

COMMUNIQUÉ 7 OF 2026

To: All Higher Education Institutions, Higher Education Stakeholders and role-players in Higher Education, all interested persons

Subject: Implementation of the Revised HEQSF and Reminder of the Regulatory Requirements for Offering Higher Education Programmes.

Introduction

On 8 July 2026, the Council on Higher Education (CHE) issued Communiqué 5 of 2026, announcing the publication of the Revised Higher Education Qualifications Sub-Framework (HEQSF) in Government Gazette No. 54941 of 3 July 2026.

The Communiqué outlined the following arrangements regarding the implementation of the Revised HEQSF:

- 1.1.** The Revised HEQSF came into effect upon its publication in Government Gazette No. 54941 on 3 July 2026. However, recognising that some of the policies required to support its implementation are still being revised, the CHE indicated that certain provisions would be implemented in phases. This approach will allow the CHE to finalise the revision of the relevant policies and provide institutions with sufficient time to develop or revise their institutional policies in support of implementation.
- 1.2.** All programmes and qualifications included in institutions' HEQSF records remain valid. Institutions were encouraged to verify their records with the Management of the Higher Education Qualifications Sub-Framework sub-programme (M-HEQSF) by emailing mheqsf@che.ac.za and copying Dlamini.p@che.ac.za, to ensure the continued alignment and accuracy of these records.
- 1.3.** Institutions currently offering 240-credit Diplomas and wishing to continue offering the relevant Diploma qualification type were urged to develop replacement 360-credit Diplomas for submission for accreditation. This is intended to ensure alignment with the requirements of the Revised HEQSF, including those relating to work-integrated learning (WIL).

The Council on Higher Education is the Quality Council for Higher Education in South Africa

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- 1.4. The Communiqué further advised that the CHE is developing an implementation manual to support institutions in implementing the Revised HEQSF.
- 1.5. In the interim, the Higher Education Quality Committee (HEQC) has requested the CHE to issue a follow-up communiqué providing further clarity on the plans for implementing the Revised HEQSF. The HEQC also requested the CHE to reaffirm the regulatory requirements governing the provision of higher education, as previously communicated in Communiqué 4 of 2023, issued on 7 June 2023. Accordingly, this Communiqué seeks to:
 - 1.5.1. Clarify the plans and arrangements for implementing the Revised HEQSF; and
 - 1.5.2. Clarify the HEQC's expectations regarding the provision of higher education programmes and the awarding of qualifications.

2. Plans for Implementation of the Revised HEQSF

- 2.1. The CHE is currently developing an Implementation Manual and an Implementation Plan to support the implementation of the Revised HEQSF.
- 2.2. The two documents will be considered by the Management of Higher Education Qualifications Committee (M-QC) at its meeting scheduled for 15 October 2026, before being submitted to the Higher Education Quality Committee (HEQC) for consideration at its meeting scheduled for 6 November 2026.
- 2.3. Following consideration of the documents by the HEQC, detailed implementation arrangements will be communicated to the higher education sector. This will include
 - 2.3.1. Clarification on when institutions will be required to submit accreditation applications for new programmes which will need to be fully compliant with the requirements of the Revised HEQSF including clarification of qualification sub-types and other requirements.
 - 2.3.2. Transition arrangements for programmes that are already in the accreditation and registration process.
 - 2.3.3. Arrangements for qualifications that are currently registered on the NQF.

