

## FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS: ACCREDITATION OF PRIVATE COLLEGES TO OFFER THE NATIONAL CERTIFICATE (VOCATIONAL)

This document is intended to contribute to a better understanding of Umalusi's quality assurance mandate, scope, and initiatives, as they apply to Further Education and Training (FET) private colleges.

### 1. Quality assurance mandate and scope

1.1	<p><b>Why does a private college have to be accredited?</b></p> <p>Accreditation is a legal requirement for private colleges in terms of the following legislation:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- General and Further Education and Training Quality Assurance (GENFETQA) Act 2001, as amended.</li> <li>- National Qualifications Framework (NQF) Act, 2008, as amended.</li> <li>- 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 September 2018).</li> <li>- Continuing Education and Training Act No. 16 of 2006.</li> </ul>
1.2	<p><b>What is the difference between accreditation and registration?</b></p> <p>Accreditation is the recognition of the capacity of a private college to offer a qualification on the General and Further Education and Training Qualifications Sub-framework, and the private college's implementation of the curriculum in support of the qualification at the required standard.</p> <p><b>Accreditation</b> attests to the capacity and the quality of the offering of a specific programme of a qualification in a private college.</p> <p><b>Registration</b> is the "licence to operate" issued by the Department of Higher Education and Training to private colleges that meet their requirements. This includes registration as a private college and registration as an examination centre.</p>
1.3	<p><b>Are all colleges expected to apply for accreditation with Umalusi?</b></p> <p>According to the General and Further Education and Training Quality Assurance (GENFETQA) Act, 2001, as amended, Umalusi is required to quality assure private colleges that intend to offer a qualification on the General and Further Education and Training Qualifications Sub-framework of the National Qualifications Framework.</p> <p>Public TVET colleges are not required to apply for accreditation by Umalusi.</p> <p>Private colleges that offer qualifications other than those on Umalusi's sub-framework must apply to the relevant Quality Council for accreditation to offer those qualifications.</p>
1.4	<p><b>How do I apply for accreditation?</b></p> <p>Application for accreditation is an online process, which can be accessed on Umalusi's website: <a href="http://www.umalusi.org.za">www.umalusi.org.za</a>. Click on the link "Apply for Accreditation" <a href="https://www.umalusi-online.org.za/OA/">https://www.umalusi-online.org.za/OA/</a>. Information on that link will guide you through the online application process.</p>

	<p>Information about the accreditation process and the accreditation fees is available on the Umalusi website on the following link: <a href="https://www.umalusi.org.za/services/accreditation/">https://www.umalusi.org.za/services/accreditation/</a>. Scroll down and click on the link to the "Open letter to applicants".</p>
1.5	<p><b>What is Umalusi's quality assurance approach for private colleges?</b></p> <p>In line with its quality assurance mandate, Umalusi uses a set of criteria to accredit private colleges to offer a qualification on its sub-framework of qualifications. Umalusi's main focus in regard to private colleges is their internal quality management of education provision.</p> <p>The criteria for the accreditation of a private college to offer a qualification on the General and Further Education and Training Qualifications Sub-framework are as follows:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Criterion 1: Mission Directed Leadership and Management</li> <li>Criterion 2: Teaching, Learning and Training</li> <li>Criterion 3: Assessment and Results</li> <li>Criterion 4: Learner Support</li> </ul>
1.6	<p><b>Is the accreditation of private colleges optional or compulsory?</b></p> <p>Private colleges that offer a qualification on the General and Further Education and Training Qualifications Sub-framework are obliged to be accredited with Umalusi per site of delivery and to further comply with the monitoring and evaluation requirements of Umalusi.</p>
1.7	<p><b>We are in the process of establishing a college. Do we start with accreditation or registration?</b></p> <p>An application will only be considered from a registered company (as per the CIPC document).</p> <p>An application for accreditation must be lodged with Umalusi, and, at the same time, the prospective college must lodge an application for registration with the Department of Higher Education and Training (DHET). Once the self-evaluation report submitted to Umalusi by the prospective private college meets the minimum requirements, Umalusi will advise the DHET thereof. The DHET will then conduct their processes leading to provisional registration as a private college and examination centre if the college meets the DHET minimum requirements.</p> <p>The accreditation process will continue for a private college that is granted provisional registration by the DHET. However, without provisional registration by the DHET, the accreditation process will not be able to continue since registration of a private college is a prerequisite for accreditation.</p>
1.8	<p><b>Is it a problem if our lecturers are not registered with the South African Council for Educators (SACE)?</b></p> <p>Yes. Section 3(a), (c), and (f) of the South African Council for Educators Act No. 31 of 2000, as amended, "applies to all educators, lecturers, and management staff of colleges."</p> <p>Further, Chapter 3 Section 21(2) states that "No person may be employed as an educator by any employer unless the person is registered with the council."</p>
1.9	<p><b>Does Umalusi accredit private providers of curriculum material, including teaching and learning aids?</b></p> <p>No, Umalusi accredits institutions that offer a qualification on the General Education and Training Qualifications Sub-framework of the NQF.</p>

