



*HIGHER EDUCATION QUALITY COMMITTEE*

***PROPOSED CRITERIA  
FOR THE HEQC's  
FIRST CYCLE OF AUDITS:  
2004-2009***

***March 2003***

***Discussion Document***

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## **EXECUTIVE SUMMARY**

### **1. Legislative authority for audits**

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. Audits are the responsibility of the HEQC also in terms of being recognised by the South African Qualifications Authority (SAQA) as the Education and Training Quality Assurer (ETQA) for the higher education band.

### **2. Nature of the audit**

The audit does not seek to measure the actual quality of the outputs in relation to teaching and learning, research and service learning. Rather, the audit seeks to:

- (i) Establish the nature and extent of the quality management system in place at the institution – what policies, systems, available resources, strategies and targets exist for the development and enhancement of quality in the core functions of higher education.
- (ii) Evaluate the effectiveness of the quality management system on the basis of evidence largely provided by the institution itself. The requirement to provide indicators of success and evidence of effectiveness, takes the audit beyond a checklist of policies and procedures.

### **3. Objectives of the audit**

According to the *Institutional Audit Framework* (p. (iii)), the general objectives of audits are, inter alia, the following:

- (i) To enable a higher education institution to assure itself, its stakeholders and the HEQC that its policies, systems and processes for the development, maintenance and enhancement of quality in all its educational offerings are functioning effectively.
- (ii) To enable providers and the HEQC to identify areas of strength and excellence as well as areas in need of focused attention for improvement in the short, medium and long term.
- (iii) To provide for consistency in quality management across the higher education sector and generate a national picture of the role of quality management in the transformation of higher education. It will also enable the HEQC to make a

judgement on the overall status of quality management in higher education and monitor system level improvement.

The above general objectives of audits apply to the first cycle of audits. In addition, there are some specific objectives for the first cycle of audits. These are the following:

- (i) The HEQC intends to signal clearly to the higher education community the institutional areas in need of systematic attention in order to ensure an acceptable level of quality provision and to indicate certain key audit areas for in depth attention. The audit criteria which are developed in this document will be a key instrument for evaluating the effective alignment between institutional quality objectives and the quality management systems in place to achieve them.
- (ii) The first audit cycle will have a common set of quality requirements for all higher education institutions. The main target areas and the levels of scrutiny will apply to all audited institutions. This will enable the HEQC to obtain baseline information in the targeted areas from all higher education institutions. Such information will:
  - Facilitate capacity development and improvement programmes by the HEQC and other roleplayers.
  - Facilitate a more differentiated approach to audit in the second cycle, allowing for lesser or greater areas and levels of scrutiny, depending on the demonstrated effectiveness of internal quality management systems. The eventual granting of self-accreditation status to institutions will also depend to a great extent on the information available on internal quality management systems.
  - Identify and disseminate good practices in quality management through all the sectors.

#### **4. Scope of the audit**

The audit will encompass the following areas and levels of enquiry:

At Level 1, general scrutiny of:

- The fitness of the mission of the institution in relation to local, national and international contexts (including transformational issues).
- The links between planning, resource allocation and quality management.
- The use of benchmarking and user surveys.

At Level 2, general scrutiny of:

- The quality management of the core functions – teaching and learning, research and service learning. The scrutiny of teaching and learning will include, *inter alia*, the quality management of short courses, exported and partnership programmes, programmes offered at tuition centres and satellite campuses, academic support services, and the quality of certification.

At Level 3, in depth scrutiny of quality management arrangements for:

- Programme development and review.
- Student assessment and success.
- In the case of institutions with a strong research mission, research quality management, as well as postgraduate education, will be scrutinised in depth.

The scope of the audit as set out above is represented diagrammatically in Figure 3 on page 15.

## **ACRONYMS**

CHE	Council on Higher Education
DoE	Department of Education
ETQA	Education and Training Quality Assurer
HEQC	Higher Education Quality Committee
NQF	National Qualifications Framework
PQM	Programme and Qualification Mix
RPL	Recognition of Prior Learning
SAQA	South African Qualifications Authority
SET	Science, Engineering and Technology

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## **SECTION A: BACKGROUND TO THE DEVELOPMENT OF THE AUDIT CRITERIA**

### **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 specific functions of the HEQC are to accredit programmes of higher education, audit the quality assurance mechanisms of higher education institutions and promote quality in higher education.

As indicated in the *Institutional Audit Framework*, the HEQC planned to develop audit criteria for the focus areas specified in that document and consult on the criteria. Criteria, according to which judgements can be made about quality and quality management, constitute a crucial component in the execution of the HEQC's functions, fulfilling the dual purpose of serving as evaluative instruments for the HEQC's audit and accreditation activities, as well as setting broad benchmarks for quality management in higher education. It is hoped that they will enable the institution to analyse and reflect on its quality management arrangements and guide the production of the institutional self-evaluation report.

The following general points of departure are appropriate in the development of the criteria:

- (i) Criteria should be developed with due attention to the social and educational context within which the HEQC's activities will take place.
- (ii) Criteria should be developed for the higher education sector as a whole, in line with the vision of a single, coordinated higher education system. The same quality requirements should apply to any institution that claims to provide higher education. A measure of flexibility should, however, be built into the criteria to allow for the necessary diversity relating to issues such as institutional mission, scope of work, etc.
- (iii) The criteria should be 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 the institutions.
- (iv) The criteria should be formulated in a broad way to indicate the key

elements in institutional quality management rather than narrow prescriptions for particular processes and methodologies of quality management. For example, reviewing programmes on a regular basis is proposed by the HEQC as a criterion for continuous quality improvement, but details of the review activity are not stipulated. Many of the key elements encapsulated in the criteria already constitute good practice in quality management systems at many higher education institutions both nationally and internationally.

This document puts forward proposals for criteria to be used during the first cycle of HEQC audits (2004-2009)<sup>1</sup>. For the first cycle, the HEQC intends using a targeted approach, rather than attempting to cover all potential audit areas in equal depth. This approach is deemed crucial in view of numerous systemic and institutional considerations.

In recognition of the real danger of system overload, the amount of scrutiny that institutions are able to handle needs to be carefully balanced against the requirements and legal obligations of the HEQC. Further, in view of the present higher education institutional quality landscape, for example, the vast differences in quality between higher education institutions and the concomitant level of preparedness for internal and external quality management processes, it seems prudent to aim for a targeted phasing in of the HEQC's audit system. This will afford institutions the opportunity not only to acquaint themselves with the HEQC's approach to audits, but also to develop or strengthen the necessary internal structures, processes and procedures for quality provision.

The findings from the first cycle of audits will be carefully reviewed by the HEQC and fully integrated into preparations for the second cycle of audits. The HEQC decisions about the scope, level and focus of the second cycle of audits will be informed by systemic and institutional performance. The broad intent in the next cycle will be to relate the scope and level of scrutiny to the level of institutional attainment in effectively managing internal quality assurance. This will allow for a more differentiated approach to audit in the second cycle, involving lesser or greater levels of scrutiny in the same or new areas of focus. Where evidence exists of effective internal systems being in place, institutions can expect lesser levels of scrutiny. Such evidence could also be the basis on which self-accreditation status could eventually be granted. The first audit cycle, which will have a common set of quality requirements for all higher education institutions, will thus provide baseline information in the targeted areas, on the basis of which a more differentiated audit approach could be implemented in the second cycle. The baseline information will also provide a foundation for capacity development and improvement programmes by the HEQC and other roleplayers.

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<sup>1</sup> The HEQC's proposed criteria were developed on the basis of research and analyses of audit requirements in a range of national and international quality assurance agencies. Part of the research was undertaken by the Centre for Higher Education Studies and Development of the University of the Free State. The criteria also drew on the research of the team that was involved in the Improving Teaching and Learning Project of the HEQC.

