EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

INSTITUTIONAL AUDIT REPORT

ON THE

UNIVERSITY OF ZULULAND

(8 February 2024)

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Acronyms

CHE: Council on Higher Education

DHET: Department of Higher Education and Training

DMP: Disaster Management Plan

ECD: Early Childhood Development

ECSA: Engineering Council of South Africa

ERP: Enterprise Resource Planning

HEDA: Higher Education Data Analyzer

HEI: Higher Education Institution

HEMIS: Higher Education Information Management System

HEQC: Higher Education Quality Committee

HEQSF: Higher Education Qualifications Sub-Framework

ICT: Information and Communications Technology

IT: Information Technology

IQA: Institutional Quality Assurance

IQMS: Integrated Quality Management System

ITS: Integrated Tertiary System

KPA: Key Performance Area

KPI: Key Performance Indicator

LLB: Bachelor of Laws

LMS: Learning Management System

MANCO: Management Committee

NDP: National Development Plan

NESP: Nurturing Emerging Scholars Programme

nGAP: New Generation of Academic Programme

NQF: National Qualifications Framework

NWG: National Working Group

PMS: Performance Management System

PoE: Portfolio of Evidence

PQM: Programme and Qualification Mix

QAF: Quality Assurance Framework

SAICA: South African Institute for Chattered Accountants

SANC: South African Nursing Council

SCF: Staff Consultative Forum

SER: Self-Evaluation Report

SoTL: Scholarship of Teaching and Learning

SoCE: Scholarship of Community Engagement

SRC: Student Representative Council

STABIO: Strategic Analysis and Business Intelligence Office

TAU: Teaching Advancement at Universities Programme

UCDP: University Capacity Development Programme

WIL: Work Integrated Learning

Executive Summary

The Council on Higher Education (CHE) was established through the Higher Education Act (No. 101 of 1997, as amended) primarily to assure quality in the South African higher education sector and to advise the Minister on aspects of higher education. The National Qualifications Framework Act (No. 67 of 2008, as amended) conferred additional responsibilities on the CHE as the Quality Council for higher education, with overall responsibility for the Higher Education Qualifications Sub-Framework (HEQSF). The CHE executes its quality assurance responsibilities through its permanent committee, the Higher Education Quality Committee (HEQC). The CHE, through the Higher Education Quality Committee (HEQC), exercises its quality assurance function using a variety of mechanisms, one of which is institutional audits that are mandated by the Higher Education Act.

The *Framework for Institutional Audits* (2021)[1] and its attendant *Manual for Institutional Audits* (2021)[2] are key instruments to regulate the implementation of institutional audits. These documents are also aligned with important aspects of the new Quality Assurance Framework (QAF)[3] that was approved by the HEQC and Council in September 2020 and which will be implemented in the medium term by the CHE. Institutional audits are strongly influenced by both the specific context within which each HEI works and by the national transformational agenda within which higher education functions. The HEQC has identified a need to do full audits of all HEIs in South Africa. A full audit of an institution determines whether or not, and to what extent, an institution's IQA systems, policies and procedures ensure the effective provisioning of good quality higher education that enhances the likelihood of student success through quality learning and teaching, research opportunities and integrated community engagement. The emphasis is less on ensuring that required standards are met at a particular threshold than on the deliberate, continuous, systematic and measurable improvement of the student experience, as well as on building reflexive praxis to develop quality cultures in institutions.

The following principles guided the institutional audit of the University of Zululand.

