UMALUSI'S SITE VISITS TO PRIVATE ADULT EDUCATION AND TRAINING (AET) PROVIDERS 2007

UMALUSI

Council for Quality Assurance in
General and Further Education and Training

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Contents

Executive Summary

Umalusi has a statutory obligation to accredit private providers of education and training in General and Further Education and Training. This report is about the formal accreditation of private adult education and training (AET) providers. Umalusi's accreditation policies and practices have been developed since 2000 in consultation with a wide range of stakeholders. They involve several steps which move through application, desktop evaluation, granting (where appropriate) of provisional accreditation, verification, and ultimately, full accreditation. The process in AET is at an early stage of development, and no institutions have as yet been granted full accreditation.

The present report includes the following sections:

- Relevant background issues (Section 1)
- Training, data collection and management processes involved in accreditation (Section 2)
- The profile of private providers that emerged from the data gathered in the desktop process (Section 3)
- The evaluation and compliance of providers that resulted from the verification or site visit process (Section 4)
- Additional issues which were raised by evaluators during the reporting process (Section 5)
- Closing or key observations of the report (Section 6)

The profile of private providers presents key features of the sector, but the sample cannot reliably represent all private AET providers. Some sets of figures were incomplete. The evaluation cohort comprised 50 private AET provider sites, a sample primarily compiled for accreditation and not research purposes. Submissions came from seven provinces, most of which were from Gauteng, followed by KwaZulu-Natal. Providers made use of different forms of legal registration, though most in the sample were registered as close corporations. Centres were funded from a variety of sources including client contracts (most often), tenders, donor funds and learner fees (least often). Clients may be corporate or industrial, agencies undertaking specifically funded projects (eg SETAs or government departments), or individual members of the public.

The total enrolment at the 50 sites was between 17 000 and 20 000 learners in 2006. The largest site had an enrolment of 2 400 in 2006 and the smallest had under 10 learners. Generally more men than women are enrolled and the largest age cohort of learners is the 36 and older group, though not by a wide margin. Most practitioners in the sample, even those with the most demanding degrees of responsibility, work on a contractual basis without tenure: 77% of the employees in the sector are employed on a contractual basis. Most professional staff in the sector have recognised qualifications.

Section 4 of the report discusses the findings of evaluators in the compliance of provider sites against set criteria. Of the 50 sites evaluated, 16 had their status confirmed, while 34 could not be confirmed as accreditation candidates. The 11 evaluation criteria were:

- Leadership, governance
- Policies, procedures, internal monitoring and review
- Management information system (MIS) and reporting
- Staff establishment
- Qualifications and learning programmes
- Instruction and delivery
- Assessment
- Facilities, equipment and learning support material
- Learner access and support
- Client satisfaction
- Provider safety and security

Provider sites were reasonably similar and consistent in their achievements on different criteria.

Generally the highest scoring criteria were management information system (MIS) and reporting, qualifications and learning programmes, and assessment – in that order. The lowest scoring criteria were provider safety and security, learner access and support, and client satisfaction – in that order.

Eight provider sites scored fairly highly in their overall score, ie 4 out of 6. However, three of these eight sites did not have their accreditation status confirmed because it emerged during site visits that the actual focus of their work did not fall within the accepted conception of an AET programme. To enhance the congruence between desktop submissions and evaluator findings, the main recommendations in this report are that Umalusi –

- formulate very clear and explicit guidelines, for the purposes of accreditation, about what constitutes AET; and
- provide simpler, more focussed and valid but standardised formats for the information which Umalusi identifies as essential.

Evaluators demonstrated expertise and professionalism, but the process is time consuming and expensive. Comparing AET to other contexts, ratings for the AET sites were generally lower than ratings by evaluators in the 2007 site visits to independent schools and private FET providers. The report ends with an expression of concern about the use of quality assurance instruments in AET that were originally designed for other sectors. Nonetheless, the general experience of the site visits, as in other sectors, seems to be positive.

1   Introduction:

1.1 BACKGROUND TO THIS REPORT

This report is about the formal accreditation of private adult education and training (AET) providers by Umalusi (Council for Quality Assurance in General and Further Education and Training) and the associated processes.

Umalusi has a statutory obligation to accredit private providers of education and training in General and Further Education and Training. It undertakes the work of accreditation in a developmental spirit, with an emphasis on improvement. Umalusi must at the same time demand credibility on the part of providers offering their services to a paying clientele.

Umalusi's accreditation policies and practices have been developed since 2000 in consultation with a wide range of stakeholders. They involve several steps which move through application, desktop evaluation, granting (where appropriate) of provisional accreditation, verification, and ultimately, full accreditation. The process is in an early stage of development, and no institutions have as yet been granted full accreditation.

The site visits reflected in the present report are intended to verify detailed information about institutional capacity and performance submitted by the organisations applying for accreditation. They are also intended to support the organisation's readiness to enter the final stage towards full accreditation. Readiness is decided through a minimum score for compliance with a wide range of evaluation criteria used in the course of the site visits. Even more important at this stage of development, the site visit programmes give Umalusi an important opportunity to engage at first hand with the concrete contexts of private providers. Fifty AET providers who had been through the preliminary processes were visited. The present report analyses the results of these visits by Umalusi-trained peer evaluators.

1.2 THE NATURE AND SCOPE OF AET

The proponents of adult education are often passionate and clear about what they stand for. This clarity is generally expressed by values related to a concern for individual fulfilment or justice and social change. But adult education is notoriously difficult to link to institutional or statutory definitions. Adult education may range from casual mutual improvement groups to formal adult literacy work, from local action groups to university extension programmes. This openness is part of the appeal of adult education, but it makes for frustration when there are needs for official accountability or academic clarification – as in the case of the allocation of funding from the tax base (such as we find in the operation of the Skills Development Act), or official registration procedures, or adequately defined research. Those attempting to define adult education sometimes resort to definition by negatives – by what adult education is not. This is found especially in the notions of non-formal and informal education, but the boundaries can be drawn in various ways.

Umalusi needs to use a mixed form of positive and negative identification of the AET with which it concerns itself. The boundaries which it has drawn are related both to trends in adult education and training in South Africa and to Umalusi's current responsibilities and capacity. These are, respectively, the pressure of the past 15 years or so to formalise adult education in terms of qualifications, and the related shift of provision outside of that by the state in public adult learning centres (PALCs). This shift has been from non-profit organisations to organisations that are either commercial or may nominally still be NGOs, but are obliged to operate on business principles and to generate income for their sustainability.

Umalusi has two broad engagements in the quality assurance of adult education and training at present. The first lies in the quality assurance (essentially moderation) of the national General Education and Training Certificate (GETC) for adults. The second lies in Umalusi's responsibility to accredit private providers in general and further education and training. The GETC will be touched on in this report, but is reported on extensively by Umalusi in other reports. In terms of accreditation, Umalusi concerns itself specifically with providers who offer some form of formal qualification, and whose work falls mainly in the general education band. In terms of qualifications, this band is concerned with Adult Basic Education and Training (ABET) levels 1 to 4. ABET level 4 is at the same level as National Qualifications Framework (NQF) level 1, and is intended to be equivalent to the completion of grade 9 in formal schooling. As we will see, even this clarity of definition failed to avoid some confusions of identity in the present site visit programme.

Two points of clarification are demanded by Umalusi's position:

First, Umalusi recognises the need and value of non-formal learning for adults across the spectrum. Such learning, and its quality, needs to be encouraged. A time may come when Umalusi has the power and capacity to engage actively with the quality assurance of aspects of non-formal adult education. However, at present its designated responsibilities, roles and capacities oblige it to give attention only to AET providers offering formal, ostensibly credit-bearing services up to the GETC. Although it takes note of specific forms of industrial or commercial training being offered by such providers, the quality assurance of such provision has until now fallen under the SETA ETQAs.

