

***Framework for  
Institutional  
Audits***

*Higher Education Quality Committee*

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## ***Framework for Institutional Audits***

**June 2004**

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## CONTENTS

Foreword	v
Acronyms	vii
<b>1. Quality assurance and the South African Higher Education System</b>	<b>1</b>
1.1 National policy and legislative context	1
1.2 Restructuring and transformation context	2
<b>2. The HEQC'S Institutional Audit Model</b>	<b>4</b>
2.1 Institutional audit and programme accreditation	4
2.2 The HEQC's approach to quality in institutional audits	5
2.3 Principles of the HEQC's audit system	5
2.4 Objectives of the HEQC's audit system	6
2.5 Scope of HEQC audits	6
2.6 Use of criteria in HEQC audits	7
2.7 Audit methodology and process	7
2.7.1 Audit methodology	7
2.7.2 Audit process	8
2.7.2.1 Scheduling of audit visits	8
2.7.2.2 Development of audit portfolio	8
2.7.2.3 Audit panels	8
2.7.2.4 Pre-audit preparation by audit panel	9
2.7.2.5 Audit visit	9
2.7.2.6 Audit report	9
2.8 Consequences of audits	9
<b>3. Cross-Border provision and quality Assurance</b>	<b>11</b>
3.1 Foreign providers in South Africa	11
3.2 South African higher education institutions abroad	11
Appendix A: Scope of the HEQC's audit system	12
Appendix B: Institutional audits within the HEQC's schedule of activities: 2004 to 2009	13
Glossary	14



## **FOREWORD**

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

The HEQC's quality assurance mandate is carried out within the framework of the Regulations for Education and Training Quality Assurers (ETQAs) of the South African Qualifications Authority (SAQA), which has overall responsibility for overseeing standard setting and quality assurance in support of the National Qualifications Framework (NQF).

Institutional audit is a form of quality assurance which is practiced in many countries and is usually associated with purposes of quality improvement and enhancement. In common with higher education systems in many parts of the world, South African higher education faces multiple stakeholder demands for greater responsiveness to societal needs through enhanced student access and mobility; through research and innovation that address social and economic development; and through engagement with local, regional and international communities of interest. Stakeholders also require that higher education institutions are able to provide the public with comprehensive information on the manner in which they maintain the quality and standards of their core academic activities, and to demonstrate sustained improvement in this regard. Institutional audits serve to address both sets of issues.

The HEQC's approach to institutional audit is strongly shaped by the complex challenges facing higher education institutions in an era of radical restructuring within South African higher education. The audit system seeks to be responsive to as well as proactive in advancing the objectives of higher education transformation, as reflected in various policy and legislative documents that have been published since 1994. Ensuring that improved and sustainable quality is part of the transformation objectives of higher education institutions is, therefore, a fundamental premise of the HEQC's approach to quality assurance in general and to institutional audits in particular.

In line with the vision of the White Paper 3: A Programme for the Transformation of Higher Education for a single, coordinated higher education system, this document sets out a common institutional audit policy framework for universities, technikons / universities of technology,<sup>1</sup> agricultural colleges, private providers and other providers whose programmes and qualifications fall under the jurisdiction of the HEQC. The specific needs and circumstances of different sectors within higher education will be taken into account within the parameters of the common policy framework. The principles, criteria and procedures for institutional

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<sup>1</sup> Following an announcement by the Minister of Education in 2003, technikons will in future be known as Universities of Technology.

audit have been developed on the basis of extensive comparative research and pilot tests, and in consultation with key stakeholders in the higher education community.

In the first audit cycle, which will run from 2004 to 2009, the HEQC will focus primarily on institutional arrangements for assuring quality in the core areas of teaching and learning, research and community engagement. Within each of these areas, specific aspects are singled out for evaluation against the requirements of the HEQC's audit criteria. Institutional responsibility for credible self-evaluation and sustained improvement remains at the heart of the HEQC's institutional audit system.

During the first cycle, the implementation of the audit system will be monitored closely and appropriate adjustments made, where necessary. A case in point is the provision made for institutions that are presently engaged in merger and restructuring processes to undergo audits only during the second half of the first audit cycle, thus allowing them sufficient time to prepare for the requirements of institutional audit. The HEQC will also take into account policy requirements in higher education which are still evolving.

