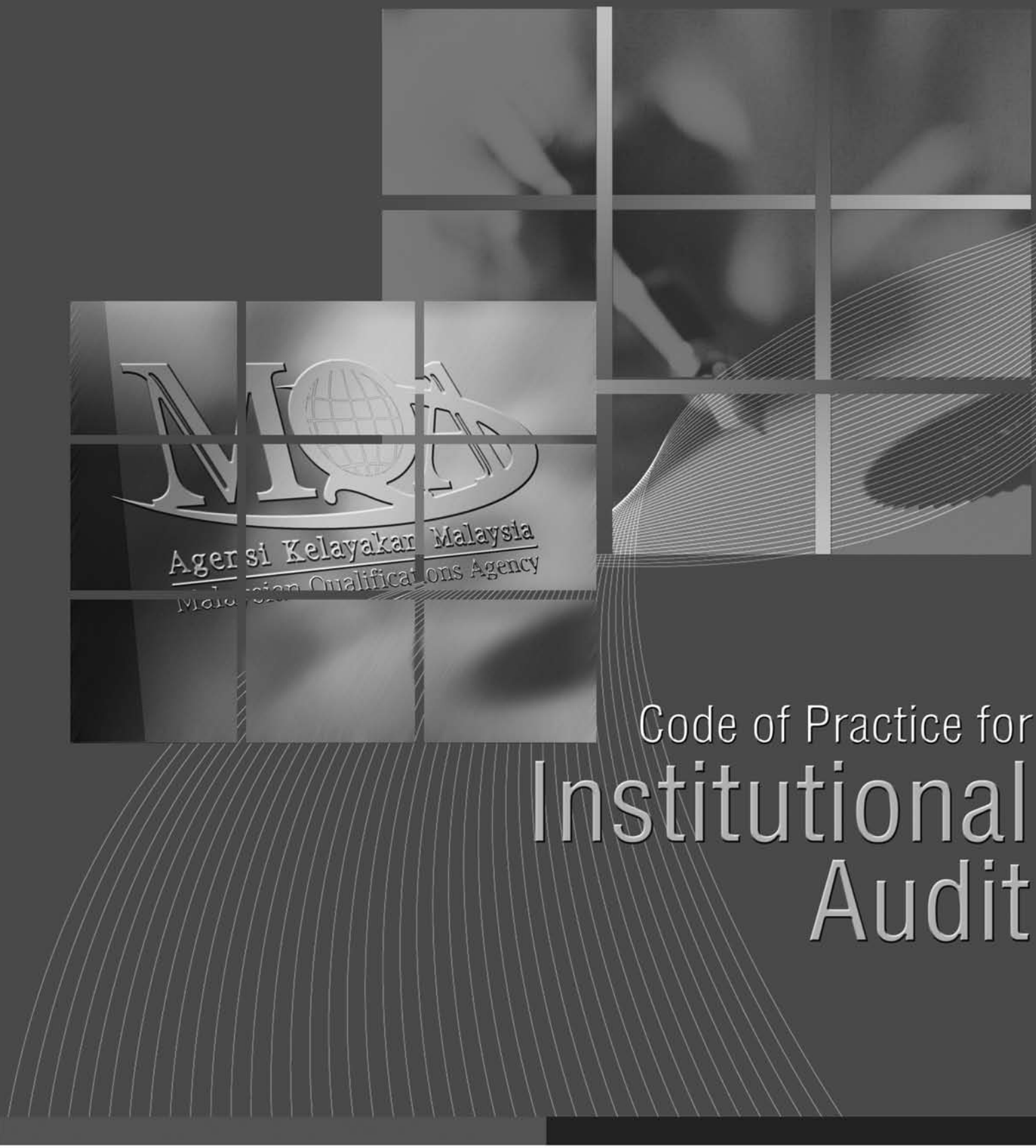

Code of Practice for Institutional Audit

Second Edition

Agensi Kelayakan Malaysia
Malaysian Qualifications Agency

Code of Practice for Institutional Audit
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Foreword to the First Edition

The National Accreditation Board (*Lembaga Akreditasi Negara*, LAN) was established in 1997 to quality assure private higher education in Malaysia. Quality assurance of public higher education institutions was entrusted to the Quality Assurance Division (QAD) of the Ministry of Higher Education. In 2005, the Malaysian Cabinet decided to merge LAN and QAD into a single quality assurance body. Thus, the Malaysian Qualifications Agency (MQA) was born under the Malaysian Qualifications Agency Act 2007. Concurrently, the Malaysian Qualifications Framework (MQF) was developed to unify and harmonise all Malaysian qualifications.

This development is in line with Malaysia's long term development plans as well as the Ministry of Higher Education's aspiration for the transformation of higher education in the country. These reflect a maturing Malaysian higher education system that encourages providers to adopt a more systematic and holistic approach in the provision of quality education.

Assigned the task to ensure quality in higher education in the spirit of the MQF, the MQA has developed a series of guidelines, standards and codes of practice to assist the higher education providers enhance their academic performance and institutional effectiveness. Key among these are the *Code of Practice for Programme Accreditation* (COPPA) and *Code of Practice for Institutional Audit* (COPIA).

COPPA and COPIA are intended to be useful guides for providers of higher education, quality assurance auditors, officers of the MQA, policy makers, professional bodies and other stakeholders engaged in higher education. The Codes, not only contain an overview of the Malaysian quality assurance system for higher education, they also guide the reader on the nine areas of evaluation for quality assurance as well as the two levels of standards -- benchmarked and enhanced standards -- that underline them. In addition, the two documents provide guidance for internal quality review to be conducted by the institution and external audit to be conducted by the MQA's panel of assessors. They also include site visit schedules as well as guidelines on report writing.

COPPA and COPIA have been developed by bringing together the good practices adopted by the QAD and LAN, with inputs from experts and stakeholders via a series of focus group discussions. They were also benchmarked against international best practices. In doing this, references have been made to quality assurance practices of MQA's counterparts, which include the Quality Assurance Agency for Higher Education (QAA) of the United Kingdom, Australian Universities Quality Agency (AUQA), the New Zealand Qualifications Authority (NZQA), Hong Kong Council for Accreditation of Academic and Vocational Qualifications (HKCAAVQ), South African Qualifications Authority (SAQA) and National Accreditation and Assessment Council (NAAC) of India.

Quality assurance is an ongoing process and it is the responsibility of all parties involved. Thus, it is of utmost importance for MQA to continuously review its quality assurance practices to ensure their relevancy, reliability, adaptability and effectiveness to address

the ever changing environment within which higher education operates. The MQA hopes that both COPPA and COPIA would assist institutions to enhance their quality provisions through the self-review and internal assessment processes as well as the external audit conducted by the MQA. In the spirit of shared responsibility and balancing the demands of autonomy, flexibility and accountability, the MQA looks forward to continuous collaboration with all stakeholders in enhancing the quality of higher education in Malaysia.

On behalf of the MQA, I wish to extend our sincere appreciation and gratitude to all those who have contributed towards the preparation of these Codes of Practice. It is our hope that these Codes will serve the purpose of our common endeavour to achieve higher education of the highest quality.

Tan Sri Dato' Dr. Muhammad Rais Abdul Karim
Chairman, Malaysian Qualifications Agency
1 June 2008

Glossary

Benchmark Data
Benchmark data are information collected from other relevant sources to determine how others achieve their levels of performance.

Formative Assessment
Formative assessment is the assessment of student progress throughout a course, in which the feedback from the learning activities is used to improve student attainment.

Good Practices
Good practices are a set of internationally accepted norms which are expected to be fulfilled to maintain high quality.

Higher Education Provider (HEP)
A higher education provider is a body corporate, organisation or other body of persons which conducts higher education or training programmes leading to the award of a higher education qualification.

Institutional Audit
Institutional Audit is an external evaluation of an institution to determine whether it is achieving its mission and goals, to identify strengths and areas of concern, and to enhance quality.

Internal Quality Audit
An internal quality audit is a self-review exercise conducted internally by a higher education provider to determine whether it is achieving its mission and goals; to identify strengths and areas of concern, and to enhance quality. It generates a Self-Review Report for Institutional Audit.

Learning Outcomes
Learning outcomes are statements on what students should know, understand and can do upon the completion of a period of study.

Longitudinal Study
A longitudinal study involves repeated observations of the same items or phenomena over a long period of time.

Malaysian Qualifications Framework (MQF)
The Malaysian Qualifications Framework is an instrument that classifies qualifications based on a set of criteria that are approved nationally and benchmarked against international best practices.

Modules
Modules are components of a programme. The term modules is used interchangeably with subjects, units, or courses.

MQF Level
An MQF level, as described in the Framework, is an award level described with generic learning outcomes and qualification descriptors which characterises a typical qualification.

Programme
A programme is a set of modules that are structured for a specified duration and learning volume to achieve the stated learning outcomes which usually leads to an award of a qualification.

Programme Accreditation

Provisional accreditation is an assessment exercise to determine whether a programme has met the minimum quality requirements prior to full accreditation.

Full accreditation is an assessment exercise to ascertain that the teaching, learning and all other related activities of a programme provided by a higher education provider has met the quality standards and in compliance with the MQF.

Quality Assurance
Quality assurance comprises planned and systematic actions (policies, strategies, attitudes, procedures and activities) to provide adequate demonstration that quality is being achieved, maintained and enhanced, and meets the specified standards of teaching, scholarship and research as well as student learning experience.

Quality Enhancement
Quality enhancement is steps taken to bring about continual improvement in quality.

Self-Review Portfolio (SRP)
A Self-Review Portfolio is a portfolio generated by an Internal Quality Audit, which is submitted to the MQA for the purpose of an Institutional Audit.

Self-Review Report (SRR)
A Self-Review Report is a report submitted by a higher education provider to the MQA for the purpose of an Institutional Audit that demonstrates whether the higher education provider has achieved the quality standards as required in the areas that are evaluated.

Student Learning Experience
Student learning experience comprises the entire educational experience of a student whilst studying for a Programme.

Summative Assessment
Summative assessment is the assessment of learning, which summarises the progress of the learner at a particular time and is used to assign the learner a course grade.

Abbreviations

1.	**HEP**	Higher Education Provider
2.	**COPIA**	Code of Practice for Institutional Audit
3.	**COPPA**	Code of Practice for Programme Accreditation
4.	**MOHE**	Ministry of Higher Education
5.	**MQA**	Malaysian Qualifications Agency
6.	**MQF**	Malaysian Qualifications Framework
7.	**MQR**	Malaysian Qualifications Register
8.	**SRP**	Self-Review Portfolio
9.	**SRR**	Self-Review Report

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Section 1

An Overview of Quality Assurance of Malaysian Higher Education

Section 1 An Overview of Quality Assurance of Malaysian Higher Education

INTRODUCTION

Malaysia's vision of its future advocates the development of a human capital of highest quality. The Ministry of Higher Education (MOHE) has incorporated this vision as one of its primary objectives under its Strategic Plan, in line with the national agenda to make Malaysia as a preferred centre to pursue higher education.

1. THE MALAYSIAN QUALIFICATIONS AGENCY

In December 2005, the Malaysian Cabinet decided to merge the National Accreditation Board (*Lembaga Akreditasi Negara*, LAN) and the Quality Assurance Division (QAD) of the MOHE. This merger created the Malaysian Qualifications Agency (MQA), the single quality assurance agency in the country, whose scope now covers both the public and private Higher Education Providers (HEP).

The Malaysian Qualifications Agency Act 2007 (MQAA 2007) assigns the responsibility for quality assuring higher education in Malaysia to the MQA. The responsibilities of the MQA are:

- to implement the Malaysian Qualifications Framework (MQF) as a reference point for Malaysian qualifications;
- to develop, with the cooperation of stakeholders, standards and criteria and instruments as a national reference for the conferment of awards;
- to quality assure higher education providers and programmes;
- to accredit programmes that fulfil a set of criteria and standards;
- to facilitate the recognition and articulation of qualifications;
- to establish and maintain the Malaysian Qualifications Register (MQR); and
- to advise the Minister of Higher Education on any matter relating to quality assurance in higher education.

2. THE COUNCIL OF MALAYSIAN QUALIFICATIONS AGENCY

The MQA is headed by a Council. It comprises of a Chairman and 16 members. The functions of the Council are:

- to approve plans and policies for the management of the Agency;
- to approve amendments and updates of the MQF;
- to approve policies and guidelines relating to audit processes and the accreditation of programmes, qualifications and higher education providers;
- to receive and monitor reports, returns, statements and any other information relating to accreditation, institutional audit and evaluation; and

- to continuously guide the Agency in its function as a quality assurance body and do all things reasonably necessary for the performance of its functions under the Act.

3. COMMITTEES

From time to time, the Agency may establish committees for various purposes, including to provide input for policy decisions. These committees consist of resource persons who possess in-depth and specialised knowledge and experience in their respective disciplines to perform such duties as prescribed under the MQAA 2007.

The committees that have been established are:

3.1 The Accreditation Committees

There are five Accreditation Committees covering the major areas of study, i.e., Science and Medicine, Engineering and Built Environment, Information Technology and Multimedia, Arts and Humanities, and the Social Sciences. The Accreditation Committees have the following functions:

- To evaluate and analyse accreditation reports; and
- To make decisions on an HEP's application for provisional or full accreditation of programmes and qualifications, i.e., to grant, deny, maintain or revoke provisional accreditation or full accreditation of programmes and qualifications.

3.2 The Institutional Audit Committee

One of the main functions of the Agency is to conduct institutional audits for a variety of purposes: the procedures of institutional audits may differ according to their respective purposes.

Among the main functions of the Institutional Audit Committee are:

- to evaluate and make recommendations on institutional audit reports;
- to make the final recommendation on the awarding, or otherwise, of institutional self-accreditation status; and
- to make recommendations for the maintenance, suspension or revocation of self-accreditation status.

3.3 The Equivalency Committee

All programmes offered in Malaysia must establish their level vis-a-vis the MQF. However, there are qualifications, within Malaysia or without, whose level in the MQF is unclear and needs to be determined. Thus, the establishment of the Equivalency Committee. The equivalency statement of a qualification is generally used for purposes of admission, employment and recognition, although it is not necessarily legally binding on the authorities responsible for these.

The key function of the Equivalency Committee is to make decisions on the equivalency of qualifications for their placement in the level of qualifications in the MQF.

3.4 The Standards Committees

Standards is an essential component in a quality assurance system to determine the expected level of attainment of quality. From time to time, the MQA will establish standards committees, both permanent and ad hoc, consisting of experts in the various disciplines of study. The members of the committees come from the academe, professional bodies and industry. The guidelines, standards and criteria are developed in consultation with principal stakeholders and various focus groups and approved by the Council of the MQA.

The main functions of the Standards Committees are:

- to develop and review the guidelines, standards and criteria for programme accreditation and institutional audit;
- to develop and review standards for specific disciplines; and
- to develop and review guides to good practices.

4. THE MALAYSIAN QUALIFICATIONS FRAMEWORK

The Malaysian Qualifications Framework (MQF) serves as a basis for quality assurance of higher education and as the reference point for national qualifications. It is an instrument that classifies qualifications based on international best practices and on a set of criteria that are approved nationally. These agreed upon criteria are used for all qualifications awarded by a higher education provider. The Framework clarifies the academic levels, learning outcomes and credit systems based on student academic load. The MQF integrates all national qualifications and provides educational pathways through which it links qualifications systematically. These pathways will enable the individual learner to progress through credit transfers and accreditation of prior experiential learning in the context of lifelong learning.

5. APPROACHES TO QUALITY ASSURANCE

The work of the MQA revolves around two major approaches to quality assure higher education in Malaysia. The first approach is to accredit programmes and qualifications. The second is to audit institutions or their components. The two are distinct approaches but highly interrelated.

There are two levels in programme accreditation. The first level is Provisional Accreditation which indicates that the programme has fulfilled the minimum requirement for it to be offered. This level is connected to seeking approval from the MOHE to conduct a new programme. The second level is Full (or Final) Accreditation, i.e., a conferment to denote that a programme has met all the criteria and standards set for that purpose and in compliance with the MQF.

Institutional Audit takes many forms. It could be comprehensive or thematic; it could be by faculty or across faculties. It could take the form of a periodic academic performance audit on institutions of higher learning or an assessment to determine the continuation or maintenance of programme accreditation status. It could take the form of an exercise for purposes of verifying data, for purposes of public policy input or for rating and ranking of institutions and programmes.

The highest form of institutional audit is the self-accreditation audit, which can lead to a conferment of a self-accreditation status for the institution so audited, whereby the institution can accredit its own programmes. Sometimes called a "system audit", the institutional audit for purposes of self-accreditation focuses on the capacity and capability of the internal quality assurance system of an institution to evaluate academic programmes that it offers. In a sense, a self-accreditation audit is an exercise in accrediting the internal quality assurance system of the institution.

The various approaches to quality assurance processes include periodic monitoring to ensure that quality is maintained and continuously enhanced.

6. THE MALAYSIAN QUALIFICATIONS REGISTER

The Malaysian Qualifications Register (MQR) is a registry of all higher education qualifications accredited by the MQA. The MQR contains, among others, information on programmes, providers, levels and validity periods of accreditation of these qualifications. It is meant to provide students, parents, employers, funding agencies and other related stakeholders with the necessary information. The MQR is accessible at <mqa.gov.my/mqr/index.htm>.

7. THE QUALITY ASSURANCE GUIDELINES

7.1 Quality Assurance Documents

The quality assurance evaluation conducted by the MQA would be guided by:

- The Malaysian Qualifications Framework (MQF);
- The Code of Practice for Programme Accreditation (COPPA);
- The Code of Practice for Institutional Audit (COPIA);
- Programme Discipline Standards; and
- Guides to Good Practices.

The *Code of Practice for Institutional Audit* (COPIA) is adapted from the *Code of Practice for Quality Assurance in Public Universities of Malaysia* (2002) published by the Quality Assurance Division of the Ministry of Higher Education. In addition, the *Lembaga Akreditasi Negara* (National Accreditation Board) -- the predecessor to the MQA -- had a series of guidelines for programme accreditation and good practices which MQA will continue to utilise to complement COPIA. MQA will continue to develop programme standards and guides to good practices to cover the whole range of disciplines and good practices. It will also review them periodically to ensure their relevance and currency.

This *Code of Practice for Institutional Audit* (COPIA), guides the HEP and the MQA in auditing higher education institutions. Unlike the *Code of Practice for Programme Accreditation* (COPPA), COPIA is dedicated to review institutions of higher learning for specific purposes through comprehensive institutional and thematic audits. Both COPPA and COPIA utilise a similar nine areas of evaluation for quality assurance.

7.2 Areas of Evaluation

The quality evaluation process covers the following nine areas:

- Vision, mission, educational goals and learning outcomes;
- Curriculum design and delivery;
- Assessment of students;
- Student selection and support services;
- Academic staff;
- Educational resources;
- Programme monitoring and review;
- Leadership, governance and administration; and
- Continual quality improvement.

Each of these nine areas contains quality standards and criteria. These standards and criteria have two distinct levels, i.e., benchmarked standards and enhanced standards. The degree of compliance to these nine areas of evaluation (and the standards accompanying them) expected of the HEP depends on the type and level of assessment.

Generally, the MQA subscribes to the shift from a fitness of purpose to a fitness for specified purpose. However, in the current stage of the development of Malaysian higher education and its quality assurance processes, there is a need to ensure that the HEPs fulfil all the benchmarked standards. Nevertheless, the diversity of the institutions and their programmes call for flexibility wherever appropriate. Where necessary, when preparing their documents for submission to the MQA, the HEPs may need to provide additional information to explain why certain standards are not applicable to their case.

8. PROGRAMME ACCREDITATION

Programme accreditation is an assessment exercise, conducted by peers, to ascertain whether a programme has satisfied the expected quality standards.