The audit criteria will focus on an institution's policies, systems, strategies, processes and activities for quality management in respect of the core functions of teaching and learning, research and service learning. The audit will include looking at the existence of policies and systems, widespread knowledge about them, and their effective use in promoting, developing and improving quality. Sampling and audit trails will be used to follow up on institutional claims about quality management systems in place. The requirement to provide indicators of success and evidence of effectiveness take the criteria beyond a checklist of policies and procedures. However, it is recognised that the actual achievement of quality requires not only effective quality management systems, but professional competence and the commitment of all those involved in teaching and learning, research and service learning.

Important to note is the reality that an audit system for South African higher education will have to take broader transformation imperatives into account. Audit criteria will 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 an institution to demonstrate that it is improving continuously as a teaching, research and social institution and that it is socially responsive without compromising its intellectual identity as a higher education institution.

Section A of this document deals briefly with a number of issues as background to the development of the HEQC's audit criteria. These issues relate, firstly, to the scope and focus of audits as set out in the *Institutional Audit Framework*, as well to the references to audit criteria in that document. Secondly, contextual issues are discussed which are of importance for the development of the audit criteria. Thirdly, a variety of other pertinent issues are dealt with, including the following:

- (i) Definition of the audit criteria.
- (ii) The quality cycle approach as an evaluative paradigm for audits and for the formulation of audit criteria.
- (iii) Level of specificity of the audit criteria.

## **2. THE SCOPE AND FOCUS OF AUDITS AS INDICATED IN THE INSTITUTIONAL AUDIT FRAMEWORK**

According to the *Institutional Audit Framework*<sup>2</sup> (*Audit Framework*, for short) (p. 8), the scope of HEQC audits will cover the broad institutional arrangements for assuring the quality of teaching and learning, research and service learning programmes, as well as

other specified areas. Governance, finances and other institutional operations will not be a focus, except in relation to their impact on the above areas.

More specifically, the audit target areas are the following (*Audit Framework*, p. 8):

- (i) Policies, systems, structures, resources and activities to support and enhance the quality of teaching and learning.
- (ii) Policies, systems, structures, resources and activities to support and enhance the quality of research (if pertinent to the institutional mission).
- (iii) Policies, systems, structures, resources and activities to support and enhance the quality of service learning programmes, including co-operative education programmes (if pertinent to institutional mission).
- (iv) The integration of quality management with institutional planning and resource allocation.
- (v) Stakeholder and/or expert surveys on the quality of provision.
- (vi) Benchmarking standards and good practice in respect of effective quality systems (against institutional, national and international benchmarks).

The following teaching and learning areas will be addressed (*Audit Framework* (p. 9):

- Staff development policies, plans and activities.
- Student access and development – policies, plans and activities.
- Programme development and review - Internal quality management arrangements for:
  - a) New programmes.
  - b) Updating and monitoring of existing programmes.
- Student assessment, throughput and completion rates.

### **3. THE DEVELOPMENT OF AUDIT CRITERIA AS ENVISAGED IN THE INSTITUTIONAL AUDIT FRAMEWORK**

The *Audit Framework* contains several references to criteria which will serve as the basis for judgments on quality in the course of an audit.

According to the *Audit Framework* (p. 7), the HEQC will use as a starting point criteria relating to an institution's own specification of mission and objectives. It is assumed that institutional missions will take national imperatives into account, as articulated in the Education White Paper 3: A Programme for the Transformation of Higher Education,

the Higher Education Act, the National Plan for Higher Education, the Human Resource Development Strategy, and other policy frameworks.

In developing the audit criteria, the HEQC will operate within the requirements for institutional efficiency set by the Department of Education (DoE) and institutional governance structures (*Audit Framework*, p. 7).

With respect to quality management for effective teaching and learning, research and service learning, the *Audit Framework* (p. 7) alludes to the fact that the HEQC has initiated a number of national projects to generate criteria for quality management, for example the Teaching and Learning project. The HEQC will also take into account institutionally set requirements and guidelines for teaching and learning, research and service learning.

## **4 CONTEXT FOR THE DEVELOPMENT OF AUDIT CRITERIA**

### **4.1 Introduction**

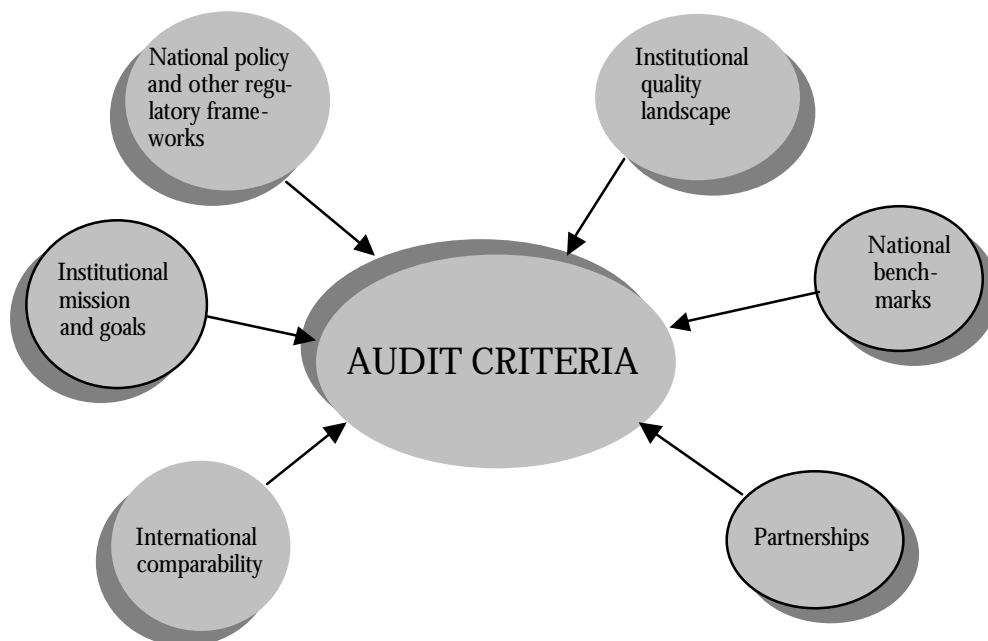
It is of paramount importance that the HEQC's audit criteria are fully contextualised within the circumstances of South African higher education, while also taking into account international trends and benchmarks. The criteria cannot be taken over simply from other contexts and/or quality assurance agencies. 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 contextual issues 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: Contextual issues relevant to the development of audit criteria**



## 4.2. National policy and other regulatory frameworks

### 4.2.1 National policy

National policy relating to higher education<sup>3</sup> 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 audit (and accreditation) criteria. The criteria have to be consonant with national policy documents on issues 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.

### 4.2.2 HEQC policy and frameworks

#### 4.2.2.1 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

<sup>3</sup> National policy relating to higher education 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).

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.

The *Founding Document* thus provides a diversity of “lenses” for looking at quality management. This multi-faceted view necessitates a diversified range and levels of criteria with which to test quality management systems.

#### 4.2.2.2 **The Institutional Audit Framework and Programme Accreditation Framework**

The audit criteria have to be developed within the context of the *Audit Framework* document and its definition of audit (*Audit Framework*, p. 4). At the same time, the audit criteria cannot be developed in isolation from the accreditation criteria as envisaged in the *Programme Accreditation Framework*. In the end, the two sets of criteria, although differentiated in focus, should together constitute a meaningful and coherent instrument for the HEQC’s quality related responsibilities. This is further necessitated by the fact that institutional self-evaluation status will take audit findings into consideration as a key measure of institutional quality capacity and achievement.