Secondly, it could be argued that Umalusi is, strictly-speaking, quality assuring only ABET provision. The reason that it uses AET is two-fold. The present limitation to ABET is not principled, but de facto. There is, in fact, a limited amount of adult education and training offered in the Further Education and Training (FET) band. It is merely accidental that it is not reflected at present. In addition, a conference on the future of ABET, co-hosted by Umalusi in 2005, came to the conclusion that the boundaries created by "ABET" were unnecessarily limiting and sometimes misleading, and that it would be more constructive to use AET.

It should be noted that the Minister of Education is setting up a committee to look specifically into the future of ABET provision in South Africa. For at least a decade, the AET sector has been beset by a kind of inhibiting tension between a desire for AET reform and a paralysis in real action. Umalusi has had to undertake real, operational accreditation work in a sector whose identity, scope of work and survival are contested, complex, ever changing and subject to more political manipulation than most other educational sectors. Because of its non-formal origins and unpredictable delivery sites, the actual provision of AET programmes is very challenging. The difficulties of demonstrating actual success have often led education officials and leaders to balk at actual AET delivery and to focus their efforts on more symbolic policy and research efforts. This has led to a degree of what is known as "policy churn" in the sector. Successive educational regimes generate more research and more policy as they grapple with and defer the challenges of implementation.

1.3 A NOTE ON THE GETC

The General Education and Training Certificate (GETC) was established to provide a mechanism for the recognition of learning achievement at the first exit level of the National Qualifications Framework (NQF) – that is, NQF level 1. This is notionally equivalent to the successful completion of a schooling grade 9, and is also known as the completion of ABET level 4. As yet there is no general, formal, external assessment or certification for a GETC in the schooling system.

There are two ways in which adult learners might obtain recognition on the NQF for learning achievements at ABET level 4. The most widely used is the GETC offered by the provincial departments of education and quality assured in various ways by the national Department of Education (DoE), the Independent Examinations Board (IEB) and Umalusi. It is also possible to

obtain an industry-specific qualification at NQF level 1. This is sometimes referred to as a GETC. In the present report it is not possible to distinguish the two forms, but the figures can be understood to refer mainly to the DoE's GETC and the GETC assessed by the IEB, quality assured and certified by Umalusi.

The DoE's GETC requires coverage of eight learning areas which reflect the school curriculum but use a unit standard format. Apart from the fundamental and core learning areas common to schooling, the adult GETC allows for a number of electives in fields with fairly wide appeal, such as health care and tourism. Language communication and mathematics (either formal "mathematical science" or more practical "maths literacy") are compulsory "fundamentals", and there is a choice of some 20 further learning areas, eight of which are the official languages, other than the fundamentals.

The GETC is assessed on the basis of a portfolio (50%) and an examination (50%). (In some cases the examination is set centrally and the whole assessment is moderated by Umalusi).

Twelve of the 25 SETAs have registered 41 ABET qualifications at NQF level 1. Only some of these are designated "GETC". While the adult GETC should be pivotal in a system of lifelong education, investigations suggest, however, that the qualification is not as well utilised.

The adult GETC based in the education departments has been running since an Act promulgated in 2000. Its uptake was very slow at first. Enrolment has grown steadily, but is still very low compared to the assumed need. Low enrolment is attributed especially to the comprehensive scope of the GETC, which is held by some to be inappropriate to adult education. Relatively large numbers of learners complete smaller clusters of subjects without attaining the full GETC. The DoE and Umalusi are currently looking at alternatives. The GETC will also be one concern of a new Ministerial committee to draw up a green paper on the subject of revamping AET in South Africa.

The findings in this report may be encouraging in that a relatively small sample of private ABET providers shows a fair uptake for the GETC. On the other hand, throughput into FET looks much smaller, and could be taken as a more realistic marker of the situation.

1.4 A BRIEF DESCRIPTION OF PRIVATE AET PROVIDERS

INSTITUTIONAL FEATURES

Some of these institutional features are discussed in more detail later, with specific reference to the sample of AET providers evaluated. However, some common features of private AET providers are presented here to focus the report.

Private AET providers are those that operate independently of the state or specific industry structures, even though they may obtain client contracts from either of these institutions. Providers make use of different forms of formal, legal registration including the following: Company for profit, Company not for profit, Trust, and close corporation. The majority of providers in this research sample were registered as close corporations, probably because the entity is relatively simpler and cheaper to administer. Centres are also funded from a variety of sources including client contracts (most often), tenders, donor funds and learner fees (least often).

AET providers vary greatly in their scale of delivery. However, these differences are not easy to calculate, even when focusing on an obvious indicator like learner enrolment. For example, the number of learners per annum means one thing when applied to a full-time course that takes place over a year, another if the numbers refer to part-time students taking the same course over a longer period, and something completely different if applied to a two- or three-day course (run several times a year).

Private AET operates in a range of social and demographic contexts. Providers indicated that their programmes were being provided in the following areas: urban towns (most often), urban cities, rural areas, established townships, and informal settlements (least often).

PROGRAMMES AND DELIVERY

The range of programmes offered covers a full range, including NQF-registered qualifications (ABET levels 1 to 3, GETC, occupational qualifications sometimes linked to learnerships) and non-NQF-registered qualifications and short courses. Most providers (45 out of 50) state that learning materials are unit standard based rather than learning programme based, with no significant difference between in-house and out-sourcing of the production of learning materials for programmes.

NQF-registered qualifications are usually quality assured and certificated by Umalusi, less often by SETA ETQAs and specialist professional bodies. Quality assurance of provision is most frequently conducted by Umalusi, followed by the ETDP SETA, although different providers have links with a wide range of SETAs.

Section 2:

The accreditation process

This section reviews the aims, goals and methodology of the AET accreditation process.

2.1 BACKGROUND

The GENFETQA Act, 2001 (Act 58 of 2001), mandates Umalusi to quality assure private providers through a process of accreditation. To this end, Umalusi began a process of provisionally accrediting private providers in the three sectors it serves, namely independent schools, private further education and training (FET) colleges and private AET providers.

Accreditation consists of two stages: provisional accreditation, and full accreditation.
So far Umalusi is in the process of granting provisional accreditation to private education and training providers. Provisional accreditation focuses primarily on compliance with minimum criteria (See Addendum 1). Given that many private providers have multiple sites, Umalusi made the decision to accredit per site rather than per provider. To support the process, private AET providers are being asked to complete a "profile" of their provision in each site being evaluated. The consolidated data from these profiles forms the basis of much of the information in this report.

The provisional accreditation process consists of a number of process steps:

- Providers submit a letter of intent, on the basis of which a decision is made whether they fall in Umalusi's scope. If so, they are invited to apply for accreditation.
- Providers complete an application form and submit a self-evaluation report supported by a portfolio of evidence.
- After a desktop evaluation, the provider may be granted one of three status outcomes:
  - o Provisional accreditation for six months, with conditions (for emerging providers)
  - o Provisional accreditation for three years, with conditions (not fully compliant)
  - o Candidacy accreditation status for three years (fully compliant)
- Providers that are considered to be fully compliant are subjected to verification site visits. If they are found to be fully compliant, the accreditation candidacy is confirmed.

2.2 SITE VISITS

PURPOSE

The primary goal of the site visits was to verify the information submitted by providers in their profiles and portfolios. This entailed the evaluation of levels of implementation and compliance in relation to the claims made in the portfolios. Evaluation was undertaken through a number of mechanisms, including the review of tangible evidence such as written documentation and data systems, observation of various processes, and interaction with key personnel. The procedures for the site visits are described in more detail below.

In addition, there were broader aims for the site visits. These included:

- Establishing relationships between Umalusi and the providers. Umalusi wanted to present itself as the overseeing agency carrying out statutory responsibilities for quality assurance, and as an agency that will be receptive to provider feedback and concerns.

- Gathering information on key contextual issues affecting private provision in AET. Umalusi

needed to inform itself of the dynamics, barriers, environmental and regulatory issues that either support or hinder successful and worthwhile provision in this sector. It was hoped that this will inform its own developing policies and procedures for the sector. It also needed to understand the nature of provision, which is extremely varied, to build up its own relationships with stakeholders.

