ESHEC
ESWATINI HIGHER EDUCATION COUNCIL

Ensuring relevance & excellence

ESWATINI HIGHER EDUCATION COUNCIL

CLASSIFICATION OF HIGHER EDUCATION INSTITUTIONS IN ESWATINI

Board Approval	Designation	Signature	Council Resolution No.
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Revision History

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Table of Contents

1. INTRODUCTION

The Eswatini Higher Education Council (ESHEC), established under the Higher Education Act, 2013, serves as the national regulatory authority responsible for quality assurance in higher education programmes. Among its core mandates is the coordination of long-term planning and the strategic development of the higher education sector. This includes facilitating the establishment of a coherent and well-structured higher education system that is responsive to the country's human resource, economic, and developmental priorities. The classification of higher education institutions represents the Council's effort to provide institutions with clear guidance on the requirements for operating as Higher Education Institutions (HEIs) in Eswatini.

The classification system for higher education institutions in Eswatini shall serve as a supplementary instrument to the existing regulatory frameworks, including the Part 2 Regulations for the Registration of Higher Education Institutions, the Part 3 Regulations for Accreditation, the Institutional Assessment Standards and Guidelines, and the Eswatini Qualifications Framework. This system enables the Eswatini Higher Education Council (ESHEC) to categorise Higher Education Institutions (HEIs) according to their capabilities in research, innovation, teaching, and learning. Its primary objective is to provide a clear basis for guiding learners and the public on the level of education that an HEI is authorised to offer, as determined by its human resources, physical infrastructure, and research capacity.

The classification system is not intended to rank institutions and shall not be used for that purpose. Rather, it functions as a quality assurance mechanism designed to enhance public confidence in the ability of an HEI to deliver programmes that fall within the classification under which it is registered. This classification framework is neither exhaustive nor fixed; it is intended to be progressive, subject to refinement and enhancement over time, and informed by ongoing consultation with stakeholders.

1.1 Objectives of the classification

- To provide a platform for categorising HEIs based on their resources, including teaching and learning, size of the institution, programme offering, research, and innovation
- To provide information to the public and prospective students on the level of education that an HEI can offer
- To guide institutions in adjusting internal policies regarding recruitment, promotions, and research focus.
- To promote continuous quality improvement in service delivery among HEIs

2. DEFINITION OF A HIGHER EDUCATION INSTITUTION (HEI)

A Higher Education Institution (HEI) in Eswatini shall be defined according to the Eswatini Qualifications Framework (ESQF) as an institution established to provide full-time, part-time, or long-distance higher education. It is also established or deemed to be designated as a public or private Higher Education Institution (HEI) under the Higher Education Act of 2013 and fully registered or provisionally registered as a Higher Education Institution (HEI). The following are the terms associated with higher education provisions and providers in Eswatini. Given the ever-evolving higher education landscape and related diversification, nuances and exceptions are possible, provided they are pre-approved by ESHEC.

Term	Definition
University	An educational institution designed for instruction, examination, or both of students in many branches of advanced learning, conferring degrees in various faculties, and often embodying colleges and similar institutions.
College	A college is an educational institution where students receive higher education qualifications as per the ESQF in more than one field of learning, equivalent to diplomas and certificates.
Institute	Establishments offering courses in professional fields, arts, science, or technology. An institute can also be part of a University.
Academy	An academy is a higher education institution specialising in teaching a particular subject or training individuals for specific jobs.

Field of Learning	The following are the ESQF fields of learning: 1. Education 2. Arts and Humanities 3. Social sciences, journalism, and information 4. Business, Commerce, administration, and law 5. Natural sciences, mathematics, and statistics 6. Information and Communication Technologies 7. Engineering, manufacturing, and construction 8. Agriculture, forestry, fisheries, and veterinary 9. Health and welfare 10. Services
Qualification Types	The following are ESQF qualification types: 1. Certificates (may be awarded at more than one level of the ESQF between levels 1 and 8) 2. Diploma (may be awarded across more than one level of the ESQF between levels 5 and 8) 3. Bachelor's degree (ESQF Level 7) 4. Bachelor's Honours degree (ESQF Level 8) 5. Master's degree (ESQF Level 9) 6. Doctoral degree (ESQF Level 10)
ESQF Level Descriptors	The ESQF is made up of ten levels, each representing a different level of difficulty in learning and/ or application of knowledge and skills learnt (outcomes of learning). ESQF levels 4/5 and above refer to higher education.

3. CLASSIFICATION OF HIGHER EDUCATION INSTITUTIONS IN ESWATINI

This section addresses the diversity of the Eswatini higher education landscape by classifying the HE providers according to their depth of operations. Hence, a clear nomenclature for the type of HEI in Eswatini is laid out. Each category provides clear minimum requirements based on which an HEI is defined and evaluated. The classifications focus on the broad categories of institutional designations and the requirements to be met to use the relevant designation, as well as governance models.

