COUNCIL ON HIGHER EDUCATION

Title: Higher Education Practice Standard for

Programme Processes

Long Form: Higher Education Practice Standard for *Programme Design, Approval and Review for /of full qualifications of public and private higher education institutions in South Africa to be registered on the HEQSF*

1. Preamble for the HEPS on *Programme Processes*

In an era of globalisation, massification, internationalisation and transformation of higher education, the need for learning programmes that value responsiveness, disciplinarity, lifelong, life-wide, and life-deep learning, graduateness, critical citizenship, decolonisation of the curriculum, epistemological access and the use of information and communication technologies to facilitate learning, has emerged. These drivers, to varying degrees, impact on the planning and design of new higher education programmes and the review, re-design and renewal of existing programmes and their modules offered by higher education institutions in South Africa. Nevertheless, the primary concern remains the enhancement of student learning to those who can demonstrate disciplinary-based knowledge, practice-based skills and professionally oriented qualities and attributes that are personally, occupationally, and socially valuable (CHE, 2017).

This higher education practice standard (HEPS) on programme design, review, and approval, draws on the definition of curriculum, as defined in the *CHE Quality Assurance Framework (QAF) for Higher Education in South Africa* (CHE, 2021:18), aimed at addressing the fundamental questions of what is taught, who is taught, who teaches, how it is taught and how learning is assessed. Curriculum, which constitutes the core of programme design, review, approval and accreditation practices in higher education, encompasses knowledge, skills, qualities and attributes that students should acquire through disciplinary, field-specific, and scholarly ways of knowing, doing, and becoming that is accomplished

through engagement with teaching, learning and assessment approaches and practices and demonstrate constructive alignment (Biggs & Tang, 2011). Programme design, review, approval and accreditation practices cannot take place in isolation but should be responsive to policy, economic, socio-cultural, linguistic, disciplinary, and learning-centred imperatives of an ever-changing knowledge-based society. Differences in terms of institutional types, qualification types, forms of knowledge and other relevant factors should be considered when designing contextually relevant and conceptually appropriate higher education programmes.

2. Rationale for the HEPS on *Programme Processes*

Programme design, review, approval, and accreditation practices hinge on the following key questions:

- What purposes and outcomes could the higher education programme achieve if it is aligned with the institution's identity (i.e. it's vision, mission, strategic goals and its mandate and context) as reflected on by the institution to Standard 1?
- What should be taught, learnt, and assessed to address these planned purposes and outcomes?
- How should the programme be structured, designed, delivered, and provisioned in terms of its modules, learning, Programme design, review, approval, and accreditation practices hinge on the following key questions:
- What purposes and outcomes could the higher education programme achieve if it is aligned with the institution's vision, mission, strategic goals and its mandate and context?
- What should be taught, learnt, and assessed to address these planned purposes and outcomes?
- How should the programme be structured, designed, delivered, and provisioned in terms of its modules, learning, teaching and assessment practices to address these purposes and outcomes?
- How can the outcomes of the learning experience of students and the attainment of the purposes and outcomes of the programme best be evaluated, revised, and improved?

It seems that these questions can best be served by acknowledging that the curriculum decision-making encompasses different stages of programme planning, designing, delivering, and provisioning, evaluating, reviewing and renewal that takes place within any higher education institution. Each of these stages consists of different undertakings supported by qualitative and quantitative data obtained from comprehensive situation analyses, including market surveys, needs analyses and stakeholder engagements. Furthermore, these stages are informed by national legislative frameworks, qualification frameworks, external and internal quality standards, policies, and procedures within any higher education institution to support student learning. However, curriculum, as argued by Badat (2022:6) has

"multiple determinants – values, epistemology, ontology, disciplines/fields, learning-related issues, history, culture, economic conditions and the like". Therefore, the curriculum is a contextualised social practice influenced by the conceptions and orientations of staff (academic, administration and professional academic support services) and the institution towards curriculum decision-making activities.

This higher education practice standard influences many other aspects of quality assurance and enhancement within higher education institutions and should not be considered in isolation from other higher education practice standards that form part of the *CHE Quality Assurance Framework (QAF) for Higher Education in South Africa* (2021). The primary concern of this higher education practice standard is formal qualifications as defined in the Higher Education Qualifications Sub-Framework and its amendments.

The HEPS on *Programme Processes* should be read in conjunction with other relevant standards, including *Institutional Identity and Agency*, *Transitions into Higher Education, Learning, Teaching and Assessment, Learning Environments, Transitions into Higher Education, Engaged Institutions* and *The Data Value Chain*.

3. The HEPS Statement for *Programme Processes*

The HEPS Statement is an overall statement or set of statements that explicitly describe the codes of practice and agreed-on norms that describe threshold levels or minimum expectations for practice in that area. More than one set of statements is possible when there are sub-sets of practice in the area. The statement(s) describe requirements in the area of practice to ensure acceptable levels of higher education provision, experiences and operations for the students, staff and the public.