1.10	<p><b>Does Accreditation with Umalusi mean we can offer any qualifications and subjects?</b></p> <p>No. A private college can only offer the qualification, programme and subjects that it has been registered for and accredited to offer.</p>
1.11	<p><b>Our college has moved to new premises since we applied for registration. How will that affect our accreditation application?</b></p> <p>Accreditation is linked to the physical address of the college. Accreditation is granted to a private college based on the availability and suitability of the physical resources as stipulated in the resource requirements of each qualification. The institution must, therefore, inform Umalusi of its intention to move to new premises. This will enable Umalusi to verify whether the new premises comply with the qualification requirements and thus confirm whether the accreditation status pertains to the new premises.</p>
1.12	<p><b>Does the public know about our college's accreditation status?</b></p> <p>Accredited colleges are listed on Umalusi's website. This information can be accessed at <a href="http://www.umalusi.org.za">www.umalusi.org.za</a> on the link "Accredited Institutions". (<a href="https://www.umalusi-online.org.za/enquiries">https://www.umalusi-online.org.za/enquiries</a>).</p>
1.13	<p><b>Will our college be registered as an examination centre even if it is not accredited by Umalusi?</b></p> <p>Once a private college has met the minimum requirements at the desktop evaluation stage of the accreditation process, Umalusi refers the college to the DHET for provisional registration. Once a college meets the requirements of the DHET, the DHET will provisionally register the college both as a private college and an examination centre. The private college will have to meet the requirements for accreditation to offer the qualification within a specified time in order to retain the registration status.</p>
1.14	<p><b>What is the "green list" that people talk about?</b></p> <p>Umalusi issues the DHET examinations directorate with a list of private colleges that have been accredited or provisionally accredited and those that have been referred to the DHET for registration and are still in the accreditation process (have not yet received an outcome of their application for accreditation). This list is referred to as the "green list".</p> <p>The cut-off dates to be compliant to be included on the "green list" are as follows:</p> <p>NATED N3 Engineering Studies:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ 31 March for the August 2025 examinations</li> <li>➤ 15 August for the November 2025 examinations</li> <li>➤ Due to the phase-out of the N1-N3 Engineering Studies, Umalusi will not be certifying the Report 190/191 Engineering Studies examinations beyond November 2025.</li> </ul> <p>NC(V):</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ 15 November for the November examinations of the following year</li> </ul> <p>Being on the green list means that if the DHET registers the private college as an examination centre, Umalusi will issue certificates to students writing at that centre who fulfil the requirements of the qualification. However, the registration of a private college is a function of the DHET, and a college must meet the requirements of the DHET prior to being registered as a private college and an examination centre. Being on the "green list" does not automatically mean that a private college can register students to write examinations.</p>