- Developing Umalusi's own institutional capacity through building up a "hands-on" familiarity with the sector. On a practical level this will help to refine future rounds of accreditation.

TRAINING AND PERSONNEL

There are two categories of verification personnel for site visits: monitors and evaluators, with one monitor to every three evaluators. The monitor has two main roles:

- The first is to coach and support the evaluators who undertake the site visits; this includes an initial meeting with his or her evaluators to ensure a common understanding of the instruments, accompanying evaluators on at least one site visit, and serving as the resource person through ongoing communication about any difficulties or problems encountered.
- The second role is to quality assure submitted reports, checking for inconsistencies between comments and gradings, and ensuring that motivations (justifications) are adequately given.

The evaluator's main role is to carry out his or her allocated site visits effectively and efficiently, to submit verification reports to monitors, and amend or extend these in the light of feedback from the monitors. All reports are moderated by Umalusi before finalisation.

Two monitors and four evaluators were trained in six-day workshops, held in June and August 2007. The workshop dealt with the familiarisation with the instruments, coverage of the site visit programme, a briefing on the Umalusi presentation to providers, and discussions on how to interact with the various participants in the site visits, especially in relation to the focus groups. In addition, procedures for submitting reports were dealt with.

THE PROCESS

The reliability of the evaluation evidence gathered during site visits was enhanced by a high level of technical, training and material support given to evaluators during the process. All evaluators received the same training, enjoyed close and technical support from monitors and made use of the same evaluation templates and programmes supplied by Umalusi. It was obvious during the plenary debriefing in November 2007, when all evaluators reported back together, that their reports were comparable in professionalism, detail, focus and scope. Three main types of evidence emerged from the process: the AET site profile, the verification report, and specific observations of evaluators.

AET PROFILE

This profile was completed by the provider, and provided information on programme offerings, assessment, reporting and certification practices, relationships with SETA ETQAs, learner numbers and profiles, staff profiles, resources and site information (Section 3 of this report).

VERIFICATION REPORT

This report was submitted by the evaluator on the basis of the site visit. It sets out the criteria and evidence requirements for the evaluation process, and includes a rating template for the level of implementation in 11 categories or criteria. Categories are divided into structured questions to enable the evaluator to elicit the information, linked to observation and inspection of various forms

of evidence. The categories cover the following aspects of provision:

- Leadership, governance
- Policies, procedures, internal monitoring and review
- Management information system and reporting
- Staff establishment
- Qualifications and learning programmes
- Instruction and delivery
- Assessment
- Facilities, equipment and learning support material
- Learner access and support
- Client satisfaction
- Provider safety and security

The report includes sections for general comments and observations on trends and inconsistencies, challenges, examples of good practice and recommendations. The evaluator makes a general rating according to weighting guidelines for individual categories, and indicates the correlation between the portfolio of evidence and the verification process. Finally, the evaluator either confirms full compliance or not, indicating areas in which compliance has not been achieved.

Section 3

Profile of the private providers

This section aims to identify key features of the sample of 50 private AET provider sites evaluated in this accreditation cohort. Where possible, some discussion of the statistics is provided. Of the sites evaluated, 16 had their accreditation candidacy status confirmed, while 34 did not have their accreditation candidacy status confirmed.

3.1 CAUTIONARY REMARKS

The data submitted by providers in their profiles were compiled into a database, discussed in this section. However, it must be pointed out that the data base was primarily constructed for accreditation and not research purposes. While this report uses the data generated by the site visits with confidence that it provides useful insights and illustrates providers. Some sets of figures are incomplete or implausible. There were no returns for certain sections and occasional anomalies between the documentation submitted and figures on the database.

3.2 LOCATION

The spread of submissions came from six provinces. Most came from Gauteng, followed by KwaZulu-Natal.

AET provider sites: provinces

Gauteng	32
KZN	6
Western Cape	4
Limpopo	3
Eastern Cape	4
Free State	1
Total sample	50

Of the 16 provider sites who were successful in having their accreditation status confirmed, nine were from Gauteng, three from the Eastern Cape, two from the Western Cape, and two from Limpopo. Successful sites were sometimes located in networks that operated well, as in the Eastern Cape. The results simply serve to confirm that there was no regional bias in the allocation of accreditation status.

Providers were asked to indicate the context(s) in which most of their AET programmes are offered. The findings suggest a reasonable spread of private provisioning, which could form the foundation for more widespread redress in AET delivery. Rural areas are often prioritised in policy discussions in the redress aspects of AET provision. However, as illustrated in the table below, AET delivery

in unstable, informal settlements can often be more challenging than in rural areas where the population is relatively less likely to move on.

Private AET providers: delivery contexts

Urban towns	25	52.08%
Urban cities	21	43.75%
Rural	18	37.5%
Established townships	13	26.53%
Informal settlements	6	12.5%
Total	48 (2 uncertain)	

3.3 TYPE AND NATURE OF PROVIDERS

INSTITUTIONAL STRUCTURE

Providers make use of different forms of formal, legal registration, including the following: Company for profit, Company not for profit, Trust, or close corporation. The majority of providers in this sector are registered as close corporations, probably because the entity is relatively simpler and cheaper to administer. Centres are also funded from a variety of sources including client contracts (most often), tenders, donor funds and learner fees (least often). It was not possible to calculate from available data any indications about the range in their total budgets or profits. Providers were asked to indicate their registration status with CIPRO, presented below.

Private AET providers: CIPRO registration

Close corporation	31
Company for profit	10
Company not for profit	6
Trust	2
Nil return	1
Total	**50**

SIZE AND SCALE OF PROGRAMMES

AET providers vary greatly in their scale of delivery. However, these differences are not easy to calculate, even when focusing on an obvious indicator such as learner enrolment. For example, the number of learners per annum means one thing when applied to a full-time course that takes place over a year, another if the numbers refer to part-time students taking the same course over a longer period, and something completely different if applied to a two- or three-day course (run several times a year).

Although the sample is small, the overall enrolment of the 50 sites was between 17 000 and 20 000 in 2006. The largest college (presumably incorporating many sites) had an enrolment of 2 400 in 2006, the smallest site had under 10 learners. A few sites currently had no learners enrolled because they

were between contractual obligations.

PARTNERSHIPS

Most sites (40 of the sample of 50) reported on the existence of partnerships, with expertise and advice as the most common type of support. There was some sharing of facilities and equipment. Many of the partners named were other private AET providers.

3.4 RESOURCES

RESOURCE PROVISIONING

Providers were asked to indicate which of the following general facilities exist at their AET sites. The apparent anomalies, for example lack of running water in such a high number of sites, may be due to carelessness in completing the questionnaire rather than a real lack of basic resources. The accuracy of this kind of data is difficult to gauge without visiting or communicating in a very direct way with every provider site.

Facility

Facility	No. of sites
Admin block - offices and staff room(s)	34
Auditorium	6
Clean running water	43
Electricity	4
ABET centre hall	15
Security measures for the premises, staff and learners	33
Sports facilities	1
Store room(s)	24
"Strong" room(s)	13
Toilet facilities for male staff	41
Toilet facilities for female staff	42
Sick bay	13
Safety measures (fire hydrants, etc)	30
Library	10
Learner study centre	12
Recreational facilities	8
Safe parking	34

FUNDING

Centres are funded from a variety of sources, including client contracts (most often), tenders, donor funds, and learner fees (least often). Clients may be corporate or industries themselves, agencies undertaking specifically funded projects (eg SETAs or government departments), or individual members of the public. The responses of the 50 providers evaluated about their sources of funding are tabulated below:

Source of funds	No. of sites indicated
Cllient contracts	38
Tenders	26
Donor funds	7
Learner fees	6
Total sample	50

Providers were asked about the duration of their contracts during the accreditation period. Only five provider sites in the sample had contractual agreements for more than three years. Others had contractual agreements of varying duration. Most sites, 32 of the sample, had some contracts that would last for 24 months, while others (23 of the sample) had only short-term contracts that would expire within two years. Ten providers had contracts that would expire within 12 months.