### 4.3 **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.

#### 4.4 The institutional quality landscape

The following aspects regarding the institutional quality landscape have to be taken into account when developing the audit criteria. The issues are briefly mentioned without discussion.<sup>4</sup>

- (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 field of quality management 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.

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<sup>4</sup> This section makes use of 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.

#### **4.5 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”). One of the functions of the audit criteria would be to evaluate the quality dimension of this link between mission and goals and an institution’s local and national context. 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.

#### **4.6 Partnerships**

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 and between universities and technikons. Within an environment where higher education co-operation is encouraged, the criteria 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.

#### **4.7 International comparability**

International trends and requirements are important benchmarks for developing the HEQC’s criteria, in order to ensure institutional reputation in a global higher education market and the production of graduates and diplomates who are internationally competitive, marketable and respected.

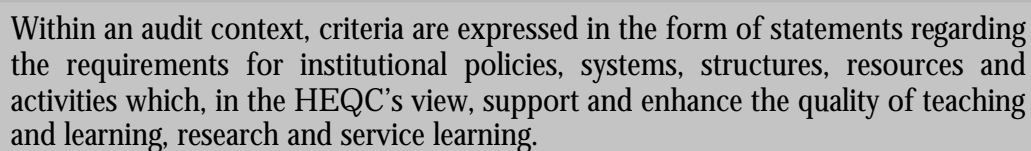
### **5. DEFINITION OF AUDIT CRITERIA**

Before developing proposals for audit criteria, it is important that a clear understanding is reached as to the exact meaning of the term “criteria” within an audit context. A

survey of the literature shows a proliferation of terms indicating levels of quality, for example, “standards”, “minimum standards”, “threshold standards“, “criteria”, “minimum criteria”, “benchmarks”, “good practice”, “best practice”, “requirements”, “minimum requirements”, etc. Several options for the use of terms like “criteria” and “standards”, which are the most important categories for the purposes of this document, present themselves, all with further possible permutations.

For the HEQC, the term “criterion” is expressed as a general statement on quality requirements within a defined area. The definition in Figure 2 is proposed for the use of the term “criteria” within an audit context:

**Figure 2: Definition of “criteria” within an audit context**



Within an audit context, criteria are expressed in the form of statements regarding the requirements for institutional policies, systems, structures, resources and activities which, in the HEQC’s view, support and enhance the quality of teaching and learning, research and service learning.

The definition of criteria would have a different focus in an accreditation context, where it would refer more specifically to programme requirements.

**6. THE QUALITY CYCLE APPROACH AS AN EVALUATIVE PARADIGM FOR AUDITS AND FOR THE FORMULATION OF AUDIT CRITERIA**

The HEQC plans to use the “quality cycle” approach to quality management as an evaluative paradigm for audits and for the formulation of audit criteria. It could be argued that the basic activities within this model could profitably be used as the key elements of a quality management framework. These activities are policy development, implementation, evaluation/review and improvement.

Within this model, planning in general institutional terms and in relation to particular areas constitutes a major component, leading first to the formulation of policy. This step has to be followed by the effective implementation of policy requirements in relation to outcomes, timeframes and resources. As a next step, evaluation and review are undertaken of policy and implementation against certain parameters, standards or indicators. On the basis of review findings, improvement of practice follows, which is

effected by re-planning and re-prioritisation, where necessary. It is assumed that planning on the basis of relevant information accompanies all steps in this cycle. Efficient and effective quality management systems are those which include the four basic activities in an integrated and repeated cycle.

Within a quality management framework, it could be assumed that the above four activities take place at all management and academic leadership levels within institutions, in a complex set of relationships and sequences. The four activities could, in fact, be regarded as constituting elements of a quality cycle, the efficiency and integratedness of which should be tested in audits. The audit criteria should provide the means of testing these in relation to specific target areas. Audit panels could raise questions regarding any or all steps in the quality cycle with regard to all the target or criterion areas.

## **7. LEVEL OF SPECIFICITY OF THE AUDIT CRITERIA**

The level of specificity of the criteria has important consequences for their interpretation and use in practical audit situations. Criteria can be devised in a number of ways and formulated on different levels of generality, ranging from general to more specific and detailed.

On the general level, for example, quality management mechanisms in specific target areas (teaching and learning, research, etc.) could be evaluated (by the institution internally or by an external body, such as the HEQC) by using the four basic steps or categories of activity indicated above. One possible evaluative question could focus on how the institution knows how well it is doing in planning, implementing, reviewing and improving with regard to quality management of the target areas. This question could be broken down into smaller evaluative questions. The following are a few examples of such questions<sup>5</sup>:

- (i) How efficiently do you (= the institution) contribute to the implementation of national policy in the target areas? On the basis of what indicators or evidence do you know this?
- (ii) How efficiently are you engaged in the systematic collection, interpretation and use of data/information/evidence in the target areas? On the basis of what indicators or evidence do you know this?
- (iii) How well are you progressing towards your vision, mission, further goal formulation, etc. with regard to the target areas? On the basis of what indicators or evidence do you know this?

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<sup>5</sup> These examples are derived from the report of the CHESD (see footnote 3), pp. 205-6, in which general, meta-level criteria in the format of evaluative questions are proposed.

- (iv) Do you know how well the quality management procedures/mechanisms in the target areas and their evaluation compare with those in other institutions? On the basis of what indicators or evidence do you know this?

It is clear, however, that audit criteria in the above general format can access only certain levels of information. Responses to such questions could also be very general and vague, or more extensive than what is required by the audit panel for its purposes.

One could also use more specific criteria. For example, if the area of staff development is audited as part of the broad area of teaching and learning, one could define sub-areas dealing with staff recruitment, selection and promotion, which would provide more detailed information on staff development.

Criteria of this nature would have the advantage of making the requirements for audit target areas more explicit, thereby clarifying the basis for self- and external evaluation and also promoting justifiable audit judgments. It would also provide a solid and explicit basis for the training of auditors.

The HEQC intends using both types of criteria in its audits during the first audit cycle, depending on the level of scrutiny of specific target areas. In the case of those areas where only general scrutiny is intended, general criteria would be the most suitable. In the case of areas which will be scrutinised in depth, more specific criteria are indicated. In practical audit situations, a combination of the two types of criteria could facilitate balanced audit judgments.

## **SECTION B: THE HEQC'S FIRST CYCLE OF AUDITS (2004-2009)**

### **8 THE HEQC'S OBJECTIVES FOR THE FIRST CYCLE OF AUDITS**

Before detailing the proposals for the criteria, it is necessary to indicate the objectives of HEQC audits both in general terms, as indicated in the *Audit Framework*, as well as for the first cycle.

According to the *Audit Framework* (p. (iii)), the general objectives of audits are, inter alia, the following:

- (i) To enable a higher education institution to assure itself, its stakeholders and the HEQC that its policies, systems and processes for the development, maintenance and enhancement of quality in all its educational offerings are functioning effectively.
- (ii) To enable providers and the HEQC to identify areas of strength and excellence as well as areas in need of focused attention for improvement in the short, medium and long term.
- (iii) To provide for consistency in quality management across the higher education sector and generate a national picture of the role of quality management in the transformation of higher education. It will also enable the HEQC to make a judgement on the overall status of quality management in higher education and monitor system level improvement.