4.   PROCEDURE FOR CLASSIFICATION

4.1 Prior Existing Higher Education Institution

For HEIs operating before the establishment of ESHEC, classification audits shall be conducted. An institution shall be notified in advance of the date when the audit shall be conducted. Before the said date, an institution shall be required to conduct a self-audit using the established standards and guidelines and set classification criteria.

4.2 New applications for registration

An HEI will apply for classification to ESHEC using the prescribed form (form X). The HEI will indicate on the application form the criteria it is applying for. The application, together with the accompanying documentation, shall be submitted to the ESHEC Secretariat. The HEI will be required to pay an assessment fee. The assessment will include a site visit to the HEI for verification of information in the application. Based on the assessment findings, recommendations and findings shall be made to the ESHEC Council.

4.3 Conditions of Classification

An HEI's classification is typically reviewed periodically every five (5) years to ensure it reflects current institutional characteristics. This review period allows for reconsideration based on recent data to determine whether the institution should remain in the same classification tier or be moved to a different one.

5.   Criteria used as a basis for classification

The classification of HEIs is categorised under seven (7) core requirements
Core requirement 1: Institutional Designation
Core requirement 2: Governance
Core requirement 3: Quality Assurance
Core requirement 4: Staffing
Core requirement 5: Infrastructure and facilities
Core requirement 6: Financial Resources
Core requirement 7: Community Service

5.1   Institutional Designation

Higher Education Institutions must be designated according to the respective types of institutions as stipulated in the requirements below.

Type	Minimum requirements
Universities (Public and Private)	
Programme Offering	PhD level, research and community development
Minimum Entry Requirements	Subject to faculty Special Regulations, the normal basic requirement for entrance to undergraduate degrees shall be a minimum of 6 passes at SGCSE/IGCSE/ GCE O' Level/A Level, IB, Matric, including passes at grade C or better in five subjects, including English
Additional Alignment	The requirements should also refer to the "Guidelines on registration of qualifications and part qualifications on the Eswatini Qualifications Framework" under Eswatini Qualifications Authority (EQA)"

Colleges (Public and Private)	
Programme Offering	Undergraduate levels according to the ESQF L4 to L6
Minimum Entry Requirements	At least 5 passes at SGCSE/IGCSE/ GCE O' Level, including 3 passes at C grade or better and a minimum of grade D in English Language and any other subject. Should specific subjects be a prerequisite for entry to a faculty, those subjects must be part of the five subjects passed.
	The requirements should also refer to the "Guidelines on registration of qualifications and part qualifications on the Eswatini Qualifications Framework" under Eswatini Qualifications Authority (EQA)"

Academy	
Programme offering	Undergraduate and graduate degrees according to the ESQF L4 to L7; applied research; formal and technical performance and innovation, and society services.

Teaching, learning, production, and research are all in one of the following fields or than one related field: arts, fine and performing arts (e.g., hands-on practice and outputs, including exhibitions and other demonstrations of arts, sport, military, police, air force, and other relevant fields. |

Minimum Entry Requirements	Subject to faculty Special Regulations, the normal basic requirement for entrance to undergraduate degrees shall be a minimum of 6 passes at SGCSE/IGCSE/ GCE O' Level, including passes at grade C or better in five subjects, including English. The requirements should also refer to the "Guidelines on registration of qualifications and part qualifications on the Eswatini Qualifications Framework" under Eswatini Qualifications Authority (EQA)"
Fields of learning	90% (or more) of programmes are in one (1) field of learning
Alignment	An academy should be associated to an institution

Institute	
Programme offering	Undergraduate and graduate degrees according to the ESQF L4 to L7; predominance of applied research and services to society
Minimum Entry Requirements	Subject to faculty Special Regulations, the normal basic requirement for entrance to undergraduate degrees shall be a minimum of 6 passes at SGCSE/IGCSE/ GCE O' Level, including passes at grade C or better in five subjects, including English The requirements should also refer to the "Guidelines on registration of qualifications and part qualifications on the Eswatini Qualifications Framework" under Eswatini Qualifications Authority (EQA)"

5.2   Governance

Governance is the system of rules and principles that directs and controls an organization, encompassing how decisions are made, who is responsible for them, and how the organization is held accountable. The organogram is a tool that depicts the structure of an organization.

Universities (Public and Private)	
Organisational Structure	The organisational structure is bicameral with two decision-making bodies; for strategic, organisational, and financial matters, the responsibility falls under the council, and for academic matters, the decision-making is with the Senate. **Chancellor:** The Chancellor, who is the titular head of the University and external to the university, is elected to the office by the Council in the

manner prescribed in the institutional statutes. The Chancellor holds office for five years and shall be eligible for re-election at the expiration of his or her term of office.

