



COUNCIL ON HIGHER EDUCATION

History and Trajectories: A Brief Overview

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COUNCIL ON HIGHER EDUCATION



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Vision

Mission & Values

■ **Vision**

To be a dynamic organisation contributing to a transformed, equitable, and quality higher education and training system in South Africa.

■ **Mission**

As the independent statutory quality council for South African higher education, the CHE

- Leads and manages quality assurance,
- Researches and monitors trends and developments,
- Initiates critical discourse on contemporary higher education issues
- Provides advice to the Minister on strategy and policy.

■ **Values**

In pursuit of its vision and mission the CHE is committed to and guided by the following values:

- Social justice
- Quality
- Integrity
- Accountability



Origins in Legislation in a **Democratic South Africa**



South Africa embraced democracy in 1994, bringing an end to many years of oppressive colonial and apartheid rule. A priority of the new democratic government involved the dismantling of apartheid policies, processes, practices and structures and to begin the difficult work of building a unified, equitable and successful country. The development of new legislation, including in higher education, underpinned by an enabling Constitution was one of the first steps. Within this context, the Council on Higher Education (CHE) was established by the Higher Education Act 101 of 1997 as an independent statutory body. The Act ascribed two major areas of responsibility in the mandate of the CHE.

The first mandate is to advise the Minister of Higher Education, Science and Innovation (the Minister of Education at that time) on all matters of higher education. The advisory function was intended to assist in furthering the goals of equity and quality in the system. Moreover, it was intended to assist in forming a quality higher education system that responds to economic and social development needs, while contributing to the public good. From inception, the CHE adopted an evidence-based approach to the advice that it provides, based on the research and monitoring work that it undertakes.

The second mandate of the CHE is the establishment and management of an external quality assurance system for higher education, to be carried out through its permanent committee, the Higher Education Quality Committee (HEQC).

The South African Qualifications Authority (SAQA) Act 58 of 1995 deemed the CHE to be the Education and Training Quality Assurance (ETQA) body for Higher Education. The National Qualifications Framework (NQF) Act 67 of 2008 replaced the SAQA Act and changed the ETQA function by replacing the ETQAs for the various sectors with three Quality Councils (QCs): Umalusi, the Quality Council for Trades and Occupations (QCTO) and the CHE. This new status of the CHE as a QC bestowed the further responsibility of managing the Higher Education Qualifications Sub-Framework (HEQSF), a sub-framework of the National Qualifications Framework (NQF).

In 2021, the Minister of Higher Education and Training requested the CHE to incorporate an additional mandate to its functions that involves sectoral oversight of transformation. The CHE has subsequently conceptualised an approach that involves integrating and implementing this function within its research, monitoring and advice function, and within its quality assurance function, and is beginning to implement this function.

The CHE:

Plans, Places and People

The Council on Higher Education (CHE) was established in May 1998. In its first annual report in 1988/89, its stated mission was to contribute to the development of a higher education system characterised by equity, quality, responsiveness to economic and social development needs, and effective and efficient provision and management. The CHE sought to make this contribution by providing informed, considered, independent and strategic advice on higher education issues to the Minister of Education through the quality assurance activities of its Higher Education Quality Committee (HEQC); through publications – including an annual report to parliament which analysed the state of, and challenges facing, higher education; and through the broader dissemination of information and through conferences and workshops on developments in higher education.



Prof. Wiseman Nkhulu, CHE
Chairperson, 1999-2002



Prof. Hugh Africa, HEQC
Chairperson, 2001 – 2009



Mr Saki Macozoama, CHE
Chairperson, 2002 - 2007

- At its establishment in May 1998, secretariat services were provided by the Development Bank of South Africa until March 1999. From March to May 1999, secretariat services were provided by the Education Policy Unit based at the University of the Western Cape.
- The first Council, under the chairpersonship of Professor Wiseman Nkhulu, took up office in 1998. It comprised 20 members, 13 appointed by the Minister, 7 ex-officio members and made provision for 3 co-opted members.
- Professor Saleem Badat was appointed as the first Chief Executive Officer of the CHE and assumed duty on 1 June 1999, together with a temporary administrator, Ms Charmaine Kakaza, and the organisation was based in offices leased from the Western Cape Tertiary Institutions Trust in Cape Town.
- Later in 1999, the CHE offices were established on the first floor of Sol Plaatje Building, 123 Schoeman Street, Pretoria.
- An Interim HEQC was established and held its first meeting in June 1999. Dr Mala Singh was seconded from the National Research Foundation for a period of three years as the Executive Director (CHE HEQC).
- The CHE assumed the status of an Education and Training Quality Assurance (ETQA) body for higher education on 14 February 2001.
- In May 2001, the HEQC was established as a permanent committee of Council and was formally launched with a membership of 13 and chaired by Professor Hugh Africa.
- In May 2002, the CHE relocated from the Sol Plaatje building to a leased office space in the Didacta Building at 211 Skinner Street (now Nana Sita Street) in Pretoria.
- The second Council was appointed in June 2002 and served until June 2006. A new chairperson, Mr Saki Macozoama, also began his term of office at the same time, as the previous chair had resigned.



Prof. Saleem Badat, Chief
Executive Officer, 1999-2006



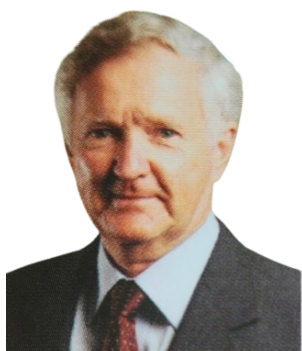
Dr Mala Singh, HEQC
Executive Director, 1999-
2006 and Interim CEO, 2006
– 2007.