There are two levels of programme accreditation, i.e., Provisional Accreditation and Full (or Final) Accreditation.

The purpose of Provisional Accreditation is to establish whether a programme has met the minimum requirements in respect of the nine areas of evaluation for it to be offered by the HEP. Where necessary, a visit may be conducted to confirm the arrangement or the suitability of the facilities at the HEP premises.

The evaluation is conducted by MQA's Panel of Assessors (POA) and its findings are tabled at the respective Accreditation Committee for its decision. The HEP uses the Provisional Accreditation report as one of the requirements to seek approval from the MOHE to offer the programme, and, on obtaining it, to commence the programme.

The purpose of a Full (or Final) Accreditation is to ensure that the programme has met the set of standards for Full Accreditation as stipulated in the *Code of Practice for Programme Accreditation*, and in compliance with the Framework. Full Accreditation is equally an external, peer and independent assessment conducted by MQA through its POA, who would evaluate the Programme Information and Self-Review Report submitted by the HEP.

The panel would also make an evaluation visit to the institution. This site visit is to validate and verify the information furnished by the HEP.

The panel will then submit the final report to the MQA, to be then tabled to the respective Accreditation Committee for its final decision.

8.1 The Accreditation Report

In the whole accreditation exercise, the feedback processes between the Agency and the HEP are communicated through the panel's oral exit report and written report in the spirit of transparency and accountability. The Accreditation Report will be made available to the HEP concerned. The most important purpose of the Report is for continual quality improvement of the HEP.

The Accreditation Report is a narrative that aims to be informative. It recognises context and allows comparison over time. It discerns strengths and areas of concern as well as provides specific recommendations for quality enhancement in the structure and performance of the HEP, based on peer experience and the consensus on quality as embodied in the standards.

If the HEP fails to achieve the accreditation of a programme, the MQA will inform the relevant authority accordingly for its necessary action. In the case of a maintenance audit for programmes already accredited, the cessation date shall be effected on the MQR to indicate the revocation of the accreditation.

8.2 The Accreditation Summary Report

A summary of the final evaluation report of the Panel is accessible to the public. The report contains information that would be helpful to prospective students, parents, funding agencies and employers.

Accreditation adds value to a programme and qualification. It enhances public confidence and can become a basis for recognition nationally and internationally. The accreditation reports can be used for benchmarking and for revising quality standards and practices. Benchmarking focuses on how to improve the educational processes by exploiting the best practices adopted by institutions around the world.

9. INSTITUTIONAL AUDIT

There are two main components of an institutional audit: the HEP Self-Review (internal quality audit) and the MQA Institutional Audit (external quality audit).

The self-review is done by the institution and is the key component of the document submitted to the MQA for evaluation by the Audit Panel.

The institutional audit is an external and independent peer audit conducted by MQA through a panel of auditors, who would evaluate the self-review as well as visit the institution to validate and verify information given by the HEP and submit the final report to the MQA.

In programme accreditation, there is an element of auditing in the form of Programme Maintenance Audit, whose purpose is to ensure the continuous maintenance and enhancement of programmes that have been accredited. The Programme Maintenance Audit is crucial given that the accredited status of a programme is perpetual, i.e., without an expiry provision. Programme Maintenance Audit, which applies to all accredited programmes and qualifications, must be carried out at least once in three years.

9.1 Report to the Higher Education Provider: Continual Quality Improvement

The most important purpose of the Institutional Audit Report is continual quality improvement of the HEP. The feedback processes in the form of the oral exit reports and written reports promote accountability and reinforce the continual quality improvement process by validating the HEP's strengths and areas of concern.

The written report is narrative and aims to be informative. It is contextual to allow comparison over time. It highlights strengths and concerns as well as provides recommendations for quality improvement.

9.2 Report to the Ministry of Higher Education

The Institutional Audit Report is made available to the Ministry of Higher Education where it can be used for policy decisions to assist HEPs improve their quality and standards, and, in the case of self-accrediting application, for granting self-accreditation status.

9.3 Report for the Public

A summary report is made accessible to the public. The report contains information that would be helpful to prospective students, parents, funding agencies and employers.

The quality assurance reports can be used for benchmarking and for revising quality standards and practices. Benchmarking focuses on how to improve the educational processes through adopting the best approaches practised by renowned institutions of higher education around the world. Adopting best practices provides the HEP the opportunity to gain strategic, operational and financial advantage.

Section 2

Guidelines on Criteria and Standards
for Higher Education Providers

Section 2 Guidelines on Criteria and Standards for Higher Education Providers

INTRODUCTION

The guidelines on criteria and standards for higher education recommend practices that are in line with internationally recognised good practices. These guidelines are aimed at helping Higher Education Providers (HEP) attain at least benchmarked standards in each aspect of higher education and to stimulate them to continuously improve their programmes. All these are in support of the national aspiration of making Malaysia the centre for educational excellence.

The guidelines are designed to encourage diversity of approach that is compatible with national and global human resources requirements. The guidelines define standards for higher education in broad terms, within which individual HEPs can creatively design their programmes of study and to appropriately allocate resources in accordance with their stated vision, mission, educational goals and learning outcomes.

Like COPPA, COPIA also utilises the nine areas of evaluation, i.e.:

1. Vision, mission, educational goals and learning outcomes;
2. Curriculum design and delivery;
3. Assessment of students;
4. Student selection and support services;
5. Academic staff;
6. Educational resources;
7. Programme monitoring and review;
8. Leadership, governance and administration; and
9. Continual quality improvement.

These nine areas will be adjusted accordingly to fit the distinct purpose of COPIA. For example, the item on the larger vision of the institution is crucial at the institutional level, as compared to its fit when conducting a programme accreditation in which it is more directed to see how a specific programme supports the larger institutional vision. Similarly, when COPIA talks about curriculum design its perspective is largely about institutional policies, structures, processes and practices related to curriculum development across the institution. In COPPA, it refers specifically to description, content and delivery of a particular programme.

The standards in each of these nine areas define the expected level of attainment for each criterion within them, and serve as a performance indicator. Standards are specified at two levels of attainment: benchmarked standard and enhanced standard.

Benchmarked standards are standards that must be met and its compliance demonstrated during an institutional audit. These are minimum standards expected of an institution of higher learning. Generally, institutions of higher learning are expected to fulfil all the

benchmarked standards. However, some of these standards may not be applicable to certain institutions or in certain situations, for which the institution involved must justify this exception. Benchmarked standards are expressed as a "**must**".

Enhanced standards are standards that should be met as the institution strives to continuously improve itself. Enhanced standards reflect international and national consensus on good practices in higher education. HEPs should be able to demonstrate achievement of some or all of these or that initiatives toward the achievement of these standards are underway. Achievement of these standards will vary with the stage of development of the HEPs, their resources and policies. Enhanced standards are expressed by a "**should**".

The use of two levels of standards recognises the fact that HEPs are at different stages of development and emphasises that quality improvement is a continual process. Enhanced standards, in particular, allow flexibility and recognise diversity to facilitate the creative growth of education.

In the remaining pages of this chapter, specific criteria of the standards are spelt out for each of the nine areas of evaluation. These serve as performance indicators of quality.

AREA 1: VISION, MISSION, EDUCATIONAL GOALS AND LEARNING OUTCOMES

The vision, mission and goals of education set the direction of an HEP, guide academic planning and implementation as well as bring together all members of the institution to strive towards a tradition of excellence.

The vision and mission of an HEP direct and guide all aspects of the institutional existence and its future progress. The larger vision and mission of the HEP provides the foundation for the development of all its academic programmes; one must be guided by them when designing such programmes.

The educational goals describe the crucial characteristics of the outcomes and processes of higher education that are in keeping with national aspirations and global importance. The general goal of higher education is to produce broadly educated individuals through the:

- provision of knowledge and practical skills based on scientific principles;
- inculcation of attitudes, ethics, sense of professionalism, and leadership and citizenship skills for societal advancement within the framework of the national vision;
- nurturing of the ability to analyse and solve problems as well as to evaluate and make decisions critically and creatively based on evidence and experience;
- development of the quest for knowledge and lifelong learning skills that are essential for continuous upgrading of knowledge and skills that parallel the rapid advancement in global knowledge; and
- consideration of other issues that are relevant to the local, national and international context.

STANDARDS FOR AREA 1

1.1 Statement of Vision, Mission and Educational Goals

1.1.1 Benchmarked Standards

- The HEP **must** formulate educational goals consistent with its vision and mission.
- The mission statement and educational goals **must** reflect the crucial elements of the processes and outcomes of higher education that is in line with national and global developments.
- The vision, mission, and educational goals **must** be approved by a governing board or other appropriate body whose membership is made up of those competent to discharge such duties and responsibilities.

- Every HEP **must** disseminate its vision, mission and educational goals to its internal and external stakeholders.

1.1.2 Enhanced Standards

- The mission and educational goals **should** encompass leadership qualities in the areas of social responsibility, research and scholarly attainment, community engagement, ethical values, professionalism, and knowledge creation.
- The HEP **should** demonstrate that its planning and evaluation processes, educational programmes, educational support services, financial and physical resources, and administrative processes are adequate and appropriate to fulfil its stated goals.

1.2 Participation in the Formulation of Vision, Mission and Educational Goals

1.2.1 Benchmarked Standards

- The vision, mission and goals **must** be developed in consultation with principal stakeholders which include departments, schools or faculties, research centres, governing boards, academic staff, student organisations, and administration and management staff.

1.2.2 Enhanced Standards

- The vision, mission and goals **should** be periodically reviewed in consultation with a wider range of stakeholders that may include the community, civil society, international peers, alumni, industry, professional bodies, funding agencies, and the government.

1.3 Academic Autonomy

An academic institution is expected to have sufficient autonomy over academic matters. Such autonomy should be reflected in its offerings, its scholarly activities and its decision-making processes.

1.3.1 Benchmarked Standards

- The HEP **must** have sufficient autonomy to design the curriculum of the qualifications that it is conferring and to allocate the resources necessary for their implementation to ensure the achievement of their learning outcomes.

  (Where applicable, this provision must also cover programmes and activities conducted in collaboration with others within or outside

the country in accordance with national interest and international best practices.)

- The academic staff **must** be given sufficient autonomy to focus on areas of his expertise, such as curriculum development and implementation, academic supervision of students, research and writing, scholarly activities, academically-related administrative duties, and community engagement.

1.3.2 Enhanced Standards

- The HEP **should** strive to expand the boundaries of academic autonomy to reflect the progression of its intellectual maturity.

1.4 Learning Outcomes

The quality of the HEP is ultimately assessed by the ability of its graduates to carry out their expected roles and responsibilities in society. This requires a clear definition of the competencies that are expected to be achieved by students upon completion of a period of study. The ability of the graduate should demonstrate the level of competencies as defined by the expected learning outcomes outlined in the Malaysian Qualifications Framework (MQF).

1.4.1 Benchmarked Standards

- The HEP **must** formulate learning outcomes and educational goals consistent with its vision and mission.
- The HEP **must** define the specific competencies that students should demonstrate upon completion of the period of study.

  (The competencies include mastery of the body of knowledge; practical skills; social skills and responsibility; ethics and professionalism; scientific method, critical thinking and problem solving; communication skills and teamwork; information management and lifelong learning; and entrepreneurship and management.)

1.4.2 Enhanced Standards

- The HEP **should** specify the link between competencies expected at completion of studies and those required for career undertakings, further studies and good citizenship.

AREA 2: CURRICULUM DESIGN AND DELIVERY

A curriculum defines the body of knowledge and the area of specialisation. The dynamism of the HEP is reflected by it keeping abreast with the latest development in the various disciplines through an effective relationship between curriculum content and current practices in these disciplines as well as by it taking into consideration the current needs of an ever changing society.

STANDARDS FOR AREA 2

2.1 Curriculum Design and Teaching-Learning Methods

2.1.1 Benchmarked Standards

- The HEP **must** have a clearly defined process to establish, review and evaluate the curriculum in which the faculty, the administration and the governing board plays an active role.
- All programmes **must** be considered only after their needs assessment has indicated that there is a need for them to be conducted.
- All programmes **must** be considered only after the resources to support them have been identified.
- The aims and objectives of all programmes **must** be consistent with, and supportive of, the HEP's vision and mission.
- The HEP **must** show that the content, approach, and teaching-learning methods of the curricula are consistent with, and supportive of, their learning outcomes.
- There **must** be a variety of teaching-learning methods in order to achieve the eight domains of the learning outcomes and to ensure that students take responsibility for their own learning.
- The teaching and learning activities **must** be consistent with the curriculum.

2.1.2 Enhanced Standards

- The curriculum **should** encourage multi-disciplinary approaches to enhance personal development through electives, study pathways and other means which should be monitored and appraised.
- The needs analysis for all programmes **should** involve feedback from external sources including the market, students, alumni, peers, and international experts whose commentaries are utilised for purposes of curriculum improvement.
- There **should** be co-curricular activities that will enrich students' experiences, and foster personal development and responsibility.

2.2 Curriculum Content and Structure

2.2.1 Benchmarked Standards

- All academic programmes **must** incorporate the core content of the discipline that are essential for understanding the concepts, principles and methods that support the programme outcomes.
- All academic programmes **must** fulfil the requirements of the discipline and incorporate topics of local, national and international importance, taking into account the appropriate discipline standards and international best practices for the field, as well as changes in them.

2.2.2 Enhanced Standards

- The HEP **should** establish mechanisms -- through the use of the latest technology and through global networking -- to access to real time information and to identify up-to-date topics of importance for inclusion in the curriculum and its delivery.

2.3 Management of Programmes

2.3.1 Benchmarked Standards

- Students **must** be provided with the most current written information about the aims, outline, learning outcomes, and methods of assessment of programmes offered by the HEP.
- All programmes **must** have a coordinator and a team of appropriate academic staff (e.g., programme committee or team) that is responsible for the planning, implementation, evaluation and improvement of the programme.
- All programme teams **must** have authority and established procedures for programme planning and monitoring.
- All programme teams **must** be given resources to implement the teaching-learning activities, and to conduct programme evaluation for quality improvement.
- All programmes -- in particular their content and delivery -- **must** be regularly reviewed and evaluated and the results utilised to assure quality. (At level 6 and above of the MQF, the review must involve external examiners.)
- The HEP **must** provide a conducive learning environment for its students in which scholarly and creative achievements are nurtured.
- The HEP **must** have effective structures and processes when fulfilling the necessary criteria and standards of qualifications awarded.

2.3.2 Enhanced Standards

- Innovations to improve teaching and learning **should** be continuously developed, adequately supported, and critically evaluated, in consultation with principal stakeholders and experts, internally and externally.
- The review and evaluation of programmes **should** involve external expertise nationally and internationally.

2.4 Linkages with External Stakeholders

At the operational level, linkages with stakeholders outside of the HEP are crucial for identifying, clarifying and improving key aspects of programmes and their interrelationships in the planning and implementation process. The linkages are best developed and maintained at local, national, regional and global levels.

2.4.1 Benchmarked Standards

- The HEP **must** have linkages with all external stakeholders at the local, national, regional or global levels for the purposes of planning, implementing and reviewing its programmes.

2.4.2 Enhanced Standards

- The HEP **should** obtain feedback from employers and utilise the information for curriculum improvement as well as for purposes of student placement, training and workplace exposure.
- The HEP **should** facilitate students to develop linkages with external stakeholders.

AREA 3: ASSESSMENT OF STUDENTS

Student assessment is a crucial aspect of quality assurance because it drives student learning and it is one of the most important measures to show the achievement of learning outcomes. The result of assessment is also the basis in awarding qualifications. Hence, the methods of assessing students have to be clear, consistent, effective, reliable and in line with current practices and must clearly support the achievement of learning outcomes.

STANDARDS FOR AREA 3

3.1 Relationship Between Assessment and Learning

3.1.1 Benchmarked Standards

- The principles, methods and practices of student assessment **must** be aligned with learning outcomes and the curricula.
- Assessment **must** be consistent with the levels defined in the MQF, the eight domains of learning outcomes and the programme standards.

3.1.2 Enhanced Standards

- The link between assessment and programme learning outcomes **should** be reviewed periodically to ensure its effectiveness.

3.2 Assessment Methods

3.2.1 Benchmarked Standards

- A variety of methods and tools **must** be used appropriately to assess learning outcomes and competencies.
- Assessment **must** be summative and formative.
- There **must** be mechanisms to ensure the validity, reliability, consistency, currency and fairness of the student assessment system.
- The assessment methods **must** be reviewed at appropriate scheduled intervals to ensure currency.
- The methods of student assessment -- including the grading criteria -- **must** be documented and communicated to students on commencement of a programme.

3.2.2 Enhanced Standards

- The methods of assessing **should** be comparable to international best practices.

- The review of the assessment methods **should** incorporate current global developments and best practices in the discipline.
- The review of the assessment system **should** be done in consultation with external experts, both locally and internationally.

3.3 Management of Student Assessment

The management of the assessment system is directly linked to the HEP's responsibility as a body that confers qualifications. The robustness and security of the processes and procedures related to student assessment are important in inspiring confidence in the quality of the qualifications awarded by the HEP.

3.3.1 Benchmarked Standards

- The HEP **must** provide sufficient autonomy to the relevant departments in the management of student assessment.
- Student assessment results **must** be communicated to the student within reasonable time.
- Changes to student assessment methods **must** follow established procedures and regulations and communicated to students prior to their implementation.
- The programme grading, assessment and appeal policies **must** be publicised.
- There **must** be mechanisms to ensure the security of assessment documents and records.

3.3.2 Enhanced Standards

- There **should** be independent external scrutiny to evaluate and improve the management of student assessment, including formal certification of the processes.

AREA 4: STUDENT SELECTION AND SUPPORT SERVICES

Student admission is governed by policies formulated by the Ministry of Higher Education (MOHE). There are varying views on the most appropriate way to select students into a higher education institution; there is no one best method of student selection. Whatever method is selected, the HEP must be able to defend it consistently. Appropriate developmental or remedial support must be made available to assist students. The number of students to be admitted is determined by the resources and capacity of the HEP as well as the number of qualified applicants. The admission and retention policies of the HEP must not be compromised for the sole purpose of maintaining a desired enrolment. If an HEP operates geographically separated campuses, or if a programme is a collaborative one, the selection and assignment of all students must be equally consistent with national policies.

STANDARDS FOR AREA 4

4.1 Admission and Selection

4.1.1 Benchmarked Standards

- The HEP **must** have clear criteria and processes of student admission -- including those affecting transfer and exchange students -- and select students whose capabilities are consistent with these criteria and processes.
- The criteria and processes of selection **must** be published, disseminated and publicly accessible, especially to students.
- Prerequisite knowledge and skills for purposes of student entry into each programme **must** be appropriate and clearly stated.
- If a selection interview is utilised, the process **must** be structured, objective and fair.
- Student selection **must** be fair and transparent.
- There **must** be a clear policy on, and appropriate mechanism for, appeal.
- The HEP **must** offer appropriate developmental or remedial support to assist students who need such support.
- The number for each student intake **must** be related to the resources, capacity and capability of the HEP to effectively deliver its programmes.
- Visiting, exchange and transfer students **must** be accounted for to ensure the adequacy of the HEP's resources to accommodate them.
- The admission policy **must** be monitored and reviewed periodically to continuously improve the selection processes.

4.1.2 Enhanced Standards

- Student performance **should** be monitored as a feedback mechanism to assist in improving selection processes.
- The review of the admission policy and processes **should** be in consultation with relevant stakeholders, nationally and internationally.
- Student intake **should** incorporate social responsibility by privileged consideration for people with special needs.
- There **should** be a relationship between student selection, programmes, and the desired learning outcomes.

