



ESHEC
ESWATINI HIGHER
EDUCATION COUNCIL

Ensuring relevance & excellence

ESWATINI HIGHER EDUCATION COUNCIL



Programme Evaluation Standards and Guidelines



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These Programme Evaluation Standards and Guidelines were developed with the support of the Commonwealth of Learning (COL), Vancouver, Canada. COL is an intergovernmental organisation that Commonwealth Heads of Government created to promote the development and sharing of open learning and distance education knowledge, resources and technologies.



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PREAMBLE BY THE DIRECTOR MINISTRY OF EDUCATION AND TRAINING

In terms of the Higher Education Act of 2013, the Eswatini Higher Education Council (ESHEC) is responsible for evaluating the admissibility of all study programmes concerning quality. In a nutshell, accreditation of a programme that leads to a qualification requires that the programme demonstrate fitness, intellectual credibility, coherence, and capacity for articulation.

The Programme Evaluation Standards and Guidelines, developed in collaboration with the Commonwealth of Learning (COL), establish high-level quality standards applicable to all higher education programmes in Eswatini, covering various modes of delivery, including cross-border and online provision. These standards and guidelines are designed to facilitate the ongoing improvement of academic programme quality, focusing on new and existing offerings through accreditation and re-accreditation processes. Emphasising the role of higher education institutions in internal quality assurance (IQA), the standards and guidelines serve as an accreditation tool and a framework for institutions to elevate programme quality beyond the stipulated minimum standards and guidelines. The primary objectives of the standards and guidelines are to:

- Equip institutions with a framework to develop robust internal quality assurance mechanisms that support programme quality improvement.
- Provide a foundation for capacity-building initiatives that strengthen the implementation of quality standards and practices in local institutions.
- Establish criteria for programme evaluation that can be consistently applied within the higher education sector to assess and assure quality.
- Offer benchmarks that define quality standards across various institutions, facilitating comparability and continuous improvement across Eswatini's higher education landscape.

Institutions are encouraged to actively engage with these standards and guidelines, using them to identify strengths, address weaknesses, and foster a culture of continuous quality improvement.

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Dr Tholakele C. Mngometulu

The Director Ministry of Education and Training

FOREWORD BY ESHEC BOARD CHAIRPERSON

It is with great pride that we present these revised Programme Evaluation Standards and Guidelines, which reflect our collective commitment to enhancing the quality and relevance of higher education in Eswatini. This revision has been made possible through the dedicated collaboration between the Eswatini Higher Education Council (ESHEC) and the Commonwealth of Learning (COL), an organisation renowned for its global contributions to open and distance learning.

The standards and guidelines have been updated to align with international best practices and the evolving needs of the higher education sector, especially in the growing importance of online learning. They provide a comprehensive framework to support institutions in improving their governance, internal quality assurance systems, programme design, and infrastructure.

I want to thank the COL team, the expert consultants, and all stakeholders who participated in the review process. Their input has been invaluable in ensuring the standards and guidelines are practical and forward-looking. These standards and guidelines are a testament to our shared vision of fostering excellence in higher education and ensuring that Eswatini's institutions remain competitive on a global scale.

I encourage all institutions to adopt these standards and guidelines in their operational and academic practices. By doing so, we will collectively raise the standards of higher education in Eswatini, ensuring that our graduates are well-equipped to contribute meaningfully to the nation's development.