3.5 PROVISION: QUALIFICATIONS AND PROGRAMMES OFFERED

The typology used by Umalusi in its instruments is not without its problems, generated in part by some of the confusions surrounding the status of some qualifications, and misunderstandings by providers about what is meant by NQF registration and non-NQF registration. It is also difficult to clearly identify how providers have mapped their skills programmes onto the instruments. While programmes and courses per se are not registered on the NQF, some of these course materials have been developed against NQF-registered standards, while some have not. The data does not give a clear picture of the scope and extent to which occupational skill programmes (as opposed to occupational qualifications) are offered; this is of concern, because a provider who may be a major player in the skills field appears relatively insignificant in the context of the data with its emphasis on qualifications. While Umalusi's focus is on qualifications, it still needs to understand the shape and size of the providers with whom it will be dealing.

In spite of these limitations, however, it is clear that the data provides an interesting indication of the spread of programmes offered.

NQF-REGISTERED QUALIFICATIONS

Private AET providers: NQF qualifications offered (current)

GETC: Full Qualification (adult)	26 sites
Fundamentals only (GETC)	22
ABET Level 3	43
ABET 2	4

ABET 1	42
Learnerships	17
*Other	22
Total	**49 (1 unclear)**

* The table below lists learner enrolment in different NQF qualifications and programmes for 2005 and 2006. These statistics show that a high proportion of learners are enrolled in programmes other than ABET, described as "other" below.

No. of learners trained: NQF qualifications

	2005	**2006**
GETC: Full Qualification (adult)	329	1 417
Fundamentals only (GETC)	1 177	806
ABET Level 3	2 980	3 169
ABET 2	3 533	3 911
ABET 1	4 329	3 885
Learnerships	133	321
*Other	9 494	10 608
Total	**21 975**	**24 117**

* In the sample of provider sites surveyed, 22 described the type of "other" NQF programmes offered. These are listed below.

Private AET providers: other NQF qualifications offered

	No. of sites
Fundamental education at GET and FET levels	7
Skills programmes (including life skills)	6
Income generation for unemployed	1
HIV and Aids	1
Customer care	1
Unspecified	6
Total	**22**

GETC INVOLVEMENT

The information submitted by providers on their involvement in GETC programmes was reasonably consistent. It has been compiled into two tables below to provide an overview. The first relates to the numbers of providers and the next to the number of learners involved.

	Full GETC No. of providers	Fundamentals only No. of providers	No. of centres' learners to FET in next year
Current	25	22	-
2006	7	16	10
2005	4	17	4

	Full GETC No. of learners	Fundamentals only No. of learners	No. of learners to FET in next year Total for sample
Current	-	-	-
2006	1 417	806	287
2005	329	1 177	180

Half of providers (50%) indicated that their clients were most interested in the provision of fundamentals only, rather than a full GETC (9%). About 35% felt that clients were "interested" in both fundamentals and a full GETC.

Non-NQF-Registered Qualifications and Short Courses

Very limited information was supplied on non-NQF qualifications and short courses. None of the providers in the sample indicated that they offer foreign qualifications, while less than half offer non-NQF qualifications and short courses. Those offered include computer training, business and office skills, crafts, and programmes designed for specific clients, eg the objectives of the Department of Labour.

Instructional Issues

Language of learning and instruction (LOLI)

Language	Comment
English	42 providers indicated English and other languages 19 providers indicated English only
Xhosa Zulu	4 providers indicated Xhosa as LOLI 5 providers indicated Zulu as LOLI
Afrikaans	3 providers use as LOLI
Sotho (South Sotho) North Sotho/ Sepedi	2 providers use as LOLI 2 providers use as LOLI
Ndebele Swati Tswana Tsonga Venda	1 mention as LOLI 1 1 1 1
Sign language	1 provider uses as LOLI
Total	50

Only 19 of 50 programmes (less than half) use an African language as the language of learning and instruction, even though the programmes on offer are essentially compensatory adult education and training to adults for whom English is an additional language.

Most provider sites (45 out of 50) state that learning materials are unit standard based rather than learning programme based. There was no significant difference between in-house (29 of 50) and out-sourcing (33 of 50) of production of learning materials for programmes, though some sites obviously use both sources. The predominant mode of delivery used by providers is face-to-face (92%), while others use E-learning (8%), distance education (8%) and a variety of mixed modes.

3.6 LEARNER PROFILES

The enrolment figures submitted by provider sites do not balance as a close scrutiny of the tables below will show. Providers submitted tables where the different categories or break down of learner numbers simply do not add up to the total provided to Umalusi. However, the figures submitted still provided interesting detail and some clear and broad trends can be deduced. The findings on learner profiles were as expected, that learner profiles are varied both across and within institutions. They may include people who have enrolled as individuals, or selected groups of employed or pre-employed learners who have been enrolled for targeted training by employers or companies, or for funded interventions.

Learner enrolment – NQF-registered qualifications

Year	Enrolment		Gender		Age			Race			
	Total part-time learners	No. full-time learners	No. male learners	No. female learners	No. aged 17 – 25 yrs	No. aged 26 – 35 yrs	No. aged 36 and older.	Black	Coloured	Indian	White
2005	9 097	1 583	5 552	4 269	943	2 580	6 451	8 701	670	1 155	154
2006	7 618	1 333	4 881	3 988	1 005	2 431	5 331	7 776	853	335	118

Learner enrolment – Non-NQF-registered qualifications

Year	Enrolment		Gender		Age			Race			
	Total part-time learners	No. full-time learners	No. male learners	No. female learners	No. aged 17 – 25 yrs	No. aged 26 – 35 yrs	No. aged 36 and older.	Black	Coloured	Indian	White
2005	2 850	235	3 614	2 163	1 677	3 154	1 088	4 852	798	161	69
2006	5 427	421	5 810	3 626	4 340	3 572	1 519	7 227	1 821	281	54

Learner enrolment – Short courses

Year	Enrolment		Gender		Age			Race			
	Total part-time learners	No. full-time learners	No. male learners	No. female learners	No. aged 17 – 25 yrs	No. aged 26 – 35 yrs	No. aged 36 and older.	Black	Coloured	Indian	White
2005	1 309	187	500	912	519	522	438	2 733	678	505	14
2006	2 191	695	964	1 461	592	1 135	923	2 373	271	34	74

The most recent total enrolment figures, for 2006, suggest that the total number of learners enrolled in AET programmes in the sample of 50 providers is between 17 600 and 20 700. The total varies, depending on which set of figures is used, ie those that relate to gender, age or part- and full-time attendance. By far the majority, or over 80% of learners are enrolled in part-time programmes and the remainder registered as full-time learners. Just over half of learners are enrolled on programmes that lead to NQF-registered qualifications, about one third on non-NQF-registered programmes and the least number on "short" courses. Figures on drop-out rates showed some anomalies and nil returns. However, the most recent estimation, also for 2006, indicates a drop-out rate of between 11 and 22%.

2006 AET learners: part- and full-time attendance

	Part time	Full time	Total
NQF-registered programmes	7 618	1 333	8 951
Non-NQF programmes	5 427	421	5 848
Short courses	2 191	695	2 886
Total	15 236	2 449	17 685

GENDER

The figures on enrolment suggest that the enrolment of men seems to be consistently higher on NQF-registered and non-NQF programmes, while this was not the case for short courses. The enrolment of men and women on short courses appeared to be fairly similar, with some years showing a higher enrolment of women and other years that of men.

Generally more men than women are enrolled in private AET centres. In 2006, the figures indicating gender showed that of a total of 20 730 learners, 11 655 were men and 9 075 women. This suggests an enrolment of male learners of about 56%. This places private providers in the same position as most workplace ABET programmes in South Africa, as opposed to those that are community based. Generally, workplace ABET programmes have a higher enrolment of men than women, while in the community-based sector the enrolment of women is often much higher than that of men.