The above general objectives of audits apply to the first cycle of audits. In addition, there are some specific objectives for the first cycle of audits. These are the following:

- (i) The HEQC intends to signal clearly to the higher education community the institutional areas in need of systematic attention in order to ensure an acceptable level of quality provision and to indicate certain key audit areas for in depth attention. The audit criteria which are developed in this document will be a key instrument for evaluating the effective alignment between institutional quality objectives and the quality management systems in place to achieve them.
- (ii) The first audit cycle will have a common set of quality requirements for all higher education institutions. The main target areas and the levels of scrutiny will apply to all audited institutions. This will enable the HEQC to obtain

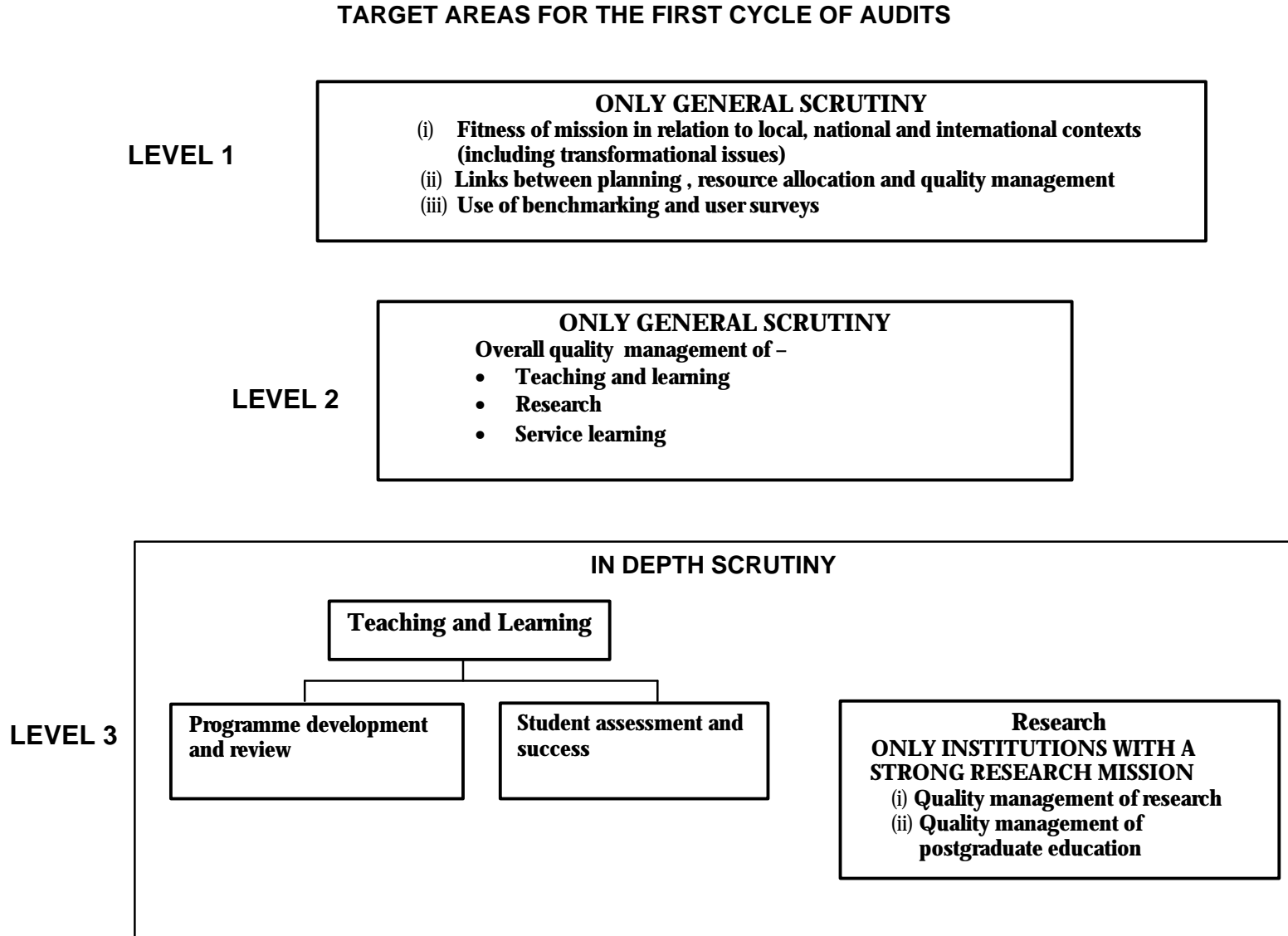
baseline information in the targeted areas from all higher education institutions. Such information will:

- a. Facilitate capacity development and improvement programmes by the HEQC and other roleplayers.
- b. Facilitate a more differentiated approach to audit in the second cycle, allowing for lesser or greater areas and levels of scrutiny, depending on the demonstrated effectiveness of internal quality management systems. The eventual granting of self-accreditation status to institutions will also depend to a great extent on the information available on internal quality management systems.
- c. Identify and disseminate good practices in quality management through all the sectors.

**9. SCOPE, LEVEL AND FOCUS OF THE HEQC'S FIRST CYCLE OF AUDITS (2004-2009)**

Figure 3 below gives a diagrammatic representation of the selected target areas, the levels of engagement and the focus of investigation.

**Figure 3: Scope, level and focus of audits in the first audit cycle (2004-2009)**



With regard to Figure 3 above, the following should be noted:

- (i) With regard to the different levels indicated, it is presumed that all higher level governance and management structures have final accountability for all quality related arrangements at lower levels.
- (ii) The scrutiny of research quality management can occur at two levels. All institutions will have general scrutiny of quality management systems for research and postgraduate education. Institutions with a specified research mission will have in depth scrutiny in this area.
- (iii) In Level 3, the in depth scrutiny applies to broad institutional level quality management arrangements for programme development and review and student assessment and success. In order to test the effectiveness of these arrangements, audit trails will be followed into a selection of programme areas.

## **10. A PROPOSAL FOR CRITERIA FOR THE FIRST CYCLE OF AUDITS**

### **10.1 Introduction**

This section proposes audit criteria for the first cycle of HEQC audits, taking into account the specific scope, level and focus of these audits as set out in Section 9 above.

### **10.2 Level of the proposed criteria**

As indicated, the HEQC intends using a combination of general and more specific criteria in its audit activities.

General criteria will be used for the following target areas:

- (i) The target area (10.3.1 below) comprising the following:
  - Fitness of mission in relation to local, national and international contexts (including transformational issues).
  - Links between planning, resource allocation and quality management.
  - Use of benchmarking and user surveys.
- (ii) The target area (10.3.2 below) consisting of the following:
  - Overall quality management of teaching and learning. This will include,

inter alia, a look at the quality management of short courses, exported and partnership programmes, programmes offered at tuition centres and satellite campuses, and certification. Where appropriate, attention will also be paid to quality management in place for particular modes of delivery, e.g. distance learning and particular types of educational programmes, e.g. professional and vocational education.

- Quality management of research.
- Quality management of service learning.

More detailed criteria will be used in the case of those target areas which will be scrutinised in depth during the first cycle of audits. The relevant target areas are the following:

- (i) Programme development and review; and student assessment and success (10.3.3 below).
- (ii) Research (only in the case of institutions with a specified research mission) (10.3.4 below).

### 10.3 **Proposed criteria for target areas in the first audit cycle**

In this section, audit criteria are proposed for each of the target areas in the first cycle of audits. A brief rationale for the inclusion of the particular target area is provided.

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. Over a period of time, data on institutional performance with regard to specific audit areas will assist the HEQC in monitoring systemic quality management and enable the institution to monitor its improvement trajectory.