HE institutions designs programmes aligned to the Higher Education Qualification Sub-Framework. A programme is linked to a qualification registered on the National Qualification Framework and is offered by a recognised, registered higher education institution. Within a differentiated higher education sector, the design and review of a programme takes place in the context of an institution's identity and mission and should be able to demonstrate fitness of purpose. Programmes and qualifications in an institution's qualification profile will be designed in alignment with the institution's identity. In accordance with the goal of the higher education system to transform society and to meet national development goals, an institution will critically reflect on the design and review of its programmes for alignment to the needs of relevant stakeholders, and the needs of an ever-changing knowledge-based society. Programme processes must

explicitly embed transformation by integrating African epistemologies, inclusivity measures and responsiveness to inequalities in society.

While programme design and review take place within a framework of national policies and imperatives, an institution's practices should reflect its orientation and distinctive context in relation to the core functions of higher education. Thus, institutions should be able to demonstrate how the choices made regarding qualification types (including their associated purpose, attributes and exit outcomes), learning programmes leading to these qualifications, target student audience, the pedagogical practices used for the development of learning outcomes, and knowledge areas relate to the institution's identity.

An institution must show evidence that it has considered relevant opportunities for student access, mobility and lifelong learning, and for success, in relation to the context of a programme and an evolving higher education landscape.

In relation to planning processes for programme design and review, there should be demonstrable alignment to the institution's resourcing capacity and there should be relevant plans for sustainability that cohere with an institution's identity. An institution's quality management system and mechanisms related to programme design, approval and review will demonstrate that related institutional processes, policies and procedures are in place and demonstrate the institution's capacity to manage the ongoing quality of the new programme, as well as continuous quality improvement of all existing programmes through a deliberately managed, monitored, and evaluated programme review process.

4. Guidelines for the HEPS on *Programme Processes*

Guidelines describe how HEPS might be interpreted and implemented. They set out good practice in the relevant area for consideration by the actors involved and provide the basis for differentiation between institutions, e.g. differentiation in terms of size, niche area and NQF level. The Guidelines are open-ended to allow for innovation and provide the basis for differentiation.

The Guidelines are posed as questions that enable institutions to engage with them in generative, reflexive and contextually responsive ways to constantly improve practice in the area. They are also used evaluatively in internal and external quality assurance processes to form the basis for the Criteria that will be developed for future external quality assurance (EQA) functions as described in the QAF such as accreditation and quality reviews.

DIMENSION 1: *PLANNING AND DESIGN*

In line with an institution's identity, vision, mission and strategic goals, a comprehensive system of policies, processes and procedures that direct curriculum and the decision-making of design, delivery and provisioning, evaluation, review and renewal of programmes, is

necessary for effective planning and design. Curriculum decision-making processes should observe relevant governing and legislative policy frameworks and strategies and demonstrate curriculum responsiveness to various global and national PESTEL factors and engagement with various external stakeholders. Comparative analyses and/or benchmarking exercises of other higher education institutions' qualifications and programmes could be conducted internationally and nationally during the planning and design of programmes. Comprehensive situational analyses, including labour market surveys and/or needs analysis, identification of scarce skills, feasibility studies, financial viability and sustainability projections, as well as feedback from students and/or alumni, conducted at institutional, faculty and/or departmental levels can inform planning and design. Suitable research methods should be used to obtain input from various stakeholders and role-players (internally and externally). Students' demographic profile and diverse needs, academic and career pathways, graduate employability, the achievement of graduate attributes, and their contribution to addressing the challenges of relevant communities locally and globally should be foregrounded in programme design, approval, and review.

Planning and design	a) How has the HE institution incorporated data on the institutional qualification and programme profile into the programme design, review and approval processes?
	b) What measures do HE institutions take to ensure that programmes offered are strategically and financially viable, sustainable, and socially and environmentally just?
	c) In what ways do organisational structures address the various aspects of the institutional capacity to offer a new programme and/or re-design/renew an existing programme?
	d) How are project management practices, including appropriate resourcing, scheduling, reporting, approving, monitoring, and evaluating, based on an agreed-upon timeframe and with available institutional resources, (e.g., human and physical), applied in the planning and design phases for new programmes or renewal of existing programmes?
	e) How have academics' scholarly engagement with relevant curriculum and learning theories, as well as principles of good curriculum practice, been incorporated into the planning, design, review, and approval of academic programmes?
	f) What academic development support services are available to build capacity and guide programme design, approval, and review teams within the institution?

	g) What are the possibilities associated with new and/or emerging interdisciplinary and/or transdisciplinary contexts and fields of knowledge production for the planning of the institution's programmes?
	h) How can local and indigenous sources of knowledge production be incorporated in the planning and design of new programmes?
	i) What are the global trends, challenges, and potential future developments in HE and how are these impacting on programme planning and design of new programmes or review of existing programmes?
	j) What are the challenges in the South African higher education environment, and how are these impacting on programme planning and design?
	k) What are the trends and challenges in the relevant programme-specific discipline(s) and domain (s) of practice and how do these influence programme planning and design?
	l) Are there underpinning values that need to be considered in the design of the specific programme (e.g., transformation, social responsiveness, etc.)
	m) How have students' demographic profile and diverse needs, academic and career pathways, graduate employability interests, and achievement on graduate attributes been incorporated into programme design, approval, and review?
	n) How have students' contributions to addressing the challenges of relevant communities locally and globally be foregrounded in programme design, approval and review?

