



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

**EXECUTIVE SUMMARY**

**Audit Report  
on the  
Polytechnic of Namibia**

**Report of the HEQC to the Polytechnic of Namibia**

**September 2007**

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HEQC Audit Report Number 17

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## Acronyms

AP	Audit Portfolio
CART	Centre for Applied Research and Technology
CED	Centre for Entrepreneurial Development
CHE	Council on Higher Education
COLL	Centre for Open and Lifelong Learning
CTL	Centre for Teaching and Learning
ETQA	Education and Training Quality Assurer
ETSIP	Education and Training Sector Improvement Plan
HEQC	Higher Education Quality Committee
ICT	Information and Communication Technology
IP	Institutional Profile
IT	Information Technology
ITS	Integrated Tertiary Software
MIS	Management Information System
PON	Polytechnic of Namibia
PSP-2	Polytechnic Strategic Plan No. 2
RPL	Recognition of Prior Learning
QA	Quality Assurance
SADC	Southern African Development Community
SAIDE	South African Institute for Distance Education
SAQA	South African Qualifications Authority
SEIT	School of Engineering and Information Technology
SNRT	School of Natural Resources and Tourism
SBM	School of Business and Management
SCLSS	School of Communication, Legal and Secretarial Studies
SRC	Students' Representative Council

## **Overview of the Audit**

### **Introduction**

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

The Audit of Polytechnic of Namibia, (hereinafter referred to as PON) was conducted by the HEQC in terms of a Memorandum of Understanding with PON, which, as the Namibian national quality assurance structures were yet to be established, voluntarily requested to be part of the HEQC processes of audit and programme accreditation.

This document reports on the audit process and findings based on the Audit Portfolio which included appendices provided by PON, supplementary documentation requested from the institution, and interviews and observations made during the audit visit that took place between 5 and 9 March 2007.

This report<sup>1</sup> contains an overview of the audit visit, the findings of the Panel in relation to the audit criteria set by the HEQC, and a list of the commendations and recommendations made by the HEQC.

### **The Audit Process**

On 15 June 2006 the Executive Director of the HEQC confirmed with the Rector and the senior academic management team at the Polytechnic of Namibia that the Polytechnic would voluntarily participate in an institutional audit between 5 and 9 March 2007.

PON conducted its institutional self-evaluation in the agreed time and produced an Audit Portfolio for review by the Audit Panel. An Audit Project Team chaired by the Registrar led the self-evaluation process (AP: ii). Four working groups were also established to deal with different aspects of the self-evaluation exercise. There were: (i) Strategic Issues, (ii) Teaching and Learning, (iii) Research and Community Engagement, and (iv) Programme Development Management and Review. The mandate of the working groups was to describe analyse and evaluate their areas against the HEQC criteria (AP: ii and iii). The documentation produced by the Working Groups served at meetings of the Audit Project Team where they were discussed and amended. Two institutional workshops involving all

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

PON stakeholders were held in which the self-evaluation report was discussed and agreed upon (AP: ii). The self-evaluation report was approved by Senate in October 2006 and by Council on November 2006 (AP: iii). Different constituencies at the institution were drawn into the self-evaluation process through providing information that contributed to the self-evaluation and the content of the Audit Portfolio. The Polytechnic of Namibia *Self-Evaluation Report for Institutional Audit* together with its printed annexures and appendices and also available on CD, were submitted to the HEQC in November 2006. An Institutional Profile was also submitted by the institution.

The HEQC constituted an Audit Panel consisting of senior academics and academic administrators from the higher education community, all of whom had taken part in auditor preparation workshops run by the HEQC. An Audit Portfolio meeting was convened in Pretoria on 24 and 25 January 2007 at which the Audit Panel considered the Audit Portfolio in preparation for the audit visit. During this meeting, the Audit Panel identified additional documents to be requested from PON prior to the audit visit.

A senior member of the HEQC staff undertook a preparatory visit to PON on 29 January 2007. During that visit, the audit visit schedule and other details of the audit schedule were discussed and agreed to by senior management of PON.

The audit visit took place from 5 to 9 March 2007. The Audit Panel undertook a tour of the campus on 4 March and conducted interviews with senior management and committee members on 6 and 7 March. On the afternoon of the 7<sup>th</sup> and 8 March, the Audit Panel split into three groups and interviewed a wide range of PON's staff members and students. Interviews were completed on 8 March, and verbal feedback was delivered to the Rector and the executive team.

Open sessions were also available for any member of staff or student of the institution and community to meet the Audit Panel and make a submission. A small group from the Institute of Chartered Accountants of Namibia made use of the opportunity to address the Panel.

In all, the Audit Panel interviewed 180 people in 32 interview sessions during the audit visit, including

- Council members
- The Rector and members of his management team
- Academic and academic support staff
- Administrative staff
- Full-time and part-time undergraduate and postgraduate students
- Civic and community representatives
- Alumni.

