

UMALUSI



Council for Quality Assurance in  
General and Further Education and Training

# Report on Accreditation and Monitoring of Private Education Institutions and Private Assessment Bodies

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**For the Period**

1 April 2023 - 31 March 2024

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## ABBREVIATIONS AND ACRONYMS

A&C	Accreditation and Coordination
AAC	Accreditation Appeals Committee
ABET	Adult Basic Education and Training
ACC	Accreditation Committee of Council
AET	Adult Education and Training
CEO	Chief Executive Officer
CHE	Council on Higher Education
DHET	Department of Higher Education and Training
E&A	Evaluation and Accreditation
E&M	Evaluation and Monitoring
E&V	Evaluation and Verification
EXCO	Executive Committee of Council
FET	Further Education and Training
GENFETQA	General and Further Education and Training Quality Assurance
GETC	General Education and Training Certificate
GFETQSF	General and Further Education and Training Qualifications Sub-framework
IAC	Internal Accreditation Committee
IS	Independent School
LoI	Letter of Intent
NATED	National Education Programme (Report 190/191)
NC(V)	National Certificate (Vocational)
NQF	National Qualifications Framework
NSC	National Senior Certificate
PED	Provincial Education Department
QAM	Quality Assurance and Monitoring
QCTO	Quality Council for Trades and Occupations
QP	Quality Promotion
SACE	South African Council for Educators
SE	Self-evaluation

## OVERVIEW

The Evaluation and Accreditation (E&A) unit is responsible for the evaluation, accreditation and monitoring of independent schools, private Further Education and Training (FET) colleges, and private Adult Education and Training (AET) colleges that offer the curriculum or programmes leading to a qualification that is registered on the GFETQSF and private assessment bodies assessing the registered qualifications.

The unit lies within Programme Three, the Quality Assurance and Monitoring (QAM) branch, whose purpose is to ensure that the providers of education and training have the capacity to deliver and assess qualifications registered on the General and Further Education and Training Qualifications Sub-framework (GFETQSF) of the National Qualifications Framework (NQF) and are doing so to the expected standards and quality.

The unit comprises three sub-units, each of which is responsible for specific stages in the accreditation process. This report outlines the main functions and processes of each of the sub-units and provides statistical information related to the processes conducted in the 2023/24 financial year.

Registered private education institutions are required to be accredited to offer qualifications on the GFETQSF. Accreditation attests to the capacity of the institution to offer the qualification at the required standard. The accreditation process is rigorous, comprising several steps of evaluation and verification, which culminate in the Accreditation Committee of Council (ACC) making a recommendation on the outcome of the application for accreditation by a private education institution for approval by the Umalusi Chief Executive Officer on behalf of Umalusi Council.

Assessment bodies other than departments of education must be accredited by Umalusi to assess qualifications on the GFETQSF. Private assessment bodies must demonstrate the capacity to conduct, administer and manage national examinations and assessment of learner achievement and deliver valid, reliable, fair, and credible assessments and examinations for the Umalusi Council to grant accreditation to a private assessment body.

The report is divided into six chapters.

- Chapter 1 provides a background of the work of the Evaluation and Accreditation (E&A) unit.
- Chapter 2 outlines the work of the Evaluation and Monitoring sub-unit.
- Chapter 3 describes the work of the Evaluation and Verification sub-unit.
- Chapter 4 profiles the work of the Accreditation and Coordination sub-unit.
- Chapter 5 provides a glimpse of the Stakeholder Engagements.
- Chapter 6 is the Conclusion.

# Chapter 1

## Introduction

### Background

The function of Programme Three: Quality Assurance and Monitoring (QAM) is to implement policies and processes to ensure the achievement of the organisational outcome, Enhanced educational standards. As a sub-programme within Programme 3, the purpose of the Evaluation and Accreditation unit is to quality assure the delivery of qualifications on the General and Further Education and Training Qualifications Sub-framework (GFETQSF) at private education institutions and the capacity of private assessment bodies to assess those qualifications. This purpose aligns with the purpose of Programme Three, which is to ensure that the providers of education and training have the capacity to deliver and assess qualifications registered on the GFETQSF and are doing so to the expected standards and quality.

### Legislative mandate

#### Constitution of the Republic of South Africa

The Constitution of the Republic of South Africa (Act No. 108 of 1996) provides for the establishment of private education institutions that-

- (a) Do not discriminate on the basis of race.
- (b) Are registered with the state; and
- (c) Maintain standards that are not inferior to standards at comparable public educational institutions.

#### National Qualifications Framework (NQF) Act

The National Qualifications Framework Act, 2008 (Act No. 67 of 2008) provides for the establishment of Umalusi as a Quality Council responsible for developing and managing a Sub-framework of qualifications at Levels 1 to 4 of the National Qualifications Framework and the related quality assurance processes. The Act determines that the Quality Council must, in respect of quality assurance within its Sub-framework -

- (a) develop and implement policy for quality assurance;
- (b) ensure the integrity and credibility of quality assurance; and
- (c) ensure that quality assurance as is necessary for the Sub-framework is undertaken.

#### General and Further Education and Training Quality Assurance (GENFETQA) Act

Section 17A (2) of the General and Further Education and Training Quality Assurance Act, 2001 (Act No. 58 of 2001, as amended) requires that:

- (a) The Council must develop policy for the accreditation of assessment bodies other than departments of education and submit it to the Minister for approval.
- (b) The Minister must make regulations in which the policy for accreditation is set out.
- (c) The Council must accredit an assessment body in accordance with the regulations contemplated in paragraph (b) above.

Section 23(1) of the same Act requires the Council to develop policy and criteria for quality assurance of private education institutions. It indicates in section 23(2) that any institution that is required to register as –

- (a) an independent school in terms of the South African Schools Act, 1996 (Act No. 84 of 1996).
- (b) a private college for further education and training in terms of the Further Education and Training Colleges Act, 1998 (Act No. 16 of 2006), or
- (c) a private centre in terms of the Adult Basic Education and Training Act, 2000 (Act No. 52 of 2000), must comply with the policy and criteria developed by the Council.

Section 25 further states that:

- (1) The Council must monitor private education institutions to ensure compliance with the policy contemplated in section 23(1).
- (2) 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 consider 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 head of the department or registrar concerned, as the case may be, contemplated in section 24(1), of its intention to withdraw the accreditation and of the date of the intended withdrawal.

### **Policies and Regulations developed in terms of Section 17A of the GENFETQA Act**

- Policy and criteria for the Quality Assurance, Accreditation and Monitoring of Independent Schools and Private Assessment Bodies (Notice 1142 in Government Gazette 41206 of 27 October 2017).
- Regulations regarding the criteria for the Quality Assurance, Accreditation and Monitoring of Independent Schools and Private Assessment Bodies (Notice 1143 in Government Gazette 41206 of 27 October 2017).
- Policy for the quality assurance of Private Colleges for Continuing Education and Training, offering Qualifications registered on the General and Further Education and Training Qualifications Sub-framework and the Accreditation of Private Assessment Bodies (Government Gazette 41887 of 7 September 2018).

Guidelines for the implementation of the policies for the accreditation of independent schools, private colleges, and private assessment bodies are available on the Umalusi website.

### **Other legislation**

The following legislation must also be considered in quality assuring a private education institution to offer, or a private assessment body to assess, a qualification on the GFETQSF.

- Continuing Education and Training Act 16 of 2006
- National Education Policy Act 27 of 1996
- South African Schools Act 84 of 1996, as amended

- South African Council for Educators Act 31 of 2000
- Regulations pertaining to the National Curriculum Statement Grades R – 12, Gazette 36041 of 28 December 2012, as amended.
- Any other legislation pertaining to the qualification or type of institution.

## Scope

In line with current legislation, applications for accreditation in respect of the following are considered:

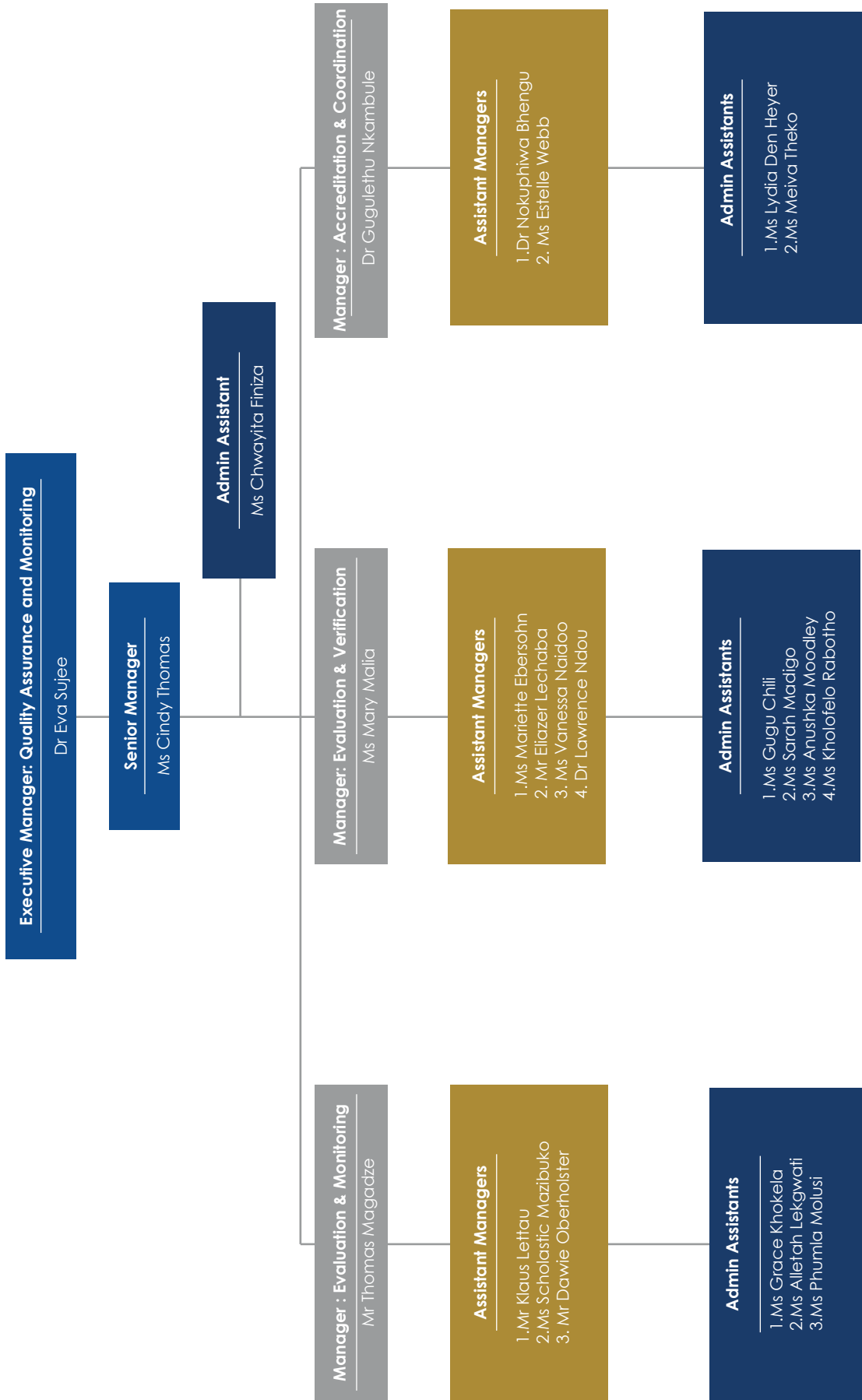
- Independent schools to offer the National Curriculum Statement leading to the National Senior Certificate;
- Private Further Education and Training (FET) Colleges offering the National Certificate (Vocational);
- Private Adult Education and Training Colleges offering the General Education and Training Certificate: Adult Basic Education and Training (GETC: ABET); and
- Private assessment bodies that intend to assess the qualifications mentioned above.