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[1] https://www.che.ac.za/publications/frameworks/framework-institutional-audits-2021
[2] https://www.che.ac.za/publications/frameworks/manual-institutional-audits-2021
[3]https://www.che.ac.za/publications/frameworks/quality-assurance-framework-qaf-higher-education-south-africa

1. The primary responsibility for internal quality assurance rests with individual HEIs. Each institution is responsible for the establishment, implementation, maintenance, improvement and enhancement of its own quality management and assurance systems.
2. The uniqueness of each institution's size, shape, location, context and mission is recognised.
3. The value of institutional audits rests on the compilation of credible, contextually relevant and reliable information that is required for internal quality-related planning and self-evaluation, peer review and public reporting (for example, by publishing executive summaries).
4. Student experience, student engagement and participation and the student voice are central to an evaluation of an institution's quality management system.
5. The institutional audit is a peer-driven and evidence-based process to ensure that the HEQC and its audit panel reports are transparent, informed and consistent.
6. Institutional audits are developmental and intent on supporting continuous quality improvement and enhancement.
7. Institutional audits are required to balance their developmental character with the regulatory requirement that the CHE and the HEQC act on poor provisioning where institutions have no clear commitments, processes, practices or plans to improve.
8. Institutional audits are a key component of the HEQC's broad-based quality assurance mandate.

Aligned to international practice, the HEQC uses a review methodology consisting of an institutional self-evaluation report (SER), and an external peer review which verifies, triangulates and validates the institution's self-evaluation. The external peer review consists of a document analysis of the SER and institutional portfolio of evidence, as well as a site visit at which interviews are conducted with constituencies and physical infrastructure is visited. This audit report forms the outcome of the institutional audit of the University of Zululand.

A brief overview of the institution

The University of Zululand was established in 1959 as the *University College of Zululand*. By virtue of its status as a university college, it was initially affiliated to the University of South Africa (UNISA). The University was officially opened on 8 March 1960, with a staff of 14 lecturers and a first intake of 41 students enrolled in two faculties, namely the Faculty of Arts and the Faculty of Education. A third faculty, the Faculty of Science, was established in 1961. On 1 January 1970, the University attained full university status, in terms of the *University of Zululand Act, 43 of 1969.*

The University currently views and positions itself as a comprehensive university *"predominantly serving the disadvantaged rural communities in the northern region of Zululand"* (SER, p. 4).

The University's main campus is located in KwaDlangezwa, which is approximately 150 kilometres north of Durban. The University's second campus is located in Richard's Bay. Established in 2009, the Richards Bay campus initially offered diploma programmes for the Faculty of Commerce, Administration, and Law, as well as the Faculty of Arts. As of 2021, it has also been offering the University's Engineering programmes under the auspices of the Faculty of Science, Agriculture and Engineering.

The University currently has a total staff complement of 1 088. Approximately 41% of the total staff complement are professional staff while non-professional staff constitute approximately 59% of the total complement. Academic staff constitute 30.7% of the total staff complement. By the final year of the period under review (2021), the University had a total student population of 16 266, making it one of the smaller universities in South Africa. At the time, the majority of the University's students, viz. 90.99%, were enrolled in undergraduate programmes. Only 9.01% were enrolled for postgraduate programmes. The University maintains that this distribution was due to its strong focus on undergraduate teaching during the period under consideration.

According to the University of Zululand website, the University's vision is to be *"a leading, comprehensive University providing quality education"* and its mission is to *"provide globally competitive graduates, relevant for the human capital needs of our country, by providing quality education which upholds high standards of research and academic excellence"*. [4]

Prior to the site visit interviews conducted with the various stakeholders at the University of Zululand, the audit panel held five meetings. The first of these meetings, which took place on 19 April 2023, served as the panel's induction meeting. The four subsequent meetings, which took place on 26 April, and 10, 25 and 28 May 2023, served the primary function of allowing the panel an opportunity to discuss and analyse the University of Zululand's Self-Evaluation Report (SER), as well as to prepare for the site visit interviews.

Following extensive consultation between the CHE staff, the panel, and the University of Zululand, the schedule for the institutional interviews was finalised prior to the commencement

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[4] http://www.unizulu.ac.za/vision-and-mission/

of the first interviews on 29 May 2023 *(See Annexure A)*. The site visit interviews took place between 29 May and 2 June 2023. All interviews scheduled for the period, 29 to 31 May 2023, took place at the University of Zululand's KwaDlangezwa Campus and on 1 and 2 June 2023, the site visit interviews took place online (on the Microsoft Teams platform). The site visit interviews were followed by two further meetings by the panel to discuss the contents of the audit report. These meetings took place on 13 June 2023 and 4 July 2023.