	Note also that a college that is not on the "green list" may NOT offer a qualification on the General and Further Education and Training Qualifications Sub-framework and may NOT register students for examinations for those qualifications at another private college that is on the "green list".
1.15	<p><b>There are surely private colleges out there which are not accredited. Is Umalusi doing anything about them?</b></p> <p>Once Umalusi identifies private colleges that offer qualifications on its sub-framework without being accredited, Umalusi advises the DHET, which then follows up with the college as an unregistered, unaccredited private college.</p>
1.16	<p><b>How much do we have to pay for the accreditation application?</b></p> <p>The fees are based on the qualifications and subjects that the college applies for. These fees relate to the processing and evaluation of the college's application. The fees are payable per step in the process, and you will not be able to move on in the accreditation process without making the relevant payments. The fees can be found in the "Open Letter to Applicants" on the Umalusi website. <a href="https://www.umalusi.org.za/services/accreditation/">https://www.umalusi.org.za/services/accreditation/</a></p>
1.17	<p><b>Our college has reservations about evaluators seeing our confidential documents, such as audited financial statements.</b></p> <p>Appointed evaluators are required to sign a code of ethics and oath of secrecy. Furthermore, evaluators are strictly monitored during the evaluation process.</p>
1.18	<p><b>Who evaluates our self-evaluation and monitoring reports?</b></p> <p>Self-evaluation and monitoring reports are evaluated by adequately qualified and experienced college lecturers, educationists or subject experts, who are appointed and trained by Umalusi for that purpose.</p>
1.19	<p><b>Can we use generic policies to support our compliance with the accreditation criteria?</b></p> <p>Policies should be customised to suit the specific context of your college and be relevant to the specific qualification requirements. Generic policies can be used as a guideline but will not be accepted as meeting the requirements if submitted without being customised to the college and qualification that is being evaluated.</p>
1.20	<p><b>How would Umalusi know if the required policies and procedures were merely developed for submission and that they don't necessarily inform/guide practice at the college?</b></p> <p>In order to ensure that submitted policies and procedures guide the actual day-to-day operations at the college, Umalusi conducts verification site visits. The main focus of the site visits is to ascertain whether colleges have evidence of policy implementation, monitoring and review of the policies they submitted as part of their portfolio of evidence.</p>
1.21	<p><b>Our college's internal policies are not documented but are known to all staff members, students, and parents. Is it essential that they should be documented?</b></p> <p>Yes. Policy documentation will ensure consistent and effective implementation, monitoring, review, and general improvement of their effectiveness.</p>
1.22	<p><b>Can we ask an education consultant to compile our self-evaluation report or to develop policies for us?</b></p>

	<p>Although it is obviously the prerogative of colleges to use consultants in portfolio and/or policy development, it is Umalusi's considered view that policies compiled by consultants do not always provide an opportunity for staff members at the college to participate actively in their development. Subsequently, it is unlikely for staff members to take full ownership of the processes of policy implementation, monitoring and review. In the main, Umalusi believes that an increased role of consultants limits the entrenchment of an internal culture of quality management.</p> <p>The self-evaluation report should be completed by the directors of the company (owner) or the campus head or principal (people involved in the management and day-to-day running of the college) so that they can answer questions during the accreditation process. During the site visit, only the college staff are interviewed and consulted. Umalusi does not deal with consultants during the evaluation process.</p> <p>The requirements for accreditation are explained in detail at the Quality Promotion meetings, which consultants may not attend. The campus manager/director/principal and/or appointed quality assurance manager should attend the Quality Promotion meeting.</p>
1.23	<p><b>How do we know that the evidence we provide will sufficiently support our compliance with the criteria?</b></p> <p>Compulsory Quality Promotion meetings are held to assist colleges on how to apply for accreditation, to explain the evidence required for the self-evaluation report, and on what to expect during the site verification visit.</p>
1.24	<p><b>Surely our narrative should be sufficient to support our compliance with the accreditation criteria.</b></p> <p>No. Narratives explain what the college perceives to be its strengths and weaknesses in relation to the compliance criteria. Compliance is determined by the relevance and adequacy of supporting evidence provided by the college, which can be confirmed through observation of the actual implementation of the policies.</p>
1.25	<p><b>How does the POPI Act affect the evaluation of our accreditation application?</b></p> <p>Section 11(1)(e) of the Protection of Personal Information (POPI) Act No. 4 of 2013 states that personal information may be processed if processing is necessary for the proper performance of a public law duty by a public body.</p> <p>Section 38(1) further states that personal information processed for the purpose of discharging a relevant function is exempt from sections 11(3) and (4), 12, 15 and 8 in any case to the extent to which the application of those provisions to the personal information would be likely to prejudice the proper discharge of that function.</p> <p>Section 38(2) states that "Relevant function", for the purposes of subsection (1), means any function (a) of a public body".</p> <p>Umalusi is exempted from sections 11(3) and (4), 12, 15 and 18<sup>1</sup> in terms of carrying out its mandate of accrediting private education institutions.</p>