4.2 Articulation Regulations, Credit Transfer and Credit Exemption

4.2.1 Benchmarked Standards

- HEP **must** have well defined and effectively disseminated policies, regulations and processes concerning articulation practices, credit transfers and credit exemptions.

4.2.2 Enhanced Standards

- The HEP **should** be in touch with the latest development and thinking about the processes of articulation, credit transfers and credit exemptions including cross-border collaborative provisions.

4.3 Transfer of Students

In this age of increased cross-border education and student mobility, nationally and globally, the question of the transfer of students and credits and the articulation of accumulated learning has become a very important aspect of higher education. Thus, sufficient attention must be given to ensure that transfer students are smoothly assimilated into the institution without undue disruption to his studies.

4.3.1 Benchmarked Standards

- The HEP **must** have a well-disseminated policy with clear criteria, mechanisms and processes, both academic and non-academic, to enable qualified students to transfer to another programme, within it or in another HEP.
- Incoming transfer students **must** have comparable achievement in their previous institution of study.

4.3.2 Enhanced Standards

- The HEP **should** have in place policies and mechanisms that facilitate student mobility between programmes and institutions, within the

country or cross-border, through articulation arrangements, joint degrees, exchange semesters, advanced standing arrangements, and the like.

4.4 Student Support Services and Co-Curricular Activities

Student support services and co-curricular activities facilitate learning and wholesome personal development and contribute to the achievement of learning outcomes. It includes physical amenities and services such as recreation, arts and culture, accommodation, transport, safety, food, health, finance, academic advice and counselling. Students with special needs and those facing personal, relationship or identity problems can be helped through special-purpose facilities and professional counselling. By examining a student's career inclination, career counselling can help students make more informed programme and career choices.

4.4.1 Benchmarked Standards

- The HEP **must** make available appropriate and adequate support services, such as physical, social, financial and recreational facilities, and counselling and health services.
- Student support services **must** be evaluated regularly to ensure their adequacy, effectiveness and safety.
- There **must** be a mechanism for students to air grievances and make appeals relating to student support services.
- The HEP **must** designate an administrative unit responsible for planning and implementing student support services, staffed by individuals who have appropriate experience consistent with their assignments.
- Academic and career counselling **must** be provided to students by adequate and qualified staff.
- Induction programmes **must** be made available to students and evaluated regularly with special attention given to out of state and international students as well as students with special needs.

4.4.2 Enhanced Standards

- Student support services **should** be given prominent organisational status in the HEP and a dominant role in supplementing programme learning outcomes.
- An equipped and adequately staffed unit dedicated to academic and non-academic counselling **should** be established.
- Student academic and non-academic counselling **should** include ongoing monitoring of the student's progress to measure the effectiveness of, and to improve, the counselling services.

- There **should** be a structured training and development plan to enhance the skills and professionalism of the academic and non-academic counsellors.

4.5 Student Representation and Participation

The participation of students in various institutional activities inculcates self-confidence for leadership, and provides experience in education and related matters. By involving students, it will also be easier for the HEP to obtain their feedback. Student publications can also contribute to an atmosphere of responsible intellectual discourse.

4.5.1 Benchmarked Standards

- The HEP **must** have a widely disseminated policy on student representation and participation in line with national policies and laws.
- The HEP **must** publish a statement of student rights and responsibilities and make it available to the campus community.
- The jurisdiction of judicial bodies, the disciplinary responsibilities of HEP officials, and all disciplinary procedures **must** be clearly defined and broadly disseminated.
- There **must** be a policy and programmes for active student participation in areas that affect their welfare, for example, peer counselling, co-curricular activities, and community engagement.

4.5.2 Enhanced Standards

- Students and student organisations **should** be facilitated to gain managerial and leadership experience, to encourage character building, to inculcate a sense of belonging and responsibility, and to promote active citizenship.
- Where student publications or other media exist, the HEP **should** provide a clear, formal and well-publicised policy regarding such publications.
- There **should** be appropriate channels to allow student participation in the formulation, management and evaluation of the curriculum, and in academic matters relevant to them.
- The HEP **should** have adequate facilities to encourage students to be involved in publication activities.

4.6 Alumni

4.6.1 Benchmarked Standards

- The HEP **must** encourage active linkages and continuous relationship between it and its alumni.

4.6.2 Enhanced Standards

- The views of the alumni **should** be incorporated in curriculum development, the achievement of the learning outcomes and the future direction of the HEP.
- The HEP **should** encourage the alumni to play a role in preparing students for their professional future, and to provide linkages with industry and the professions.

AREA 5: ACADEMIC STAFF

The quality of the academic staff is one of the most important components in assuring the quality of higher education and thus every effort must be made to establish proper and effective recruitment, service, development and appraisal policies that are conducive to staff productivity. It is important that every programme has appropriately qualified and sufficient number of academic staff in a conducive environment that encourages recruitment and retention.

Teaching, research, consultancy services and community engagement are the core interrelated academic activities. Nevertheless, the degree of involvement in these areas varies between academic staff and between academic institutions.

Work and its equitable distribution is one of the ways the HEP recognises meritorious contribution for the purpose of promotion, salary determination and other incentives. It is crucial for the HEP to provide training for its academic staff. The equitable distribution of work helps ensure that such training can be done fairly and systematically.

STANDARDS FOR AREA 5

5.1 Recruitment and Management

5.1.1 Benchmarked Standards

- The HEP **must** have a clear and documented academic staff recruitment policy where the criteria for selection are based on academic merit.
- The staff to student ratio for each programme **must** be appropriate to the teaching-learning methods and comply with the programme discipline standards.
- The HEP **must** have an adequate number of full-time academic staff for each programme.
- The HEP **must** clarify the roles of the academic staff in teaching, research and scholarly activities, consultancy, community services and administrative functions to show a balance of functions and responsibilities in line with academic conventions.
- The HEP policy **must** reflect an equitable distribution of responsibilities among the academic staff.
- Recognition and reward through promotion, salary increment or other remuneration **must** be based on equitable work distribution and meritorious academic roles using clear and transparent policies and procedures.

- The HEP **must** have clear policies, criteria and processes in academic appointment and promotion exercise -- for example, that of Professors and Associate Professors -- guided by considerations which are in line with national policy and international best practices.

5.1.2 Enhanced Standards

- The recruitment policy **should** seek a balance between senior and junior academic staff, between academic and non-academic staff, between academic staff with different approaches to the subject, and between local and international academic staff with multi-disciplinary backgrounds.
- The HEP **should** have national and international linkages to provide for the involvement of renowned academics and professionals to enhance its scholarly activities.

5.2 Service and Development

5.2.1 Benchmarked Standards

- The HEP **must** provide for an effective academic staff development programme.
- The policy on the academic staff **must** address matters related to service, development and appraisal.
- The HEP **must** provide mentoring and formative guidance for new academic staff as part of its staff development programme.
- The academic staff **must** be provided with the necessary training, tools and technology for self-learning, access to information and for communication.
- The HEP **must** provide for a suitable environment for the student appraisal of the academic staff.

5.2.2 Enhanced Standards

- The HEP **should** provide opportunities -- including funding -- for academic staff participation in professional, academic and other relevant activities, national and international. It should appraise this participation and demonstrate that it utilises the results of this appraisal for improvement of the student experience.
- The HEP **should** have appropriate provision to allow for advanced enhancement for its academic staff through research leave, sabbatical, and sponsored participation in, and organisation of, conferences.

AREA 6: EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES

Adequate educational resources are necessary to support teaching-learning activities of a programme. These resources include finance, expertise, physical infrastructure, information and communication technology, and research facilities.

The physical facilities of a programme are largely guided by the needs of the specific field of study. These facilities include the space and the necessary equipments and facilities for administration, for large and small group learning (e.g., libraries, resource centres, lecture halls, auditoriums, tutorial rooms), for practical classes (e.g., science and computer laboratories, workshops, studios), and for clinical learning (e.g., hospitals, clinics).

Where appropriate, research facilities are included as part of educational resources because a research-active environment improves the quality of higher education. A research culture attracts high calibre academics that engender critical thinking and enquiring mind, contributing further to knowledge advancement. Active researchers are best suited to interpret and apply current knowledge for the benefit of academic programmes and the community. They also attract grants that increase the number of staff and their morale. Interdisciplinary research has positive effects on academic programmes.

A research-active environment provides opportunities for students to observe and participate in research through electives or core courses. Exposure to an environment of curiosity and inquiry encourages students to develop lasting skills in problem solving, data analysis and continuous updating of knowledge. Some students may develop an interest in research as a career choice.

Educational experts are specialised staff from various disciplines who have been trained or who have considerable experience in effective teaching-learning methodologies and related matters of higher education. They would deal with problems and provide training as well as advice on teaching-learning processes and practices. The expertise can be provided by an education unit or division at the HEP or acquired from an external source.

Other facilities, which are essential for supporting teaching-learning activities such as dormitories, transport, security, recreation and counselling, are equally important. A balanced and proportional increase in the direct and indirect educational resources supports effective teaching-learning.

Adequate quantity of physical and financial resources and services is crucial. Equally important, if not more so, is the quality, relevance, accessibility, availability and delivery of such resources and services, and their actual utilisation by learners and teachers alike. These considerations must be taken into account in evaluating the effectiveness of educational resources.

STANDARDS FOR AREA 6

6.1 Physical Facilities

6.1.1 Benchmarked Standards

- The HEP **must** have sufficient and appropriate resources, including equipments and facilities for training, to ensure effective delivery of the curriculum.
- Educational resources, including infrastructure and resources in support of academic staff development programmes, **must** be distributed according to the educational needs.
- The physical facilities **must** comply with the relevant laws, and with health and safety regulations.
- The library and resource centre **must** have adequate and current references, qualified staff and other facilities -- including appropriate information and communication technology-mediated reference materials -- to support academic programmes and research activities.
- The HEP **must** provide adequate and suitable facilities to promote research activities.
- The HEP **must** have a policy regarding access to information and external linkages for effective teaching and learning, for example, through the use of the most current electronic devices, library databases, networks and linkages and other effective means of using information and communication technology.

6.1.2 Enhanced Standards

- The physical learning environment **should** be periodically reviewed to assess its quality and appropriateness for current education and training, and regularly improved through renovations, building new facilities and the acquisition of the latest and appropriate equipment to keep up with the development in educational practices and changes.
- Students and faculty **should** be provided with adequate and continual support to learn how to utilise new equipments and to access information in the various and ever changing mediums and formats.
- The facilities **should** be user friendly to those with special needs.

6.2 Research and Development

(These standards are largely directed to universities and university colleges)

6.2.1 Benchmarked Standards

- The HEP **must** have a policy and planning that identifies the priorities, facilities and development in research and commercialisation.

- The HEP **must** facilitate and provide incentives for the academic staff and the departments to conduct research.
- The interaction between research and education **must** be reflected in the curriculum, inform current teaching, and encourage and prepare students for engagement in research, scholarship and development.

6.2.2 Enhanced Standards

- There **should** be a link between research, development and commercialisation.
- The HEP **should** periodically review research resources and facilities and take appropriate action to enhance its research capabilities and to keep up with latest technology.
- The HEP **should** provide incentives, including funding, to academic staff to engage in publication, including in reputable refereed journals.

6.3 Educational Expertise

6.3.1 Benchmarked Standards

- The HEP **must** have a policy on the use of educational expertise in planning educational programmes and in the development of new teaching and assessment methods.

6.3.2 Enhanced Standards

- The HEP **should** have access to educational experts whose expertise can be utilised for staff development and educational research in the various disciplines.

6.4 Educational Exchanges

6.4.1 Benchmarked Standards

- The HEP **must** have a policy on exchanges of students, academic staff and educational resources, and disseminate it to students and faculty.

6.4.2 Enhanced Standards

- The HEP **should** have a clear policy and future planning on educational collaboration with relevant international institutions.
- The HEP **should** provide appropriate facilities and adequate financial allocation for exchanges of academic staff, students, and resources.

6.5 Financial Allocation

6.5.1 Benchmarked Standards

- The HEP **must** have budgetary and procurement procedures to ensure that its resources are sufficient and that it is capable of utilising its finances efficiently and responsibly to achieve its objectives and maintain high standards of quality.
- The HEP **must** have a clear line of responsibility and authority for budgeting and resource allocation that takes into account the specific needs of each department.
- The HEP **must** have a written and well-disseminated policy on tuition fees, refunds and other related payments.

6.5.2 Enhanced Standards

- Those responsible for an academic programme **should** be given sufficient autonomy to appropriately allocate resources to achieve the programme objectives and to maintain high educational standards.

AREA 7: PROGRAMME MONITORING AND REVIEW

Quality enhancement calls for programmes to be regularly monitored, reviewed and evaluated. This includes the monitoring, reviewing and evaluating of institutional structures and processes (administrative structure, leadership and governance, planning and review mechanisms), curriculum components (syllabi, teaching methodologies, learning outcomes) as well as student progress, employability and performance.

Feedback from multiple sources -- students, alumni, academic staff, employers, professional bodies, parents -- assists in enhancing the quality of the programme. Feedback can also be obtained from an analysis of student performance and from longitudinal studies.

Measures of student performance would include the average study duration, assessment scores, passing rate at examinations, success and dropout rates, students' and alumni's report about their learning experience, as well as time spent by students in areas of special interest. Evaluation of student performance in examinations can reveal very useful information. If student selection has been correctly done, a high failure rate in a programme indicates something amiss in the curriculum content, teaching-learning activities or assessment system. The programme committees need to monitor the performance rate in each course and investigate if the rate is too high or too low.

Student feedback, for example through questionnaires and representation in programme committees, is useful to identify specific problems and for continual improvement of the programmes.

One method to evaluate programme effectiveness is a longitudinal study of the graduates. The HEP should have mechanisms for monitoring the performance of its graduates and for obtaining the perceptions of society and employers on the strengths and weaknesses of the graduates and to respond appropriately.

STANDARDS FOR AREA 7

7.1 Mechanisms for Programme Monitoring and Review

7.1.1 Benchmarked Standards

- The HEP **must** have a policy on the reviewing, monitoring and evaluation of all programmes offered that utilises proper mechanisms and resources, including benchmark data, teaching-learning methods and technologies, administration and related educational services, as well as feedback from principal stakeholders.
- There **must** be a programme review committee for each department headed by a designated coordinator.

- In collaborative arrangements, the partners involved **must** share the responsibility of programme monitoring and review.
- The areas of concern and ways to improve programmes as identified by the HEP self-review processes **must** be brought to the attention of the highest management level to ensure further appropriate measures.
- Student performance and progression **must** be analysed to ascertain the achievement of the learning outcomes of each programme.

7.1.2 Enhanced Standards

- Student performance and progression analysis **should** be utilised to provide feedback to committees responsible for student selection, curriculum planning and student counselling.

7.2 Involvement of Stakeholders

7.2.1 Benchmarked Standards

- The evaluation and review of programmes **must** involve the relevant stakeholders.

7.2.2 Enhanced Standards

- Stakeholder feedback -- particularly that of the alumni and employers -- **should** be incorporated into a programme review exercise.
- For a professional programme, the HEP **should** engage the relevant professional bodies and associations in its programme evaluation exercise.

AREA 8: LEADERSHIP, GOVERNANCE AND ADMINISTRATION

There are many ways of administering a higher education institution. Nevertheless, governance that reflects the leadership of an academic organisation must emphasise excellence and scholarship. It is very crucial that leadership at the various levels of the HEP provides clear guidelines and direction, builds relationship amongst the different constituents based on collegiality and transparency, manages finances and other resources with transparency and accountability, forge partnerships with significant stakeholders in educational delivery, research and consultancy and dedicates itself to academic and scholarly endeavours. Whilst formalised arrangements can protect these relationships, they are best developed by a culture of reciprocity and open communication.

STANDARDS FOR AREA 8

8.1 Governance

8.1.1 Benchmarked Standards

- The policies and practices of the HEP **must** be consistent with its statement of purpose.
- The HEP **must** clarify its governance structures and functions, and the relationships within them, and these must be communicated to parties involved based on principles of transparency, accountability and authority.
- The governing board of the HEP **must** be an active policy-making body with an adequate degree of autonomy.
- Mechanisms to ensure functional integration and comparability of educational quality **must** be established in HEPs which have geographically separated campuses.
- The HEP **must** have a department or unit dedicated to, and responsible for, the internal quality assurance system.
- The HEP **must** encourage connectivity of its staff and students with the local community around it, including through cultural, social and community service activities.

8.1.2 Enhanced Standards

- The HEP **should** have a comprehensive, interconnected and institutionalised committee system responsible for academic programmes that takes into consideration, among others, internal and external consultation, feedback, market needs analysis and employability projections.

- The governance principles **should** reflect the representation of academic staff, students and other stakeholders.
- The Chair of the governing board **should** exercise non-executive powers of the HEP.
- The governing board **should** be free from undue external pressures.
- The HEP **should** have a clearly stated policy on conflict of interest, particularly in relation to private practice and part-time employment of its employees.
- The HEP **should** actively participate in socio-economic activities of the community in which it is located.

8.2 Institutional and Academic Leadership

8.2.1 Benchmarked Standards

- The selection criteria, selection process, job description, and the qualification and experience required of members of the institutional executive management team of the HEP (i.e., the HEP leadership) **must** be clearly stated.
- The leadership of academic programmes and departments (i.e., the academic leadership) **must** be held by those with appropriate qualifications and experience, and sufficiently knowledgeable on issues of curriculum design, delivery and review.
- Mechanisms and processes **must** be in place to allow for communication between the HEP leadership and the academic leadership of departments and programmes in matters such as faculty recruitment and training, student admission, allocation of resources, and decision-making processes.
- The academic leadership at the department and programme levels **must** be evaluated at defined intervals with respect to performance and in relation to the achievement of the mission and goals of the HEP.

8.2.2 Enhanced Standards

- The HEP leadership and the academic leadership **should** take on the responsibility of creating a conducive environment to generate innovation and creativity.
- The HEP leadership and the academic leadership **should** undergo periodic training and staff development programme to enhance their leadership capabilities.

8.3 Administrative and Management Staff

8.3.1 Benchmarked Standards

- The administrative staff of the HEP **must** be appropriate and sufficient to support the implementation of the educational programmes and related activities, and to ensure good management and deployment of the resources.
- The HEP **must** have mechanisms for training and career advancement for its administrative and management staff.
- The HEP **must** conduct regular performance review of its administrative and management staff.

8.3.2 Enhanced Standards

- The HEP **should** have an advanced training scheme for the administrative and management staff to fulfil the specific needs of educational programmes, for example, risk management, maintenance of specialised equipment, and additional technical skills.

8.4 Academic Records

8.4.1 Benchmarked Standards

- The HEP **must** have policies concerning the accessibility and security of student and academic staff records.
- The HEP **must** establish and disseminate policies that respect the rights of individual privacy and the confidentiality of records.

8.4.2 Enhanced Standards

- The HEP **should** continuously review policies on security of records including increased use of electronic technologies and its safety systems.

8.5 Interaction with External Sectors

8.5.1 Benchmarked Standards

- The HEP **must** have a constructive mechanism for cooperation with external sectors, including with its external stakeholders.

8.5.2 Enhanced Standards

- The collaboration with external sectors **should** be institutionalised through formalised agreements.

AREA 9: CONTINUAL QUALITY IMPROVEMENT

Increasingly, needs are constantly changing because of the advancements in science and technology, and the explosive growth in global knowledge, which are rapidly and widely disseminated. Society demands better quality and greater accountability from HEPs.

In facing these challenges, HEPs have little choice but to become dynamic learning organisations that take the responsibility to enhance quality and embrace the spirit of continual quality improvement.