#### 10.3.1 **Fitness of the mission of the institution in relation to the local, national and international context (including transformational issues), links between planning, resource allocation and quality management, use of benchmarking and user surveys**

##### 10.3.1.1 **Rationale**

The fitness of the mission of an institution, as a key concept in directing its core activities, has to be determined in relation to the local and broader national context. In this, the transformational role that institutions are required to play within the national

higher education agenda, is of key importance. A range of policy and legislative instruments have laid down transformational purposes and objectives for higher education. These include increased equity and access opportunities for marginalised groups, greater responsiveness to local, regional and national needs in and through teaching and research, producing a highly skilled workforce as well as an enlightened citizenry, and increasing the pool of basic and applied knowledge to enhance understanding and applications. Furthermore, the fitness of mission has to be related to international benchmarks, where appropriate, in order to establish broad comparability with reputable institutions of higher learning abroad.

The success of quality management at institutions is, to a considerable extent, dependent on the integration of quality management mechanisms with institutional planning and resource allocation. Quality management mechanisms need to be fully integrated with institutional planning from the highest level downwards. Similarly, financial planning should ensure adequate resource allocation for the development, implementation, review and improvement of quality and quality management mechanisms at all levels of the institution, but specifically in relation to the core activities of teaching and learning, research and service learning.

Benchmarking institutional performance against other institutions nationally and internationally is a useful source of information for continuous self-improvement through application of good practice. At this point, the HEQC is interested in the extent to which benchmarking is occurring and the internal and external reference points for such benchmarking.

User surveys are an important instrument in evaluating the effectiveness of institutions in chosen areas, on the basis of utilising information from different stakeholders. Examples are student satisfaction surveys, graduate tracking surveys, and employer satisfaction surveys.

#### 10.3.1.2 **Criteria**

The criteria in Table 1 are proposed for this target area.

**Table 1: Criteria for: (i) the fitness of the mission of institutions in relation to the local, national and international contexts (including transformational issues), (ii) links between planning, resource allocation and quality management, and (iii) use of benchmarking and user surveys**

<p><b>Criterion 1:</b>  SUB-AREA: FITNESS OF THE MISSION OF INSTITUTIONS IN RELATION TO LOCAL, NATIONAL AND INTERNATIONAL CONTEXTS (INCLUDING TRANSFORMATION ISSUES)  CRITERION: The institution has a clearly stated mission and purpose with goals and priorities which are fit for its local, national and international context and which adequately provide for transformational issues. There are effective strategies for the realisation of these goals and priorities. Human, financial and infrastructural resources are available to give effect to these goals and priorities.</p>
<p>In order to meet this criterion, the following are examples of what would be expected:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>(i) Engagement with local, regional, national and international imperatives (including national policy frameworks and objectives) in order to establish the fitness of the mission of the institution. Involvement of internal and external stakeholders in this process</li> <li>(ii) Adequate attention to transformational issues in the mission of the institution.</li> <li>(iii) The translation of the mission into a strategic plan with clear timeframes and resources for the achievement of goals and targets in its core functions.</li> <li>(iv) Allocated responsibilities at senior management level for implementation and monitoring.</li> </ul>
<p><b>Criterion 2</b>  SUB-AREA: LINKS BETWEEN PLANNING, RESOURCE ALLOCATION AND QUALITY MANAGEMENT.  CRITERION: Quality related objectives and mechanisms are fully integrated into institutional planning. Financial planning ensures adequate resource allocation for the development, implementation, review and improvement of quality at all levels of the institution, and specifically in relation to the core activities of teaching and learning, research and service learning.</p>
<p>In order to meet the criterion, the following are examples of what would be expected:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>(i) Key quality improvement priorities in the core functions of teaching and learning, research and service learning are aligned with the strategic goals of the institution.</li> <li>(ii) Institutional planning includes quality assurance and quality improvement prioritisation and target setting at all critical junctures.</li> <li>(iii) Adequate resource allocation is made through financial planning for the development, implementation, review and improvement of quality and quality management mechanisms at all levels.</li> </ul>
<p><b>Criterion 3</b>  SUB-AREA: USE OF BENCHMARKING AND USER SURVEYS  CRITERION: The institution engages in benchmarking and utilises user surveys in the process of planning and priority setting for quality development and improvement.</p>

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

- (i) Benchmarking against internal and external reference points is conducted on a regular basis for purposes of improvement and establishing institutional reputation and competitive edge.
- (ii) User surveys are conducted on a regular basis to obtain feedback for quality improvement from a range of appropriate stakeholder constituencies, e.g. graduate tracking surveys, employer satisfaction surveys, etc..

### 10.3.2 **Quality management of core functions: (i) teaching and learning (including quality management of short courses, exported and partnership programmes, programmes offered at tuition centres and satellite campuses, academic support services, and certification), (ii) research and (iii) service learning**

#### 10.3.2.1 **Rationale**

Efficient management of the core functions of teaching and learning, research and service learning is crucial to ensure the quality of these functions at the point of delivery. In order to do this, the necessary structures, processes and procedures have to be in place. In this, middle management, including deans and heads of academic support services, play a key role. Well-managed teaching and learning activities are central to judging institutional success and effectiveness with regard to the majority of the student population.

As far as research is concerned, it is assumed that some measure of research activity is underway at all higher education institutions (e.g. to inform teaching), though research may not be an integral part of the institutional mission. It is also assumed that postgraduate education is being undertaken at institutions that do not have a research mission. The quality management of those research activities needs to be included in the institutional quality management system.

As far as service learning is concerned, a number of institutions are already offering programmes (or planning to) which address social development needs in and through teaching and research. This trend is an important indicator of the transformatory relationship between the institution and the communities it seeks to serve through its core activities. The quality management of such socially responsive programmes will have to ensure equivalent standards of teaching and learning to other programmes within the institution.

Given the increase in the number of short courses, their quality should be ensured and mechanisms should be set up to evaluate the impact of offering these courses in relation

to whole qualifications and the mission of the institution. This is particularly necessary since the HEQC intends delegating responsibility for the quality of short courses to institutions themselves, on the basis of demonstrated internal systems to manage the quality of short courses. The quality of programmes offered beyond our borders, and programmes offered in partnership with other institutions, as well as those at tuition centres and satellite campuses, has to be equivalent to those offered in South Africa and at the main campuses of institutions. The quality of academic services has to be ensured in order to render efficient support for academic provision. Lastly, the processing and issuing of certificates, as well as security measures to avoid fraud or illegal issuing of these certificates, is a crucial element in ensuring the credibility of an institution's qualifications.

### 10.3.2.2 Criteria

The criteria in Table 2 below are proposed for this target area.

**Table 2: Criteria for the quality management of teaching and learning (including the quality management of short courses, exported and partnership programmes, programmes offered at tuition centres and satellite campuses, academic support services, and certification)**

<p><b>Criterion 1</b>  SUB-AREA: GENERAL QUALITY MANAGEMENT OF TEACHING AND LEARNING  CRITERION: Clear and efficient arrangements are in place for the management of teaching and learning in a way that ensures and enhances quality.</p> <p>In order to meet the criterion, the following are examples of what would be expected:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>(i) A well-developed academic plan which is implemented efficiently, articulates well with the institutional mission and strategic goals and is adequately resourced.</li> <li>(ii) Quality management mechanisms for ensuring and enhancing the quality of teaching and learning at both undergraduate and postgraduate levels.</li> <li>(iii) Key quality improvement priorities are set in areas of need with appropriate resources, time-frames and indicators of success.</li> <li>(iv) Staff development policies promote the professional competence of academic staff and attend especially to the development needs of new personnel.</li> <li>(v) Mechanisms are in place for promoting access to students from marginalised groups, <i>inter alia</i>, through the provision of academic development programmes.</li> <li>(vi) There is a system in place for storing and updating detailed information about students in order to inform policy, planning, implementation and review at all levels.</li> </ul>
<p><b>Criterion 2</b>  SUB-AREA: QUALITY MANAGEMENT OF SHORT COURSES  CRITERION: The institution has a quality management system in place for the effective management of short courses.</p>