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Ms. Makhosazana Madondo
ESHEC Board Chairperson

TABLE OF CONTENTS

PREAMBLE BY THE DIRECTOR MINISTRY OF EDUCATION AND TRAINING	3
FOREWORD BY ESHEC BOARD CHAIRPERSON	4
GLOSSARY OF TERMS	6
PROGRAMME EVALUATION STANDARDS AND GUIDELINES	11
STANDARD 1 PROGRAMME MISSION STATEMENT	12
STANDARD 2 PROGRAMME DESIGN AND DEVELOPMENT	13
STANDARD 3 TEACHING AND LEARNING STRATEGY	15
STANDARD 4 ASSESSMENT AND LEARNER ATTAINMENT	17
STANDARD 5 INTERNAL QUALITY ASSURANCE MECHANISM	18
STANDARD 6 PHYSICAL RESOURCES AND INFRASTRUCTURE.....	20
STANDARD 7 STAFFING	22
STANDARD 8 LEARNER SUPPORT SERVICES.....	23
STANDARD 9 LEARNER ADMISSION TO A PROGRAMME	25
STANDARD 10 FINANCIAL RESOURCES.....	26
STANDARD 11 INFORMED AND ETHICAL USE OF TECHNOLOGY	27

GLOSSARY OF TERMS

Accreditation	Accreditation is a formal decision on the quality of a higher education institution, programmes, or facilities based on evidence that qualification framework levels and subject standards are compatible and in compliance with approved Quality Assurance Standards (QAS), usually valid for a limited period (CAT Policy, 2020).
Artificial Intelligence	Artificial Intelligence (AI) refers to the simulation of human intelligence processes by computer systems. AI encompasses various techniques, approaches, and technologies, including machine learning, natural language processing, Artificial computer vision, robotics, expert systems, and more. These Intelligence techniques enable AI systems to perform tasks that typically require human intelligence, such as understanding natural language, recognising patterns in data, making decisions, and solving complex problems.
Blended Learning	Blended learning, also known as hybrid learning, is a teaching and learning approach that combines traditional face-to-face instruction with online learning activities. In a blended learning environment, learners engage in a mix of in-person classroom sessions and online learning experiences. What learners do independently is complementary to what they do in a face-to-face environment—there is a blend of out-of-class and in-class learning activities.

Competencies	Competencies are defined skills, knowledge, and abilities students are expected to acquire through a programme.
Continuous Improvement	Continuous improvement is the ongoing process of identifying and implementing enhancements in quality across programmes and institutional practices.
Distance Learning	Distance learning refers to a mode of provision in which learners and instructors are separated by physical distance, and instruction is delivered through various technological means rather than in traditional face-to-face settings. Distance learning allows individuals to pursue education and training without being physically present in a traditional classroom setting, offering flexibility in terms of time, location, and pace of learning.
Generative Artificial Intelligence (Gen-AI)	Generative Artificial Intelligence (Generative AI) is a branch of artificial intelligence focused on creating models and algorithms capable of generating new content that resembles human-created data. This can include generating images, text, audio, video, and other forms of data.
Guidelines	Guidelines are established quality criteria or benchmarks institutions strive to meet to ensure a programme's effectiveness, consistency, and quality. Guidelines describe how standards linked to them may be achieved (ASG-QA)
Internal Quality Assurance (IQA)	Internal quality assurance (IQA) refers to the processes, Assurance mechanisms, and practices implemented within an educational institution to monitor, evaluate, and enhance the quality of its educational programs, services, and operations. IQA aims to ensure that the institution meets its standards

	of excellence and continuously improves its performance. Internal quality assurance is driven from within the institution.
Learning Management System (LMS)	Learning Management System (LMS) is a platform designed to facilitate learning design, delivery, and administration. LMS platforms are commonly used in educational institutions to deliver online learning experiences for learners.
Learning Outcomes	Learning outcomes are specific statements that clearly describe What learners are expected to know, understand, or be able to do because of a learning activity or educational program.
Qualifications Framework	A Qualifications Framework (QF) is a formal system used at the national level to classify and recognise qualifications and levels of learning achievement. It promotes transparency and comparability of qualifications, facilitating domestic and international recognition.
Online Learning	Online learning, or e-learning, refers to a mode of teaching and learning delivered primarily or entirely over the Internet or through digital technologies. In online learning, learners use online platforms and tools to engage in educational activities, access course materials, and interact with instructors and peers.
Programme of Study	It is a structured plan designed by an educational institution to guide students through a specific learning pathway. It outlines the sequence of courses, requirements, and learning outcomes that students must fulfil to earn a qualification. A programme leads to a qualification.