Most of the site visit interviews took place according to the agreed-to schedule. Importantly, at the beginning of each interview, the interviewees were assured of the panel's commitment to: (a) respecting the institution's autonomy, (b) fairness and objectivity, (c) the confidentiality of the sources of the information shared in the interviews, and (d) giving due consideration to all information shared in the interviews. To reassure interviewees that their contributions would be completely anonymous and confidential, they were also informed that none of the interviews would be recorded. All interviews were manifestly productive and provided most of the information sought by the audit panel. To the University's credit, virtually all interviews took place according to schedule. Furthermore, most of the interviews were characterised by a commendably collegial spirit, which of course greatly facilitated the work of the panel.

The University of Zululand provided a comprehensive SER augmented by a substantial volume of relevant documentation submitted as part of its portfolio of evidence (PoE). During the course of the site visit interviews, it was confirmed that the SER was developed through a broadly consultative process and included the contributions of several workstreams working with inputs from across the University.

In the main, the following strengths are discernible in the University's quality management and assurance endeavours. Firstly, it is obvious that the University is constantly working on improving its quality assurance process. In this regard, the University's decision to strengthen its review of academic departments and their programmes through a Quinquennial Review system is particularly noteworthy. During the site visit too, the panel was struck by the positivity and loyalty towards the University expressed by staff and student interviewees (a positivity and loyalty which were not experienced as uncritical). This was perceived by the panel as an indication of an engaging and inclusive University culture, for which the panel commends the University, particularly its leadership. Furthermore, the University should be commended for how it is consistently and programmatically ensuring that its academic staff acquire teaching-related qualifications to enhance teaching excellence.

The panel however also identified various lacunae in the University's quality management system, including the following: Firstly, there appears to be a need to enhance the levels of data literacy among all academic and professional staff. Secondly, the University's efforts at curriculum transformation endeavours are taking place in the absence of a finalised policy on curriculum transformation. Thirdly, there is a need to expedite the execution of the approved University's spatial plan, to enhance students' chances of academic success. Lastly, the University should invest greater effort in redressing the under-representation of female students in its postgraduate programmes.

The following is a summary of the audit panel's commendations and recommendations for the University of Zululand.

Focus area 1: Governance, strategic planning, management and leadership support the core academic functions

The four standards in Focus Area 1 concentrate on the role that an institution's *governance, strategic planning* (as contained in its *vision, mission and strategic goals), management and academic leadership* play in its quality management in order to enhance the likelihood of student success and to improve the quality of learning, teaching and research engagement, as well as accommodating the results of constructive, integrated community engagement. These standards are:

Standard 1:

The institution has a clearly stated vision and mission, and strategic goals which have been approved by appropriate governance structures, subject to comprehensive stakeholder engagement.

In line with the requirements reflected in the *Framework for Institutional Audits 2021*, the vision, mission, and goals of the institution as articulated in the SER are sufficiently cogent. The SER also provides an outline and assessment of the University's strategic plan which was in effect during the period under review. The vision, mission, and strategic plan had been approved by the University Council after broad consultation. Given that the University executed its responsibilities relating to Standard 1 appropriately, the panel has no substantive recommendations for improvement in respect of this standard.

Standard 2:

The stated vision, mission and strategic goals align with national priorities and context (e.g., transformation, creating a skilled labour force, developing scarce skills areas and a critical citizenry, and contributing to the fulfilment of national goals as informed by the NDP and related national planning), as well as sectoral, regional, continental and global imperatives (e.g., Africa Vision 2063 or the Sustainable Development Goals).

