

# **POLICY AND CRITERIA FOR THE QUALITY ASSURANCE OF INDEPENDENT SCHOOLS AND THE ACCREDITATION AND MONITORING OF ASSESSMENT BODIES**

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#### **ACRONYMS**

GFET	General and Further Education and Training
GFETQF	General and Further Education and Training Qualifications Framework
NCS	National Curriculum Statement
NSC	National Senior Certificate
NQF	National Qualifications Framework
QC	Quality Council
SASA	South African Schools Act

## **CHAPTER 1**

### **OVERVIEW**

This is the revised policy text in accordance with comments received from various respondents following the Minister of Basic Education's invitation for public comments through Government Gazette 33930.

The document outlines the policy and criteria for the quality assurance of independent schools and the accreditation and monitoring of assessment bodies. While independent schools are sites of learning in respect of exit qualifications that are registered on the General and Further Education and Training Qualifications Framework Umalusi Council is responsible for, assessment bodies administer or conduct internal and external assessments at independent schools.

Chapter 1 covers the definitions applicable to this policy document. Chapter 2 outlines the legislative requirements for quality assurance of provision and Umalusi's approach to quality assurance. Chapter 3 follows with the criteria for the quality assurance and monitoring of independent schools and Chapter 4 provides the criteria for the accreditation and monitoring of assessment bodies that assess and examine qualifications in schools.

### **DEFINITION OF CONCEPTS, SCOPE, PURPOSE AND APPLICATION OF THE POLICY FRAMEWORK**

#### **1. Definitions**

In this document, any word or expression to which a meaning has been assigned in the National Qualifications Framework Act (Act No. 67 of 2008) and the

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General and Further Education and Training Quality Assurance Act (Act No. 58 of 2001), has the same meaning, unless the context otherwise indicates –

**“accreditation”** the recognition of a private provider of education and training or assessment against standards as part of a quality assurance process;

**“assessment”** means the process of identifying, gathering and interpreting information about a learner's achievement in order to-

- (a) assist the learner's development and improve the process of learning and teaching; and
- (b) evaluate and certify competence in order to ensure qualification credibility;

**“assessment agency”** means an agency accredited by Umalusi to set and conduct internal assessment;

**‘assessment body’** means a department of education or a body accredited by the Council as a body responsible for conducting internal assessment and external examinations ;

**“assessed curriculum”** means that part of the intended curriculum which features in assessment or examinations and “examined curriculum” has the same meaning;

**“certification”** means the formal recognition of a qualification or unit of learning awarded to a successful learner;

**“curriculum”** means the necessary underpinning framework documentation provided for a qualification to facilitate a more general understanding of its implementation in an educational system. The curriculum for a qualification provides a more detailed description of what is required for the purpose of the qualification to be fulfilled through its enactment. Syllabi for the necessary units of learning/subjects form an integral part of the curriculum;

**“enacted curriculum”** refers to management strategies and decisions, teaching practices, the knowledge imparted, learning activities and experiences that are intended to operationalise the intended curriculum;

**“examined curriculum”** means that part of the intended curriculum which features in assessment or examinations and “assessed curriculum” has the same meaning;

**“general education”** means compulsory education provided for in the South African Schools Act (SASA), 1996;

**“General and Further Education and Training Qualifications Framework”** means the sub-framework of qualifications developed and managed by Umalusi Quality

Council for NQF levels 1-4 as envisioned in Chapter 2 of the NQF Act no 67 of 2008;

**“GENFETQA Act”** means the General and Further Education and Training Quality Assurance Act no 58 of 2001;

**“further education and training”** means all learning and education and training programmes leading to qualifications at levels 2-4 of the National Qualifications Framework;

**“independent school”** means any private school established according to the SASA, 1996;

**“intended curriculum”** means the description of the skills and content and values to be taught and learned, how these are to be enacted in practice, and how they should be examined or assessed;

**“learning programme”** means a structured and purposeful set of learning experiences that leads to a qualification or part qualification. The nature of the programme will be determined by the qualification and curriculum that it serves. Learning programmes, while serving the ends of the qualification, do not form a part of the qualification itself.