*Dr Mala Singh*

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*Higher Education Quality Committee, CHE*

*May 2004*

## ***ACRONYMS***

AUT	Universities and Technikons Advisory Council
CHE	Council on Higher Education
DoE	Department of Education
ETQA	Education and Training Quality Assurer
HEQC	Higher Education Quality Committee
NPHE	National Plan for Higher Education
NQF	National Qualifications Framework
NSB	National Standards Body
SAQA	South African Qualifications Authority
SETA	Sector Education and Training Authority



# 1. QUALITY ASSURANCE AND THE SOUTH AFRICAN HIGHER EDUCATION SYSTEM

## 1.1 NATIONAL POLICY AND LEGISLATIVE CONTEXT

The Higher Education Quality Committee (HEQC) is a permanent committee of the Council on Higher Education (CHE), established by the Higher Education Act, No. 101 of 1997. The CHE's responsibilities are to:

- Advise the Minister at his/her request or proactively on all matters related to higher education;
- Assume executive responsibility for quality assurance within higher education and training;
- Monitor and evaluate whether the policy goals and objectives for higher education are being realised;
- Contribute to developing higher education through publications and conferences;
- Report to parliament on higher education; and
- Consult with stakeholders on higher education matters.

The specific functions of the HEQC are to:

- Promote quality assurance in higher education;
- Audit the quality assurance mechanisms of institutions of higher education; and
- Accredite programmes of higher education.

The Board of the HEQC has added quality-related capacity development to the above functions.

The nature, purpose and scope of the HEQC's work relate to a range of policy documents and legislation that shape and regulate the provision of higher education in South Africa,<sup>2</sup> in particular the requirements of the Higher Education Act as amended, and White Paper 3: A Programme for the Transformation of Higher Education. The HEQC further operates within the framework of the relevant policies and regulations of the Department of Education (DoE), including the National Plan for Higher Education (NPHE) and the regulations governing the registration of private providers.

As the ETQA with primary responsibility for the Higher Education and Training Band of the National Qualifications Framework (NQF),<sup>3</sup> the HEQC also operates within the requirements

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<sup>2</sup> Higher Education Quality Committee, *Founding Document*, Pretoria, 2001, pp. 3–8.

<sup>3</sup> South African Qualifications Authority Act No. 58 of 1995, Section 5 (1)(a)(ii) and Higher Education Amendment Bill, 2001, Section 7 (1) (a).

of the South African Qualifications Authority (SAQA) Act and its regulations.<sup>4</sup> According to the regulations, the functions of ETQAs are to:

- Accredite constituent institutions for specific standards or qualifications registered on the NQF;
- Promote the quality of constituent institutions and monitor their provision;
- Evaluate, assess and facilitate moderation amongst constituent institutions, register constituent assessors for specified registered standards or qualifications in terms of the criteria established for this purpose and take responsibility for the certification of constituent learners;
- Co-operate with the relevant body or bodies appointed to moderate across ETQAs including, but not limited to, moderating the quality assurance on specific standards or qualifications for which one or more ETQAs are accredited;
- Recommend new standards or qualifications, or modifications to existing standards or qualifications, to the National Standards Bodies (NSBs) for consideration;
- Maintain a database acceptable to SAQA;
- Submit reports to SAQA in accordance with its requirements; and
- Perform such other functions as may from time-to-time be assigned to it by SAQA.<sup>5</sup>

The Board of the HEQC determines policy and procedures for the quality assurance work of the HEQC and has final responsibility for approving audit and accreditation reports. It makes its judgements independently of other national agencies but seeks to complement their work where issues of quality and standards are involved. The judgements are based on evaluation reports from peer and expert review panels.

## **1.2 RESTRUCTURING AND TRANSFORMATION CONTEXT**

In South Africa, where the higher education system had been characterised by decades of fragmentation, uneven provision and racial segregation, the challenges of higher education transformation are part of the demands for social and economic justice that are at the core of the agenda for democratic change in South African society. The restructuring of public higher education to produce a more just, effective, efficient and responsive system has been underway at systemic and institutional levels for a number of years. Developments in higher education also encompass the growth of the private provider sector (including a small number of foreign providers) and its associated challenges of building quality in a relatively new sector of higher education provision and of improved articulation with the public higher education sector.

Specific quality-related goals facing the South African higher education sector include increased access and equity opportunities for previously marginalised groups, especially

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<sup>4</sup> Regulations under the South African Qualifications Authority Act No. 58 of 1995.

