Draft Good Practice Guide on Student Engagement in Quality Assurance and Promotion in Higher Education

August 2022

This is a draft that is yet to go through the processes of engagement with stakeholders and approval by the relevant structures of the CHE. It should therefore not be circulated, quoted, or cited. The CHE bears no responsibility for the consequences of quoting or citing the contents of this draft which could change before approval.

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Acronyms

CHE   Council on Higher Education

EQA   External Quality Assurance

HE   Higher Education

HEI   Higher Education Institution

HEQC   Higher Education Quality Committee

HEQSF   Higher Education Qualification Sub-framework

IQA   Internal Quality Assurance

PQM   Programme and Qualification Mix

RPL   Recognition of Prior Learning

SAC   Student Advisory Committee

SER   Self-Evaluation Report

Glossary of Terms

Academic success refers to the achievement, by students, of the set academic and intellectual goals.

Accreditation is a process used by an External Quality Assurance Agency to provide assurance to the public that either an institution or an academic programme meets specific quality standards.

Articulation is a process that enables student mobility within and among the institutions that comprise the post-school education and training system.

Curriculum design and development is a planned, a purposeful, progressive, and systematic process to create and design new programmes or positive improvements in existing learning programmes.

Credit Accumulation and Transfer refers to the arrangement whereby the diverse features of both credit accumulation and credit transfer are combined to facilitate lifelong learning and access to the workplace.

External Quality Assurance (EQA) is the means by which an external quality agency ensures that institutions have Internal Quality Assurance (IQA) systems in place to manage the quality of their activities and educational provision. It also ensures that the qualifications and programmes that they offer have been peer-reviewed to ensure that the provisioning meets the quality standards and criteria of the Council on Higher Education (CHE).

Good practice is an approach, method, technique or way of doing things that is generally accepted as being correct or more effective in delivering desired results or outcomes.

Internal Quality Assurance (IQA) refers to the integrated institutional system, policies and processes used by an institution to manage the quality of an institution's core and associated functions of learning and teaching, research and community engagement.

Learning is the activity or process of acquiring knowledge, skills and values by studying, practising, being taught, or experiencing something.

Parity of esteem is about according a qualification the same status as other qualifications at the same level on the NQF.

Peer assessment is a process whereby students assess and rate the performance of other students of equal or similar status.

Principles are fundamental truths or propositions that serve as the foundation for a system of belief or behaviour or for a chain of reasoning.

Professional Body is an organisation of expert practitioners in an occupational field, including an occupational body that may be statutory or non-statutory.

Programme refers to a purposeful and structured set of learning activities designed to enable a student to meet the outcomes necessary for the award of a qualification.

Qualification is a formal status or title that a higher education institution confers on a person who completes a prescribed learning programme and attains a specified level of achievement in relation to the learning outcomes of the programme. The achievement is evaluated through a combination of formative and summative assessment tools and methodologies.

Quality in higher education embodies meeting the minimum standards of education; fitness for purpose in the context of mission differentiation of institutions within a national framework; value for money; and transformation in the sense of developing the personal capabilities of individuals, as well as advancing the agenda for social change.

Quality Assurance in Higher Education involves evaluating and providing evidence of the extent to which institutions have put in place the measures needed to achieve (i) the goals and purposes they have identified for themselves, and (ii) programmes that are able to deliver a set of learning experiences which will support students in attaining the qualifications to which the programmes lead.

Quality Assurance Agency is an independent body or institution which develops, oversees, safeguards and improves quality standards in the higher education sector.

Quality Audit is an external quality review process of an institution's quality management system and its constituent elements, based on that institution's identity, nature, context and strategic goals.

Quality Promotion is the development of a programme of activities to institutionalise a quality culture in higher education and the commitment to continuous quality improvement.

Recognition of Prior Learning refers to the principles and processes through which the prior knowledge and skills of a person are made visible, mediated and rigorously assessed and moderated for the purposes of alternative access and admission, recognition and certification, or further learning and development.

Self-assessment is a process in which students are required to rate their own performance against standards and criteria.

Stakeholder is any group or individual able to affect or is affected by the achievement and/or non-achievement of an organisation or institution's objectives.

Standards are codes of practice for quality assurance used in higher education, which higher education institutions should consider and adhere to.

Student engagement is the planned and purposeful process in which academics and management staff interact with students to exchange ideas, impart knowledge and search solutions to academic and academic support challenges.

Student voice reflects students' perspective on matters that affect their education. The articulation of an authentic student voice through student representatives participating in structures and processes, gives students the ability to influence policies and processes.

Teaching is a process of engagement with students to enable their understanding and application of knowledge, concepts, processes, skills and values. It includes designing the curriculum, content selection, delivery, assessment, reflection and continuous improvement.

1   Background and Context

1.1   The primary responsibility for internal quality assurance and promotion in higher education lies with the institution. Owing to their direct influence on students, higher education institutions (HEIs) have a primary obligation of ensuring quality provision of higher education to their students and are accordingly in the first instance responsible for creating an institutional quality assurance culture and implementing internal quality assurance and promotion measures. Quality assurance agencies provide some form of validation of the internal quality assurance and promotion measures put in place and implemented by higher education institutions. They also monitor internal quality assurance and promotion mechanisms against appropriate standards and benchmarks.

1.2   The Education White Paper 3 of 1997[1] identified quality assurance as one of the steering mechanisms for the transformation of higher education, together with planning and funding. This White Paper and the promulgation of the Higher Education Act 101 of 1997 resulted in greater attention being paid to quality assurance and promotion in the higher education sector.

1.3   The Council on Higher Education (CHE), through its permanent sub-committee, the Higher Education Quality Committee (HEQC), is mandated to promote quality and quality assurance in the higher education sector in terms of the Higher Education Act (Act 101 of 1997) as amended, and the National Qualifications Framework Act (Act 67 of 2008), as amended. In fulfilling this mandate, the CHE undertakes various quality promotion initiatives to advance quality provision within the South African higher education sector, including the development of guidelines and standards to assist HEIs to institutionalise quality.