The Evaluation and Accreditation (E&A) unit comprises three sub-units, each concentrating on specific accreditation processes.

- (a) **The Evaluation and Monitoring (E&M) sub-unit** handles the Letter of Intent (LOI) to apply for accreditation, Quality Promotion meetings, the self-evaluation process, monitoring of accredited institutions, extension of scope, accreditation and monitoring of private assessment bodies, and providing assessment bodies with details regarding the accreditation status of independent schools and FET private colleges. The sub-unit is responsible for organising the annual accreditation forum and liaising with the Department of Higher Education and Training on matters related to the accreditation of private colleges. Detailed information about the work of the E&M sub-unit is covered in Chapter 2.
- (b) **The Evaluation and Verification (E&V) sub-unit** is responsible for the verification site visits to independent schools and private colleges. This includes site visits to institutions that have met the requirements at the desktop evaluation stage of the accreditation process and those in the "improvement" stage after an initial outcome of provisional accreditation or a window period to improve. The aim of the site visit is to verify the implementation of the evidence submitted in the self-evaluation report. The sub-unit is responsible for liaising with provincial education departments on matters related to the accreditation of independent schools. Detailed information about the work of the E&V sub-unit is covered in Chapter 3.
- (c) **The Accreditation and Coordination (A&C) sub-unit** serves as the secretariat of the Internal Accreditation Committee (IAC), Accreditation Committee of Council (ACC) and Accreditation Appeals Committee (AAC). It is the responsibility of this sub-unit to coordinate the presentation of reports to the IAC, ACC, AAC, and the CEO, as well as to communicate the outcome of accreditation applications to private education institutions and coordinate the issuing of accreditation certificates. Detailed information about the work of the A&C sub-unit is covered in Chapter 4.

## Organogram

The organogram of the E&A unit as at 31 March 2024 is as follows:



# Chapter 2

## Evaluation and Monitoring (E&M)

The initial steps of the accreditation process fall under the purview of the sub-unit responsible for evaluation and monitoring. The sub-unit processes Letters of Intent (LoI) to apply for accreditation from institutions seeking accreditation. Subsequently, the sub-unit coordinates the Quality Promotion meetings and the self-evaluation report process. The Evaluation and Verification sub-unit is then given access to the self-evaluation reports so they can be used to inform the site verification process. The Evaluation and Monitoring sub-unit then monitors institutions once they have received accreditation. The sub-unit also handles the extension of scope processes, as well as the accreditation and monitoring of private assessment bodies. In addition, the sub-unit oversees the coordination of the annual accreditation forum and maintains communication with the Department of Higher Education and Training in matters related to the accreditation of private colleges.

### Letter of Intent (LoI)

Institutions that wish to apply for accreditation submit a Letter of Intent (LoI), which is an online process. This process assists Umalusi in determining if the institution that wishes to apply for accreditation offers a qualification on the General and Further Education and Training Qualifications Sub-framework (GFETQSF), namely the National Senior Certificate (NSC), the National Certificate (Vocational) [NC(V)], or the General Education and Training Certificate: Adult Basic Education and Training (GETC: ABET), is operating in South Africa, and, in the case of independent schools, is registered as an independent school by the Provincial Education Department.

It is important to note that the LoI is just an indication by the institution that they intend to apply for accreditation. It assists Umalusi in sifting accreditation applications as some of the applications do not fall within Umalusi's scope for accreditation and, therefore, cannot continue with the accreditation process beyond this step.

The trends in the number of Independent Schools, Private Further Education and Training (FET) Colleges, and Private Adult Education and Training (AET) Colleges submitting LoI to apply for accreditation are depicted in Table 1.

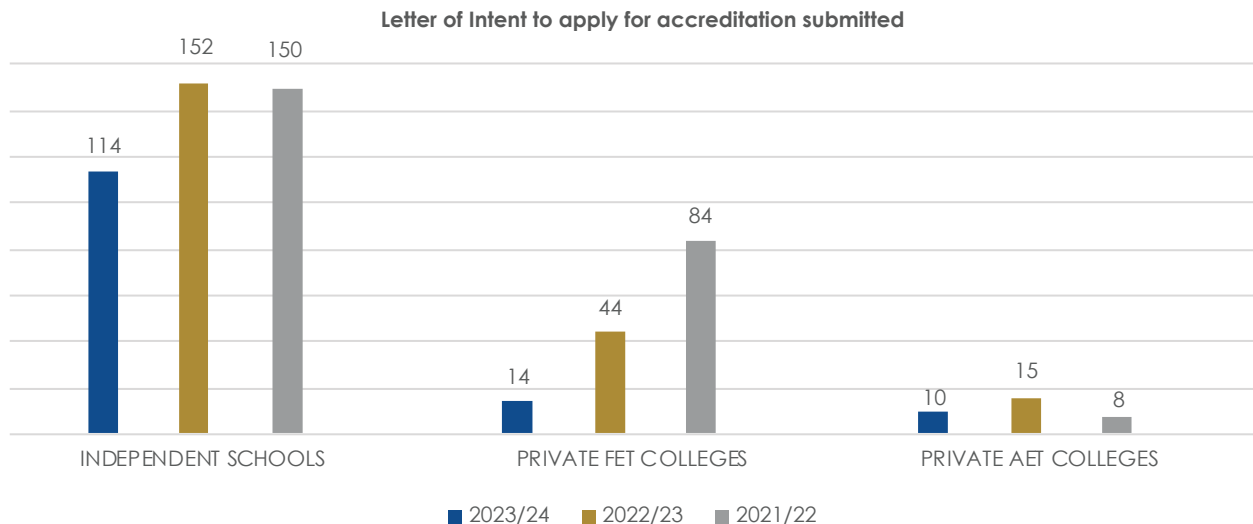
For independent schools, the total number of LOI submitted per financial year has shown slight fluctuations: from 150 LOI in 2021/22 to 114 LOI in 2023/24.

Private FET Colleges have seen a notable decline from 84 LOI submitted in 2021/22 to 14 in 2023/24. The quarterly figures depict a pronounced reduction in Q1 from 25 LOIs in 2021/22 to one in 2023/24, reflecting a shrinking sector due to the National Education Report 190/191 N1 – N3 Engineering Studies programmes being phased out.

Private AET Colleges, though smaller in scale, demonstrate a variable trend. From a total of eight (8) LOI submitted in 2021/22, the number increased to 15 in 2022/23 but then decreased to 10 in 2023/24.

**Table 1:** LOI submitted between 01 April 2021 and 31 March 2024

	INDEPENDENT SCHOOLS					PRIVATE FET COLLEGES					PRIVATE AET COLLEGES				
	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	Total	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	Total	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	Total
2023/24	25	44	22	23	114	1	4	5	4	14	0	3	2	5	10
2022/23	36	47	31	38	152	16	17	5	6	44	6	2	4	3	15
2021/22	41	39	28	42	150	25	23	17	19	84	3	2	1	2	8



**Figure 1:** LOI submitted between 01 April 2021 and 31 March 2024

### Quality Promotion (QP) Meetings

Following the successful completion of the Letter of Intent (LoI) stage, institutions are required to attend a Quality Promotion (QP) meeting. These meetings are conducted online via Microsoft Teams. The purpose of Quality Promotion meetings is to provide institutions with detailed guidance on Umalusi’s expectations regarding the evidence that must be submitted for evaluation as part of their application for accreditation. By clarifying these requirements, Umalusi ensures that institutions are well-prepared to meet the necessary standards, facilitating a smoother accreditation process.

Institutions are given an overview of the accreditation process during these meetings, as well as guidance on the pertinent legislation, an explanation of everything needed for the self-evaluation report, and a synopsis of the verification site visit. These sessions are intended to provide applicants with relevant information and a chance to ask questions on the accreditation process and the requirements for offering the qualification. The institutions must attend these QP meetings before they are given access to the self-evaluation report.

It has been noted that following attendance at a Quality Promotion meeting, some private colleges change their chosen subjects while others withdraw their applications for accreditation. This is especially common among Adult Education and Training (AET) providers and providers wanting to offer the National Certificate (Vocational) qualification who feel that the requirements for offering the qualifications and for accreditation are too demanding for the type of service they intend to provide.

In examining Table 2, the Quality Promotion meetings held from April 2023 to March 2024 for Independent Schools, Private FET Colleges, and Private AET Colleges, distinct patterns emerge. The total of 11 meetings held for Independent Schools reflects the high number of Lol submitted by independent schools. These meetings are relatively evenly distributed throughout the year, peaking in quarter 4 with four meetings. The distribution of Quality Promotion meetings for Private FET Colleges (five meetings, with a noticeable concentration in quarter 1, where two meetings were conducted, followed by only one meeting per subsequent quarter) and Private AET Colleges (only two meetings in total, one each in quarter 2 and quarter 4) is also dependent on the number of Lol submitted and the willingness of institutions to attend the QP meetings.

**Table 2:** Quality Promotion meetings held between 01 April 2023 and 31 March 2024

QUALITY PROMOTION MEETINGS HELD	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	Total
Independent Schools	2	3	2	4	11
Private FET Colleges	2	1	1	1	5
Private AET Colleges	0	1	0	1	2

### Self-Evaluation (SE) Report

The institutions move to the next step of the accreditation process, self-evaluation, after attending a QP meeting. The self-evaluation report is made available to the institution at this point. They need to complete the instrument and submit it electronically, together with the necessary supporting documents. The submitted self-evaluation report and supporting evidence are evaluated to determine whether the institution satisfies the minimum standards for accreditation. Specific criteria are assigned to trained subject specialists and evaluators for online evaluation.

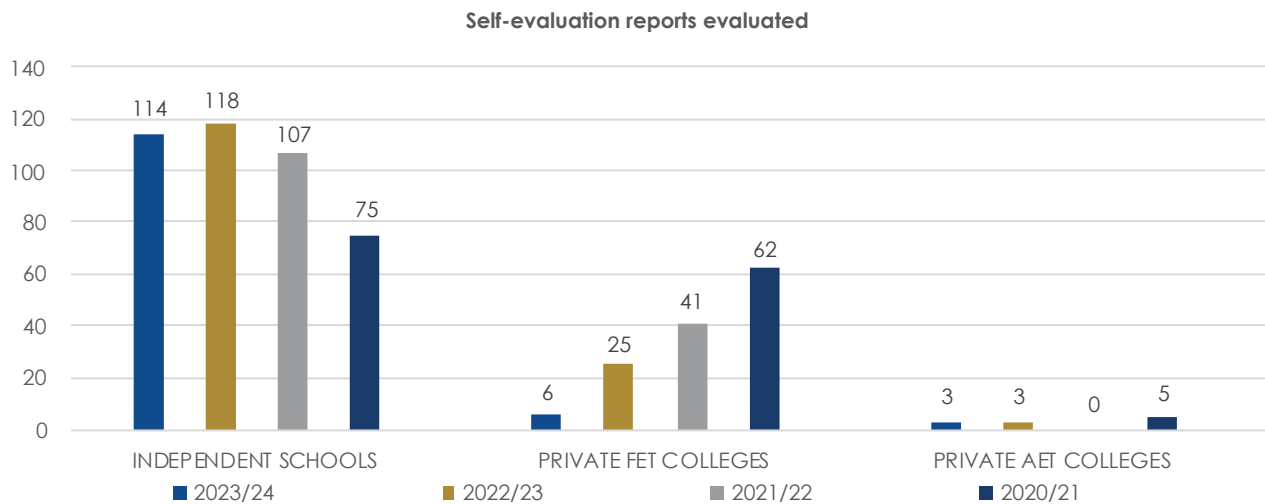
Should the institution's self-evaluation (SE) report be determined to fall short of the required standards, the SE report is returned to the institution, enabling them to present more pertinent evidence at the cost authorised by the Umalusi Council. A maximum of two returns of the SE report to the institution may be made. The application may be terminated if, even after two further submissions, the evidence still does not satisfy the minimum requirements for accreditation. If the institution wishes to pursue accreditation through Umalusi in the future, it must submit a fresh application and pay all associated fees without having access to the prior submissions.

