



ESWATINI HIGHER EDUCATION COUNCIL



Institutional Assessment Guidelines



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INSTITUTIONAL ASSESSMENT GUIDELINES

In terms of the Higher Education Act of 2013, the Swaziland Higher Education Council has the responsibility to assess institutions for establishment, registration and accreditation. It is responsible for setting out institutional standards to govern the operations, performance and general conduct of all institutions authorised to operate under the aforesaid Act. The following elements are considered in the assessment of an institution.

1. The Vision and Mission of the Institution

The institution has an explicit vision and mission statement. The mission statement should clearly spell out the overall purpose of the institution, which is the reason for its existence. It should clearly convey its goals and objectives and serve as the basis for the institution's day-to-day operations, as well as a guide for its strategic plans for the future. **Benchmarks**

- The **mission statement** clearly defines the purpose of the institution within the higher education sector as well as the interest groups the institution intends to serve.
- The higher education institution engages in **strategic planning** processes leading to clearly outlined plans for its continuous improvement and there is a provision of periodic reporting, monitoring and evaluation of the strategic plan.
- The institutional plans clearly indicate how **human, financial and infrastructural resources** will be made available to achieve said goals and priorities
- The strategic goals **clearly reflect milestones and achievable objectives**.

2. Institutional Governance and Management

The institution has a system of governance that facilitates the accomplishment of its mission and purposes; and supports institutional effectiveness and integrity. Through its organizational design and governance structure, the institution creates and sustains an environment that encourages teaching, learning, service, scholarships and where possible research and creative activity. It demonstrates administrative capacity by assuring provision of support adequate for the appropriate functioning of each organizational component. The institution's governance has sufficient independence from any other entity.

Benchmarks

- The higher education institution has a functioning **governing council/body**, which is a legally constituted body ultimately responsible for the institutions quality and integrity. The institution has and employs policies and procedures to engage its internal constituencies including – it's governing board, administration, staff, and student in the institution's governance.
- Senior management positions are filled with **competent (qualified, experienced, skilled and knowledgeable)** people.
- The administrative structures are **properly constituted** and operate in line with internationally accepted principles for governance.

- Delegated decision-making responsibilities, communication and reporting lines are clearly outlined – **management hierarchy** is clearly outlined
- Institution's **statutes are available and fully functional**, responsibilities and reporting lines are clearly outlined and in line with statutes

3. Internal Quality Assurance System

This is a system aiming at setting up, maintaining and improving the quality and standards of teaching, student learning experience, research, and service to community. The overall objective is to continuously evaluate, monitor, promote and improve the quality of the programmes and courses, and the institution as a whole. So the higher education institution should have a policy, system/s and relevant procedures for the assurance of quality.

Benchmarks

- The higher education institutions' quality assurance **practices and procedures support and buffer the achievement of quality in all aspects** of the endeavours of the higher education institution.
- Internal quality mechanisms are in place to monitor the day to day activities of the institution, including governance, administration, staff, finances, teaching and learning and assessment.
- Clear guidelines are in place for the **continuous improvement of quality** and these are consistently followed.
- The higher education institution has a **comprehensive internal quality assurance policy and clear guidelines and procedures for the effective monitoring and evaluation** of the implementation of the policy and these are duly followed.
- Multiple sources of information are used to monitor the quality of teaching such as classroom observation and student feedback.

4. Programme Design and Review

The higher education institution has policies and systems in place to ensure not only the quality of its programme design and development but also the fitness for purpose and relevance of developed programmes to national and industry socio economic needs. The design of the programme maintains an appropriate balance of theoretical, practical and experiential knowledge and skills. They have sufficient disciplinary content and theoretical depth at the appropriate level to serve their educational purposes. Institutions should also have procedures in place for the **regular and systematic review** of faculties, units and directorates and for programme evaluation aimed at continuous improvement and quality assurance.

