivery of the programme and its components (modules /courses).

3. Staffing

Staff competence and effectiveness are critical for institutional performance. An institution should provide incentives and resources for its staff to meet their own professional goals and to contribute to the realisation of the institution's mission. Staff development should also be an integral part of an institution's human resource development strategy and practice and is essential to respond to the challenges currently facing professionals in higher education. These include:

- Transformation of the education system in the post-1994 era.
- Dealing with 'non-traditional students'.
- New understandings about teaching and learning.

- Demands of the knowledge society, which include capacity-building in research, academic management and leadership, as well as in teaching and information technology.

CRITERION 4: *The academic staff responsible for the proposed programme are suitably qualified and have sufficient teaching competence. Their assessment competence and research profile are adequate for the nature and level of the programme. The institution and/or other recognised agencies provide opportunities to academic staff to enhance their teaching and assessment competencies and to support their professional growth and development.*

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% of the academic staff for postgraduate programmes have relevant academic qualifications higher than the exit level of the programme. The qualifications of the academic staff were awarded by recognised higher education institutions¹⁵.
- (ii) The majority of full-time academic staff have two or more years' teaching experience in a recognised higher education institution.
- (iii) The majority of academic staff have teaching experience in areas pertinent to the proposed programme.
- (iv) The majority of academic staff in professional programmes have relevant professional experience.
- (v) Academic staff are competent to apply the assessment policies of the institution.
- (vi) The majority of the academic staff responsible for the proposed programme have at least two years' experience of student assessment at the exit level of the proposed programme.
- (vii) Academic staff members have research experience through their studies toward higher education qualifications.
- (viii) The area(s) of research of some of the academic staff members are relevant to the subject areas of the proposed programme.
- (ix) The research profile of the staff complement of postgraduate programmes includes recognised research outputs.
- (x) The institution and / or other recognised agencies provide orientation and induction opportunities in which new staff members participate. Experienced staff make use of educational development opportunities provided by the institution and other recognised agencies.
- (xi) Staff development is provided to enhance lecturers' and tutors' skills for working with and developing curricula that are responsive to student diversity, especially under-prepared and second language students at both undergraduate and postgraduate levels.

¹⁵ For a definition of the term "recognised higher education institution", see the Glossary.

- (xii) There is ongoing professional development and training of staff as assessors in line with the SAQA requirements.

CRITERION 5: *The academic and support staff complement is of sufficient size and seniority for the nature and field of the proposed programme and the size of the student body to ensure that all activities related to the programme can be realised. The inclusion of academic staff members who contribute to the diversity of the staff complement is encouraged. An appropriate ratio exists between full-time and part-time appointments to ensure the stability of the programme.*

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 proposed programme and number of enrolled students.
- (ii) Though junior staff or part-time tutors may act as facilitators of learning, the learning is designed by qualified and experienced academic staff.
- (iii) The leader of the proposed programme team is preferably a full-time academic staff member of the institution.
- (iv) Junior and part-time staff and tutors are trained, where necessary, and monitored by full-time academic staff.
- (v) Appropriate administrative procedures exist for the selection, appointment, induction and payment of part-time academic staff members and tutors.
- (vi) The academic staff complement is such that it ensures that students are exposed to a diversity of ideas, styles and approaches.
- (vii) The stipulations of the Labour Relations Act and conditions of service are adhered to with regard to recruitment and employment of staff.
- (viii) Where appropriate and as required by the nature of the proposed programme, sufficient support staff dedicated to the proposed programme are available (in addition to institutional support staff).
- (ix) Support staff are adequately qualified for their duties and their knowledge and skills are regularly updated.
- (x) For large distance learning programmes, sufficient administrative and technical staff are employed to handle the specialised tasks of registry, dispatch, management of assignments, record-keeping, and administrative support to students.

CRITERION 6: *Contractual arrangements relating to the time and work of academic staff ensure that all programme quality assurance (policies, implementation, review and improvement of practice), teaching, research, learning support, materials development, assessment, monitoring of part-time staff (where applicable), counselling and administrative activities related to the proposed programme are realised.*

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

- (i) Specific and sufficient time is formally allocated to academic staff member work schedules to fulfil their responsibilities related to the proposed programme.
- (ii) The time slots and mode(s) of contact (personal, electronically) for consultation with academic staff will be made known to the students.

4. Policies and procedures for student assessment

Student assessment and success is a central indicator of teaching and learning effectiveness. The transformation goals of widening access, improving retention and throughput rates and producing graduates with appropriate knowledge and skills, can be supported and directed by an effective assessment system. Although the curriculum may target skills, knowledge 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. Finally, 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.

Student assessment encompasses activities which have to do mainly with the delivery of the proposed programme and as such belongs more properly to programme process issues. This section deals only briefly with the policies and procedures for student assessment which have to be in place with a view to the delivery of the proposed programme and should be read in close conjunction with Criteria 24-28 under Programme Process.

CRITERION 7: Policies and procedures exist for internal assessment, external examination, monitoring of student progress, rigour and security of the assessment system, explicitness of assessment practices, validity and reliability of assessment practices and recording of assessment results,

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

- (i) Policies and procedures exist for internal assessment of students by academic staff responsible for teaching a course / module in terms of a system that includes internal moderation.
- (ii) Policies and procedures exist for external examination of students' learning achievements by appropriately qualified personnel who are appointed in terms of clear criteria and procedures and who conduct their responsibilities in terms of clear guidelines.
- (iii) Policies and procedures are in place to monitor student progress.
- (iv) Policies and rules are in place to ensure the security of the assessment system, especially with regard to plagiarism and other misdemeanours.
- (v) Assessment criteria are explicit and commensurate with the level of the qualification and aligned with the requirements of the NAP, SAQA, and (where appropriate), professional bodies.
- (vi) Policies and procedures exist to ensure the validity and reliability of assessment practices.
- (vii) Policies exist for secure and reliable recording of assessment results.