In analysing the self-evaluation report submissions over the past three financial years, namely, from 1 April 2021 to 31 March 2024, the total number of submissions from Independent Schools was relatively stable but exhibited significant quarterly fluctuations, as is evident in Table 3. Private FET Colleges, on the other hand, experienced a notable decline in the number of submissions, with a sharp drop from 41 reports in 2021/22 to just six self-evaluation reports submitted in 2023/24, reflecting the effect of the NATED Report 190/191 Engineering Studies N1-N3 programmes being phased out. Private AET Colleges showed minimal activity, with only a few submissions over the entire period of three years, pointing to a minimal number of institutions applying for accreditation.

In conclusion, while Independent Schools demonstrate general stability in the number of self-evaluation reports submitted, the declining trend in Private FET Colleges and the consistently low activity in Private AET Colleges highlight potential areas for support to improve self-evaluation submissions across these sectors.

**Table 3:** SE reports evaluated between 01 April 2021 and 31 March 2024

	INDEPENDENT SCHOOLS					PRIVATE FET COLLEGES					PRIVATE AET COLLEGES				
	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	Total	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	Total	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	Total
<b>2023/24</b>	46	22	29	17	<b>114</b>	1	4	0	1	<b>6</b>	1	1	1	0	<b>3</b>
<b>2022/23</b>	15	25	71	7	<b>118</b>	2	3	17	3	<b>25</b>	0	3	0	0	<b>3</b>
<b>2021/22</b>	14	61	19	13	<b>107</b>	6	7	23	5	<b>41</b>	0	0	0	0	<b>0</b>



**Figure 2:** Self-evaluation reports evaluated between 01 April 2021 and 31 March 2024

### Extension of scope

After the institutions are accredited, they may apply for an extension of scope to offer additional grades/subjects/programmes linked to their current registration and accreditation. Independent schools must first be registered with the Provincial Education Department (PED) to offer the grades for which they intend to apply for an extension of scope.

The process of applying for an extension of scope is similar to the initial application, first submitting a Letter of Intent (LoI) to apply for an extension of scope indicating the phase for which the extension of scope is sought, followed by payment of the requisite fees. The institution must then attend a QP meeting, after which the institution submits a self-evaluation report, which is followed by a verification site visit. A consolidated report is presented to the Accreditation Committee of Council (ACC) with a recommendation on the outcome of the extension of scope application. Institutions that are successful in the extension of scope application are required to return their original accreditation certificate to Umalusi and will be issued with a new certificate indicating all the grades/subjects/programmes accredited to offer.

Thirteen independent schools submitted applications for extension of scope in the 2023/24 financial year.

## Monitoring

The policies for the accreditation and monitoring of independent schools and private colleges offering qualifications on the GFETQSF require that accredited institutions are monitored to determine whether they continue to meet the minimum standards for accreditation. In the 2023/24 financial year, independent schools in their second and sixth year of accreditation and independent schools with a grade 12 pass rate less than the national average in the 2022 National Senior Certificate (NSC) examination, as well as private colleges in their second year of accreditation, were identified for monitoring. In addition, accredited institutions for which complaints were received were monitored.

The monitoring focused on some of the core criteria for accreditation, including that accredited institutions must continue to offer the curriculum leading to the qualification for which they are accredited. For schools, that is the National Curriculum Statement leading to the National Senior Certificate. It is also a requirement that the principal of an accredited school or private college holds a professional teaching qualification and current registration with the South African Council for Educators (SACE), and all teachers at a school and lecturers at a college must hold current registration with the SACE. Further, at least 80% of teachers at a school must hold a professional teaching qualification, and at least 80% of lecturers at a college must be suitably qualified for the subjects they teach.

Accredited institutions must ensure that premises and facilities continue to meet the required standard, and any change in the premises or ownership must be authorised by the relevant authority. Premises must be safe, and a current health and safety certificate issued by the local municipality or accredited health and safety officer, as well as annual servicing of fire-fighting equipment, must be in place. The financial viability of institutions is also tested during monitoring, requiring financial statements that are attested to by an independent, registered financial officer.

The grade 12 results of accredited schools are checked against the national average. Schools with grade 12 results below the national average are issued a notice of intent to withdraw accreditation and must submit a plan of action for the year to improve the grade 12 results. Should a school's grade 12 results fall below the national average for a second consecutive year, the school is issued with a final notice of intent to withdraw accreditation.

Employing teachers who are currently registered with the SACE is one of the primary requirements that institutions fail to meet during the monitoring process. Other common areas of non-compliance post-accreditation include expired health and safety certificates, annual servicing of fire-fighting equipment not adhered to, change of premises without the necessary authorisation, institutions no longer offering the qualification for which they are accredited, and non-submission of annual financial statements compiled by an independent financial officer.

Institutions that fail to maintain the required standards are given notice of intent to withdraw the accreditation. Failure to comply with the requirements for accreditation within the specified time may lead to withdrawal of the institution's accreditation.

The consequences of the withdrawal of accreditation may be the review of the institution's registration status by the provincial education department (for schools) or the Department of Higher Education and Training (DHET) for private colleges and the withdrawal of the examination centre registration by the assessment body.

Table 4 below indicates the number of independent schools and private colleges monitored between 01 April 2021 and 31 March 2024. Implementation of a differentiated approach to monitoring is evident in the total number of institutions monitored. Independent Schools experienced significant

fluctuations, peaking at 330 monitored institutions in 2021/22, decreasing to 143 in 2022/23, and slightly increasing to 183 in 2023/24. The number of institutions monitored is related to the number of institutions that receive accreditation in an identified year.

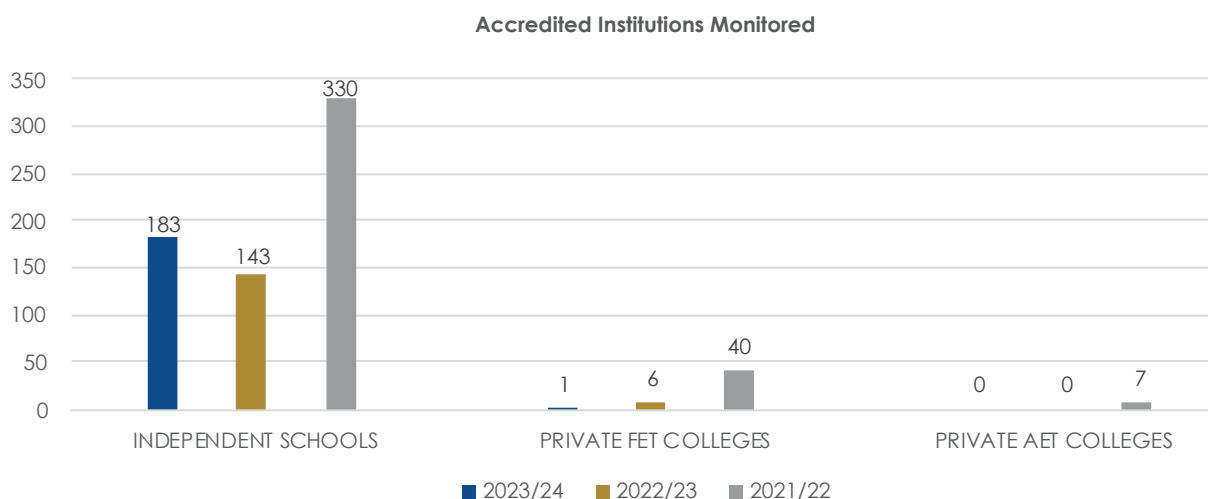
Private FET Colleges saw a steep decline from 40 institutions monitored in 2021/22 to just one (1) in 2023/24, indicating reduced monitoring activities potentially due to fewer institutions that received accreditation in the identified financial year.

Private AET Colleges consistently reported low monitoring numbers, with seven (7) institutions monitored in 2021/22 and none in the following two years, highlighting the small number of accredited institutions.

It is important to note that institutions undergoing the Extension of Scope process in the year they are due for monitoring are not required to submit a monitoring report, as they are monitored during the Extension of Scope process.

**Table 4:** No. of accredited institutions monitored between 01 April 2021 and 31 March 2024

	INDEPENDENT SCHOOLS					PRIVATE FET COLLEGES					PRIVATE AET COLLEGES				
	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	Total	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	Total	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	Total
2023/24	79	75	22	7	183	0	1	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0
2022/23	48	40	46	9	143	2	1	3	0	6	0	0	0	0	0
2021/22	122	61	49	98	330	10	14	6	10	40	1	5	0	1	7



**Figure 3:** Accredited institutions monitored between 01 April 2021 and 31 March 2024

## Private Assessment Bodies

The accreditation process for private assessment bodies entails several steps stretching over a minimum of three years for new applicants. It culminates in the presentation of an accreditation report for consideration by the Umalusi Council. The accreditation criteria for private assessment bodies are outlined in the policies and regulations developed in line with the requirements of the GENFETQA Act (No. 58 of 2001, as amended). Umalusi Council pronounces on the accreditation of a private assessment body.

The criteria for accreditation of a private assessment body are:

- Leadership, planning and management
- Assessment standards
- Research and development
- The conduct and administration of examinations
- Resulting systems and processes

During the 2023/24 financial year, the following activities concerning private assessment bodies were conducted:

- Consideration of presentations for the justifiable need for two prospective assessment bodies to assess qualifications on the GFETQSF.
- Evaluation of a self-evaluation report submitted by a prospective assessment body.
- Monitoring of a private assessment body's compliance with requirements for accreditation to assess the NSC and GETC: ABET.
- Processing of applications for concessions to establish designated examination centres to accommodate candidates from online schools and distance education providers to write the NSC.
- Monitoring of examinations conducted at designated examination centres.
- Coordination of a site visit to an accredited assessment body to reflect on areas of improvement needed and implementation of improvement plans.
- Review of the accreditation process for private assessment bodies.

There are currently two private assessment bodies accredited to assess both the National Senior Certificate (NSC) and the General Education and Training Certificate: Adult Basic Education and Training (GETC: ABET), namely:

- The Independent Examinations Board (IEB), and
- The South African Comprehensive Assessment Institute (SACAI).

## Challenges encountered by the E&M sub-unit

- (a) Applications for accreditation as a private college by applicants who have no knowledge or understanding of the qualifications that they want to offer.
- (b) A lack of understanding of Umalusi's mandate that results in numerous queries directed to Umalusi concerning qualifications and processes that do not fall within Umalusi's mandate.
- (c) Incorrect contact details provided by private education institutions during the Lol process result in challenges in communicating with the institutions about their applications.
- (d) Institutions having challenges with connectivity lead to interruptions in the Quality Promotion meetings.

## Mitigating actions

- (a) Applicants for accreditation as a private college are guided in choosing the subjects needed to complete the qualification.
- (b) During the QP meetings, applicants receive a detailed explanation of the accreditation requirements. Through the discussions, applicants can have a better grasp of Umalusi's expectations as well as the accreditation process.
- (c) The self-evaluation process enables institutions to reflect on the processes, procedures, and policies in place and amend and develop further policies to meet the evidence requirements. This process can lead to improvement within the institutions.
- (d) People who intend to offer a qualification on the GFETQSF must research and understand the qualification they intend to offer before applying for accreditation as a private college to offer the qualification.

Although there is a clear distinction between the processes that each sub-unit is responsible for, there is close integration between the processes conducted by each sub-unit, necessitating clear communication between sub-units and detailed record keeping. Once the self-evaluation process is completed by the Evaluation and Monitoring sub-unit, applications are referred to the Evaluation and Verification sub-unit to conduct the next stage of the accreditation process, which is detailed in the next chapter.

# Chapter 3

## Evaluation and Verification (E&V)

The Evaluation and Verification (E&V) sub-unit is responsible for site verification visits that aim to authenticate the evidence submitted during the desktop evaluation stage of the accreditation process. These visits, scheduled for a single day, are based on the reports generated in the desktop evaluation process.