AGE GROUPS

Private AET: age groups of learners

Age	No. aged 17 – 25 yrs	No. aged 26 – 35 yrs	No. aged 36 and older
NQF programmes	1 005	2 431	5 331
Non-NQF programmes	4 340	3 572	1 519
Short courses	592	1 135	923
Total	**5 937**	**7 138**	**7 773**

The figures submitted on ages of learners did not show unexpected or remarkable findings, other than there were possibly more older learners than anticipated. AET is often a catchment for out-of-school youth. Yet the largest cohort of learners in the sample was the 36 years and older group, though not by a wide margin. This serves to affirm the role of the older learner in AET and lifelong learning, especially with policy and planning for the sector. These statistics also suggest

that the proportion of total enrolment in non-NQF programmes, compared with NQF-registered programmes, may be higher than providers indicated in other sections of their profiles and portfolios.

RACE

Learner enrolment 2006	Black	Coloured	Indian	White
NQF programmes	7 776	853	335	118
Non-NQF programmes	7 227	1 821	281	54
Short courses	2 373	271	34	74
Total	17 376	2 945	650	246

The racial distribution of programmes is as follows: African or black learners comprise 82% of those in programmes, coloured learners 14%, Indian learners about 3% and white learners just over 1%.

SPECIAL NEEDS

Total number of learners enrolled according to disability: 2005 and 2006

Year	Blind	Partially sighted	Deaf	Hard of hearing	Physically disabled	Epilepsy	Other
2005	6	20		15	30	10	3
2006	-	27	-	18	39	9	2

The mainstreaming of disabled people or learners with special needs into private AET simply has not happened in the sample of programmes evaluated. It is difficult to predict how much this finding can be generalised. Of a total learner population that is between 17 000 and 20 000 learners, all providers together indicated that they had reached less than 100 learners with special needs each year.

3.7 PRACTITIONERS AND EMPLOYEES

STAFF CATEGORIES

Providers were asked to indicate the types of staff members employed in their centres in the previous year. The table below presents the total in the category for the sample of 50 private providers.

Private AET providers: staff employed in 2006 (Sample = 50 providers)

	Permanent Male	Permanent Female	Contract Male	Contract Female	Total
Educators/ facilitators	38	62	221	679	1 000
Professional staff (eg coordinators)	40	63	36	103	242
Admin assistants	15	46	4	15	80
Garden and cleaning staff	17	19	7	9	52
Other	10	14	2	3	29
Total	**120**	**204**	**270**	**809**	**1 403**

EMPLOYMENT SECURITY AND TENURE

Male/female ratio	Tenure
Total males employed – 390 Total females employed – 1 013	Total permanent staff employed – 324 Total contract staff employed – 1 079

Grand total: 1 403

Most practitioners in the AET profession working at all levels, even those with the most demanding degrees of responsibility, work on a contractual basis without permanent tenure or job security. Within the sample of AET providers evaluated, 1 079 out of 1 403 employees were employed on a contractual basis, ie 77% of the employees in the sector. This means that the sector operates without a guaranteed, permanent hub of professional practitioners. The effects on continuity, quality and strategic planning can only be detrimental.

The sector is dominated by women (72% of employees). Of the 1 013 women employed in the sample, 809 or (80%) are contract employees. Of the 390 males employed in the sample, 270 (or 69%) are contract employees.

STAFF QUALIFICATIONS
Private AET: profile of professional staff according to qualifications in 2006

	Permanent Male	Permanent Female	Contract Male	Contract female	Total
Unqualified	6	7	16	29	58
Education diploma	13	36	55	122	226
ABET qualification	21	35	105	400	561
First degree	4	10	17	28	59
Degree + educational					
Diploma	13	16	16	68	113

Post-graduate Education diploma	6	9	9	13	37
Honours degree	6	12	11	6	35
Masters degree	8	3	3	3	17
Doctorate	1	1	2	1	5
Assessor standards	19	33	22	53	127
Moderator standards	47	11	8	14	80
Verifier standards	2	1	1	1	5
Other	1	1	6	6	14
Total	**147**	**175**	**271**	**744**	**1 337**

The qualifications of professional staff in the sector are impressive. Only 58 practitioners of the 1 337 surveyed, did not have qualifications. This amounts to about 4,3% of professional practitioners in the AET sector. Most practitioners were in possession of an ABET qualification (561 practitioners or 42%). No further detail was supplied on these qualifications. Even though employment opportunities are uncertain and mostly contractual, practitioners appear to be well qualified for the sector and well qualified compared to other sectors also in a transition from non-formal to formal modes of operation, eg early childhood, development.

Most practitioners in the private AET sector are African in conventional racial classification (773 of a sample of 990 employees), which amounts to about 78% of professionals employed in the sector. In turn, most of these practitioners are African women, about 57% of professional staff in the sector. Other racial groups are represented in a manner which broadly aligns with demographic trends.

RACE OF PROFESSIONAL STAFF

The profile of professional staff according to racial classification is as follows:

Private AET providers: race of professional staff

	Male	Female	Total
African/Black	205	568	773
Coloured	20	38	58
Indian/Asian	3	28	31
White	24	94	118
Other	2	8	10
Total	**254**	**736**	**990**

3.8 QUALITY ASSURANCE

QUALITY ASSURANCE OF PROVISION

Quality assurance of provision is most frequently conducted by Umalusi, followed by the ETDP SETA, although different providers have links with a wide range of SETAs. Accreditation candidates were asked to indicate the ETQAs or SETAs and/or professional bodies that are engaged in providing quality assuring at their centres, including any band ETQAs such as Umalusi and CHE. The results are tabulated below.

Name of SETA or professional body	No. AET centres indicated
AGRISETA: Agricultural Sector Education and Training Authority	3
BANKSETA: Banking Sector Education and Training Authority	2
CETA: Construction Education and Training Authority	4
CHE: Council on Higher Education	-
CHIETA: Chemical Industries Education and Training Authority	3
CTFL: Clothing, Textiles, Footwear and Leather Sector Education and Training Authority	1
ESETA: Energy Sector Education and Training Authority	1
ETDP SETA: Education, Training and Development Practices	14
FASSET: Financial and Accounting Services Sector Education and Training Authority	2
FIETA: Forest Industries Education and Training Authority	-
FOODBEV SETA: Food and Beverages Manufacturing Industry Sector Education and Training Authority	6
HPCSA: Health Professions Council of SA	-
HWSETA: Health and Welfare Sector Education and Training Authority	5
INSETA: Insurance Sector Education and Training Authority	2
ISETT: Information Systems, Electronics and Telecommunication Technologies Sector Education and Training Authority	1
LGSETA: Local Government Sector Education and Training Authority	2
MAPPP SETA: Media, Advertising, Publishing, Printing and Packaging Sector Education and Training Authority	-
MERSETA: Manufacturing, Engineering and Related Services Sector Education and Training Authority	7
MQA: Mining Qualifications Authority	3
PAB: Professional Accreditation Body	1
PSETA: Public Service Sector Education and Training Authority	1
SABPP: SA Board for Personnel Practice	-
SAICA: SA Institute of Chartered Accountants	-

SANC: SA Nursing Council	-
SAPC: South African Pharmacy Council	-
SASSETA: Safety and Security Sector Education and Training Authority	3
SERVICES SETA: Services Sector Education and Training Authority	3
TETA: Transport Education and Training Authority	2
THETA: Tourism Hospitality and Sport Education and Training Authority	1
UMALUSI: Council for Quality Assurance in General and Further Education and Training	32
W&RSETA: Wholesale and Retail Sector Education and Training Authority	6
Other – specify	2

This table clearly highlights one of the problems around desktop evaluations. Fifty providers were seeking confirmation of their accreditation candidacy with Umalusi, yet only 32 indicated that Umalusi is engaged in quality assuring provision at the centre. On-site visits make a valuable contribution to the validity of evaluation and accreditation decisions. In terms of the data, the five main agencies involved in quality assuring provision in private AET centres are listed below.