In its 2004/05 Annual Report, the vision of the CHE was a transformed, equitable, high quality, economically and socially responsive, productive and sustainable higher education system in a transformed, equitable, just, humane and democratic South Africa, based on the principles and values of non-racialism, non-sexism, freedom of expression and other basic human and social rights. The CHE defined its mission as contributing to the development of a higher education system characterised by quality and excellence, equity, responsiveness to economic and social development needs, and effective and efficient provision, governance and management. It sought to make this contribution by providing informed, considered, independent and strategic advice on higher education (HE) policy issues to the Minister of Education; through the quality assurance activities of its sub-committee, the Higher Education Quality Committee (HEQC); through publications and through broader dissemination of information, and through conferences and workshops on HE and other focused activities.



Prof. Chabani Manganyi, CHE
Chairperson, 2007 – 2012



Prof. Rolf Stumpf, HEQC
Chairperson, 2009 - 2011,
and acting Chief Executive
Officer, 2010

- In 2006, Prof. Badat resigned as CEO to take up the position of vice-chancellor at Rhodes University and Dr Mala Singh acted as interim CEO.
- Ordinary members of the Third Council took up office in July 2006.
- Dr Mala Singh resigned as interim CEO in July 2007 to take up a professorship at the Open University. Dr Lis Lange then acted as interim CEO from August 2007 to April 2008.
- The third Chairperson, Professor Chabani Manganyi, was appointed from October 2007.
- Professor Cheryl de la Ray was appointed as Chief Executive Officer from May 2008.
- The promulgation of the National Qualifications Framework Act 67 of 2008 established the CHE as the sole quality council for higher education in the country, with responsibility for developing and managing the Higher Education Qualifications Sub-Framework. This represented a significant and important addition to the mandate of the CHE.
- The CHE purchased its own premises in 2009, at Perseus Technopark in Pretoria.
- Professor Rolf Stumpf assumed the position of HEQC Chairperson in 2009.
- Professor de la Ray resigned in 2009 to take up the position of Vice-Chancellor at the University of Pretoria and Professor Stumpf acted as Chief Executive Officer from January to April 2010, at which point Mr Ahmed Essop took over as Chief Executive Officer.
- Dr Lis Lange resigned in 2010, and Dr Mark Hay took up the position of HEQC Executive Director in the same year.



Dr Lis Lange, acting HEQC
Executive Director, 2006,
acting CEO, 2007 and HEQC
Executive Director, 2007 -
2010



Prof. Cheryl de la Ray, Chief
Executive Officer, 2008 – 2009



Mr Ahmed Essop, Chief
Executive Officer, 2010 -
2015.

The CHE

Plans, Places and People

In its 2009/10 Annual Report, the vision was described as follows: the CHE as an independent statutory body strives to be an organisation nationally and internationally recognised for the quality of its intellectual contribution to and its impact on the South African higher education system, through its core functions of advising the Minister of Education and Training, monitoring trends in the higher education system and assuring and promoting the quality of higher education. The mission of the CHE was to contribute to the development of a transformed, equitable, high quality higher education system capable of responding to the intellectual, ethical and human resources challenges of a democratic society based on social justice principles which operates in a global context.



Dr Leticia Moja, acting CHE
Chairperson, 2012 - 2013

- Ordinary members of the Fourth Council took up office in December 2010.
- Prof. Manganyi's term as chairperson concluded in December 2012, and Dr Leticia Moja was appointed as the Acting Chairperson for a six-month period.
- Professor Yunus Ballim assumed the position of Chairperson of the HEQC in April 2012.
- From 2012, upon the resignation of Dr Mark Hay, the position of Executive Director was abolished.



Dr Mark Hay, HEQC Executive
Director, 2010 - 2012



Prof. Yunus Ballim, HEQC
Chairperson, 2012 - 2014

In its 2013/14 Annual Report, the vision and mission of the organisation continued as stated in 2009/10. A section on values was added: In pursuit of its vision and mission, the CHE committed to being guided by the values of independence, transformation, integrity and public accountability.



Prof. Themba Mosia, CHE
Chairperson, 2013 – 2018
and 2018 – 2022

- In July 2013, Professor Themba Mosia was appointed as the Chairperson of the HEQC. Professor Mosia served two terms with the second term ending in July 2022.
- In December 2014, the ordinary members of the Fifth Council took up office.
- Mr Essop vacated the position of Chief Executive Officer in 2015, and Dr Denyse Webbstock served as acting Chief Executive Officer from March to September 2015. Professor Narend Bajinath was appointed as CEO from October 2015.
- Professor John Mubangizi assumed the role of HEQC Chairperson in 2015 and served until 2018.



Dr Denyse Webbstock, acting
Chief Executive Officer, 2015



Prof. John Mubangizi, HEQC
Chairperson, 2015 – 2018.



Prof Narend Bajinath, Chief
Executive Officer, 2015 – 2020

The CHE undertook a strategic review process in 2016/17 which resulted in a revision of its Strategic Plan 2015–2020. The vision of the organisation was re-articulated to be: ‘a dynamic organisation contributing to a transformed, equitable and quality higher education and training system in South Africa’. The mission statement was refined to emphasise that the work of the CHE was in four areas, namely (a) leading and managing quality assurance; (b) researching and monitoring trends and developments; (c) initiating critical discourses on contemporary higher education issues; and (d) providing advice to the Minister of Higher Education and Training on strategy and policy. The values of social justice, quality, integrity and accountability would underpin and guide the work and actions of the CHE during this period.