Vice Chancellor: Executive head of a university, a distinguished academician with a minimum of 10 years of experience as a professor in a university system or 10 years of experience in an equivalent position within a reputable research and/ or academic administrative organisation.

The Council Composition:
  a) University staff plus student representatives: not less than 30%
  b) Industry representative: not less than 20% and
  c) Founding member/ owners: not more than 40%
Number of Council members: at least 15
Term of office for council: 3 years

The Senate Composition: All full professors are members of the Senate, and at least 1 student.
Chairperson of the Senate: Vice Chancellor
Terms of Office for Senate: 3 Years

Inclusion of the organogram is mandatory.

Colleges (Public and Private)

Organisational Structure	The organisational structure is bicameral with two decision-making bodies: for strategic, organisational, and financial matters, the responsibility falls under the Governing Board. For academic matters, the decision-making is with the Academic Council.
	
	The Governing Board composition:
	  a) College senior staff plus student representative: 35 %
	  b) Industry representative: 40%
	  c) Founding members: 25%
	Number of governing board members: at least 15
	Term of office for Governing Board: 3 years
	
	Academic Council composition:
	  a) Director (Chair)
	  b) Heads of Departments
	  c) Senior academic staff representatives
	  d) Student representatives
	Terms of office for the Academic Council: 3 years
	
	Director of the College: Executive head of the institution with a Master's degree in a relevant field, at least five years in a leadership role, and a

	minimum of 2 years' working experience as an executive head. A PhD is an added advantage. Inclusion of the organogram is mandatory.
Academy & Institute	
	BOARD Industry representative: 40% Founding members: 25% **Number of governing board members**: at least 15 **Term of office for Governing Board**: 3 years **Academic Council composition**: Director (Chair) Heads of Departments Senior academic staff representatives Student representatives **Terms of office for the Academic Council**: 3 years
The organogram is mandatory for all HEIs	

Alignment to the King Report (a series of guidelines for corporate governance)

Key Components

- Governing Body (Board of Directors)
- Committees Reporting to the Board
    - *Audit and Risk Committee*
    - *Remuneration Committee*
    - *Nomination Committee*
    - *Sustainability/ESG Committee*
- Executive Management
- Internal Audit and Compliance
- Stakeholder Engagement Function

5.3   Quality Assurance (All types of HEIs)

Internal Quality Assurance	Minimum Requirements
The internal quality assurance system is robust and enables coverage of key functions.	There must be: • A designated function/ unit for quality assurance directly reporting to the Vice Chancellor/ Rector/ Director/ Principal • A designated person/ function within an administrative unit for quality assurance • A budget allocation for the QA function, which excludes salaries for QA functions or positions • Established QA mechanisms and matrices to support annual self-reviews • The designated QA Manager should focus on QA issues in the respective unit or office. No additional academic workload should be imposed. **NB: An academy and Institute should have a designated officer**

The internal quality assurance system enables the achievement of the strategic priorities, mission, and vision.	• Annual self-evaluation reports on institutional/ departmental performance, which include the following:
	  - Quantitative and qualitative analysis of the institutional or departmental performance for each key function, and in line with the approved strategic plan
	  - Major findings
	  - Recommendations for enhancement
	The annual self-evaluation reports should demonstrate a causative link between the strategic plan, budget allocation, QA actions and approved Annual Reports on organisational performance.

5.4 Staffing

The HEI secures an adequate and sufficiently qualified number of academic staff to ensure effective delivery and support of teaching, learning, and research.

Type	Minimum Requirements

All types of HEIs	a) Full-time academic staff to part-time staff ratio: 60/40
	b) For all academic staff:
	  • At least 2% of the overall workload of an academic staff member should be allocated for annual continuous professional development (e.g., workshops, training) and training on diverse teaching, learning, and assessment methodologies and new technologies. The professional development must culminate in an assessment
	  • Participation in at least 1 conference related to the field of learning annually
	  • Membership to an association or professional body, if applicable
	  • At least 8 hours of training on quality assurance annually

Undergraduate	a) 65% of academic staff with a terminal degree in the subject-specific area b) A Master's degree in a relevant subject-specific area
Master	a) 80% of academic staff with a terminal degree in the subject-specific area b) At least 1 professor per research area c) At least 1 primary (must be a professor) and a secondary supervisor per master's student d) A maximum of 5 master's students per primary supervisor
Doctoral	a) 90% of academic staff with a terminal degree in the subject-specific area b) At least 3 professors per research area c) At least 1 primary (must be a professor) and a secondary supervisor per doctoral student d) A maximum of 5 doctoral students per primary supervisor
The HEI provides for a clear approach to ensuring an adequate level of academic ranks supported by robust faculty promotion pathways, consideration, and adherence to the institutional policies.
Lecturer	For all fields: a) A lecturer must hold a minimum qualification of the ESQF level higher than the exit level in the teaching module b) Workload allocation: teaching/research/ community engagement ratio 80/10/10