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Benchmarks

- The collection of programmes offered by the institution is **aligned to its overall mission and vision** and reflects the niche area and market segment served by the institution.
- Programmes offered by the higher education institution **address national and industrial development needs and priorities**.
- The institution has specialized systems and a **clear and comprehensive Programme Development and Design Policy** that is implemented and monitored.
- Learning outcomes, degree of curriculum choice, teaching and learning methods and expected completion times cater for the learning needs of students. Competences of students who complete the programme are made explicit and aligned to the correct level of the SQF.
- **Reviews** of faculties, directorates, units and programmes **are undertaken regularly**.
- The institution has processes in place that provide students with the opportunity to **evaluate lecturers** and the results are considered for improvement of teaching.
- Tracer studies of alumni are undertaken to **determine the relevance and impact of the programmes** offered by the institution.
- Provision is made for periodic **international peer reviews of curricula** and review findings used to enhance and improve the quality of programmes.

5. Institutional Facilities and Infrastructure

The higher education institution should have the necessary physical facilities, resources and infra-structure required to support the nature and scope of programmes being offered. Adequate physical infra-structure enables effective implementation of planned curricular activities and experiences. Planning for these resources should take into consideration the following: a) The different needs of each of the courses in all the programmes in offer b) Provide students with learning space that guarantees their health & safety c) Ensure reasonable access to all equipment to all students d) Have in place mechanisms/ procedures for upkeep and maintenance. **Benchmarks**

- The institution has explicit and **detailed regulations, guidelines and processes for the resourcing and maintenance of physical facilities** and learning resources. The institutional budget makes **provision for the acquisition, maintenance, and replacement of capital items and consumables needed to support quality teaching**, learning and research.
- **Learning resources and physical facilities, including library, ICT infrastructure, lecture and laboratory facilities, specialist facilities**, ancillary support for learning and teaching are of the appropriate size and number to support effective teaching and learning.
- The institution maintains clear, **accurate and adequate information on institutional capacity**, facilities and resources.

- The institution has a **properly equipped and stocked library** with the required staff to support student use of the information services, and the library provides adequate workspace for students.
- All buildings meant for students' use meet basic health and safety standards and are conducive for learning and living purposes.

6. Staffing

The academic and support staff at the higher education institution should be sufficiently qualified and appropriately experienced to ensure quality education, research and community engagement.

Benchmarks

- The institution has sufficient numbers and continuity of faculty members to carry out both classroom and non-classroom roles of faculty. The **academic workload** allocation model in use takes into consideration the staff: student ratio, the nature and field of the programme being offered, and the number of courses each lecturer has to offer per semester.
- Academic staff members at the institution are **sufficiently and appropriately qualified**, and have the relevant experience to teach and assess student competence.
- The institution has a sound and publicly **accessible staff recruitment policy** with clear guidelines for the advertising and filling of vacancies.
- A sufficient **support staff is available** to provide the diversity/range of support functions/activities required and they are qualified, trained and well supported in their professional development
- The institution **has clear job descriptions** outlining the tasks and responsibilities of all staff members
- A staff appraisal system that includes giving staff feedback on their performance and helps identify staff development needs is in place.
- A Comprehensive **Rank and Promotion Policy** is available

7. Student Recruitment, Selection and Admission

The higher education institution has policies and procedures, including fair and equitable guidelines and processes, in place for the recruitment, selection and admission of students into its institution.

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Benchmarks

- The institution has an **explicit and coherent Admission Policy** which stipulates recruitment, selection and admission criteria for each programme. These criteria are aligned to the general requirements for entry into higher education
- The prospectus of the institution clearly explains entry **requirements, course expectations and evaluation criteria** and these are publicly available.
- The institution makes provision **for equity** in admission processes and has specific strategies in place to make provision for international students

8. Teaching, Learning & Student Assessment

The higher education institution gives recognition to the importance of promoting student learning and has explicit policies setting out teaching and learning for the range of programmes being offered. The teaching and learning strategy is appropriate for the institutional type and mode/s of delivery (contact or distance).