- The ordinary members of the Sixth Council took up office in 2018.
- Professor Angina Parekh chaired the HEQC for a first term of office from April 2018 to December 2022. Prof Parekh was appointed for a second term in 2023.



Prof. Angina Parekh, HEQC
Chairperson, 2018 – 2022 and 2023 –

The CHE Plans, Places and People

In 2020, a new Strategic Plan 2020–2025 was introduced. The vision for the organisation was to contribute to innovative, quality higher education that is responsive to the needs of society. It reaffirmed the identity of the CHE as the independent, statutory, quality assurance and advisory body for South African higher education, which transforms lives in pursuit of an equitable, prosperous and innovative society. The Plan committed the CHE to fulfilling its role through leading and managing external quality assurance; regulating qualifications through the HEQSF; serving as an intellectual hub for higher education research, monitoring, policy, and critical discourse; and advising the Minister on all higher education matters. The 2020–2025 Strategic Plan focused on repositioning the CHE as an innovative organisation that will work tirelessly to foster quality higher education that is responsive to the needs of society, prioritise implementation of the new Quality Assurance Framework (QAF); improve management of the Higher Education Qualifications Sub-framework (HEQSF); revitalise the research, monitoring and advice function; maintain good governance and compliance with the relevant legislation and policies; and restructure the organisation to ensure that it becomes more agile, responsive and dynamic. The CHE's work during this period would be guided by the values of innovation, integrity, equity, respect and accountability.



Prof. Mvuyo Tom, acting CHE
Chairperson, 2022



Rev. Vuyokazi Memani-
Sedile, CHE Chairperson,
2022 -

- Professor Narend Bajinath's term as Chief Executive Officer (CEO) ended on 31 September 2020. Dr Amani Saidi acted in the position of CEO from 1 October 2020 to 31 January 2021, and Dr Whitfield Green was appointed as CEO from the 1st of February 2021.
- Professor Mvuyo Tom served as Interim Chairperson from July 2022 until December 2022. Reverend Vuyokazi Memani-Sedile then took up the office of Chairperson, and the ordinary members of the Seventh CHE Council also took up office at the same time.



Dr Amani Saidi, acting Chief
Executive Officer, 2020-2021



Dr Whitfield Green, Chief
Executive Officer, 2021 -



The CHE's Advice Role

In the early years of the CHE's existence, the national context was one of extensive policy development to transform the higher education system and to develop a single, democratic, equitable, planned, coordinated and expanded higher education system. The CHE played an important role in advising the Minister responsible for higher education on its transformation and restructuring. Policy advice was the principal role of the CHE.

In 1999, the Minister of Education sought the CHE's advice on the optimal size and shape of the higher education system. To some extent, this informed the development of the National Plan of 2001, and set in motion a range of policy developments that ultimately led to a fundamental restructuring of the system through mergers and incorporations in the mid-2000s. This was the first piece of advice provided by the CHE, in accordance with its legislated responsibility to provide such advice.

Over the years, the CHE has since grown its monitoring and research capabilities. It has undertaken and published substantial research and monitoring reports as a basis for its work, and for the advice it provides to the Minister in several areas of importance in higher education.

To date, areas in which advice has been provided include higher education policy, academic policy, governance, private higher education, curriculum restructuring, teaching and learning, the state of provision of particular qualification types, student funding, and the remuneration of executives in higher education to name a few.

In August 2006, the Minister of Education expressed her view that the CHE needed to alter its focus from shaping policy in higher education to supporting the monitoring of the progress that South Africa is making against the goals set in the National Plan for Higher Education and in other major policy pronouncements. Whilst advice to shape policy continues to be an important focus of the CHE, it has also grown in its ability to provide policy and strategy implementation advice.

In 2008, the CHE's Consultative Conference focused on reviewing the advisory role of the CHE in the light of limitations related to the heavy reliance on task teams and commissioned research, and the time it took to deliver the advice, as well as the inability of the CHE to respond quickly to unanticipated requests and unplanned events affecting higher education. This led to a revised, more diversified strategy for the advisory function and more resourcing for this area of work.





Much of the research or advice has been published either as occasional publications, for example the Proposal for Undergraduate Curriculum Reform; or as volumes of particular series, such as the Higher Education Monitor, Kagisano and Briefly Speaking; higher education reviews which are published at regular intervals and provide a comprehensive analysis of higher education at that point; annual issues of a statistics digest on higher education known as VitalStats; and books such as Reflections of South African University Leaders: 1981 to 2014.

In 2018, Council formally adopted the strategy to revitalise the research, monitoring and advice work of the CHE as one of its strategic priorities, and the CHE's 5-year Strategic Plan 2020/21 to 2024/25 incorporates a strategic outcome to develop the CHE as a reputable centre of intellectual discourse, knowledge generation and advice on higher education, in particular through revitalising and strengthening the research, monitoring, evaluation, and advice capabilities of the CHE.

To this end, the Research, Monitoring and Advice Committee (RMAC) of Council has been strengthened, an in-house Research Ethics Committee has been established and efforts are underway to improve the staff complement responsible for this work at the CHE. The Professor Narend Baijnath Resource Centre was established in 2022 to house the CHE's growing resource collection and to serve as a space for intellectual and scholarly activities. We are already seeing the fruits of the enhanced emphasis on this work, through the increasing number of dialogue events, research projects and publications and advice approved by Council for submission to the Minister of Higher Education, Science and Innovation.

The new Strategic Plan for 2025/26 to 2029/30, to be developed in the next few months, will continue this trajectory.