1.4   In response to requests from HEIs and the relevant stakeholders, the CHE has, over the years, developed various Good Practice Guides to assist with the practical implementation of quality assurance and promotion requirements and some of these include:

- *A Good Practice Guide for Quality Management of Research* (2006);
- *Work-Integrated Learning: Good Practice Guide (2011);*[2]
- *Distance Higher Education Programmes in a Digital Era: Good Practice Guide* (2014);

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[1] Department of Education. 1997. Education White Paper 3: A Programme for the Transformation of Higher Education. Pretoria: Government Printers.

[2] See also HEQC. 2006. Service Learning in the Curriculum. A Resource for Higher Education Institutions.

- *A Good Practice Guide for the Quality Management of Short Courses offered Outside of The Higher Education Qualifications Sub-Framework* (2016); and
- *Norms of Certification for the Higher Education Qualifications Sub-Framework* (HEQSF) in 2020.

The Good Practice Guide on *Student Engagement in Quality Assurance and Promotion in Higher Education*, hereinafter referred to as the Good Practice Guide, which focuses on ways in which to optimise student participation in quality assurance and promotion processes, is the latest addition to the list of guidelines documents produced by the CHE.

1.5 In recent decades, educational theory and policy have evolved towards an inclusive, student-centred system which emphasises the importance of student participation in all matters affecting their educational experience. The need to involve students in higher education quality assurance and promotion processes has caught the attention of both governments and HEIs nationally and internationally, the focus being primarily on how to involve students efficiently and effectively in such issues.[3]

1.6 The 2016 *#FeesMustFall* campaign waged by students added weight to the calls for quality higher education in South Africa and for the student voice to be heard and recognised in higher education matters.

1.7 Research has shown that active student participation promotes quality[4] and when students actively participate in quality assurance and promotion processes as implementation partners, they develop a sense of ownership and a desire to see the processes succeed.

1.8 In addition, incorporating the student voice in institutional policy formulation practices guards against potential curriculum and assessment bias arising from, among other things, a failure to consider different educational backgrounds and learning environments; relevant and contextual learning material; methods of receiving information, learning barriers and learner support needs; and appropriate assessment methodologies.[5]

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[3] The body of literature is extensive: see, for example, Alexander W Asten (1984). Student Involvement: A Developmental Theory for Higher Education. Republished in *Journal of College Student Development* (1999) 40 (5): 518-529; Trowler, V (2010). Student engagement literature review. Yor: Higher Education Academy; Daniel C Bishop, Karin Crawford, Nicola Jenner, Natalie Liddle, Esther Russell & Mark Woollard (2012) Engaging students in quality processes, Enhancing Learning in the Social Sciences, 4:3, 1-6, DOI: 10.11120/elss.2012.04030009; Masahiro Tanaka (2019). Student Engagement and Quality Assurance in Higher Education, International Collaborations for the Enhancement of Learning. Routledge.

[4] Palomares (2014). Involving students in quality assurance. University News.

[5] The Quality Assurance Agency for Higher Education, QAA Briefing: 'Student Engagement in Quality Assurance and Enhancement' July 2018; David Sadker. Some Practical Ideas for Confronting Curricular Bias. https://www.sadker.org/curricularbias.html#:~:text=Curriculum%20may%20perpetuate%20bias%20by%20pre

1.9   Studies have also shown that there is a correlation between student engagement and student success.[6] When involved in quality assurance and promotion processes, students are in a better position to reflect on and analyse the quality of their educational programmes, and the quality of teaching they receive; as well as to make quality decisions regarding their future endeavours or goals.

1.10   Student engagement has accordingly been linked to various educational success factors such as engendering social growth and development, a sense of inclusiveness and belonging, improvements in behaviour and values, acquisition of knowledge and skills, and work-readiness.[7] This connection with student success makes student engagement in quality assurance and promotion an important tool in achieving higher education goals.

1.11   Despite the benefits associated with student participation in quality assurance and promotion, local and international studies show that student engagement in quality assurance and promotion is minimal in most HEIs;[8] and where student engagement is undertaken, it is often superficial or tokenistic.

1.12   A baseline study commissioned by the HEQC in 2009[9] highlighted numerous challenges constraining proper student engagement in quality assurance; some of which include lack of knowledge on quality assurance processes, inaccessibility to quality assurance policies and processes, and lack of clarity on the roles that students should play in quality assurance and promotion.

1.13   Participants at the 2020 International Quality Promotion Conference organised by the CHE on the theme '*Enhancing academic success through the involvement of students in Quality Assurance and Promotion in Higher Education*' expressed similar views. They identified a lack of student engagement in quality assurance and promotion processes, lack of engagement platforms, lack of proper engagement skills or techniques,

senting%20only%20one,and%20distort%20complex%20issues%20by%20omitting%20different%20perspective s., accessed 18 April 2022; Intercultural Development Research Association (2016). Forms of Bias in Textbooks and Instructional Materials. https://www.idra.org/equity-assistance-center/forms-bias-textbooks-instructional-materials/, accessed 18 April 2022;

[6] De Villiers, B. and Werner, A. (2018). The relationship between student engagement and academic success. *Journal for New Generation Sciences* 14 (1): 36; Wawrzynski, M.R; Heck, M.R; and Remley, C.T. (2012). Student engagement in South African Higher Education. *International Research* 53 (1): 106-123.

[7] Bowden, Tickle and Naumann (2019). The four pillars of tertiary student engagement and success: a holistic measurement approach. *Studies in Higher Education.* https://doi.org/10.1080/0375079.2019.1672647.

[8] Bovill, C., Cook-Sather, A.A. and Felten, P. (2011). Students as co-creators of teaching approaches, course design and curricula: Implications for academic developers. *International Journal for Academic Development*: Doi 10.1080/1360144X.2011.568690.