The verification process for independent schools includes a comprehensive examination of various aspects such as the school's mission, policies, staff composition, financial stability, premises, curriculum design, assessment procedures, and academic performance. Similarly, private colleges undergo a thorough evaluation, with a heightened focus on student support, stakeholder satisfaction, and result analysis to facilitate continuous improvement.

The accreditation trajectory for private colleges differs from that of independent schools. Independent schools must first register with the Provincial Education Department, enrol learners, and then apply for accreditation. In contrast, private colleges, as outlined in the Continuing Education and Training Act (No. 16 of 2006), paragraph 30(1)(b)(ii), must provide the registrar with a reason to believe that they will comply with Umalusi's requirements before being registered as private colleges. After completing the self-evaluation stage, private colleges are referred to the Department of Higher Education and Training (DHET) for registration and approval as examination centres. Meeting the DHET requirements is mandatory before the enrolment of students and the administration of examinations.

Registration or provisional registration by the DHET is a prerequisite for accreditation. The absence of such registration impedes private colleges from progressing in the accreditation process beyond the self-evaluation stage.

The site verification visit is coordinated by an assistant manager and an administrative assistant, with the evaluation conducted by Independent Contract Workers (ICWs). The evaluation team, comprising a general evaluator and subject specialists, undergoes training, and their profiles are shared with the institution before the visit to prevent conflict of interest.

Data triangulation involves interviews with management and teachers/lecturers, covering policy implementation, overall assessment of functionality, lesson observations, and inspection of facilities and premises. The subsequent development of site verification reports and recommendations is based on professional judgement and adherence to an evaluation guideline.

In response to COVID-19 restrictions in 2020, Umalusi introduced online verification site visits, replacing traditional in-person visits. Online site visits have proved to be an effective means of verifying the implementation of evidence submitted during the self-evaluation process and have thus become the preferred mode of conducting the verification process.

### Pre-site visit meetings

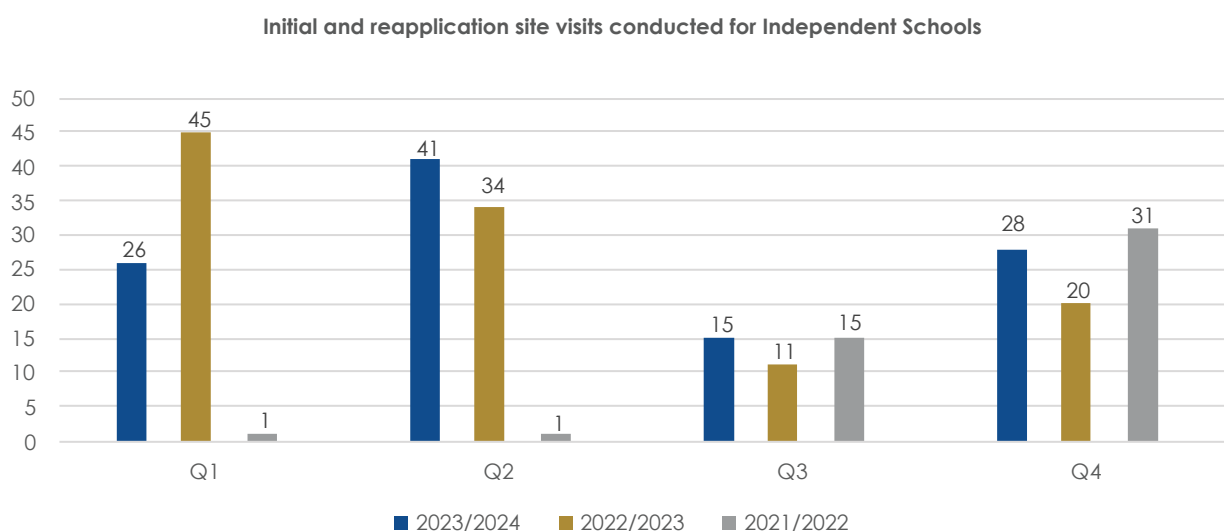
Pre-site visit meetings are held for institutions that have met the minimum standard in their self-evaluation reports. These meetings, via online platforms, usually involve multiple institutions but can also be tailored to individual institutions. This flexibility ensures that institutions do not need to wait for the availability of other institutions, thereby avoiding potential delays in their application process.

The primary objective of these meetings is to prepare institutions for the upcoming site visit. They provide guidance on the requirements and offer insights into the procedures that will unfold on the day of the visit. Additionally, individual preparatory meetings are scheduled with each institution at least two days prior to the site visit. These meetings allow for a detailed discussion of the site visit agenda and ensure that all stakeholders are well-informed and aligned. This meticulous preparation aims to facilitate a smooth and efficient site visit process, minimising potential disruptions.

## Initial and Reapplication Site visits

**Table 5:** Initial and reapplication site visits conducted from 01 April 2021 to 31 March 2024

	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	Total
<b>2023/24</b>	26	41	15	28	<b>110</b>
<b>2022/23</b>	45	34	11	20	<b>110</b>
<b>2021/22</b>	1	1	15	31	<b>48</b>



**Figure 4:** Initial and reapplication site visits conducted for independent schools between 01 April 2021 and 31 March 2024

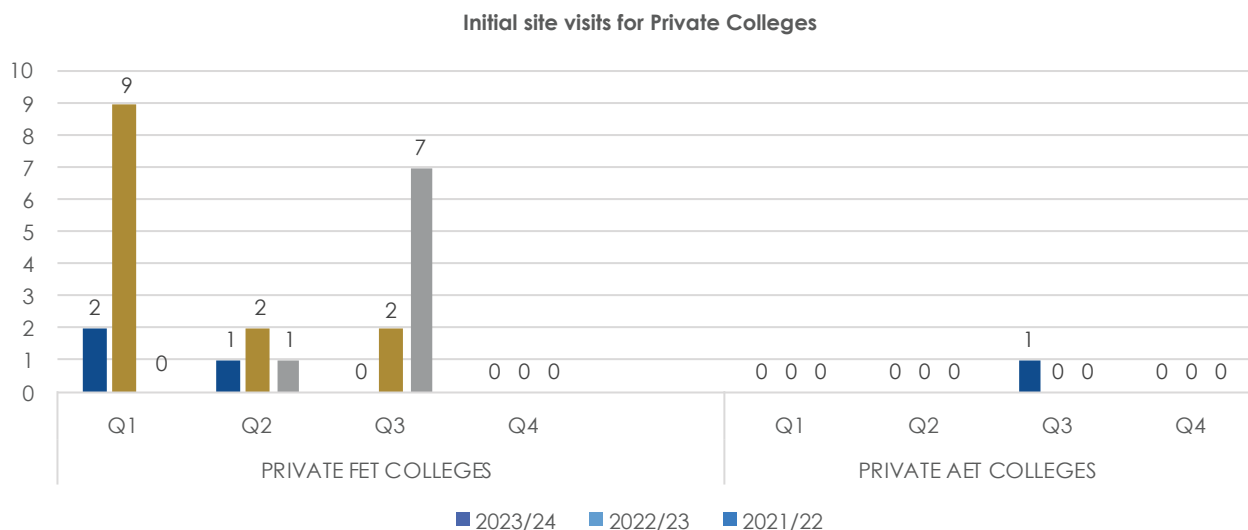
As Umalusi transitioned to online site visits because of the COVID-19 pandemic, the 2021/2022 financial year saw a gradual resumption of site visit activities, depicted in Figure 4. Despite the initial challenges the change in modality brought about, a total of 48 online verification site visits were conducted in the initial year of the new format. This indicates a successful adaptation to the new online format and commitment to maintaining engagement with Independent Schools despite the aftermath of Covid-19.

The following financial year, 2022/23, saw Independent Schools build upon this momentum, as 110 online verification site visits were conducted across all four quarters. The first quarter saw 45 visits, indicating that the sector adapted to online service delivery in a previously uncertain period. During this period, the online verification process was refined and adjusted, resulting in 110 site visits being conducted, which attests to continued commitment and effectiveness in maintaining engagement with independent schools.

In the most recent financial year, 2023/2024, site visit activity fluctuated, with a total of 110 visits conducted across all quarters. The first quarter saw 26 visits, and activity peaked in the second quarter with 41 visits, reflecting a concentrated effort during this period. However, the third quarter experienced a significant decline to 15 visits, suggesting potential challenges or external factors such as the administration of end-of-year examinations affecting the ability to conduct visits. The fourth quarter saw a recovery with 28 visits, attributed to fewer school holidays, thereby allowing for more site visits. Despite these fluctuations, the total number of visits remained consistent with the previous year, demonstrating resilience and adaptability.

**Table 6: Initial Site Visits conducted for Private Colleges per quarter between 1 April 2021 and 31 March 2024**

	PRIVATE FET COLLEGES					PRIVATE AET COLLEGES				TOTAL
	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4		Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	
2023/24	2	1	0	0		0	0	1	0	4
2022/23	9	2	2	0		0	0	0	0	13
2021/22	0	1	7	0		0	0	0	0	8
TOTAL	11	4	9	0		0	0	1	0	25



**Figure 5: Initial Site Visits for Private Colleges between 1 April 2021 and 31 March 2024**

Over the three years from 2021/22 to 2023/24, the site visit activity to Private FET and AET colleges has experienced notable fluctuations (see Table 6). In 2021/22, there was a marked decrease in site visits, with only eight (8) visits conducted, all in the first three quarters. This decline can be attributed to ongoing pandemic-related challenges and the adjustment period required for institutions to fully adapt to the new online process. The 2022/23 financial year saw a resurgence in activity, with 17 site visits conducted, indicating a gradual recovery from the previous year's disruptions. However, the activity was uneven, peaking in Quarter 1 and dropping to zero in Quarter 4. The most recent financial year, 2023/24, showed a mixed pattern, with a total of five visits. Activity was present in Quarters 1 and 3 but absent in Quarters 2 and 4, likely due to the phasing out of the N1-N3 Engineering Studies programmes over this period. Overall, the data reflects the significant impact of external factors on site visit activity and the resilience of the institutions in adapting to new challenges.

## Follow-up Site Visits and Improvement Reports

When an institution fails to meet the minimum accreditation requirements during the initial report presentation to the Accreditation Committee of Council, it is granted a period to address the identified shortcomings. Depending on the level of non-compliance, this period may serve as an opportunity for improvement or result in provisional accreditation. After this period, upon payment of the necessary fee for evidence evaluation, Umalusi evaluators conduct a “follow-up” evaluation, producing an “improvement” report.

As part of the “follow-up” evaluation, site visits are conducted to verify the information provided by the institution. These visits assess various aspects, including the implementation of policies, curriculum content and delivery, assessment practices, structures, facilities, resources, and equipment. Historically, these site visits were unannounced; however, the shift to online site visits now requires prior notification.