DIMENSION 2: *STAKEHOLDERS*

By adopting an appropriately formulated stakeholder enhancement strategy, HE institutions can systematically identify, analyse, plan, and implement actions that are aimed at identifying and responding to the needs of key groups in relation to the purpose, nature and outcomes of a programme and its modules, and in relation to the institutional context.

In keeping with its unique ethos, identity, reputation and strategic direction within a competitive HE sector an institution's contribution to the country's economy and society, in general, is made explicit through designing relevant and financially viable programmes that are also strategically sustainable and socially just. *Active* stakeholder engagement promotes the sharing of relevant and reliable information, which contributes to an institution's efficacy, credibility and sustainability in the HE sector. The ladder of engagement developed by Rudd, Colligen & Naik (2006), consisting of notify, inform, consult, involve, collaborate, and empower, may serve as guidelines when institutions engage with external stakeholders.

Programme design, approval and review needs to be informed by guidance, input, and feedback from **internal role-players** within the higher education institution, such as academic, administrative, technical, and professional support staff through formal and informal communication channels. Feedback from governance structures, advisory boards and external and internal moderators constitute contextually rich sources of information. It is also important to consider the following three degrees of student engagement, namely consultation, partnership, and leadership (Ashwin & McVitty, 2015). In consultation, students are usually asked for their views on the curriculum, which may lead to minor amendments. Feedback on the programme/module(s) is often confined to a *post hoc* opinion survey (Ashwin & McVitty, 2015. Collaboration with students can support curriculum transformation. In leadership, the emphasis is on how students can create new learning programmes through their engagement. Curriculum decision-making processes, can also be informed by engagement with **various external stakeholders** such as academic peers and subject experts, locally and internationally, government departments, quality council(s), shareholders (i.e. for private higher education institutions), Sector Education and Training Authorities (SETAs), employers, statutory and non-statutory professional bodies, advisory boards, alumni, parents, sponsors, donors, community organisations, partner institutions and other post-secondary education and training (PSET) providers such as other institutional types.

Stakeholders	a) Which internal role-players have been consulted and why?
	b) Which data generation methods have been used to obtain input from these internal role players? How effective have these methods been for the institution?
	c) To what extent are academics in departments and faculties empowered to be actively involved in programme design and renewal?
	d) How are administrative, technical and support staff consulted / informed / involved in the various stages of programme design, approval, and renewal?
	e) In what ways can engagement with staff be cross-cutting between academic, professional and support staff to foster collaboration and multiple voices?
	f) What resources and academic support are provided by institutional governing structures to advise academic staff during the design of new programmes and renewal of existing programmes?
	g) How are current students and alumni engaged to exchange ideas to improve programme design (forward thinking) and programme renewal (retrospective)?
	h) Which data generation methods have been used to obtain feedback from students (past and present)? How effective have these methods been for the institution?
	i) How are current students and alumni consulted in determining the need for a new programme and the renewal of an existing programme?

	j) How representative is the sample of students who participated in curriculum decision-making of the target student profile for the programme(s) and / or module(s) under development or renewal?
	k) What levels of engagement with students (present and past) are prioritised during programme planning, design, and review? (e.g., notification / collaboration / empowerment)?
	l) Which external stakeholders have been consulted and why?
	m) Which data generation methods have been used to obtain input from external role-players? How effective have these methods been?
	n) What meaningful contribution has active stakeholder engagement with various key groups (i.e., professional bodies, employers, industry sectors, etc.) made to the responsiveness of HE programmes at this HE institution?
	o) In what ways have other higher education institutions (competitors) in the same geographic area and/or disciplinary context been consulted to improve the quality of this HE institution's programmes?
	p) How are shareholder expectations for return on investment, where relevant, and other factors such as the scarce skills needs of the country balanced during planning, design, approval and renewal of programmes?
	q) How does the programme compare with similar programmes offered by other higher education institutions nationally and internationally? Where are there opportunities to address any gaps or shortcomings if relevant? How is continuous improvement achieved?