This report reflects the audit process and findings based on the Audit Portfolio provided by PON, supplementary documentation requested from the institution, and interviews and observations made during the audit visit. Every effort was made to understand the quality arrangements at the institution at the time of the audit visit and to base the Panel's

conclusions on the documentation submitted, the interviews held and the observations made.

It is expected that PON will use these findings to strengthen its internal quality management systems and thereby facilitate the improvement of the quality of its core academic activities. Decisions about the manner in which this is done, and the priority accorded to the various recommendations, is the prerogative of PON. It is expected that seven months after the publication of the Audit Report, PON will submit to the HEQC an improvement plan based on the HEQC Audit Report.

The HEQC would like to thank PON for the co-operative manner in which it participated in the audit process. The HEQC also wishes to express appreciation for the openness and confidence shown by PON management in allowing the Audit Panel to conduct its work. Efficient preparation by PON resulted in a trouble-free audit that allowed the auditors to focus their attention on the main purposes of the audit. The hospitality and assistance of PON's personnel was appreciated. Mr Jafta and his team are thanked in particular for the preparation of the documentation, as well as for their co-operation and helpfulness throughout the process.

## Summary of Audit Findings

This section summarises the main conclusions stemming from the audit.

The Polytechnic of Namibia (PON) is a predominantly contact higher education institution situated in Windhoek. It also provides distance learning through the nine regional centres of the University of Namibia.

In 1996 PON was a certificate and diploma granting institution offering 7 programmes, mainly in Business, Nature Conservation and Agriculture. In 1999, PON started offering degrees while continuing to offer certificates and diplomas, which allowed for multiple exit points. By 2006 PON offered 77 qualifications in 19 programmes, which included 16 Bachelors and 2 Masters degrees. Qualifications offered through distance education included certificates, diplomas and Bachelor of Technology degrees.

In 2006 PON had three categories of students of whom 51% were full-time, 31% part-time, and 18% distance education. In 2005 the School of Business and Management had the highest student enrolment which accounted for 66% of the total student population.

PON is organised into five Schools. These are:

- School of Business and Management which consists of four academic departments; Accounting and Finance, Business Management, Economics, and Public Management.
- School of Communication, Legal and Secretarial Studies which has four departments; Media Technology, Legal Studies, Secretarial Studies, and Communication.
- School of Natural Resources and Tourism which consists of four departments, Nature Conservation, Hospitality and Tourism, Land Management, and Agriculture.
- School of Engineering which has five departments, Mechanical Engineering, Civil Engineering, Electrical Engineering, Mathematics and Statistics, Technical and Vocational Education and Training.
- School of Information Technology which is a new school and had not been divided into departments at the time of the submission of the Portfolio.<sup>2</sup>

The commendations of the HEQC signal areas of strength, excellence and/or innovation which may require ongoing institutional support. The recommendations of the HEQC signal issues that may require new or strengthened attention with regard to quality provision. The HEQC notes that PON has itself identified many of these issues for attention. These and a number of other issues will need to be incorporated into the overall quality assurance planning and practice at PON, with appropriate allocation of responsibility for purposes of implementation and monitoring.

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<sup>2</sup> In September 2006, the School of Engineering and Information Technology was divided and two separate schools were established.

PON is a recently established institution which is committed to the quality of teaching and learning, research and community engagement. There are well developed governance policies and systems; good physical facilities, particularly its library, Engineering School, Department of Media Studies, and the Hotel School; responsiveness to the social and economic development of Namibia; and attention to integrate experiential learning into the curriculum. Given the nature of the institution, its stated objectives and commitments, the Panel flagged three general areas in need of attention:

1. Develop further what it would mean for PON to be a university of applied science and technology and develop indicators to measure progress towards achieving this goal; and in the light of the findings and in conjunction with national imperatives, reconsider its vision, mission and re-align its goals.
2. Develop further PON's plans to grow and implement a quality management system that is adequately resourced.
3. Formalise its approach to teaching and learning into a plan which is aligned to the institutional mission and will enable consistent teaching and learning across the faculties and support the academic success of students.

### **List of Commendations and Recommendations**

A list of commendations and recommendations follows. These are not presented in order of priority. They are clustered below to provide a quick overview for the reader. The body of the report also draws attention to other issues for attention and consideration by Polytechnic of Namibia.

#### **Commendations**

1. The HEQC commends the Polytechnic of Namibia for its facilities, particularly at the School of Engineering, in the Department of Media Studies, at the Hotel School, as well as the PON library.
2. The HEQC commends the Polytechnic of Namibia for its responsiveness to the social and economic imperatives of Namibia.
3. The HEQC commends the Polytechnic of Namibia for some significant practices to ensure institutional governance, namely, the composition and role of Council.
4. The HEQC commends the Polytechnic of Namibia for providing supportive structures to enable the SRC to strengthen its leadership position within the institution.
5. The HEQC commends the Polytechnic of Namibia for its commitment to integrating experiential learning into the curriculum so that theory and practical experience are brought together.