STANDARDS FOR AREA 9

9.1 Quality Improvement

9.1.1 Benchmarked Standards

- The HEP **must** establish policies and procedures for regular reviewing and updating of its internal quality assurance activities to ensure continuous quality improvement.
- The unit or department dedicated to the internal quality assurance system of the HEP **must** take continuous efforts to keep abreast with the changes and best practices in quality assurance.
- The HEP **must** have dynamic mechanisms to implement recommendations for quality improvement and record the achievements of such implementations.
- There **must** be a link between quality assurance processes and the achievement of the institutional goals.

9.1.2 Enhanced Standards

- The internal quality assurance unit of the HEP **should** be given a prominent organisational status in the HEP.
- The HEP **should** embrace the spirit of continual quality improvement based on prospective studies and analyses that leads to the revisions of its current policies and practices, taking into consideration past experiences, present conditions, and future possibilities.
- The HEP **should** strive to get its internal quality assurance system accredited by a relevant, external and authoritative accreditation body.

Section 3

Submission for Institutional Audit

Section 3 Submission for Institutional Audit

INTRODUCTION

This section contains information and reference to assist the Higher Education Provider (HEP) in the preparation of submission for an institutional audit. It is not a prescriptive tool; it is a general manual meant to assist the provider to understand and interpret the necessary information required for such a submission. The HEP should follow closely the requirements found in Section 3.1 below and clarify with the MQA from time to time should the need arise.

Although comprehensive, not all items in this section apply equally to all submissions; some are more relevant and applicable than others. The HEP should utilise the guidelines appropriately and customise their submission in accordance to the specific needs of their institution. They should, however, indicate -- and explain -- items that are not applicable to them.

The guidelines in this section cover all the main dimensions in the nine areas of evaluation. It also provides illustrative examples. The HEP is expected to provide appropriate information with evidences that support and best illustrate their specific case. The HEP is also welcomed to furnish additional information that may not be specifically covered by these guidelines.

The information provided by the HEP for its submission should be brief, concise and succinct.

3.1 The Documentation Required

HEPs are required to submit the Self-Review Portfolio (SRP) or MQA-03, for an institutional audit in the prescribed format below:

- Part A: General Information About the HEP
  This is an institutional profile of the HEP.

- Part B: Information on the Nine Areas of Evaluation for Quality Assurance
  This provides the information pertaining to the nine areas of evaluation and the standards in each of them.

- Part C: Self-Review Report

In preparing the portfolio, HEPs are encouraged to use bullet points, diagrams and flow charts as much as possible. In support of the information provided in the portfolio, HEPs may append relevant and significant documentations. The HEP may be requested to provide additional information before or during the institutional

audit visit. Further, the HEP may also be required to allow the auditors access to confidential information for verification purposes.

The HEP is expected to send to the MQA:

- Hard copies of the SRP as per required;
- Hard copies of other supporting materials as per required; and
- Soft copies of the SRP as per required.

Upon receipt of the SRP, the MQA will vet through the document to ensure that the submission is complete. In cases where the SRP is incomplete, the MQA will request the HEP to complete the documentation. The SRP is then forwarded to the panel of auditors.

The remaining pages of this section consist of descriptions of templates for Part A and Part B, as well as the guidelines to a Self-Review Report (Part C).

PART A: GENERAL INFORMATION ABOUT THE HIGHER EDUCATION PROVIDER

Part A of the Self-Review Portfolio of this Code of Practice for Institutional Audit (COPIA) seeks general information on the Higher Education Provider (HEP). It is basically an institutional profile of the HEP.

There are 22 items listed below, most of which are self-explanatory.

Items 1 and 2 ask for the name of the HEP and the date of its establishment. Item 3 asks for the reference number to show that the institution has received formal approval of its establishment from the relevant authority. Item 4 asks for the name and designation of the Chief Executive Officer of the HEP.

Items 5 to 9 require the HEP to furnish its address and contact details.

Item 10 asks for the names and addresses of departments of the HEP which are located outside of its main campus. Item 11 asks for the names and addresses of branch campuses, where applicable.

Items 12 and 13 require the HEP to list all the departments in the HEP, including those in its branch campuses and the number of programmes offered by them as well as details of these programmes.

Items 14, 15, 16 and 18 ask for the details of the academic staff, students and administrative and support staff. Item 17 asks specifically about student attrition rate.

Item 19 requires the HEP to provide the organisational chart of the HEP.

Items 20 and 21 ask for the purpose and details of the submission for the institutional audit.

Item 22 asks for the name and details of the contact person in the HEP.

PART A - GENERAL INFORMATION ABOUT THE HIGHER EDUCATION PROVIDER

1. Name of the Higher Education Provider (HEP):
2. Date of establishment:
3. Reference No. of the Approval for Establishment:
4. Name, title and designation of the chief executive officer:
5. Address:
   - Address:
   - Correspondence (if different from above):
6. Tel.:
7. Fax:
8. Email:
9. Website:

10. Names and addresses of Faculties/Schools/Departments/Centres (if located outside the main campus):

i.
ii.
iii.

11. Names and addresses of branch campuses (if applicable):

i.
ii.
iii.

12. List of Faculties/Schools/Departments/Centres in the HEP (and its branch campuses) and no. of programmes offered:

No.	Name of Faculties/Schools/Departments/ Centres	No. of programmes offered

13. Details of all programmes currently conducted by the HEP (and its branch campuses):

No.	Name of programme	Level	Awarding body	Approval Date	Accreditation Date	Recognition (by PSD/JPA) Date	Type of Programme (Collaboration/ Homegrown)	Current No. of students

(PSD: Public Service Department, JPA: *Jabatan Perkhidmatan Awam*)

14. Number and qualification of academic staff:

Status	Academic Qualification	Number of staff		
		Local	Foreign	Total
Full-time	PhD			
	Masters			
	Bachelors			
	Diploma			
	Professional			
	Others			
	Sub-total			
Part-time	PhD			
	Masters			
	Bachelors			
	Diploma			
	Professional			
	Others			
	Sub-total			
	Total			

15. Designation of academic staff:

Designation	Number				Total	
	Local		Foreign			
	Full-time	Part-time	Full-time	Part-time	Full-time	Part-time
Professor						
Associate Professor						
Senior Lecturer						
Lecturer						
Junior Lecturers including tutors, teaching assistants						

List others who are involved in teaching and learning, for example, adjunct professors, visiting professors, exchange professors, fellows, etc.

16. Total number of students:

	Number of students		Total
	Local	Foreign	
Male			
Female			
Total			

17. Student attrition rate:

	Year	Number of students leaving the institution	Reasons for leaving
Current year			
Past 1 year			
Past 2 years			
Past 3 years			

18. Total number of administrative and support staff:

	Job Designation	Number of staff required	Current number of staff	Minimum qualification
1				
2				
3				

19. Provide the organisational chart of the HEP:

20. State the purpose of this audit:

❑ Comprehensive Institutional Audit

❑ Thematic audit ……..(please specify)

21. Provide details of the purpose of this audit:

22. Contact person:

- Name (Title):
- Designation:
- Tel.:
- Fax:
- Email:

PART B: INFORMATION ON THE NINE AREAS OF EVALUATION FOR QUALITY ASSURANCE

An audit of an institution covers standards in nine areas of evaluation. There are two levels of these standards, i.e., benchmarked standards and enhanced standards. The former is expressed by a "must" which means that the Higher Education Provider (HEP) must comply with these standards, whilst the latter is expressed by a "should" which means that the HEP is encouraged to fulfil them.

Part B of the Self-Review Portfolio requires the HEP to furnish information on all the standards in the nine areas of evaluation for quality assurance on the institution to be audited. The following pages provide a series of questions and statements that guide the HEP to furnish such information.

Area 1 is on vision, mission, educational goals and learning outcomes. There are 10 questions and statements on the nine benchmarked standards and five on the five enhanced standards.

Area 2 on curriculum design and delivery has 20 questions and statements on the 17 benchmarked standards and eight questions and statements on the eight enhanced standards.

Area 3 on assessment of students has 22 questions and statements on the 12 benchmarked standards and six questions and statements on the five enhanced standards.

Area 4 on student selection and support services has 35 questions and statements on the 24 benchmarked standards and 19 questions and statements on the 16 enhanced standards.

Area 5 on academic staff has 18 questions and statements on the 12 benchmarked standards and seven questions and statements on the four enhanced standards.

Area 6 on educational resources has 32 questions and statements on the 14 benchmarked standards and 14 questions and statements on the 10 enhanced standards.

Area 7 on programme monitoring and review has ten questions and statements on the six benchmarked standards and four questions and statements on the three enhanced standards.

Area 8 on leadership, governance and administration has 25 questions and statements on the 16 benchmarked standards and 11 questions and statements on the 11 enhanced standards.

Area 9 is on continual quality improvement. There are six questions and statements on the four benchmarked standards and three questions and statements on the three enhanced standards.

PART B - INFORMATION ON THE NINE AREAS OF EVALUATION FOR QUALITY ASSURANCE

The statements below are meant to be guidelines for data collection in the nine areas of quality assurance.

INFORMATION ON AREA 1: VISION, MISSION, EDUCATIONAL GOALS AND LEARNING OUTCOMES

1.1 Statement of Vision, Mission and Educational Goals

Information on Benchmarked Standards

1.1.1 State or provide a copy of the HEP's vision and mission and the general educational goals.

1.1.2 Describe how the mission statement and educational goals reflect the crucial elements of the processes and outcomes of higher education in line with national and global developments which may include issues of social responsibility, competency, research attainment, community involvement, ethical values, and leadership.

1.1.3 Describe the appropriate body and membership responsible for approving the vision, mission and educational goals of the HEP.

1.1.4 Describe how the vision, mission and educational goals are made known to the relevant parties.

Information on Enhanced Standards

1.1.5 Provide information to what extent the institutional mission and educational goals incorporate aspects of leadership, social responsibility, research, scholarship, community engagement, ethical values, professionalism and knowledge creation.

1.1.6 State that the HEP's planning and evaluation processes, educational programmes, educational support services, financial and physical resources, and administrative processes are adequate and appropriate to fulfil its stated goals.

1.2 Participation in the Formulation of Vision, Mission and Educational Goals

Information on Benchmarked Standards

1.2.1 Describe how the HEP involves major stakeholders in the formulation and renewal of the mission and educational goals as well as the educational programmes.

Information on Enhanced Standards

1.2.2 Describe how the HEP consults and involves a wide range of stakeholders in the ongoing refinement of the vision, mission and goals.

1.3 Academic Autonomy

Information on Benchmarked Standards

1.3.1 Describe how the curriculum is designed and the resources allocated to show sufficient autonomy in such functions.

1.3.2 How does the HEP ensure that the members of the academic staff have sufficient autonomy to focus on areas of their expertise?

Information on Enhanced Standards

1.3.3 What are the HEP's plans to expand the boundaries of academic autonomy?

1.4 Learning Outcomes

Information on Benchmarked Standards

1.4.1 Show how the learning outcomes and educational goals are in line with, and supportive of, the vision and mission of the HEP.

1.4.2 Specify the broad competencies and attributes expected of students upon completion of a period of study.

1.4.3 Describe how these relate to the existing and emergent needs of the profession, discipline and the larger society.

Information on Enhanced Standards

1.4.4 Explain how the competencies are related to the needs of the student in his future workplace, further studies and good citizenship.

INFORMATION ON AREA 2: CURRICULUM DESIGN AND DELIVERY

2.1 Curriculum Design and Teaching-Learning Methods

Information on Benchmarked Standards

2.1.1 Describe the processes, procedures, and mechanisms for curriculum development. How are the main constituents in the institution involved in this process?

2.1.2 Show evidence that the HEP have considered market and societal demand for the programme as well as sufficient resources to run it.

2.1.3 Show how the aims and objectives of programmes are in line with, and supportive of, the vision and mission of the HEP.

2.1.4 Elaborate how the HEP ensures the principles guiding the design of the curriculum support the attainment of learning outcomes.

2.1.5 Describe the various teaching-learning methods to achieve learning outcomes and ensure that students take responsibility for their own learning.

2.1.6 Describe how the HEP ensures its curriculum and instructional methods encourage students to take active participation for their learning.

2.1.7 Specify how the HEP envisages that the curriculum and instructional methods prepare students for their learning.

2.1.8 Give details of HEP policies and practices that show that teaching and learning are consistent with the curriculum. How are elements of inconsistencies redressed?

Information on Enhanced Standards

2.1.9 Show how the curriculum encourages a multi-disciplinary approach and co-curricular activities in enhancing and enriching the personal development of the learner. Show how these are monitored and appraised.

2.1.10 Show how external sources are engaged in the needs analysis of programmes. Show how their commentaries are utilised to improve them.

2.1.11 What are the co-curricular activities that enrich student learning experience, and foster personal development and responsibility?

2.2 Curriculum Content and Structure

Information on Benchmarked Standards

2.2.1 Describe how the academic programmes incorporate the core content of the discipline that are essential for understanding the concepts, principles and methods that support the programme outcomes.

2.2.2 Describe how the academic programmes fulfil the requirements of the discipline and takes into account discipline standards and international best practices as well as changes in them.

2.2.3 Specify the processes by which topics of local, national and international importance are incorporated into the curriculum.

Information on Enhanced Standards

2.2.4 Show evidence that the HEP has the mechanism in place to access the latest development in a field of study.

2.3 Management of Programmes

Information on Benchmarked Standards

2.3.1 Provide a sample of the Student Study Guide, Student Handbook and Student Project Handbook, where applicable.

2.3.2 State the designation, responsibility and authority of the main academic officer and committee responsible for a programme. Do they have adequate resources? Show evidence.

2.3.3 State the terms of reference of the curriculum committees.

2.3.4 What authority do the committees have to resolve conflicts of educational principle and to ensure that the goals and the requirements of the specific disciplines are met?

2.3.5 What are the resources given to programme teams to implement teaching-learning activities, and to conduct programme evaluation for quality improvement?

2.3.6 Describe the review and evaluation processes of programmes and the utilisation of the results.

2.3.7 Show how the learning environment nurtures scholarly and creative achievements.

2.3.8 Describe the structures and processes to ensure that all the criteria and standards of a qualification awarded are fulfilled.

Information on Enhanced Standards

2.3.9 Explain the HEP's mechanisms and resources for introducing and evaluating innovations in teaching-learning and evaluation methods. Indicate the involvement of internal and external principal stakeholders and experts in these.

2.3.10 Show how the HEP engages external expertise nationally and internationally in the review and evaluation of programmes.

2.4 Linkages with External Stakeholders

Information on Benchmarked Standards

2.4.1 Describe the links that exist between the HEP and its external stakeholders for the purpose of curriculum improvement.

Information on Enhanced Standards

2.4.2 State the existing mechanism to obtain and utilise feedback from employers for the improvement of the curriculum, training and workplace exposure.

2.4.3 What opportunities are available to students to have linkages with external stakeholders?

INFORMATION ON AREA 3: ASSESSMENT OF STUDENTS

3.1 Relationship Between Assessment and Learning

Information on Benchmarked Standards

3.1.1 Explain how assessment principles, methods and practices are aligned to the learning outcomes and curricula.

3.1.2 State how assessment of students is consistent with the levels defined in the MQF and its eight domains of learning outcomes.

3.1.3 Indicate how the HEP monitors student assessment to reduce curriculum overload and encourage integrated learning.

3.1.4 Describe how the HEP ensures that appropriate attitudes are assessed and inculcated (e.g., respect for socio-cultural diversity, sensitivity to rights of others, teamwork, lifelong learning).

Information on Enhanced Standards

3.1.5 Describe how the link between assessment and learning outcomes are periodically reviewed to ensure its effectiveness.

3.2 Assessment Methods

Information on Benchmarked Standards

3.2.1 Describe the student assessment methods and show how these methods, including that of practical training, clinical training, studio projects, demonstrations and the like, can measure the students' achievement of the learning outcomes.

3.2.2 Provide information on the summative and formative assessment methods.

3.2.3 Describe the mechanism to ensure validity, reliability and fairness of the student assessment system.

3.2.4 Explain how the HEP monitors the reliability and validity of assessment over time and across sites.

3.2.5 Describe how internal assessments are validated against external standards (e.g., external examiners, external examinations).

3.2.6 Explain the various feedback mechanisms to ensure validity, reliability, consistency, currency and fairness of the assessment methods. Explain whether records are available to students for feedback on performance and corrective measures.

3.2.7 Explain how the HEP provides feedback to students on their academic performance, including making records available, to ensure that they have sufficient time to undertake remedial measures.

3.2.8 Describe how assessment methods are reviewed to ensure currency.

3.2.9 How are student assessment methods documented and communicated to students?

3.2.10 Append a copy of the Regulations of Examination.

Information on Enhanced Standards

3.2.11 Describe how the internal assessments are comparable to that of external best practices (e.g., through evaluation by external examiners, in comparison with student assessment held in reputable institutions).

3.2.12 State whether the curriculum have mechanisms to review and implement new methods of assessment.

3.2.13 How does the review of the assessment method incorporate current global developments and best practices in the discipline?

3.2.14 Describe how external expertise, locally and internationally, are consulted in the review of the assessment system.

3.3 Management of Student Assessment

Information on Benchmarked Standards

3.3.1 How autonomous are the departments in the management of student assessment?

3.3.2 Indicate the committees and the processes for verification and moderation of assessments, and benchmarking academic standards of assessment. How autonomous are they?

3.3.3 Explain how the committees ensure that standards are met.

3.3.4 Explain how assessment performance and results are made available to students.

3.3.5 State the authority responsible for assessment policy. Describe the composition of the committees involved and their terms of reference.

3.3.6 State whether student representatives, academic staff and stakeholders are involved in making changes to the system of student assessment and their mode of involvement.

3.3.7 Provide information on the appeal policy.

3.3.8 Describe how confidentiality and security are ensured in student assessment processes and academic records.

Information on Enhanced Standards

3.3.9 Explain the nature of the independent external scrutiny of student assessment to improve the management of the assessment system.

INFORMATION ON AREA 4: STUDENT SELECTION AND SUPPORT SERVICES

4.1 Admission and Selection

Information on Benchmarked Standards

4.1.1 Who is responsible for student selection? State the academic criteria and the mechanisms for admission to programmes and any other additional requirements.

4.1.2 Provide evidence that the students selected fulfil the admission policies.

4.1.3 Describe the admission mechanisms and criteria for students with other equivalent qualifications (where applicable).

4.1.4 Describe the characteristics of students admitted. Provide a copy of any technical standards that have been deployed for the admission of students with special needs.

4.1.5 Show how the criteria and mechanisms are published and disseminated.

4.1.6 Provide information on the prerequisite knowledge and skills for student entry.

4.1.7 If a selection interview is utilised, describe it.

4.1.8 Show evidence that the admission policy and mechanism is fair and transparent.

4.1.9 Describe the appeal policy and mechanism.

4.1.10 State what are the special programmes provided for those who are selected but need additional remedial assistance.

4.1.11 Summarise the methods of orientation of new students, early warning system for academic difficulty and system of academic counselling, tutoring and remediation.

4.1.12 Indicate the student intake in the last three years and the projection of student intake for the next five years. Describe how the size of student intake is determined in relation to the capacity of the HEP and explain the mechanisms that exist for adjustments, taking into account the admission of visiting, exchange and transfer students.

4.1.13 How does the HEP continuously monitor and periodically review student selection processes?

4.1.14 Describe how the selection methods are reviewed to comply with the social responsibilities, human resource requirements and needs for further studies and lifelong learning.

Information on Enhanced Standards

4.1.15 Show how the student performance is monitored as a feedback mechanism to improve student selection.

4.1.16 How does the HEP engage the relevant stakeholders in the review of its admission policy and processes?

4.1.17 Describe how student intake incorporates social responsibility by privileged consideration for people with special needs.

4.1.18 Show the relationship between student selection, programmes, and learning outcomes.

4.2 Articulation Regulations, Credit Transfer and Credit Exemption

Information on Benchmarked Standards

4.2.1 Describe the policies, regulations and processes of credit transfer, credit exemption and articulation practices, and how are these disseminated.