[9] Higher Education Quality Committee (HEQC). (2009). A Baseline Study on Student Participation in Quality Assurance. A final Report of Research Work undertaken by Chiroro, P.M. & Shabalala, N. on behalf of the CHE. Pretoria. CHE.

students not recognised as co-partners, and a failure to implement student feedback as concerns that needed to be addressed.

1.14 Literature suggests that the lack of proper guidelines to direct the processes on student engagement in quality assurance and promotion within HEIs lies at the root of the above-mentioned challenges. The absence of guidelines has also constrained meaningful engagement with students in quality assurance and promotion processes. This *Good Practice Guide* addresses that gap.

2   Purpose of the Good Practice Guide

2.1 As alluded to in the previous section, students are not adequately engaged in quality assurance and promotion processes. This *Good Practice Guide* therefore aims to mainstream the involvement of students in quality assurance and promotion processes in HEIs in South Africa.

2.2 The Good Practice Guide furthermore gives direction regarding the practical aspects of engaging students in quality and quality assurance processes in HEIs.

3   Scope

3.1 This Good Practice Guide covers student engagement in quality assurance and promotion relating to the provision of in higher education services linked to teaching and learning, research, community engagement and some associated student support services activities that directly affect student success.

3.2 The Guide applies to both public and private higher education service providers, but does not cover student engagement in quality assurance and promotion in other sectors of the post-school education and training (PSET) system.

3.3 The Good Practice Guide presents principles and good practices that HEIs, quality assurance agencies, professional bodies and other role players in the quality assurance and promotion space could adopt to ensure constructive and meaningful engagement with students in their quality assurance and promotion activities.

4   Approach

4.1 The good practices presented herein are informed by desktop and/or literature-based research on student engagement practices locally and internationally, followed by some stakeholder input. The research identified

student engagement practices that have worked effectively elsewhere and can be adopted or adapted easily in South Africa to produce positive outcomes. In a sense, the good practices presented herein have been benchmarked locally, regionally and globally.

4.2 The Good Practice Guide approaches the subject matter from two perspectives:

4.2.1 The first is that the primary responsibility for assuring the quality of provision of higher education lies with higher education institutions themselves, and therefore internal quality assurance and promotion processes are of critical importance. External quality assurance should, in essence, serve only as a means of validating internal processes.

4.2.2 The second perspective is that students are the primary beneficiaries of higher education, and therefore their experience of higher education is a good determinant of the effectiveness and fitness of purpose of their respective higher education institutions. Consequently, engaging with and responding to the student voice improves students' educational experiences.[10]

5 Regulatory Frameworks

5.1 This Good Practice Guide is anchored in the Higher Education Act (Act 101 of 1997), as amended, the National Qualifications Framework Act of 2008 (Act 67 of 2008), as amended and the Constitution of the Republic of South Africa (Act No. 108 of 1996).

5.2 Furthermore, the Good Practice has links to the following policy documents:

- The National Commission on Higher Education's Policy Framework for Transformation (1996);
- The Education White Paper 3 of 1997: A Programme for the Transformation of Higher Education;
- The National Plan on Higher Education (2001);
- The White Paper for Post-School Education and Training (2013); and
- The National Plan for Post-School Education and Training (2020).

5.3 The Good Practice Guide should be read in conjunction with the following CHE policies, frameworks and documents:

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[10] The Quality Assurance Agency for Higher Education, QAA Briefing: 'Student Engagement in Quality Assurance and Enhancement' July 2018.

- The Higher Education Quality Committee Founding Document (2001);
- Quality Assurance in Higher Education (n.d.);
- A Baseline Study on Student Participation in Quality Assurance. A Final Report (2009);
- Framework for the Institutional Quality Enhancement in the Second Period of Quality Assurance (2014);
- Quality Enhancement Project: The Process for Public Higher Education Institutions (2014);
- Report on the Quality Promotion Conference (2020);
- *Kagisano* No. 12: Student Governance and Engagement for Academic Success, and
- A Quality Assurance Framework (QAF) for Higher Education in South Africa (2021).

6   Unpacking Quality, Quality Assurance and Quality Promotion in Higher Education

6.1   In the South African Higher Education system, quality assurance should not be viewed in isolation from transformational imperatives, and a failure to address issues such as curriculum transformation, social justice, access, accountability, and funding[11] will impact negatively on the quality of education that students receive. Transformation is therefore a quality issue, and quality is a transformation issue.

6.2   The CHE views quality in terms of transformation, fitness of purpose, fitness for purpose, and value for money:[12]

6.2.1   Transformation is about the redress of past injustices, unfair discrimination in education, training and employment opportunities.

6.2.2   Fitness of purpose speaks to the broader goals and purpose of education such as, whether institutions are contributing to national aspirations while fitness for purpose relates to the institution's vision, mission and strategic and academic planning in relation to diversity and differentiation.[13]

6.2.3   Value for money relates to the full range of higher education purposes as well as the transformational need to capacitate individual learners to promote their own social and economic development and that of others.[14]

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[11] Strydom, A. H., Lategan, L.O.K, Muller, A. (1997). Enhancing Institutional Self-Evaluation and Quality in South African Higher Education: National and International Perspectives.
[12] Higher Education Quality Committee (HEQC, 2001) Founding Document.
[13] CHE, (2021). A Quality Assurance Framework (QAF) for Higher Education in South Africa.
[14] Higher Education Quality Committee (HEQC, 2001) Founding Document.

The overarching goal of maintaining quality is to assist students in achieving academic success.

6.3   A quality objective will not be achieved without appropriate quality assurance implementation frameworks, mechanisms, processes and procedures to assure that the specified standards or minimum requirements of quality in education are met. At the same time, for quality to be realised, enabling conditions have to be created, which is what quality promotion entails. Quality promotion therefore goes hand in hand with quality assurance.