The Research, Monitoring & Advice Trajectory

1997

HIGHER EDUCATION ACT

The CHE is required/mandated to:

- Advise the Minister responsible for Higher Education & Training on higher education matters.
- Monitor the higher education system & publish information about developments on a regular basis.
- Organise and host conferences on higher education themes.

1999

ANNUAL CONFERENCES

The CHE held its first annual consultative conference of national HE stakeholders during November 1999. The 1st conference was framed by several discussion papers. These conferences served as valuable mechanisms for the exchange of ideas between HE stakeholders and the CHE, and for the identification of key challenges. Over time, the conferences evolved into higher education conferences which generally have a thematic focus. The most recent annual conference took place in March 2023 under the theme Promoting access to, and success in postgraduate studies. A strong addition to the conference in recent years has been to negotiate a special edition of an accredited journal as a platform to publish papers from the conference that meet the requirements of the journal.

2000

RESEARCH-INFORMED MINISTERIAL ADVICE

Since its inception, the CHE has undertaken numerous research projects. The research projects and their reports are often used as a basis for advice to the Minister.

The first substantial piece of advice for the Minister was underpinned by a report titled, Towards a new Higher Education Landscape: Meeting the Equity, Quality and Social Development Imperatives of South Africa in the 21st Century, published in 2000, the primary outcome of a CHE Task Team colloquially referred to as the Size and Shape Task Team. The latest piece of advice, currently being finalised, is an Advisory Note on Issues Identified from the National Review of South African Doctoral Qualifications: 2020 – 2021. Several other pieces of advice are also in the pipeline.

2001

THE KAGISANO SERIES

The word 'Kagisano' is derived from one of the indigenous languages of South Africa - SeTswana – and it means to support each other or to collaborate on some initiatives. Kagisano, the Research Journal of the Council on Higher Education (CHE), serves as a medium for promoting collaboration between the CHE and external researchers. It is aimed at building, reviewing and applying knowledge on contemporary, thematic higher education issues. Normally, papers published in Kagisano would have been presented and discussed at research colloquia or similar events organised by the CHE, or by the CHE in association with other sectoral organisations. The first edition, titled Reinserting the 'Public Good' into Higher Education Transformation, was published in November 2001. The latest edition, Kagisano Number 14: Inferences of Resilience and Agility of Higher Education from the Diverse Experiences with Emergency Remote Teaching and Learning was published in September 2022. A call for papers for Kagisano Number 15 is out on the theme of Artificial Intelligence and Higher Education.

<https://www.che.ac.za/publications/research/che-kagisano>

The Research, Monitoring & Advice Trajectory

2003

THE HIGHER EDUCATION MONITOR SERIES

The Higher Education Monitor series comprises of publications emanating from the research and monitoring work of the CHE. They are scholarly publications that do not necessarily reflect the policy positions, plans or strategies formally adopted by the Council. The first Higher Education Monitor titled The State of Private Higher Education in South Africa, was published in June 2003. Higher Education Monitor No. 15: Perspectives on the Possible Future of Higher Education in South Africa in the Era of COVID-19, was published in July 2022. Higher Education Monitor No. 16 is being drafted with the title, Epistemic Access to, and Success in Higher Education for Students from Previously Disadvantaged Backgrounds.