**“Minister”** means the Minister of Basic Education;

**“National Qualification Framework” (NQF)** is a ten-level framework provided for the registration of national qualifications;

**“NQF Act”** means the National Qualification Framework Act No 67 of 2008

**“qualification”** means a registered national qualification, in the context of the NQF Act no 67 of 2008;

**“quality assurance”** means the process of measuring quality against standards;

**“Quality Council (QC)”** means a Quality Council contemplated in Chapter 5 of the NQF Act no 67 of 2008;

**“registered”** means registered on the NQF by SAQA in terms of Chapter 4 of the NQF Act no 67 of 2008;

**“requirements”** means requirements as established by this policy as determined by Council in respect of the quality assurance of independent schools, assessment bodies and assessment agencies;

## **2. Scope and purpose of the policy framework**

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The purpose of this policy is to set requirements for the quality assurance of:

- 2.1 Independent schools offering qualifications on the General and Further Education and Training Qualifications Framework and programmes leading to such qualifications such as the National Curriculum Statements (NCS), leading to the National Senior Certificate (NSC); and
- 2.2 Assessment bodies which provide assessment and examination services for qualifications on the General and Further Education and Training Qualifications Framework offered in schools.

### **3. Application of the policy**

This policy framework applies to:

- 3.1 Private institutions that are registered (in accordance with the South African Schools Act (SASA), No 84 of 1996) as independent schools.
- 3.2 Public and private assessment bodies that conduct and manage formal internal and external assessments for independent schools for qualifications on the General and Further Education and Training Qualifications Framework.

## **CHAPTER 2**

### **LEGISLATIVE CONTEXT AND UMALUSI' QUALITY ASSURANCE APPROACH**

#### **4. Legislative context**

4.1 The Constitution of the Republic of South Africa (Act No. 108 of 1996) and the South African Schools Act (SASA) (No. 84 of 1996) provide for the establishment of independent schools and public schools. Independent schools are required to register with the relevant provincial department of education.

The National Qualifications Framework (NQF) Act No. 67 of 2008, provides for the establishment of Umalusi as a Quality Council that is responsible for the development and management of a sub-framework of qualifications at levels 1-4 of the National Qualifications Framework and the related quality

assurance processes. The NQF Act No. 67 of 2008 determines that the Quality Council must, in respect of quality assurance within its sub-framework, do the following:

- 4.1.1 develop and implement policy for quality assurance;
- 4.1.2 ensure the integrity and credibility of quality assurance;
- 4.1.3 ensure that quality assurance as is necessary for the sub-framework is undertaken;

To determine and maintain the standard of qualifications in the General and Further Education and Training Qualifications Framework, Umalusi must ensure the following:

- 4.1.4 the associated qualifications and curricula are quality assured;
- 4.1.5 education institutions that offer provision towards the achievement of such qualifications are quality assured;
- 4.1.6 assessment bodies/agencies and systems that externally examine such qualifications are accredited, monitored and quality assured; and
- 4.1.7 the conduct of national external examinations for qualifications on the framework is moderated and monitored.

4.2 The *General and Further Education and Training Quality Assurance (GENFETQA) Act (No 58 of 2001)*, as amended in 2008, assigns responsibility for the quality assurance of independent schools to Umalusi (Chapter 3, 23 (2)(a)). In line with the object of the GENFETQA Act, namely, to enhance the quality of general and further education and training, Umalusi was established with the purpose of maintaining norms and standards in general and further education and training and as such its mandate is confirmed as follows:

- 4.2.1 Developing and maintaining a sub-framework of qualifications for general and further education and training;
- 4.2.2 Quality assurance of all exit point assessment of such qualifications;
- 4.2.3 Certification of learner achievements;
- 4.2.4 Quality assurance of independent schools; and
- 4.2.5 Accreditation of assessment bodies.

## **5. Related policy**

This policy must be read and understood in conjunction with the following policy documents:

- 5.1 *The General and Further Education and Training Qualifications Framework 2011;*
- 5.2 *Standard Setting and Quality Assurance of the General and Further Education and Training Qualifications Framework – Umalusi Policy 2011;*
- 5.3 *Policy documents and guidelines pertaining to the National Senior Certificate and the National Curriculum Statements; and any other*

- qualification on the *General and Further Education and Training Qualifications Framework* as applicable;
- 5.4 Other related legislation as appropriate to the various education and training sectors Umalusi is mandated to work in;
  - 5.5 Council policies and directives on the conduct, administration and management of the assessments for the qualifications on *The General and Further Education and Training Qualifications Framework*;
  - 5.6 The regulations pertaining to qualifications on *The General and Further Education and Training Qualifications Framework* that are developed by the Department of Basic Education and gazetted by the Minister on assessment and certification including those that are promulgated by provincial legislatures; and
  - 5.7 Any other relevant policies and directives issued by the Council.