Based on the SER and the interviews conducted, it is evident that the University's vision, mission, and strategic goals endeavour to respond to its own history and context, as well as national needs. However, while senior members of the Executive spoke at length about the University's aspirations to respond to extant continental and global imperatives, such as those contained in *Africa Vision 2063* and the *United Nations Sustainable Development Goals*, there was no sustained and meaningful engagement with these programmes as reflected in the SER or the interviews conducted with several academics. Furthermore, it is the view of the panel that the University will benefit from further diversifying its staff complement and increasing the proportion of international students enrolled, as well as the proportion of female students in its postgraduate programmes.

Recommendations:

It is recommended that:
1. The University should endeavour to make more explicit the articulations between its academic programmes and research on the one hand, and broader African (continental) and global developmental initiatives such as *Africa Vision 2063* and the *United Nations Sustainable Development Goals*, on the other.
2. The University should endeavour to further diversify its staff complement and student body, particularly with respect to extant designated racial categories and disability.
3. The University should strive towards increasing its enrolment of students in the 'international' category.
4. The University should endeavour to increase the proportion of female students enrolled in its postgraduate programmes.

Standard 3:

There is demonstrable strategic alignment between the institution's quality management system for core academic activities across all sites and modes of provision and its vision, mission and strategic goals, as well as its governance and management processes.

Based on the scrutiny of the University's SER and PoE, as well as the interviews conducted, the panel believes that the University has the appropriate policies and structures in place to ensure adequate levels of quality assurance. Additionally, the roles of the Senate, Council, committees of Senate and Council, Faculty Boards, as well as the Management Committee of the University are sufficiently clearly articulated and exercised to support quality assurance.

Recommendations:

It is recommended that:

5. The University should review its committee structures to determine the effectiveness and efficiency of each and to reduce overlapping functions should there be any.

6. The University should more explicitly demonstrate (preferably in the form of a focussed document) how it ensures "an alignment between its quality management system for core academic activities across all sites and modes of provision and its vision, mission, and strategic goals, as well as its governance and management processes" (*CHE Framework for Institutional Audits*, p. 24).

Standard 4:

There is a clear understanding of and demonstrable adherence to the different roles and responsibilities of the governance structures, management and academic leadership.

It is evident that currently, the University adheres strictly to the requirements of its *Statute* and *Governance Guide*. Consequently, there is manifest adherence to the different roles, functions and obligations of the University's governance, operational, and substantively academic structures. Lines of authority and escalation are also clear. However, it is the panel's view that the University should expedite the measures proposed by its Protective Services Department to enhance the safety of staff and students.

Recommendation:

It is recommended that:

7. The University expedite the implementation of the strategies proposed by its Protective Services Department to enhance the safety of staff and students.

Focus area 2: The design and implementation of the institutional quality management system supports the core academic functions

The four standards in Focus Area 2 concentrate on how the *design and implementation of an integrated quality management system* in the institution enhances the likelihood of student success and improves the quality of learning, teaching and research engagement, as well as accommodating the results of constructive, integrated community engagement within the context of the institution's mission. These standards are:

Standard 5:

A quality assurance system is in place, comprising at a minimum, of:

        i)   *governance arrangements*

        ii)   *policies*

        iii)   *processes, procedures and plans*

        iv)   *instructional products*

        v)   *measurement of impact*

        vi)   *data management and utilisation as these give effect to the delivery of the HEI's core functions.*

Based on the University's SER and supporting documentation, the panel is of the opinion that, in the main, the University complies with the key requirements associated with Standard 5. Appropriate policies, data management processes, and teaching resources are in place to support the University's core academic functions of teaching and learning, research, and community engagement. However, two areas that the University should focus on strengthening or clarifying relate to its community engagement endeavours and the line of reporting for the Directors in its Finance Department.

Recommendations:

It is recommended that:

8. The University should consider requiring that the Directors in Finance and unit heads in the Infrastructure Office account to the Management Committee only through their respective Executive Directors to ensure observance of proper lines of authority.

9. The University should promote awareness of its *Community Engagement Policy* and the relevant strategic goals to enhance understanding of the approaches and goals of the University's community engagement efforts.