5. Venues and IT infrastructure

Suitable and sufficient venues for teaching and learning, e.g. lecture, seminar and reading rooms, and, where appropriate, laboratories and clinical facilities, are indispensable for

quality teaching and learning in a programme. Proper venue allocation ensures smooth running of classes and, where appropriate, codes for clinical conduct and laboratory practice and safety should be in place, for example in natural science programmes. Suitable office space and access to computers are essential for full-time faculty to perform their duties.

CRITERION 8: Suitable and sufficient venues, IT infrastructure and access to software are available, providing favourable conditions for quality teaching and learning, research and student support.

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 proposed programme will be offered, including teaching and learning venues and, where appropriate, laboratories and clinical facilities. Venues are properly furnished and equipped with the educational and technological apparatus necessary to offer the proposed programme. Where appropriate, codes for clinical conduct and laboratory practice and safety exist.
- (ii) Venue allocation and time-tabling are carefully planned to accommodate the needs of students on the proposed programme. In the case of remote students, special care is taken to place suitable sites of learning close to where students live / work.
- (iii) Suitable office space and access to computers are provided for full-time faculty.
- (iv) Sufficient and suitable IT infrastructure form part of the planning of the programme and is available at all sites of learning, as determined by the programme outcomes. IT infrastructure includes reasonably recent hardware models (computers and printers) and reasonably recent versions of industry standard software and databases required by the programme.
- (v) Staff and students are trained in the use of technology required for the programme.
- (vi) There is access to IT infrastructure for students who take courses after hours and on weekends.
- (vii) The IT infrastructure for the programme is properly maintained. A financial plan exists for the maintenance and continuous upgrading of the infrastructure.

6. Library resources

Library resources which are sufficient in size and scope are essential to complement the curriculum, provide incentives for individual learning and support professional and scholarly activities of staff and students involved in the proposed programme. Adequate library support is important also for off-campus students, and student access to the library, research and computing facilities is essential on weekends and outside of normal working hours.

CRITERION 9: Sufficient, relevant and up to date library resources are available to students in the proposed programme.

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

- (i) Library resources are integrated into the programme curriculum in a systematic manner.
- (ii) Library resources are sufficient in size and scope to -
 - (a) Complement the curriculum.
 - (b) Provide incentives for students to learn according to their own needs, capacity and pace.
 - (c) Support appropriate professional and scholarly activities of the staff and students involved in the proposed programme.
- (iii) Policies exist for the proper management and maintenance of library resources, as well as for their continuous renewal and expansion. These policies are integrated into the institution's financial plan.
- (iv) On and off-campus students have adequate library support and access to library, research and computing facilities are available on weekends and outside of normal working hours.

7. Programme administrative services

Programme administrative services fulfil an important role in providing information to students in the programme regarding curriculum issues, venues, time tables, access to the library and IT facilities, availability of academic and support staff and student support services. Administrative services also include a management information system of records of students in the programme. Programme administrative staff have to be able to deal with a diverse student population.

CRITERION 10: Efficient programme administrative services and staff are in place..

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

- (i) The proposed programme's administration services make provision for -
 - (a) Student enquiries about the proposed programme.
 - (b) Accurate and sufficient information regarding venues, time-tables, access to library and IT facilities, availability of academic and support staff for student consultations and student support services.
 - (c) A reliable management information system of records of the students in the programme, including admission, progression, grades/marks, fees and graduation.
- (ii) Programme administrative and support staff are able to deal with the needs of a diverse student population.
- (iii) Proper processes are in place for the identification of active students, particularly in distance education programmes.
- (iv) There is a system that monitors student performance in order to ensure timely identification of at risk students. Strategies exist for advising students about ways to improve their chances of success and for referral to appropriate academic development programmes. Rules for re-admission to programmes are clear, defensible and sensitively applied.

- (v) There are effective systems in place for communication with students, including those in remote areas.

8. Postgraduate policies, procedures and regulations

The DoE (NPHE 2001: 5.3) has set an increase in postgraduate enrolments and outputs as a strategic goal for the higher education system. It suggests that, in the next 5 years, the system should improve the efficiency of its postgraduate outputs so that master's graduates constitute 6% of the annual output of graduates and doctoral graduates constitute 1%. Those institutions that plan to increase their postgraduate enrolments and outputs will have to attend to additional demands such as research funding, staff development, improving the quality of undergraduate output and the development of a research-conducive infrastructure and culture.

Postgraduate supervision and research training is a core academic activity for most higher education institutions world-wide. Traditional approaches to postgraduate supervision are increasingly being replaced by more pragmatic and efficient approaches which are based on explicit accountability and contractual requirements for students and supervisors, an emphasis on research skills training and on the employability of the graduate.

In order to ensure the quality of the input dimension of the proposed postgraduate programme, explicit policies and procedures have to be in place, as well as proper admission and selection criteria¹⁶.

CRITERION 11: *Appropriate postgraduate policies, procedures and regulations are in place for the proposed programme that are in keeping with the institution's research policy, if applicable.*

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

- (i) Appropriate policies, procedures and regulations are in place for the proposed postgraduate programme which are communicated to and understood by all postgraduate students, academic and administrative staff and implemented consistently across the institution. Areas covered by the policies, regulations and procedures include:
- Admission arrangements.
 - Selection criteria.
 - Rules of progression.
 - Selection and development of supervisors.
 - Supervision and reporting arrangements.
 - Assessment and examination requirements.
 - Mechanisms to deal with plagiarism and fraud.
 - Mechanisms to deal with student complaints and appeals.

¹⁶ Criteria for process aspects of postgraduate programmes are indicated in Section 6 below under Criteria for Programme Process.

- (ii) Equity and access concerns are responsibly built into selection criteria and protocols through RPL and alternative assessment protocols, including a combination of interviews, presentations, references and portfolios of previous work.
- (iii) Selection criteria are in place to ensure that students admitted to particular research programmes are adequately prepared to undertake the required research. Provision is made for additional research training, language and writing skills development and support for under-prepared students, both prior to and during the research process.