<sup>1</sup> Umalusi is exempted from sections 11(3) and (4), 12, 15 and 18<sup>1</sup> in terms of carrying out its mandate of accrediting private education institutions, namely:

11(3) A data subject may object, at any time to the processing of personal information

11(4) If a data subject has objected to the processing of personal information in terms of subsection (3), the responsible party may no longer process the personal information.

12(1) Personal information must be collected directly from the data subject, except as otherwise provided for in subsection (2)

15 "Further processing of personal information" must be in accordance or compatible with the purpose for which it was collected in terms of section 13, and 18, "Notification to data subject when collecting personal information."

	Your college will need to ensure that the necessary provisions are in place in terms of the personal records that will be provided in terms of the college's application for accreditation.
1.26	<p><b>I have heard that the NATED N1-N3 Engineering Studies programmes are being phased out. When will that happen, and how does it affect my college's accreditation?</b></p> <p>Notice number 3973 of Government Gazette number 49518 issued by the Minister of Higher Education, Science and Innovation indicates the date of the phase-out of the NATED Report 190/191 Engineering Studies N1–N3 programmes as 01 January 2024. TVET Numbered Circular 0108 of 18 October 2023 issued by the Office of the Deputy Director-General: Technical and Vocational Education and Training outlines the teach-out plan for the last cohort of students who will be enrolled on the programmes.</p> <p>Since the programmes are now phased out, the Department of Higher Education and Training is not considering applications for registration of private colleges to offer the N1-N3 Engineering Studies programmes, and Umalusi is not accepting applications from private colleges to offer the NATED N1-N3 Engineering Studies programmes.</p> <p>Private colleges that are already registered and accredited to offer the N1-N3 Engineering Studies programmes may continue to offer the programmes in line with the promulgation of the phase-out dates by the Minister. Colleges must note that the accreditation of private colleges to offer the N1-N3 Engineering Studies programmes will lapse in line with the phase-out of the programmes, and colleges will not be refunded for any amounts paid for services rendered in the accreditation process.</p>

## 2. Site visits

2.1	<p><b>What preparation is needed for the site visit?</b></p> <p>All staff members should be able to display an understanding of applicable policies and demonstrate that they can implement the policies and procedures accordingly. The key personnel must attend a pre-site visit meeting to ensure that they understand what is required for the site visit and the programme for the day.</p>
2.2	<p><b>How experienced and qualified are Umalusi's site evaluators?</b></p> <p>The site evaluators and subject specialists who are appointed and trained by Umalusi are experienced educationists, college heads, senior lecturers or subject experts.</p>
2.3	<p><b>The private college sector is competitive. Why should our college be site visited by educationists, college heads, senior lecturers, or subject experts from other colleges?</b></p> <p>The capacity of a private college to offer a qualification on the General and Further Education and Training Qualifications Sub-framework at the required standard must be demonstrated and evaluated by Umalusi for the purpose of accreditation. It is important, therefore, that evaluation is conducted by people who are knowledgeable about the sector. Colleges are always informed prior to the site visit of the names of the potential site evaluators; thus, they are given an opportunity to express their unhappiness with any of the evaluation personnel Umalusi assigns to the college. Site evaluators and subject specialists are required to sign relevant documents to ensure that they conduct themselves ethically and with utmost confidentiality.</p>