Programme Accreditation	Accreditation is a formal evaluation process used to assess the quality and effectiveness of an educational programme offered by an institution. It ensures that a programme meets certain quality and rigour standards the accrediting agency sets. It validates adherence to minimum standards and confirms a programme's quality, integrity, and fitness for purpose in the regional context. A programme is accredited for a limited period and needs re-accreditation.
Programme Design	Programme Design refers to the process of planning and organising the structure, content, and delivery of a program or project. It involves defining objectives, identifying target audiences, selecting appropriate methods and resources, and creating a coherent framework that guides the program's implementation and evaluation.
Quality	In higher education, quality means achieving desired standards, usually explicitly stated at the institutional and national levels. Quality involves setting standards to be achieved.
Quality assurance	It refers to an all-encompassing, ongoing process that systematically evaluates, monitors, and improves the quality of a higher education system, institution, or programme. It is a planned and structured approach to ensure that institutions or programmes meet established education, infrastructure, and governance standards.
Quality Management System (QMS)	It is a structured framework that documents processes, procedures, and responsibilities for achieving quality policies and objectives. It encompasses coordinated activities aimed at

	directing and controlling an institution to ensure that its educational services meet specified requirements, enhance student outcomes, and foster a culture of continuous improvement.
Standards	Standards refer to the specification of aspects, elements or principles to which a higher education institution should conform or by which quality is judged (ASG-QA)
Work Integrated Learning (WIL)	It is an educational approach that integrates academic learning with practical work experiences. By applying theoretical knowledge in real-world contexts, it enhances students' employability. WIL is a crucial strategy for producing work-ready graduates through experiential learning.

PROGRAMME EVALUATION STANDARDS AND GUIDELINES

In terms of the Higher Education Act of 2013, the Swaziland Higher Education Council has the responsibility to evaluate the admissibility of all study programmes in terms of quality.

The following quality standards and guidelines are considered in the evaluation of an academic programme:

- 1) Programme Mission Statement
- 2) Programme Design and Development
- 3) Teaching and Learning Strategy
- 4) Assessment and Learner Attainment
- 5) Internal Quality Assurance
- 6) Physical Resources and Infrastructure
- 7) Staffing
- 8) Learner Support Services
- 9) Learner Admission to a Programme
- 10) Financial Resources
- 11) Informed and Ethical Use of Technology

STANDARD 1: PROGRAMME MISSION STATEMENT

A programme should have a programme mission statement which gives the overall purpose of the programme. It describes what the programme is, the rationale for offering it, for whom it is designed, and the competencies it provides. It should convey its goals and objectives, serve as the basis for the programme's day-to-day operations, and guide its strategic plans. The goals must spell out the broad learning outcomes (i.e., what exactly will the learners learn).

Benchmarks

1. The programme's mission statement aligns with the overall institution's mandate and articulates who the organisation is, what it does, and whom it serves. Programme leaders review the mission statement periodically.
2. The faculty or department offering the programme has a plan or blueprint with measurable objectives/competencies and realistic timeframes.
3. Qualifications resulting from the programme are specified and communicated and refer to the correct level of ESQF.
4. The programme's purpose and skills gaps to be addressed are clearly described. The programme reflects how it contributes to the education and careers of graduating learners and the economy's development generally. It reflects the interests of stakeholders.
5. Where programmes are offered online, through blended or distance learning, there is a rationale for offering the programme using that mode of provision.