<https://www.che.ac.za/publications/monitoring/che-higher-education-monitor>

2004

REVIEWS OF SOUTH AFRICAN HIGHER EDUCATION

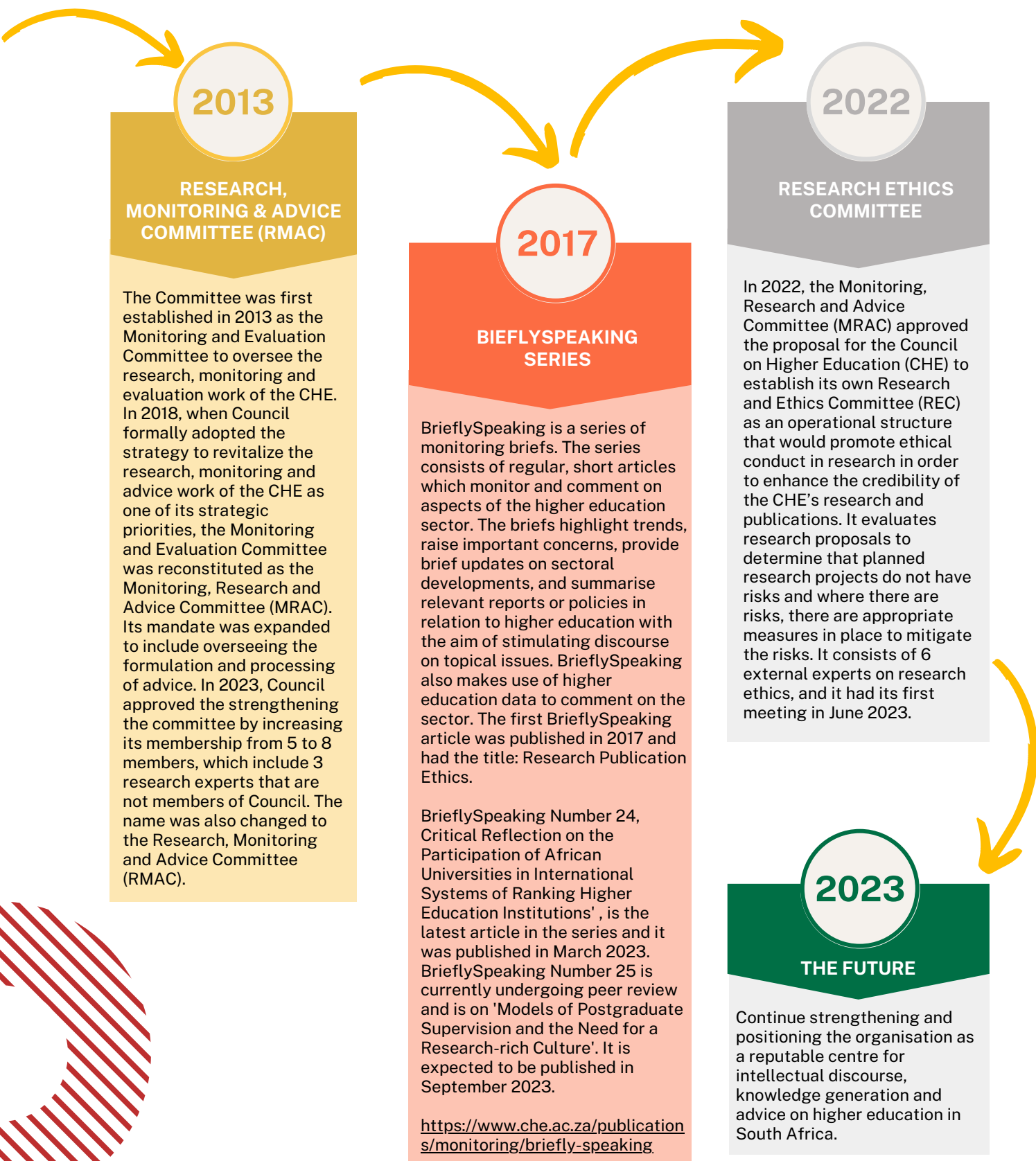
The CHE regularly undertakes a research-based review of higher education to take stock of important trends and development in the higher education system in South Africa against the backdrop of trends and changes identifiable in other higher education systems in developed and developing countries. South African Higher Education in the First Decade of Democracy was the first review to be published in 2004. Since then, Review of Higher Education in South Africa: Selected Themes, was published in August 2007; South African Higher Education Reviewed: Two Decades of Democracy was published in 2016, and the most recent Review of Higher Education in South Africa twenty-five years into Democracy was published in 2022. A review of higher education in South Africa three decades into democracy is underway. It focuses on the state of quality of higher education in South Africa and is expected to be published when the country celebrates 30 years of democracy in 2024.

2012

VITALSTATS

VitalStats is an annual CHE publication that presents higher education enrolments, completions, qualifications, staff complement, financial and student cohort study data. The CHE first published VitalStats in 2012. Since then, ten further VitalStats have been published. The 10th issue of the series, VitalStats: Public and Private Higher Education 2020, published in 2022, was the first issue to also incorporate private higher education datasets, drawn from the CHE's Higher Education Quality Committee Information System (HEQCIS). Also, for the first time in 2022, a separate annual supplement presenting financial data was published. The 11th issue, titled VitalStats: Public and Private Higher Education 2021, is the latest in the series and was published in March 2023.

<https://www.che.ac.za/publications/vital-stats>



The CHE's

Quality Assurance Role



Immediately after its establishment in 1998, the CHE concentrated on a consultative process of laying the foundations for a national quality assurance system to support the development of a quality-driven and transformed higher education system that contributes to socio-economic development, social justice, and innovative scholarship. The first milestones were the establishment in 2001 of the Higher Education Quality Committee (HEQC) as a permanent committee of Council mandated to oversee the quality assurance role of the CHE, and the publication of the HEQC Founding Document in the same year.

Key HEQC policies and frameworks for implementation of its quality assurance mandate were finalised by 2004, including the Criteria for Institutional Audits, and the Criteria for Programme Accreditation. The year 2004 also marked the beginning of the implementation of its quality assurance activities in earnest, including programme accreditation and institutional audits to ensure that demonstrable quality assurance capacity was established in higher education institutions.

The CHE established a rigorous peer-driven system of accreditation for new programmes proposed by both public and private institutions, and this continues to ensure providers' compliance with minimum standards for the offering of programmes. The system has expanded greatly over the years, with over 8 000 new programmes having been assessed. Other processes such as the approval of new sites of delivery for existing programmes, and the reaccreditation of existing programmes carried out on a cyclical basis for private higher education institutions having been added.

The first cycle of comprehensive audits of institutional quality assurance mechanisms initiated in 2004 involved all public universities and the larger private higher education institutions. The audits were generally regarded to be successful in that they accelerated progress in institutions developing internal quality assurance systems. The audits also revealed persistent challenges and constraints to improving teaching and learning across the system, evidenced in continuing poor throughput rates.

In 2008, a review of the HEQC by an external panel was initiated. The panel found that the HEQC was successful in most of its areas of responsibility and had contributed to quality assurance processes regarded as important in all higher education institutions.



The CHE's **Quality Assurance Role**

The first cycle of quality assurance introduced by the CHE from 2004 was characterised by the first cycle of institutional audits and concluded in early 2011. Thereafter, a shift in focus from institutional audits to the quality enhancement of teaching and learning was proposed to enable the CHE to engage actively with institutions to improve the quality of higher education offered. A five-year project, the Quality Enhancement Project (QEP) was implemented from 2014, based on the publication in 2013 of the Framework for Institutional Quality Enhancement in the Second Period of Quality Assurance. The QEP focused on the specific areas of teaching and learning to bring about the required improvement through a more targeted process of institutional self-evaluation and peer review using an inductive approach rather than pre-determined criteria.