Standard 6:

Human, infrastructural, knowledge management and financial resources support the delivery of the institution's core academic functions across all sites of provision, in alignment with the concomitant quality management system, in accordance with the institution's mission.

During the period under review, the University managed to allocate the necessary human, financial and knowledge management resources in a manner that not only enabled it to deliver on its core academic functions but also to implement its quality management strategies. Certainly, there are areas of concern that have been identified by the panel regarding staff recruitment, library resources at the University's Richards Bay Campus, and the pace of infrastructure development. However, in the main, the panel is of the view that the University is performing adequately in respect of Standard 6.

Commendation:

a. The University is commended for ensuring and supporting its academic staff to acquire teaching and learning-related qualifications. To the University's credit, a significant number of teaching staff hold such qualifications.

Recommendations:

It is recommended that:

10. The University should expedite the execution of its approved spatial development plan to enhance the quality of existing buildings.

11. The University should, as a matter of urgency, fill the vacancies in the Institutional Support and Planning Offices as well as review the operating model and staff establishment of the

Quality Assurance Office, to enhance quality management in faculties and support departments.

12. The University should increase the staff capacity of its Health and Safety unit.

13. A shuttle service between the two campuses should be established, to reduce the turnaround time for the delivery of intercampus library loan materials (books), until such times that a full library service is available at the Richards Bay Campus.

Standard 7:

Credible and reliable data (for example, on throughput and completion rates) are systematically captured, employed and analysed as an integral part of the institutional quality management system so as to inform consistent and sustainable decision-making.

The University, through its Enterprise Resource Planning system, Power HEDA, and its Learning Management System, has extensive collections of credible data at its disposal, which for the most part, it routinely analyses and uses for decision-making, largely to enhance student success rates. Nonetheless, based on the interviews conducted, the panel is of the view that the University will benefit from ensuring the further enhancement of the relevant staff's data literacy capabilities. Importantly, the University's data storage and usage practices conform with the provisions of the *Protection of Personal Information Act.*

Recommendation:

14. It is recommended that the University should intensify its data literacy training endeavours to enhance the data interpretation skills of all relevant staff.

Standard 8:

Systems and processes monitor the institution's capacity for quality management, based on the evidence gathered.

The panel is of the view that the University, despite one significant shortcoming alluded to below, for the most part, complies with the main requirements associated with Standard 8. Furthermore, the University has shown proof that it has at its disposal the necessary processes to monitor quality management and assurance, including during periods of disruption.

Recommendations:

It is recommended that:

15. The University's draft *Disaster Management Plan* should be finalised and adopted as soon as possible, and an awareness programme of its existence and content should be initiated.

16. The University should consider developing standard operating procedures which should be attached to the *Disaster Management Plan* as annexures, to make the document easier to navigate and use.

Focus area 3: The coherence and integration of the institutional quality management system support the core academic functions

The four standards in Focus Area 3 concentrate on the coherence and integration of the various components comprising the institutional quality management system and on how these work in concert to support the likelihood of student success and improve the quality of learning, teaching and research engagement, as well as accommodating the results of constructive integrated community engagement in accordance with the institution's mission. These standards are:

Standard 9:

An evidence-based coherent, reasonable, functional and meaningfully structured relationship exists between all components of the institutional quality management system.

Based on the University's SER and supporting documentation, it can be argued that "meaningfully structured" relationships exist between all elements of the University of Zululand's quality management system. Furthermore, the functioning of and relationships between the components of the quality management system are monitored on an ongoing basis by the University's Management Committee. Nonetheless, as reflected in the recommendations to the University below, the panel has identified a few lacunae in the University's performance in relation to this standard. Addressing these shortcomings should however not be too onerous.

Recommendations:

It is recommended that:

17. The University should analyse the performance management system (PMS) templates for their effectiveness in ensuring equitable work distributions, the integration of teaching and learning, research, and community engagement, and ensuring that more junior staff

have an opportunity to develop their research and community engagement portfolios. In addition, the PMS review should ensure that the quality of activities undertaken expressly leads to the achievement of the goals and strategic objectives of the *University's Strategic Plan*.