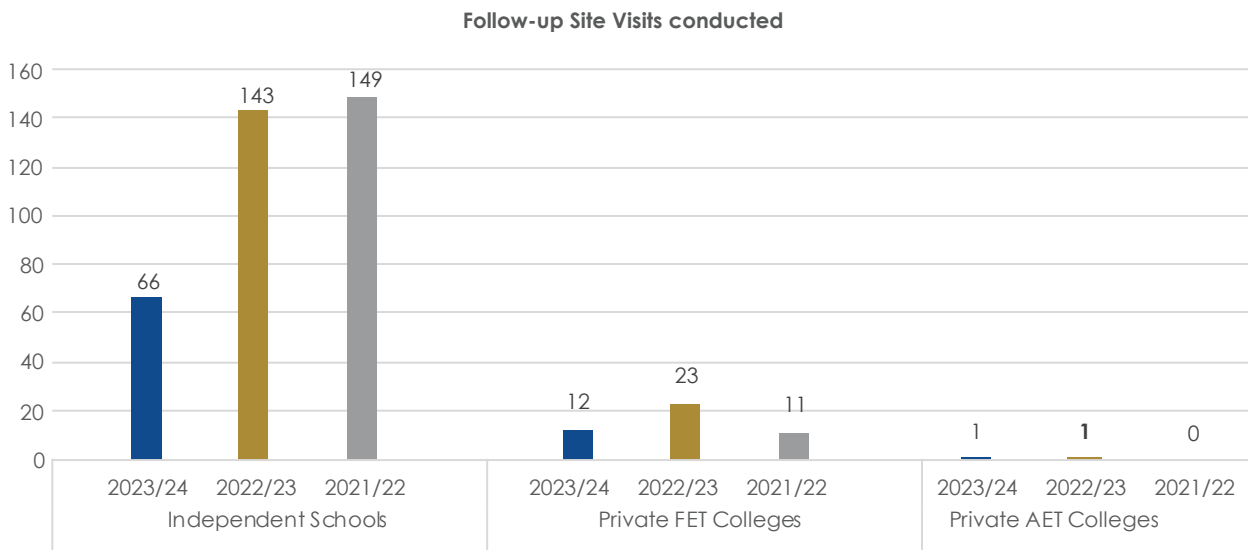
Despite the transition to online site visits, the rigorous and professional standards of the evaluation process are maintained. The majority of institutions express a preference for this approach, providing positive feedback. Additionally, since online site visits are recorded, ensuring that all information is available for subsequent review.

In cases where accredited private education institutions relocate and apply for a “change of site,” follow-up site visits are also conducted. These visits verify whether the new facilities and resources meet the minimum requirements for quality provision.

Table 7 provides an overview of the number of follow-up site visits performed subsequent to the evaluation of an improvement report, categorised by sector, spanning from 1 April 2021 to 31 March 2024. The higher number of site visits conducted to independent schools between 1 April 2021 and 31 March 2023 can be attributed to additional staff contracted on a short-term contract to deal with follow-up evaluations specifically.

**Table 7:** Follow-up Site Visits conducted from 01 April 2021 to 31 March 2024

	Independent Schools			Private FET Colleges			Private AET Colleges		
	2023/24	2022/23	2021/22	2023/24	2022/23	2021/22	2023/24	2022/23	2021/22
<b>Q1</b>	13	94	37	5	11	0	0	1	0
<b>Q2</b>	14	30	83	5	4	0	0	0	0
<b>Q3</b>	17	0	29	1	3	4	1	0	0
<b>Q4</b>	22	19	0	1	5	7	0	0	0
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>66</b>	<b>143</b>	<b>149</b>	<b>12</b>	<b>23</b>	<b>11</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>0</b>



**Figure 6:** Follow-up Site Visits conducted from 01 April 2021 to 31 March 2024

### “Window Period”

The term “window period” refers to a specific phase in the accreditation process that is distinct from an accreditation status. It signifies that an institution has not initially met the accreditation criteria, granting them an opportunity for improvement. As outlined in the GENFETQA Act, sections 25 (1) and (2), the window period applies to private education institutions that fall short of the minimum standards required for accreditation during their initial presentation of the accreditation report to the Accreditation Committee of Council (ACC).

During the window period, institutions are afforded the chance to put measures in place to meet the minimum requirements for accreditation. Feedback is provided to these institutions, detailing the specific areas where they failed to meet accreditation standards. The feedback also specifies the timeframe within which the institution must address these deficiencies and remit the fee for a follow-up evaluation. It is emphasised that the review will not only deal with the areas where the institution did not initially meet the requirements for accreditation but that all accreditation criteria must be met by the time of the review.

### Confirmation site visits

Over the past two financial years, 2022/23 and 2023/24, Umalusi has conducted unannounced physical site visits, known as confirmation site visits, to ensure the validity of evidence presented during online evaluations. These visits, carried out by two Umalusi officials, are crucial for detecting and addressing any superficial improvements or “window-dressing” that might have occurred during the online site visits. For independent schools, there was a slight increase in these confirmation visits from 51 in 2022/23 to 53 in 2023/24. Quarterly data shows a high level of activity in quarters one and four of both years, indicating a consistent effort to maintain rigorous verification processes.

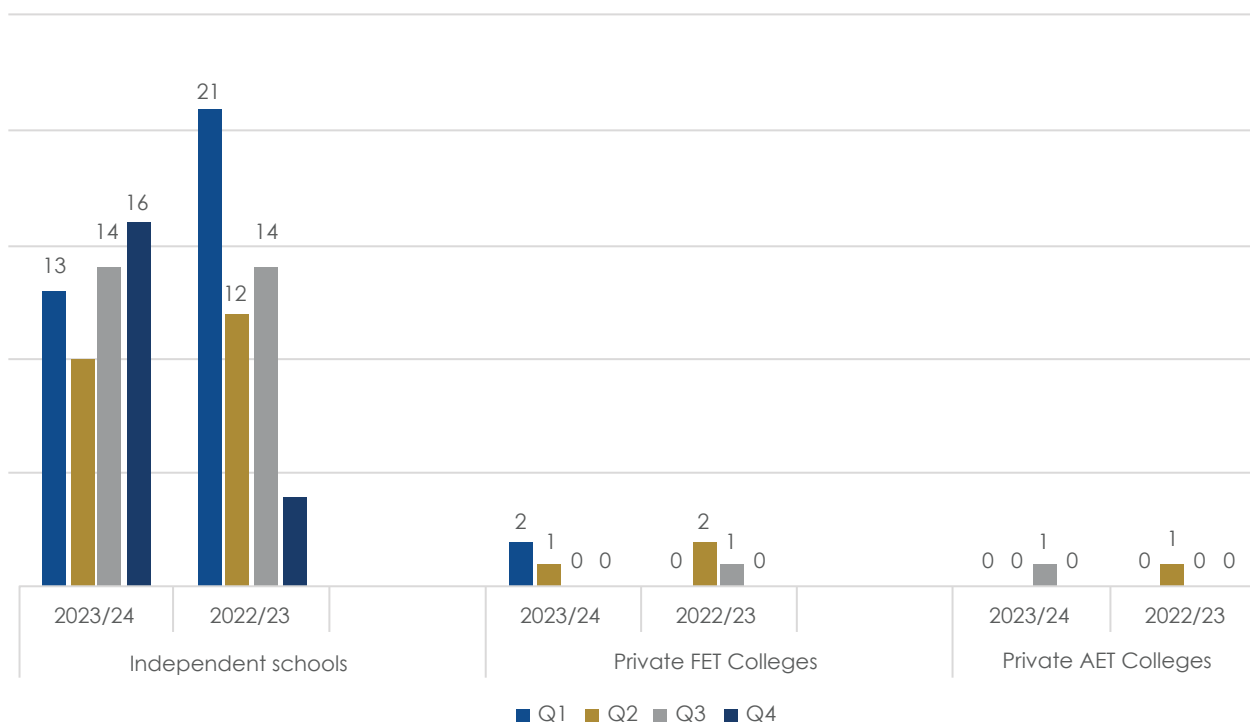
In the case of private colleges, the number of confirmation site visits remained stable over the two years. Private FET Colleges saw three visits each year, with a slight shift in quarterly distribution. Private AET Colleges had one visit each year, with no significant change in distribution.

Confirmation site visits play an important role in ensuring that institutions meet the required standards and that “window dressing” for site visits is minimised.

**Table 8:** Confirmation Site Visits conducted per sector from 01 April 2022 to 31 March 2024

	Independent schools		Private FET Colleges		Private AET Colleges	
	2023/24	2022/23	2023/24	2022/23	2023/24	2022/23
Q1	13	21	2	0	0	0
Q2	10	12	1	2	0	1
Q3	14	14	0	1	1	0
Q4	16	4	0	0	0	0
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>53</b>	<b>51</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>1</b>

Confirmation site visits following online site visits



**Figure 7:** Confirmation Site Visits conducted per sector from 01 April 2022 to 31 March 2024

## Reports to the Accreditation Committee of Council

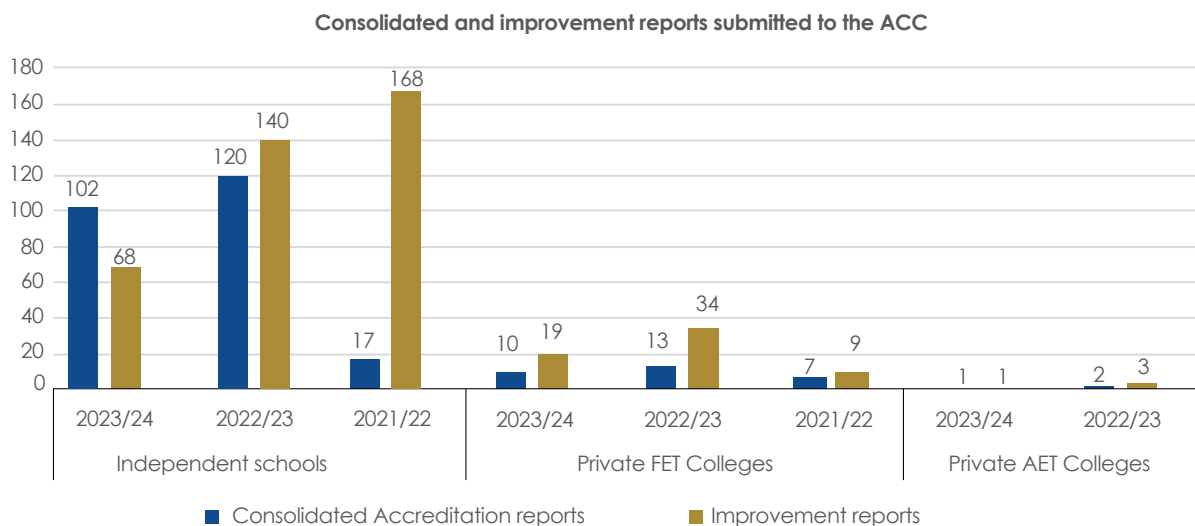
Evaluators and subject specialists generate both desktop and site visit reports that summarise the information gathered throughout the evaluation and verification processes. These reports are consolidated into a comprehensive accreditation report that includes a recommendation regarding the outcome of the accreditation application. This recommendation is based on specific indicators designed to assess whether the institution satisfies the minimum requirements for accreditation according to the officially prescribed criteria.

Following the preparation of the consolidated accreditation reports, they undergo a thorough moderation, quality assurance, and approval process within the relevant sub-unit. Once approved, the reports are forwarded to the Accreditation and Coordination sub-unit for further review. Subsequently, the reports are assigned to the Accreditation Committee of Council (ACC) members for their consideration. The frequency with which reports are submitted to the ACC each quarter is contingent upon the number of site verification visits conducted.

**Table 9: Reports submitted to the ACC between 01 April 2021 and 31 March 2024**

Initial Consolidated Accreditation reports		Independent schools			Private FET Colleges			Private AET Colleges		
		2023/24	2022/23	2021/22	2023/24	2022/23	2021/22	2023/24	2022/23	2021/22
	Q1	15	27	0	1	0	0	0	2	0
	Q2	44	37	0	6	6	0	1	0	0
	Q3	27	39	2	0	5	1	0	0	0
	Q4	16	17	15	3	2	6	0	0	0
	TOTAL	102	120	17	10	13	7	1	2	0

Improvement reports		Independent schools			Private FET Colleges			Private AET Colleges		
		2023/24	2022/23	2021/22	2023/24	2022/23	2021/22	2023/24	2022/23	2021/22
	Q1	17	18	18	2	1	0	0	0	0
	Q2	18	82	31	13	13	0	0	0	0
	Q3	15	35	72	2	12	2	0	0	0
	Q4	18	5	47	2	8	7	1	3	0
	TOTAL	68	140	168	19	34	9	1	3	0



**Figure 8: Reports submitted to the ACC between 01 April 2021 and 31 March 2024**

From 2021/22 to 2023/24, there has been a dynamic pattern in the submission of initial consolidated accreditation reports and improvement reports for Independent Schools, Private FET Colleges, and Private AET Colleges. In the 2021/22 financial year, there was a significant increase in both types of reports, with Quarter 4 seeing the highest number of initial reports and Quarter 3 having the most improvement reports. This trend suggests a focused effort towards finalising accreditation processes and implementing necessary improvements towards the end of the financial year.