II. MID-TERM CHECK PHASE

This phase constitutes a compliance and performance review midway through the programme. This has the following purposes:

- (i) To ensure that the institution has addressed the areas indicated by the HEQC for urgent attention when the candidacy submission was approved.
- (ii) To review the performance of the institution with regard to the implementation of the programme, as set out in the implementation plan submitted in the candidacy phase. This step provides an early warning system (to the institution and to the HEQC) about problem areas, as well as an opportunity for appropriate developmental support, where necessary.
- (iii) To evaluate the progress of the institution towards meeting the criteria for programme process, programme output and impact, and programme review in the accreditation phase of the new programme.

CRITERION 12: *The institution provides evidence that it complies with conditions set by the HEQC when the candidacy submission was approved. The implementation of the programme implementation plan is on schedule and considerable progress has been made with regard to meeting the criteria for the accreditation phase of the programme.*

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

- (i) Evidence is provided by the institution that it has addressed all the conditions and concerns communicated by the HEQC when the candidacy submission was approved. Convincing substantiation for any deviancies from the conditions set by the HEQC is provided by the institution.
- (ii) The implementation of the programme is on schedule as set out in the approved programme implementation plan. Convincing substantiation for any deviancies from the implementation plan is provided by the institution.
- (iii) Considerable progress has been made towards meeting the criteria for programme process (especially with regard to teaching and learning interactions), programme output and impact, and programme review in the accreditation phase of the new programme.

III. ACCREDITATION PHASE

Within one year of the first cohort of students having graduated from the new programme, the institution must demonstrate compliance with conditions set by the HEQC during the candidacy and mid-term check phases (where applicable). The institution should also provide convincing substantiation for any deviancies from the conditions set by the HEQC.

The institution must also conduct a self-evaluation of the strengths and weaknesses of the programme against the HEQC's criteria for programme input indicated above for the candidacy phase¹⁷, as well as the HEQC's criteria for programme process, programme output and impact, and programme review, which are outlined in Sections A, B and C, respectively, below. Against this background, a programme improvement plan must be submitted to the HEQC, which addresses all deficiencies which became apparent during the self-evaluation.

The following criteria are proposed for programme process, programme output and impact, and programme review.

A. CRITERIA FOR PROGRAMME PROCESS

The criteria for programme process which are dealt with in this section are classified in areas, relevant aspects and numbers of the corresponding criteria in Table 5 below:

Table 5: Classification of criteria for programme process in areas, relevant elements and numbers of the corresponding criteria

AREA	RELEVANT ASPECTS	CRITERION
1. Programme coordination	(a) Mandate and responsibilities of programme team (b) Student input and participation	Criterion 13
2. Student academic development	(a) Responsiveness to student needs (b) Curriculum development (c) Availability and accessibility of academic development programmes (d) Multilingualism and language development	Criterion 14
3. Teaching and learning interactions	(a) Balance and mix between teaching methods (b) Teaching methods and nature of learning material (c) Design and use of learning materials (d) Design and use of instructional and	Criterion 15

¹⁷ For the purposes of the accreditation phase, all occurrences of the phrase “proposed programme(s)” in the Input Phase have to be interpreted as “programme(s)”.

	learning technology (e) Suitable learning opportunities (f) Learning opportunities and practice (g) Available time to meet learning requirements (h) Guidance on integration of programme components and outcomes (i) Student involvement	
4. Student assessment	(a) Purposes of assessment (b) Internal assessment and moderation (c) External examination (d) Assessment and level of qualification (e) Efficiency and reliability of assessment and recording of results (f) Recording of assessment results (g) Rigour and security of the assessment system	Criterion 16 Criterion 17 Criterion 18 Criterion 19 Criterion 20
5. Work-based learning	(a) Coordination (b) Communication (c) Recording system (d) Monitoring (e) Mentoring system	Criterion 21
6. Postgraduate studies	(a) Management of the postgraduate programme (b) Development of research competence (c) Assessment (d) Selection, appointment and training of supervisors (e) Role and responsibilities of supervisors and post-graduate students	Criterion 22 Criterion 23 Criterion 24

The following criteria are proposed for the different areas.

1. Programme coordination

The programme has to be coordinated by a programme team in order to ensure that the purposes and outcomes of the programme are met. Opportunities should exist for student input and participation in some of the activities of the programme team.

CRITERION 13: *The programme is coordinated by a programme team to ensure that its intended purposes and outcomes are met.*

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

- (i) A programme team is established and operates within the framework of an agreed-upon mandate and defined procedures and responsibilities.
- (ii) The responsibilities of the programme team include -
 - (a) Programme design.
 - (b) Ensuring that all conditions for delivery of the program are met.
 - (c) Day-to-day coordination of programme delivery.
 - (d) Review and evaluation of the programme.
 - (e) All aspects of the programme quality management system.
 - (f) Monitoring expenditure in terms of the programme budget.
- (iii) Opportunities exist for student input and participation in relevant activities of the programme team.

2. Student academic development

Student academic development plays an important role in addressing the social imperative for greater access and equity. The higher education landscape is at present being transformed to reflect more accurately the demographics of the country. Apart from this, the Department of Education aims to increase the participation rate in higher education of the 20-24 year cohort to 20% within the next ten to fifteen years (NPHE 2001: 2.2). Student academic development can also play a role in improving the efficiency of the higher education system by increasing retention and graduation rates, as well as the number of students completing postgraduate qualifications, especially with regard to under-prepared students from historically under-represented groups. The multilingual nature of South African society also poses a major barrier for students studying in a second or third language at tertiary level.