The outcomes of assessment have a profound effect on students' future careers. It is therefore important that assessment is carried out professionally at all times and that it takes into account the extensive knowledge that exists about testing and examinations processes. Higher education institutions should have explicit policies setting out its assessment procedures. The institution demonstrates commitment to educational achievement and development through ongoing assessment of student learning. **Benchmarks**

- The higher education institution has a comprehensive **Teaching & Learning Policy** in place that directs all its teaching and learning activities and is effectively communicated to staff and students.
- Students have the opportunity **to provide feedback on the programmes** and these inputs are taken into account in programme improvement and/or delivery methods of programmes.
- There is an appropriate balance between different **teaching and learning methods**. Teaching and learning methods are appropriate to the design and use of the learning materials and instructional and learning technology.
- There is evidence for partnerships for experiential learning.

The institution has a detailed and **clear assessment policy** in place that covers formative/summative assessment, internal and external moderation, remedial processes, student appeal processes, intellectual honesty of staff and students examination malpractice, thus ensuring rigor in the assessment practices. **This policy should be known to the students as well.**

- Students receive **timeous feedback on the outcomes of assessment** (in terms of the nature and level of the programme as well as the mode of delivery).
- All academic staff members have been **trained in the setting and evaluation of assessment tasks**.

- A system is in place to ensure safe storage of examination papers as well as students' results

9. Student Progression and support

The institution monitors student progress and has guidelines and services in place for the identification and support of at risk students.

Benchmarks

- The institution has clearly stated criteria (for each programmes offered) which set out the **rules for student progression from one year** level to another.
- The **institution identifies at-risk students** on a continuous basis in order to offer student support where and when appropriate.
- The institution offers appropriate and **adequate student support services**, including, but not limited to, psychological, social, academic, financial and other student needs
- The institution **has regulations in place to deal with student discipline**, plagiarism and other behavioural and academic infringements.

10. Financial and Administrative Systems

The higher education institution has appropriate financial and administrative systems in place which enable it to support the academic activities and tasks of the institution. It demonstrates the ability to respond to financial emergencies and unforeseen circumstances.

Benchmarks

- The institution has adequate financial resources to support programme delivery and sustain its operations.
- The institution has **effective administrative and financial services** in place to handle the admission of students, the provision of ancillary support of students, staff appointments, staff development opportunities, and the financial management of the institution
- Required systems, processes and structures are in place to **ensure sound financial management**
- Resource procurement **and allocation is sufficient to support the core areas necessary to ensure quality teaching and learning**, research and community engagement.
- Utilization of funds occurs in **accordance with the priorities** set in the mission and goals of the institution and financial audits are undertaken regularly.
- Institutional budgeting **processes are inclusive**, clearly communicated to staff, continuously monitored and reported to management.
- Effective **risk management** systems and processes are in place **to ensure continuous viability** of the institution.

11. Research Activities

The higher education institution encourages, promotes and engages research and development work aimed at innovation and of national interest.

Benchmarks

- The higher education institution **makes provision for research and offers explicit guidelines** on the manner in which research should be conducted and published.
- Systems, facilities and guidelines for conducting and publishing research, appropriate to the level and scale of the research involved, match international standards.
- **Time and resources** are made available for academic staff to conduct independent and team research, preferably research aligned to national priorities.

12. Management Information System

The higher education institution has developed and maintains an effective management information system that facilitates the recording and processing of student information and provides data for management planning. This system should cover, amongst other things, student progression and achievement, employability of graduates, student satisfaction with their programmes, effectiveness of lecturers, profile of student population, learning resources and their costs and the institution's own key performance indicators.

Benchmarks

- The institution has an **electronic data system** in place for the capturing and processing of student information and the monitoring of student progress
- The **institution collects, analyses** and uses relevant information for the effective management of its study programmes and other activities.
- Data on staff and students are **accurate, up-to-date and are used for planning and monitoring** processes.