Information on Enhanced Standards

4.2.2 Describe how the HEP keeps abreast of latest development with regards to articulation, credit transfer and credit exemption and cross-border provisions.

4.3 Transfer of Students

Information on Benchmarked Standards

4.3.1 Explain the policy, criteria and mechanisms to enable qualified students to transfer to another programme. Indicate if there are appropriate mechanisms such as bridging courses for students who need it. Provide figures for the last five years.

4.3.2 Describe the mechanism to ensure transfer students are given exemptions by taking into account their previous experience, qualifications obtained from another programme and credits accumulated. Provide figures for the last five years.

4.3.3 Indicate how students accepted for transfer have comparable achievements in their previous institution of study. Provide the relevant data to support this.

Information on Enhanced Standards

4.3.4 Describe the policies and mechanisms to facilitate student mobility, exchanges and transfers, nationally and internationally.

4.4 Student Support Services and Co-Curricular Activities

Information on Benchmarked Standards

4.4.1 What support services are made available to students? Show evidence that those who provide these services are qualified. What other additional support programmes provided by other organisations are accessible to students?

4.4.2 If the HEP has campuses that are geographically separated, how are student support services provided at these sites?

4.4.3 How are the adequacy, effectiveness and safety of these services evaluated and ensured?

4.4.4 What mechanism is available for students to complain and to appeal on matters relating to student support services?

4.4.5 Describe the roles and responsibilities of those responsible for student co-curricular activities.

4.4.6 Describe the management of the activities and maintenance of student records.

4.4.7 Describe the accessibility, confidentiality and effectiveness of the academic and non-academic counselling and support services (e.g., preventive and therapeutic health services, financial aid, sports and cultural activities, career and academic counselling) available to the students.

4.4.8 Provide information on the availability of an early warning system to detect students with academic difficulties.

4.4.9 Provide information on the qualification of those who provide these services. Explain how the HEP ensures that those who provide these services are qualified.

4.4.10 How are students orientated into academic programmes of the HEP?

4.4.11 Describe additional support programmes provided by other organisations that the students could access.

Information on Enhanced Standards

4.4.12 Describe the importance given to student support services in the organisational structure of the HEP.

4.4.13 Provide information on the unit dedicated to academic and non-academic counselling.

4.4.14 How is the effectiveness of the counselling services measured, and the progress of those who seek its services monitored? What plans are there to improve the services, including that of enhancing the counselling services?

4.4.15 Describe the mechanisms that exist to identify students who are in need of spiritual, psychological, social and academic support.

4.4.16 Describe how student supervision is instituted. Explain how the HEP deals with situations where it anticipates a student encountering academic difficulty (e.g., a student entering with a marginal academic qualification).

4.4.17 Describe any courses, training or reparatory sessions organised for remediation.

4.4.18 Describe the training and development plan to enhance the skills and professionalism of the academic and non-academic counsellors. How many have benefitted from this in the last five years?

4.5 Student Representation and Participation

Information on Benchmarked Standards

4.5.1 State the HEP's policy on student participation in the teaching-learning process. Describe how students contribute to the development of these policies.

4.5.2 Explain the measures taken by HEP to encourage student self-government and participation in the activities of the governing bodies of the HEP.

4.5.3 Show evidence of the statement of student rights and responsibilities and its availability to the campus community.

4.5.4 Describe the jurisdiction of judicial bodies, the disciplinary responsibilities of HEP officials, and all disciplinary procedures and their dissemination.

4.5.5 Describe the policy on active student participation and show how students are encouraged to actively participate in curriculum development, teaching-learning processes as well as in other areas that affect their welfare.

Information on Enhanced Standards

4.5.6 How are students and student organisations facilitated to gain managerial and leadership experience, to encourage character building, to inculcate a sense of belonging and responsibility, and to promote active citizenship?

4.5.7 What is the policy regarding student publication?

4.5.8 Describe the appropriate channels to allow student participation in the formulation, management and evaluation of the curriculum, and in academic matters relevant to them.

4.5.9 What facilities are available to encourage student involvement in publication?

4.6 Alumni

Information on Benchmarked Standards

4.6.1 How does the HEP encourage active linkages and continuous relationship between it and its alumni?

Information on Enhanced Standards

4.6.2 Describe the role of the alumni in curriculum development, the achievement of the learning outcomes and the future direction of the HEP.

4.6.3 How does the HEP encourage the alumni to assist the students in preparing for their professional future? Show the result of this initiative.

INFORMATION ON AREA 5: ACADEMIC STAFF

5.1 Recruitment and Management

Information on Benchmarked Standards

5.1.1 Provide the HEP policies on academic staff recruitment to include the requirements related to the qualifications for appointment.

5.1.2 Provide data to show that the staffing profile matches the range and balance of teaching skills, specialisations and qualifications required to deliver each programme. Identify any problem areas and describe corrective actions needed and planned.

5.1.3 Provide evidence to show that the number of academic staff involved in conducting each programme is sufficient.

5.1.4 Describe the teaching responsibility, research and scholarly activities, consultancy, community services and administrative functions of the academic staff to show a balance of functions and responsibilities in line with academic conventions.

5.1.5 State the policy to ensure the equitable distribution of responsibilities among the academic staff.

5.1.6 State the HEP's policy for ensuring that teaching, research and service contributions are appropriately recognised and rewarded.

5.1.7 Describe the policies, criteria and processes in the appointment and promotion to academic positions, particularly that of professorship and associate professorship.

Information on Enhanced Standards

5.1.8 Describe how the HEP balances its recruitment between all levels of academic and non-academic staff and between local and international academic staff with multi-disciplinary backgrounds.

5.1.9 Describe the nature and extent of the HEP's national and international linkages in the effort to enhance its scholarly activities.

5.2 Service and Development

Information on Benchmarked Standards

5.2.1 Show evidence of, and state the mechanisms and procedures for, professional development and career advancement of the academic staff (including study leave, sabbatical, advanced training, specialised courses, re-tooling, etc.)

5.2.2 Show evidence of the existence of, or academic staff access to, institutions, centres or activities (e.g., centres of excellence, research institutes, professional bodies, learned societies, academic forums) that supports academic staff development.

5.2.3 Describe how participation in staff development programmes is encouraged.

5.2.4 Provide information on the institutional policy on service, development and appraisal of the academic staff. Describe the HEP policy to retain the academic staff. Give information on the academic staff leaving the institution in the last five years.

5.2.5 Describe the policy on consultancy and private practice.

5.2.6 Describe the HEP's criteria and administrative procedures for initial appointment, promotion and tenure. Provide written guidelines. If there are multiple tracks for academic staff, describe these and the criteria for advancement.

5.2.7 Describe the processes and procedures in handling disciplinary cases involving the academic staff.

5.2.8 Describe the mentoring and guidance system for new academic staff. Provide information for the recent intake of new academic staff.

5.2.9 Describe the support available to assist new academic staff to develop teaching skills in line with current trends in pedagogy, curriculum design, instructional materials, and assessment.

5.2.10 Show evidence that academic staff are provided with the necessary training, tools and technology.

5.2.11 Describe how the student appraisal of the academic staff is conducted. Indicate its frequency.

Information on Enhanced Standards

5.2.12 List and describe the major conferences organised by the HEP in the last five years.

5.2.13 List and describe the major conferences attended and actively participated by members of the academic staff in the last five years. Describe how the academic staff are given the opportunity to participate in professional, academic and other relevant activities at national and international levels. How is this participation appraised and its results utilised for purposes of enhancing the student experience?

5.2.14 Give evidence of national and international recognition of staff members (e.g., journal editorship, service as peer reviewers, study and expert-groups and national committee membership).

5.2.15 Show the research activities of the academic staff in the last five years.

5.2.16 Describe the provisions for allowing advanced enhancement for academic staff.

INFORMATION ON AREA 6: EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES

6.1 Physical Facilities

Information on Benchmarked Standards

6.1.1 List the major physical facilities available to conduct educational programmes of the HEP.

	Facilities	Current		Projection			
				Next Year		Next Two Years	
		No.	Capacity	No.	Capacity	No.	Capacity
1.	Lecture Halls						
2	Tutorial Rooms						
3.	Discussion Rooms						
4	Laboratories and Workshops						
	- IT Lab						
	- Science Lab						
	-Engineering workshop						
	-Processing workshop						
	-Manufacturing workshop						
	-Studio						
	-Others						
5	Library and Information Centres						
	Learning Support Centres						
6.	Learning Resources Support						
7.	Student Social Spaces						
8.	Other Facilities						

6.1.2 Describe the adequacy of the physical facilities and equipments (such as workshop, studio, laboratories) as well as human resources (for example, laboratory professionals, technicians).

6.1.3 Identify current unmet needs and needs that may arise within the next several years.

6.1.4 For programmes requiring workshop or laboratory support, provide a brief description of the facilities.

6.1.5 Show how educational resources are distributed and scheduled according to educational needs.

6.1.6 Show evidence that the physical facilities comply with the relevant laws, and with health and safety regulations.

6.1.7 Describe the collection available in the library and resource centre. State the database system used in them.

Field of specialisation	**Resources supporting the programmes (e.g., books, online resources, etc.)**		**Number of Journals**		**State other facilities such as CD ROM, Video and electronic reference material**
	Number of Title	Number of Collection	Number of Title	Number of Collection	

6.1.8 State the number of staff in the library and resource centre and their qualifications.

6.1.9 Describe resource sharing and access mechanisms that are available to extend the library's capabilities. Comment on the extent of use of these facilities by academic staff and students. Comment on the adequacy of the library to support the programmes.

6.1.10 Describe the mechanism to obtain feedback from users on the library policy, services and procedures.

6.1.11 Explain the steps taken and the facilities provided by the HEP to promote research activities.

6.1.12 State the policy on the use of information and communication technology (ICT) in the HEP. Describe the ICT infrastructure that supports academic programmes.

6.1.13 List the ICT staff and their qualifications that support the implementation of the ICT policy at the HEP.

6.1.14 Indicate what plans exist to improve the educational facilities -- physical, library and ICT -- in line with the development in teaching practice.

Information on Enhanced Standards

6.1.15 Explain how the HEP periodically reviews the adequacy, currency and quality of its educational resources.

6.1.16 Indicate what plans exist to improve these facilities in line with the development in the teaching practice.

6.1.17 Describe how students and faculty are provided with opportunities to learn the various and most current methods to access information.

6.1.18 How are these facilities user friendly to those with special needs?

6.2 Research and Development

(Please note that the standards on Research and Development are largely directed to universities and university colleges)

Information on Benchmarked Standards

6.2.1 Describe the policy and planning that identifies the priorities, facilities and development in research and commercialisation.

6.2.2 Summarise the major research interests at the HEP. Describe the research facilities to support these areas of interest.

6.2.3 Describe any programmes on ethics in research for staff and graduate students. Describe the formal policy related to scientific misconduct in research (e.g., deception, fabrication of results, plagiarism, and conduct outside the norm of scientific behaviour) and how it is disseminated.

6.2.4 Specify the administrative entity that is responsible for protecting the integrity of the research processes.

6.2.5 Describe the facilities and the budget allocation made available by the HEP to support research.

6.2.6 List the major research activities and the academic staff involved in them in the last five years.

6.2.7 Describe how the HEP fosters interaction between its research and educational activities.

6.2.8 Explain the mechanism that exists to ensure research activities are reflected in the curriculum and teaching.

6.2.9 State any initiatives taken by departments to engage students in research.

Information on Enhanced Standards

6.2.10 Show the link between research, development and commercialisation.

6.2.11 List and describe the research, development and commercialisation activities and achievements in the last five years.

6.2.12 Describe the processes where the HEP reviews its research resources and facilities and the steps taken to enhance its research capabilities.

6.2.13 Describe the incentives to academic staff to engage in publication, including in reputable refereed journals.

6.2.14 List and describe the major publications of the academic staff in the last five years.

6.3 Educational Expertise

Information on Benchmarked Standards

6.3.1 Describe the policy and practice on the use of appropriate educational expertise in planning educational programmes and in the development of new teaching and assessment methods.

Information on Enhanced Standards

6.3.2 Describe the access to educational expertise, both internal and external, and its utilisation for staff development and research.

6.4 Educational Exchanges

Information on Benchmarked Standards

6.4.1 Describe the practice of the HEP in collaborating and cooperating with other providers for exchanges of student, staff, and resources in compliance with the HEP's policy. Provide information on these exchanges for the last five years.

6.4.2 Describe how is this collaboration disseminated to students and faculty.

6.4.3 How do the educational exchanges benefit the HEP?

Information on Enhanced Standards

6.4.4 Describe the future plans to strengthen international collaborative activities.

6.4.5 How would a policy on exchanges with international institutions benefit the HEP?

6.4.6 Describe the facilities and financial allocation to support educational exchanges.

6.5 Financial Allocation

Information on Benchmarked Standards

6.5.1 Provide information on the HEP's financial standing and sources which supports its academic, research and service missions.

6.5.2 Demonstrate how the financial allocation dedicated to the HEP -- and its utilisation -- is sufficient for it to achieve its purpose.

6.5.3 Indicate the responsibilities and line of authority in terms of budgeting and resource allocation in the HEP.

6.5.4 Describe the policy on tuition fees and other payments, and the policy of refund to students who withdraw or who are dismissed from the institution.

6.5.5 Provide information on number of students who are funded through loans, grants or scholarship. What are the major sources of student funding?

Information on Enhanced Standards

6.5.6 Describe how those responsible for a programme enjoy sufficient autonomy to allocate and utilise resources to achieve the programme objectives.

INFORMATION ON AREA 7: PROGRAMME MONITORING AND REVIEW

7.1 Mechanisms for Programme Monitoring and Review

Information on Benchmarked Standards

7.1.1 Describe the processes, procedures and mechanisms for monitoring and reviewing a curriculum.

7.1.2 Describe the structure and workings of programme review committees.

7.1.3 Describe the nature of the relationship and the responsibilities of the parties involved in collaborative arrangements in programme monitoring and review.

7.1.4 How does a self-review process assist in identifying weaknesses and in improving academic programmes?

7.1.5 Explain how the HEP ensures that identified concerns are addressed.

7.1.6 Describe how the HEP uses the feedback from programme review in programme development.

7.1.7 Describe how evaluation activities are being enhanced and refined to cover all important components of the programmes.

7.1.8 How are student performance and progression analysed to ascertain that learning outcomes have been achieved?

Information on Enhanced Standards

7.1.9 Explain how the HEP utilises the analysis of student performance and progression to provide feedback to committees responsible for student selection, curriculum planning and student counselling. Provide examples.

7.2 Involvement of Stakeholders

Information on Benchmarked Standards

7.2.1 Which stakeholders are consulted in the monitoring and review of programmes? Describe the involvement of these stakeholders.

7.2.2 Show how the views of these stakeholders are taken into consideration.

Information on Enhanced Standards

7.2.3 Show how feedbacks obtained from stakeholders are incorporated in a programme review exercise.

7.2.4 Do stakeholders have access to the final report of a programme review?

7.2.5 How are professional bodies and associations engaged in programme monitoring and review?

INFORMATION ON AREA 8: LEADERSHIP, GOVERNANCE AND ADMINISTRATION

8.1 Governance

Information on Benchmarked Standards

8.1.1 Show how the policies and practices of the HEP are consistent with its statement of purpose.

8.1.2 Describe the governance structures and functions, and the relationships between them. How are these made known to all parties involved?

8.1.3 Describe the functions, structure, leadership, membership and reporting protocol of the major permanent decision-making bodies of the HEP.

8.1.4 Describe how the HEP ensures the effectiveness of relationship between the institutional leadership and the departments.

8.1.5 Describe the representation and role of the academic staff, students and other principal stakeholders in the various institutional governance structures and committees. Indicate the type and frequency of meetings held during the past academic year.

8.1.6 Show evidence that the governing board is an effective policy-making body with adequate autonomy.

8.1.7 Describe the mechanisms to ensure functional integration and comparability of educational quality in campuses that are geographically separated.

8.1.8 Describe the department or unit set up to assure educational quality. Describe the internal quality assurance system and mechanism.

8.1.9 Highlight the major community engagement activities of members of the HEP. How is involvement in such activities recognised?

Information on Enhanced Standards

8.1.10 Describe the committee system responsible for academic programmes in the HEP and how it utilises consultation and feedback, and considers market needs analysis and employability projections.

8.1.11 Describe the representation and role of the academic staff, students and other stakeholders in the various governance structures and committees of the HEP.

8.1.12 Describe the role and function of the Chair of the governing board.

8.1.13 Describe how free is the governing board from undue external pressures.

8.1.14 Describe the policy pertaining to conflict of interest, particularly in relation to private practice and part-time employment of its employees.

8.1.15 Describe the HEP's participation in the socio-economic activities of the community in which it is located.

8.2 Institutional and Academic Leadership

Information on Benchmarked Standards

8.2.1 Describe the selection criteria, selection process, job description, and the qualification and experience required of members of the institutional executive management team of the HEP.

8.2.2 Describe the current leaders of academic programmes and departments (i.e., the academic leadership) in terms of their qualifications, experience and expertise on issues of curriculum design, delivery and review. Describe the procedures and criteria for their selection, appointment and evaluation.

8.2.3 Describe the relationship between the HEP leadership and the academic leadership in matters such as recruitment and training, student admission, and allocation of resources and decision-making processes.

8.2.4 Describe how the performance of the academic leadership of the departments and programmes is periodically evaluated.

Information on Enhanced Standards

8.2.5 Show how the HEP leadership and the academic leadership create a conducive environment to generate innovation and creativity in the institution.

8.2.6 Describe the policies to enhance the leadership capabilities of the HEP leadership and the academic leadership. List the programmes that the HEP and the academic leadership have undergone for this purpose in the last five years.

8.3 Administrative and Management Staff

Information on Benchmarked Standards

8.3.1 Describe the structure of the administrative staff which supports the educational programmes.

8.3.2 Explain how the number of the administrative staff is determined in accordance to the needs of the programmes and other activities. Describe the recruitment processes and procedures. State the terms and conditions of service.

8.3.3 Describe the effectiveness and efficiency of the administrative support for academic programmes.

8.3.4 State the mechanisms for training and career advancement for administrative and management staff of the HEP. Describe the achievements of this training and career advancement activity in the last five years.

8.3.5 Describe how the HEP conducts regular performance review of its administrative and management staff.

8.3.6 State the mechanisms and procedures for monitoring and appraising staff performance, for ensuring equitable distribution of duties and responsibilities among the staff, and for determining the distribution of rewards.

8.3.7 Describe the processes and procedures in managing the discipline of the staff.

Information on Enhanced Standards

8.3.8 Describe the training scheme for the administrative and management staff to fulfil the needs of the educational programmes.

8.4 Academic Records

Information on Benchmarked Standards

8.4.1 State the policies on the secure retention, retrieval and disposal of student and academic staff records.

8.4.2 Describe how the HEP ensures the rights of individual privacy and the confidentiality of records. How are these made known?

Information on Enhanced Standards

8.4.3 Describe the HEP's review policies on security of records and its plans for improvements.

8.5 Interaction with External Sectors

Information on Benchmarked Standards

8.5.1 Describe the mechanisms to ensure that the HEP interacts constructively with the external sectors, including its external stakeholders.

8.5.2 Describe the effectiveness of the relationships between the HEP and the external sectors.

8.5.3 Describe any type of shared responsibility between the HEP and the external sectors.

Information on Enhanced Standards

8.5.4 Describe the formal agreements between the HEP and its external sectors.

INFORMATION ON AREA 9: CONTINUAL QUALITY IMPROVEMENT

9.1 Quality Improvement

Information on Benchmarked Standards

9.1.1 Describe the policies and procedures for regular reviewing and updating of the internal quality assurance activities of the HEP.