Examples of sources of evidence/indicators

- Relation to the institution's mission and planning
- Faculty or departmental plan (emanating from the institutional strategic plan)
- Faculty or departmental review minutes

STANDARD 2: PROGRAMME DESIGN AND DEVELOPMENT

This quality standard covers both programmes that need re-accreditation and those that are new and require accreditation for the first time. A programme consists of several courses and leads to a qualification. The institution demonstrates that the programme enhances learning and meets the country's socio-economic needs. The programme's mode of delivery should be ideal, incorporating innovative learning methods and technology. When a programme changes from face-to-face delivery to an online or distance mode, it is regarded as a new programme. It must undergo re-accreditation by ESHEC to ensure it meets the minimum standards and guidelines established for online programmes. The introduction of a postgraduate programme is contingent upon the existence of appropriate undergraduate programmes that are aligned with the intended outcomes of the postgraduate qualification, fostering an integrated learning environment.

Benchmarks:

1. The programme is designed coherently and articulates well with other relevant programmes, where possible. Online programmes should be equivalent to face-to-face and maintain the same quality standards.
2. Clear principles and guidelines guide programme development, and staff demonstrate proficiency and familiarity with their applications.
3. The institution adheres to the Credit Allocation and Transfer (CAT) policy in programme development and review, utilizing learning outcomes and credits to facilitate student mobility within and across institutions and sub-frameworks of the Eswatini Qualifications Framework (ESQF).
4. Where a programme is delivered online, it must be supported by a clear rationale for the online format, ensuring that the needs and characteristics of the target learners are thoroughly considered.
5. The programme's development and approval process is rigorous and thorough, as evidenced by the documentation showing the extent of consultation with internal and external stakeholders and benchmarking with other institutions.

6. The programme meets the requirements of learners and is intellectually credible.
7. The programme responds to the country's socio-economic needs and meets the demands of the local, regional, and international markets.
8. Programme design and development is informed by needs assessment.
9. The intended exit-level competencies are clearly articulated, appropriate for the programme's purpose, and aligned with the programme design and the assessment criteria.
10. The programme content is grounded in relevant theories and findings from current research, effectively integrating applicable examples and applications.
11. The programme's content, delivery methods and assessment strategy promote graduate employability.
12. The programme's assessment strategy must be established during the design stage to ensure alignment with educational objectives and quality standards.
13. The programme's intended learning outcomes are clearly stated and aligned with the relevant NQF level. Where transnational providers offer online programmes, they are aligned to the NQF of the destination country and customised for that context.
14. The programme is subjected to formal approval, systematic monitoring, and periodic review by internal and independent external bodies.
15. Internal reviews are conducted at the faculty, departmental, programme, and module levels. The programme has a culture of self-reviews for self-improvement.
16. The programme articulates with other programmes (within the institution and across universities) to facilitate learner progression.
17. If the proposed programme is a professional degree, it is endorsed by the relevant professional body.
18. Research is well integrated into academic programmes to equip learners with basic research skills and competencies.

19. Satisfaction surveys by stakeholders (like learners, parents and teachers) are conducted as appropriate.

Examples of sources of evidence/indicators

- Programme Development principles/guidelines
- Programme and course specifications
- Stakeholder inputs
- Benchmarking reports
- Documentation of internal formal approval of the programme
- Needs Assessment Report (Use ESHEC template)
- Professional body endorsement or approval
- Benchmarking reports
- Alignment to the ESQF (Coherence and articulation)
- Reports from surveys, focus groups, dialogue, tracer studies etc.
- Meetings of programme development
- Programme and course feedback

STANDARD 3: TEACHING AND LEARNING STRATEGY

The programme should have a clearly defined teaching and learning strategy that is reviewed regularly. Arrangements should be in place for quality assurance of the teaching and learning processes. The teaching and learning strategy of the programme should consider the mode of provision, the diversity of learners on the programme, and the ever-changing higher education environment.

Benchmarks

1. The programme's teaching and learning strategy is clearly articulated, with an appropriate mix of theoretical and applied experiences to achieve stated educational objectives/ competencies.
2. Teaching and learning strategies employ a variety of innovative pedagogical approaches and place learner success at the centre.
3. Guidelines on appropriate class sizes allow effective teaching and learning on the programme, and the guidelines are implemented.

