



NEW PROGRAMME/QUALIFICATION APPLICATION PROCESS

A programme is defined by the Higher Education Quality Committee (HEQC) as 'a purposeful and structured set of learning experiences that lead to a qualification', and a qualification is defined as 'the formal recognition and certification of learning achievement'. At Rhodes University, a 'programme' and a 'qualification' are considered the same thing.

1. Internal Consideration of New Programme Applications

Before new programme proposals enter the *external* approval, accreditation and registration process, they need to be *internally* considered and approved by Faculty Boards, Senate and Council.

The Rhodes University process for considering new qualification proposals is as follows:

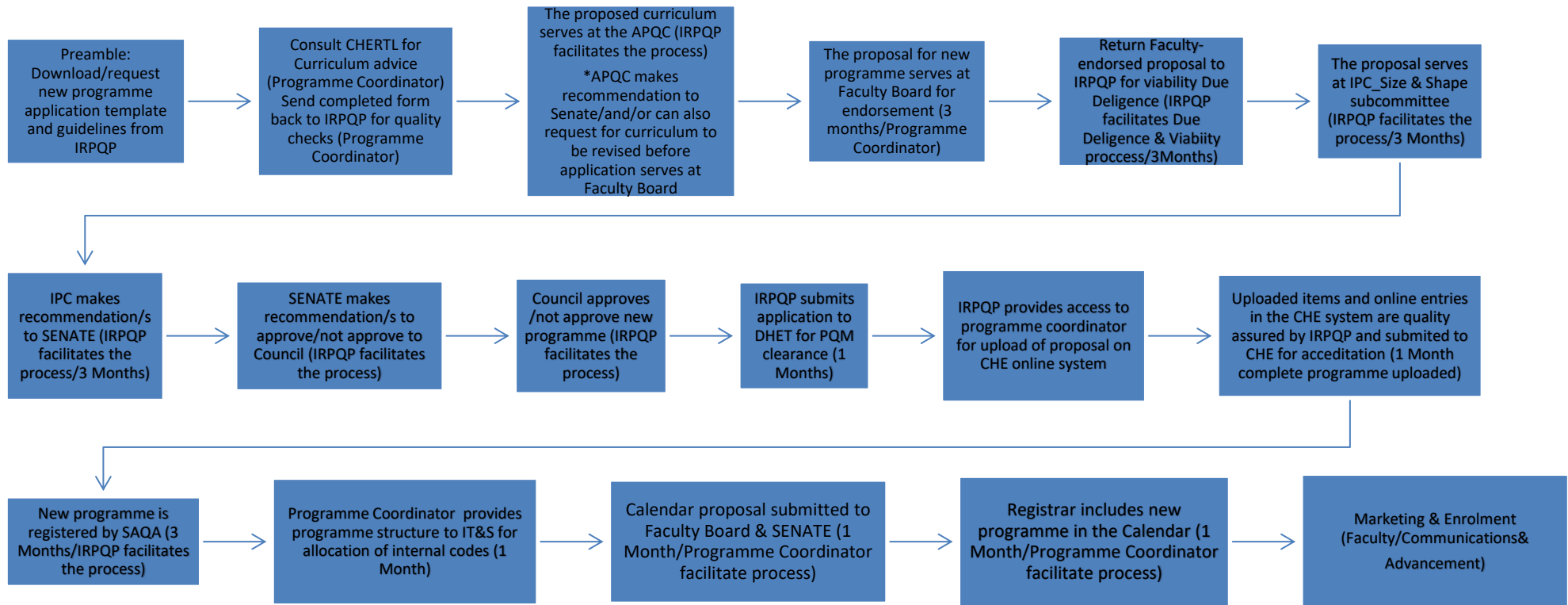
- a) **Department or Institute** submits a motivation (using the attached New Programme Application Template and Data Table) to the relevant Faculty Board/s. for consideration by the IPC Size & Shape Sub-Committee of the **Institutional Planning Committee** (IPC).
- d) If the proposal is recommended by the IPC it is submitted to **Senate and Council**, and simultaneously sent to **other Eastern Cape Universities** for comment on potential duplication (this is facilitated by the Eastern Cape University Planners Forum, via the Institutional Planning Unit).
- c) Once **Senate and/or Council** approval has been obtained for the programme, the **IRPQP Division** completes and submits the necessary forms online for external approval, accreditation and registration. At this stage, additional information, particularly regarding quality assurance arrangements, may be requested from the proposer. This stage of the process can take up to 18 months. First, the DHET approves for adding to the Programme Qualification Mix, and then CHE and SAQA approval is received before any marketing of the new programme can begin.
- d) Once national approval is confirmed, the **I&TS Division** allocates a Protea code, and students can only then begin applying for the qualification for the following academic year.