## Turnaround time for accreditation applications

The time from the submission of the intent to apply for accreditation to the communication of the outcome to the institution after presenting the accreditation report to the Accreditation Committee of Council can extend up to 18 months. This duration may be further extended depending on the institution's compliance with the required processes. The process is likely to take longer for private colleges, as it is dependent on their acquisition of registration as a private college and examination centre by the DHET. Following the awarding of registration, the private college must complete a full academic cycle of offering the qualification before a site visit can be scheduled. This additional step can contribute to a longer overall timeframe for the accreditation process.

Several factors influence and have the potential to impede the process, including:

- Misalignment between accreditation application and offerings
- Incomplete submissions
- Non-payment for site visits
- Non-attendance at pre-site visit meetings
- Concurrent examination periods
- School/college holidays
- Institutions deferring the site visits

## Areas of strength

- (a) Successful online site verification visits: These visits are consistently carried out effectively.
- (b) Pre-site visit meetings: The introduction of these has been well-received by many institutions.
- (c) Improved communication: The online site visit process has significantly enhanced communication with institutions.
- (d) Safety and cost-effectiveness: Online site visits are safe and eliminate travel and accommodation expenses.
- (e) Flexibility in evaluator deployment: Evaluators from any part of the country can be deployed, allowing for more efficient planning and execution of site visits.
- (f) Training on Microsoft Teams: Comprehensive training on Microsoft Teams features has been provided to numerous institutions.
- (g) Streamlined document submission: Institutions submit documents prior to online site visits, saving valuable time on the day of the visit.
- (h) Thorough evaluation: The online process demands thorough evaluation and probing, ensuring a comprehensive examination of evidence submitted by institutions.
- (i) Recorded site visits: The online site visit process is recorded, with the recordings serving as valuable references in cases of uncertainty and disputes.
- (j) Reduced turnaround time: There is a significantly reduced turnaround time between site visits and the presentation of reports to the ACC.
- (k) Consolidated report format: This format guides reporting, ensuring that essential information is consistently provided for making accreditation decisions.
- (l) Rigorous and effective verifications: Online site visits have proven to be rigorous and effective in conducting verifications.
- (m) Confirmation site visits: These are physical, unannounced visits to institutions when the online verification indicates that the institution meets the requirements for accreditation. The confirmation site visits reduce the effects of "window dressing" during site visits.

## Challenges

- (a) Some institutions face challenges due to a lack of necessary technology for successful online site verification visits. In such cases, the evaluation team finds ways to overcome such challenges when they arise.
- (b) The online process is disrupted when there is unexpected load-shedding.
- (c) Persistent challenges with internet connectivity and reception remain a concern, particularly for institutions in remote areas. In these situations, the evaluation team will find a way to deal with such evaluations as well.
- (d) For private colleges, site visits can only occur after registration or provisional registration by the DHET, completion of a national examination, and payment of required fees. Planning is dependent on the applicant's actions and compliance.
- (e) While registration and accreditation processes are linked, Umalusi can only provide feedback on its processes. Some applicants expect feedback on the registration process, which is beyond Umalusi's control.
- (f) Colleges without enrolments for an academic cycle pose a challenge for verifying teaching and learning during site visits, as verification of curriculum implementation requires student enrolment.
- (g) Lack of communication from some providers about the absence of registered learners can hinder the verification of teaching and learning during site visits.
- (h) Site visits capture the institution's situation at a specific point in time, with potential for "window dressing." This is addressed through unannounced "follow-up" or "confirmation" site visits.
- (i) Limited available dates for site visits, especially for the NATED programme in private colleges, are a constraint due to the nature of the trimester calendar.
- (j) The consolidated accreditation report involves intensively collating information from desktop and site visit evaluations. Specialised report writing skills and a time-intensive process are essential for this report.

## Conclusion

After the site visits and reporting thereon have been completed, a consolidated report is developed, which reports on evidence evaluated and verified during the accreditation process. The moderated consolidated reports are sent to the Accreditation and Coordination (A&C) sub-unit for quality assurance before being submitted to the Accreditation Committee of Council with a recommendation on the accreditation outcome based on specific criteria.

# Chapter 4

## Accreditation and Coordination (A&C)

The Evaluation and Accreditation unit oversees three committees, namely the Internal Accreditation Committee (IAC) (an operational committee) and two Council Committees, namely the Accreditation Committee of Council (ACC) and the Accreditation Appeals Committee (AAC). The Accreditation and Coordination (A&C) sub-unit coordinates the workings of these committees involved in accrediting private education institutions.

Acting as the secretariat of these committees, the A&C sub-unit staff manage the presentation of accreditation and monitoring reports to the IAC and ACC, as well as the presentation of appeal reports to the AAC. Additionally, they develop and communicate letters notifying institutions of accreditation outcomes for signature by the Chief Executive Officer or the Senior Manager, as required. The A&C sub-unit is also responsible for coordinating the issuing of accreditation certificates.

### Committees

The three committees and their work are as follows:

#### Internal Accreditation Committee (IAC)

The Internal Accreditation Committee (IAC) is comprised of the Senior Manager, Managers of the E&A unit of Umalusi and Admin Assistants of the A&C sub-unit. Managers may co-opt Assistant Managers and Admin Assistants from their sub-unit as needed to provide clarity on reports considered at the IAC meetings. The A&C sub-unit manager or his delegate chairs the IAC, with the A&C sub-unit serving as the secretariat of the Committee.

The purpose of the IAC is to consider recommendations from the evaluation teams regarding deferred reports, reports that need to be sent back to the ACC for review, and monitoring reports where a notice of intent to withdraw accreditation is recommended. The Committee also reviews reports of no accreditation for institutions that failed to submit evidence and/or pay the required fee following a window period to improve or provisional accreditation. Additionally, the Committee considers reports on change of site, change of ownership and/or change of name requests. The IAC also considers reports on appeals against the accreditation outcome and presents findings and recommendations to the ACC. The IAC meets at least four (4) times annually before each meeting of the ACC.

#### Accreditation Committee of Council (ACC)

The Accreditation Committee of Council (ACC) was established by the Umalusi Council to support the work of the Evaluation and Accreditation (E&A) unit's evaluation processes and to ensure that accreditation decisions are thoroughly reviewed and credible.

According to its Terms of Reference, the ACC is comprised of 13 Council-appointed members. However, the 6<sup>th</sup> Umalusi Council has approved the current ACC membership to comprise 14 members. The ACC includes a Chairperson who is a member of the Umalusi Council and 13 nominated members from the private and public provider sectors that Umalusi serves. One of the committee members is appointed as the deputy chairperson, and Umalusi full-time staff members serve as ex-officio members. The Committee meets at least four (4) times annually.

The role of the ACC is to deliberate on and recommend decisions regarding accreditation applications. Members are assigned accreditation reports to verify that the accreditation process is fair and that the decisions are consistent with the evidence. ACC members have access to the evidence provided by the institutions, source reports, and the consolidated accreditation report. Each member presents their findings on the allocated reports, and the Committee makes a final recommendation on the accreditation status of the institution. The ACC decides whether to accept, amend, or reject the accreditation recommendation and provides supporting reasons for their decisions. The Committee also recommends the withdrawal of the accreditation status of a private education institution / private assessment body.

### Accreditation Appeals Committee (AAC)

The Accreditation Appeals Committee (AAC) is a Council Committee chaired by a member of the Umalusi Council with legal expertise. The purpose of the AAC is to provide a mechanism for institutions to appeal an accreditation decision or outcome that is felt unjust. The Committee consists of one legal expert and two professional persons who are qualified and experienced in the accreditation processes of Quality Councils. As such, the two professional persons are nominated by the Council on Higher Education (CHE) and the Quality Council for Trades and Occupations (QCTO). Four meetings of the Accreditation Appeals Committee are scheduled per calendar year. However, the Committee only meet on the scheduled dates if there are appeals to be considered.

The Accreditation Appeals Committee makes recommendations to the Umalusi Executive Committee (EXCO) regarding the appeals. The EXCO makes the final decision on the outcome of an appeal.

### Accreditation outcomes

The Accreditation Committee of Council (ACC) recommends accreditation outcomes to the Chief Executive Officer (CEO) of Umalusi, who the Council delegates to approve recommendations. Once outcomes are approved, accreditation letters, signed by the Umalusi CEO on behalf of the Umalusi Council, are issued to the institutions.

### Independent Schools

The possible outcomes of an accreditation application for accreditation by an independent school are:

- Accreditation
- Two (2) years provisional accreditation
- No accreditation (following a “window period” to improve or provisional accreditation)

The table below indicates the number of independent schools granted each status in 2023/24 and previous financial years.

**Table 10: Accreditation Outcomes for Independent Schools**

	2023/24	2022/23	2021/22	TOTAL
<b>Accreditation</b>	48	95	80	<b>223</b>
<b>Provisional Accreditation</b>	43	42	27	<b>112</b>
<b>No Accreditation</b>	30	67	96	<b>193</b>
<b>ACCREDITATION OUTCOMES</b>	<b>121</b>	<b>204</b>	<b>203</b>	<b>528</b>

### Accreditation outcomes for Independent Schools

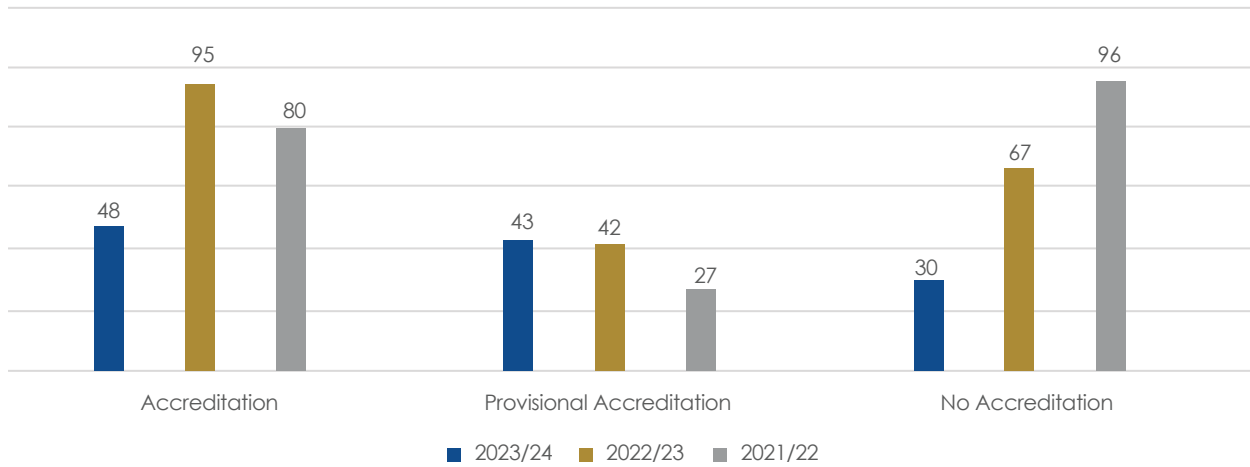


Figure 9: Accreditation Outcomes for Independent Schools

The main reasons for schools not achieving accreditation include:

- Moving premises without acquiring permission and the necessary documentation from the Provincial Education Department.
- Expired or unobtained health and safety certificates, especially for new premises.
- Employing unqualified teachers or teachers who are not registered with the South African Council for Educators (SACE).
- Fraudulent SACE certificates.
- Provisional registration as an independent school.
- Accreditation applications that do not align with the school's registration or offerings.
- Failure to follow up on an accreditation application after being granted a period to improve.