## 6. Umalusi's quality assurance approach

- 11.1 For the purpose of this policy, the quality assurance of independent schools and the accreditation and monitoring of assessment bodies and/or assessment agencies represent two important features of an integrated quality assurance regime for *The General and Further Education and Training Qualifications Framework*, namely –
  - 6.1.1 The quality assurance of education provision. This means the process that leads to accreditation and subsequent monitoring of education institutions that offer qualifications that are registered on the *General and Further Education and Training Qualifications Framework*;
  - 6.1.2 The quality assurance of assessment systems and the accreditation and monitoring of assessment bodies and/or assessment agencies that externally examine qualifications that are registered on *The General and Further Education and Training Qualifications Framework*.
- 6.2 Quality assurance is carried out through processes that include:
  - 6.2.1 The accreditation of independent schools and private assessment bodies in accordance with a set of regulated criteria supported by:
    - (a) Self-evaluation by the institution to enhance an internal culture of quality management and ongoing improvement;
    - (b) External validation to affirm meeting of accreditation criteria,

national policy and regulations and to ensure a bench marked standard of provision and school improvement.

(c) Monitoring to ensure maintenance of standards and continued improvement

- 6.3 The quality assurance process is supported by the values of integrity, and transparency.
- 6.4 In respect of the assessment system, the Council sets common standards and criteria for both public and private assessment bodies / agencies.
- 6.5 In order for Umalusi to certify learning achievements with confidence, independent schools are required to register as examination centres with a public assessment body or an accredited private assessment body to examine the curriculum enacted at the sites of learning. Independent schools must ensure delivery of quality teaching and learning which will culminate in credible and valid assessment.
- 6.6 Accredited assessment bodies must register independent schools as examination centres and mentor and support them to ensure the requirements of the qualification being assessed are fulfilled.
- 6.7 In the main, the criteria for the quality assurance of independent schools are intended to assess the effectiveness of the implementation of the intended curriculum. The criteria are explained in Chapter 3 of this document.
- 6.8 The accreditation of private assessment bodies is provided for in the General and Further Education and Training Quality Assurance Act, 2001, as amended. Public assessment bodies are deemed accredited but are monitored against the accreditation criteria. The accreditation criteria for assessment bodies are intended to ensure that assessment bodies administer assessment of learner achievement in a manner that is credible, valid and fair. The criteria are dealt with in Chapter 4 of this document.

## CHAPTER 3

# CRITERIA FOR THE QUALITY ASSURANCE AND MONITORING OF INDEPENDENT SCHOOLS

### 7. Introduction

7.1 in order to ensure consistency across the public and independent school sectors this policy framework is informed by the quality assurance approaches used in public schools to date and international practice.

7.2 The criteria are set within the context of curriculum delivery, as it relates to qualifications registered on the General and Further Education and Training Qualifications Framework developed and managed by Umalusi.

7.3 The criteria cover several critical areas in order to establish:

7.3.1 the effectiveness of leadership and governance in achieving national objectives and those of the school;

7.3.2 the effectiveness of self-regulated quality management in driving improvement in provision;

7.3.3 the appropriateness of values that inform the school ethos; and

7.3.4 the quality of provision and school performance.

### 8. Criteria for the accreditation of independent schools

The accreditation of independent schools is the recognition of independent schools against regulated criteria that offer the National Curriculum Statements and the National Senior Certificate or any other qualification that is registered on the General and Further Education and Training Qualifications Framework.

