



The Accreditation Process: Independent Schools - FAQ, Areas of Concern and Maintaining Standards

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PRESENTATION OUTLINE

- **Umalusi's accreditation process – beyond the initial outcome**
- **The impact of COVID-19 on accreditation process**
- **Frequently asked questions**
- **Areas of good practice**
- **Areas of concern**
- **Maintaining standards**
- **Withdrawal of accreditation**
- **Umalusi Appeals Process**

UMALUSI'S ACCREDITATION PROCESS – BEYOND THE INITIAL OUTCOME

- **Window period** – not an accreditation status;
 - it is a “grace period” afforded to private education institutions that fail to meet the minimum standards for accreditation at the first presentation of the accreditation report to the ACC (in terms of the GENFETQA Act, section 23 (1) and (2).
- Such private education institutions are granted an opportunity to improve on their submission and meet the minimum requirements for accreditation before the final accreditation decision is made.
- Letters clearly indicating the areas where the institution did not meet the minimum requirements for accreditation as well as the time period in which the institution must meet all the minimum requirements and pay the fee for the follow up evaluation are sent to the affected institutions.
- The letters advise institutions that **all accreditation criteria must be met at the point of review.**

UMALUSI'S ACCREDITATION PROCESS – BEYOND THE INITIAL OUTCOME

- **Improvement report** – after provisional accreditation or a “window period” to improve
 - Institutions must submit a narrative indicating how they now meet the minimum requirements for accreditation and pay the required fee prior to the expiry of the “window period”.
 - It should be noted that schools that received accreditation outcomes post the November 2019 ACC, were initially not required to submit evidence.
 - Due to COVID-19 restrictions and the move to online site visits, those schools have since been requested to submit evidence.
 - Ensure the evidence is submitted to Umalusi by the date as indicated in the letter and that payment is made.
 - Consequence of non-submission / non-payment by due date: no accreditation.
 - Where necessary, **if evidence submitted meets required standard** “on paper”, an unannounced site visit or online site visit will be conducted to verify implementation.

UMALUSI'S ACCREDITATION PROCESS – BEYOND THE INITIAL OUTCOME

“Follow up site visits”– to verify implementation of evidence submitted in the “improvement report”.

- **When it is possible to do face-to-face**, these are unannounced, but evaluator will have a letter of authorisation from Umalusi. Schools can phone Umalusi to verify.
- Since follow-up site visits focus on specific requirements and core indicators, the site visits can take place at any time of the school year.
- School calendars for the current year are requested and are consulted prior to arranging the unannounced visit to prevent the evaluator turning up during a special school event.
- The same process applies to private education institutions that are granted 2 years provisional accreditation.

UMALUSI'S ACCREDITATION PROCESS – BEYOND THE INITIAL OUTCOME

NOTE:

- **All accreditation criteria must still be met at the point of review** – a drop in standards will affect the accreditation outcome, even if those indicators were not listed in the feedback to the school.
- Therefore, in addition to the listed areas, the evaluator will check, e.g.:
 - Teacher qualifications and SACE registration
 - School results
 - Health and Safety Certificate
 - Servicing of fire equipment
 - Etc.

UMALUSI'S ACCREDITATION PROCESS – BEYOND THE INITIAL OUTCOME

- Monitoring
 - Biennial
 - Underperforming schools
 - Complaints received

- Reapplication after an outcome of “no accreditation”
 - All the required fees are payable

- Appeal process

UMALUSI'S ACCREDITATION PROCESS – BEYOND THE INITIAL OUTCOME

EXTENSION OF SCOPE

- Independent schools that have acquired accreditation may apply for extension of scope to offer additional grades linked to their current accreditation.
- The school must be registered with the PED for the phase it is applying for extension of scope.
- The following process must be followed:
 - LOI must be submitted, indicating the phase for which the extension of scope is sought.
 - The requisite fees must be paid
 - Quality promotion meeting must be attended
 - Self-evaluation submitted and evaluated
 - Site verification visit conducted
 - A report consolidated and presented to ACC for a decision.
- Schools which are successful in their application for extension of scope must return their original accreditation certificate to Umalusi and will be issued a new certificate indicating all the grades accredited to offer.

THE IMPACT OF COVID-19 ON ACCREDITATION PROCESS

- Due to the COVID-19 national lockdown and restrictions, Umalusi could not conduct site visits.
- Adverse COVID-19 circumstances still prevail even under level 1, which make the conduct of physical site visits by Umalusi a challenge.
- In light of this situation, Umalusi, through its Evaluation and Accreditation (E&A) Unit, has decided to embark on the conduct of **online** site visits.
- Under normal circumstances, Umalusi would have sent a team comprising officials and evaluators to visit your school in order to verify implementation of submitted evidence. School premises, facilities and implementation of teaching and learning at your school would also have been checked for compliance during this visit. This process can now be conducted online through available technology.