<sup>5</sup> South African Qualifications Authority, *Criteria and Guidelines for ETQAs*, Pretoria, p. 27.

women and black students and staff; greater responsiveness to local, regional and national needs in and through teaching and research; improved institutional efficiencies leading to increased throughput, retention and graduation rates in academic programmes; increasing the pool of black and women researchers, as well as the pool of basic and applied knowledge to enhance understanding and social application. The mergers and incorporations in public higher education bring the additional challenge of developing new institutions whose academic functions and products are characterised by improved quality and standards.

The work of the HEQC, including its institutional audit activities, will be conducted within the context of ongoing reform and restructuring in order to produce a transformed higher education system of high quality which is able to address the complex knowledge development needs of South African society. Institutional audits will take account of the continuing uneven development that characterises the South African higher education sector, and will seek to assist institutions in identifying effective approaches to quality management.

Audits will also address quality-related issues pertaining to the adaptability, responsiveness and innovativeness of institutions in the production of new knowledge and skills, and the utilisation of new modalities of provision. In addition, audits will seek to evaluate institutional initiatives to produce a vibrant intellectual culture both within the institution and in society, and act as an incubator of new ideas and cutting edge knowledge as part of the national system of innovation.

## **2. THE HEQC'S INSTITUTIONAL AUDIT MODEL**

### **2.1 INSTITUTIONAL AUDIT AND PROGRAMME ACCREDITATION**

Institutional audit constitutes one of the mechanisms through which the HEQC carries out its responsibilities for quality assurance. The audit will focus on an institution's policies, systems, procedures, strategies and resources for the quality management of the core functions of teaching and learning, research and community engagement, including the relevant academic support services. More specifically, institutional audit will seek to assess an institution's capacity for quality management of its academic activities in a manner that meets its specified mission, goals and objectives, and engages appropriately with the expectations and needs of various internal and external constituencies.

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

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

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

Programme accreditation, on the other hand, which is also within the HEQC's jurisdiction, deals with judgements on the attainment of minimum standards at programme level. The HEQC's audit and accreditation systems form part of an interconnected quality assurance system. This connection is evident in institutional requirements for achieving self-accreditation status.<sup>6</sup> The HEQC's decision about self-accreditation status will be informed by evidence of institutional quality arrangements derived from a range of sources, including evidence from audits. Self-accreditation is one of the HEQC's key strategies for facilitating the move of the higher education system towards a greater measure of quality assurance self-regulation.

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<sup>6</sup> Higher education institutions can apply for and be granted self-accreditation status for a period of six years after an HEQC evaluation has found that the institution satisfies its audit requirements, successfully manages internal and external programme evaluations, and satisfies other quality-related requirements of the DoE and SAQA. Self-accreditation status will enable institutions to accredit all existing programmes where no other ETQA has a formal interest.

## 2.2 THE HEQC'S APPROACH TO QUALITY IN INSTITUTIONAL AUDITS

In view of the prevailing higher education policy context, the HEQC's understanding of quality encompasses fitness for purpose, value for money, and individual and social transformation, within an overarching fitness of purpose framework.<sup>7</sup> With due allowance for mission differentiation and diversity, institutional audits assess whether institutions manage the quality of their core academic activities in a manner that:

- Is fit for purpose in advancing the institution's mission and goals;
- Addresses transformational challenges for the development of individual students as well as the requirements of social and economic development; and
- Provides value for money in relation to the full range of higher education purposes.

Further, HEQC audits consider the relationship between quality and fitness of purpose, and the manner and extent to which an institution's mission and academic activities take national priorities and needs into account, as well as respond to regional and international imperatives.

## 2.3 PRINCIPLES OF THE HEQC'S AUDIT SYSTEM

The following principles guide the HEQC's institutional audit system:

- Institutional audits will link the achievement of quality to transformation objectives and the fostering of innovation and diversity in higher education.
- The primary purpose of institutional audits is to facilitate systematic and continuous quality development and improvement in higher education and enhance institutional capacity to plan, act and report on quality-related objectives and achievements.
- The primary responsibility for quality and quality management rests with higher education institutions themselves. Institutions should seek to establish and sustain effective internal quality management systems that enhance quality and yield reliable information for internal quality-related planning, external audit and public reporting.
- The HEQC's responsibility is to establish a value-adding system of external evaluation which can validate institutional information on the effectiveness of internal quality arrangements, especially as they pertain to the development, enhancement and monitoring of quality in teaching and learning, research and community engagement.
- The HEQC will use a system of peer and expert review in order to ensure informed and constructive evaluations.