The following criteria are proposed for this area:

CRITERION 14: *Academic development models promote national education goals, are appropriate for and responsive to the needs of students and staff and are implemented in academic programmes and teaching and learning activities by means of curriculum innovation in a way which is integrated with / integral to students' mainstream studies. Academic development programmes are available and accessible to students and address students' language needs with regard to the language of instruction.*

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

- (i) Academic development models address equity targets, student profile, prior learning, levels of language proficiency, specific disciplinary skills and general academic demands of curricula adequately.
- (ii) Curriculum development initiatives and assessment methods are responsive to the needs of the student body and the availability and scope of academic development programmes are communicated to students.
- (iii) Student development initiatives are well integrated into the mainstream academic programmes of the institution, whether through 'stand alone' programmes or through extended or enriched curricula.
- (iv) There are procedures for referral to academic development programmes. Placement of students in academic development programmes is based on clearly communicated selection criteria.
- (v) Opportunities for development in the language of learning are available in the institution and are integrated with mainstream curriculum content.
- (vi) Curriculum design at programme and course/module level includes strategies for language development within the context of enhancing students' use of disciplinary discourse and skills.

3. Teaching and learning interactions

Teaching and learning interactions should be based on sound well-motivated insights into the processes of teaching and learning. The learning facilitation methods used have to be appropriate to ensure achievement of the purposes and outcomes of the programme.

CRITERION 15: *Teaching and learning methods and learning materials are appropriate to ensure the achievement of the purposes and outcomes of the programme.*

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

- (i) Recent insights into the principles and practices of instructional design are put into practice, including an appropriate balance and mix between different teaching methods, fitness of teaching methods for the nature of the learning material, design and use of learning materials, and design and use of instructional and learning technology.
- (ii) Suitable learning opportunities are provided to ensure the acquisition of the knowledge, skills and attitudes specified in the programme outcomes.
- (iii) Learning opportunities are provided to ensure that theory is put into practice.
- (iv) Learners are able to meet the learning requirements of the programme (as expressed in the credits of courses or modules) within the stipulated time.
- (v) Learners are provided with guidance as to how the integration of subjects, courses or modules contributes to the learning outcomes of the programme.
- (vi) There is active student involvement in the teaching and learning process.

4. Student assessment

The rationale for criteria for student assessment is provided under Programme Input, Section 4, Policies and procedures for student assessment, and is not repeated here. This section deals with the delivery of student assessment as such.

The proposed criteria are indicated below.

CRITERION 16: *Assessment is an integral part of the teaching and learning process and is recognised and used as a key motivator of learning to inform teaching practice and to improve the curriculum.*

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

- (i) Assessment is systematically and purposefully used both to generate data for summative purposes (such as grading, ranking, selection, predicting) and also for formative purposes (such as providing timeous feedback to inform teaching and learning).
- (ii) The assessment approach(es) used in the programme are in general characterised by a recognition of assessment as a key motivator of learning and an integral part of the teaching and learning process.
- (iii) Assessment data are used diagnostically to inform teaching and assessment practice and to improve the curriculum.

CRITERION 17: *Students' learning achievements are internally assessed by the academic staff responsible for teaching a course/module in terms of a system that includes internal moderation.*

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

- (i) The academic staff who teach a course/module are responsible for designing, running and marking both formative and summative student assessments, for recording results and for feedback to students.
- (ii) Internal moderation is conducted to provide a reliability check on the marking process and to provide developmental feedback to staff on their assessment practice.
- (iii) For summative assessment, and especially where more than one marker is involved, at least 50% of the final marks are moderated (i.e. checked for reliability) via a system of internal moderation¹⁸.
- (iv) Procedures are followed to receive, record, process, and turn around assignments within a timeframe that allows students to benefit from formative feedback prior to the submission of further assessment tasks.

¹⁸ Traditionally this has been done after the marking is completed, by another academic, who did not teach on the course, usually from the same department. But for large classes, it is acceptable and more efficient for the marking team, led by the course convenor, to work together and compare and moderate each other's marking as the marking proceeds.

CRITERION 18: *Students' learning achievements on the exit level of a qualification are externally examined by appropriately qualified people who have been appointed in terms of clear criteria and procedures and who conduct their responsibilities in terms of clear guidelines.*

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

- (i) For summative assessment, external examiners are appointed for the exit level at which a qualification is awarded.
- (ii) External examiners are appointed in terms of clear criteria, including that -
 - (a) They are recommended by the examining department, and should be independent experts in their fields.
 - (b) They have qualifications at least on the same level as the qualification being examined.
 - (c) Where possible in the particular discipline, external examiners are changed every three years and reciprocal arrangements are avoided.
 - (d) External examiners are approved by Senate and are responsible to Senate.
- (iii) The institution provides documentation on the curriculum and continuous assessment, as well as guidelines or a format to assist external examiners in the completion of their reports.
- (iv) Completed external examiners reports are returned to the lecturer concerned and also to the programme coordinator or head of department/school. Where problems are raised, these are discussed with the lecturer concerned and the academic manager ensures that agreed improvements are effected.
- (v) External examiners are required to approve the final marks list for the qualification concerned.
- (vi) External examiners are expected to comment on -
 - (a) The validity of the assessment instruments in relation to the specified learning outcomes, ideally prior to their implementation.
 - (b) The quality of student performance and the standard of student attainment across the spectrum of results in relation to the learning outcomes, relevant generic qualification standards and international academic/professional standards.
 - (c) The reliability of the marking process.
 - (d) Any concerns or irregularities with respect to the observation of institutional/professional regulations.

CRITERION 19: *The level of challenge of assessment is appropriate to the level on which the qualification is pegged. Assessment practices are effective and reliable in measuring and recording student attainment of the intended learning outcomes.*

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

- (i) Assessment criteria are commensurate with the level of the qualification, aligned with the requirements of the NAP, SAQA and, where appropriate, professional bodies, and are made explicit to staff and students.