4. A teaching and learning policy directs the programme's teaching and learning activities, including lecturers' workloads. The policy provides guidelines on how multi-campus teaching is managed to avoid disadvantaging learners.
5. There is evidence of partnerships for experiential learning.
6. Where distributed learners are enrolled, sufficient resources are provided; there is a learner tracking mechanism, and at-risk learners are identified early enough and supported.
7. Irrespective of the mode of provision, it is clear how learning is monitored. Learning analytics are used to improve teaching and learning, particularly in online learning.
8. Staff and learners are inducted to ensure familiarity with the technology used and to keep them up to date with technological developments.
9. There are opportunities for professional development for staff, especially staff that support online learning.
10. Learners and staff have ready access to relevant technology.
11. In blended learning, learners clearly know their responsibilities and what the institution provides. It is also clear how much time is spent on independent learning and how much is face-to-face. There is seamless integration of out-of-class and in-class learning.
12. When distance or remote learners are enrolled in a programme, sufficient administrative and technical resources must be provided to manage specialised tasks, including dispatching learning material and assessments, record-keeping, and addressing other student needs.
13. The performance of online teachers is regularly evaluated, including feedback from learners. The peer reports and learner review reports are analysed.

Examples of sources of evidence/indicators

- Teaching and learning strategy
- Teaching and learning policy
- Developed standard module or course outlines

- Evidence of action learning such as project, practical training, assignment, industrial attachment, etc.
- Library material (off/online)
- Relevant learning material (books, journals etc)
- Classroom space
- Memorandum of understanding/ Service Level agreements
- Timetables
- Experiential learning logbooks and reports
- Learner feedback (Lecturer feedback forms, End of course/ modules evaluations and reports)

STANDARD 4: ASSESSMENT AND LEARNER ATTAINMENT

There should be policy guidelines and procedures for a programme's assessment strategy that align with the institutional assessment policy (e.g., the number of assignments per course). The policy should have clearly outlined formative and summative assessment procedures, internal and external moderation, monitoring of learner progress, validity and reliability of assessment practices, recording of assessment results, rigour and security of the assessment system, and settling disputes.

Benchmarks

1. Learners should be assessed using published criteria, regulations and procedures that are applied consistently.
2. The assessment system is efficient, fair, and secure and employs sound quality assurance measures.
3. Where an online assessment is employed, appropriate measures and systems are established to ensure the rigour and credibility of the assessment process. Considerations include the convenience for learners and lecturers, the security of assessment procedures, and the reliability of the technological environment, all of which are thoroughly evaluated prior to the implementation of online assessments.
4. As much as possible, examinations that require laboratory activities are conducted in laboratories under qualified proctors.

5. There is proof that all teaching staff has been trained in pedagogy, assessment and evaluation of assessment tasks.
6. When work-integrated learning (WIL) is integrated into the programme, the assessment must be rigorous and credible.
7. There shall be established guidelines for maintaining proof of continuous assessment records, including work-integrated learning (WIL) assessment.
8. The programme assessment method is clearly articulated, and a well-defined assessment plan is established to ensure alignment with the institutional assessment policy.
9. The programme encompasses appropriate assessment procedures applicable to all delivery modes and a dedicated process for addressing assessment complaints.

Examples of sources of evidence/indicators

- Assessment policy and procedures
- Student assessment, project work, thesis, final examination, etc.
- Marking Guides or schemes
- Moderation Reports
- Assessment Rubrics
- Assessment Board Reports
- Published assessment criteria, regulations and procedures
- Recording of assessments
- Security of assessments

STANDARD 5: INTERNAL QUALITY ASSURANCE MECHANISM

The programme should have an internal system for continuously improving its teaching and learning, research and community service processes. The overall purpose of the internal quality assurance (IQA) system is to monitor programme performance continuously to ensure the achievement of the institutional mission and goals.