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<sup>7</sup> See also the HEQC's *Founding Document*, p. 14.

## 2.4 OBJECTIVES OF THE HEQC'S AUDIT SYSTEM

The general objectives of HEQC audits are to:

- Encourage and support Higher Education providers to maintaining a culture of continuous improvement, by means of institutional quality processes that build on HEQC and institutionally set requirements;
- Validate the self-evaluation reports of institutions on their quality arrangements for teaching and learning, research and community engagement;
- Enable higher education institutions to develop reliable indicators that will assure institutional stakeholders and the HEQC that their policies, systems, strategies and resources for assuring and enhancing quality in teaching and learning, research and community engagement, are effective;
- Provide information and evidence that will enable higher education institutions and the HEQC to identify areas of strength and excellence as well as areas in need of focused attention for planned improvement in the short, medium and long term; and
- Enable the HEQC to obtain baseline information in the targeted areas through the use of a common set of audit criteria for all institutions. Such information will:
  - Help to identify and disseminate good practices in quality arrangements in the higher education sector;
  - Facilitate capacity development and improvement programmes by the HEQC and other role-players;
  - Form part of the rationale for granting self-accreditation status to institutions; and
  - Enable the HEQC to generate a national picture of quality arrangements in higher education, and to monitor system and sector-level quality improvement.

## 2.5 SCOPE OF HEQC AUDITS

The scope of HEQC audits extends to institutional policies, systems, strategies and resources for managing quality in the core areas of teaching and learning, research and community engagement. General issues of institutional governance, management and financing will be considered only in relation to their impact on quality objectives.

During the first cycle of audits from 2004 to 2009, two broad areas<sup>8</sup> will be evaluated:

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

Area 2: Teaching and learning, research and community engagement.<sup>9</sup>

<sup>8</sup> Benchmarking, user surveys and impact studies will be looked at in both broad areas.

<sup>9</sup> The scope of the first audit cycle from 2004 to 2009 is diagrammatically represented in Appendix A of this document.

It should be noted that, although the HEQC has delegated responsibility for quality arrangements with regard to short courses, recognition of prior learning (RPL), moderation of assessment, training of assessors and certification to institutions themselves, it will use audits to evaluate quality-related institutional arrangements in these areas.

The findings from the first cycle of audits will be reviewed by the HEQC and fully integrated into preparations for the second cycle. Decisions about modifications to the scope of evaluation of the second cycle of audits will be informed by systemic and institutional trends, and communicated timeously.

## **2.6 USE OF CRITERIA IN HEQC AUDITS**

The HEQC has developed a set of criteria which specifies its requirements for effective institutional quality management in those target areas which form part of the first cycle of institutional audits from 2004 to 2009 (see 2.5 above). The criteria function as evaluative tools that enable the institution, the audit panel and the HEQC to focus on important institutional signals and indicators of quality as well as quality management.

In developing audit criteria, the HEQC took cognisance of national policies and regulatory frameworks, the institutional quality landscape, and international trends with respect to quality assurance in higher education. The criteria were finalised after taking stakeholder comments into consideration.

The criteria will serve as guidelines for institutions when doing their self-evaluation reports for the HEQC audits, together with additional requirements which institutions might set for themselves in order to further strengthen their internal quality arrangements. Audit panels will interpret and apply the criteria to the designated audit areas, with due consideration of the institution's mission, context and objectives. Audit panels could focus on particular audit areas during a visit, given the mission, goals and level of development of the institution to be audited.

## **2.7 AUDIT METHODOLOGY AND PROCESS**

### ***2.7.1 Audit methodology***

The HEQC has laid down a set of criteria for the conduct of the audit. In common with standard international practice, the HEQC employs an audit methodology consisting of institutional self-evaluation, followed by external validation by peers and experts. Self-evaluation requires institutions to develop an audit portfolio, with supporting information and evidence, in which the effectiveness and efficiency of the institution's management of the quality of core academic activities are evaluated against the HEQC's audit criteria and any other relevant quality criteria that the institution has set for itself.

The institution's audit portfolio is validated by a panel of peers and experts, which is appointed by the HEQC. The panel has to arrive at an independent judgement on the effectiveness of the institution's internal quality arrangements. Based on the panel's findings, the HEQC's report to the institution will identify areas of strength and good practice as well as areas in need of attention, and provide commendations and recommendations for action. The report will not provide a single, overarching summative judgement on institutional quality and quality management. Institutions are required to implement appropriate follow-up strategies which address the recommendations of the report. A summary of the report will also be available in the public domain.