- (ii) Learning activities and the required assessment performances are both aligned with learning outcomes at the programme and the modular level.
- (iii) Learning outcomes for a programme/module and their link to assessment criteria and judgements are clearly stated and communicated to students.
- (iv) Assessment procedures are effective in measuring student attainment of the intended learning outcomes.
- (v) There is at least one integrated assessment procedure for each qualification which is a valid test of the key purposes of the programme.
- (vi) A range of assessment tasks and methods ensure that all learning outcomes are validly assessed.
- (vii) A system is in operation for maximising the accuracy, consistency and credibility of results regardless of who is assessing, including:
 - (a) Consistency of marking.
 - (b) Concurrence between assessors and external examiners on the nature and quality of the evidence which indicates achievement of learning outcomes.
- (viii) Students' assessment records are reliable and secure. Assessment data is accessible to academic coordinators, administrators, teaching staff and students, as appropriate.

CRITERION 20: *The assessment system is rigorous and secure.*

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

- (i) Institutional/faculty/professional rules governing assessment are published and clearly communicated to students and relevant stakeholders.
- (ii) Evidence is provided to demonstrate that these rules are widely adhered to.
- (iii) Breaches of assessment regulations are dealt with effectively.
- (iv) Students are provided with information and guidance on their rights and responsibilities regarding assessment processes (for example, definitions and regulations on plagiarism, penalties, terms of appeal, supplementary examinations).
- (v) Student appeals procedures are explicit, fair and effective.
- (vi) There are published, clear and consistent guidelines/regulations for -
 - (a) Marking and grading of results.
 - (b) Aggregations of marks and grades.
 - (c) Progression and final awards.
 - (d) Compensation and/or condonement of RPL.

5. Work-based learning

Work-based learning forms an essential part of many professional and vocational programmes. The coordination process of work-based learning should be efficient and contribute to the purposes of the programme.

CRITERION 21: *The coordination of work-based learning is done efficiently in all components of the programme.*

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

- (i) Effective processes and procedures are in operation for the coordination of work-based learning.
- (ii) Regular and efficient communication takes place between the institution, students, mentors and employers involved in work-based learning.
- (iii) A recording system (both institutional and by the employer) keeps record of the contents and progress of the student's learning experience in the workplace.
- (iv) Monitoring of work-based learning is done regularly and in a systematic regular fashion. Feedback is utilised for improving the practice of work-based learning.
- (v) The mentoring system enables the student to recognise strengths and weaknesses in his/her work, to develop new and existing abilities, to gain knowledge of work practices

6. Postgraduate studies

The rationale for criteria for postgraduate studies is given in Section 8 under Programme Input. Apart from policies for postgraduate studies which are discussed there, the process of postgraduate studies should also of a good quality.

CRITERION 22: *The postgraduate programme is managed properly and offers opportunities for students to develop research competence.*

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

- (i) A senior academic is allocated responsibility to coordinate research programmes, monitor the progress of postgraduate students and oversee assessment procedures.
- (ii) A senior academic is allocated responsibility to coordinate structured master's programmes, monitor the progress of postgraduate students and oversee assessment procedures.
- (iii) Monitoring and review of this system takes place regularly and includes student feedback on the quality of their learning experience, supervision and support infrastructure.
- (iv) Training is provided in research skills, including guidance on research design and methodology.
- (v) Training is provided in language, writing and numeric skills, where required.
- (vi) Employment-related skills are developed, where appropriate.

CRITERION 23: *Research is properly assessed.*

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

- (i) Exit level outcomes and assessment criteria (including an understanding of the quality of research achievement required) are clearly communicated to students on commencement of studies
- (ii) At least one examiner external to the institution per dissertation/thesis is appointed.
- (iii) Examiners are appointed on the basis of qualifications, experience, expert knowledge in the research area and independence.
- (iv) The institution provides clear guidelines to external examiners on the standard/quality of research achievement required, on the nature of their task and on institutional examining regulations.
- (v) Without undermining the principle of assessment by academic judgement, assessment decisions are made transparently and students are afforded reasonable access to information (e.g. examiners' reports).
- (vi) There are appeal mechanisms for students and opportunities for them to defend their theses (e.g. through an oral defence).
- (vii) Higher degree committees or similar structures consider examiners' reports qualitatively and make considered decisions about examination outcomes

CRITERION 24: *The selection and appointment criteria for postgraduate supervisors are acceptable to the research community in the area of stud. The institution provides guidelines which make explicit the role and responsibilities of both the supervisor and the student and other matters that are relevant to the performance of research.*

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

- (i) The supervisor has a qualification in a relevant field of study at the same level as (or higher than) the exit level of the postgraduate programme he/she is supervising.
- (ii) The supervisor has a relevant and appropriate research track record, as well as experience, expertise and peer recognition in the relevant field of study.
- (iii) The selection and appointment criteria for supervisors are strictly applied.
- (iv) In the case of inexperienced or new supervisors, training opportunities are provided and joint supervision is explored as an option.
- (v) The guidelines for supervisors specify the following:
 - Nature, format and expected turn-around time regarding work submitted to the supervisor.
 - Forms of assessment, and communication of feedback to the student
 - The periodicity of contact between student and supervisor, 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.

C. CRITERIA FOR PROGRAMME OUTPUT AND IMPACT

Programme output should be carefully monitored with regard to the efficiency of the programme in student retention and throughput rates. Programme outputs are also important in terms of representivity with regard to race and gender in conformity with national goals in this regard. The integrity of the certification processes for the qualification obtained through the programme should not be compromised.

The classification of criteria for Programme Output and Impact in areas, relevant aspects and the number of the corresponding criteria is indicated in Table 6:

Table 6: Classification of criteria for Programme Output and Impact in areas, relevant elements and numbers of the corresponding criteria

AREAS	RELEVANT ELEMENTS	CRITERION
1. Student retention and throughput rates, equity of outcomes / representivity	(a) Access to information (b) Systems, procedures and processes (c) Justification of race and gender profile (d) Composition of qualifying and entering class	Criterion 25
2. Integrity of certification	(a) Mechanisms to quality assure processing and issuing (b) Mechanisms to avoid fraud or illegal issuing	Criterion 26
3. Programme impact	(a) Employment data (b) External acknowledgement of programme quality	Criterion 27

CRITERION 25: *Student retention and throughput rates are sustained at acceptable levels and are monitored. The programme is achieving 'equity of outcomes' or representivity in output (NPHE 2001: 3.2).*

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

- (i) Programme coordinators have access to accurate information on the retention and throughput rates for the programme.
- (ii) Programme coordinators have systems, procedures and processes in place to ensure that retention and throughput rates are satisfactory and communicated to the relevant authorities.