9.1.2 Describe the efforts taken by the internal quality assurance unit to keep abreast with the changes and best practices in quality assurance.

9.1.3 Identify those responsible for continual quality improvement within the HEP and their qualifications and experiences.

9.1.4 How does the unit or department dedicated to quality assurance support the HEP's attempt to ensure continuous quality improvement?

9.1.5 Describe how the HEP implement the recommendations for quality improvement and record the achievements of such implementations.

9.1.6 Describe the link between the quality assurance processes and the achievement of the institutional goals.

Information on Enhanced Standards

9.1.7 How prominent is the internal quality assurance unit in the organisational structure of the HEP?

9.1.8 Describe the recent and projected activities undertaken by the HEP with the purpose to ensure that it remains responsive to its changing environment and in embracing the spirit of continual quality improvement.

9.1.9 What are the attempts made by the HEP to have its internal quality assurance system accredited and recognised by a relevant, external and authoritative accreditation body?

PART C – SELF-REVIEW REPORT

The Self-Review Report should include the following:

- Strengths of the HEP in meeting its goals;
- Areas of concern that need to be addressed;
- Strategies for maintaining and enhancing the strengths;
- Steps that have been taken to address the problem areas; and
- Conclusions and recommendations for change.

Section 4
The Institutional Audit

Section 4 The Institutional Audit

INTRODUCTION

An institutional audit is an external independent audit conducted by the Malaysian Qualifications Agency (MQA) on the Higher Education Provider (HEP). The institutional audit is preceded by an internal quality audit, which is known as a self-review. It is conducted by the higher education provider to supplement the external audit and is an important part of the quality assurance process to determine whether the HEP is achieving its vision and mission.

4.1 The Internal Quality Audit

An internal quality audit is also known as a self-review. It is conducted by the higher education provider and is an important part of the quality assurance process. The Chief Executive Officer and other senior staff of the HEP must be totally committed to, and supportive of, the self-review and its purposes. A senior person with appropriate expertise should lead the self-review process supported by the HEP's quality committee. The self-review builds as much as possible on current relevant evaluative activity and relevant existing materials.

The HEP brings together representatives of the administration, the academic staff, students and other constituents to:

- collect and review data on the HEP and its educational programmes;
- analyse the data to identify the institutional strengths, areas of concern and opportunities;
- develop strategies to ensure that the strengths are maintained and problems are addressed; and
- make specific recommendations for further quality enhancement.

An internal quality audit is concerned with the HEP's own objectives, and with the success of the HEP in achieving those objectives based on the guidelines on good practices and the general requirements in the nine areas of quality assurance. The nine areas are:

1. Vision, Mission, Educational Goals and Learning Outcomes;
2. Curriculum Design and Delivery;
3. Assessment of Students;
4. Student Selection and Support Services;
5. Academic Staff;
6. Educational Resources;
7. Programme Monitoring and Review;
8. Leadership, Governance and Administration; and
9. Continual Quality Improvement.

Some possible self-questioning around each area might be structured along these lines:

- What actions are we taking in relation to this area?
- Why were these actions chosen?
- How do we check their effectiveness – what performance indicators do we have?
- Are the indicators effective?
- What do we do as a result of the review?
- Can we measure the degree of achievements – what are the actual outcomes?
- Can we improve on the existing actions, even those that are already effective?

An internal quality audit has several merits, including:

- the recognition of institutional autonomy and responsibility;
- the maintenance of a process of critical self-development; and
- the production of information, and reflection on it, some of which is not normally evident.

For effective quality management, it is imperative that the policies and procedures of the HEP should be in writing, approved through appropriate institutional processes, published in appropriate institutional documents accessible to those affected by them, and implemented by the HEP.

4.1.1 The Internal Quality Audit Task Force

An internal quality audit requires time and effort. A self-review task force is formed and a Coordinator is appointed. Members of the task force should include people who are able to make an objective assessment and could give useful information on the HEP. The members may comprise of administrators (academic, fiscal, managerial), heads of departments and programmes, junior and senior academics, students and alumni, and others associated with the HEP as well as those external to the HEP.

The Coordinator is responsible for distributing and collecting the institutional database forms, answering questions during database preparation, preparing the final unified version of the database, coordinating the self-analysis report and writing the final consolidated self-review report. For each section of the self-review report, it is recommended that a person most familiar with the relevant processes is appointed as the head of the section.

The students are expected to participate actively in the self-review process and are encouraged to produce an independent student report.

4.1.2 Data Collection

Data should be accurately and consistently collated by a knowledgeable person in the HEP for each particular section. Wherever possible, references should be made to documents that are already published.

The HEP should provide a factual description of its history, policies, procedures and structures to support the education, training and research activities, and not just provide brief answers to the specific questions listed under each heading. Information on the processes by which decisions are made and their rationale should also be included.

An institutional self-review should be built on the HEP's existing quality improvement programme. It should incorporate information and conclusions obtained from a variety of sources.

4.1.3 The Self-Review Portfolio (SRP)

The self-review can be expressed in terms of asking questions about processes and their consequences, as well as about structures and their effects. The HEP self-review could generate an effective critique, which is both objective and effective for self-development.

The HEP is encouraged to undertake an analysis of the strengths, weaknesses, and opportunities that are appropriate and to assess itself against the quality assurance standards. An internal quality audit is concerned with the HEP's own goals and with the success of the HEP in achieving those goals. The internal quality audit must be widely understood and owned so that the results and implications of the review and the resulting audit processes are followed through.

The head of every section forwards his report of the analysis to the Coordinator of the task force. The Coordinator synthesises these findings and analyses, fits them in line with the nine quality assurance areas, and generates a Self-Review Portfolio (SRP).

4.2 Institutional Audit: The External Audit

An institutional audit is an external independent audit that follows the internal self-review.

There is no single authoritative interpretation of the concept of institutional effectiveness. However, an HEP is expected to develop a broad-based system to determine institutional effectiveness appropriate to its own context and purpose and to use its statement of purpose as the foundation for planning, implementation and evaluation. The HEP is also

expected to employ a variety of assessment methods, and to demonstrate use of the results of the planning, implementation and evaluation process for the improvement of both educational programmes and support activities. In the final analysis, educational quality will be judged by how effectively the HEP achieves its established goals.

4.2.1 The Role Players

4.2.1.1 The Liaison Officer

The HEP should appoint a liaison officer to act as the key link between the HEP and the MQA to coordinate the institutional audit. The MQA should be informed of the name of the officer, whom it will contact on the logistics of the institutional audit.

The liaison officer can arrange the tentative agenda for the audit visit and after mutual agreement with the MQA Institutional Audit Team, will inform all the relevant people of the audit schedule.

The liaison officer may be requested to join the meetings of the panel of auditors should there be a need for clarification of issues.

4.2.1.2 Representatives of the HEP

The panel of auditors normally meets with various groups of people in the HEP to secure and verify information from more than one source. The HEP will be advised as to the groups of people the panel will interview after the panel's reading and discussion of the SRP. The panel of auditors may request to meet the following people or categories of people:

- The Chief Executive Officer, alone or together with the senior management. It is preferable that the first and the last formal meetings are with the Chief Executive Officer and others at his invitation;
- Members of key committees who are responsible for the development and supervision of policy on quality assurance of the HEP in the main areas of the audit;
- Key persons in the HEP responsible for the management and operation of the quality system and subsystems, such as deans, heads of departments and quality manager;
- Members of the governing board or its equivalent;
- Student representatives;
- Academic staff in selected departments and programmes;
- A cross-section of students drawn from different levels and categories;

- A selection of graduates; and
- Leaders from industry, government and the community, who have experience with the HEP and its graduates.

It is important for the panel of auditors to meet representatives of as many of the above categories to obtain a cross-sectional perspective of the academic and non-academic programmes and their quality. This is because each can contribute its views from specialised perspectives, particularly in relation to the effectiveness of teaching and learning and the achievement of learning outcomes.

Students should be selected and briefed on their role in the audit process so that they may truthfully provide representative student input. Student opinion will be particularly sought regarding the quality and adequacy of the academic programmes, and the provision of student support services, as well as their role in providing feedback to the HEP on these matters.

Students can also be requested to serve as guides in the auditors' visit to the library, classrooms, laboratories and other teaching-learning facilities.

Representatives of the academic staff should be briefed on their roles so that they may provide representative input as well. Their opinion is sought in particular with regards to academic staff development, promotion and tenure, workload distribution, teaching skills, understanding of institutional goals, their role in institutional governance, perceptions of the curriculum, students, the academic culture in the HEP and the appropriateness and sufficiency of available facilities.

4.2.1.3 The Panel Chairperson

A Chairperson of the panel of the auditors will be appointed by the MQA and will be responsible for the overall conduct of the institutional audit. Details on the roles and responsibilities of the Chairperson are given in "Section 5: The Panel of Auditors".

4.2.1.4 The Panel Secretary

The panel of auditors will have a Secretary. Details on the roles and responsibilities of the Secretary are given in Section 5.

4.2.1.5 The Panel Members

The MQA will appoint the members of the panel of auditors. Details on the roles and responsibilities of the Panel members are given in Section 5.

4.2.2 Support Facilities

The HEP shall also ensure that the audit team will be provided with the necessary facilities to carry out its assignment. This will include providing a base room and meeting rooms for the team.

Base room

- The base room serves as the team's office for the sole use of its members and the liaison officer, and should be provided with the necessary office equipment.
- All forms of information in the base room should be accessible to the audit team.

This is where the audit team will work, share evidence, check judgments, read documentary evidence and draft reports. It is an important place for the team to share ideas and to analyse findings. Given the confidential nature of the information and the discussion in the base room, access to it must be restricted.

During the Planning Visit by the Chairperson and the MQA secretariat -- which precedes the formal visit of the panel of auditors -- they should inspect the base room to ensure its suitability.

Meeting rooms

Individual meetings with the various representatives of the HEP may take place in the base room but generally it is better if such meetings can be held in separate meeting rooms. This is to provide privacy and avoid anxiety and pressure.

4.2.3 The Audit Timeline

The timeline for the audit process is a schedule to be determined together by the HEP and the MQA secretariat. When the HEP submits the relevant documents for an institutional audit, the MQA will scrutinise the documents to ensure that they are complete. The MQA will then form a panel of auditors and prepare to commence the audit exercise.

The schedule is set in three segments:

i. The weeks before the Audit Visit;
ii. The week of the Audit Visit; and
iii. The weeks after the Audit Visit.

THE WEEKS BEFORE THE AUDIT VISIT

Table 1: A typical timeline prior to the audit visit

Weeks before	Activity and Responsibility
17	Audit Management Meeting of the HEP and the MQA on the purpose, scope and timeline of the audit. (refer to Section 4.2.4)
16-15	MQA identifies the members of the panel of auditors and submits the list to the HEP
14	• HEP sends response to MQA on the list of members of the panel of auditors
13	• MQA confirms: - the appointment of members of the panel of auditors and Chairperson - the dates of the Preparatory Meeting of the panel of auditors and the MQA
17-11	• HEP submits a completed Self-Review Portfolio to MQA • MQA - records the submission of documents - forwards the assignment to the relevant officer - checks whether the information submitted is complete - notifies the HEP that the evaluation process will commence - sends the Self-Review Portfolio to panel of auditors • MQA makes arrangements for the Preparatory Meeting of the panel of auditors and arrangements for the Planning Visit by the Chairperson
10-8	• Auditors submit their individual written report on the HEP's Self-Review Portfolio to MQA. • MQA circulates reports to all members of the panel of auditors
7	Preparatory Meeting of the panel of auditors to appoint a Secretary, identify main issues for the audit exercise and further documentation required, and draft timetable for the audit visit (refer to Section 4.2.5)

Weeks before	Activity and Responsibility
6	MQA : - collates panel comments and requests for additional information - sends requests to the HEP - sends audit timetable to the HEP - makes arrangements for the Audit Visit
5-4	Planning Visit to the HEP by Chairperson and MQA Secretariat to seek additional information, inspect facilities and confirm audit timetable (refer to Section 4.2.6)
3	• MQA sends further documentation received from the HEP to the auditors • MQA sends audit timetable to the HEP and auditors
2-1	Preparations for the audit visit by the panel of auditors to the HEP

WEEK OF THE AUDIT VISIT

The actual timetable for the audit visit will depend on the purpose of the audit. The duration of the visits can be between three to five days as agreed between the MQA and the HEP. The table below describes a typical visit schedule for five days.

Table 2: A typical timetable for an audit visit

Day	Time	Activity	Persons involved	Notes
Day 1	Afternoon	Check-in at the hotel	Auditors	***Panel Coordination Meeting*** A panel coordination meeting is a meeting among the panel members only. Panel convenes to review documents and agrees to the audit processes and strategies, and prepares for interviews. ***Interviews*** Individuals and groups interviewed will depend on the purpose and focus of the audit. ***Group Meetings*** Group meetings will be held during lunch with each auditor talking to a small group of people. ***Site Visits*** Site visits are visits to facilities and relevant departments. ***Documentation Check*** A documentation check refers to panel members scrutinising records and documents.
	Evening	Panel coordination meeting	Auditors	
Day 2	Morning	- Opening meeting - Panel meeting and interviews	Auditors, HEP Liaison Officer and HEP Senior Management representatives	
	Lunch time	Group meetings	Auditors, Student representatives	
	Afternoon	Site visits	Auditors, Students	
	Evening	Panel reviews the findings of the day	Auditors	

Day	Time	Activity	Persons involved	Notes
Day 3	Morning	Panel meeting and interviews	Auditors, Academic Staff, Administrative and Management Staff	***Panel Review Meeting*** A Panel Review Meeting is a meeting among the members of the panel to determine and review the main findings before reporting to the HEP at the end of the morning session of the fourth day, i.e, before the exit meeting.
	Lunch	Group meetings	Auditors and Students or Staff	
	Afternoon	Documenta-tion check	Auditors	
	Evening	Panel reviews the findings of the day	Auditors	
Day 4	Morning	- Re-interviews - Panel Review Meeting -Exit Meeting	Auditors, HEP Liaison Officer, HEP staff, students and HEP Senior Management	
	Afternoon	Panel reviews findings	Auditors	
	Evening	Report writing	Auditors	
Day 5	Morning	Report writing	Auditors	
	Afternoon	Check-out	Auditors	
The MQA acts as the secretariat to the panel of auditors. An MQA officer will be involved in all the above activities in his capacity as a resource person.				

Shaded rows indicate activities carried out at the HEP.

THE WEEKS AFTER THE AUDIT VISIT

Table 3: A typical timeline after the audit visit

Weeks After	Activity and Responsibility
1-2	Secretary drafts a Draft Institutional Audit Report and sends it to panel members
3	Panel members send comments on the Draft Institutional Audit Report to Secretary
4	• Secretary revises the text and sends Draft Report to the Chairperson who then forwards it to MQA • MQA sends Draft Institutional Audit Report to the HEP for verification
5-6	HEP sends response on Draft Institutional Audit Report to MQA
7	MQA forwards the response to Chairperson and Secretary
8-9	Chairperson finalises the Institutional Audit Report and submits it to MQA
10-12	• Presentation of the Report to Institutional Audit Committee for deliberation • MQA submits report to relevant parties

4.2.4 The Audit Management Meeting

The Audit Management Meeting is the first formal engagement between the HEP and the MQA. In this meeting, representatives from the HEP involved with quality assurance will discuss and confirm with the MQA on the purpose, scope and timeline of an audit.

4.2.5 The Preparatory Meeting

After the Self-Review Portfolio (SRP) has been submitted, there will be a Preparatory Meeting of the panel of auditors. In this meeting, the panel of auditors will:

- appoint a Secretary to the panel;
- determine the main issues for the audit;
- review audit procedures;

- share its first impression of the portfolio;
- identify any further information, clarification and documentation required from the HEP; and
- draft a timetable for the audit visit.

Following the Preparatory Meeting, the MQA will advise the HEP if there is any further information, clarification or documentation required from the HEP.

4.2.6 The Planning Visit

About three weeks after the Preparatory Meeting, the Chairperson and the MQA secretariat will make a Planning Visit to the HEP. The main purpose of the Planning Visit is:

- to clarify the roles and responsibilities of the various parties involved in the audit process;
- to discuss the practical implications for the HEP in providing further information to the panel of auditors via the MQA;
- to clarify issues through direct personal meetings where possible;
- to indicate to the HEP which persons the panel regards as best able to assist it in verifying particular issues;
- to advise the HEP which sample of departments, areas or systems are to be studied;
- to confirm the timetable of the audit, including site visits and persons to meet;
- to discuss with the HEP the logistics associated with the audit and any matters relating to the HEP's responsibilities to ensure that the relevant information and parties are available to be interviewed during the audit; and
- to inspect the base room for suitability.

The requirements of the audit team will be conveyed to the HEP during the Planning Visit. The Audit Visit timetable ought to be designed with sufficient flexibility to give the HEP time to provide further information and for the panel to set up further interviews or re-interviews with specific people, should the need for these emerge during the visit.

For HEPs that have multi-campuses and offshore campuses or that operate transnational programmes, MQA will decide on the mode and nature of the audit visits.

4.2.7 The Audit Visit

One purpose of the Audit Visit is to verify the content of the HEP's Self-Review Portfolio. The visit is also meant to acquire further insight into the HEP's operations through first-hand observation and personal interaction. A visit allows a qualitative assessment of factors that may not be easily documented in written form. The audit visit shall include inspection of facilities.

There will be an opening meeting in which the HEP provides background information and may involve the members of the HEP who will be interviewed during the Audit Visit. The purpose of the meeting is to introduce the auditors as individual people and fellow professionals.

The panel conducts interviews to gain clarification on issues to assist it in reviewing the effectiveness of systems for monitoring and enhancing the quality of the HEP being audited. It also looks at the effectiveness of the application of the systems that supports the achievement of the aims and objectives of the HEP. The panel of auditors reaches its conclusions through the interviews and documentation checks carried out during the visit and their individual reflections on them.

The panel normally takes the opportunity of the visit to triangulate with various groups to verify the findings. To this end, few meetings with groups are likely to be single-purpose meetings. Interviewees should, within reason, expect to be asked about anything within the scope of the audit.

After the interviews are concluded, the panel meets to formalise its preliminary findings which are then reported orally to the HEP.

4.2.8 The Oral Exit Report

At the end of the visit, the Chairperson, representing the panel, delivers an oral report to the HEP. The oral report will highlight the areas of strengths, the opportunities and the areas of concern. The areas of strength show commendable compliance to the quality standards. The areas of concern are directly related to non-compliance to the standards and the opportunities highlight room for improvement and future possibilities. All key elements must be covered at the oral exit report so that the written report is consistent with it.

The Chairperson provides opportunities for the members of the HEP to seek clarifications of, and explanations to, the points raised in the oral report. He should advise the members of the HEP that the findings given in the oral report are tentative and will be presented in the more detailed and written Institutional Audit Report.

4.2.9 The Draft Institutional Audit Report

The Chairperson and the Secretary are responsible for drafting the Institutional Audit Report, in consultation with panel members, to ensure that it represents the consensus view of the panel members.

Approximately a month after the Audit Visit, the Chairperson submits to the MQA a copy of the Draft Institutional Audit Report. The MQA then sends the HEP a copy of the said Report for verification of facts and feedback.

4.2.10 The Institutional Audit Report

The Chairperson scrutinises the feedback and finalises the Institutional Audit Report.

The aim of the Report is to assist the HEP in continual quality improvement. The panel comes to its conclusions and recommendations through observed facts and through its interpretation of the specific evidence received from the HEP or that it has gathered itself.