#### 8.1 **Criterion 1: Leadership, management and communication**

*The school's leadership provides strategic direction and governance oversight based on acceptable practices. Management strategies, approaches, policies and processes are effective in facilitating the achievement of the school's stated objectives and national objectives, and in raising school performance. The school leadership and management consult and communicate effectively with all stakeholders in respect of strategic and management related matters.*

#### 8.2 **Criterion 2: School ethos**

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*The school gives expression to an ethos that promotes the values of the South African Constitution and displays values that reflect the specific character of the school, as articulated in the school's vision and mission statement, with specific attention to safety and discipline;*

### **8.3 Criterion 3: Teaching and learning**

*The school designs and delivers learning programmes and assessments for the qualifications it offers in accordance with the policy requirements of the qualifications as registered on the General and Further Education and Training Qualifications Framework and provides appropriate support for learning. The school conducts and takes responsibility for the standard of internal continuous assessment, and where appropriate is registered as an examination centre that undertakes external assessment in compliance with the directives of the national policy that governs the qualification, policies and directives of Umalusi Council and the relevant assessment body. The quality of the school's teaching and learning, and assessment is effectively monitored for improvement.*

### **8.4 Criterion 4: School results**

*School performance is evaluated and used to inform continuous improvement in the quality of provision with specific reference to the quality of learner achievements and assessment outcomes, and stakeholder satisfaction levels.*

## **CHAPTER 4**

### **CRITERIA FOR THE ACCREDITATION AND MONITORING OF ASSESSMENT BODIES AND/OR ASSESSMENT AGENCIES AND FOR THE MONITORING OF THE PUBLIC ASSESSMENT SYSTEM**

#### **9. Introduction**

- 9.1 As part of Umalusi's quality assurance process private assessment bodies / agencies are recognized through the granting of accreditation.
- 9.2 Accreditation is granted to private assessment bodies where such organizations satisfy the requirements for accreditation as indicated in this policy and the policies as established by the Council.

- 9.3 The public assessment system is monitored against the criteria of this policy.
- 9.4 The quality assurance and monitoring of assessment systems are central to the quality assurance of national external examinations which forms the basis for the determination of standards in public and private education and training.
- 9.5 Assessment bodies / agencies must have:
- 9.5.1 clearly defined goals that are in line with national policies and that relate to the assessment of national qualifications;
  - 9.5.2 sufficient resources to realise their goals;
  - 9.5.3 demonstrate evidence of achieving their goals;
  - 9.5.4 demonstrate capacity to fulfill their functions; and,
  - 9.5.5 provide sufficient reason for the Council to believe that they can continue to achieve their goals.
- 9.6 Several broad criteria pertinent to the quality assurance of assessment bodies are grouped into three focus areas: strategic leadership and management; assessment standards; and, the administration of assessment –

## **10. Accreditation and monitoring of assessment bodies**

### **10.1 Criterion 1: Leadership, planning and management**

*The assessment body's leadership provides strategic direction and governance oversight based on acceptable practices. The strategic initiatives, interventions, policies and procedures of the assessment body promote fair, valid and reliable assessments. The assessment body is financially viable and sustainable and demonstrates commitment to quality improvement.*

### **10.2 Criterion 2: Assessment standards**

*The assessment body's assessment approach and systems are credible in that assessments are administered against the policy requirements and standards of qualifications and curricula registered on the General and Further Education and Training Qualifications Framework. Assessment standards and practices are*

benchmarked. Standards of assessment are maintained and improved through appropriate and effective monitoring and moderating mechanisms.

### **10.3 Criterion 3: Development and research**

*The work of the assessment body is informed by appropriate research and assessment approaches are innovative, benchmarked and fit for its purpose. Research findings are used to improve assessment products, systems and approaches as well as to provide feedback to education institutions in order to drive the improvement of teaching, learning and internal assessment. The capacity of staff employed in the assessment process is developed.*

### **10.4 Criterion 4: The conduct and administration of examinations and/or assessments**

*The assessment body conducts credible external assessments /examinations in that it is effective and efficient in the management of all administrative and logistical processes associated with the conduct of examinations and/or assessments. Security systems with a low tolerance for irregularities are implemented and irregularities are reported and dealt with as required. Delivery is monitored and evaluated with the purpose of supporting continuous improvement.*

### **10.5 Criterion 5: Resulting systems and processes**

*The assessment body has efficient and reliable systems for the capture, storage and management of learner achievement data and is ethical in reporting and safeguarding the accuracy and security of learner results*

## **11. Withdrawal of accreditation**

Umalusi reserves the right to withdraw the accreditation status of independent schools or private assessment bodies that fail to comply with its accreditation, and monitoring requirements. Such decisions may be appealed through a formal appeals process established and overseen by the Appeals Committee of Umalusi Council.