Benchmarks

1. Internal quality assurance mechanisms are in place to monitor the effectiveness of the faculty or department offering the programme's day-to-day activities, including governance, finances, infrastructure, teaching, and assessment resources. Evidence of such internal quality assurance (IQA) processes exists.
2. Regular feedback from employers, labour market representatives, and other relevant organisations is collected and used to improve programme development and implementation.
3. Tracer studies are conducted regularly to establish how well the programme's graduates are absorbed in the market and how they are performing.
4. Assessment data is analysed and used to monitor learner progress and achievement and, where necessary, to inform programme changes.
5. The programme includes mechanisms for identifying plagiarism and copyright infringement cases and guidelines for dealing with such cases.
6. Learners are involved in the programme's quality assurance activities, including developing policies, procedures or processes.
7. Learners evaluate teaching and learning processes, and results are analysed on time to use feedback for improvement.
8. The assessment of practical programme components (like laboratory experiments) is well-resourced, well-planned, and well-proctored. Appropriate numbers of candidates are used, and maximum security measures are taken at such venues.
9. The internal quality assurance system ensures that programmes, including online programmes, are appropriately designed, effectively delivered, and well-resourced.

Examples of sources of evidence/indicators

- IQA reports (moderation, external examiner, peer observation, audits, student progress, budgets)
- Records of department, faculty, and QA committee meetings discussing quality-related issues.
- Completed checklists ensuring adherence to internal and external regulations and standards.

- IQA workshop records
- Samples of daily or weekly lesson plans showing alignment with learning outcomes
- Standardised rubrics for assessments, projects, or exams.
- Logs of student advising sessions, interventions, and follow-ups.
- Student Feedback and Satisfaction Surveys
- Attendance Records, including online engagement metrics for online or blended learning
- Admission criteria, records of student entry qualifications, and enrolment data.
- Performance Appraisals

STANDARD 6: PHYSICAL RESOURCES AND INFRASTRUCTURE

There should be adequate resources and physical infrastructure to meet programme goals/ objectives. Adequate physical infrastructure 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 the programme 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. Where e-learning is used, most of the key resources are in digital format so learners can have ease of accessibility. Learners and staff are inducted into the usage rights of resources obtained online.

Benchmarks

1. Classrooms and library facilities are adequate, relevant, appropriate and accessible for the courses on offer. For online courses/modules, digital resources are prioritised so learners and lecturers can easily access them. As much as possible, Open Education Resources (OER) are used to enrich online learning. Students in each classroom must:
 - a) have free movement and easy access to desks.
 - b) sit comfortably with sufficient space between the desks and
 - c) have an easy vision of the lecturer and demonstration boards.

2. Relevant and appropriate software (like LMS and reliable Wi-Fi) and hardware are available and always functional where online or blended learning is used. Library and laboratory resources are kept up to date
3. There are sufficient and well-qualified human resources to maintain the technology.
4. Technology equipment and facilities are updated to keep pace with the latest versions.
5. Faculty facilities are appropriate and adequate for course development, learner and lecturer support and other faculty responsibilities.
6. There is appropriate and adequate equipment for coursework and research, including computer facilities, visual aids, etc.
7. Guidelines and processes for procuring/replenishing and maintaining physical facilities essential for teaching, learning, and research are in place.
8. The library and other resources for learner support, including ICT facilities and laboratories, cater for all learners (off-campus and on-campus) and have flexible opening hours.
9. A help desk will be available throughout the working day to assist learners in virtual programmes. A dedicated support staff member will respond to queries promptly and address technical and administrative issues to ensure a smooth learning experience.
10. Appropriate physical facilities and infrastructure are in place to accommodate staff and students with special needs.