Agency involved in QA of provision	No. AET centres
UMALUSI: Council for Quality Assurance in General and Further Education and Training	32
ETDP SETA: Education, Training and Development Practices	14
MERSETA: Manufacturing, Engineering and Related Services Sector Education and Training Authority	7
W&RSETA: Wholesale and Retail Sector Education and Training Authority	6
FOODBEV SETA: Food and Beverages Manufacturing Industry Sector Education and Training Authority	6

QUALITY ASSURANCE OF NQF-REGISTERED QUALIFICATIONS

NQF-registered qualifications are usually quality assured and certificated by Umalusi, less often by SETA ETQAs and specialist professional bodies. Providers were asked to indicate who quality assures and certifies the NQF-registered qualifications offered.

Private AET providers: QA and certification of NQF qualifications

A SETA or ETQA	18
Umalusi	30
The provider	9
Professional body	8
Other – specify	5 (no. of sites)

Non-NQF-Registered Qualifications

Non-NQF qualifications are quality assured both internally and externally in the private AET sector. The actual statistics were incomplete, but the trends in the sector were quite clear that assessment, quality assurance and certification of non-NQF qualifications are most often conducted by the provider. The forms of assessment used are a written test (most often), observation, portfolios, peer assessment and recognition of prior learning (RPL). Methods and forms of assessment used are tabled below.

AET centre assesses non-NQF-registered qualifications using the following:

Internal continuous assessment	29 sites
Internal summative assessment	21
External summative assessment	12
Portfolio assessment	16
Written test and/or exams (pen and paper)	25
Observation	18
Peer assessment	8
Recognition of prior learning (RPL)	6 sites

Providers involved in moderation and verification of assessment results used the following types of agencies:

AET providers: QA of non-NQF qualifications

	Moderate or verify non-NQF qualifications	QA and certification non-NQF qualifications
An assessment body	7	
The provider	24	16
Professional body	2	7
Other – contracted moderators	3	2

3.9 ASSESSMENT

Placement Assessment

Most providers in the sample (44 sites) stated that they conducted placement assessments of learners using a range of instruments. However, most of these (11 out of 40) indicated that they made use of Independent Examinations Board (IEB) placement tests.

Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL)

A few providers stated that they made use of RPL in order to facilitate access of learners into programmes, give exemption or gain credit toward programmes. The numbers reported appear to be high and probably relate to access into programmes rather than formal credits. The numbers of providers and learners involved reportedly involved are tabulated below.

NQF-registered programmes: sed RPL for access/credits

Year	No. providers	No. learners
2005	8	1 506
2006	13	1 062

Provider (non-NQF) programmes: used RPL for access/credits

Year	No. providers	No. learners
2005	6	2 046
2006	8	2 783

3.10 LEARNER SUPPORT

Learner support information applied across all categories of programmes. An overview is given below.

Number of sites and forms of learner support

Before enrolment	No. of sites
Career guidance	28
Financial support/bursaries	7
Information sessions	37
Extra information/handbooks	3
Counselling	1

During programmes or courses	No. of sites
Library and study centre resources	25
Excursions	16
Extra classes	35
Tutoring	27
Study skills	26
Internet access	1
Motivational sessions	1

On completion of programmes or courses	No. of sites

Job placement	6
Alumni club	2
Follow-up training	27
Internship programmes	1
Learnerships	4

The range here appears to be impressive, especially in career guidance, information sharing, extra classes, study skills, tutoring and follow-up training. The presence of libraries in half of the sites is also remarkable, though the quality of these cannot be ascertained. Clearly, the integration of learner support into private AET provision has become accepted practice. Only one provider mentioned counselling as a form of learner support offered. Adult education literature generally would place counselling and referral as probably the most essential form of learner support in AET.

Section 4

Evaluation and compliance

4.1 INTRODUCTION

This section is about the compliance of AET sites with Umalusi accreditation criteria. Evidence and data was gathered from the verification reports and from the accounts of evaluators at report-back meetings. The profile data submitted by provider sites suggested a more positive picture of private AET provision than the site visits revealed. The discussion below attempts to identify the areas of convergence and divergence between what programmes and evaluators reported about the actual delivery in AET sites.

Evaluators were required to observe evidence, interact with programme staff and participants and compile scores for the 11 evaluation criteria and associated indicators. As stated in section 2, the 11 criteria were:

- Leadership, governance
- Policies, procedures, internal monitoring and review
- Management information system (MIS) and reporting
- Staff establishment
- Qualifications and learning programmes
- Instruction and delivery
- Assessment
- Facilities, equipment and learning support material
- Learner access and support
- Client satisfaction
- Provider safety and security

Collated scores against the 11 criteria yielded an overall compliance score, with anything below 3 representing non-compliance and a score of 6 representing 100%. Sixteen sites were found to be compliant, ie had their accreditation status confirmed, eight of these sites had scores of 4 or more, while 34 sites did not have their accreditation status confirmed.

Explanation of the 6-point rating scale:

Score	Grading	Explanation
1	Unacceptable	There are major gaps in the level of implementation and the sufficiency of evidence provided. The general standard of implementation is unacceptable. Urgent and significant improvement of performance is required.
2	Weak	The level of implementation and the sufficiency of evidence provided are inadequate to meet the required standard. The weaknesses are more than the strengths. A lot of improvement is needed.

3	Adequate	The level of implementation and the supporting evidence meet the minimum standard. There are more strengths than weaknesses.
4	Good	Although there are important strengths in the level of implementation and the supporting evidence, there are some areas for improvement. The level of implementation and the sufficiency of evidence are, in the main, good.
5	Very good	There are major strengths in the level of implementation and the quality of evidence provided. The general standard of implementation is very good; although performance can be improved to excellent.
6	Outstanding	The level of implementation and sufficiency of evidence provided are of the highest standard. There is abundant evidence that performance is sustainable and maintained. The general standard of implementation is excellent and exemplary.

Provider sites were quite similar and consistent in their achievements on different criteria. From the average score for each question across all sites, the highest scoring criteria were Management information system (MIS) and reporting, Qualifications and learning programmes, and Assessment, in that order. The lowest scoring criteria were Provider safety and security, Learner access and support, and Client satisfaction, in that order.

4.2 RELATIVE STRENGTHS OF SITES

MANAGEMENT INFORMATION SYSTEM (MIS) AND REPORTING

Evaluators were impressed by the management of information and MIS systems of providers. This was the criterion on which providers were most compliant by an obvious margin, with 85% of sites demonstrating adequate evidence (score of 3) on the overall criterion. The criterion was broken down into indicators and the level of compliance was still very high. Some of these are: 96% of sites showed adequate evidence (score of 3) of monitoring attendance of learners and educators; 92% of tracking learner progress and attainment; 91% of ensuring privacy and safekeeping of records for learners and staff. Perhaps educators are versed in the practice of keeping records and have made the transition to electronic data management in an efficient and effective way.

QUALIFICATIONS AND LEARNING PROGRAMMES

Providers also scored well on the criterion "Qualifications and learning programmes", with 73%

of sites demonstrating adequate evidence (score of 3) on the overall criterion. However, the indicators relating to this criterion suggest that the criterion demanded evidence of the actual existence of programmes rather than evaluating their quality. Practically all sites (98%) were able to offer programmes that are registered on the NQF; and 85% can provide evidence that their programmes will eventually lead to a full GETC. However, only 62% of sites could provide adequate evidence that they review learning programmes.