- (iii) The race and gender profile of the programme output can be justified in relation to the historical profile of its field and in relation to institutional equity targets.
- (iv) The composition of the qualifying class increasingly resembles that of the entering class.

CRITERION 26: *Clear and efficient arrangements ensure that the integrity of certification processes for the qualification obtained through the programme is not compromised.*

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

- (i) Effective mechanisms quality assure the processing and issuing of certificates for the qualification obtained through the programme.
- (ii) Effective security measures avoid fraud or illegal issuing of certificates for the qualification obtained through the programme.

CRITERION 27: *The programme has succeeded/attempted to have an impact on job opportunities for students and in alleviating shortage of expertise in relevant fields.*

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

- (i) Graduates / diplomates from the programme managed to find employment in the field of study of the programme or in a related field, or there is evidence that the programme attempted to have an impact on job opportunities for students.
- (ii) Conscious efforts are made to get the programme acknowledged in the workplace / community and by other institutions.

D. CRITERIA FOR PROGRAMME REVIEW

The internal review of programmes by an institution is an important step in the quality assurance of programmes. Programme review is assumed to include course/module review, which should ideally be conducted while the course or module is being taught, so that problems or gaps identified can be addressed while learners still have the opportunity to derive the maximum benefit from the learning experiences being made available to them. The key findings of course reviews can be collated and aggregated in order to inform a comprehensive review of the programme of which the course/module is a part.

Since the review of programmes/courses/modules is a key component of the institutional quality management system, procedures need to be in place to ensure that insights derived from internal reviews are acted upon and plans for improvement are implemented. When students and other stakeholders provide feedback on the programme, those responsible for offering the programme, course or module need to have access to the data and need to be provided with the opportunity to respond to it.

The classification of criteria for programme review in areas, relevant aspects and the number of the corresponding criteria is indicated in Table 7:

Table 7: Classification of criteria for programme review in areas, relevant elements and numbers of the corresponding criteria

AREA	RELEVANT ASPECTS	CRITERION
1. Attainment of outcomes, curriculum alignment, judgment by peers	(a) Internal academic evidence (b) External examiners reports (c) Alignment and updating of curriculum (d) Revision of learning material (e) Judgment by expert peers	Criterion 28
2. Stakeholder feedback, use of results of review	(a) Student and recent graduates feedback (b) Employer / professions / community feedback (c) Programme team feedback (d) Development and implementation of improvement plans (e) Support by resource provision and staff development	Criterion 29

3. Retention and throughput rates, equity and representivity in output	(a) Access to information on retention and throughput rates (b) Monitoring of retention and throughput rates (c) Ensuring satisfactory retention and throughput rates (d) Review of cost-effectiveness of programme (e) Justification of race and gender profile (f) Composition of qualifying and entering class	Criterion 30
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CRITERION 28: *Students are attaining the intended exit-level learning outcomes/ critical outcomes/ general cognitive skills/ graduate attributes specified by the provider in the design of the programme. The curriculum of the programme is properly aligned and regularly updated and expert peers/ professional bodies are satisfied with the relevance and quality of learning achieved by students on the programme.*

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

- (i) Academics involved in the programme ensure, monitor and evaluate learning outcomes.
- (ii) External examiners' reports provide evidence that qualifying students are attaining the intended range of specified exit-level learning outcomes.
- (iii) Programme content and teaching and learning methods are aligned with entry requirements, levels of student preparedness, exit-level outcomes and assessment methods and criteria.
- (iv) There are mechanisms to allow for the periodic revision of learning material in the light of ongoing feedback from learners and tutors and advances in knowledge and research.
- (v) The learning outcomes for the programme are judged by expert peers (and professional bodies, where applicable) to meet disciplinary/ professional standards.

CRITERION 29: *There is positive feedback from internal and external stakeholders on the programme. The feedback and results of the programme review/ evaluation are used to effect improvements in the programme's design and delivery and to develop further the educational expertise of academic staff.*

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

- (i) Student/ graduate opinion indicate that the majority of students are satisfied with the programme and with its delivery and assessment practices in

particular. Where student dissatisfaction has been expressed, the teaching staff concerned have interpreted this, resulting in efforts to address/ improve the situation.

- (ii) Student / graduate opinion indicate that the majority of students are satisfied with the way teaching and support staff for the programme perform their duties. Where student dissatisfaction has been expressed, appropriate steps have been taken to address/ improve the situation.
- (iii) Opinion surveys of external stakeholders indicate satisfaction with the programme's curriculum and with the competence of its graduates. Where stakeholder dissatisfaction has been expressed, efforts have been made to address/ improve this.
- (iv) Staff who teach on the programme are satisfied with the leadership and management of the programme provided by their department/ school/ faculty.
- (v) Feedback and results of the review are used to develop and implement improvement plans.
- (vi) Improvement plans are supported by resource provision and staff development.

CRITERION 30: Student retention and throughput rates are sustained at acceptable and cost-effective levels and are monitored. The programme is achieving 'equity of outcomes' or representivity in graduate output (NPHE 2001:3 :2).

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

- (i) Programme coordinators -
 - Have access to accurate information on the retention and throughput rates for the programme.
 - Monitor retention and throughput rates on a continuous basis.
 - Take appropriate steps to ensure that retention and throughput rates are satisfactory and report their actions to their superiors.
 - Review the cost-effectiveness of a programme by considering costs, retention and throughput rates, and quality.
- (ii) The programme can justify its race and gender profile in relation to the historical profile of its field and in relation to institutional equity targets.
- (iii) The composition of the qualifying class increasingly resembles that of the entering class with regard to race and gender.

