



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

**EXECUTIVE SUMMARY**

**AUDIT REPORT  
ON DA VINCI INSTITUTE FOR  
TECHNOLOGY MANAGEMENT**

**Report of the HEQC to Da Vinci Institute for Technology Management**

**March 2007**

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## ACRONYMS

AP	Audit Portfolio
CHE	Council on Higher Education
CSI	Corporate Social Investment
DoE	Department of Education
ETQA	Education and Training Quality Assurance Body
HEI	Higher Education Institution
HEQC	Higher Education Quality Committee
MIS	Management Information System
MOTIP	Management of Technology, Innovation and People
OBE	Outcomes Based Education
QA	Quality Assurance
QMS	Quality Management System
RPL	Recognition of Prior Learning
SAQA	South African Qualifications Authority
TT100	Technology Top 100 Business Awards Programme

## **Overview of the Audit**

### **Introduction**

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

The audit visit to the Da Vinci Institute for Technology Management (hereafter referred to as Da Vinci) was conducted by the HEQC in terms of the above mandate. This document reports on the audit visit to Da Vinci, which took place from 6-8 June 2006.

This report<sup>1</sup> contains an overview of the audit process and a list of the commendations and recommendations made by the HEQC. The commendations and recommendations are based on the findings of the Audit Panel, using the audit criteria set by the HEQC.

### **The Audit Process**

In 2005, the Executive Director of the HEQC secured the consent of the CEO of Da Vinci that it would participate in an institutional audit from 6-8 June 2006 as a private higher education institution that provides postgraduate programmes.

Da Vinci conducted its institutional self-evaluation using the HEQC audit criteria and produced an audit portfolio for review by the audit panel. Da Vinci did not negotiate for modification to the scope of the audit.

In April 2006, Da Vinci presented its Audit Portfolio (AP) to the HEQC. The HEQC constituted an Audit Panel consisting of academics and academic administrators from the higher education community, all of whom had participated in an auditor preparation workshop run by the HEQC. An Audit Portfolio meeting was convened in Pretoria on 3 May 2006 at which the Audit Panel met to consider the Audit Portfolio and to prepare for the audit visit. During this meeting, the Audit Panel decided that additional documents should be requested from Da Vinci in preparation for the audit visit.

The audit visit took place from 6 to 8 June 2006. The Audit Panel conducted a tour of the institution's premises in Modderfontein where the interviews were conducted.

Open sessions were also available for any staff or student member of the institution and the community to meet the Audit Panel and to make a submission. No one made use of the opportunity to address the Panel.

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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 da Vinci and Appendix D contains the audit visit schedule.

In all, the Audit Panel interviewed about 42 people during the audit visit, including

- Full- and part-time staff
- Students
- Employers.

This report reflects the audit process and findings based on the Audit Portfolio provided by Da Vinci, supplementary documentation requested from the institution, and interviews and observations made during the audit visit. Every effort has been made to understand the arrangements for quality management 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.

A synopsis of the HEQC's evaluation of the state of quality management at Da Vinci is found in the summary of findings together with the commendations and recommendations. It is expected that Da Vinci will use these findings to strengthen its internal quality management systems and thereby improve the quality of its core academic activities. The recommendations indicate priority areas for improvement. Other areas of strength or areas in need of improvement are indicated in the main body of the report. Decisions about forms of implementation of the recommendations and their further prioritisation are the responsibility of the institution.

It is expected that five months after the receipt of the report, Da Vinci will submit to the HEQC an improvement plan based on the HEQC Audit Report. The institution will be expected to submit a mid-cycle progress report three years after the site visit.

The HEQC would like to thank Da Vinci for the co-operative manner in which it has participated in the institutional audit process. It also wishes to express its appreciation for the frank discussions held in the course of the audit. The hospitality and assistance of Da Vinci personnel is appreciated. Professors R Marcus and B Anderson and their team are thanked for facilitating the audit process, including the preparation of the documentation.

## Summary of Findings

The Da Vinci Institute for Technology Management has its roots in 1995 when the University of Warwick established a presence in South Africa through Morgan Education Technologies. Given the success of the cooperative education model, Morgan Education Technologies persuaded Eskom and the CSIR to sponsor twenty-five students to complete its Masters programme. Morgan became firmly entrenched as an academic organisation delivering 65% of the University of Warwick Masters Degree programme. Morgan was also involved in the Technology Top 100 Business Awards programme (TT100) designed to identify companies demonstrating technological excellence.

Morgan Education Technologies then became known as Morgan University Alliance and finally, the Warwick Institute. However, the promulgation of new legislation regulating higher education resulted in the University of Warwick deciding it was not prepared to meet the requirements of the Higher Education Act and to cease Warwick operations in South Africa.