Examples of sources of evidence/indicators

- List of Library collections and online databases/ journal subscriptions
- Teaching and Learning Classrooms/ Venues
- IT infrastructure and training (including Wi-Fi bandwidth size)
- Size and scope of library resources
- Integration of library resources into the programme
- Management and maintenance of library resources
- Library support and access to students

STANDARD 7: STAFFING

The programme should have an appropriate staffing structure consisting of academic, administrative, technical, and other support staff with relevant qualifications and experience. The responsibilities and job descriptions of such staff should be clearly defined. The calibre of the staff working in the programme, working conditions, professional development mechanisms, and productivity enable the programme to meet its expected objectives. Staff workloads should be structured to allow the staff to perform their roles effectively while minimising the risk of burnout. A lecturer should teach a maximum of four (4) courses per semester.

Benchmarks

1. The faculty or department offering the programme is administered by a qualified, experienced and competent management team with clearly defined roles and responsibilities.
2. Teaching staff must hold appropriate and relevant qualifications for their courses or modules higher than the exit level of the programme but, at minimum, a degree. Academic staff qualifications should be vertically aligned and relevant to the courses or modules taught. The following minimum requirements apply:
 - a) Lecturers in diploma and certificate programmes must possess a minimum of a bachelor's degree in the relevant discipline.
 - b) Lecturers in undergraduate programmes must hold a master's degree aligned with the corresponding bachelor's degree in the relevant discipline.
 - c) Lecturers in postgraduate programmes must have a Doctoral degree aligned with the master's and bachelor's degrees in the relevant discipline.
3. To commence or continue being offered, a programme must maintain a minimum academic staff ratio of 60% full-time to 40% part-time.
4. Staff recruitment and selection processes are objective, inclusive, equitable, and transparent, aligned with enrolments and programme requirements. These processes adhere to the stipulations of the Labour Relations Act and established conditions of service.

5. Academic staff qualifications were awarded by recognised higher education institutions and are verified against the Eswatini Qualifications Framework to ensure alignment with national standards.
6. The institution has a policy for continuous staff development to ensure that they remain informed about the latest developments in their fields and enhance their skills and expertise. This policy includes regular opportunities for professional development in which relevant academic staff actively participate.
7. A performance management system is in place to monitor and coordinate the specialised roles and tasks they perform. A promotion criterion should be based on a performance appraisal system, which itself should be based on several factors such as teaching, research, publication, etc
8. Administrative, technical and academic development support staff are adequately qualified for their duties, and opportunities exist for staff development.

Examples of sources of evidence/indicators

- Verified Qualifications and teaching experience for academic staff
- Employment contracts
- Assessment competence of teaching staff
- Research profile of academic staff
- Staff development reports/ training plans etc
- A list of Full-time and part-time staff
- Recruitment and selection policy
- Performance Management Tools (Performance agreements/appraisals)
- List of Administrative and technical staff (IT)
- Job descriptions

STANDARD 8: LEARNER SUPPORT SERVICES

Learner support structures provide a conducive environment to achieve the intended programme outcomes. A wide range of mechanisms cater to various learners with different needs. Learner support takes care of learners' academic and non-academic needs, uses learner data to enable timely provision of support where needed, makes

effective use of appropriate technology, and puts learner success at the centre. Learners are orientated on the available support services.

Benchmarks:

1. An accurate profile of learners is available to facilitate decisions on the appropriate support for the different learners.
2. Learners with special needs are catered for on the programme to ensure academic success.
3. Disadvantaged learners who may lack access to the necessary technology are considered in the delivery of blended or online programmes.
4. The Learning Management System (LMS) allows learners to submit queries and receive responses from designated staff within the institution, which is especially important for online programmes.
5. The library has enough material to support the proposed programme and an appropriate library management system for on-campus and off-campus learners.
6. Learners can access electronic information appropriate for the programme and its use.
7. There is an effective grievance handling procedure.
8. Medical, recreational and academic support structures should be in place in the programme
9. The institution provides an IT help desk facility to support on-campus and off-campus learners, ensuring access to technical assistance for a smooth learning experience regardless of location. Additionally, a procedure specifies turnaround times for addressing learner queries and providing feedback on course assessments.
10. The institution conducts regular programme-related research, including satisfaction surveys, to identify learner support needs and evaluate the effectiveness of the support mechanisms.