In 2019, Council decided that a second cycle of institutional audits of all higher education institutions in the country should be undertaken. A Framework and Manual for Institutional Audits was published in 2021, and a Supplementary Guide for Institutional Audits of Private Higher Education Institutions was published in 2022. The audits, still underway, use a review methodology based on reflexive and generative approaches and start to set the scene and bed the balanced approach that will be used as the new Quality Assurance Framework (QAF) is implemented.

The designation of the CHE in the NQF Act as the quality council for higher education included the responsibility of developing and managing the Higher Education Qualifications Sub-Framework, and the responsibility to develop qualification standards for HEQSF qualifications.

The Higher Education Qualifications Framework (HEQF) was published in 2007 as a policy that determined the qualification types, characteristics and purposes of all higher education qualifications in South Africa. In response to a number of unresolved concerns, inconsistencies and gaps identified in the HEQF, a review of it was initiated by the CHE in 2010, and this resulted in the publication of the Higher Education Qualifications Sub-Framework in 2013. A comprehensive 5-year HEQSF-alignment project commenced in 2011. Following a declaration by the Minister of Higher Education and Training, no institutions are permitted to enrol new students on qualifications that are not HEQSF-aligned beyond 31 December 2019. A third review of the sub-framework was initiated in 2020 and is nearing completion.

The CHE published the Framework for Qualification Standards in Higher Education in 2013, which framed the development of qualification standards. To date, 11 qualification standards have been developed and several others are at various stages of development.

The CHE's **Quality Assurance Role**

In 2012, the HEQC and Council approved the Framework for the National Review of Programmes, paving the way for the first national review – of the Bachelor of Social Work. Since then, several reviews have been undertaken, the latest one being a review of the doctoral qualification. The development of qualification standards and the conducting of national reviews have now been aligned, with the development of a qualification standard preceding a review, and the review taking place against the standard.

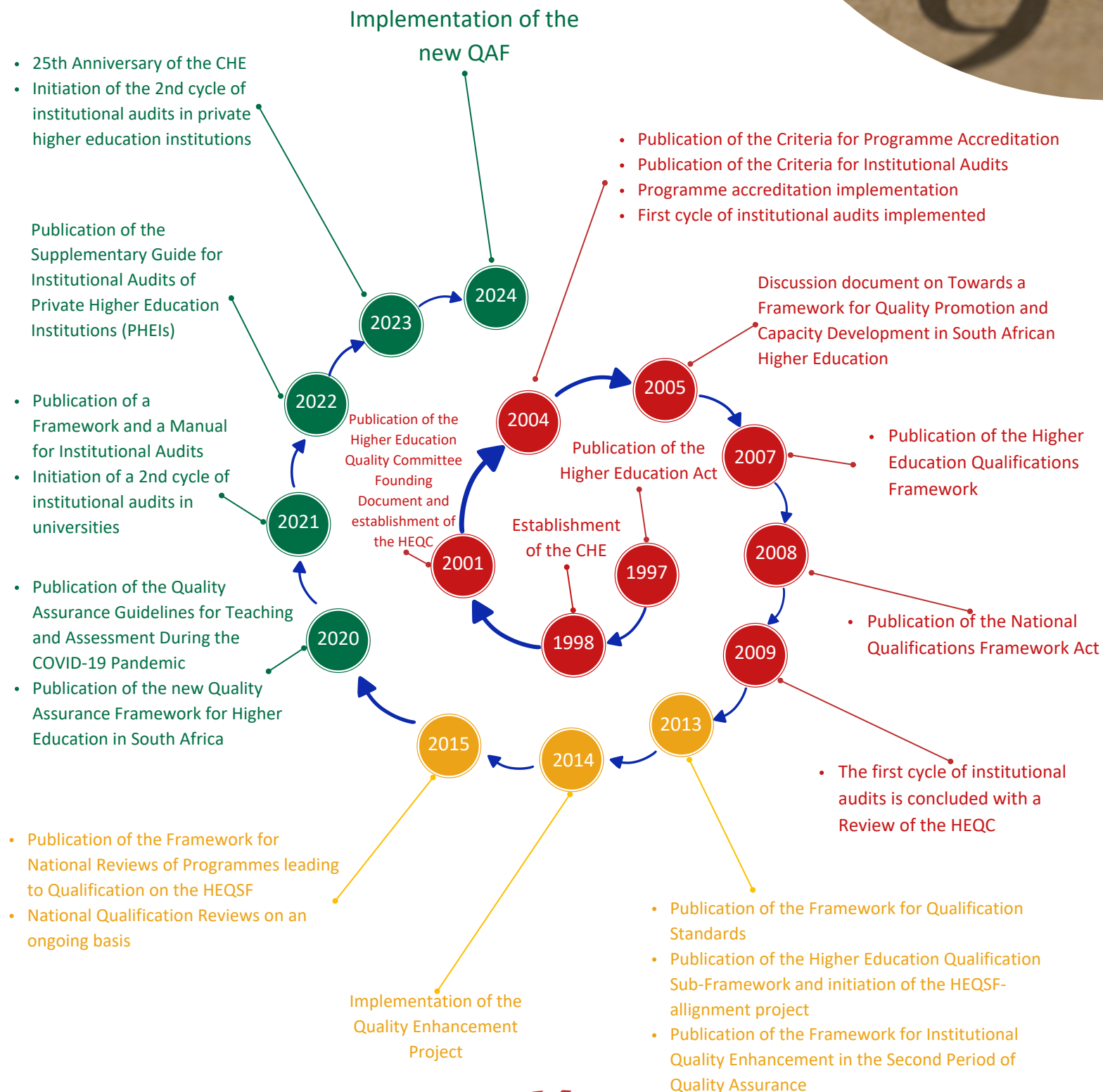
Over the years, quality promotion and capacity development have complemented and supported the other quality assurance activities of the CHE. Quality promotion activities have included the convening of quality fora, the dissemination of information on quality assurance, and on supporting the improvement of quality through the publication of good practice guides and quality-related research. Capacity development has assisted to prepare all higher education institutions and quality assurance practitioners to participate in a national quality assurance system. As the system has matured, capacity development activities have continued within the different quality assurance processes and have comprised the training of many hundreds of peer evaluators for programme accreditation and for the HEQSF alignment process, as well as panel members for audits and site visits, and for national reviews. On occasion, members of professional bodies have been trained on accreditation processes.