NB: New qualification proposals should be submitted to Faculty as soon as possible, preferably two years before the anticipated implementation. Further information on the national programme accreditation framework and criteria can be obtained from the IRPQP Division - email: M.Mabaso@ru.ac.za

One of the following recommendations may be made by the Institutional Planning Committee:

- i. Proposal supported as is, subject to allocation or availability of resources to support the programme in the short and long-term. The IRPQP Division begin DHET PQM application process.
- ii. Proposal supported in principle, but further information is required. Once the information is provided to the IRPQP Division and subject to allocation or availability of resources to support the programme in the short and long-term, the external application process can begin.
- iii. Recommendation pending. Further information to be provided at the next meeting of the Institutional Planning Committee.
- iv. Proposal referred back to Faculty for further consideration.
- v. Proposal rejected.

Process Flowchart for Application for New Programmes/Qualification (Internal Processes - 6 Months; External Processes - 12 Months)



2. External Consideration of New Programme Applications

Programme accreditation entails the evaluation of academic programmes in accordance with the Higher Education Quality Committee's (HEQC) programme accreditation criteria, which stipulate the minimum requirements for programme input, process, output and review¹.

According to the South African quality assurance framework for higher education, all new academic programme proposals are required to be

- i. Approved by the Department of Higher Education and Training (DHET);
- ii. Accredited by the HEQC; and
- iii. Registered on the National Qualification Framework (NQF).

Once approved internally, new programme proposals are submitted to the DHET online via the IRPQP Division. The DHET approves the programmes for inclusion on the Programme and Qualification Mix (PQM). The institution submits an application for accreditation to the HEQC. Once the HEQC grants accreditation, the programme is then registered on the NQF by SAQA.

Note: New programmes requiring professional body endorsement/registration should seek further information before submitting a programme for external approval.

¹ Framework for Programme Accreditation, CHE, Nov 2004

New Qualification Application Notes:

1. NQF Levels

The South African *National Qualifications Framework* is "the set of principles and guidelines by which records of learner achievement are registered to enable national recognition of acquired skills and knowledge, thereby ensuring an integrated system that encourages life-long learning." (SAQA, www.saqa.org.za). The revised HESQF defines how higher education qualifications fit within the NQF and also allocates the responsibility for standards generation and setting for higher education qualifications to the Council on Higher Education. *Level descriptors* are set for each level against which qualifications are evaluated to determine the appropriate level of each qualification. SAQA level descriptors are available at www.saqa.org.za

In 2008 the National Qualifications Framework (NQF) Act No 67 replaced the South African Qualifications Authority Act No 58 of 1995. The NQF Act brought changes, in particular, the levels of the NQF. NQF levels of all qualifications changed from 8-level framework to the 10- level framework in line with this legislation as depicted on the table below:

Old NQF level	New NQF level	Recognised qualifications
8	10	Doctoral Degree
8	9	Master's Degree
7	8	Bachelor Honours Degree Postgraduate Diploma
7	8	Bachelor's Degree (480 credits) (4 years)
6	7	Bachelor's Degree (360 credits) (3 years)
n/a	7	Advanced Diploma
6	6	Diploma (previously National Diploma) (240 credits and 360 credits)
6	6	Advanced Certificate
5	5	Higher Certificate

Qualifications that are not aligned with or not recognised in the HEQSF remain at the old NQF level.