	Furthermore, it is Umalusi and not the site evaluator that makes the final accreditation decision.
2.4	<p><b>Umalusi visited our college. Will there be another visit?</b></p> <p>There may be another visit to verify evidence subsequently submitted if your college is granted a "window period" to meet the requirements for accreditation within a given period or receives an outcome of provisional accreditation. There may also be an unannounced physical verification site visit after an online site visit, or a visit as part of the monitoring process. Umalusi may also visit a college if there is a complaint lodged by students, parents, a member of the public or any government department.</p> <p>Umalusi officials conducting physical site visits will always have a letter from Umalusi authorising them to conduct the site visit and contact numbers at Umalusi to confirm the authenticity of the officials conducting the unannounced site visit.</p>

### 3. Monitoring

3.1	<p><b>How will Umalusi monitor the compliance of colleges that are accredited for 7 years?</b></p> <p>Umalusi uses a differentiated approach to monitor accredited colleges. This can either be through the submission of a report and supporting evidence or an unannounced physical site visit. The college will be informed via email if they must submit a monitoring report and the date by which they must submit a completed report and supporting evidence.</p> <p>If there are complaints or concerns about an accredited college, Umalusi has the right to conduct an unannounced site visit at any time during the period of accreditation or request an institution to complete a monitoring report.</p> <p>Note that Umalusi officials conducting site visits will always have a letter from Umalusi authorising them to conduct the site visit and contact numbers at Umalusi to confirm the authenticity of the officials conducting the unannounced site visit.</p>
3.2	<p><b>Is it compulsory to submit monitoring reports?</b></p> <p>Yes. Accredited private colleges are required to submit monitoring reports as a condition of their accreditation. Umalusi may institute steps to withdraw accreditation of private colleges that fail to submit the required monitoring reports or that fail to maintain the required standards for accreditation.</p>
3.3	<p><b>What is the purpose of post-accreditation monitoring?</b></p> <p>The purpose of post-accreditation monitoring is to ensure that the accredited institutions continue to meet Umalusi's accreditation criteria.</p>
3.4	<p><b>What happens to private colleges that do not submit their required monitoring reports to Umalusi?</b></p> <p>Their accreditation status will be reviewed, and consequently, the college's accreditation may be withdrawn. Such colleges will be warned about the implications of their failure to maintain their accreditation status.</p>

	Furthermore, the accreditation status of colleges is regularly communicated to the DHET. Failure of private colleges to maintain their accreditation status may lead to a review by the DHET of their registration as a private college and examination centre.
3.5	<p><b>Does our centre have to pay an administration fee every time it is monitored?</b></p> <p>No. A biennial accreditation fee is payable.</p> <p>However, if a private college does not submit the required monitoring report and Umalusi is required to conduct a monitoring site visit, the private college will be required to pay a monitoring fee in addition to the biennial accreditation fee. Further, if a private college does not maintain the accreditation standards and receives a notice of intent to apply for accreditation, a fee will be levied to cover the cost of evaluating evidence presented for evaluation and verification.</p> <p>Colleges which fail to pay the biennial accreditation fee or any monitoring fees may have their accreditation status reviewed.</p>