18.   The University should prioritise the provision of appropriate PowerHEDA dashboards to all relevant role-players and ensure that all staff attain the levels of data literacy that are required to fully understand the PowerHEDA system, and the dashboards provided. (Also see recommendation 14 above.)

19.   The University should ensure that: (a) the status of community engagement in the University is enhanced, (b) the quality and coordination of its community engagement initiatives are evaluated, and (c) the *Policy and Procedures on Community Engagement* and its *Community Engagement Strategic Plan are aligned.* (Also see recommendation 8 above).

20.   The University should implement a referral, tracking and evaluation system to monitor and evaluate the impact of the support interventions implemented to ensure meaningful quality improvements in module success and pass rates.

Standard 10:

Evidence-based regular and dedicated governance and management oversight of the quality assurance system exists.

The University of Zululand has established a range of policies and procedures involving, *inter alia*, the University Council, Senate, and Management Committee, which enables it to provide appropriate oversight of its quality assurance system. This is facilitated by clear lines of authority between the different components of the system. As indicated in this report, however, the University should attend to the concerns expressed by some members of the University community in respect of the University's Staff Consultative Forum.

Recommendation:

It is recommended that:

21.   The University should consult with all staff on the effectiveness of the Staff Consultative Forum in addressing the needs of all staff equitably, as well as consider the re-establishment of the staff union representation as soon as this is possible.

Standard 11:

Planning and processes exist for the reasonable and functional allocation of resources to all components of the institutional quality management system.

Based on the assessment of the University's SER and the interviews conducted with key role players at the University, the panel is of the view that the University of Zululand basically has the requisite systems in place to ensure a reasonable, fair, functional, and transparent allocation of resources to all the principal elements of its quality management system. However, work is required in respect of establishing an institution-wide work allocation system. The University will also have to ensure that measures are in place to avoid underspending of DHET grants.

Recommendations:

It is recommended that:

22. The University must ensure that resources for new programmes are provided ahead of the year of the programmes being introduced (See comments above regarding the new Engineering programmes).

23. The University should put systems in place to ensure that the UCDP and the Clinical Training grant are used promptly and efficiently.

24. Staff and student climate surveys should be conducted regularly (ideally, every two years) to monitor progress made in addressing staff and student concerns highlighted in previous surveys.

25. The University should conduct an audit on the staff establishment of all departments to assess the cost to the company in converting time-on-task staff to full-time staff to ensure that there is stable and sufficient staff support at the University.

26. The University should develop a workload policy to ensure equitable staff workload allocations that align with the requirements of the PMS.

Standard 12:

The quality assurance system achieves its purpose efficiently and effectively.

The panel believes that the University, on the whole, has appropriate measures in place to ensure that the quality assurance system achieves its purpose efficiently and effectively. Nonetheless, as pointed out in the report, the University should address the vacancies in key positions and consistently monitor and assess, in a more holistic manner, the impact of all its staff development

interventions.

Recommendation:

27. It is recommended that the University should analyse the impact of staff development opportunities on the enhancement of the core functions of the institution.

Focus area 4: Curriculum development, learning and teaching support the likelihood of student success

The four standards in Focus Area 4 concentrate on how effectively the institutional quality management system enhances the likelihood of student success, improves learning and teaching and supports the scholarship of learning and teaching. These standards drill down in greater detail in Focus Area 2. These standards are:

Standard 13:

An effective institutional system for programme design, approval, delivery, management and review is in place.

The University of Zululand has clear procedures for programme design, development, approval, and review. The introduction of new programmes involves comprehensive consultation, adherence to policy documents and guidelines, and various steps, such as programme design workshops, module development, peer review, evaluation, and approval by relevant university structures. These processes also involve various academic governance structures. To further strengthen the repertoire of systems aimed at reviewing the quality of its programmes, the University should implement the recently piloted Quinquennial Review system across all departments in all faculties.