Examples of sources of evidence/indicators

- Student handbooks
- Published grievance procedure
- Access cards

- Student Identification cards
- Evidence of staff training on assessment
- Evidence of support structures
- Library systems

STANDARD 9: LEARNER ADMISSION TO A PROGRAMME

Admission to a programme is based on explicit and coherent admission criteria/ requirements and procedures that are non-discriminatory and contribute to its quality. Sufficient and accurate information is given upfront to inform prospective learners and parents about the programme.

Benchmarks

1. The programme defines, publishes, and makes admission practices readily available.
2. All promotional materials for the programme must present accurate and sufficient information regarding admission policies, completion requirements, and academic standards. Marketing efforts will comply with Eswatini Higher Education Council (ESHEC) regulations and must accurately reflect the Eswatini Qualifications Framework (ESQF) level and the programme's accreditation status.
3. The admission policy outlining the admission requirements of both local and international students is compatible with corresponding national and international priorities and the specific programme's requirements.
4. The policy clearly articulates issues of equity and inclusiveness. Learners with special needs are admitted to programmes of study, and where possible, there are policies in place to facilitate early identification of such learners and enhance their academic success.
5. The admission process into a programme is fair, transparent, and benchmarked against best practices, ensuring that qualifying candidates are admitted.
6. Programmes shall adhere to the minimal entry requirements as stipulated in the published Eswatini Qualifications Framework (ESQF).
7. Flexible entry routes, including RPL, are provided regarding general admission requirements and additional requirements for the programme, where

applicable. Admission of students through an RPL route should not constitute more than 10 per cent of the student intake for the programme.

Examples of sources of evidence/indicators

- Recruitment material with published admission criteria (brochures, pamphlets, prospectus)
- Admissions policy
- Admission board meetings
- Clear documentation of entry requirements
- Equity, inclusivity and gender mainstreaming policy

STANDARD 10: FINANCIAL RESOURCES

The department or faculty offering the programme has sufficient financial resources to run it and ensure its sustainability, given the projected student enrolment and the academic and support staff complement needed to run it effectively.

Benchmarks

1. The faculty or department offering the programme has a plan or blueprint showing projected learner enrolments and recurrent expenditure.
2. The programme budget aligns with learner enrolments and follows a defined process and procedures.
3. There should be projected estimated expenditure for the next 3-5 years, i.e. cost of equipment, supplies, and staff salaries and identify sources of revenue to support the programme and ensure sustainability
4. In distance and online programmes, the institution ensures transparency by avoiding hidden costs for learners. Clear information is provided upfront when unavoidable costs exist, enabling learners to make informed decisions about their financial commitments.

Examples of sources of evidence/indicators

- Departmental plans for projected student numbers
- Programme budgets

- Departmental procurement plan

STANDARD 11: INFORMED AND ETHICAL USE OF TECHNOLOGY

The programme should have expertise and policy guidelines on the ethical use of technology in teaching, learning, assessment and management. The policy guidelines should clearly state how learners and staff use existing and emerging technologies. The programme should be proactive and innovative in harnessing technology's affordances to enhance the quality of provision.

Benchmarks

1. The programme generally has clear guidelines for using technology, including emerging technologies like GenAI tools.
2. The programme has expertise in evaluating available technological tools and supporting staff and learners in appropriately understanding and using the technology.
3. Staff and learners are regularly trained/inducted on emerging technologies to promote a full understanding of the advantages of embracing such technology (e.g., ChatGPT²).
4. The programme has a system for monitoring the use of technology and its benefits (e.g., AI tools)³.

Examples of sources of evidence/indicators

- Ethical use of technology policy and guidelines
- Training records and attendance