

# **COUNCIL ON HIGHER EDUCATION**

## **HEQF, Programme Accreditation and the Registration of Qualifications**

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# Purpose

- To raise some of the issues arising from the HEQF in terms of programme and qualification design
- To provide clarity on the HEQC's processes and system of programme accreditation
- To provide clarity on the process of qualification registration as it pertains to the higher education sector

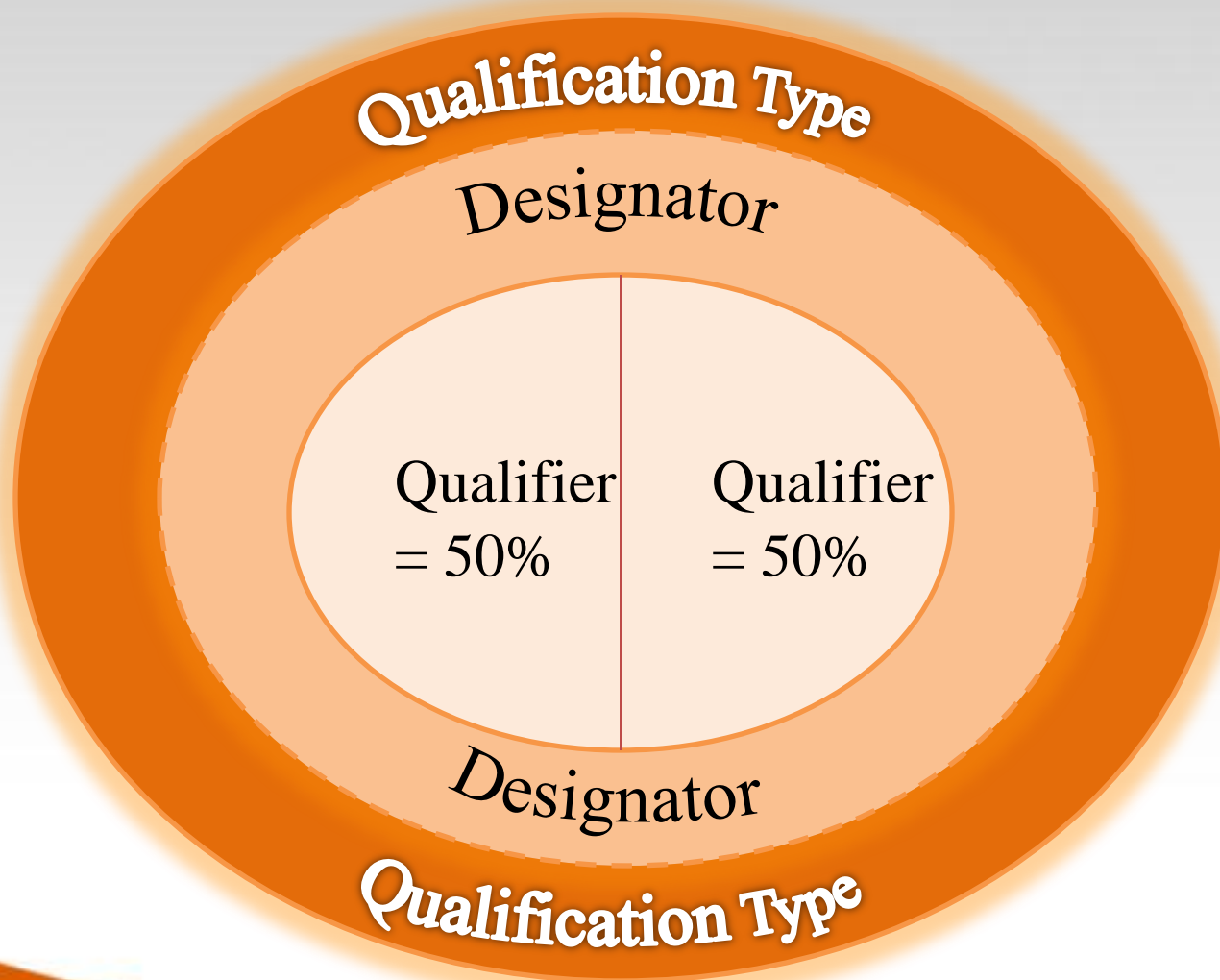
# The Legislation Framework

- The **South Africa Higher Education Act**, 101 of 1997
- The **Higher Education Qualifications Framework** (05 October 2007) (NQF – sub-framework)
- The **National Qualifications Framework (NQF) Act**, 2008
- **Policy “Tools”** – Communiqué 3 (June 2009) / Classification of Educational Subject Matter (CESM) (August 2008), CHE-HEQF Communiqué 1 (Oct 2010)