In 2018, the CHE embarked on a process to review its approach to quality assurance in relation to identified weaknesses in existing processes and approaches, opportunities that were evident in a system that had matured, and in a higher education context that had evolved considerably since the time the processes and approaches were conceptualised and implemented. This process resulted in the approval of a new Quality Assurance Framework for Higher Education in South Africa by Council in September 2020.

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The Quality Assurance Trajectory



A New Path

The Quality Assurance Framework (QAF)



The conceptualisation of the new QAF is a result of a strategic renewal process involving reflection and self-review by the CHE, external and internal environmental analyses and research.

The need for a project to fully conceptualise a new approach to quality assurance was first identified in 2016. In 2018, the Council of the CHE established a Council Task Team (CTT) to discuss the strategic priorities for the CHE in the next planning cycle. The CTT provided a short-term roadmap of a proposed way of achieving the identified strategic goals and priorities of the CHE.

One of the main strategic priorities for the CHE was the conceptualisation of a new QAF which would clearly articulate the strategic direction for the organisation for the medium to long term. The QAF also needed to be aligned and complementary to the Higher Education Qualifications Sub-Framework (HEQSF) that the CHE manages as the QC for higher education in terms of the National Qualifications Framework (NQF) Act 67 of 2008 (as amended).

There were several reasons for a new approach. It had become clear that the current external quality assurance (EQA) functions of the CHE – programme accreditation, national reviews and institutional audits – have developed into isolated silos with uneven implementation and emphasis. The overwhelming emphasis on programme accreditation meant that quality assurance in higher education was very much limited to an input focus, with less emphasis on process, outputs, outcomes and impact.

Internal quality assurance (IQA) refers to the integrated quality assurance systems at individual institutional level, comprising an institutional quality assurance system, quality support, quality development and enhancement, and quality monitoring. During the conceptualisation of the QAF it was recognised that IQA capacity was very uneven across the sector, and generally weak.

One of the main intentions of the new development was to create a more conducive balance and synergy between EQA and IQA and to shift away from an overwhelming focus on EQA. The intention is to enable greater autonomy, but also more responsibility to HEIs that are deemed to be functional in terms of their IQA systems, policies and processes.

The development of the QAF relied on experienced peer academics participating in working groups to examine and make proposals on the elements of the new QAF based on substantial research and extensive consultations with all national higher education stakeholders, as well as with a national and an international peer reference group. An extensive report on the conceptualisation of the new QAF was submitted to the HEQC for discussion and recommendation to Council for approval. The final QAF was based on this conceptualisation report and was approved by the HEQC and Council in September 2020.

A New Path

The Quality Assurance Framework (QAF)



The new Framework has been conceptualised at a juncture in South Africa's history that presents both unprecedented challenges and opportunities for innovative changes. The Framework identifies these as inter-related challenges pertaining to socio-economic development, the contextual relevance of knowledge production and dissemination, rapid advances in technology, the continuing need for systematic, societal and economic transformation, and the increasing fragility of the planetary eco-system due to environmental degradation.

It recognises that ways of knowing, learning, teaching and working are radically changing, and greater flexibility and innovation are necessary for the ways in which higher education institutions (HEIs) manage their core business and operations. These must be considered as a new responsive, agile national system of higher education quality assurance is designed and implemented.

Transformation and learning and teaching are thus selected as strategic focus areas for the QAF in its first cycle of implementation.

The scope of the new QAF includes both external and internal (institutional) quality assurance and places much more of the responsibility for the quality and quality assurance of higher education, both public and private, on institutions themselves.

The QAF aims to simplify processes and provide for greater self-regulation for institutions that are deemed functional, which will, however, come with greater responsibility and accountability of HEIs for the quality management (QM) of their provisioning for higher education through their IQA systems. By introducing a differentiated approach to working with institutions, the CHE will free more of its capacity to work with developing institutions that need more support.

As the Quality Council (QC) for higher education, the CHE will fulfil its EQA responsibility through an integrated implementation of its quality assurance functions of standards development, quality promotion and capacity development (QPCD), quality reviews, and qualification and programme accreditation.

Qualification Standards and Higher Education Practice Standards form the basis of the QAF and are the integrating instruments that will underpin all IQA and EQA activities. All EQA and IQA activities will use the standards as indicators of quality. The standards are developed by peer-based communities of practice.

In the QAF, the CHE is emphasising a developmental approach to building and supporting internal quality assurance in institutions. The developmental approach will be balanced by the need for accountability to ensure that higher education standards are met.