### ***2.7.2 Audit process***

This section outlines briefly the various elements of the institutional audit process. The section identifies only the elements and stages in the process, without any detailed discussion of all the operational issues involved. These will be dealt with in full in the HEQC's *Institutional Audit Manual*.

#### *2.7.2.1 Scheduling of audit visits*

The HEQC will develop a schedule of the different types of institutions that are to be audited in any particular year. The final decision on when to conduct a particular audit rests with the HEQC, although institutions will be able to make a submission on the scheduling of the audit visit in the audit cycle. Institutions will normally receive at least nine months notification of the intended audit visit.

#### *2.7.2.2 Development of audit portfolio*

Each institution will be required to conduct a self-evaluation exercise and develop an audit portfolio which must be submitted to the HEQC at least ten weeks before the scheduled audit visit. The purpose of the portfolio is to present a description, analysis and evaluation (supported by appropriate evidence) of the manner in which the institution manages the quality of its core academic activities within the specified scope and focus of the audit. The HEQC will review the portfolio to ensure that it meets the specified requirements, and may request additional information from the institution.

#### *2.7.2.3 Audit panels*

The HEQC will maintain a list of potential auditors from which it will constitute audit panels for specific institutional visits. Audit panel members may also be drawn from other sources. The size of the audit panel will vary according to the size and complexity of the institution to be audited, as well as the requirements of the particular audit. In addition to the chairperson, each panel will have an audit officer, who will be a staff member of the HEQC, and will serve as the principal point of contact with the institution. Institutions will

be afforded an opportunity to comment on the composition of the audit panel with respect to possible conflicts of interest.

The HEQC will provide auditors with the necessary training and pre-audit orientation.

#### *2.7.2.4 Pre-audit preparation by audit panel*

Audit panels will have appropriate pre-audit preparation activities, including an audit portfolio meeting, to ensure that members are familiar with the contents of the audit portfolio, to establish strategies and procedures to be followed during the audit, and to clarify their respective roles and responsibilities for the audit. The portfolio meeting will also enable the audit panel to identify particular focus areas for evaluation, given the mission, goals and level of development of the institution to be audited. Pre-audit preparation also serves to finalise the programme for the visit and to identify any additional information that the panel may wish to request from the institution.

#### *2.7.2.5 Audit visit*

In order to validate statements and claims made in the audit portfolio, the audit panel will conduct interviews with staff, students and other role-players; scrutinise documentation that is made available on-site; conduct visits to tuition centres and satellite campuses where applicable; and request additional information where this is needed. The duration of audit visits will vary from two to five days, depending on the size and complexity of the institution concerned.

#### *2.7.2.6 Audit report*

On the basis of the quantitative and qualitative evidence gathered during the audit, the audit report will be developed by the HEQC and finalised in consultation with the chairperson and other members of the audit panel. The report will provide an assessment of the adequacy and effectiveness of the internal quality arrangements of the institution, as well as commendations and recommendations in the various target areas of the audit. Before finalisation, a draft report will be presented to the institution for comment on factual errors, discrepancies and omissions. The revised report will be submitted to the HEQC Board for approval. The final audit report will thereafter be presented to the institution. A summary of the report will be published on the HEQC website.

## **2.8 CONSEQUENCES OF AUDITS**

The HEQC will not rank higher education institutions on the basis of audit judgements. The purpose of institutional audit is to encourage higher education institutions to engage in systematic and continuous quality improvement appropriate to their context as well as to their mission and strategic goals.

The HEQC will require institutions to develop and implement a quality improvement plan in response to the recommendations specified in the final audit report. Where an audit identifies areas of serious concern, the HEQC will propose explicit action by the institution within a specified timeframe as part of its improvement plan. The HEQC will monitor progress in the implementation of such strategies by means of a mid-cycle progress report from the institution, usually three years after the audit visit. The HEQC may also refer specific matters to the DoE or other appropriate bodies for further attention.

Institutional audits will not directly lead to the allocation or the withdrawal of funds from public higher education institutions. The HEQC does not allocate any funds to institutions or programmes, nor does it make any direct decisions on the funding and financing of higher education. HEQC audit outcomes are, therefore, not directly linked to funding. Funding for public institutions is the responsibility of the DoE and, in the case of private providers, the responsibility of their owners or board of directors.