THE IMPACT OF COVID-19 ON ACCREDITATION PROCESS cont.

- Please note also that an **online pre-site visit meeting** will be arranged with your school prior to the actual virtual site visit, once plans have been finalised.
- The online pre-site visit meeting is intended to create a platform for schools to discuss matters relating to the online site visit and also to discuss other documents which might be sent to schools in preparation for the visit.
- In order to take the schools' application processes forward, letters have been sent to affected schools as a way of crafting a way forward on future site visits.

PILOT OF THE ON LINE FOLLOW-UP SITE VISITS

- Three (3) schools were invited to be part of the online follow-up site visit pilot project.
- In preparation for the virtual follow-up site visits, two dry run activities were held internally.
- The purpose of the dry run was to test the efficacy and efficiency of the online platform in conducting online site visits.
- The assistant managers, subject specialists, managers, senior manager in the Evaluation and Accreditation unit served as observers and critiques of the process.
- The three (3) schools were invited to participate in the online pre-site visit meeting on 26 November 2020 in order to prepare them for the actual online follow-up site visit.
- Actual online follow-up site visits then took place on 30 November 2020, 1 December 2020 and 3 December 2020.
- Following is a summary of feedback received from the three (3) pilot schools:

PILOT OF THE ONLINE FOLLOW-UP SITE VISITS cont.

- ✓ The process was clearly set out and submission of documents easy to manage and follow.
- ✓ Communication from Umalusi was extremely helpful and supportive.
- ✓ Clear established guidelines and explanation from Umalusi.
- ✓ Minimal contact with others especially during the Covid-19 pandemic.

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

Explain the “green / amber / red lists”.

RED

- Application for accreditation NOT submitted
- Only Letter of intent submitted
- Self-evaluation report submitted after the cut-off date
- School has received an outcome of “no accreditation” after a “window period” or provisional accreditation

These schools may **NOT** be registered as examination centres in the current year.

AMBER

- The school has been granted a “window period” to improve, OR
- The school was notified of the “no accreditation” outcome close to the cut-off date for meeting the requirements to be on the “green list”.

It is the Assessment Body's prerogative to either register these schools as examination centres in the current year and take full responsibility for the examinations conducted at the centre **OR** not register them as examination centres in the current year.

Umalusi will issue certificates to learners who fulfil the requirements of the NSC at these schools.

NOTE: The final decision for registration of an examination centre lies with the assessment body, not with Umalusi.

GREEN

- Self-evaluation report submitted and evaluated (first application)
- Accreditation decision pending
- Accreditation
- Provisional accreditation
- These schools **may** be registered as examination centres in the current year.

NOTE: The final decision for registration of an examination centre lies with the assessment body, not with Umalusi.

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

Green / Amber / Red list (cont.)

The cut off date for compliance to be included on the “green list” for 2022 is **31 August 2021**.

For the 2021 examination cycle:

Umalusi has provided the assessment bodies with a list of schools which are compliant with the accreditation requirements as at **31 August 2020**.

- This is the **only** list to be recognised by the assessment body.
- **No letters** will be issued to individual schools (other than the outcome of the accreditation process).
- The “green/amber/red” coding will **not** change during an academic year

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

Registration vs Accreditation:

- An independent school must first be registered with the relevant provincial education department as an independent school (to obtain a “licence” to operate) before it is accredited by Umalusi.
- Independent schools offering a qualification on the General and Further Education and Training Qualifications Sub-framework that received registration must apply to Umalusi for accreditation within **one year** after registration.
- Accreditation is linked to the EMIS registration and registered physical address of the school. Any change to:
 - Physical address
 - Grades offered at the registered premises

must be authorised in writing by the Provincial Education Department **before** the change is made. Such evidence must be submitted to Umalusi.

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

Change of Premises:

- If a school moves premises once accredited, Umalusi must be informed within 14 days and an application for change of premises must be submitted to Umalusi within 30 days.

Change of Principal

- If a new principal is appointed, the following documents must be submitted to Umalusi:
 - Letter of appointment on a school letterhead;
 - Certified copy of principal's ID document (or passport in the case of a foreign national);
 - Certified copies of:
 - Professional teaching qualifications
 - SACE registration document

Areas of Good Practice

- Relevant people attend the quality promotion meetings, thus schools upload the relevant documents and are much more prepared for the site verification visit.
- Considerable improvement in areas identified as conditions to be met after a “window period” to improve and provisional accreditation.
- Most of the schools are granted either accreditation or 2 years provisional accreditation after a “window period” or provisional accreditation.