### Private Colleges

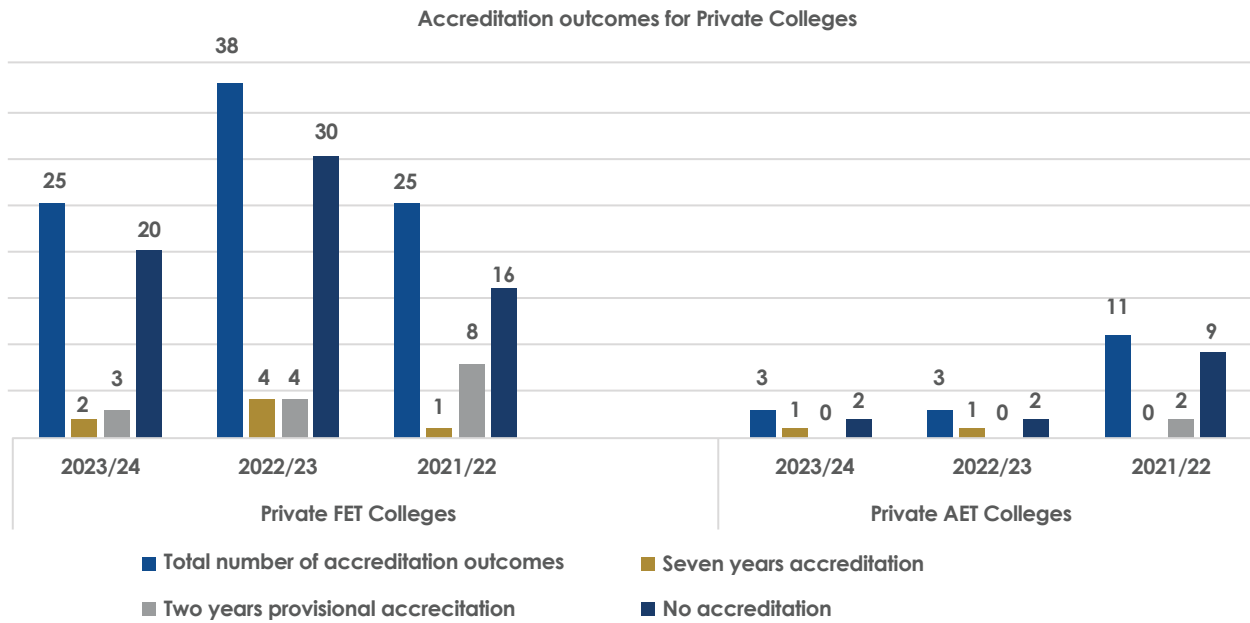
Private colleges are awarded one of the following statuses:

- Seven years accreditation
- Two years provisional accreditation
- No accreditation (following a “window period” to improve or provisional accreditation)

The table below indicates the number of private colleges granted each status in 2023/24 and previous financial years.

**Table 11: Accreditation Outcomes for Private Colleges**

	Private FET Colleges				Private AET Colleges		
	2023/24	2022/23	2021/22		2023/24	2022/23	2021/22
<b>Total number of accreditation outcomes</b>	25	38	25		3	3	11
<b>Seven years accreditation</b>	2	4	1		1	1	0
<b>Two years provisional accreditation</b>	3	4	8		0	0	2
<b>No accreditation</b>	20	30	16		2	2	9



**Figure 10: Accreditation Outcomes for Private Colleges**

Many private colleges are granted a “window period” to improve or two years provisional accreditation for their initial application, and then an outcome of no accreditation in the follow-up evaluation. Very few meet the requirements for seven years accreditation. For many private colleges, it has been found that the evidence submitted in the self-evaluation report has not been implemented in the college. This could be attributed to outsourcing the development of the self-evaluation report rather than having it done by the college management and staff, as well as the frequent change of principals and lecturers in many private colleges.

### Window Period to Improve

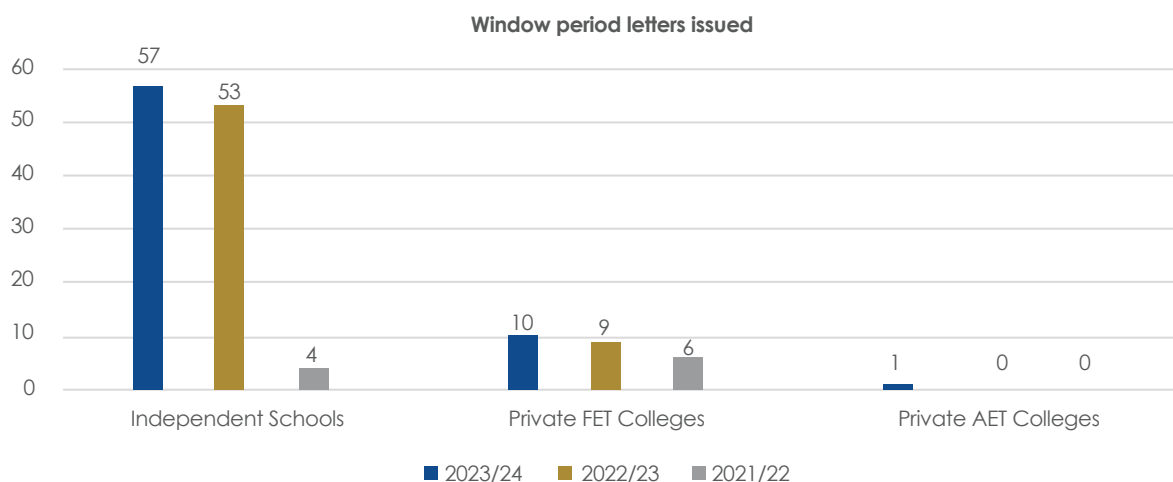
A window period to improve means that the institution did not meet the required standards and has been granted an opportunity to improve. A window period is not an accreditation outcome or status. The window period is time-bound, and there is a cost that the institution must pay for the follow-up evaluation to determine whether the institution subsequently meets the required standards. There is no extension of a window period to improve.

In 2021/22, only four independent schools were granted a window period to improve. The low number is directly related to the inability to conduct site verification visits during the COVID-19 lockdown restrictions. However, once site visits resumed, the number of institutions granted a window period to improve increased considerably, with 53 letters issued in 2022/23 and 57 in 2023/24.

The low number of window period outcomes for Private FET Colleges and Private AET Colleges is indicative of the lower number of applications for accreditation in these sectors.

**Table 12: Window period letters issued**

Number of window period letters issued	Independent Schools	Private FET Colleges	Private AET Colleges
2023/24	57	10	1
2022/23	53	9	0
2021/22	4	6	0



**Figure 11: Window period letters issued**

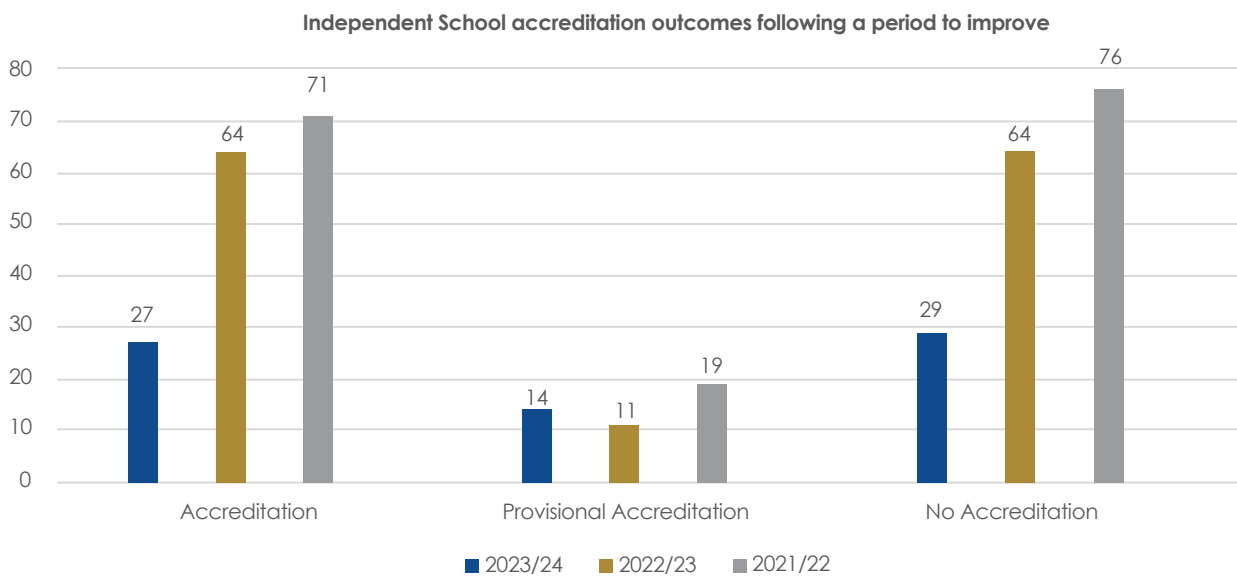
### Improvements following a window period or provisional accreditation

The data on independent school outcomes following a period given to improve shows a concerning trend of institutions failing to enhance their accreditation status significantly. In the 2021/22 financial year, 43% of schools achieved accreditation after the improvement period. This percentage has decreased over time, with only 39% in 2023/24. The decline suggests that schools are not effectively utilising the window or provisional accreditation periods to make necessary improvements.

This situation is particularly alarming because most schools continue to operate despite not meeting accreditation requirements. Since the registration of independent schools falls under the Provincial Education Departments and not Umalusi, a school's registration is not automatically withdrawn if it fails to obtain accreditation. The Head of Department in each province is informed of accreditation outcomes, but this does not necessarily result in immediate action. As a result, it is crucial for the public to be vigilant and insist on evidence of Umalusi accreditation before enrolling their children in an independent school. This measure is essential to ensure that schools meet the necessary standards and provide a quality education.

**Table 13:** Independent School accreditation outcomes between 01 April 2021 and 31 March 2024, following a period to improve

Independent School outcomes following a period to improve				
YEAR	TOTAL	Accreditation	Provisional Accreditation	No Accreditation
2023/24	70	27 39%	14 20%	29 41%
2022/23	139	64 46%	11 8%	64 46%
2021/22	166	71 43%	19 11%	76 46%



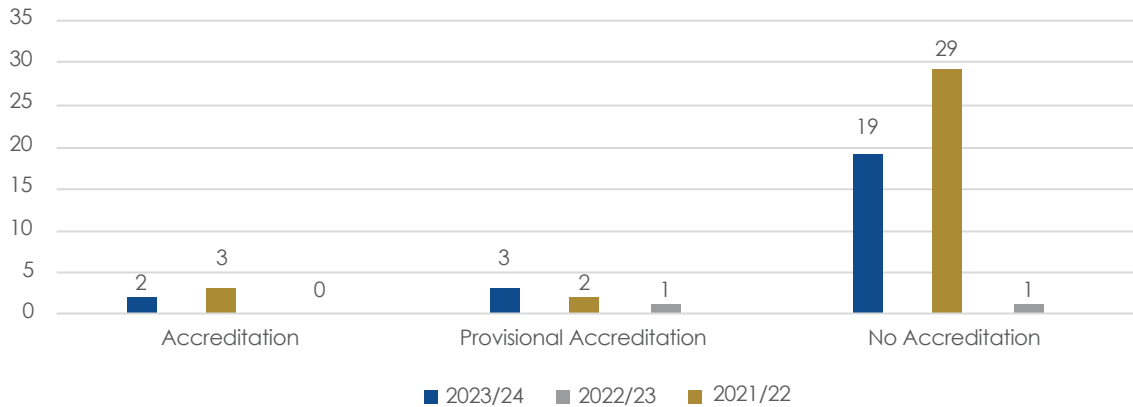
**Figure 12:** Independent Schools accreditation outcomes following a period to improve

The statistics for private colleges for the past financial years reflect a similar trend to that of independent schools in that most colleges are not making use of the opportunity given to them to improve. Seventy-nine per cent (79%) of private colleges received an outcome of no accreditation following a period to improve in the most recent financial year, as did 67% of private AET colleges.