4.2.11 Findings and Judgments

An Institutional Audit Report concludes with Commendations, Affirmations and Recommendations. Commendations are aspects of the institutional provisions that are considered worthy of praise. Affirmations are proposed improvements by the HEP to aspects of the institutional provisions which the panel believes are significant and which it welcomes. Recommendations are suggestions made by the panel for purposes of decision-making and quality enhancement.

Depending on the type of the audit undertaken, the findings and judgments of the audit may be used for one or more of the following:

4.2.11.1 For Continuation or Cessation of Programme Accreditation

Recommendation to maintain or cease an accreditation status of a programme shall be forwarded to the Accreditation Committee for its decision. The decision will be effected on the Malaysian Qualifications Register (MQR). A publicly accessible summary report is then released, usually within four weeks after the decision.

4.2.11.2 For Academic Performance Audit

The Institutional Audit Report for the Academic Performance Audit (APA) should highlight the affirmation, commendations, and areas of concern to indicate the performance of the institution and its "state of health" on all nine areas of evaluation using the benchmarked and enhanced standards. It does not state any specific decisions on the whole as in the case of accreditation.

The Report will be sent to the Ministry of Higher Education and the HEP for their attention and further action. A summary of the Report may be made accessible to the public.

4.2.11.3 For Self-Accreditation Status

To be granted a self-accreditation status, an HEP has to be invited by the Minister of Higher Education to apply for it based on a set of eligibility criteria. On getting the invitation by the Minister, MQA will conduct an institutional audit which will be the basis for granting, or otherwise, a self-accreditation status. A summary of the Report may be made accessible to the public.

4.2.11.4 For Other Purposes

An institutional audit is an instrument that can be utilised for a variety of purposes in the evaluation and assessment of institutions or specific aspects of them. These can range from audit for purposes of admission and student assessment to institutional and programme rating. The nature of the findings and judgments of these varied audits can be used for different purposes accordingly.

4.2.12 Appeal

All appeals over decisions and judgments of an institutional audit exercise can be made in relation to:

i. factual contents of the panel reports;
ii. substantive errors within the reports;
iii. any substantive inconsistency between the oral exit report, the final audit report and the decision of the MQA; or
iv. other grounds deemed valid by the Minister of Higher Education.

The final authority for all appeals is the Minister of Higher Education.

4.2.13 Follow Up

The HEP will inform MQA as to the progress arising from an Institutional Audit Report. The purpose of the ongoing interaction is:

i. to get feedback on an audit report, the audit process, and on the extent to which the HEP considers the audit report to be authoritative, rigorous, fair and perceptive;
ii. to ensure corrective actions are taken if so required; and
iii. to have a dialogue with those responsible for follow up action as to how recommendations will be integrated into the HEP's continual quality improvement plan.

Section 5
The Panel of Auditors

Section 5 The Panel of Auditors

INTRODUCTION

Assessments by the audit panel for institutional audit are based firstly on the Self-Review Portfolio (SRP) submitted by the Higher Education Provider (HEP), which is further supported by observation, written and oral evidences and personal interaction during the audit visit.

The HEP is expected to have the necessary checking mechanisms in place and to be able to demonstrate to the members of the audit panel that the procedures are effectively utilised and that there are plans to address any shortfalls.

The primary task of the panel of auditors is to verify that the processes, mechanisms, and resources are appropriate for the achievement of the HEP's statement of purpose. To evaluate the effectiveness of the quality assurance system, the auditors must investigate the application of its procedures, and the extent to which the institution achieves the statement of purpose. The need to ensure that the intended institutional objectives are met should be particularly emphasised.

5.1 Appointment of the Members of an Audit Panel

The selection of the members of an audit panel is guided by the characteristics of the HEP to be audited, the type of audit, the availability and suitability of prospective panel members and their expertise and experience in quality audit and higher education.

5.1.1 Personal and General Attributes of Auditors

Auditors should be competent, open-minded and mature. They should be good listeners and good presenters. They should possess sound judgment, analytical skills and tenacity. They should have the ability to perceive situations in a realistic way, understand complex operations from a broad perspective and understand the role of individual units within the overall organisation.

The auditors should be able to apply the above attributes in order to:

- obtain and assess objective evidence fairly;
- remain true to the purpose of the audit;
- evaluate constantly the effects of audit observations and personal interactions during an audit;
- treat concerned personnel in a way that will best achieve the audit purpose;
- perform the audit process without being unduly distracted;
- commit full attention and support to the audit process;
- react effectively in stressful situations;

- arrive at generally acceptable conclusions based on rational considerations; and
- remain true to a conclusion despite pressure to change what is not based on evidence.

It is not expected that each panel member possesses all the characteristics and experience required, but collectively the panel should possess all the qualities and attributes which may include some or all of the following.

i. Higher education qualification or further education and training aspects:

- Appropriate subject knowledge and teaching experience
- Knowledge of curriculum design and delivery
- Institutional leadership or management experience
- Knowledge of higher education or further education and training, including the understanding of current responsibilities and requirements and organisational features relevant to particular programmes and structures
- Experience in research and scholarly activities

ii. Quality audit aspects:

- An understanding of the context and environment within which the HEP operates
- Commitment to the principles of quality and quality assurance in higher education
- Knowledge of quality assurance, methods and terminologies
- Experience in quality reviews, accreditation or audit processes
- Ability to relate processes to outputs and outcomes
- Ability to focus knowledge and experience to evaluate quality assurance procedures and techniques, and to suggest good practices and starting points for improvements

iii. Personal aspects:

- Integrity
- Discretion
- Timeliness
- Ability to communicate effectively
- Ability to work in a team
- Breadth and depth of perspective
- Commitment and diligence

5.1.2 Responsibilities of the Auditors

Auditors are responsible for:

- complying with the audit requirements;
- communicating and clarifying audit requirements;
- planning and carrying out assigned responsibilities effectively and efficiently;
- documenting the observations;
- reporting the audit results;
- safeguarding documents pertaining to the audit;
- submitting such documents as required;
- ensuring such documents remain confidential;
- treating privileged information with discretion; and
- cooperating with, and supporting, the Chairperson.

Auditors should:

- remain within the scope of the audit;
- exercise objectivity;
- collect and analyse evidence that is relevant and sufficient to draw conclusions regarding the quality system;
- remain alert to any indications of evidence that can influence the audit results and possibly require more extensive auditing;
- act in an ethical manner at all times; and
- be able to answer such questions as:
    - Are the procedures, documents and other information describing or supporting the required elements of the quality system known, available, understood and used by the HEP's personnel?
    - Are all documents and other information used to describe the quality system adequate to achieve the required quality objectives?

5.2 Conflict of Interest

As the members of the audit panel are being selected, prospective auditors must declare their interest in the assignment. If the prospective auditor has a direct interest, the MQA should exclude him from consideration. The MQA will send the list of prospective auditors to the HEP concerned to allow it to register objections, if any. If an HEP disagrees with a prospective auditor, the HEP is obliged to furnish reasons for its objection. However, the final decision whether to select a particular person as an auditor rests with the MQA.

Conflicts of interest may be categorised as personal, professional or ideological.

- ***Personal conflict*** could include animosity or close friendship between an auditor and the Chief Executive Officer or other senior manager of the HEP, or being related to one, or being a graduate of the HEP, or if an auditor is excessively biased for or against the HEP due to some previous event.

- ***Professional conflict*** could occur if an auditor had been a failed applicant for a position in the HEP, was a current applicant or a candidate for a position in the HEP, was a senior adviser, examiner or consultant to the HEP, or is currently attached to an HEP that is competing with the one being audited.

- ***Ideological conflict*** could be based on differing world views and value systems. An example of this type of conflict would be an auditor's lack of sympathy to the style, ethos, type or political inclination of the HEP.

5.3 The Audit Panel

Potential members for an audit panel are selected from the MQA's Registry of Auditors. The selection of auditors depends on the type of the audit, the characteristics of the HEP, and the need to have a panel that is coherent and whose members are balanced in terms of background and experience.

It is crucial that the auditors work together as a team, and should not attempt to apply preconceived templates to their consideration of the HEP being audited, nor appear to address inquiries from entirely within the perspective of their own specialty or the practices of their own HEP. Unless otherwise arranged, all communications between the HEP and members of the panel must be via the MQA.

5.3.1 The Chairperson

The Chairperson is the key person in an audit exercise and should have adequate experience as an auditor. It is the Chair's responsibility to create an atmosphere in which critical professional discussions can take place, where opinions can be liberally and considerately exchanged, and in which integrity and transparency prevail. Much of the mode and accomplishment of the audit exercise depends on the Chairperson's ability to facilitate the panel to do its work as a team rather than as individuals, and also to bring out the best in those whom the panel meets.

The Chairperson presents the oral exit report summarising the tentative findings of the team to the representatives of the HEP. The Chairperson also has a major role in the preparation of the written report and in ensuring that the oral exit report is not materially different from the final report.

The Chairperson is also responsible to ensure that the HEP's plan of action -- following the audit visit and in response to the conditions made by the panel -- is considered and endorsed by the panel.

5.3.2 The Secretary

The panel Secretary is expected to compile the report during the visit and to work closely with the Chairperson to complete the draft report shortly after the visit. The Secretary is responsible for organising the contributions from the other team members and to ensure that the overall report is coherent, logical, and internally consistent.

If important areas have been omitted from a team member's write-up, it is the responsibility of the panel Secretary either to contact that member for additional details, or to supply the missing content himself.

It is important for the Secretary to compare his draft report with the set of strengths and concerns identified by the panel members to ensure that all areas are well documented in the text of the report. Attention should be paid so that comments made are based on due compliance to the quality assurance standards as contained in this Code.

Specific tasks of the Secretary involve:

- To ensure that the exit report accurately summarises the outcomes of the visit and is consistent with the reporting framework; and
- To coordinate and liaise with the panel members with respect to the audit report.

5.3.3 The MQA Officer

The MQA officer has the following responsibilities:

- To keep copies of handouts, database pages, evaluation reports, and organisational charts, for incorporation, as appropriate, in the final report;
- To act as a resource person to the panel and the HEP on policy matters;
- To ensure that the panel conducts itself in accordance with its ethical responsibilities;
- To liaise with the HEP liaison officer;
- To coordinate and liaise with the panel members;
- To ensure that the report is processed effectively and in a timely manner; and
- To provide other relevant administrative services.

5.4 The Audit Trail

When the Self-Review Portfolio (SRP) is submitted to the MQA, it is distributed to members of the audit panel who will examine the portfolio to determine that the documentations are complete as well as to determine the reliability and effectiveness of the HEP's quality system. In evaluating and checking the HEP's SRP, the audit panel will:

- respect the objectives and values of the HEP;
- validate the HEP's conclusions and proposed improvement activities;
- contribute towards the HEP's process of self-reviewing by pointing out aspects that require attention; and
- reach a judgment of the HEP's achievement based on the scope and purpose of the audit.

Panel members are selected so that the panel as a whole possesses the expertise and experience to enable the audit to be carried out effectively. Members may translate their different perspectives into different emphases in their attention to the audit process, and a concentration on certain aspects of the portfolio.

5.4.1 Before the Audit Visit

Before the Audit Visit, panel members must have read thoroughly the HEP's Self-Review Portfolio to familiarise themselves with the HEP's policies, procedures and criteria for assuring quality, as well as with the purpose and possible outcomes of the audit. Adequate exploration of issues by the audit panel depends on panel members being thoroughly familiar with the HEP's Self-Review Portfolio.

The SRP should be read at two levels. At one level, the auditor should read its contents for information on the quality management systems of the HEP, and the plan of the HEP to achieve its statement of purpose, and forms preliminary views on them. At another level, the auditors construct an opinion on the quality of the self-review evaluation and the depth of its analysis.

The following are some of the questions which the auditors would want to consider in critically examining the SRP:

- How thorough is the SRP?
- Does it show that the HEP has a strong process of ongoing self-review?
- How perceptive is the SRP?
- Does it clearly identify strengths and weaknesses?
- Does it propose appropriate actions to enhance the strengths and remedy the weaknesses?
- Does it clearly indicate the capability and capacity of the HEP to achieve its objectives?

An auditor's analysis of the SRP should result in:

- an understanding of the major characteristics of the HEP relevant to the audit;
- the identification of broad topics for investigation that arise from these characteristics; and
- the generation of other ideas about the HEP, including its strengths, concerns, quality system and proposed improvement plan.

The auditors may also find it helpful to record thoughts about the following:

- To request the HEP for further information before the Audit Visit to clarify the SRP, to assist in planning the Audit Visit, and to save time during the visit.
- To request the HEP to furnish further information to be made available during the Audit Visit, particularly when the information sought would be voluminous.
- Comments to be passed to the HEP before the Audit Visit, but not for immediate response - these are typically a forewarning of issues that may be raised.
- Possible people or groups to be interviewed during the Audit Visit.

Each auditor is expected to produce a preliminary report -- generally four to six pages in length -- on the SRP to be submitted to the MQA and circulated to other panel members at least a week before the Preparatory Meeting. These brief first impression reports set down the major topics or concerns detected by each auditor. This advance information saves time at the Preparatory Meeting, and assists the meeting to focus quickly on substantive matters.

5.4.2 Preparatory Meeting

At the Preparatory Meeting, panel members consider the comments on issues of particular interest or concern, and may request any further information or clarification they need from the HEP. This input guides the preparation of an initial programme for the Audit Visit. The Preparatory Meeting provides an opportunity for the panel members to develop into a team with a common purpose rather than a group of individuals with divergent goals.

The intention of the Preparatory Meeting is to ensure that all panel members:

- understand the purpose, context, parameters and constraints of an audit in general and of any particular aspects of this audit;
- understand the sort of judgments and recommendations expected of them;

- are familiar with the MQA's procedures for conducting an institutional audit;
- familiarise themselves with the major issues of the audit as identified by the auditors in their brief preliminary report of the SRP;
- recognise that any preliminary judgments formed during the reading of the portfolio may change following the Audit Visit, with the final conclusions based on explicit and secure evidence;
- avoid judging the HEP primarily in terms of the auditor's own home campus or organisation; and
- have an opportunity to share ideas, get acquainted and recognise the need to contribute their own ideas, experiences, expertise and knowledge with sensitivity to each other's views and contributions.

5.4.3 During the Audit Visit

At the Preparatory Meeting, issues may have been raised or have been resolved. However, there could still be significant disagreements between panel members on some issues. Such differences must be resolved by the end of the Audit Visit, and plans should be made for questioning and verifying the issues raised.

While this may require some lively debate in public meetings, it is important that auditors maintain their professionalism. This is to avoid a public presentation of the lack of unanimity and to avoid wasting the short time available for interaction with members of the HEP.

In group discussions, panel members should work with and through the Chair without being too formal. Members should respect the agenda agreed by the panel for the various meetings, and support the Chairperson as he matches the pace of the meeting to the size of its agenda.

During interviews with members of the HEP, the panel should clarify issues, and seek explanations, justifications and further information. It is extremely important to create an atmosphere for genuine dialogue. Questioning should be rigorous but fair and consistent. In particular, panel members need to:

- explore discrepancies between what is written and what is said;
- seek clarification and confirmation when required;
- listen as well as ask;
- concentrate on major rather than minor issues;
- participate in a collaborative manner;
- be aware that the dynamics of the panel and of its relation to the staff of the HEP will change and develop during the visit; and
- put interviewees at ease to ensure their full and active contribution.

Panel members may also offer occasional suggestions where appropriate, but without slipping into the role of a consultant. The panel must do its utmost to unearth and consider all information relevant to its conclusions. Panel members use a variety of questioning styles to gather the information it requires, ranging from discursive to directive.

To pursue a particular issue, the panel may begin by seeking information through an open-ended question, and then investigate the issue further, probing by asking other questions based on the answer to the first question. This often leads to the use of closed questions and finally checking to confirm the impression obtained.

The panel considers both quantitative and qualitative data, looking for specific strengths or areas for improvement and highlighting examples of good practice. Within the scope of the audit, the panel's work depends on well-chosen sampling. The selection of samples occurs at two levels. The first arises from the auditors' analysis of the portfolio, during which particular areas may be identified as significant or problematic, and therefore selected for further investigation. This process is sometimes called scoping. At the second level, the panel decides what documentary or oral evidence is needed to sample within these areas. Some sampling may be done to check information already presented in the SRP. If this verifies the information, the panel may use the rest of the portfolio with confidence in its accuracy and comprehensiveness, and avoid the repetition of collecting for itself information that is already available in the HEP's written documents.

Although a panel cannot cover all issues in depth, it delves into some issues through a process known as tracking or trailing. This form of sampling focuses on a particular issue and pursues it in depth through several layers of the organisation. For example, to check that procedures are being implemented, a selection of relevant reports might be sought, and the way in which whether a related issue had been dealt with would be tracked. Another instance would be the investigation of a system-wide issue, such as the way in which student evaluations of teaching are handled. An HEP may need to be informed in advance of the areas in which this approach is to be used, so that the necessary documentation and personnel are available to the panel. Some of the materials may be able to be supplied in advance of the visit.

Triangulation is the technique of investigating an issue by considering information on it from different sources, such as testing the perceptions held about it by different individuals in the organisation. For example, selected policies and their implementation may be discussed with senior management, with other staff and with students to see if the various opinions and experiences of the policy and its workings are consistent.

Aspects of a topic may be checked through committee minutes, courses and teaching evaluations, programme reviews, reports of professional association accreditation,

and external examiners' reports. The panel must determine where inconsistencies are significant, and are detracting from the achievement of the HEP's objectives. The panel may also attempt to detect the reasons for such inconsistencies.

If an interviewee makes a specific serious criticism, the panel should verify whether this is a general experience of that group, as well as following it up subsequently and in other ways.

Panel members must plan and focus their questions. They should avoid:

- asking multiple questions;
- using much preamble to questions;
- telling anecdotes or making speeches;
- detail the situation in their own organisation; and
- offer advice (suggestions for improvement and examples of good practice elsewhere can be included in the audit report).

A good discipline before asking any question is to ask oneself:

How can I ask this question in the fewest possible words?

The questioning and discussion must always be fair and polite. It must, however, be rigorous and incisive, as the audit report must reflect the panel's view of the HEP, in respect of both its achievements and weaknesses, and not merely describe a well-constructed facade. The audit panel must collect convincing evidence during the Audit Visit. The evidence gathering process must be thorough.

The panel must come to clear and well-founded conclusions in the context of the terms of reference of the audit, including the scope of the audit, the nature of the HEP, and good practices, both within and without academia.

5.4.4 After the Audit Visit

After the Audit Visit, panel members read, comment on and, as desired, contribute to the draft or drafts of the Institutional Audit Report. All panel members should be satisfied that the Report is accurate and balanced. The Institutional Audit Report is then submitted to the MQA.

The MQA will conduct an evaluation of the effectiveness of the audit exercise. A report on the whole audit process will then be prepared by the MQA officer.

5.5 The Institutional Audit Report

The Institutional Audit Report outlines the findings, commendations, affirmations and recommendations of the audit panel. The panel comes to its conclusions through its interpretation of the specific evidence it has gathered, and the extent and weight of the recommendations are determined by the observed facts and evidence gathered.

Audit reports should not contain vague or unsubstantiated statements. Firm views are stated categorically, avoiding excessive subtlety. The report does not comment on individuals nor appeal to irrelevant standards.

The panel's findings include the identification of commendable practices observed in the HEP, and the report draws attention to these. The report deals with all relevant areas, but without excessive detail or trying to list all possible strengths. In writing the conclusions and recommendations, the following factors are kept in mind:

- Conclusions should be short, brief and direct to the point.
- Conclusions will address issues and not provide details of processes.
- Conclusions will be prioritised to provide direction to the HEP.
- Conclusions will:
    - o take into account the HEP's own programme of improvement;
    - o make recommendations for improvement in aspects not covered by the Self-Review Portfolio; and
    - o make constructive comments on plans of improvement that will push the HEP towards its goals and objectives.