Warwick Institute transformed into the Da Vinci Institute for Technology Management, and combined with Da Vinci Research under the banner of Da Vinci Holdings. In 2003, Da Vinci applied for, and was granted, conditional accreditation for the following postgraduate qualifications:

- PhD (Management of Technology and Innovation)
- M Sc (Management of Technology and Innovation).

This was followed in 2004 with the conditional accreditation of the

- Diploma (Management of Technology and Innovation)
- Certificate (Management of Technology and Innovation).

These four programmes are offered to postgraduate students by Da Vinci.

It is stated in the Portfolio that enrolments at Da Vinci on 20 March 2006 numbered 225, which constitutes a 139% increase since December 2004. Of the students, 69% are previously disadvantaged and 44% are female. Of the total enrolment, 76% of students are registered for the MSc programme (AP: Appendix 2, Enrolment data).

The Panel obtained a comprehensive picture of the quality arrangements at Da Vinci and noted Da Vinci's commitment to the implementation of its newly developed quality management system. The Panel also noted the predominantly positive reception of Da Vinci and its work among its students and clients. The Panel was particularly impressed with the manner in which Da Vinci has aligned its core areas to business, industry and government, and its social and transformational agenda.

Given the nature of the institution and its stated objectives and commitments, the Panel flagged three general areas in need of developmental attention:

1. The Panel noted the need for Da Vinci as a newly established institution to finalise and implement its planned quality management system. The Panel noted that while

Da Vinci is committed to the management of quality it has yet to integrate quality management fully into its core functions. This includes formalising its institutional quality framework and the appropriate structures, policies and procedures. An institutional quality framework includes, but is not limited to, the development and review of programmes, work-integrated learning, and the use of advisory committees.

2. The Panel noted that Da Vinci was aware of the tensions that can arise from the customisation of its programmes. While customisation of programmes reflects institutional responsiveness to industry, Da Vinci is encouraged to consider the implications of customisation for its academic offerings.
3. The Panel encourages Da Vinci specifically to examine its assessment practices and policies to ensure rigorous, consistent and adequate assessment across all modules, levels and qualifications.

The HEQC makes recommendations in a number of areas to signal to Da Vinci those issues that require attention with regard to quality provision and urges that these issues be incorporated into the overall quality assurance planning and practice at Da Vinci.

A summary of the commendations and recommendations follows. They are clustered below to provide a quick overview for the reader. The body of the report draws attention to other issues for attention and consideration by Da Vinci.

### **Commendations**

1. The HEQC commends Da Vinci for its identification and pursuit of a narrowly defined selection of niche areas that are responsive to national priorities and for the institution's inclusion of innovation in the management of technology and people, its responsiveness to the national need for human resource skills development, and in its method of programme delivery.
2. The HEQC commends Da Vinci for the manner in which it approaches community engagement activities, including the *Edge* publication, as part of its core corporate responsibilities.

### **Recommendations**

1. The HEQC recommends that Da Vinci finalise its strategic plan and ensure that it aligns its budgeting and financial planning activities to the objectives of the mission as well as to the institution's goals.
2. The HEQC recommends that Da Vinci align its quality assurance mechanisms at institutional level and that it continue to develop, consolidate, implement and monitor its quality management arrangements in the three core areas of teaching and learning, research and community engagement.

3. The HEQC recommends that Da Vinci put in place measures to ensure that the progression in complexity from the lower to higher qualifications is clear, and that credit allocation and the level of qualifications are reviewed to ensure coherence of outcomes in all programmes.
4. The HEQC recommends that Da Vinci put in place policies and procedures to ensure that its admissions practices and provisions for RPL access are linked to appropriate and adequate student support structures.
5. The HEQC recommends that, in light of the risks associated with its current paper-based student record keeping system, Da Vinci urgently implement its IT-based record keeping system.
6. The HEQC recommends that Da Vinci develop a system to monitor the potential risks of customised programmes, to prevent programme dilution, and to ensure that curricula maintain their integrity so that programme coherence and portability is assured.
7. The HEQC recommends that Da Vinci align the expected outcomes of its doctoral programme with the requirements of the NQF and thus ensure that they are consonant with the general expectations of a PhD both nationally and internationally.
8. The HEQC recommends that Da Vinci ensure the integrity of its assessment, moderation and external examination processes through a comprehensive assessment and moderation policy.
9. The HEQC recommends that Da Vinci refine its research policy so that it is aligned to institutional goals and to ensure that research planning is appropriate to postgraduate provision. The policy should address the management of commercialisation of research versus the academic endeavour and postgraduate supervision of research.
10. The HEQC recommends that Da Vinci develop an institutional community engagement framework and that it monitor and review its community engagement activities. Such a policy would ensure that community engagement activities are formally aligned to the core functions of teaching and learning and research as well as ensure the link between resource allocation and planning.