# Higher Education Qualifications Framework

- Gazetted 2007, implemented for all *new programmes* as of 01 January 2009
- More rungs for HE to occupy – move from 6 to 9 qualification types
- Offers a nested approach to qualification design: qualification types / designators / qualifiers etc
- Intended to simplify HE and make it more flexible
- Currently under review

# The Nested Approach to Qualification Design



# Qualification Types

- **Postgraduate**

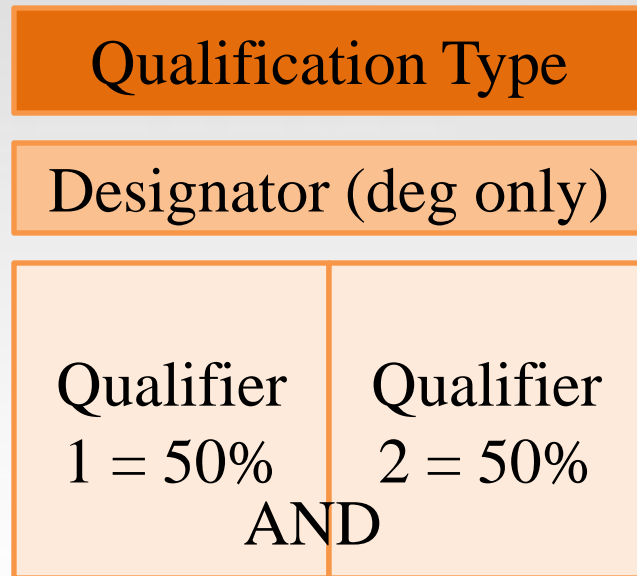
- ✓ Doctoral degree (360 credits / NQF 10)
- ✓ Master's degree (180 credits / NQF 9)
- ✓ Bachelor Honours degree (120 credits / NQF 8)
- ✓ Postgraduate diploma (120 credits / NQF 8)

- **Undergraduate**

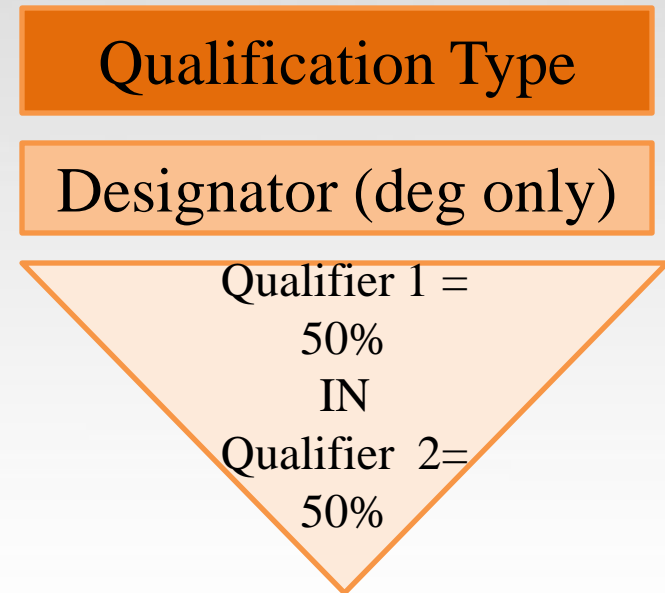
- ✓ Bachelor's degree (360 or 480 credits / NQF 7 or 8)
- ✓ Advanced Diploma (120 credits / NQF 7)
- ✓ Diploma (360 credits / NQF 6)
- ✓ Advanced Certificate (120 credits / NQF 6)
- ✓ Higher Certificate (120 credits / NQF 5)

# Designator and Qualifier Models

- Eg: B Arts (Film and Drama)



- Eg. M Phil (Psychology in Child Psychology)



- To use a qualifier = a minimum of 50% of total credits AND a minimum of 50% of exit level credits must be in the field of specialisation

# HEQF: Issues Relating to Qualification Design

- Role of the Professional Bodies in Qualification Design (NQF Act)
- Standards setting – whose responsibility and who will be involved?
- Qualification vs programme, institutional autonomy, comparability and equitability
- International comparability, benchmarking and recognition
- ‘Professional’ vs general qualifications and specific requirements
- Models of qualification design: stacked or ‘pegged’
- Credit weightings and NQF levels into notional hours, min and max credits and required credits eg research



# HEQF: Issues Relating to Qualification Design (cont)

- Unit standards vs exit level outcomes-based qualifications
- Naming conventions for the use of designators and qualifiers
- Admissions requirements and progression discrepancies within the HEQF
- Role of Work Integrated Learning (WIL)
- ‘Completedness’ of the HEQF or should amendments / exceptions be considered?
- HEQF implementation for existing programmes and qualifications – what are the implications
- CHE has the responsibility of implementing and reviewing HEQF

# What is the CHE and HEQC?

The **Council on Higher Education (CHE)** is “an independent statutory body responsible for advising the Minister of Education on all matters related to higher education policy issues, and for quality assurance in higher education and training.”