<p>In order to meet the criterion, the following are examples of what would be expected:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>(i) Policies and mechanisms are in place to record and quality assure all short courses offered by the institution. These policies and mechanisms are widely known at the institution.</li> <li>(ii) Mechanisms exist to evaluate the impact (both positive and negative) of offering short courses in relation to – <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The mission of the institution.</li> <li>• The success rates in whole qualifications.</li> </ul> </li> </ul>
<p><b>Criterion 3</b>  SUB-AREA: QUALITY MANAGEMENT OF EXPORTED AND PARTNERSHIP PROGRAMMES, AND PROGRAMMES OFFERED AT TUITION CENTRES AND SATELLITE CAMPUSES  CRITERION: Clear and efficient arrangements are in place to manage the quality of exported programmes, programmes offered in partnership with other institutions, and programmes offered at tuition centres and satellite campuses.</p>
<p>In order to meet the criterion, the following are examples of what would be expected:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>(i) Quality management mechanisms are in place to ensure that exported programmes are of equivalent quality to those offered in South Africa.</li> <li>(ii) Compliance with the national quality criteria and other requirements of the importing country.</li> <li>(iii) Clear allocation of quality management responsibility for all partnership programmes.</li> <li>(iv) Quality management mechanisms to ensure that programmes offered at tuition centres and satellite campuses are of equivalent quality to those offered at the main campus.</li> </ul>
<p><b>Criterion 4</b>  SUB-AREA: QUALITY MANAGEMENT OF ACADEMIC SUPPORT SERVICES  CRITERION: An adequate level of academic services (e.g. library and learning materials, computer support services, etc.) is in place to support teaching and learning objectives and needs.</p>
<p>In order to meet the criterion, the following are examples of what would be expected:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>(i) Academic services are geared towards supporting the needs and learning objectives of teaching and learning, research and service learning. Efficient structures and procedures ensure the integratedness of academic provision and academic support.</li> <li>(ii) Academic services are adequately staffed and the necessary infrastructure is in place. The institution provides development opportunities for support staff to update their expertise and to keep abreast of developments in their field.</li> <li>(iii) Academic services are adequately resourced in order to fulfill their functions properly.</li> </ul>
<p><b>Criterion 5</b>  SUB-AREA: QUALITY MANAGEMENT OF CERTIFICATION  CRITERION: Clear and efficient arrangements are in place to ensure that the integrity of certification processes is not compromised.</p>
<p>In order to meet the criterion, the following are examples of what would be expected:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>(i) Effective mechanisms to quality assure the processing and issuing of certificates.</li> <li>(ii) Effective security measures to avoid fraud or illegal issuing of certificates.</li> </ul>

Table 3 below proposes criteria for the quality management of research. It is important to note that institutions which do not specify research as part of their mission but have a large number of postgraduate students will be subject to the more detailed criteria requirements indicated under the heading, Criteria for the management of postgraduate education (9.3.4.2 (ii) below).

**Table 3: Quality management of research**

<p><b>Criterion</b>  SUB-AREA: QUALITY MANAGEMENT OF RESEARCH  CRITERION: Clear and efficient arrangements are in place for the management of research functions and processes in a way that ensures and enhances quality, and increases research participation, research productivity and research funds.</p>
<p>In order to meet the criterion, the following are examples of what would be expected:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>(i) A research plan which indicates the role and nature of research conducted at the institution, which is implemented efficiently and adequately resourced.</li> <li>(ii) Appropriate and effective strategies are implemented for research development, including capacity development for new researchers.</li> <li>(iii) Appropriate and effective strategies are implemented for postgraduate education, including postgraduate supervision.</li> </ul>

**Table 4: Quality management of service learning**

<p><b>Criterion</b>  SUB-AREA: QUALITY MANAGEMENT OF SERVICE LEARNING  CRITERION: Clear and efficient arrangements are in place for the management of programmes which have a service learning component in a way that ensures and enhances quality.</p>
<p>In order to meet the criterion, the following are examples of what would be expected:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>(i) Service learning programmes are integrated into institutional and academic planning, as part of the institution's mission and strategic goals.</li> <li>(ii) Adequate resources and enabling mechanisms (including incentives) are in place to support the implementation of service learning, including staff and student capacity development.</li> <li>(iii) Review and monitoring arrangements are in place to gauge the impact and outcomes of service learning programmes on the institution, as well as on other participating constituencies.</li> </ul>

### 10.3.3 Programme development and review; and student assessment and success

**Focus:** In depth scrutiny

#### 10.3.3.1 Rationale

In the *Audit Framework*, the HEQC had identified teaching and learning as a critical focus area for its quality related activities. This choice of focus was to ensure the centrality of teaching and learning issues in the restructuring and transformation of higher education. The HEQC set up an Improving Teaching and Learning Project to support and strengthen capacity in this core area of institutional responsibility. The Project identified a range of activity areas within the scope of teaching and learning, all of which are not focus areas for the audit.

The HEQC has identified two activity areas for in depth scrutiny in the first audit cycle. They are: (i) Programme development and review and (ii) Student assessment and success. These two areas represent the start and end point of the teaching and learning process. The HEQC believes that systematic institutional attention to these two areas, validated by the audit process, covers a number of critical teaching and learning dimensions not addressed in depth in this first audit cycle, e.g. staff and student development.

Within an audit context, the nature and arrangements for institutional planning, design and management of academic programmes are important indicators of the effectiveness of educational provision. Effective procedures in this area could ensure that programmes meet the needs of students and other stakeholders, are intellectually credible, and enable ongoing improvement in design and delivery. The same applies to professional and work-based learning in vocational programmes, where the monitoring of teaching and learning arrangements in the workplace is critical to ensuring the credibility of qualifications. The effectiveness of institutional programme management is also an important consideration, amongst others, in the eventual awarding of self-accreditation status to institutions by the HEQC.

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.<sup>6</sup>

### 10.3.3.2 Criteria

#### (i) Criteria for programme development and review

This section proposes a number of criteria for programme development and review. The criteria in Table 5 below are proposed for *programme development*. At this point, only a few criterion statements are provided with indicators for illustrative purposes.

**Table 5: Criteria for programme development**

<p><b>Criterion 1</b>  SUB-AREA: PROGRAMME MANAGEMENT  CRITERION: The planning and administration of academic programmes are conducted within the framework of an effective programme quality management system. Responsibility and lines of accountability are clearly allocated. Management information systems are used to record and disseminate information about the programme, as well as facilitate review and improvement.</p>
<p>In order to meet the criterion, the following are examples of what would be expected:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>(i) Dedicated structures and line managers who have responsibility for the quality management of academic programmes.</li> <li>(ii) Clearly defined procedures, time frames, reporting and communication arrangements.</li> <li>(iii) Capturing and continual updating of all necessary information about programmes in the management information system (including their registration and accreditation status). Relevant aspects of this information are regularly available to staff and students.</li> </ul>
<p><b>Criterion 2</b>  SUB-AREA: DESIGN AND APPROVAL  CRITERION: There are clear systems and procedures for the design and approval of new programmes, courses and modules.</p>
<p>In order to meet the criterion, the following are examples of what would be expected:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>(i) Programme planning and budgeting are aligned.</li> <li>(ii) Programme planning and approval are linked to the operationalisation of the institution's/academic unit's mission and goals, Teaching and Learning Plan (as appropriate) and agreed 'Programme and Qualification Mix' (PQM) (as appropriate). This is used as a criterion for the internal approval of new programmes.</li> <li>(iii) The quality requirements for programme development and delivery take account of all delivery modes (e.g. face to face, distance, mixed modes, etc.).</li> </ul>

<sup>6</sup> This paragraph draws on the HEQC's Teaching and Learning Project, Report on Assessment Report No. 5), 2002.