The following qualifications are particularly affected:

NQF level	Unaligned or unrecognised qualifications
8	Master's of Technology
7	Bachelor of Technology

2. Credit Values

Credits are the measurement of the volume of learning required for a specific qualification. Credits are based on the number of hours of study. Ten notional study hours equal one credit. Notional hours include contact time, preparation time, tutorials, laboratory and practical work, and examinations. Undergraduate and Honours programmes assume a 30-week full-time academic year, while master's and doctoral programmes

assume a 45-week academic year. An average full-time student is expected to study for 40 hours per week. The normal (minimum) credit load of higher education qualifications is as follows:

Advanced certificate:	120 credits / 1200 hours
Bachelor's degree (3 years):	360 credits / 3600 hours
Bachelor's degree (4 years):	480 credits / 4800 hours
Postgraduate Diploma	120 credits / 1200 hours
Honours degree:	120 credits / 1200 hours
Master's degree:	180 credits / 1800 hours
Doctoral degree:	360 credits / 3600 hours

It is important to note that the HESQF requires Honours programmes to assign at least 30 credits to conduct and reporting research under supervision. In the case of coursework Master's degrees, this is 60 credits, and for research Master's and doctoral degrees, it is the total number of credits recognised for the qualification (i.e. 180 for research Master's and 360 for PhDs).

3. Admission Requirements

All applicants to a programme should be aware of the selection criteria and relevant procedures, including any recognition of prior learning possibilities. No more than 10% of enrolments to a particular programme should be on the basis of RPL (see the University's RPL policy for further details <https://www.ru.ac.za/institutionalplanningunit/policies/policiesa-z/>).

4. Strategic Objectives

New programme/qualification proposals should first support the University's vision and mission and should fit into the academic plans for the relevant Faculty and department. An application would be further strengthened if it can be demonstrated that it contributes to national priority areas (increasing students' numbers in postgraduate, science, engineering and technology, and teacher education programmes) or produces graduates in scarce skills areas. An annually revised list of critical skills identified by the Department of Labour as experiencing 'absolute scarcity' or 'relative scarcity' is available at www.skillsportal.co.za

5. Staff Resources

A new programme must have sufficient staff capacity. Where no additional staff will be required, the impact of the new programme on current staff workloads and/or other department outcomes e.g. research outputs, needs to be outlined. It is important that academic staff hold qualifications relevant to the programme and that they are at an appropriate level. In respect of coursework programmes, the staff offering the coursework should have a qualification one level higher than the one on offer. The supervisors of research degrees would normally hold a doctoral degree. Inevitably there will be exceptions, but it is essential that inexperienced staff are mentored and that assessor training is encouraged. In some fields, registration with a professional council may be required. The external accreditation process requires the University to declare that 'the staff complement is of sufficient size and seniority to ensure that a high-quality programme is being offered' and sufficient staff stability.

6. Anticipated Enrolments

It is important to enrol appropriate numbers: no more than the available resources can accommodate, and no fewer than needed to ensure financial viability. The 'rule of thumb' for a minimum number of students per staff member to ensure the viability of undergraduate programmes usually is 20 per annum, and for postgraduate programmes, 5 to 10 per annum.

7. Assessment Details

Assessment practices should be commensurate with the University's teaching and learning policies and should be effective and consistent in measuring student attainment of the intended learning outcomes.

Details of how the programme will be externally moderated and examined should also be provided where possible. It is useful to think of assessment criteria as WHAT the assessors need to see to ensure that students can meet the specified outcomes. Assessment tasks refer to HOW the evidence will be collected (such as essays, portfolios, examinations).

Many applicants chose to submit a table (as below), indicating that they have explicitly aligned these aspects of the course. Assistance in developing this aspect of the proposal is available from the Centre for Higher Education Research, Teaching and Learning (CHERTL).