DIMENSION 3: *COMMUNICATION*

Communication with external stakeholders and internal role-players, as listed above, should consider the institutional context, take the profile of the interest group(s), the goal of the communication, medium of communication and the feedback and follow-up actions into account. Communication modalities should also be reviewed on a regular basis for fitness of purpose. Since the profile of target audience(s) and their degree of engagement may differ, it is important to determine how programme design, approval and review processes will impact on their roles, responsibilities, duties, and interests. These aspects will affect the goal of communication and the nature of the message to be communicated (e.g. raise awareness, provide detailed information, influence attitudes and culture, attract prospective students, provide guidance, report decisions, address misconceptions, etc.), which in turn determine the ways of communicating with the various interest group(s) (e.g. electronic mail, reports, memos and notices, face-to-face meetings, focus groups, webinars, presentations, etc.). Modalities of communicating should be informative, timely and relevant to the target audience and therefore driven by a comprehensive communication plan.

Various communication channels should be used during the programme design, approval, and review processes at an institutional (e.g. Senate or Academic Board), faculty (e.g., faculty board, committees,) and departmental levels (e.g., committees, communities of

practice, interactions with staff and students inside and outside the classroom, informal gatherings, etc.). These communication channels should make provision for the effective handling of feedback, as well as dispute resolution. Curriculum decision-making and governance processes require the use of institution-specific programme and/or module specification templates that capture technical details (e.g., NQF levels, credits, programme and module names and codes, rules of combination and progression, etc.), conceptual (e.g., knowledge, skills and values), contextual (e.g. students' demographic profile, modes of provision, etc.) and/or operational elements (e.g. infrastructural requirements, timetabling, etc.). These templates should be aligned to the requirements of national legislative frameworks, accreditation criteria of quality councils, and professional bodies (statutory and non-statutory). Such information should align to the institution's prospectus and marketing material, year/handbooks, module outlines provided to students, and be present on student administration systems for certification processes. Such mechanisms are key to communicating consistent programme information to a wide range of relevant stakeholders. Ultimately, the curriculum decision-making processes linked to programme design, approval and review should be captured formally in written documentation that communicates programme and module details accurately and concisely to all stakeholders and role-players.

Communication	a) In what ways does communication with external stakeholders and internal role-players consider the institutional context, take the profile of the interest group(s), the goal of the communication, medium of communication and the feedback and follow-up actions into account?
	b) How are communication modalities reviewed for fitness of purpose?
	c) In what ways does communication generated by the institution differ based on the profile of target audience(s) and therefore, their roles, responsibilities, duties, and interests?
	d) How does the institution align the goal of communication and the nature of the message to be communicated (e.g. raise awareness, provide detailed information, influence attitudes and culture, attract prospective students, provide guidance, report decisions, address misconceptions) with the modalities of communication with various stakeholders (e.g. electronic mail, reports, memos and notices, face-to-face meetings, focus groups, webinars, presentations)?
	e) To what extent is there a communication plan that is relevant for the institution's needs and context?
	f) How are the institution's approval requirements for programme design, approval, and review processes met at the requisite levels (at an

	institutional, faculty, departmental/academic unit levels; committees, communities of practice, interactions with staff and students inside and outside the classroom, informal gatherings, etc.)?
	g) How is feedback managed?
	h) How are contestations in relation to programme design and review managed?
	i) What tools are used by the institution, to communicate curriculum decision-making for programmes, and how does the institution ensure consistency to operational elements (e.g. recruitment, handbooks, module outlines, certification, infrastructural requirements, timetabling, etc.)?

DIMENSION 4: *SOCIAL, COGNITIVE AND LINGUISTIC JUSTICE AND TRANSFORMATION*

Higher Education programmes are a key lever for transformation of South Africa. Our integrated national higher education system, which has emerged from a racialised one that prescribed who was able to access higher education, is defined by the achievement in and of, a learning programme (CHE, 2022). Institutions should critically reflect on how learning programmes will support a diverse student body's successful learning achievement, in line with the institutional identity and mission, and articulate what mechanisms and practices will be used to foster transformation and contribute to equity and social justice. Some of the ways in which the standard is critical to achieving and sustaining transformation includes practices of design and review of programmes that will support the development of graduates who can contribute to national development goals and the transformation of our society, equitable formal and epistemological access for students, social relations and inclusion, and multilingualism for all participants in higher education (CHE, 2020).

Consideration of relevant practices that facilitate access and articulation within the National Qualifications Framework, the development of context-relevant curricula within which students can locate themselves, learn, think and be and which stimulates the opportunity for cognitive change, are also relevant to programme design and review. Transformation within this standard is also embedded in a comprehensive and consultative internal and external approval process that involves a range of stakeholders and governance structures that represents a plurality of voices.