## 4. General

4.1	<p><b>As far as we are concerned, we comply with all the accreditation criteria, but our accreditation report says we are not fully compliant.</b></p> <p>To address this, compare the evidence provided by your college with Umalusi's evidence requirements. You may address queries to the manager responsible for the accreditation of private colleges at Umalusi.</p> <p>Private colleges which do not meet the minimum requirements for accreditation at the first presentation of the report to the Accreditation Committee of Council are granted a "window period" within which to meet the minimum requirements for accreditation.</p> <p>Together with the letter advising you of the outcome of your application, you will receive an indication of the areas in which the college failed to meet the minimum requirements for accreditation. In addition, you will be advised of the date by which the college is required to meet all the minimum requirements for accreditation, as well as the date by which a re-evaluation fee must be paid. Failure to pay the required fee by the date indicated will automatically result in an outcome of "no accreditation".</p> <p>Please note that at the time of review, all the accreditation criteria must be met. Therefore, if standards drop from the time of the initial site visit, that will be taken into account in determining the outcome of the college's application for accreditation, even if the item was not specified in the feedback on the accreditation application.</p> <p>The fee payable for evaluation of evidence following a "window period" to improve or provisional accreditation is indicated in the schedule of fees in the "Open Letter to Applicants – Private FET Colleges" on the Umalusi website: <a href="http://www.umalusi.org.za">www.umalusi.org.za</a>. The fees are revised on an annual basis.</p>
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4.1	<p><b>What are the costs associated with accreditation and monitoring?</b></p> <p>Please refer to the annual fees indicated in the "Open letter to applicants" found on the Umalusi website. <a href="http://www.umalusi.org.za">www.umalusi.org.za</a>. Fees are reviewed annually. The amount payable is the amount that is applicable at the time that the step in the process is conducted.</p>
4.2	<p><b>Why do we have to attend a Quality promotion meeting for every site that seeks accreditation?</b></p> <p>Umalusi accredits institutions to offer specific subjects within a specific qualification at a specific site of delivery. Accreditation is not transferable. Every site has to meet the resource requirements per qualification/programme applied for. Heads of institutions and campus managers stationed at sites of delivery must be familiar with Umalusi's quality assurance processes and requirements.</p>
4.3	<p><b>Why do private providers have to pay such high accreditation fees?</b></p> <p>Fees are calculated on the costs incurred for conducting the evaluation process. The Constitution of South Africa, Chapter 2: Bill of Rights, paragraph 29 states:  <i>3) Everyone has the right to establish and maintain, at their own expense, independent educational institutions that:</i>  <i>(a) do not discriminate based on race.</i>  <i>(b) are registered with the state; and</i>  <i>(c) maintain standards that are not inferior to standards at comparable public educational institutions.</i></p> <p>In addition, the General and Further Education and Training Quality Assurance Act, 2001, Section 13 (1)c states: <i>The funds of the Council consist of money received by the Council in respect of fees charged for services.</i></p>
4.4	<p><b>Is provisional accreditation automatically extended?</b></p> <p>No. The two-year provisional accreditation is not automatically extended. This is a period granted to an institution whose evaluation indicated that there are some requirements that the institution was not able to meet at the time of application, and there is an indication that the institution can be able to meet those within the two years granted for improvement. If by the end of the two years, the institution has not demonstrated that it meets all the requirements for accreditation and/or has not paid the required fee for follow-up evaluation, the provisional accreditation will lapse, and the college will be considered as not accredited.</p> <p>The college must demonstrate implementation of teaching and learning at the required standard within the provisional accreditation period. A college must, therefore, ensure that students are enrolled for the subjects for which it is seeking accreditation during that period so that Umalusi can evaluate the implementation of teaching and learning.</p>
4.5	<p><b>Is the seven-year accreditation automatically extended?</b></p> <p>No. The institution must reapply for accreditation in year six of the seven-year accreditation in order to ensure that there is no break in their accreditation period. The seven-year accreditation will not be automatically extended.</p>
4.6	<p><b>Is there an appeal process if we disagree with the final outcome of our application?</b></p> <p>In terms of the Umalusi appeal process, a request for an appeal must be submitted within 10 working days of receipt of the outcome of the accreditation application.</p>

The basis for an appeal must be that the institution has evidence to support its claim that an incorrect decision was made, taking into account evidence that was available **at the time of the decision**. Any measures put in place after the evaluation or that are planned to be implemented will not be considered as the basis for an appeal.

Detailed reasons for the appeal must be indicated on the appeal form. The appeal (on the requisite form) must be emailed to [accreditation.appeals@umalusi.org.za](mailto:accreditation.appeals@umalusi.org.za).

Payment of the required fee must be made for an appeal to be considered. Should the finding of the appeal be in favour of the appellant, the fee paid will be refunded to the applicant.

Note that a college may submit **an informal query** on the reason for their accreditation outcome to [accreditation@umalusi.org.za](mailto:accreditation@umalusi.org.za) or one of the Umalusi staff copied in the email notifying them of the outcome of their application. No payment is required for a query. Colleges are advised to follow the query route before submission of a formal appeal.

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