ASSESSMENT

Assessment was the third area of relative strength of providers, with 69% of sites demonstrating adequate evidence (score of 3) on the overall criterion. Most of the actual indicators under this criterion tended to interrogate aspects of internal assessment, rather than any other aspect of assessment of programmes as demonstrated in the following table:

Indicator of assessment practice or criterion	Adequate evidence (score of 3)
Continually evaluate the quality of learner achievement	88% of sites
Head of departments (HoDs) regularly check learners' assessment tasks and workbooks	79%
Internal moderation of SBA implemented and reviewed	65%
Provider makes teachers accountable for results	73%
Compliance with national policy, conduct and administration of ABET level 4 examinations	63%

During discussions between evaluators and practitioners, many mentions were made of the sources of assistance to practitioners in terms of assessment. These included coordinators and more senior practitioners in the programme, consultant and external assessors and moderators, the use of exemplars and assessment agencies such as the IEB, which was frequently mentioned. There may be relatively more resources available to private AET in terms of assessment than other aspects of delivery.

4.3 RELATIVE WEAKNESSES OF SITES

PROVIDER SAFETY AND SECURITY

The compliance of AET sites on safety and security was disturbingly poor. Of the 50 sites evaluated, 75% did not comply with the safety and security requirements for confirmation of accreditation. The criterion was broken down into indicators, but the level of compliance on these was much the same – 74% showed less than adequate evidence (score of 3) of conducting any simulation of emergency procedures; and 71% showed less than adequate evidence of safety procedures in specialist classrooms such as laboratories, electrical workshops etc. There seemed to be two main explanations for this:

- AET providers are simply not aware of their responsibilities in health, safety and security of programme participants. They do not perceive it as integral to AET programme responsibility, even when conducting skills training which involves the use of potentially dangerous equipment.
- Providers regard health and safety issues as the responsibility of either the client or the owner of the building used, or occasionally the trade unions. It is inevitably the responsibility of an agency other than themselves, even though the AET provider is the agency primarily

interacting with staff and learners.

Negative observations from evaluators included observing completely exposed electrical wiring in welding classes; broken floor boards, which meant learners were in danger of falling several feet onto the ground below; and sewing machines left lying around for people to trip over. One comment from a provider was that "nothing ever happened in rural areas" so the provider did not need to bother with the safety and security of learners. Another felt that it could be added to the job description of the "trainer". It seems that health and safety issues had "fallen through the gap" in the integration of education and training or in cost-cutting exercises, as they seemed to be especially bad in skills training sites.

However, there were a few examples of good practice. These included sending groups of learners on First-aid training, appointing an emergency management team, condom dispensers on site, making use of a participant who is also a police reservist. One of the most notable was a health and safety checklist given to facilitators to complete at every new venue at which they facilitate. When problems are encountered by facilitators, these are then brought to the attention of the client, company or building owner by the AET provider.

LEARNER ACCESS AND SUPPORT

The profile data on learner access and support, submitted by provider sites, appeared to be quite impressive. Yet compliance on this criterion was weak. Of the 50 sites evaluated, 62% scored less than 3 and did not comply with requirements of this criterion. Achievement on the different indicators was variable: only 52% showed adequate evidence (score of 3) of an admission policy; 47% could provide evidence of an outline of a learner support programme; only 46% continually monitor and review learner disciplinary polices, and 32% use learner feedback to review or plan learner support. Career counselling and guidance fared slightly better and it was found that 62% of sites continually monitor and review career counselling and guidance.

As with other areas of low compliance, AET providers regard learner access and support as being outside of their ambit of responsibility. It was generally viewed as that of the client, especially the Human Resources (HR) department or trade union shop stewards. Other providers stated that there were few "discipline problems" with adults so the intervention was not necessary. Learner selection was almost always done by the client and placement adequately dealt with by placement testing. It was suggested that should any problems arise a "security guard could be called". More developed and sophisticated notions of support and nurturing learning were generally not in place, though some providers made use of learner codes of conduct or learning contracts. At one site, learners had specific permission to telephone the "head" if they had any problems; and at another full and appropriate use was made of SMS messages to remind learners of classes or important information.

CLIENT SATISFACTION

The criterion "Client satisfaction" created a middle point among providers: 50% of sites were found to be compliant (score of 3) in terms of an overall score on this criterion. Providers seemed to have an awareness of client and learner satisfaction, but only 48% could provide adequate evidence of a report or minutes of meetings with clients or learners. In general providers were more interested in the satisfaction of corporate clients than learners. There were a few examples of good and bad practice. Some providers were found to have conducted learner surveys after every course or programme; changed textbooks that learners had found difficult; and upgraded library stock and introduced daily newspapers because learners wanted to read more. One evaluator uncovered an extremely bad example of compromising learner interests for a client. Learners on a company training programme had to wake up at 4am and return home at 9pm to travel to a town far away, because the training contract had been given to a provider (friend) in that town even though there were facilities close to their workplace.

Section 5

Additional issues

This section identifies additional issues which arose during the plenary workshops where monitors and evaluators met to report their findings. These are issues that are synthesised from the data, and themes and trends noted by monitors and evaluators, that were not entirely captured by the evaluation instruments.

5.1 PROBLEM OF DEFINITION

As stated above, collated scores against the 11 criteria yielded an overall compliance score. The highest overall score in this sample was 4, achieved by eight provider sites. However, three of these eight sites did not have their accreditation status confirmed because it emerged during site visits that the actual focus of their work and programme delivery did not fall within the accepted conception of AET. It is difficult to ascertain where these difficulties arose. The problem may lie with Umalusi guidelines about what constitutes AET and what does not; or provider sites may describe their programmes as AET, but on close inspection such programmes do not fit the criteria; or AET sites may constantly change programmes on offer so that by the time they are visited, their offerings no longer comply with AET guidelines.

Problems of definition and scope have beset the compensatory adult education field ever since extended notions of adult literacy work developed and both ABE and ABET were introduced. The problem has been exacerbated by the much misunderstood integration of education and training. Original notions of adult compensatory education as fundamental, foundational and applicable to many contexts have become confused and the debates and definitions continue to develop. In order to enhance the congruence between desktop submissions and evaluator findings, the main recommendations made here are that Umalusi –

- formulate very clear and explicit guidelines, for the purposes of accreditation, about what constitutes AET; and
- provide simpler, more focussed and valid but standardised formats for the information which Umalusi identifies as essential.

5.2 MARGINS BETWEEN AET AND FET

Many providers offer adult basic and further education and training programmes to adult learners. It was clear during discussions with evaluators that the decision by AET sites to offer programmes at either GET or FET levels varies from year to year, depending on the demand expressed by clients. Compensatory adult education and training, whether it is formally assigned to a GET or FET band, has many of the same features. It takes place in the same type of institutional settings, subject to the same financial arrangements, involves learners from the same socioeconomic contexts and the two bands are often facilitated by the same adult educators. However, the multipurpose nature of AET sites can mean they are subject to many or complex accreditation issues. This may mean that Umalusi should reconceptualise an approach to these providers that accommodates these complexities rather than exacerbates them.

5.3 ACCREDITATION ROLES IN UMALUSI AND THE SETAS

Practitioners in provider sites expressed confusion around the roles of Umalusi and SETAs in relation to accreditation. Providers themselves are asking for clarification on the roles played by the different bodies, and for advocacy around accreditation in relation to what it means, and who is

accredited and who is not. These issues will need to be addressed through current, transitional and future decisions.

5.4 COMMUNITIES OF PRACTICE

The concept of communities of practice, sometimes referred to as communities of trust, is an ongoing theme in debates on the development of the South African NQF. Essentially it is invoked as a conceptual tool through which to explore how a shared sense of professional standards can be developed, so that portability of learning and articulation of credits can be enabled. The notion of "communities of practice" informs Umalusi's approach to quality assurance in some ways, by the idea of peer review – a model in which those who themselves work in a particular sector are seen as the best people to make judgements about institutional practices in that sector. To this end, those appointed as monitors and evaluators are required to have some experience or knowledge of the sector, and are often involved in the sector.

This approach seemed to work in the AET sector, compared with experience in other sectors. Most provider sites in the evaluation sample readily reported on the existence of informal partnerships, with expertise and advice as the most common type of shared support. The data specifically related to assessment also revealed much sharing of information and expertise. There was also some sharing of facilities and equipment. Many of the sites named were other private AET providers as informal "partners" suggesting that there is evidence of a community of practice in the sense of sharing of professional expertise. If Umalusi's accreditation approach aims at fostering the idea of building up communities of practice in this sector, it will need to foster and encourage what exists in this context.

