

# QA and Standard Setting

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# QA and standards setting

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- ❑ HEQC is a subcommittee of the Council on Higher Education in South Africa, and it has responsibility for institutional audits, accreditation of new programmes, thematic reviews of existing programmes and capacity development and quality promotion.
- ❑ Involvement in standards setting limited.
- ❑ Evaluation of programmes against set standards.
- ❑ South Africa operates in the context of a national qualification framework and up to now the standard setting function was located in the SA Qualifications Authority.

# Accreditation as Quality Assurance

<b>Input</b>	<b>Programme design, student recruitment and admission, staffing, teaching and learning strategy, resources</b>
<b>Process</b>	Coordination, Academic development, teaching learning interaction, student assessment
<b>Output and impact</b>	Student retention, programme impact
<b>Review</b>	All above programme areas



# National Reviews as Quality Assurance: South African MBA as example

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- A participatory model is used to set standards:
  1. Integration of criteria for assessment
    - International options analysed
    - Stakeholder participation to create criteria (consensus used to develop criteria)
    - Consensus criteria benchmarked against international norms
  2. Criteria circulated broadly for comment (especially wrt programme design, programme and learning and assessment)



## Embedded requirements provide the framework for the development of criteria

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- ❑ Minimum standards used differently – programme vs. general conditions
- ❑ Programme purpose and level affect criterion development
- ❑ Benchmarking
- ❑ Exit level outcomes are focus

# Standard setting models in South Africa

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OLD UNIVERSITY  
MODEL – no minimum  
Standards (driven by  
Description of qualification  
purpose)

FORMER  
TECHNIKON MODEL –  
Driven by consensus on  
Subjects taught (no content  
prescription)

INDUSTRY-LED model –  
Driven by consensus on  
Standards (specific  
outcomes + attributes  
+ values)

PARTICIPATORY MODEL –  
Driven by agreed upon  
Criteria & standards  
with institutions  
responsible for meeting  
standards



# Tensions

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## □ Depth vs. practicality

- Limitations of an evaluation
- Approach and methodology
- Time is limited
- What CAN be done? What SHOULD be done – how deep is too deep in terms of what is necessary and useful?
- How many minimum standards?
- How many can one not meet?
- Options if 'exceeds minimum standards'



# Tensions in standard setting

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## □ **Autonomy vs regulation**

- Nature of 'control model'
- Hybrid model – institutional responsibility and external agency
- Accountability vs control
- Compliance vs homogeneity
- Standardisation vs autonomy and innovation
- Agreed upon standards vs context

# Tensions

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## □ Peer review

- Who is a peer?
- How important is the context of the programme?
- Biases, history and subjectivity
- To what extent is a particular body of knowledge and philosophical paradigm privileged over another? Is this a good or a bad thing? Does the consensus process entrench this?



# The million dollar question

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- ❑ Should the QA agency be involved in standard setting?
- ❑ Is this conceptually sound, practicable and transparent from the point of view of governance?