Senior Lecturer	For all fields:
	a) A senior lecturer must hold a minimum qualification of the ESQF level higher than the exit level in the teaching module
	b) Workload allocation: teaching/research/ community engagement ratio 70/20/10
	c) An academic staff member qualifies for promotion to the level of senior lecturer if such staff member has:
	  • A doctoral degree
	  • At least 3 years of service as a lecturer at the particular institution.
	  • Proof of national and international reputation as a scholar or professional.
	  • A high degree of teaching proficiency and commitment.
	  • Evidence of impactful community engagement.
	  • At least 1 publication per year.

Associate Professor	a) Workload allocation: teaching/research/ community engagement ratio 60/30/10
	b) An academic staff member qualifies for promotion to the level of senior lecturer if such staff member has:
	  • A doctoral degree
	  • At least 3 years of service as a lecturer at the particular institution.
	  • Proof of national and international reputation as a scholar or professional
	  • A high degree of teaching proficiency and commitment
	  • Evidence of impactful community engagement
	  • Indexed publications
	All promotions to the level of Associate Professor must be externally reviewed by peer experts.

Head of Department (HoD)	An academic staff member qualifies for promotion to the level of senior lecturer if such a staff member has: • A doctoral degree • At least 6 years of service as a lecturer at the particular institution. • Proof of national and international reputation as a scholar or professional (Publications) • A high degree of teaching proficiency and commitment • Evidence of impactful community engagement • Proven record of contribution to departmental or faculty academic goals • Previous leadership in committees and sub-departments

5.5 Infrastructure and Facilities

Type	Minimum Requirements
Land Specifications according to Type	_Universities and Colleges_ Minimum 10 hectares _Institutes and Academies_ Between 5 and 10 hectares **NB:** For virtual universities and colleges, space should be provided for physical access points for student support and physical hubs.
Student Accommodation	_On campus accommodation **AND** Off campus accommodation (private)_ • Accommodation must be within five (5) kilometres of the campus unless special approval is granted. • Preference for accommodations within walking distance or near shops and public facilities. • Reliable transport must be provided for accommodations which are more than two (2) kilometres from campus. • At least 10% of students will be secured with dormitories
Software and Hardware	_Must cover the whole student journey;_ • From application, admission, enrolment, progression, graduation, alumni, and employment Manage assessment (online, summative, formative, diagnostic and peer assessment) including; • Security measures for assessment modalities • Integrity policies and measures • A staff member assigned for technical support

Internet	Provide campus network access via wired and wireless connections. Wireless networks offer different access levels: • full access for registered students and staff (authenticated via university credentials) • restricted guest access for visitors • network access policies Minimum internet speed recommendations for students usually start around 20 Mbps, with recommended speeds of 50 Mbps or higher for quality remote learning and working (remote and working from home for lecturers).
Library	The library should be administered and supervised by a full-time head librarian holding at least a Master's degree in Library and Information Science or a related field. Reading space accommodating at least 5% of the students population. The library should have a minimum core collection that supports all programmes offered by the university.
Sports and Recreational Facilities	*Universities and Colleges* Two (2) hectares reserved for open space (Greenery, parking) + 1 standard Athletics track (enclosing a football pitch) and two (2) sporting codes *Institutes and Academies* One (1) hectare reserved for open space (Greenery, parking) + at least two (2) sporting codes

5.6   Finances

All types	A five (5) year cash flow forecast Proof of operational funds Accounting system in line with accepted accounting standards Cash and risk management policy Audited financial statements

5.7 Community engagement

All types	Community Engagement Plan - Public lectures - Workshops - Cultural events open to the community - Volunteer programs that encourage student and staff participation in local initiatives - Community advisory boards On campus services - Career guidance - Counselling sessions - Campus clinic Shared services - Shared IT support - Shared infrastructure *(e.g Computer labs, Auditorium, Sporting Facilities)* Number of innovative outputs per cohort - Registered patents - Creative outputs such as designs, software, or artistic works depending on the discipline, Student-led innovation prototypes (health app, fintech app) - Peer reviewed publications Community impact projects - Medical programmes: *University Medical Training Clinic, Bakery* - Hospitality Programmes: *Cafeteria and Bakery* - Fine arts programmes: *Fashion Design Hub* - IT programmes: *ICT Hub*