5.5 SHORT-TERM VIEW

One of the biggest challenges to the sector and possibly the factor which may hinder quality of provision the most is the very short-term view or very short lifespan of any project. The majority of practitioners in the sector (77%) are contract workers without tenure, leaving the sector without a hub of permanent professionals. Most sites have contracts for 24 months. And only five providers in the sample had contractual agreements for more than three years. This severely affects long-term planning and serious career and learning path development for both learners and practitioners. Most learners in the sector study part-time, a relatively slow learning process which requires long-term management and planning.

5.6 QUALITY ASSURANCE CONCERNS

AET providers are fragile and operate in difficult and unpredictable environments. The best AET is characterised by the quality of its responsiveness to contextual needs. The use of the standard processes for accreditation of independent schools and private FET providers may not be entirely suitable to this sector. Even in those somewhat more stable sectors, the detailed provision of information and preparation for site visits comes on top of other statutory registration and reporting obligations and could prove intolerably burdensome.

It is unfortunately possible that contextually sensitive, award-winning AET centres with admired track records going back years can be – and are – refused accreditation because they do not fit into a predetermined mould. This would not necessarily be problematic if it did not threaten their access to funding or their ability to prepare adult learners for assessment for registered qualifications.

5.7 SUMMING UP

The profiles and the site visit verification process certainly deepened Umalusi's understanding of the characteristics of private provision in AET, the nature of these providers, and some of the challenges

they face. The personal interaction and observation processes through which evaluators and monitors employ their professional judgement also yields vital perspectives on the sector.

Provider sites were fairly consistent in their strengths and weaknesses. In general across all sites, the highest scoring criteria were Management information system (MIS) and reporting, Qualifications and learning programmes, and Assessment, in that order. The lowest scoring criteria were Provider safety and security, Learner access and support, and Client satisfaction, in that order. The remaining criteria: Leadership, governance; Policies, procedures, internal monitoring and review; Staff establishment; Instruction and delivery; and Facilities, equipment and learning support material did not reveal especially remarkable scores.

Evaluators began to build up valuable research and evaluation expertise and to consolidate the relationship between Umalusi and the private AET sector. It must be noted, however, that the process is time consuming and expensive, and the various steps and layers in reporting allow for some slippage in capturing accurate data. The main recommendation in this report in relation to gathering information is to provide simpler and more focused and valid but standardised formats for the information which Umalusi identifies as essential for accreditation processes.

Section 6

Closing observations

The programme of site visits to private AET providers in 2007 has confirmed various perceptions of this sector and provided a number of new insights. These points are drawn together here to inform Umalusi's ongoing development of the accreditation process. The observations relate to aspects of the context and to Umalusi's accreditation role.

6.1 ASPECTS OF THE CONTEXT OF AET

INTENSE LACK OF ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL POWER

The importance of AET has long been recognised. It is seen as a significant building block for the quality of life and the prosperity of South Africa. Yet, for a whole complex of reasons, AET has been marginal and has chronically been called "the Cinderella of education provision". In spite of general political recognition of its importance, an array of problems has proved intractable. Current ministerial attention to adult literacy and ABET is therefore welcome and promises some improvement.

However, many of the problems of AET are widespread internationally and are related to deeply rooted perceptions and standard practices in education provision and to the lack of economic and social power on the part of the majority of the clientele for adult education. Not least of the problems, though, is the sheer difficulty of the logistics of quality AET provision. For quality, the sector must of necessity be responsive to multiple local conditions and individual needs. Apart from the major curricular challenges which this poses, the problems of timing and locality are often daunting. These issues all play into the difficulty of identifying, training and retaining staff – who all too often have to be employed on a part-time and temporary basis with conditions of service that need to be supplemented by a powerful spirit of mission if there is to be sustained quality. On the whole, only rare organisations manage to maintain high levels of quality delivery in AET. The sector is therefore certain to remain in need of special care.

ACCREDITATION PROGRESS IN RELATION TO CONTEXTS

It is not surprising then that (compared with other sectors of private provision that Umalusi is concerned with) a large proportion of private AET providers is making poor progress towards accreditation. The site visit programme has shown clearly the syndrome of limited permanence, relatively weak institutional identity and stability and financial insecurity reflected in dependence on various forms of contracts (from employers, donors or SETAs) with only minor support via student fees. There are exceptions to some aspects of this pattern, and certain providers have managed to build impressive track records.

DIVERSE PROVISION

Three striking features of the context of AET provision are the salience of commercial factors, the impact of formalisation and the wide-ranging offerings of AET providers. There has been a steady loss of donor funding for the sector, linked to political shifts since the mid-1990s and a world trend to shift from the status of funded NGOs to that of non-profit businesses or even of profit-making businesses. This has meant that organisations are obliged to be competitive in responding to tenders and other opportunities and to be far more strictly accountable for achievement against funded objectives than in the past. While welcome in some respects, these pressures can prove profoundly damaging when the institutional capacity to respond to them is lacking, and might distort the spirit of mission and the quest for professional quality.

National Policy Developments

In the 1990s South Africa took the controversial route of structuring the provision of education and training around a formal quality assurance model represented by the National Qualifications Framework. Linked to the provisions of the National Skills Development Strategy, this has ostensibly put far more resources than formerly at the disposal of AET providers. The condition has been the satisfaction of stipulated national criteria relating to curriculum and institutional capacity. As with the commercial pressures, this poses particular challenges to a sector that must in some ways be non-formal and responsive to emerging and local needs.

Problems of delineation

Part of the responsiveness has been to turn AET providers into multipurpose providers. This means that many are as much involved in forms of technical and vocational education in one or another of the different three bands (general, further and higher) as they are in general provision – or even more so. At the same time, in the range of providers visited in the present programme, there is a predominance of ABET and virtually no AET beyond NQF level 1. (In spite of this bias, Umalusi has a principled commitment to the broader term, AET.) Umalusi has tried to focus on providers of general and further education and training, and the elasticity of the AET sector makes an interesting exercise of pinning down its relationships. It is decidedly the most frequently used quality assuror (compared with SETA ETQAs and professional bodies) among the present set of providers.

6.2 ASPECTS RELATING TO ACCREDITATION

Inevitably, the contexts and conditions of AET make the work of accreditation different and in some ways more difficult, than is the case of, for example, in the private school sector with its far greater degree of institutional stability.

Umalusi's initial approach to accreditation of private AET providers has been modelled largely on its more established approach to the accreditation of independent schools. On the whole this has worked satisfactorily. However, the contextual factors outlined above make it more difficult to manage and less efficient than elsewhere. Gathering and verifying information is certainly problematic in AET. Umalusi will therefore need to work towards a more streamlined model designed especially for this sector.

Umalusi will continue to develop its approach together with the AET sector in the developmental spirit is has brought to this work so far. In doing this it faces a particularly serious form of the duality characterised by its work in accreditation more generally – the duality of public protection versus cooperative development. While a policing approach is not what Umalusi seeks, the AET sector is especially open to the possibility of letting learners down because of inadequate professionalism and even of an unprincipled exploitation of commercial opportunities. Accreditation is meant to prevent this from happening. To fulfil its responsibilities in this area, Umalusi will need more resources, among other things, to clarify the extent of those organisations operating without registration and not making an effort to enter the accreditation process. On the other hand, Umalusi must also be on the lookout for ways of managing accreditation while recognising problems of the formalising process. These have led, in some instances, to a situation in which creditable and responsive organisations – in some cases award-winning bodies – fail the accreditation process either because of the weight of the bureaucracy involved or because they fail to meet technical requirements for accreditation that are not strictly relevant to their mission. Umalusi has been intensely conscious of such problems in the working of the formalising process and is intent on helping to overcome them in the interests of the country's adult learners, and within the scope of its brief and the means at its disposal.