Social, cognitive and	a) In what ways do programmes offered by the institution reflect South Africa's transformation imperatives?
	b) How is the institutional strategy for transformation incorporated into the design and review of programmes?

	c) How does the programme prepare students to be graduates who exhibit qualities of critical citizenship?
	d) How does the institution see the relationship between programme development and review, and the resolution of complex problems facing society?
	e) In what ways is multilingualism developed as a fundamental competence of the institution's programmes?
	f) What opportunities do the institution's programmes offer for learning experiences with external partners and/or in civil society? If such opportunities are not present, what possibilities are there for such learning, and how is it relevant to the programme and the institution's context?
	g) What opportunities do the institution's programmes offer for students to engage with marginalised voices relevant to the context of the purpose of the programme?
	h) What opportunities does the institution offer for multiple pathways into a programme?
	i) In what ways are these pathway opportunities based on reflection on programme purpose, audience, and intended graduate attributes?
	j) Considering the respective context of a programme, how does the institution accommodate a diverse set of students with a view to encouraging social inclusion, in a programme?
	k) Additionally, how are students from a diverse set of backgrounds supported for student success?
	l) What professional development opportunities are on offer for staff to engage on matters such as curriculum transformation of and for the programme, at both a conceptual and pedagogical level?

DIMENSION 5: *KNOWLEDGE*

A range of national strategic and legislative frameworks and policies, as well as other good practice guidelines on teaching, learning, assessment, student engagement, community engagement and work-integrated learning, underpin the knowledge and ways of knowing needed by those who will engage with programme design, approval, and review practices. Additionally, through staff development practices within institutions, those who are involved in programme design, approval and review practices should also stay abreast with the latest developments related to qualification frameworks, qualification and quality standards, and quality assurance practices in other countries, to conduct comparative analyses and benchmarking of relevant qualifications. The conceptual framework on which the *Higher Education Qualifications Sub-Framework* (2014) and its amendments, and the CHE *Framework for Qualification Standards* (2015) are based, should be the cornerstone of curriculum decision-making processes. Hence, an in-depth understanding of curriculum differentiation based on different forms of knowledge and knowledge structures in the

curriculum is needed to foster an understanding of knowledge as socially constructed and historically and culturally determined.

Knowledge	a) Which national strategic and legislative frameworks and policies dominated discussion in a HE institution on planning, designing, approving and reviewing programmes? Why are these of particular importance and how have these impacted on curriculum decision-making processes?
	b) What measures has the institution taken to ensure that its programmes are comparable with those offered by other institutions nationally and internationally? What has been learned from these comparative analyses and benchmarking exercises to inform programme design, approval, and review at the institution?
	c) How has the institution reflected on its capacity in relation to its specific needs for the academic and professional development of support staff members with the required qualifications, knowledge, skills, and experience to guide academics in terms of curriculum decision-making processes. How are any shortcomings addressed and continuous improvement achieved?
	d) Which academic staff development opportunities (e.g., short courses, training programmes, learning material, etc.) are available in the institution to equip those who have to make curriculum decisions with the required knowledge and skills? How effective are these staff development practices for the institutional context, and how are any shortcomings addressed and continuous improvement achieved?
	e) What scholarly practices (e.g., webinars, seminars, conferences, etc.) pertaining to curriculum, teaching, learning and assessment occur regularly at the institution to support an inquiry-based approach to curriculum decision-making?
	f) How is new knowledge based on scholarly undertakings on curriculum, teaching, learning and assessment at the institution shared more broadly among staff and students?
	g) How regularly are existing programmes offered by the institution reviewed and revised?
	h) What structures, systems, policies, processes, and procedures, are in place as part of the internal quality assurance system for the review and revision of existing programmes?
	i) What structures, systems, policies, processes, and procedures, are in place as part of the internal quality assurance system for the approval of changes to existing programmes after reviews and revisions?
	j) Which continuous improvement measures are in place at the institution to ensure that feedback from various stakeholders and role-players is incorporated into programme review practices?

DIMENSION 6: *GOVERNANCE STRUCTURES AND MANAGEMENT ARRANGEMENTS*

Programme design and review represent one point of integration of the core functions of a higher education institution. It is thus critical that internal formal and informal governance structures and management arrangements for the achievement of this standard demonstrate coherence with an institution's identity, mission and vision and serve as a record of a relevant authority's approval and mechanism for the monitoring and achievement of an institution's strategy and policies. Such structures are therefore representative of an institution's internal quality management system. These include, for example, structures related to the relevant discipline, practice, and or field within the institution; those responsible for quality assurance and learning and teaching matters, structures responsible for resourcing of programmes, and the highest academic decision-making body of an institution. Such arrangements signal a set of milestones of decision making at various levels of an institution and represent engagement with a range of informed and relevant stakeholders. Governance structures themselves will also be subject to evaluation for their fitness of purpose in line with an institution's identity.