7   Quality Assurance and Promotion Processes in Higher Education at National Level (EQA)

A Quality Assurance Agency typically accredits either institutions or qualifications/programmes offered by institutions in terms of a set of quality criteria. It also carries out institutional audits and national reviews within the higher education sector. The Quality Assurance Agency also develops national or regional quality assurance and promotion regimes including the frameworks that articulate the criteria, standards and the attendant processes. It also works to create conducive environment to promote quality within higher education institutions.

7.1   Quality Assurance Agency within the Higher Education Sector

7.1.1   The primary Quality Assurance Agency for the higher education sector in South Africa is the Council on Higher Education (CHE) which discharges this responsibility through a permanent sub-committee, the Higher Education Quality Committee (HEQC).[15]

7.1.2   The CHE carries out its quality assurance mandate as stipulated by Higher Education Act (Act 101 of 1997) as amended, and the National Qualifications Framework Act (Act 67 of 2008), as amended.

7.1.3   The HEQC's mandate includes, amongst other things, quality promotion, institutional audits and programme accreditation. The CHE is also mandated to develop and implement policy for quality assurance; ensure the integrity and credibility of quality assurance; and ensure that such quality assurance as is necessary for the Higher Education Qualifications Sub-Framework (HEQSF) is undertaken. It also conducts capacity development and training to promote and sustain this mandate.

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[15] The Higher Education Act (Act 101 of 1997).

7.1.4   The CHE determines policy and procedures for the quality assurance work of the CHE and has final responsibility for approving audit and accreditation reports.

7.1.5   The CHE also advises the Minister responsible for Higher Education and Training on all matters pertaining to higher education, publishing information regarding developments in higher education, including reports on the state of higher education, on a regular basis; and promoting the access of students to higher education institutions.

7.2   CHE Quality Assurance Processes

The mechanisms by which CHE assures quality in higher education involves conducting programme accreditation, institutional audits/reviews and national reviews. With the approval of the Quality Assurance Framework (QAF) in 2020 and the preparation for its implementation in 2024, the processes will be amended and renewed.

7.2.1   **Programme Accreditation**

Programme accreditation entails the evaluation of higher education academic programmes in accordance with the CHE's programme accreditation criteria, which stipulate the minimum requirements for programme input, process, output and impact and review. The process involves the following:

(a)   An institution applies for the accreditation of a new programme or qualification and provides a detailed implementation plan indicating how the programme will fit into the institution's approved Programme Qualification Mix (PQM) or into the strategic planning of the private HEI.

(b)   Peer academics conduct an initial evaluation of an application for a new programme and compile a report for the HEQC's Accreditation Committee, which in turn evaluates the material and prepares a report for the HEQC's consideration.

(c)   The HEQC will accredit a programme if it meets the specified criteria. Programmes which comply substantially, but not fully, may be accredited subject to conditions; while programmes which fail to meet the criteria will not be accredited.

(d)   The HEQC may conduct site visits to an institution to ascertain how the institution is fulfilling the criteria in practice. Should an institution fail to meet the criteria, it will normally have an

opportunity to make the required adjustments, after which it must resubmit the application for further review.

7.2.2 **Institutional Audits/Reviews**

An institutional audit/review is a quality assurance process for evaluating the appropriateness, coherence and effectiveness of an institution's quality management system in light of that institution's identity, nature, context and strategic goals. In broad terms, the process involves the following:

(a)   Institutions prepare Self-Evaluation Reports (SERs) with supporting documentation in which they reflect on their practices against a set of Standards approved by the HEQC. The SER also responds to the nationally set standards as outlined in the Framework and Manual for institutional Audits, as approved by the CHE.[16]

(b)   HEQC audit panels conduct site visits to institutions to verify documentation and to interview staff, students and relevant stakeholders.

(c)   Institutional audit panels evaluate the SERs against Standards and prepare reports outlining their findings and detailing their recommendations for action by the institution concerned.

(d)   The HEQC reviews and confirms all panel reports before releasing them to institutions.

(e)   Institutions normally have a set time to submit improvement plans detailing the actions they would take to address or implement the institutional audit panel recommendations.

7.2.3 **National Reviews**

The unit of analysis is either the qualification, programme or theme based on a sector review. In broad terms, the process involves the following:

(a)   To guide the review process, institutions prepare SERs and portfolios of evidence according to the HEQC's standards and guideline documents.

(b)   HEQC review panels consisting of external experts conduct institutional site visits, engaging with relevant stakeholders, to

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[16] The Framework for Institutional Audits (2021) contains such a set of Standards. These might, however, be adjusted as the QAF is implemented. HEQC audit panels conduct site visits to institutions to verify documentation and to interview staff, students and relevant stakeholders.

assess the functioning of the qualification, and the extent to which these are aligned to national standards and guidelines.

(c) The review panels provide reports for each institution detailing their findings, which the HEQC reviews and confirms before releasing them to the respective institutions.

(d) Institutions meeting the standards are accredited to continue offering the programme/s or qualification/s under review. A failure to meet the set standards will result either in the HEQC withdrawing accreditation, in which event the institution may not offer the programme after a stipulated date or placing the institution on notice to take remedial action as outlined in an approved improvement plan to meet certain conditions by a stipulated date, failing which accreditation will be withdrawn.

7.3 Professional Bodies Serving as Quality Assurance Agencies

7.3.1 Without undermining the CHE's overarching oversight and accreditation prerogatives, certain professional bodies serve as Quality Assurance Agencies entrusted with setting and maintaining standards within respect to the education and training for candidates to be registered to practise in their respective professions.

7.3.2 These professional bodies derive their competence through statutory authority or through SAQA recognition as professional bodies,[17] or both.[18]

7.3.3 The processes of professional bodies serving as Quality Assurance Agencies do not replace those of the HEQC. Professional bodies monitor the quality of vocational or professional offerings to ensure quality in practice. Professional bodies enable persons to register and practise as professional practitioners in the relevant field.