### **3. CROSS-BORDER PROVISION AND QUALITY ASSURANCE**

#### **3.1 FOREIGN PROVIDERS IN SOUTH AFRICA**

All foreign institutions which have an operational presence in South Africa, including those higher education institutions which are subject to the audit and/or accreditation requirements of other national, regional or international agencies, are subject to the HEQC's institutional audit policies, requirements and procedures. In addition, these institutions have to satisfy the registration requirements of the DoE.

In order to lessen the burden on foreign providers operating in South Africa, who may be subject to two sets of audit requirements, the HEQC will negotiate specific audit requirements, including the scope of the audit, with such institutions, and will work co-operatively as far as possible with the agencies that are responsible for audits in their countries or origin. In the case of transnational institutions with no specific national quality assurance affiliation, the HEQC will conduct audit activities in liaison with relevant transnational agencies, where appropriate.

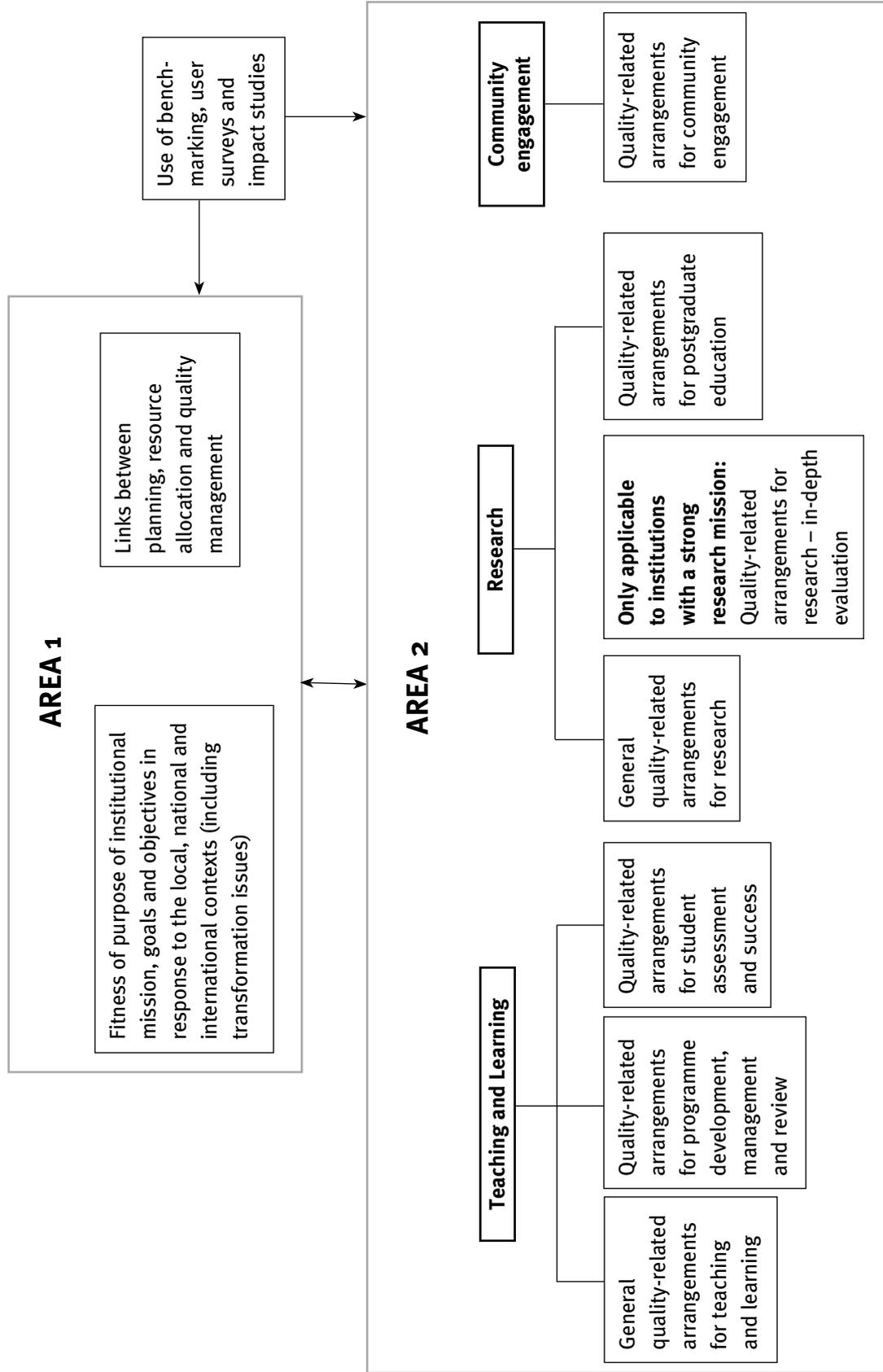
#### **3.2 SOUTH AFRICAN HIGHER EDUCATION INSTITUTIONS ABROAD**

South African higher education institutions which operate outside the country are subject to the HEQC's audit policies, requirements and procedures for all their local as well as cross-border academic activities. In addition to the HEQC's requirements, such institutions have to satisfy the relevant quality assurance policies and procedures of the countries in which they operate. The HEQC will co-operate closely with national quality assurance agencies in countries where South African higher education institutions have an operational presence in order to share audit and accreditation information.

All higher education providers that are operating across borders need to ensure equivalence in the quality of provision at different sites of delivery in South Africa and abroad. Where audit judgements cannot sufficiently attest to the equivalence of the quality of provision at programme level, the HEQC may refer the matter to its Accreditation Committee to other appropriate bodies.

## APPENDIX A

Figure 1: Scope of the HEQC's audit system



## **APPENDIX B**

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

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

#### ***Phase A (2004 to 2006)***

- (a) Full-scale audits commence at all public and private higher education institutions where no mergers are underway.
- (b) In the case of merged institutions, provision is made for a three-year 'settling-down' period. The HEQC will undertake visits to merged institutions in the first year after the merger date in order to ascertain the nature and level of planning for institutional and programme quality management.
- (c) New programmes from all public and private higher education institutions undergo accreditation processes that include site visits in order to ensure that only programmes of good quality enter the higher education system. This includes new programmes from merged institutions.
- (d) In general, existing programmes are not re-accredited by the HEQC. Where professional councils or other statutory bodies require existing programmes to be re-accredited, the HEQC will undertake such re-accreditation jointly with other relevant ETQAs in a range of co-operation modalities.
