



education

Department of Education
REPUBLIC OF SOUTH AFRICA



Communiqué No 2

This communiqué is the second of a series to inform the South African higher education community of the steps being taken to prepare the higher education system for the implementation of the Higher Education Qualifications Framework (HEQF).

Until the full implementation of the HEQF institutions will want to submit:

- applications to offer a new programme against an existing qualification (e.g. BA); and
- applications to offer a new programme against a new and HEQF-aligned qualification (e.g. Advanced Diploma).

The following guidelines prepared by the CHE, DOE and SAQA indicate which HEQF-related changes require fresh approval for funding, accreditation and registration, which qualification alignments do not, and how to distinguish between them.

- **Changes to an existing and approved programme which affect less than 50% of the programme** do not need to be submitted to the DoE for a PQM decision, to the HEQC for an accreditation decision, or to SAQA for the registration of the relevant qualification. During the transition period in the implementation of the HEQF, HEIs are strongly advised to follow this route as far as is possible.
- **Changes to an existing programme which affect more than 50% of the programme** must be linked to an existing qualification for which the institution has already obtained registration approval at SAQA. This programme will have to be submitted to the DoE for PQM approval and to the HEQC for accreditation.

- **New programmes linked to an existing qualification for which the institution has already obtained registration approval from SAQA** have to be submitted to the DoE for a PQM decision as well as to the HEQC for an accreditation decision. **New programmes of this type can be divided into two categories:**
 - **Programmes leading to existing qualifications which are accommodated within the HEQF** (for example, a 360-credit Diploma, a Bachelor's degree, a Master's degree) and for which the institution has already obtained registration approval from SAQA have to be submitted to the DoE for a PQM decision as well as to the HEQC for an accreditation decision.
 - **Programmes leading to existing qualifications that are not accommodated within the HEQF** (for example, a 240-credit Diploma, a B Tech degree) will not be considered until such time as the CHE has developed the required approach and policy framework for the generation and setting of standards for qualifications, including the designation of qualifications. A new qualification will have to be formally approved by the relevant structures.
- At this stage it is anticipated that this 'no approvals' phase, which only applies to programmes linked to qualifications that are not aligned with the HEQF, should not last longer than another 18 months. During this period guidelines will also be developed to assist HEIs in understanding which applications in this category would need fresh funding, accreditation and registration approval and which may not require such full approval.

At this stage it is not possible to set a specific date for existing qualifications to become 'HEQF compliant'. Nevertheless the importance of maintaining consistency and coherence in the higher education system is of such importance that this date is likely to be at least 4 to 5 years from now.

- During the transitional period, while the CHE is developing an approach and framework for the generation and setting of standards for qualifications in higher education **SAQA will rollover the present registration approval of existing HE qualifications for another three years.** In this regard SAQA will not establish new SGBs for HE and **will not register any new HE qualifications**, except the 167 NQF Level 5 to 8 Qualifications that are already in the pipeline, until a date has been set for this between the DoE, CHE and SAQA.
- **A coordination structure able to facilitate decisions in relation to PQM approval, standards, accreditation of programmes and registration of qualifications during the transition period will be created in order to expedite processes and ensure consistency.** This structure will be constituted in terms of expertise and stakeholder representation.

- This structure will be designated the Interim Joint Committee and will have responsibility to deal with the various aspects of PQM approval (DoE), standards generation and setting for qualifications (CHE), programme accreditation (CHE via HEQC), and registration of HE qualifications (SAQA).
- The IJC will initially exist until the end of 2009 with the option of renewing its operational life further by mutual agreement amongst the above parties. Its detailed brief, constitution and composition will be developed by the three parties and communicated to public and private HEIs in order to maintain transparency in the system.

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