6. The HEQC commends the Polytechnic of Namibia for the integration of technology into the curriculum and for ensuring access to technology through provision of computers in both dedicated and open laboratories.
7. The HEQC commends the Polytechnic of Namibia for the quality of its study guides for distance education students, the design and development of which is based on SAIDE criteria and guidelines which are internationally benchmarked. These study guides are interactive and allow students the opportunity to direct their own learning while engaging with the content.

### **Recommendations**

1. The HEQC recommends that the Polytechnic of Namibia interrogate through research and institution-wide debate, its understanding of what it would mean to become a university, and particularly a university of applied science and technology, develop indicators to measure progress towards achieving this goal; and in the light of the findings and in conjunction with national imperatives, reconsider its vision, mission and institutional goals.
2. The HEQC recommends that the Polytechnic of Namibia consider the development and implementation of a concerted strategy to change PON's staff equity profile. This strategy could supplement the recruitment strategy with an innovative approach to staff development and retention, and enable the institution to achieve better results in relation to staff equity.
3. The HEQC recommends that the Polytechnic of Namibia review the current practice of electing Deans and heads of departments to ensure that the quality management arrangements of the institution are not compromised.
4. The HEQC recommends that the Polytechnic of Namibia continue with its plans to develop and implement a quality management system that is adequately resourced, and review the current location of the Quality Assurance Unit within the governance structures of the institution.
5. The HEQC recommends that the Polytechnic of Namibia develop formal systems for benchmarking, student and employer surveys, and impact studies that are consistently used throughout the institution and which provide for action plans to address areas for attention with clearly defined timeframes and allocation of responsibilities.
6. The HEQC recommends that the Polytechnic of Namibia urgently formalise its conceptual framework for teaching and learning into an academic plan that has clear goals and targets, and which provides for monitoring and evaluation, and allocates responsibility for action and has clearly defined timeframes.
7. The HEQC recommends that the Polytechnic of Namibia review the function and effectiveness of its arrangements for the assurance of quality of teaching and learning across the institution.
8. The HEQC recommends that the Polytechnic of Namibia develop a management information system which stores critical information. This management

information system will support the institution-wide quality management system and institutional planning, as well as help track the institution's identified performance indicators.

9. The HEQC recommends that the Polytechnic of Namibia undertake systematic research on approaches to academic development, so it can design appropriate interventions to support under-prepared students in an effort to assist such students to engage successfully in teaching and learning programmes, and ensure that such interventions are properly resourced.
10. The HEQC recommends that the Polytechnic of Namibia develop and implement, through the Centre for Teaching and Learning, a consistent practice to identify and support at-risk students and include staff training.
11. The HEQC recommends that the Polytechnic of Namibia develop a certification policy and procedures, which covers short courses, and that it take taken to automate the process for identifying their graduates within a specific academic year.
12. The HEQC recommends that the Polytechnic of Namibia develop a single repository to store data on all short courses offered at PON to enable the institution to manage and monitor the offering of short courses.
13. The HEQC recommends that the Polytechnic of Namibia develop and implement a systematic process for programme review, which ensures the utilisation of feedback, as well as the implementation of programme improvement plans.
14. The HEQC recommends that the Polytechnic of Namibia, as identified in the Portfolio, develop and implement a Human Resources Plan which is aligned to PON's strategic plan and which makes provision for equity and redress, staff development, staff recruitment and retention.
15. The HEQC recommends that the Polytechnic of Namibia develop an institutional assessment policy, which specifies the roles of various structures involved in the management of different aspects of assessment.
16. The HEQC recommends that the Polytechnic of Namibia develop a policy regarding access to student records which makes provision for different levels of access and has built in mechanisms for security.
17. The HEQC recommends that the Polytechnic of Namibia revisit the guidelines for moderation to ensure that procedures are clearly set out and that processes are in place for the utilisation of feedback in the improvement of the quality of assessment, programme content and the curriculum.
18. The HEQC recommends that the Polytechnic of Namibia develop and implement a comprehensive research strategy that includes implementation plans and makes provision for monitoring and evaluation. The HEQC urges the Polytechnic to allocate dedicated financial resources for this strategy. In this regard, attention needs to be given to the research and library budgets, the drive to improve staff qualifications, and an increase in recognised applied research outputs.

19. The HEQC recommends that the Polytechnic of Namibia develop and implement a coherent strategy for the development, monitoring and review of postgraduate education that includes policies and procedures for admission to postgraduate studies, postgraduate supervision that encompasses the roles and responsibilities of supervisors and students, and which makes provision for the training of supervisors.
20. The HEQC recommends that the Polytechnic of Namibia develop and implement a strategy which will provide a clear conceptual framework for community engagement, its relationship with the other two core functions, as well as include policies, procedures and resource provision for staff to develop programmes, partnerships, and staff and student capacity for community engagement activities.