The CHE has one permanent sub-committee, the **Higher Education Quality Committee (HEQC)**. The CHE's statutory responsibility for the promotion and assurance of quality in higher education is carried out by the HEQC.

# What is the relationship between the CHE, SAQA and DHET?

- The **CHE** programme accreditation = first ‘step’ in the approval process for an institution to be permitted to offer a higher education programme.
- **Then** qualification registered on the National Qualifications Framework (NQF) by the South African Qualifications Authority (**SAQA**).
- **Then** programme will either be registered on the institution’s Programme and Qualification Mix (PQM) [public providers] or the institution is registered as a private higher education institution [PHEI] by the Department of Higher Education and Training (**DHET**)

# Quality Assurance: Accountability and development

- oldest form of quality assurance, over 100 years in USA
- Internationally = two main meanings:
  - ✓ The licensing of an institution to offer programmes,
  - ✓ The assessment of the programmes to be offered
- **If** quality assurance = both development and accountability, **then** accreditation = hard accountability end of the continuum.
- Either accredited or not, depends on a provider ability to comply with a number of criteria which go from legislation to educational infrastructure, to educational processes, to the content of a programme.

# Purpose of programme accreditation

- **quality** of programmes and **credibility** of qualifications.
- programme content is **coherent** and **intellectually credible**
- progression in **knowledge** and **skills**
- staff are well-equipped **disciplinary** and **pedagogically** in the appropriate **mode of delivery**
- Educational **infrastructure** is sufficient (WIL, library, IT, buildings, labs, information accountability, etc)
  - ✓ Accreditation is about the possibility of **good teaching and learning**.
  - ✓ Integration of **education and skills**.
  - ✓ The right of students to be prepared to exercise their **citizenship**.
  - ✓ Society holding HE **accountable**.