APPENDIX 2

PROPOSED CRITERIA FOR EXISTING PROGRAMMES

NOTE: The following should be noted:

- (i) The criteria below are proposed for existing programmes. As indicated, existing programmes are programmes leading to qualifications that are registered on the NQF and have been accredited by AUT, SAQA or the HEQC.
- (ii) The criteria will be utilised as the basis of an institution's self-evaluation of existing programmes for purposes of re-accreditation by the HEQC, or in applying for self-accreditation status to the HEQC. The same criteria will be used by the HEQC in the evaluation of existing programmes.
- (iii) Existing programmes will mostly not be re-accredited in the programme accreditation cycle: 2004-2009. For exceptions, see 4.3 above.
- (iv) Institutions are required to supply both qualitative and quantitative (statistical) data, where applicable, with reference to the issues dealt with in the criteria below, as well as an analysis and interpretation of these.

The criteria for existing programmes are *identical* to those for new programmes as far as the categories of programme input, programme process, programmes output and impact, and programme review are concerned and are not repeated here¹⁹. Readers are referred to the corresponding sections under New Programmes in Appendix 1. The tables below provide a summary of the corresponding programme areas, relevant aspects, number of criterion and page number(s).

1. Programme input

Table 8 Classification of criteria for programme input into areas, relevant aspects and numbers of corresponding criteria

AREAS	RELEVANT ASPECTS	CRITERION
1. Programme design	(a) Relation to institution's mission and planning (b) Needs of students and other stakeholders (c) Intellectual credibility (d) Coherence (e) Articulation	Criterion 1

¹⁹ It should be noted that, in the case of existing programmes, the phrase "proposed programme(s)" in the category "Programme Input" for new programmes has to be interpreted as "programme(s)".

	(f) Characteristics and needs of professional and vocational education (g) Learning materials development	Criterion 2
2. Student recruitment, admission and selection	(a) Recruitment documentation (b) Legislative issues (c) Widening of access (d) Equity (e) Assumptions of learning (f) Professional needs (g) Capacity of the programme	Criterion 3
3. Staffing	(a) Qualifications (b) Teaching experience (c) Assessment competence (d) Research profile (e) Staff development (f) Size and seniority (g) Diversity (h) Full-time and part-time staff (i) Time and activities	Criterion 4 Criterion 5 Criterion 6
4. Student assessment	(a) Internal assessment (b) External examination (c) Robustness and security (d) Explicitness and level of assessment criteria (e) Validity and reliability of practices (f) Recording of results	Criterion 7
5. Venues and IT infrastructure	(a) Suitable and sufficient venues (b) Venue allocation (c) Office space and access to computers (d) Sufficient and suitable technology (e) Training in technology (f) Access to technology (g) Maintenance of technology	Criterion 8
6. Library resources	(a) Integration into curriculum (b) Size and scope (c) Management and maintenance (d) Student support (e) Access	Criterion 9
7. Programme administrative services	(a) Provision of information (b) Management information system (c) Dealing with a diverse student population (d) Identification of active students (e) Communication systems	Criterion 10
8. Postgraduate policies, regulations and procedures	(a) Policies, regulations and procedures (b) Equity and access (c) Preparation of students	Criterion 11

2. Programme process

Table 9: Classification of criteria for programme process in areas, relevant elements and numbers of the corresponding criteria

AREA	RELEVANT ASPECTS	CRITERION
1. Programme coordination	(a) Mandate and responsibilities of programme team (b) Student input and participation	Criterion 13
2. Student academic development	(a) Responsiveness to student needs (b) Curriculum development (c) Availability and accessibility of academic development programmes (d) Multilingualism and language development	Criterion 14
3. Teaching and learning interactions	(a) Balance and mix between teaching methods (b) Teaching methods and nature of learning material (c) Design and use of learning materials (d) Design and use of instructional and learning technology (e) Suitable learning opportunities (f) Learning opportunities and practice (g) Available time to meet learning requirements (h) Guidance on integration of programme components and outcomes (i) Student involvement	Criterion 15
4. Student assessment	(a) Purposes of assessment (b) Internal assessment and moderation (c) External examination (d) Assessment and level of qualification (e) Efficiency and reliability of assessment and recording of results (f) Recording of assessment results (g) Rigour and security of the assessment system	Criterion 16 Criterion 17 Criterion 18 Criterion 19 Criterion 20
5. Work-based learning	(a) Coordination (b) Communication (c) Recording system (d) Monitoring	Criterion 21

	(e) Mentoring system	
6. Postgraduate studies	(a) Management of the postgraduate programme (b) Development of research competence (c) Assessment (d) Selection, appointment and training of supervisors (e) Role and responsibilities of supervisors and post-graduate students	Criterion 22 Criterion 23 Criterion 24

3. Programme output and impact

Table 10: Classification of criteria for Programme Output and Impact in areas, relevant elements and numbers of the corresponding criteria

AREAS	RELEVANT ELEMENTS	CRITERION
1. Student retention and throughput rates, equity of outcomes / representivity	(a) Access to information (b) Systems, procedures and processes (c) Justification of race and gender profile (d) Composition of qualifying and entering class	Criterion 25
2. Integrity of certification	(a) Mechanisms to quality assure processing and issuing (b) Mechanisms to avoid fraud or illegal issuing	Criterion 26
3. Programme impact	(a) Employment data (b) External acknowledgement of programme quality	Criterion 27

4. Programme review

Table 11: Classification of criteria for programme review in areas, relevant elements and numbers of the corresponding criteria