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[17] See also "Policy It Criteria for Recognising a Professional Body and Registering a Professional Designation for the Purposes of the National Qualifications Framework Act, Act 67 of 2008, June 2012" (GN 585, GG No. 35547, 27 July 2021).

[18] Statutory bodies performing accreditation functions include: (a) the Health Professions Council of South Africa; (a) the South African Nursing Council; the South African Pharmacy Council; (b) the Council for the Built Environment and the Councils it coordinates; (c) the Engineering Council of South Africa; (d) the South African Council for the Quantity Surveying Profession; (e) the South African Council for Social Service Professions; and (f) the South African Veterinary Council (g) South African Dental Technicians Council (SADTC). The South African Institute of Chartered Accountants is a voluntary, not-for-profit organisation, recognised by SAQA and the Independent Regulatory Board for Auditors to perform monitoring and accreditation functions; while the Legal Practice Council and the South African Council for Natural Scientific Professions are statutory regulating bodies which may consult and advise institutions, the CHE and SAQA, but do not accredit academic programmes.

7.3.4 Professional bodies serving as Quality Assurance Agencies determine their own standards and methods of monitoring, assessment and accreditation. Notwithstanding differences in nomenclature and implementation, these methods are usually similar to CHE's accreditation process.

7.3.5 Unless specific circumstances warrant otherwise, professional body evaluations normally take place every five years.

7.3.6 The processes followed by professional bodies evidence the following common features:

(a) The relevant agency normally determines when an evaluation process takes place, although institutions may also apply in writing for the accreditation of new programmes.

(b) Institutions prepare SERs containing standard information on the education and training programmes to be evaluated and how they meet the Agency-prescribed standards and conditions. The Agency may request institutions to furnish additional information.

(c) Evaluation panels of experts in the field conduct site visits to verify the information in the SERs and to assess facilities and learning and teaching conditions. Various stakeholders are interviewed during such site visits.

(d) The evaluation panels prepare reports which are reviewed by the relevant committees within the agency.

(e) The agency may grant the application, in which event the programme is accredited as leading to the professional registration of candidates; grant conditional or provisional accreditation and impose conditions for continued provision of the education or training in question; or reject the application.

(f) In addition, as part of their continuous monitoring processes, Agencies may require institutions to submit annual reports.

8 Good Practices for Student Engagement in Internal Quality Assurance and Promotion Processes (IQA)

Within institutions, quality assurance takes place throughout the academic value chain, including:

- Policy development and management mechanisms;
- Staff recruitment and promotion;
- Curriculum development and review;
- Selection of students for admission;

- Teaching and learning processes and support systems for students and staff;
- Quality research;
- Meaningful community engagement programmes;
- Student evaluation of curricula and input on staff performance; and
- Academic reviews and audits.[19]

Quality in each of these areas is therefore a fundamental tenet of academic success.

8.1 Aspects of Internal Quality Assurance

8.1.1 Participation of students in their own learning and assessment is conceptually different from the participation of students in quality assurance and quality promotion systems and processes as shown in the statements that follow.

8.1.2 Participation in the development and revision of learning programmes, student support systems and in assessment processes focuses on the micro-environment. Such participation expresses the principle of student-centred learning and is reflected in the skills, attributes and other outcomes that a particular approach has on individual students.

8.1.3 Participation in quality assurance systems and processes, and its application focuses on the macro-environment and involves strategic management and oversight of quality. In such matters the student voice is normally articulated through membership of governance, planning management and oversight structures; and participation in internal and external quality assurance monitoring, review and audit processes. For an effective student voice, student participation should be at all tiers – departmental, faculty, Senate and Senate sub-committees, institutional planning and quality assurance committees, and Council.

8.2 Student Participation in Student-centred Learning and Teaching, Research and Community Engagement

8.2.1 **Governance and Policy Formulation**

Principle

Institutions should value inclusive practices. Student engagement should be genuine, not tokenistic, and integral to institutional culture. Incorporating student voice in determining institutional culture and in institutional policy formulation gives effect to an holistic, inclusive,

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[19] Materu, P. (2007). Higher Education Quality Assurance in Sub-Saharan Africa. Status, Challenges, Opportunities, and Promising Practices. World Bank Working Paper No. 124.

student-centred approach to students' academic endeavour and promotes a sense of ownership in the academic process.

Good Practices

(a) Student representatives participate effectively in structures overseeing learning and teaching, research and community engagement facilities as well as student support services to ensure that available resources are fit for purpose and accessible to students.

(b) Institutions develop and implement policies ensuring that academic and research programmes are designed to encourage students to participate actively and effectively in the learning process; and that the assessment of students reflects this approach, particularly in formative assessment processes.

(c) Faculties establish student faculty councils or similar structures comprising student representatives, and in response to the need for diversity of views, preferably from each academic programme and across academic years of study.

(d) Students are represented on faculty boards as well as faculty and institutional learning and teaching committees.

8.2.2 Curriculum Development

Principle

Incorporating the student voice when developing curricula guards against potential curriculum and assessment bias arising from, among other things, a failure to consider different educational backgrounds and learning environments; relevant and contextual learning material; methods of receiving information, learning barriers and learner support needs; and appropriate assessment methodologies.

Good Practices

(a) Academic staff are normally responsible for curriculum planning and design.

(b) Institutions implement inclusive practices in which curriculum development takes cognisance of the needs and expectations of the different stakeholders involved in the higher education sector and the economy at large.

(c) When new programmes are developed, or existing programmes are reviewed, students provide input on aspects such as content, resources, delivery methods and assessment from the start of the process.

(d) For effective promotion of their learning and teaching environment, students are trained in issues of curriculum development, self- and peer assessment practices, course and module evaluation processes, and the roles they are required to play in these various processes.