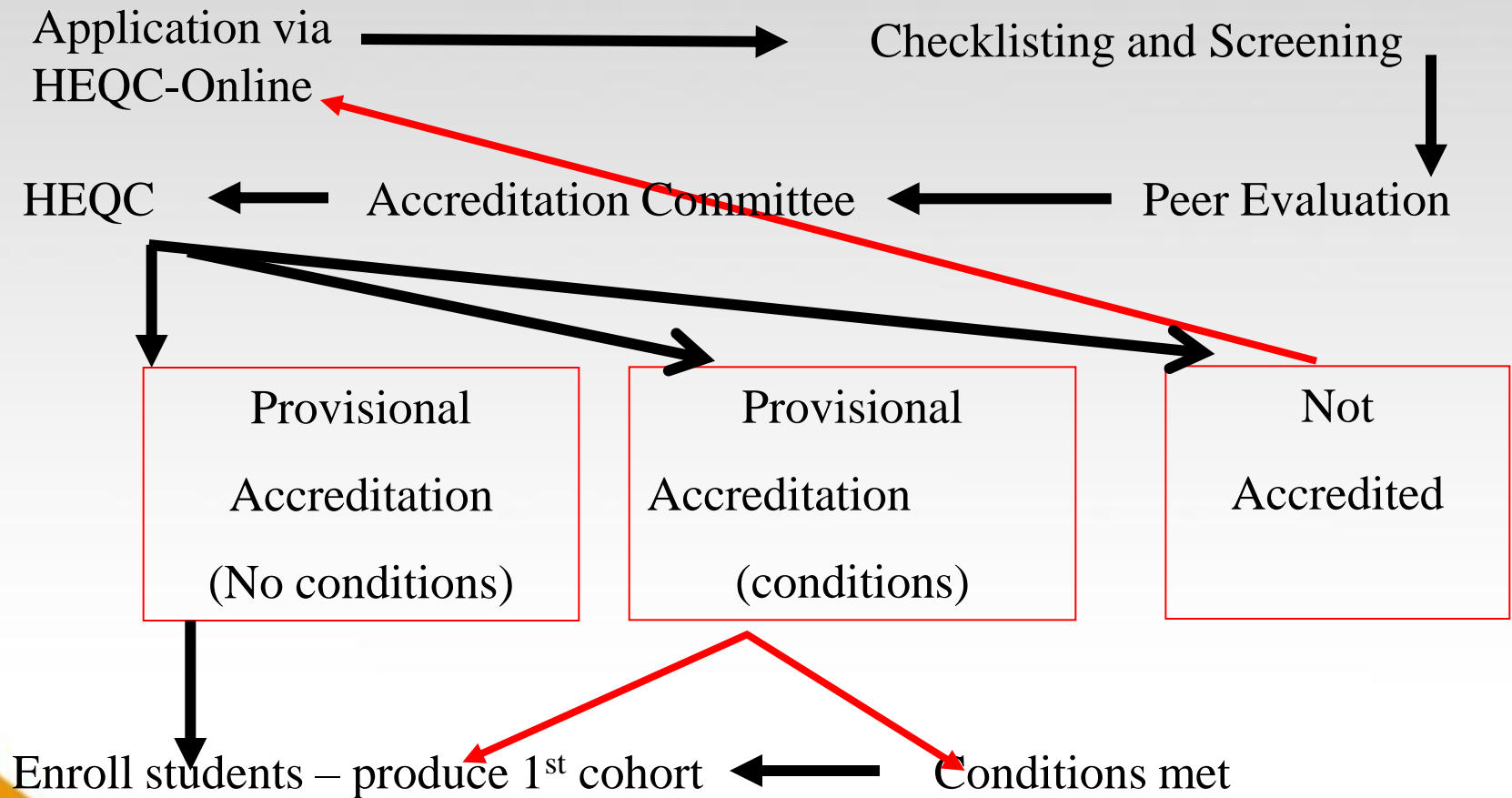
# Principles of programme accreditation

- programmes = acceptable **quality**.
- satisfy **minimum quality requirements** to be allowed to enter and remain in the higher education system.
- **primary responsibility** for programme quality rests with higher education institutions themselves.
- Institutions should seek to establish and sustain **effective mechanisms** that facilitate programme **quality** and yield reliable information for internal programme related **planning** and **self-evaluation**, **external evaluation**, and **public reporting**.

# Principles of programme accreditation (cont)

- HEQC = establish a **value-adding external system** of programme accreditation to **validate institutional information** on the effectiveness of arrangements for ensuring the quality of academic programmes.
- HEQC = use a system of **peer and expert review** in order to ensure credible and consistent programme evaluations.

# Accreditation process – candidacy phase





# HEQC Online Application Process

1. Institution registers an institutional administrator and completes the institutional profile and programme application forms

## **The Accreditation Directorate of the HEQC:**

1. **Receives** the completed applications submitted HEQC Online application
2. **Assesses** the programmes internally through checklisting and screening processes
3. **External evaluations** are conducted by peer subject specialists
4. **Recommendations** are drafted by the Accreditation Directorate and Accreditation Committee
5. **Decision** is taken by the HEQC
6. **Outcomes** communicated to the institutions in writing

# The HEQC-Online application form

## Two sections.

- Section 1: institutional profile.
- Section 1 to be completed only once.
  
- Section 2: programme information.
- Section 2 to be completed for each programme submitted.
- Separate information required for each site of delivery (e.g., programme coordination, staffing, student numbers, teaching venues).
  
- Evaluation is evidence-based: completeness of the submission is very important.
- All relevant documentation (policies, procedures) needs to be included in the application.

# Principles of programme evaluation

- Evidence based – annexures
- Self-evaluation
- Programme evaluation not institution, but institution must be able to support programme
- Qualitative process – not tick-a-box
- Judgment in terms of standards – lead to recommendation
- Developmental – improvement plan
- Confidentiality – relationship of trust

# NQF Act and Registration of Qualifications

- NQF Act 67 of 2008, implemented as of 01 June 2009
- Players changing – Previously CHE, SAQA, DoE, SETAs, professional bodies, Umalusi
- Now CHE, Umalusi, QCTO = Quality Councils
- AND DHET, SAQA to register, some SETAs, Professional Bodies
- Additional “roles” for QC: Standards setting, naming criteria, CAT, short courses, RPL

# Responsibility of QC's with regards to Qualifications

- Develop and implement policy and criteria for the development, registration and publication of qualifications
- Develop and implement policy and criteria for assessment, recognition of prior learning and credit accumulation
- Ensure the development of such qualifications or part qualifications as are necessary for the sector, which may include the assessment of learning achievement
- Recommend qualifications or part qualifications to the SAQA for registration

# Current approach for Registration of Qualifications adopted by the HEQC

- Institutions uploads qualification submission as part of application for accreditation as per stipulated SAQA template
- HEQC processes application for accreditation
- HEQC informs SAQA and DHET of the outcomes of the application for accreditation
- If the application for accreditation is successful, HEQC makes the qualification submission available to SAQA for registration on the NQF
- Any queries relating to the qualification are directed to the institution by SAQA
- The HEQC does not currently accredit short courses or learnerships

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**Questions and closing remarks...**