AREA	RELEVANT ASPECTS	CRITERION
1. Attainment of outcomes, curriculum alignment, judgment by peers	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> (a) Internal academic evidence (b) External examiners reports (c) Alignment and updating of curriculum (d) Revision of learning material (e) Judgment by expert peers 	Criterion 28
2. Stakeholder feedback, use of results of review	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> (a) Student and recent graduates feedback (b) Employer / professions / community feedback (c) Programme team feedback (d) Development and implementation of improvement plans (e) Support by resource provision and staff development 	Criterion 29
3. Retention and throughput rates, equity and representivity in output	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> (a) Access to information on retention and throughput rates (b) Monitoring of retention and throughput rates (c) Ensuring satisfactory retention and throughput rates (d) Review of cost-effectiveness of programme (e) Justification of race and gender profile (f) Composition of qualifying and entering class 	Criterion 30

GLOSSARY

Academic development	Curriculum strategies employed in teaching and learning to enhance the quality of teaching and learning and the academic performance of particularly under-prepared students.
Accreditation	Recognition status granted for a stipulated period of time to a programme after an evaluation indicates that it meets or exceeds minimum thresholds of educational quality. In the case of applications for new programmes, accreditation is the final phase in the accreditation process and is preceded by the candidacy and mid-term check phases, each of which has its own requirements.
Applied competence (SAQA definition)	The ability to put into practice in the relevant context the learning outcomes acquired in obtaining a qualification.
Assessment (SAQA definition)	The structured evaluation of a person's ability to demonstrate acquisition and application of the outcomes of a programme of learning, leading to the award of a qualification.
(i) Integrated assessment (SAQA definition)	A form of assessment which permits the learner to demonstrate applied competence and which uses a range of formative and summative assessment methods.
(ii) Criterion referenced assessment	Student performance is judged against pre-specified criteria or standards. It tends to place emphasis on measurable competencies.
(iii) Diagnostic assessment	Used to predict student performance and academic potential, often used in placement testing.
(iv) Formative assessment	Used to improve learning and to give feedback to students on their progress. Serves needs intrinsic to the educational process.
(v) Norm-referenced assessment	Student performance is compared with that of peers in the same class or cohort. Is associated with the averaging of scores and the grading of students.
Credit {SAQA definition)	That value assigned to a given number of notional hours of learning. One SAQA credit equals ten notional learning hours. 120 SAQA credits are equivalent approximately to one year of full-time study.
Core learning (SAQA definition)	That compulsory learning required in situations contextually relevant to the particular qualification, and "core" has a corresponding meaning.
Course/module review	Internal quality assurance procedures that a provider undertakes

	to monitor and reflect on the outcomes of the education it provides through course/modules. The findings of course reviews should feed into the reviews of the programmes of which they are a part.
Criteria for programme accreditation	The minimum standards which are necessary to support and enhance the quality of teaching and learning, research and service learning programmes.
Examination (SAQA definition)	A written, oral or practical assessment, as the case may be, in accordance with general education policy. Also supplementary and re-examination, continuous evaluation, and the evaluation of experiential learning.
Exit survey	An exit survey is conducted at the end of a learner's contact with a provider, usually when he/she graduates. An exit survey asks a range of questions including about the learner's experience of the programme, the strengths and weaknesses of the programme from the learner's perspective, how useful the learning was, whether the learner has already secured employment or whether the learner plans to study further.
Fundamental learning (SAQA definition)	That learning which forms the grounding or basis needed to undertake the education, training or further learning required in the obtaining of a qualification and "fundamental" has a corresponding meaning.
Moderator (SAQA definition)	A person, apart from the examiner, that is appointed by the provider 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.
Notional hours of learning (SAQA definition)	The learning time that it is conceived it would take an average learner to meet the outcomes defined, and includes concepts such as contact time, time spent in structured learning in the workplace and individual learning.
Outcomes (SAQA definition)	The contextually demonstrated end products of the learning process.
(i) Exit level outcomes (SAQA definition)	The outcomes to be achieved by a qualifying learner at the point at which he or she leaves the programme leading to a qualification.
(ii) Critical outcomes (SAQA definition)	Those generic outcomes determined by SAQA, which inform all teaching and learning, including but not limited to:

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> a) Identifying and solving problems in which responses display 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 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 the society at large, by making it the underlying intention of any programme of learning to make an individual aware of the importance of: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> 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.
(iii) Specific outcomes (SAQA definition)	Contextually demonstrated knowledge, skills and values, which support one or more critical outcomes.
Programme	A purposeful and structured set of learning experiences that leads to one or more qualifications. In an outcomes-based system, a programme can be defined as a purposeful and coherent combination of units of learning (modules or unit standards) expressed in an outcomes-based format that lead to one or more qualifications.
(i) Existing programme	Programmes leading to qualifications that are registered on the NQF and have been accredited by the Universities and Technikons Advisory Council (AUT) or SAQA or the HEQC.
(ii) New programme	A programme which has not existed before or a programme which has been significantly changed, i.e. when its purpose, outcomes, field of study, mode or site of delivery has been

	changed to a considerable extent.
Programme evaluation	The external quality assurance procedures undertaken to make an independent assessment of a programme's outcomes or to validate the findings of an internal programme review.
Programme review	The internal quality assurance procedures that a provider undertakes to monitor and reflect on the outcomes of its academic programmes.
Recognised higher education institution	<p>(i) The higher education institution has formal approval in terms of the Higher Education Act, 1997 (101, 1997) to operate as public or as private institution of higher education in South Africa.</p> <p>(ii) In the case of foreign institutions, the institution 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.</p>
Recognition of prior learning	A means of recognising what individuals already know and can do.
Staff development	Building the capacity of higher education staff to fulfil their professional roles effectively.
Qualification	The formal recognition and certification of learning achievement awarded by an accredited provider. In the outcomes-based approach intrinsic to the NQF, a qualification signifies and formally certifies the demonstrated achievement by a learner of a planned and purposeful combination of learning outcomes, at a specified level of performance.
Service learning	Service learning is learning which takes place as a structured and integral part of an academic curriculum and programme and is directed at specific community needs. It could be credit-bearing (and assessed accordingly), may be work-based, or take other forms.
Specialised learning (SAQA definition)	That specialised theoretical knowledge which underpins application in the area of specialisation and "specialisation" has a corresponding meaning.