8.2.3 Review of Programmes

Principle

Having experienced the learning and teaching processes first-hand, students are well-placed to participate in the review of existing academic programmes; and to provide information regarding current content and delivery, the effectiveness of associated student support programmes and the quality of the intended course outcomes.

Good Practices

(a) To ensure currency and relevance of curriculum content, effective service provision and a supportive learning and teaching environment, good quality assurance practices include the regular internal monitoring, review and revision of academic programmes.

(b) Student participation is seen as integral to review processes and student representatives serve in all structures involved in such activities.

(c) Students are involved at the onset of processes to ascertain their experiences of current content and delivery, the effectiveness of associated student support programmes and the quality of the intended course outcomes. Thereafter students participate in the institutional processes leading to the adoption of the revised programmes.

(d) Regular monitoring practices provide opportunities for students to submit information regarding suitability, relevance and quality of their curricula and the provision of learning and teaching services;[20] and to participate in analysing such information and planning any follow-up activities.

8.2.4 RPL Assessment

Principle

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[20] Such opportunities may include but are not limited to satisfaction surveys.

Student participation in RPL assessment practices enhances insight of both students and staff, guards against inappropriate assessment methodologies and promotes fairness.

Good Practices

(a) Student representatives are included in committees that are responsible for dealing with RPL assessment issues.
(b) Students participate in the development of assessment tools for the prospective students' portfolio of evidence and such assessment tools should reflect inputs from students.
(c) Both academics and students are trained in issues of RPL assessment, such as what should be included in the portfolio of evidence, how to translate the knowledge acquired informally or non-formally against bodies of knowledge acquired through a structured formal education system among other skills.

8.2.5 Assessment

Principle

Student participation in assessment practices enhances insight of both students and staff, guards against potential assessment bias resulting from inappropriate assessment methodologies and promotes fairness.

Good Practices

(a) Students have opportunities to participate in the formulation of the assessment strategies, standards and processes.
(b) Students have opportunities to comment upon their participation in the assessment processes which feedback is used to improve the students' learning experiences.

8.2.6 Programme and/or Lecturer Evaluations

Principle

Student feedback, through appropriate channels, on their experiences of curricula and teaching methodologies serves to improve institutional learning and teaching service delivery.

Good Practices

(a) Appropriate processes for student evaluation of courses in teaching and learning provision are in place and implemented on a regular basis.

(b) Students have regular opportunities, through evaluation questionnaires and/or other forms of feedback, to comment upon their learning experiences.

(c) Such feedback is provided for lecturer and/or course development purposes and does not serve a punitive function. Lecturers may however use such information in applications for promotion, where applicable.

(d) The outcomes of such questionnaires and the lecturers' responses thereto serve before departmental and faculty quality assurance structures.

(e) Survey participants are presented with feedback on action plans emanating from the evaluation processes.

8.2.7 Articulation and parity of esteem

Principle

Student perspectives on issues pertaining to articulation and parity of esteem add value in providing accurate information for decision-making processes and for promoting quality education.

Good Practices

(a) Student structures are involved in consultations regarding articulation processes between programmes and qualifications within and/or across departments and/or faculties and institutions.

(b) Institutions provide appropriate training for students to participate effectively at all levels of engagement.

(c) Students provide inputs and/or comments regarding the issues pertaining to articulation and parity of esteem.

8.2.8 Research

Principle

Student participation in the governance of research practices enhances insight of both students and staff, promotes fair and equitable practices and improves research integrity.

Good Practices

(a) Students participate in the formulation of research strategies and niche areas.

(b) Students participate in the development of standards and processes for promoting ethical research and maintaining research integrity.

(c) Students participate in the development of student-orientated research policies such as Higher Degrees Guides and postgraduate supervision policies and the monitoring of such policies.

(d) Students have opportunities to comment upon their participation in research projects and the quality of research supervision which feedback is used to improve institutional research practices and students' learning experiences.

8.2.9 Community Engagement

Principle

Student participation in the governance of community engagement practices promotes relevant and meaningful engagement practices and improves student work-integrated and service-learning experiences.

Good Practices

(a) Students have opportunities to participate in the formulation of the assessment strategies, standards and processes.

(b) Students have opportunities to comment upon their participation in community engagement projects which feedback is used to improve students' learning experiences.

8.2.10 Support Services and Resources Critical for Student Success

Principle

Inadequate resource and support services provision could potentially disrupt an institution's mainstream academic agenda. Students' insight into how they experience educational support structures and processes will improve the quality assurance processes of such services.

Good Practices

(a) Institutions ensure that Student Support Services Councils function optimally and report directly into Governance and Executive Management structures.

(b) Student representatives participate actively in residence management and oversight structures.

(c) Student representatives are active in overseeing structures providing physical, emotional and social health support to students.

(d) Students participate actively in institutional structures and processes that monitor and assure the quality of student support services.

(e) Student participation in Management and Quality Assurance of operational units such as Divisions, Departments and the like are included in managers' performance contracts.

8.3 Student Participation in Internal Quality Assurance and Promotion

8.3.1 Governance and Policy Formulation processes

Principle

Student engagement is integral to a progressive higher education culture. Incorporating the student voice in institutional policy formulation and implementation promotes quality, creates a sense of ownership and a desire to see the processes succeed. Institutions therefore promote an inclusive, student-centred approach to quality assurance.

Good Practices

(a) Institutions endeavour to cultivate, nurture and maintain a culture of student engagement among all within the institutions.

(b) Regular reflection, monitoring and evaluation of the authenticity and effectiveness of the student participation should be done.

(c) Student representatives participate in structures evaluating and promoting quality assurance processes for all aspects of student learning and progression.

(d) Students have opportunities to provide information regarding suitability, relevance and quality of their curricula and the provision of learning and teaching services; and to participate in analysing such information and planning any follow-up activities.

(e) Institutions establish avenues for student engagement with quality assurance practitioners with clear communication channels and rules of engagement.