Areas of Concern

- Non-compliance post-accreditation.
- Non-compliance and closure of schools due to Covid-19.
- Increasing reapplications- schools playing the system to remain green in order to be considered by the assessment body as exam centres.
- Professional teaching qualifications and SACE registration of teachers.
- Current health and safety certificate.
- Annual servicing of fire fighting equipment.
- Misalignment between grades registered to offer, grades offered at the school and the grades applied for accreditation.

Areas of Concern

- Some schools wait until the day of expiry of the window period or provisional accreditation to submit their improvement report.
- Some schools claim to have not received the outcome letters or are not aware of letters as the previous principal had left and there was no handover of Umalusi information within the school.
- Failure to inform Umalusi of change of contact details.
- Some schools wait to be reminded to submit or pay - not receiving a reminder is not a valid excuse for non-submission or non-payment.

Maintaining Standards

Chapter 3 clause 25(2) of the GENFETQA Act states:

“If a private education institution fails to comply with the policy, the Council must

- notify the private education institution in writing and set out the nature and extent of the failure; and
- determine a reasonable period within which the private education institution must comply with the policy.

25(3) further states “At expiry of the period contemplated in subsection (2)(b), the Council –

- “must evaluate the steps taken by the private education institution to comply with the policy and take into account any submissions made by the private education institution; and
- “may affirm the accreditation of the private education institution or withdraw the accreditation as from a date specified by Council”.

Maintaining Standards

Accredited schools are subject to monitoring to ensure that the minimum requirements for accreditation are maintained, including that:

- the school continues to offer the Curriculum and Assessment Policy Statements (CAPS) as part of the National Curriculum Statement leading to the National Senior Certificate.
- any change in school premises, ownership, or principal is communicated and that the required minimum standards for these are maintained.
- At least 80% of the teachers hold professional teaching qualifications and have current registration with SACE.
- the premises are safe, and a current health and safety certificate and evidence of annual servicing of fire equipment is in place.
- Grade 12 results continue to be on par with or above the national average.

Note that all the accreditation criteria must be met at the time of monitoring.

Withdrawal of Accreditation

GENFETQA Act, No. 58 of 2001 as amended

Failure to comply

23 (1) **If a private education Institution fails to comply with the policy**, the Council must —

(a) notify such private education institution in writing and set out the nature and extent of the failure; and

(b) determine a reasonable period within which the private education institution must comply with the policy.

(3) At the expiry of the period contemplated in subsection (2)(b), the Council—

(a) must evaluate the steps taken by the private education Institution to comply with the policy and take into account any submissions made by the education Institution; and

(b) may affirm the accreditation of the private education institution or withdraw the accreditation as from a date specified by the Council.

(4) Before the Council **withdraws an accreditation**, it must notify the registrar concerned, as the case may be, contemplated in section 24(1) of 35 its intention to withdraw the accreditation and of the date of the intended withdrawal.

Withdrawal of Accreditation

Failure to maintain standards

Schools that fail to maintain the required standards will be given notice of intent to withdraw the accreditation, and a reasonable period to comply with the requirements. Failure to comply within the specified time may lead to withdrawal of the school's accreditation.

Withdrawal of accreditation may lead to:

- review of the registration status of a school by the provincial education department, and
- withdrawal of the examination centre registration by the assessment body.

The SASA, 1996, provides for the registration and withdrawal of registration of independent schools.

ACCREDITATION APPEALS

Please note that an appeal of an accreditation outcome only considers **what was in place at the time of the evaluation**, and whether the correct decision was made taking into account the evidence that was available at the time of the evaluation.

ACCREDITATION APPEALS PROCEDURE

Step	Action taken
1	An appeal is received from the institution.
2	The appeal is recorded in the appeals register.
3	The appeal is first of all treated as a query, and is brought to the attention of the relevant manager to investigate the matter.
4	The findings are presented to the Internal Accreditation Committee (IAC).
5	The appeal and findings together with the recommendation of the IAC are presented to the Accreditation Committee of Council (ACC) as a review.
6	The ACC considers the findings and the recommendations of the IAC, and then either: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> i. rescinds their original decision, or ii. stands by their original decision, and advises that the matter be referred to the Appeals Committee.
7	The institution is advised of the outcome of the review by the ACC, and that they must pay the appeal fee within 15 days in order for the appeal to be lodged with the Accreditation Appeals Committee.
8	The appeal is presented to the Accreditation Appeals Committee.
9	The AAC presents their recommendations to the Umalusi EXCO, who consider the recommendation and make a final decision on the appeal.
10	The outcome is communicated to the institution.
11	If the outcome is in favour of the appellant, the appeal fee is refunded to the applicant.

Thank you