Governance structures and management arrangements	a) What types of institutional structures are in place for the approval of new programmes and review of existing programmes? Are these evaluated and continuously improved?
	b) How are governance and management structures constituted in terms of representation (of both staff and students) and roles, and what is the role of leadership and executive management of the institution in such structures?
	c) What processes are followed to ensure governance structures consist of relevant expertise required to review programmes and provide assurance of requisite quality standards and legislative requirements being met?
	d) How does the work of governance and management structures related to this standard align to relevant internal and external regulations and policies on programme and qualification design and review?
	e) How often are internal policies related to this standard reviewed and who are the relevant owners and users of such policies?
	f) How does the institution monitor programme implementation?
	g) How often is the mix or profile of programme offerings monitored and reviewed? Which structure, policy and processes are in place for this purpose?
	h) What organisational structures (business units) are in place to record and track decisions on new and existing programme management?
	i) What is the role of such organisational structures in the process of programme design and review?

	j) How is programme review information fed into the institution's data management of quality matters?
	k) What is the institution's arrangement for the management of programmes including where programmes are located and the reporting of student achievement, as determined by the terms of reference of the institution's respective examination structures and academic decision-making body of the awarding institution?
	l) What mechanisms, including processes, policies and practices are used to solicit student feedback for the purpose of programme review? m) How does the institution engage in programme renewal and who are its relevant stakeholders for such processes?
	n) What programme level policies and mechanisms are in place for the purposes of communication with students regarding grievance procedures and misconduct?
	o) How do programme level policies, processes and procedures align with institutional level policies, processes and procedures? Is there a programme manager with the requisite qualification, experience and knowledge and skills, as well as authority, in place to manage these?

DIMENSION 7: *LEADERSHIP*

In the context of programme design, approval and review, leadership should be in keeping with the institutional identity, vision, mission and strategic goals, and is operationalised through appropriate structures, systems, processes and procedures at institutional, faculty and departmental levels within a higher education institution. Programme design, approval and review practices within a higher education institution are overseen by appropriate leadership and management structures at the institutional level (e.g., Senate/Academic Boards, Academic Planning Committees, etc.) and at the faculty and departmental levels (e.g., academic boards, programme accreditation/ advisory and/or approval committees, etc.). Leadership ensures that there is continuous development of a quality culture when overseeing the processes and structures that guide programme design, approval, and programme review. Leadership emphasizes the importance of adherence to national legislative frameworks, institutional policies, and engagement with the scholarship of teaching and learning and the body of knowledge underpinning good curriculum decision-making practices as approaches which strengthen the duties and tasks that the relevant staff perform.

Leadership	a) How does the leadership understand their agential role in programme design, approval, and review? Who are the relevant leaders in relation to institutional programme processes, faculty programme processes and school and / or departmental programme processes?

	b) Does the leadership have the necessary competencies and skills to oversee the process of programme design, approval, and review?
	c) To what extent does the leadership guide and support all stakeholders (internal and external) in programme design, approval, and review?
	d) Which quality structures are in place to oversee the processes in programme design, approval, and review?
	e) In which ways does leadership drive a quality culture in programme design, approval, and review?

DIMENSION 8: *RESOURCE MANAGEMENT*

Programme design, approval, and programme review processes rely on careful consideration of appropriate resource management, including staff capacity, financial resources and requisite infrastructure. Staff capacity, including academic, administrative, technical, and professional academic support staff members, enables appropriate design, delivery, provisioning, and review of new and existing programmes. Hence, it is incumbent on institutions to ensure that adequate human capacity is allocated to these processes and that these staff members are suitably qualified and experienced, have manageable workloads and performance plans, and are granted professional learning opportunities for personal growth and well-being. Furthermore, based on an investigation into the financial and strategic viability and sustainability of a programme, institutions must take the type and nature of the qualification, the disciplinary context of the programme, student enrolments, the demographic profile of students, staff seniority and expertise, infrastructure (physical as well as digital infrastructure) and other relevant factors into account. Resource planning and management should also consider that the different phases of programme design, approval and review may differ in terms of their staff capacity, financial resources and infrastructural requirements, and these variances should be adequately accommodated.

Resource management	a) Which actors and stakeholders could be involved in the different stages of programme design, approval and review at an institution?
	b) How does the institution ensure that these staff members are qualified and have the relevant experience in terms of curriculum decision-making in higher education, and within their specific disciplinary, professional and support context?
	c) How are acceptable workloads for all these staff members involved in programme design, approval, and review processes determined?
	d) How is the scope of work to be handled by staff members (e.g. assigned to a specific faculty/academic unit or working across faculties/academic unit) determined?