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>(iv) Regional considerations are accounted for in the planning (and offering) of programmes.</li> <li>(v) Specified procedures and realistic time frames for the design and approval of academic offerings and guidelines for academic staff and programme teams to work from.</li> <li>(vi) Approval is done on the basis of transparent criteria, by an institutional authority that is independent of the programme team. Consistency of standards across the institution is monitored.</li> <li>(vii) Where appropriate, programme teams consult with external stakeholders such as professional bodies, potential employers, government departments and local communities about the nature of their programmes, to ensure that graduates meet employability requirements and labour market needs in both the short and long-term.</li> </ul>
<p><b>Criterion 3</b>  SUB-AREA: STAFFING  CRITERION: An adequate number of suitably qualified academic and support staff is available to deliver the programmes on offer.</p>
<p><b>Criterion 4</b>  SUB-AREA: STUDENT RECRUITMENT, SELECTION, SUPPORT AND DEVELOPMENT  CRITERION: The institution uses effective student recruitment, selection, support and development procedures to ensure that sufficient numbers of adequately prepared students enter and succeed in the programme.</p>

Apart from the above, the following additional criteria for programme development apply in the case of *professional and vocational education* (Table 6)

**Table 6: Additional criteria for programme development in the case of professional and vocational education, including work-based learning<sup>7</sup>**

<p><b>Criterion 1</b>  SUB-AREA: CHARACTERISTICS AND NEEDS OF PROFESSIONAL AND VOCATIONAL EDUCATION  CRITERION: The characteristics and requirements of professional and vocational education are accounted for in the development of the programme.</p>
<p>In order to meet the criterion, the following are examples of what would be expected:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>(i) The programme promotes an understanding on the part of the student of the specific occupation for which he/she is being trained.</li> <li>(ii) The programme has a balance of theoretical and practical or applied knowledge. The student masters the techniques and skills which are required by a specific profession or occupation.</li> <li>(iii) Work-based learning forms an integral part of the curriculum and placement in a work-based environment is regarded as an essential component of the programme.</li> <li>(iv) All relevant stakeholders, including employers and professional bodies (where applicable) are involved in the development of the programme.</li> </ul>

<sup>7</sup> This section draws on the publication of Brennan, J. and Brenda, L. 1996. *A review of work based learning in higher education*. Quality Support Centre, Department of Education and Employment.

<p><b>Criterion 2</b>  SUB-AREA: MANAGEMENT OF WORK-BASED LEARNING  CRITERION: The management of work-based learning is done efficiently in order to promote quality in all the components of the programme.</p>
<p>In order to meet the criterion, the following are examples of what would be expected:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>(i) Effective policies, processes and procedures are in place for the management of work-based learning and are consistently applied across the institution.</li> <li>(ii) Learning contracts are utilised as a means by which the student, the higher education institution and the employer can negotiate, approve and assess the objectives and outcomes of the learning process. The roles of the various parties involved in work-based learning, i.e. the institution, students, mentors and employers, are clearly spelled out in the contract.</li> <li>(iii) Regular and efficient communication takes place between the institution, students, mentors and employers involved in work-based learning.</li> <li>(iv) A system is in place (both institutional and at the place of employment) to record the contents and progress of the student's learning experience in the workplace.</li> <li>(v) Monitoring of work-based learning is done regularly and systematically. Feedback is utilised for improving the practice of work-based learning.</li> </ul>
<p><b>Criterion 3</b>  SUB-AREA: MENTORING SYSTEM  CRITERION: An effective mentoring system provides support for the student in the workplace.</p>
<p>In order to meet the criterion, the following are examples of what would be expected:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>(i) The mentoring system is educative, i.e. it enables the student to recognise strengths and weaknesses in his/her work, to develop existing and new abilities, and to gain knowledge of work practices.</li> <li>(ii) The mentoring system is supportive, i.e. it offers opportunities to nurture and develop students.</li> </ul>

Apart from the above, the following additional criterion applies in the case of *distance learning programmes* (Table 7).

**Table 7: Additional criterion for distance learning programmes**

<p><b>Criterion</b>  SUB-AREA: DISTANCE LEARNING PROGRAMMES  CRITERION: The necessary structures, processes and procedures are in place to ensure quality provision in the development and implementation of distance learning programmes.</p>
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In order to meet the criterion, the following is an example of what would be expected:

- (i) The design of the programme ensures explicit and reasoned coherence between, on the one hand, the aims and intended learning outcomes of the programme and, on the other, the scope of the learning materials and the strategies for teaching at a distance.
- (ii) The institution has tested systems and technologies for materials development and delivery for distance learning.
- (iii) Learning materials, teaching and learner support strategies, and modes of assessment are designed (and reviewed regularly) in order to give students enrolled at a distance a reasonable chance of achieving intended exit level outcomes.
- (iv) Training and development opportunities are provided for staff to be able to design, deliver and review programmes offered at a distance.
- (v) Systems are in place to identify inactive students and support them timeously.

The criteria in Table 8 are proposed for *programme review*.

**Table 8: Criteria for programme review**

<p><b>Criterion 1</b>  SUB-AREA: QUALITY MANAGEMENT OF ACADEMIC PROGRAMME REVIEW  CRITERION: Clear and effective procedures are in place (including internal and external peer review) to evaluate programmes on a regular basis. Review findings are disseminated appropriately and utilised for staff development, curriculum improvement and increasing student access.</p>
<p><b>Criterion 2</b>  SUB-AREA: REVIEW METHOD  CRITERION: The method and processes for programme and course/module review are credible and consistent, and allow for the triangulation of information and data in order to produce a valid outcome.</p>
<p><b>Criterion 3</b>  SUB-AREA: TRAINING AND SUPPORT FOR ACADEMIC REVIEW  CRITERION: The institution provides academic managers and teaching staff with training and support to ensure the rigour and consistency of the review process.</p>

(ii) **Criteria for student assessment and success**

The criteria in Table 9 below are proposed for *student assessment and success*. At this point, only a few criterion statements are provided with indicators for illustrative purposes.

**Table 9: Criteria for student assessment and success**

<p><b>Criterion 1</b> SUB-AREA: MANAGEMENT OF ASSESSMENT CRITERION: The institution has an assessment policy and clear and effective procedures for its implementation. The policy and its procedures ensure academic and professional standards in the design, approval, implementation and review of assessment strategies for programmes and modules, and for the qualifications it awards.</p>
<p>In order to meet the criterion, the following are examples of what would be expected:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>(i) Guidelines or regulations for the following: formative assessment, provision of feedback to students, weighting of class marks (continuous assessment) and examinations, security procedures, disciplinary and appeals procedures, regulations for marking, grading, aegrotats, supplementary examinations, condoned passes, etc.</li><li>(ii) Responsibility allocated for the implementation of institutional assessment policy to faculties and departments/schools. The assessment decisions by the committees/boards at these levels are validated by expert peers.</li><li>(iii) At the programme and course/module level, assessment is systematically and purposefully used both to generate data for summative purposes (grading, ranking, selection, predicting) and also for formative and diagnostic purposes, such as providing timeous feedback to inform teaching and learning.</li><li>(iv) Effective monitoring of assessment practices takes place at the management level.</li></ul>
<p><b>Criterion 2</b> SUB-AREA: MODERATION SYSTEM CRITERION: The institution has efficient internal and external procedures to moderate and validate its assessment procedures and results, in order to ensure their reliability and to ensure the integrity of the qualifications it awards.</p>
<p><b>Criterion 3</b> SUB-AREA: RELIABILITY OF ASSESSMENT PRACTICES CRITERION: The principles, procedures and practices of assessment are explicit, fair and consistently applied throughout the institution.</p>
<p><b>Criterion 4</b> SUB-AREA: RIGOUR AND SECURITY OF THE ASSESSMENT SYSTEM CRITERION: Assessment is conducted rigorously within a framework of institutional/ faculty/professional rules and regulations governing assessment. Security arrangements in relation to recording and documenting assessment decisions are in place to ensure the credibility of outcomes.</p>
<p><b>Criterion 5</b> SUB-AREA: RECOGNITION OF PRIOR LEARNING (RPL) CRITERION: The institution has a policy and effective procedures for recognising prior learning and for assessing current competence.</p>
<p><b>Criterion 6</b> SUB-AREA: ASSESSMENT TRAINING CRITERION: The academic staff responsible for official decisions on assessment are appropriately trained, experienced and competent to assess. The institution offers its teaching staff development opportunities in order to improve and professionalise its assessment practices.</p>