Recommendation:

28. It is recommended that the University should expedite the institution-wide implementation of the recently piloted Quinquennial Review system.

Standard 14:

There is evidence-based engagement at various institutional levels, among staff, and among staff

and students, with:

      a.   curriculum transformation, curriculum reform and renewal;

      b.   learning and teaching innovation; and

      c.   the role of technology (1) in the curriculum, (2) in the world of work, and (3) in society in general.

The University has developed various formal consultative and decision-making structures to facilitate engagement on the part of staff, student, and external stakeholder participation in diverse aspects of teaching and learning, such as curriculum reform, transformation, and renewal, teaching methodologies, assessment, and the role of technology in teaching and learning. However, while the University is manifestly invested in curriculum transformation, it does not have a formal policy to guide its curriculum transformation endeavours. This requires attention as does the University's endeavours in respect of teaching innovations.

Recommendations:

It is recommended that:

29. The University should develop and adopt a policy on curriculum transformation in order to guide ongoing and consistent institution-wide curriculum transformation.
30. The University should consider a more formal or programmatic approach to institutionalising innovation in teaching and learning.

Standard 15:

The students' exposure to learning and teaching at the institution, across all sites and modes of provision, is experienced as positive and enabling of their success.

The University conducts various surveys to allow students, graduates, and alumni to share their experiences at different stages of their academic journey. These surveys assess crucial aspects of module delivery, including teaching, assessment, and the learning environment, emphasising the University's commitment to ensuring the quality of the student experience. Based on the outcome of these surveys as well as the interviews conducted by the panel with staff and students, the panel is of the opinion that students largely view their educational experiences at the University positively. Two lacunae in the University's performance in respect of Standard 15 were however identified. These relate to the fact that module evaluations do not take place consistently across all modules as well as the fact that some of the students interviewed indicated that it is not clear how students should register their complaints about their learning experiences

at the University (i.e., other than through the periodic surveys).

Commendation:

b. During the site visit, the panel was struck by the positivity and loyalty towards the University expressed by management, other staff and students, including members of the SRC. This was perceived by the panel as an indication of an engaging and inclusive University culture, for which the panel commends the University, particularly its leadership.

Recommendations:

It is recommended that:

31. The University should ensure the implementation of a compulsory module evaluation system for all modules.
32. Efforts should be made to articulate and improve the efficiency of mechanisms for managing student complaints and appeals.

Standard 16:

Institutions engage with and reflect on the employability of their graduates in a changing world.

During the period under the review, the University performed less well on Standard 16 than it did in respect of the other standards. Specifically, the panel found that the University should endeavour to significantly enhance its performance in respect of the following: alumni engagement; assessment of graduate outcomes; investment in career readiness programmes for students who are enrolled in non-professional programmes, and engagement with industry partners.

Recommendations:

It is recommended that:

33. The University should implement initiatives to enhance alumni engagement.
34. The University should conduct longitudinal follow-up surveys to gain a more comprehensive understanding of graduate outcomes. These surveys would track graduates' employment status and career progression over an extended period. By

collecting data at different points in graduates' careers, the University can assess the long-term impact of its programmes and identify trends and patterns in career development.

35. The University should actively engage with industry partners, so as to ensure the ongoing relevance of programmes and improve graduate employability. The University can gain insights into emerging trends and skills requirements by establishing partnerships with employers, professional organisations and industry leaders. This collaboration can inform curriculum development, internships and job placement initiatives, thereby increasing graduates' chances of meaningful employment.

36. The University should consider benchmarking its graduate employment outcomes and employability initiatives against those of other reputable institutions. This comparison can help identify areas where the University can further enhance its efforts in supporting graduate employability.

Thus, as indicated on page 10, over and above identifying various strengths in the University of Zululand's quality management and assurance processes, the panel also identified a range of lacunae that the University should attend to, as reflected in the list of 36 recommendations above.