Purpose statement	Course Outcomes	Assessment Criteria	Assessment Tasks
• •	• •	• •	• •
• •	• •	• •	• •
• •	• •	• •	• •

HEQC PROGRAMME ACCREDITATION CRITERIA

The HEQC has developed criteria against which new programme applications are evaluated, and these should be borne in mind by proposers when applying to offer a new programme. They are grouped into four sets (input, process, output/impact and review), and there are 154 requirements or sub-criteria listed. The University has attempted to integrate the criteria into the new internal programme application template, but the following summary of the HEQC criteria by Dr Michael Smout (2006), which condenses the criteria into 29 statements of minimum requirements, may also be of assistance:

PROGRAMME INPUT

Programme design

- C1 The programme is consonant with the institutional mission, its strategic priorities and academic focus areas.
- C2 The programme is coherently planned in terms of content, level, credits and outcomes and maintains an appropriate balance between theory, practice, experiential knowledge and skills.
- C3 The programme is coherently planned in terms of its target audience and academic peers, relevant professional bodies and students are involved in the development and regular review of the programme.

Student recruitment, admission and selection

- C4 All programme recruitment materials contain accurate and sufficient information with regard to the purpose of the programme, admission policies and criteria, completion requirements and the demands that the programme will place on students.
- C5 Admission requirements are in line with the degree of complexity of learning required in the programme.
- C6 Student selection criteria are explicit and the number of students selected does not exceed the

capacity available for offering good quality education

Staffing

- C7 The academic staff responsible for the programme are suitably qualified and have sufficient relevant experience in terms of teaching and assessment.
- C8 Academic staff have research experience and research profiles adequate for the nature and level of the programme.
- C9 The academic and support staff complement is of sufficient size, seniority and stability (in terms of employment status of staff) to ensure that all programme activities can be carried out effectively and that the programme can be sustained.

Teaching and learning strategy

- C10 The programme promotes student learning through the effective use of teaching and learning methods that are commensurate with the specified learning outcomes.
- C11 There is an effective strategy for the design and review of the learning materials that are used in the programme and for ensuring their alignment with the goals and underpinning philosophy of the programme.

The recognition of prior learning

- C12 Appropriate policies and procedures for RPL are effectively implemented so that prior learning can articulate with current programmes.

Infrastructure

- C13 There are suitable and sufficient venues at all official sites of learning where the programme is offered.
- C14 Support infrastructure such as IT, library and any required specialized facilities and equipment are adequate for all offerings of the programme.

Programme administrative services

- C15 There is an effective programme administrative system in terms of student records and in respect of information about the programme and relevant support facilities and services for students.
- C16 Student performance is monitored and at risk students are provided with advice and support.

Postgraduate policies and procedures

- C17 There are effective policies and procedures relating to postgraduate supervision, including the selection and appointment of supervisors and the definition of the roles and responsibilities of supervisors and students – M and D levels only.

PROGRAMME PROCESS

Programme co-ordination

C18 The programme is effectively coordinated in order to facilitate the attainment of its intended purposes and outcomes. The responsibilities of programme coordinators are clearly defined and documented.

Academic development

C19 Academic development initiatives promote student and staff development and encompass such issues as curriculum development and teaching and learning issues.

Teaching and learning

C20 The effectiveness of teaching and learning interactions is regularly monitored and the results are used for improvement.

Student assessment

C21 Assessment is an integral part of the teaching/learning process and provides timely feedback to inform teaching and learning.

C22 Learning achievements of students are internally assessed by the academic staff responsible for teaching in terms of a system that includes internal moderation.

C23 Learning achievements of students on the exit level are externally moderated by appropriately qualified people appointed according to clear criteria and who operate in terms of institutional guidelines.

C24 Measures have been taken to ensure the reliability, rigour and security of the assessment system.

Work-based learning

C25 The co-ordination of work-based learning is done effectively in all components of applicable programmes.

Delivery of postgraduate programmes

C26 Students in postgraduate programmes are provided with appropriate opportunities for the development of research skills.

OUTPUT AND IMPACT

Student retention and throughput

C27 Student retention and throughput rates are monitored, especially in terms of race and gender equity and remedial measures are taken where necessary.

Programme impact

C28 Within the framework of its intended outcomes, the design and delivery of the programme

contributes to the employability of its students.

REVIEW

Programme review

C29 Results of user surveys, reviews and impact studies are used in regular evaluation of all aspects of the programme and to develop improvement plans.