**Criterion 7**

SUB-AREA: EFFICIENCY, GRADUATION AND RETENTION RATES

CRITERION: Student retention and graduation rates in programmes are in line with the Department of Education's benchmarks stipulated in the *National Plan for Higher Education 2001*, and other requirements set by the institution itself.**Criterion 8**

SUB-AREA: EQUITY AND REPRESENTIVITY IN GRADUATE OUTPUT

CRITERION: Programmes are achieving increasing equity in access, retention and success rates for graduates in line with the *National Plan for Higher Education, 2001*.

Apart from the above, the following additional criterion for student assessment and success applies in the case of professional and vocational education (Table 10).

**Table 10: Additional criterion in the case of professional and vocational education**

**Criterion**

SUB-AREA: ASSESSMENT OF WORK-BASED LEARNING

CRITERION: The assessment of work-based learning is conducted efficiently and with clear criteria.

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

- (i) Academics as well as workplace-based assessors (for example mentors and/or supervisors), provide an input into assessment, depending on the specific nature of the task to be assessed.
- (ii) The criteria for assessment are clearly spelled out, depending on the purposes of the assessment within the workplace environment. Assessment tasks are developed in a manner that advances the required competences.

The following additional criterion applies in the case of the assessment of *distance learning programmes* (Table 11).

**Table 11: Additional criterion for assessment of distance learning programmes**

**Criterion**

SUB-AREA: DISTANCE LEARNING PROGRAMMES

CRITERION: The policies and procedures for assessment take into account the particular contexts and requirements of distance education students.

In order to meet the criterion, the following is an example of what would be expected:

The institution can demonstrate that formative and summative assessment procedures for distance learning programmes are appropriate for the delivery mode and the circumstances in which the programmes are studied.

### 10.3.4 Research

**NOTE: The criteria in this section are only applicable in the case of institutions with a specified research mission.**

**Focus:** In depth scrutiny.

#### 10.3.4.1 Rationale

The White Paper (1997) and the *National Plan for Higher Education* place strong emphasis on the need to develop research capacity and increase research productivity to ensure both open-ended intellectual inquiry and the application of research activities to social development. However, the current capacity, distribution and outcomes of the higher education research system, including graduate throughput rates, remain cause for concern. The Department of Education has set an increase in postgraduate enrolments and research outputs as a strategic goal for the South African higher education system. The HEQC includes research quality management in its audit system to ensure that research as a core function of higher education is conducted within an integrated quality framework and that it is included in institutional planning and resource allocation for a key mission area indicated by the institution.

#### 10.3.4.2 Criteria

##### (i) Criteria for the quality management of research

In the case of Criterion 1 (for the sub-area: Research Management), an example is given of indicators in that sub-area.

##### **Table 12: Criteria for the quality management of research**

<p><b>Criterion 1</b> SUB-AREA: RESEARCH MANAGEMENT CRITERION: The institution has a research management system that allows for planning, implementation and monitoring of researcher participation, research output and growing the pool for the funding of research.</p>
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<p>In order to meet the criterion, the following are examples of what would be expected:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>(i) A research policy that makes provision for differentiated support for the different types of research (e.g. basic, strategic and applied) and for the different stages of the research cycle (proposal development, evaluation, funding, reporting, dissemination).</li> <li>(ii) A research information system that monitors research production and researcher participation throughout the institution.</li> <li>(iii) Indicators to evaluate the effectiveness of the research management system.</li> <li>(iv) Strategies in place to increase research funding.</li> </ul>
<p><b>Criterion 2</b>  SUB-AREA: RESEARCH QUALITY  CRITERION: The institution has policies, criteria and procedures to allocate resources, based on internal and external peer review.</p>
<p><b>Criterion 3</b>  SUB-AREA: RESEARCH CAPACITY DEVELOPMENT  CRITERION: The institution has policies, structures and programmes that are conducive to the development of new researchers, with due attention to race and gender considerations.</p>
<p><b>Criterion 4</b>  SUB-AREA: KNOWLEDGE PRODUCTION AND NATIONAL GOALS  CRITERION: The institution has a research policy that encourages and supports collaborative and problem solving research at the local/regional/national level and the dissemination of research outcomes to potential users.</p>

**(ii) Criteria for the quality management of postgraduate education**

The specified audit criteria in Table 13 below are proposed for the quality management of *postgraduate education*. In the case of Criterion 2 (for the sub-area: Effective Supervision), an example is given of indicators in that sub-area.

**Table 13: Criteria for postgraduate education**

<p><b>Criterion 1</b>  SUB-AREA: MANAGEMENT OF POSTGRADUATE EDUCATION  CRITERION: The institution has policies, structures and procedures for supporting and improving postgraduate education.</p>
<p><b>Criterion 2</b>  SUB-AREA: EFFECTIVE SUPERVISION  CRITERION: The institution has policies, systems and regulations to support and monitor postgraduate supervision.</p>

<p>In order to meet the criterion, the following are examples of what would be expected:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>(i) The institution has regulations governing the relationship between supervisors and postgraduate students. There are clear mechanisms for complaints and appeals.</li> <li>(ii) The institution has monitoring mechanisms to check the progress of postgraduate students.</li> <li>(iii) The institution has available codes of practice or guidelines for supervision.</li> <li>(iv) Training and development opportunities for new supervisors are available.</li> </ul>
<p><b>Criterion 3</b>  SUB-AREA: CAPACITY DEVELOPMENT  CRITERION: The institution has policies, structures and resources to support postgraduate development</p>
<p><b>Criterion 4</b>  SUB-AREA: ASSESSMENT OF POSTGRADUATE RESEARCH  CRITERION: The institution has clear criteria and procedures to assess Honours, Masters and PhD theses which are based on external examination</p>

## 11. USE OF CRITERIA IN AUDIT JUDGMENTS

The HEQC intends using a scale of judgement to indicate the outcomes of audit investigations, in order to make the level of outcomes more explicit. This is done for reasons of transparency, but is also intended as an instrument for institutional development, within the framework of the HEQC's formative approach to quality management.

A variety of models present themselves for representing the final audit outcomes. The model that is proposed here involves classifying audit outcomes, using the categories of *good*, *satisfactory*, and *not satisfactory*. The criteria will be used by audit panels to arrive at a decision regarding the final audit outcome. The following is proposed in this regard:

- (i) Where the HEQC criteria are fully met, the final audit outcome is classified as *good*.
- (ii) Where the HEQC criteria are generally met, the final audit outcome is classified as *satisfactory*.
- (iii) If the HEQC criteria are generally not met, the final audit outcome is classified as *not satisfactory*.

Where an institution demonstrates the use of innovative quality management systems and procedures that go beyond the HEQC's requirements, it will be commended as an example of excellent practice in quality management.