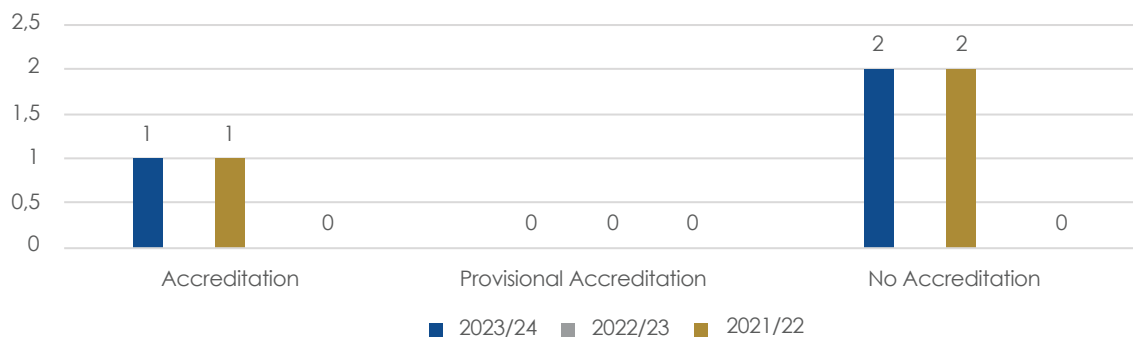
**Table 14:** Private College accreditation outcomes following a period to improve

Private College outcomes following a period to improve			
	Accreditation	Provisional accreditation	No accreditation
<b>2023/24</b> Private FET Colleges	2 <b>8%</b>	3 <b>13%</b>	19 <b>79%</b>
<b>2022/23</b> Private FET Colleges	3 <b>9%</b>	2 <b>6%</b>	29 <b>85%</b>
<b>2021/22</b> Private FET Colleges	0 <b>0%</b>	1 <b>50%</b>	1 <b>50%</b>
<b>Private AET Colleges</b>			
<b>2023/24</b> Private AET Colleges	1 <b>33%</b>	0 <b>0%</b>	2 <b>67%</b>
<b>2022/23</b> Private AET Colleges	1 <b>33%</b>	0 <b>0%</b>	2 <b>67%</b>
<b>2021/22</b> Private AET Colleges	0 <b>0%</b>	0 <b>0%</b>	0 <b>0%</b>

**Private FET College outcomes following a period to improve**



**Private AET College outcomes following a period to improve**



**Figure 13:** Private College outcomes following a period to improve

## Recommendations for improvement

- (a) Institutions must ensure they adhere to the timelines specified in the accreditation feedback letters.
- (b) Principals and heads of institutions must implement stringent measures to verify the professional qualifications and SACE registration of their teachers and lecturers.
- (c) Institutions must make payment for the improvement process within the specified period, as evidence will only be evaluated once payment is received. Failure to pay within the specified time will result in the accreditation outcome being based on the initial evaluation, leading to a decision of no accreditation for the institution.

## The Appeal Process

Institutions have the right to appeal an outcome of “no accreditation”. It is important to note that an appeal must be based on evidence from the institution that an incorrect decision was made, considering the evidence presented during the evaluation. Measures implemented after the evaluation and requests for leniency or further time to address the outstanding matters do not constitute grounds for an appeal.

The appeal, supporting evidence, and payment for consideration must be made within the specified timelines for an appeal to be considered. The appeal and supporting evidence are first considered by the Internal Accreditation Committee, and a recommendation is made to the Accreditation Committee of Council (ACC). The ACC considers the appeal and supporting evidence and decides whether to review their original recommendation on the outcome of the application or to uphold their original decision. If the ACC decides to uphold their original recommendation, the appeal and supporting evidence are presented to the Accreditation Appeals Committee (AAC) for consideration and recommendation to the Executive Committee of Council for a final decision. If the findings are in favour of the appellant (that is, if the appeal is successful), the appeal fee will be refunded to the appellant.

## Appeals presented to the AAC

During the past three financial years, the AAC diligently reviewed several appeals from institutions dissatisfied with accreditation decisions. This period underscores the AAC's commitment to ensuring fairness and transparency in the accreditation process. All the appeals failed. The fact that the appeals failed demonstrates the rigour that the Accreditation Committee of Council applies in considering the evidence before making recommendations on the outcome of accreditation applications.

The table below indicates the number of appeals presented to the AAC per financial year between 1 April 2021 and 31 March 2024 and the outcomes thereof.

**Table 15:** Appeals considered by the AAC

	INDEPENDENT SCHOOLS			PRIVATE FET COLLEGES		
	2023/24	2022/23	2021/22	2023/24	2022/23	2021/22
Appeals presented	3	11	2	2	3	0
Appeals failed	3	11	2	2	3	0

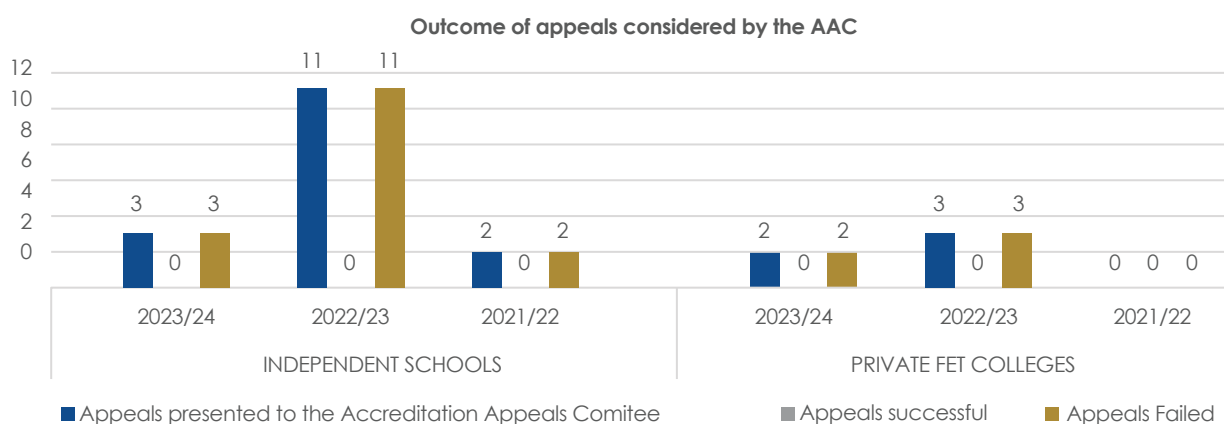


Figure 14: Outcome of appeals considered by the AAC

### Area of Strength

- (a) The Accreditation Appeals Committee, independent of the Accreditation Committee of Council, provides an additional layer of review to ensure that the accreditation process is fair, efficient and reliable.

### Challenge

- (a) Despite every effort to explain the basis for an appeal, institutions still submit appeals without merit. For example, institutions request additional time to implement measures, ask for leniency, or highlight measures that have been put in place after the evaluation.

### Recommendation for improvement

Private education institutions must note that an appeal is to determine whether the correct decision was made based on the evidence provided at the time of the evaluation. An appeal for leniency or extra time to put measures in place will fail.

### Conclusion

The three committees, the IAC, ACC and AAC, play a crucial role in the accreditation of private education institutions applying for accreditation by Umalusi. The two Council committees, the ACC and AAC, provide independent oversight of the E&A unit's evaluation processes, ensuring that the accreditation processes are credible and valid.

# Chapter 5

## Stakeholder Engagement

Umalusi employs various platforms and methods to communicate with stakeholders, ensuring they are well-informed about its legislative mandate and the ongoing developments in its implementation. This chapter outlines key engagements that Umalusi undertakes to maintain effective communication and collaboration with its stakeholders.

### **Annual Meeting with officials from the Department of Basic Education, Provincial Education Departments, and Private Assessment Bodies**

One of the primary platforms for stakeholder engagement is the annual meeting, which brings together representatives from the Department of Basic Education, Provincial Education Departments, and Private Assessment Bodies. The primary objective of this meeting is to discuss and address issues related to the alignment of the registration of independent schools as private education institutions and private examination centres and their accreditation by Umalusi. The alignment is guided by the Regulations regarding the Criteria for the Quality Assurance, Accreditation, and Monitoring of Independent Schools and Private Assessment Bodies gazetted by the Minister of Basic Education on 27 October 2017. The annual meeting serves as a crucial forum for stakeholders to understand and align processes with these regulations, ensuring a cohesive approach to quality assurance and accreditation.

### **Accreditation Forum and Accreditation Certificate Presentation Ceremony**

Umalusi once again successfully conducted an Accreditation Forum and Accreditation Certificate presentation ceremony in a hybrid mode (a physical meeting and concurrent online live stream). One hundred and fifteen delegates attended the physical meeting, and around 993 participants joined online. This event serves a dual purpose: to present institutions that have met the accreditation criteria during the past year with accreditation certificates and to discuss pertinent issues affecting the education of learners. By bringing together educational leaders and stakeholders, the forum facilitates meaningful discussions on current challenges and opportunities in the education sector, fostering a collaborative approach to continuous improvement.

The theme for the 2024 forum was “Empowering Excellence: Pursuing Quality Education in a World of Technological Advancement”, with presentations on “Quality Education in the Midst of Technological Advancements” and “Update on Developments Affecting Private Education Institutions in the General and Further Education and Training Qualifications Sub-framework”. Accreditation certificates were presented to institutions that were granted accreditation in 2023.

Positive feedback was received from participants on the content and planning of the forum. However, it became clear that more advocacy is needed on the mandate and role of Umalusi in the education landscape. The questions posed by participants will assist in the planning of future accreditation forums and other advocacy initiatives.

### **DHET and Umalusi Joint Task Team on Registration and Accreditation of Private Colleges**

The Evaluation and Monitoring sub-unit serves as the secretariat for this task team, which meets to discuss matters relating to the registration and accreditation of private colleges. The task team meetings have proved to be valuable in navigating the way forward in dealing with matters related to registration and accreditation of private colleges, particularly in the offering of the N1-N3 Engineering Studies programmes during the phase-out of the qualification and the teach-out period.

## Articles in the Makoya Magazine

Evaluation and Accreditation unit staff contributed articles to the Umalusi magazine, Makoya, during the reporting period. These include the following articles:

- Umalusi's approach to the accreditation of independent schools offering online teaching and learning. (Makoya – June 2023)
- Umalusi engages policymakers and implementers on the imperative of stopping unregistered and unaccredited institutions from operating. (Makoya – September 2023)
- Accreditation & Certificate Award Ceremony. (March 2024)

# Chapter 6

## Conclusion

The Evaluation and Accreditation unit continues to implement rigorous processes to ensure quality provision of the qualifications on the GFETQSF at private education institutions, thereby protecting the South African learners in these sectors.

The three sub-units of the E&A unit, namely Evaluation and Monitoring (E&M), Evaluation and Verification (E&V), and Accreditation and Coordination (A&C) sub-units, ensure that the evaluation processes of private education institutions applying for accreditation with Umalusi are rigorous and run smoothly. Similarly, the two Council committees, the Accreditation Committee of Council (ACC) and the Accreditation Appeals Committee (AAC) provide independent oversight of the E&A unit's evaluation and accreditation processes.

Umalusi employs various platforms and methods to communicate with stakeholders, ensuring they are well-informed about its legislative mandate and the ongoing developments in its implementation.

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**ISBN:** 978-1-928445-73-9

**Address:** General Van Ryneveld Street,  
Persekor Technopark, Pretoria

**Telephone:** +27 12 349 1510

**Email:** [info@umalusi.org.za](mailto:info@umalusi.org.za)

**Web:** [www.umalusi.org.za](http://www.umalusi.org.za)

  Umalusi\_RSA

  @UmalusiSA