- 2.4.** In the interim, the CHE is conducting a series of workshops for different stakeholder groups, as follows:
- 2.4.1. A workshop for stakeholders within the NQF system of collaboration and other role-players in the NQF will take place on 21 September 2026.
 - 2.4.2. A series of regional roadshows for higher education institutions will take place in October 2026. The intended participants include institutional representatives from quality assurance units, curriculum development units, units responsible for programme and qualification mixes (PQMs) and student records, as well as academic staff. Further details will be communicated in due course.
- 2.5.** Higher education institutions should note that the current process for the re-registration of qualifications on the National Qualifications Framework (NQF) is separate from the implementation of the Revised HEQSF and is continuing as planned. The two processes must not be conflated. The content update to remove the Registered, Data under Construction (RDC) for registered qualifications to comply with the requirements of the Policy and Criteria for Registration of Qualifications and Part-qualifications on the NQF is applicable to qualifications as they are currently offered in line with the 2013 HEQSF and should not be used to make changes that would alter the qualification type, subtype or route, NQF level, credit structure, purpose, curriculum architecture or other fundamental features of an existing qualification to align with the Revised HEQSF (2026).

3. Reminder of the regulatory requirements for the offering of programmes in higher education.

- 3.1.** The following regulatory requirements must be met before a higher education programme may be offered:
- 3.1.1. The programme must have been deemed accredited and confirmed as aligned with the HEQSF, as reflected in the Offerings per Institution Report available on the HEQSF-Online portal; or have been submitted for accreditation after 01 January 2009 and been accredited by the Higher Education Quality Committee (HEQC).

- 3.1.2. The qualification awarded upon successful completion of the programme must be registered on the National Qualifications Framework (NQF) by the South African Qualifications Authority (SAQA).
- 3.1.3. In the case of a public higher education institution, the programme and associated qualification must be included in the institution's Programme and Qualification Mix (PQM), as approved by the Department of Higher Education and Training (DHET).
- 3.1.4. In the case of a private higher education institution, the programme and associated qualification must be included in the DHET's Register of Private Higher Education Institutions for each approved site of delivery.
- 3.2.** Institutions are further reminded that student enrolments and qualification achievements must be reported through the Higher Education Management Information System (HEMIS) or the Higher Education Quality Committee Information System (HEQCIS), as applicable. The information reported must correspond with the programme accredited by the HEQC, the qualification registered on the NQF and the information recorded in the institution's approved PQM or in the Register of Private Higher Education Institutions, as applicable.
- 3.3.** Institutions are reminded that HEQC decisions, including accreditation outcomes do not apply retrospectively. Institutions may therefore not enrol students in a programme before the programme has been accredited by the HEQC and all other applicable regulatory requirements have been met.
- 3.4.** Proposed changes to an accredited programme or its associated qualification must be submitted for approval through the applicable regulatory processes before implementation. The HEQC has processes in place for programme title changes and addition of new fields of study to existing qualifications.
- 3.5.** These may include approval by the DHET as part of the PQM process for public higher education institutions, evaluation and approval by the HEQC, and submission to SAQA for registration or amendment, where applicable.
- 3.6.** Institutions remain responsible for ensuring that any approved changes do not compromise the purpose, coherence, academic integrity or outcomes of the programme and its associated qualification as accredited and registered.

- 3.7.** The applicable regulatory requirements and approval processes are established to safeguard the integrity and validity of learner achievements recorded on the National Learners' Records Database (NLRD).
- 3.8.** Institutions are therefore required to ensure that, before enrolling students, all relevant requirements relating to programme accreditation, NQF registration and, where applicable, inclusion in the approved Programme and Qualification Mix (PQM) or the Register of Private Higher Education Institutions have been met.
- 3.9.** These requirements also apply to the offering of, and conferral of awards against, generic qualifications. Institutions must ensure that all awards are issued under the approved generic qualification title, without the addition of qualifiers. Only fields of study that have been approved by the HEQC may be offered within a generic qualification.
- 3.10.** The HEQC has no process through which it may retrospectively condone the offering of an unaccredited programmes, validate enrolments made before accreditation, or regularise achievements arising from non-compliant provision.
- 3.11.** Furthermore, the HEQC cannot retrospectively amend records on the NLRD.
- 3.12.** Institutions remain accountable for the accuracy, validity and regulatory compliance of the learner enrolment and achievement data they submit.

Any questions regarding the content of this communicate can be directed to mheqsf@che.ac.za and copying Dlamini.p@che.ac.za.



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