	e) Which processes are in place to monitor, evaluate and improve the workload of staff?
	f) How is the performance of staff monitored, evaluated and improved?
	g) Which professional learning opportunities are available to staff to ensure that they stay abreast with the latest developments on curriculum inquiry and related aspects?
	h) What are the financial and infrastructural resources (e.g., office space, technology, equipment, ICT, etc.) available to staff members who are involved in programme design, approval and review processes?
	i) Which measures are in place to ensure that these resources are managed properly and maintained? How are shortcomings addressed and continuous improvement achieved?
	j) What processes does the institution use to establish whether it has the required staff capacity, infrastructure and facilities (e.g., teaching and research venues, technology and equipment, library and ICT infrastructure and resources, learning management systems, student support services, etc.) to support the delivery and provisioning of its programmes?
	k) How does the institution ensure that the infrastructure and facilities aimed at a particular programme are appropriately maintained and safe for students and staff to use?
	l) How does the institution ensure that the library services and ICT infrastructure support quality teaching in a programme and that enough relevant resources are available to students on all sites of provision?
	m) How does the institution ensure that suitable student support services are available to address the learning needs of a diverse student body in a programme, across all sites of provision?

DIMENSION 9: *DATA SOURCES*

A range of relevant data sources can be used to support programme design and review. Firstly, the qualification and programme profile or mix of an institution provides technical information on the institution's programmes and is interpreted in line with the institution's identity.

Additional data sources include statistical information on student demographics and student enrolments per programme, student success statistics, including throughput rates per programme, retention rates, and pass rates per module. Programme and module details information such as the design of the programme and its modules, student admission and selection requirements, availability of physical infrastructure (e.g., availability of lecturing venues, laboratories, technology, equipment, etc.), academic, technical, administrative, and academic support service capacity, expertise and workload, teaching, learning and assessment strategies to deliver the programme and its modules is another source of data.

Data-generating and collection methodologies for the purpose of obtaining feedback from various stakeholders and role-players on programmes and modules offered by the institution may include labour market surveys and/or needs analyses, information on South African scarce skills needs in a particular domain/field of study, feasibility studies, financial viability, and sustainability projects, as well as feedback from students and/or alumni, conducted at institutional, faculty and/or departmental levels within a higher education institution.

Data sources	a) What kind of data and information is generated to inform programme design, approval, and review?
	b) Who assumes responsibility for designing the required data collection instruments, e.g., surveys, interview protocols, etc.?
	c) Who assumes responsibility for generating the data and information needed to make informed curriculum decisions on programme design, approval and review?
	d) How are the data and information analysed, conclusions drawn, reported to relevant parties an infused into policy and programme review processes?
	e) What procedures are in place to verify access and to protect the rights of relevant parties? (in line with POPI and PAYA Acts) How is access to the data and information managed to protect the rights of relevant parties?
	f) How do the data and information generated enable relevant parties to make informed curriculum decisions? How effective are the existing practices for the institutional context and how can any shortcomings be addressed?
	g) What processes does the institution use ensure that new programmes and their modules are in keeping with the identity, vision, mission, and strategic direction of the institution and aligned to its qualification and programme profile or mix?
	h) What data does the institution rely on, to determine if there is a specific need for designing a new programme or modules? How are these sources determined and evaluated for relevance and adequacy?
	i) How does the institution ensure the validity of data and information related to designing, approving and reviewing programmes?
	j) What structures, policies, processes, and procedures does the institution have in place to support data and information management of its qualifications, programmes and modules? How effective are these for the institutional context and how are any shortcomings addressed and continuous improvement achieved?
	k) What are the measures taken by the institution to continuously improve the quality of its data and information aimed at programme design, approval, and review?

DIMENSION 10: *PHYSICAL AND DIGITAL ENVIRONMENTS*

A critical examination of physical and digital environments, digital devices and resources, and the ICT support system facilitates access for a range of students and also supports effective decision making. Virtual learning spaces, choices about both technologies and physical learning infrastructure, facilities that can support learning and teaching, and physical and social aspects of the physical environment need to be considered in relation to the institutional context and programme. The design of learning environments must be aligned with programme processes to ensure that spaces (physical, digital, and social) enable inclusive curricula and pedagogical transformation.

Physical and digital environments	a) How does the institution determine whether physical facilities are appropriate for this programme? This includes the availability of adequate classroom and laboratory space, as well as resources such as equipment, technology, and supplies needed to support this programme.
	b) How does the institution embrace the affordances of technology in relation to both supporting student learning and through choices made in programmes where technology is a central modality for provision?
	c) How does the institution determine whether technology and information systems are appropriate for this programme? This includes the availability of the appropriate hardware, software, and network infrastructure necessary to support programme-specific needs, such as online learning, data analysis, or remote collaboration.
	d) How does the institution ensure that, in this programme, the physical facilities, technology, library and information systems are accessible to all students and staff including those with disabilities and that they meet relevant legal and regulatory requirements?
	e) What institutional and programmatic measures are in place, including protection of sensitive data, intellectual property, and confidential information from unauthorized access, theft, or loss; to mitigate against security and privacy risks in technology-enhanced environments?
	f) How does the institution ensure that the facilities, technology, and library and information systems are reliable and scalable to meet the needs of this programme, its students and staff, now and in the future?