A New Path

The Quality Assurance Framework (QAF)

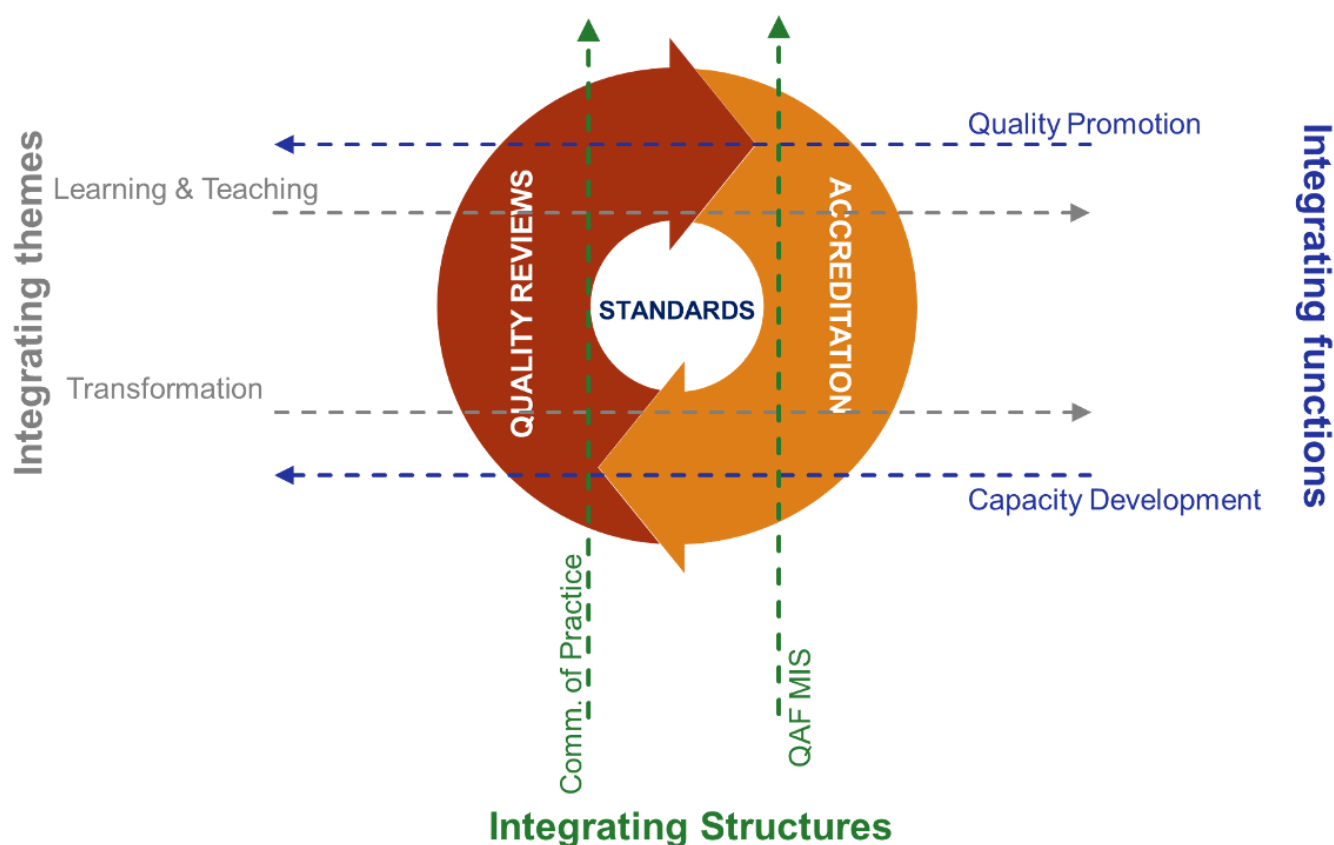


The new QAF also involves adopting greater use of digital systems, as a way of more efficiently and effectively managing the implementation of the EQA functions, but also as a means of collecting, collating, analysing and recording and interpreting data that enable an understanding of the status of quality at institutions and how it changes over time. The QAF-MIS will enable a coherent and holistic view of quality at each higher education institution in the country, represented on digital Institutional Quality Dashboards.

Quality promotion and capacity development span both internal and external quality assurance. As part of the implementation of and preparation for the QAF, the CHE has been undertaking extensive workshops and consultations, and will continue to do so, thereby including the sector and all participants in this exciting new journey.

After twenty-five years of managing external quality assurance (EQA), and in 2023, the year of its 25th Anniversary, the CHE is set to launch the new QAF.

A new Quality Assurance Framework for Higher Education in South Africa



The CHE's

Current Council members



Introducing the current CHE Council members who were appointed by Dr. BE Nzimande, the Minister of Higher Education, Science, and Innovation, to serve from 15 December 2022. Reverend Vuyokazi Memani-Sedile presides as the Chairperson of the Council.

 Ms Vuyo Memani-Sedile (Chairperson)	 Prof Lesly Le Grange	 Prof Angina Parekh	 Prof Yusef Waghid	 Adv. Nomazotsho Memani
 Prof Daniel van der Nest	 Ms Keketjo Magongoa	 Dr Tholsie Naidoo	 Adv. Matefo Majodina	 Mr Mphedziseni Muluvhahotho
 Dr Grant Son	 Ms Dorina Ionescu	 Prof Vukosi Marivate	 Mr Sagren Govender	 Mr Vijayen Naidoo
 Dr Mafu Rakometsi	 Ms Nadia Starr	 Dr Fulufhelo Nelwamondo	 Dr Moses Simelane	 Mr Imraan Patel
 Dr Nita Lawton-Misra	 Dr Bheka Zulu	 Dr Marcia Socikwa	 Dr Whitfield Green	 Prof Modimowabarwa Kanyane



25 Great Years Thank you for your support



COUNCIL ON HIGHER EDUCATION