- (e) National reviews (such as the HEQC's present MBA re-accreditation exercise) are undertaken in selected programme, qualification or disciplinary areas.
- (f) Self-accreditation status is not granted to higher education institutions. However, institutions intending to apply for self-accreditation status in Phase B can use this opportunity to develop the necessary structures, systems and capacity for self-accreditation.

#### ***Phase B (2007 to 2009)***

- (a) Audits continue at all institutions not affected by mergers.
- (b) Audits commence at merged institutions.
- (c) Accreditation of new programmes at all institutions continues.
- (d) Re-accreditation of existing programmes is generally not conducted by the HEQC, except if an institution performs consistently poorly in the accreditation of new programmes, or if the audits or the re-accreditation of existing programmes through national reviews point to serious problem areas.
- (e) Institutions can apply for self-accreditation status. This status will be granted on the basis of satisfactory evidence of the effectiveness of internal quality management systems and programme quality. The HEQC could undertake selective re-evaluations of existing programmes in institutions which apply for self-accreditation status in cases where this is deemed necessary by the HEQC.
- (f) National reviews continue as required.

## **GLOSSARY<sup>10</sup>**

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

**Audit** – See Institutional Audit.

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

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

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

**Audit officer** – Senior HEQC staff member who serves as a full member of the audit panel and as principal point of contact with the higher education institution in order to facilitate the audit process.

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

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

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

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

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<sup>10</sup> The definitions of terms provided in this Glossary refer to their use in the text of the *Framework for Institutional Audits*, and may not necessarily include other possible interpretations of the same terms.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

**Mid-cycle report** – Report to be submitted by an institution to the HEQC in the third year after its audit on progress in the implementation of its quality improvement plan.

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

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

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

**Quality assurance** – The processes of ensuring that specified standards or requirements have been met.

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

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

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

**Self-evaluation** – Within the context of an audit, self-evaluation refers to the process by which an institution reviews the effectiveness of its quality management system for assuring, developing and monitoring the quality of teaching and learning, research and community engagement against the requirements of the HEQC's audit criteria and any other quality criteria that the institution deems relevant. The self-evaluation process leads to the development of an audit portfolio by the institution for submission to the HEQC.