5. Criteria

Criteria are the instruments to determine whether the standard is being met or not. They are benchmarks for evaluation and for making quality judgements about higher education activities based on the standards and guidelines agreed upon by the Higher Education (HE) sector. The Criteria depend closely on the purpose of the quality judgement that it is meant to be used for.

Criteria are not included in the standard description. This is because the criteria will be developed to be relevant to the specific quality assurance exercise that is being conducted. This could be an internal quality assurance exercise conducted by an institution, or a specific external quality assurance activity to be conducted by the CHE. Criteria are therefore activity, time and context specific. Some criteria, for example the criteria for accreditation, will be in place for a longer period.

Whenever an External Quality Assurance (EQA) activity is to be undertaken, the CHE will re-convene the Community of Practice to develop the relevant criteria for the exercise.

6. Review of the HEPS

It is understood that the HEPS will be regularly reviewed and revised in an iterative way to account for change. The HEPS on *Programme Processes* will be in place for the first iteration of the QAF, for 7 years.

7. References

Ashwin, P. & McVitty, D. (2015). The Meanings of Student Engagement: Implications for Policies and Practices. In Curaj, A., Matei, L., Pricopie, R., Salmi, J. & Scott, P. (Eds.), *The*

European Higher Education Area: Between Critical Reflections and Future Policies. (pp. 343-359). Springer Open.

Badat, S. (2022). *Thirteen Propositions on Teaching and Learning beyond the Covid-19 Pandemic and in the era of the Fourth Industrial Revolution*. SARChI Chair T&L Research Paper series No. 5. Johannesburg: University of Johannesburg

Bernstein, B. (2000.) *Pedagogy, symbolic control and identity: Theory, research, critique*. (Rev. ed.). Rowman & Littlefield.

Biggs, J., & Tang, C. (2011). *Teaching for Quality Learning at University: What the Student Does.* 4th ed. Open University Press.

Council on Higher Education. (2013). *Framework for Qualification Standards in Higher Education.* Council on Higher Education. http://nr-online.che.ac.za/html_documents/LLB/QS%20Framework%20approved%20by%20HEQC%20and%20Council.pdf

Council on Higher Education. (2014). *Higher Education Qualifications Sub-Framework.* Department of Higher Education and Training. https://www.gov.za/sites/default/files/gcis_document/201410/38116gon819.pdf

Council on Higher Education. (2016). *Policies on the Recognition of Prior Learning, Credit Accumulation and Transfer, and Assessment in higher education.* Council on Higher Education. https://www.che.ac.za/sites/default/files/RPL-CAT%20Assessment%20Policy%20Document.pdf

Council on Higher Education. (2017). *Quality Enhancement Project Phase 2: Focus Area and Institutional Submission.* Council on Higher Education. https://www.che.ac.za/sites/default/files/FINAL%20QEP%20phase%202%20%20MARCH%202017.pdf

Council on Higher Education. (2021). *A Quality Assurance Framework (QAF) for Higher Education in South Africa*. Council on Higher Education. https://www.che.ac.za/publications/frameworks/quality-assurance-framework-qaf-higher-education-south-africa

Council on Higher Education. (2021). *Draft Good Practice Guide on Student Engagement in Quality Assurance and Promotion in Higher Education*. Council on Higher Education. https://www.che.ac.za/publications/reports/draft-good-practice-guide-student-engagement-quality-assurance-and-promotion

Council on Higher Education. (2022). *Briefly Speaking, Dimensions of Transformation of Higher Education in South Africa*. Council on Higher Education. https://www.che.ac.za/news-and-announcements/brieflyspeaking-n0-21-dimensions-transformation-higher-education-south

Department of Education. (1997). *A Programme for the Transformation of Higher Education* [White paper]. https://www.gov.za/sites/default/files/gcis_document/201409/18207gen11960.pdf

Department of Education. (2008). *National Qualifications Framework Act No. 67 of 2008* (as amended). https://www.gov.za/documents/national-qualifications-framework-act-commencement

Maton, K. (2011). Theories and things: The semantics of disciplinarity. In Christie, F. & Maton, K. (Eds.), *Disciplinarity: Systematic functional and sociological perspectives*. (pp. 62–84). Continuum.

Maton, K. (2014). *Knowledge and Knowers: Towards a realist sociology of education*. Routledge.

Muller, J. (2009). Forms of knowledge and curriculum coherence. *Journal of Education and Work*, 22, 205–226.

Rudd, T., Colligen, F. & Naik, R. (2006). *Learner voice: A handbook from Futurelab*. [Online].https://www.researchgate.net/publication/32231461_Futurelab_Learner_voice_handbook

Shay, S. (2013). Conceptualising curriculum differentiation in higher education: A sociology of knowledge point of view. *British Journal of Sociology of Education,* 34(4), 563–582.