8.3.2 Determining Standards

Principle

Student perspectives and insights add value in ensuring that appropriately focused standards and processes are developed.

Incorporating the student voice in setting standards for evaluation purposes promotes the formulation of standards that are fit for purpose, creates a sense of ownership and enhances an inclusive, student-centred approach to quality assurance.

Good Practices

(a) Institutions may determine their own quality assurance objectives and standards, in line with their respective Visions, Missions and Goals, and student participate in setting these objectives and standards.

(b) Student structures are involved in processes and criteria for internal reviews of departments and/or programmes.

(c) Student structures are involved in validation processes for programme standards.

(d) Student structures are involved in preparing the SERs which institutions submit for external evaluation purposes.

(e) Student structures have access to and are able to provide feedback on all quality assurance reports and improvement plans.

8.3.3 Participating in Higher Education Qualifications Sub-Framework (HEQSF) Reviews and Programme Qualification Mix (PQM)

Principle

Students' understanding and appreciation of the Higher Education Qualifications Sub-Framework (HEQSF) and the Programme Qualification Mix (PQM) of their respective institutions constitute the essential foundation for their effective engagement on issues of quality assurance and promotion.

Good Practices

(a) Students are represented in institutional committees that are involved in the review of programmes and qualifications.

(b) Student structures and/or student representatives are afforded the opportunity to provide inputs and/or comments in the review of programmes and/ or qualifications before their adoption and implementation.

(c) The categorisation of the programmes according to the fields/sub-fields of study as per the DHET requirements[21] is the duty of programme developers.

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[21] Classification of Educational Study Matter (CESM) categories.

8.3.4 Participation in Institutional Audits and Reviews

<u>Principle</u>

For relevant and effective outcomes, quality assurance processes should acknowledge the student voice. Student perspectives and insights in monitoring and oversight processes add value in providing accurate information for decision-making and ensuring a qualitative, reflective learning environment.

<u>Good Practices</u>

(a) All quality assurance SERs, irrespective of the level at which they are drafted, acknowledge the student voice and include inputs from undergraduate and postgraduate students, as applicable.

(b) All internal departmental or programme review and/or evaluation panels have student members.

(c) Students are represented on institutional committees participating in external review and audit processes.

(d) Student representatives participate in the development of improvement plans resulting from quality assurance processes and such plans should reflect inputs and contributions from students, as appropriate.

(e) Student structures and/or student representatives have an opportunity to comment on such plans before their adoption and implementation.

8.4 Authentic Student Participation

8.4.1 Ensuring a Representative Voice

<u>Principle</u>

An authentic student voice reflects the general will of students rather than the will of particular constituencies. Stakeholder interaction should be respectful, authentic and inclusive; and students should be free to select their representatives. For the student voice to be authentic, student representatives should have some quality assurance and promotion experience enable them to reflect perspectives of a broad spectrum of the student body and stay clear of individual and/or partisan interests.

<u>Good Practices</u>

(a) The role of elected student representatives is recognised and respected,

(b) Space is created for the articulation of perspectives from sectors within the broader student community whose voices might otherwise have been muted.

(c) While the role of SRCs as the recognised representatives of students is respected, particularly in selecting appropriately trained and experienced persons to articulate the student voice, student representatives in quality assurance and promotion processes are drawn from a wider pool of students.

(d) Persons articulating the student voice have some practical experience in quality assurance matters, having previously participated in planning and quality assurance processes or structures at departmental/faculty, Senate Learning and Teaching committees or QA committees up to Council level.

8.4.2 Communication and Feedback

Principle

Information sharing and open channels of communication within institutions and inter-institutional collaboration among student participants promote for effective student involvement in quality assurance structures and processes.

Good Practices

(a) Institutions establish clear communication channels and rules of engagement among student participants, institutional managers and quality assurance practitioners.

(b) Institutions keep student participants abreast of correspondence with External Quality Assurance Agencies and share relevant data and evaluative reports to enable students to function meaningfully at the different levels of engagement.

(c) Student collaborations with other higher education stakeholders are encouraged and institutions organise national and/or regional platforms such as seminars and/or workshops where students interact with peers and other stakeholders on issues of quality assurance and promotion.

8.4.3 Capacity Development for Effective Student Participation in IQA

Principle

Appropriate selection, training and monitoring processes promote a meaningful and effective student voice. Capacity development and appropriate resource provision are therefore vital for establishing and sustaining a stable and effective quality assurance environment and ensuring that students function effectively when participating in quality assurance processes.

Good Practices

(a) Institutions develop appropriate selection criteria for recruiting persons who provide student perspectives on panels.

(b) Students are equipped with knowledge of the quality assurance environment, and exposed to the leadership, governance and decision-making skills required within that environment. Capacity development should extend beyond current student leaders and include those aspiring to be leaders so as to nurture a new stream of student leadership to choose from when the term of office of the extant student leaders comes to an end.

(c) Institutions provide relevant training interventions for students to participate effectively in quality assurance and promotion at all levels of engagement; and preferably, student participants are empowered separately prior to participating in any training provided to panel members generally.

(d) Institutions provide students with adequate resources (equipment and facilities) to support their participation in quality assurance and promotion matters.

(e) Mentorship programmes are encouraged within institutions to help capacitate students with skills and knowledge pertaining to quality assurance and promotion.

(f) The Quality Assurance Agency conducts an annual review of all processes with the specific aim of establishing the extent to which students have participated meaningfully and effectively in the accreditation, audit and review processes and, if appropriate, to determine steps to be taken to enhance the effectiveness of student participation in quality assurance and promotion processes.

9 Good Practices for Student Engagement in External Quality Assurance and Promotion Processes (EQA)

9.1 Student Involvement in External Quality Assurance Processes

9.1.1 Governance and Strategic Decision-making

Principle

The Quality Assurance Agency sets the tone for meaningful, inclusive and mutually respectful student participation practices at all levels within the Higher Education Sector by developing an appropriate sectoral student quality assurance culture which incorporates the student voice in governance and oversight processes.

Good Practices

(a) The Quality Assurance Agency establishes a Student Advisory Committee (SAC) as a forum for inputs from students' perspectives on matters pertaining to quality assurance in the higher education sector.[22]

(b) SAC membership reflects the diversity within the student body and ensures demographic and disciplinary representativity to enable broad-ranging and authentic input.

(c) The Quality Assurance Agency establishes a national platform such as a students' forum or regional workshop for students to engage quality assurance issues and exchange ideas and experiences.

9.1.2 Setting Standards and Developing Processes

Principle

Student perspectives and insights add value in ensuring that appropriately focused standards and processes are developed. Incorporating the student voice in setting standards for evaluation purposes promotes the formulation of standards that are fit for purpose, creates a sense of ownership, and enhances an inclusive, student-centred approach to quality assurance.

Good Practices

(a) Students are members of committees responsible for setting accreditation, audit and review standards, and for determining processes.

(b) When accreditation, audit and review processes are conducted, the nature and extent to which students are involved in institutional

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[22] Where appropriate, SAC members could serve on committees and/or panels; and participate in the development of standards, processes and guidelines for audits and reviews, and the appointment of persons to evaluation panels. The SAC could also conduct surveys and other forms of research into issues affecting student learning and arrange appropriate quality assurance training for students at nationals and institutional level.

quality assurance and promotion processes is a standard assessment criterion.

9.1.3 Ensuring Effective Student Participation

<u>Principle</u>

Appropriate selection, training and monitoring processes promote a meaningful and effective voice when student representatives participate in quality assurance processes.

<u>Good Practices</u>

(a) The Quality Assurance Agency develops appropriate selection criteria for recruiting persons who provide student perspectives on panels.

(b) Preferably, student participants are empowered separately prior to participating in any training provided to panel members generally.

(c) The Quality Assurance Agency conducts an annual review of all processes with the specific aim of establishing the extent to which students have participated meaningfully and effectively in the accreditation, audit and review processes and, if appropriate, to determine steps to be taken to enhance the effectiveness of student participation in quality assurance and promotion processes.

9.2 Student Involvement in CHE Processes

9.2.1 Audit and Review Panels

<u>Principle</u>

The student voice on evaluation panels fosters a diversity of perspectives and insights and promotes quality decision-making.

<u>Good Practices</u>

(a) Student panel members are drawn from a pool of suitably qualified and experienced candidates nominated by institutions[23] through their respective student structures such as Student Representative Councils (SRCs), SRC-affiliated structures and faculty councils.

(b) Nominees undergo training before being placed in the database.

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[23] Much in the same way as institutions are currently asked to nominate candidates for consideration as panel members.

9.2.2 Audit and Review Processes

Principle

For relevant and effective outcomes, quality assurance processes should acknowledge the student voice. Student perspectives and insights in monitoring and oversight processes add value in ensuring that appropriate monitoring and information-seeking processes are developed and implemented.

Good Practices

(a) In addition to the institutional SER, students[24] are invited, should they so wish, to report on the quality of students' learning experience at the institution as well as their experience of and participation in quality assurance practices within the institution.

(b) During site visits students have an opportunity to engage separately with the evaluation panel in a confidential setting.

(c) Students are part of the evaluation panel's introductory briefing and report back sessions.

(d) Students are involved in follow-up activities subsequent to the review process. Follow-up reports describe their involvement in drafting the improvement plan and its implementation.

9.3 Student Involvement in the Quality Assurance Practices of Professional Bodies

Principle

Student representation in quality assurance and promotion structures ensures that student voice is incorporated in governance and decision-making processes.

Good Practices

(a) Professional bodies consider the extent to which the student voice is incorporated into their quality assurance governance and decision-making structures.

(b) Professional bodies ensure that student representatives or recent graduates in the field form part of their structures tasked with the development of standards, processes and guidelines for reviews and evaluations.

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[24] Through Student Representative Councils or other appropriate bodies.

(c)   Professional bodies ensure that student representatives or recent graduates in the field form part of the panels performing the external quality assurance functions on their behalf and that such members are capacitated to participate fully as panel members.

10   Roles and Responsibilities of Role Players in the Implementation of the Good Practice Guide

10.1   Status of the Good Practice Guide

10.1.1 The Good Practice Guide expresses some fundamental principles and practices which Quality Assurance Agencies and institutions within the Higher Education Sector should consider when designing and assessing their quality assurance policies and practices; and determining the extent to which the student voice should be reflected within such policies and practices.

10.1.2 The Good Practice Guide is not exhaustive. Agencies and institutions are free to tailor the principles and guidelines to their own contexts. In a dynamic environment, other ways of promoting student participation will inevitably emerge.

10.2   Role Player Responsibilities

10.2.1 All participants in internal and external quality assurance and promotion processes will endeavour to give effect to the principles and guidelines for student participation as set out in the Good Practice Guide and align their policies and processes accordingly.

10.2.2 All participants will regularly review the implementation of the Good Practice Guide and provide feedback to their respective governing structures. In addition, all SERs should contain a section on the successes and challenges regarding the Guide's implementation.

10.2.3 The CHE will offer appropriate support to institutions regarding the implementation of the Guide.

10.2.4 External Quality Assurance Agencies and Institutions will use the Guide when designing and implementing their quality assurance and promotion policies and processes.

10.2.5 Professional bodies will ensure that their quality assurance and accreditation agencies adhere to the Guide when engaging students in quality assurance and promotion matters.

10.2.6 Students and student representatives will acquaint themselves with the Guide's contents to ensure effective contributions as co-constructors in the issues pertaining to quality assurance and promotion.

10.2.7 The CHE will review the Good Practice Guide if need arises, including needs necessitated by changes in legislation and national regulatory frameworks. Those who have input to make would be welcome to contact the CHE email address: MHEQSF@che.ac.za