Section 6
Guidelines for Preparing the
Institutional Audit Report

Section 6 Guidelines for Preparing the Institutional Audit Report

INTRODUCTION

In preparing the final audit report, the auditors are guided by the following format. As far as possible, the auditors should stay within this prescribed format.

1. THE COVER PAGE

Title	:	Report of an Audit on (name of higher education provider)
Date of visit	:	
Prepared by	:	The Panel of Auditors for the Malaysian Qualifications Agency.
Footnote	:	This privileged communication is the property of the Malaysian Qualifications Agency.

2. TABLE OF CONTENTS

3. MEMORANDUM

This should include a signed statement from the panel of auditors composed as follows:

To	:	Malaysian Qualifications Agency.
From	:	The panel of auditors that visited (name of HEP) on (date)

The panel of auditors that visited the (name of HEP) on (date) is pleased to provide the following report of its findings and conclusions.

Respectfully,

_____
Name, Chairperson

_____
Name, Secretary

_____
Name, Member

_____
Name, Member

_____
Name, Member

4. INTRODUCTION AND COMPOSITION OF THE AUDIT PANEL

A typical example:

An assessment of the (name of HEP) was conducted on (date) by a Panel of Auditors representing the Malaysian Qualifications Agency. The panel expresses its appreciation to the Chief Executive Officer (name), academic staff, management staff and students for their interest and candour during the audit visit. The team also expresses a special thank you to (name) who acted very efficiently as the liaison officer and attended to all the needs of the team.

After the paragraph of introduction, list the members of the panel of auditors, giving their names, titles and institutions and their roles in the panel as chair, secretary, or member. For example:

Chair	:	Name Designation Affiliation
Secretary	:	Name Designation Affiliation
Member	:	Name Designation Affiliation
Member	:	Name Designation Affiliation
Member	:	Name Designation Affiliation
Secretariat	:	Name Designation Affiliation

5. ABSTRACT

Provide an abstract of the audit report.

6. SUMMARY OF PANEL OF AUDITORS' FINDINGS

The summary of the audit findings depends on the nature and type of the audit. The panel must include their commendation, affirmation and recommendation based on the categories outlined in Section 4.2.11.

6.1 For Continuation or Cessation of Programme Accreditation

The summary of the Audit Report contains the following:

1. **Commendation:** Aspects of the provision of the programme that are considered worthy of praise.

2. **Affirmation:** Proposed improvements by the HEP to aspects of the programme, which the panel believes are significant and which it welcomes.

3. **Recommendation for Maintenance of Accreditation:** Where the panel recommends maintenance of accreditation of programmes, such a recommendation may be subjected to mandatory requirements, which the HEP must comply within a stipulated time period.

   The panel may also suggest other areas of improvement to enhance quality of the programme. Although these additional recommendations are optional, the HEP are nevertheless strongly encouraged to implement them.

4. **Recommend the Cessation of Accreditation:** Where the panel recommends the cessation of accreditation of programmes, such recommendations must state the reasons for the cessation.

6.2 For Academic Performance Audit

The summary of the Audit Report for an Academic Performance Audit (APA) highlights the affirmation, commendations, and areas of concern and also indicates the performance of the institution on all the nine areas of evaluation using the benchmarked and enhanced standards without stating any specific decision on the whole as in the case of accreditation. The Report will be sent to the authorities concerned and the HEP will then be given a report on its state of health for its attention and further action.

6.3 For Self-Accreditation Status

The summary of the Audit Report on Self-Accreditation Status contains:

1. **Commendation:** Aspects of the institutional provisions that are considered worthy of praise.

2. **Affirmation:** Proposed improvements by the HEP to aspects of the institutional provisions which the panel believes are significant and which it welcomes.

3. **Recommend the Granting of a Self-Accreditation Status:** Recommendation for the granting of a Self-Accreditation Status may take one of the following:
   - Self-Accreditation Status is conferred without conditions. However, the panel may suggest areas of improvement to enhance quality of the institution.
   - Self-Accreditation Status may be conferred subject to any mandatory requirement, which the HEP must comply within the stipulated time period.

4. **Recommend not to Grant the Self-Accreditation Status:** Where the Self-Accreditation Status is not granted, the report must state the reasons for such a recommendation.

6.4 For Other Purposes

The audit panel must summarise their commendation, affirmation and recommendation based on the purpose of the institutional audit, which ranges from audit for purposes of admission and student assessment to institutional rating, programme rating and the maintenance of Self-Accreditation Status.

In general, the audit report should adhere to the points reported orally in the exit meeting with the HEP and follow the order in which the items will be listed in the body of the report. For concerns or problems, the panel should indicate their relative urgency and seriousness, and express any recommendations in generic or alternative terms. All items cited here should be supported by documentation in the body of the report.

7. PREVIOUS QUALITY ASSURANCE OR ACCREDITATION ASSESSMENTS AND PROGRESS REPORTS

Where applicable, the panel must summarise the key findings and recommendations of the most recent assessment of the HEP or its academic programmes, including progress report addressing any problems identified previously.

Give the dates of previous assessments and reports. Conclude this by summarising the areas of concern in the assessment that have been corrected and problems that still remain.

8. THE SELF-REVIEW PORTFOLIO

The panel must comment on the organisation, completeness, reliability and consistency of the data in the Self-Review Portfolio submitted by the HEP. It should ask questions such as: Were the numerical data (e.g., applicant, admissions, financial) updated to the current year?

The panel should comment on the comprehensiveness and depth of analysis of the HEP self-review and the organisation and quality of its conclusions and recommendations. The panel should also comment on the self-review in terms of the degree of participation by the HEP's academic staff, administrators and students. It should mention the degree to which the panel's major conclusions are consistent with those of the self-review of the HEP.

9. BACKGROUND OF THE HIGHER EDUCATION PROVIDER

The panel must briefly summarise the history of the HEP. Briefly describe its setting, its mission and goals as well as its role in the state and the local community. Describe also the relationship of the HEP with other centres, and if relevant, geographically separated campuses, programmes, and sites.

10. REPORT ON THE HIGHER EDUCATION PROVIDER IN RELATION TO THE NINE AREAS OF EVALUATION

This section of the report must contain a summary narrative of what has been found during the Institutional Audit. It is structured around the nine areas of evaluation for quality assurance stated in Section 2. All comments must be based on sound evidence submitted by the HEP or discovered by the Panel during its Audit Visit. Depending on the nature of the audit, the narrative of the report must address each of the nine areas and the questions listed below.

At the end of each subsection, the narrative must indicate the extent to which the Benchmarked Standards and Enhanced Standards for specific aspects of the nine quality assurance areas have been met.

The following provides guidance on reporting the findings of the Panel in relation to each of the nine areas of evaluation for quality assurance.

10.1 EVALUATION ON AREA 1: VISION, MISSION, EDUCATIONAL GOALS AND LEARNING OUTCOMES

10.1.1 Statement of Vision, Mission and Educational Goals

Evaluation on Benchmarked Standards

- Comment on the HEP's vision and mission.
- Evaluate how the educational goals reflect the crucial elements of processes and outcomes of higher education that is in line with national and global developments.
- Comment on the governing body and its membership responsible for the approval of the vision, mission and educational goals of the HEP.
- How widely are the vision, mission and educational goals communicated to the internal and external stakeholders of the HEP?

Evaluation on Enhanced Standards

- In what ways do the mission and educational goals encompass leadership qualities in the areas of social responsibility, research attainment, community engagement, ethical values, professionalism, and knowledge creation?
- How adequate and appropriate are the HEP's planning and evaluation processes, educational programmes, educational support services, financial and physical resources, and administrative processes to fulfil its stated goals?

10.1.2 Participation in the Formulation of Vision, Mission and Educational Goals

Evaluation on Benchmarked Standards

- Comment on the involvement of the principal stakeholders of the HEP in the development of the vision, mission and goals of the HEP.

Evaluation on Enhanced Standards

- Evaluate the HEP's consultation with the wider range of stakeholders in the review of the vision, mission and goals.

10.1.3 Academic Autonomy

Evaluation on Benchmarked Standards

- Comment on the degree of autonomy in curriculum design and resource allocation.
- Illustrate how much autonomy is given to the academic staff in order for him to focus on his areas of expertise such as curriculum development, supervision of student, research and writing, scholarly activities, administrative duties and community engagement.

Evaluation on Enhanced Standards

- Is the realm of academic autonomy of the HEP expanding, and in what way?

10.1.4 Learning Outcomes

Evaluation on Benchmarked Standards

- Summarise the outcomes of the educational programmes.

  Students should exhibit these outcomes as evidence of their achievement. Cite evidence that the outcomes reflect the mission and goals of the HEP and are understood by the academic staff, students and administrators and are drawn upon in designing the programmes.
- Describe the competencies demonstrated by the students upon completion of an academic programme and comment how these relate to current and future needs of the profession and the discipline.

Evaluation on Enhanced Standards

- In what way the academic programmes specify the link between the student's competencies expected at the end of the programme and those required by the market as well as for purposes of higher studies and good citizenship?

10.2 EVALUATION ON AREA 2: CURRICULUM DESIGN AND DELIVERY

10.2.1 Curriculum Design and Teaching-Learning Methods

Evaluation on Benchmarked Standards

- Appraise the processes by which the curriculum is established, reviewed and evaluated. How do the academic and administrative staff, and the governing board get involved in this process.
- Comment on the system of curriculum planning, implementation, evaluation and management. Where does the responsibility for these activities reside?

- How was the needs assessment for programmes done? How are resources to support the programmes identified?
- Comment on the HEP's strategic assessment and planning that serves as a framework to the accomplishment of the institutional goals and objectives.
- How appropriate and consistent are the curriculum content, approach and teaching-learning methods, and how do they support the achievement of learning outcomes?
- Comment on the HEP's effectiveness in achieving a coherent and coordinated curricula.
- How does the HEP coordinate and monitor the teaching-learning activities to avoid redundancies and deficiencies?
- Are there diverse teaching learning methods that can help achieve the eight domains of the learning outcomes and that can ensure that students take responsibility for their own learning? How is the teaching and learning strategy defined and communicated to the staff and students?
- How are independent learning skills developed? How are projects supervised? What training is provided to supervisors?
- How are group projects managed and assessed?
- What is the evidence that students acquire self-directed learning skills and use data in realistic problem solving?
- Is computer-assisted learning employed? Comment on the use of communication technologies.
- Are ethical principles and appropriate attitudes being nurtured and developed?
- If practical training is conducted in several sites, what efforts are made to ensure there is equivalency in educational quality of experience and the evaluation of students?
- Comment on the relationship between teaching and learning practices and the curriculum to show consistency and how inconsistencies are addressed.

Evaluation on Enhanced Standards

- How does the curriculum encourage a multi-disciplinary approach that can enhance personal development through electives, study pathways and other means? How is the effectiveness of the approaches monitored and appraised?
- How does the needs analysis for programmes involve feedback from external sources? How is the feedback from these sources obtained and utilised to improve the programmes?

- Comment on the co-curricular activities available to students to enrich their experience, and to foster personal development and responsibility.

10.2.2 Curriculum Content and Structure

Evaluation on Benchmarked Standards

- How is the core subject matter incorporated into the curriculum to enhance student understanding of the concepts, principles and methods that support programme outcomes?
- How do programmes fulfil the core requirements of the discipline and appropriate standards in line with international best practices of the field and the changes in them?

Evaluation on Enhanced Standards

- Comment on how the HEP access the latest developments in the field of study and incorporate them into the curriculum.

10.2.3 Management of Programmes

Evaluation on Benchmarked Standards

- Comment on how students are informed about programme learning outcomes, curriculum, and methods of assessment.
- Comment on who is responsible for the planning, implementation and improvement of a programme and what authority he has in establishing procedures for planning and monitoring the programme. How are problems with timetabling addressed and student workload monitored?
- How adequate are the resources provided to a programme team to implement the teaching and learning activities, and to conduct the programme evaluation for quality improvement?
- Comment on the HEP's programme review and evaluation processes and how the results are being utilised to enhance the quality of academic programmes.
- Comment on whether the learning environment is conducive for scholarly and creative achievement.
- Comment on the structures and processes to ensure that all the criteria and standards of a qualification awarded are fulfilled.

Evaluation on Enhanced Standards

- Comment on the innovative efforts made by the HEP to improve teaching-learning. Who does it consult in this process and to what effect?
- Comment on the utilisation of external expertise nationally and internationally in the review and evaluation of programmes.

10.2.4 Linkages with External Stakeholders

Evaluation on Benchmarked Standards

- Comment on how appropriate mechanisms are put in place to link the HEP with the stakeholders outside of it for the purposes of curriculum development.

Evaluation on Enhanced Standards

- Comment on how employer feedback is obtained and utilised for curriculum development, student placement, training and workplace exposure.
- Comment on opportunities given to students to develop linkages with external stakeholders.

10.3 EVALUATION ON AREA 3: ASSESSMENT OF STUDENTS

10.3.1 Relationship Between Assessment and Learning

Evaluation on Benchmarked Standards

- How are students evaluated? Comment on the alignment between assessment and programme aims and learning outcomes.
- Comment on their appropriateness in relation to the educational goals and compliance to standards.
- Assess the effectiveness of the methods used in assessing learning outcomes and competencies and its consistency with the Malaysian Qualifications Framework.

Evaluation on Enhanced Standards

- Assess how the programmes ensure the effective link between assessment and learning outcomes is maintained.

10.3.2 Assessment Methods

Evaluation on Benchmarked Standards

- Comment on the variety of assessment methods and how students demonstrate they have achieved a programme learning outcomes.
- Comment on how practical training is assessed.
- Evaluate on how students are assessed. Does the assessment of student achievement employ a variety of methods to support the attainment of outcomes?
- Is the assessment method both summative and formative? Does that cover both theoretical and practical components of the programme?

- How does the HEP ensure the validity, reliability and fairness of the assessment system, and their consistency across programmes?
- Comment on how assessment methods are reviewed to ensure currency.
- Comment on the documentation and dissemination of student assessment methods. Are the assessment methods clearly stated, adequately published, disseminated on time, and widely understood by students, faculty and administrators?

Evaluation on Enhanced Standards

- Comment on the external sources referred to to improve the methods of assessment.
- Evaluate the mechanisms to review and implement new methods of assessment.
- Comment on how the review of the assessment method incorporates current global developments and best practices in the discipline.
- Comment on the consultation of external experts in the review of assessment system.

10.3.3 Management of Student Assessment

Evaluation on Benchmarked Standards

- Comment on the autonomy of the various departments in student assessment, including the committees and the processes for verification, moderation and benchmarking.
- Comment on the sufficiency of students' supervision and feedback.
- Comment on the promptness of students receiving feedback on tests of their performance.
- Comment on the composition and role of the assessment committee.
- How does the committee ensure that examination procedures (e.g., how questions are formulated and vetted, how answer scripts are marked) and changes to them are fair, valid, reliable, and widely disseminated?
- Comment on the process of changes to student assessment methods. How are they communicated to the students?
- Evaluate how the HEP ensure due process as well as opportunities for fair and impartial hearing.
- Comment on the publicity of the grading, assessment, and appeal policies and practices. How widely is this carried out?
- Comment on how student assessment is supervised. How does the HEP protect the confidentiality of the assessment system? How is the security of assessment documents and records ensured?

Evaluation on Enhanced Standards

- Comment on the role of independent external scrutiny of the student assessment system.

10.4 EVALUATION ON AREA 4: STUDENT SELECTION AND SUPPORT SERVICES

10.4.1 Admission and Selection

Evaluation on Benchmarked Standards

- Comment on the clarity of the HEP's policies on student selection and student transfer, including those in relation to students with special needs.
- Comment whether the requirements for admission are adequate. Describe the organisation and operation of the admission committee. Comment on the admission process.
- Does the HEP have a policy for disadvantaged students?
- Comment on the publication, dissemination and accessibility of the student selection criteria and processes.
- Comment on how suitable the prerequisite knowledge and skills are for entry into a programme and how well they are defined.
- Comment on how the HEP ensures that the selected students have capabilities that are consistent with the admission policies.
- Comment on the objectivity and fairness of the interview process.
- Comment on whether the student selection process is fair and transparent.
- Comment on the policy and mechanism for appeal.
- Comment on the developmental and remedial support made available to students who need it.
- Evaluate the methods of orientation of new students, early warning system for academic difficulty, and system of academic counselling, tutoring and remediation.
- Comment on the trend and projection of student intake in relation to the HEP's capacity to effectively deliver a programme. Comment also on the proportion of applicant to intake and on the main characteristics of the students admitted.
- Evaluate the sufficiency of qualified applicants in relation to the admission standards. Mention the proportion of gender and minorities.
- Evaluate the effectiveness of counselling directed to new applicants.

- Comment on whether the resource distribution is ample and appropriate to support the number of elective students, commitment to continuing education, research, service, and consultancy activities.
- Evaluate on how the HEP ensures the availability of adequate resources to take into consideration visiting, exchange and transfer students.
- Comment on how often the admission policy is monitored and reviewed, and on the link between student selection and student performance is monitored to improve student selection processes.
- Comment on the rate of attrition and the reasons for it.

Evaluation on Enhanced Standards

- Comment on how the student performance is monitored as a feedback mechanism to improve student selection.
- Comment on how the relevant stakeholders are engaged by the HEP in the review of its admission policy and processes.
- Comment on how student intake incorporates social responsibility by privileged consideration for people with special needs.
- Comment on the relationship between the selection process, programmes and learning outcomes.

10.4.2 Articulation Regulations, Credit Transfer and Credit Exemption

Evaluation on Benchmarked Standards

- Assess how the policies, regulations and processes of credit transfer, credit exemption and articulation practices are defined and disseminated. Evaluate the implementation of the policies, regulations and processes above.

Evaluation on Enhanced Standards

- Comment on how the HEP keeps itself up-to-date on processes of articulation, credit transfer and credit exemptions, including cross-border collaborative provisions.

10.4.3 Transfer of Students

Evaluation on Benchmarked Standards

- Comment on the policy, criteria and mechanisms to enable qualified students to transfer to another programme.
- Comment on the mechanism to ensure transfer students are given exemptions by taking into account their previous experience, qualifications obtained from another programme and credits accumulated.
- Comment on the evaluation procedures to determine the comparability of achievement of incoming transfer students.

Evaluation on Enhanced Standards

- Comment on the policies and mechanisms to facilitate student mobility, exchanges and transfers, nationally and internationally.

10.4.4 Student Support Services and Co-Curricular Activities

Evaluation on Benchmarked Standards

- Evaluate the adequacy and quality of student support services. How do they contribute to the quality of student life?
- Comment on the operation and accessibility of the loan office. Are students' needs met by loans and scholarships? Does the HEP provide financial aid through its own resources?
- How are health services and professional counselling made available and information about them disseminated to the students?
- If the HEP has campuses that are geographically separated, comment on how student support services are provided at the external sites.
- Evaluate on how and how frequent student support services are evaluated.
- Appraise the mechanisms for complaints and appeals on student support services.
- Comment on the unit that is responsible for planning and implementing student support services. How does it fit into the overall structure of the organisation in terms of hierarchy and authority? How qualified are the staff of this unit? Who does the head of this unit report to?
- Comment on the qualifications of the counsellors and on the measures to ensure that adequate personal and academic counselling are provided and confidentiality maintained.
- Comment on the availability of an early warning system to detect students facing academic difficulty. Are these measures effective?
- Appraise the orientation of incoming students.

Evaluation on Enhanced Standards

- Comment on how prominent the student support services are in the organisational structure of the HEP compared to other major administrative areas.
- Evaluate the unit dedicated to academic and non-academic counselling.
- Comment on how counselling services monitor student progress and address personal and social needs. How is the effectiveness of student counselling and support programmes measured?
- Are there continuous evaluation to identify students in trouble, with timely counselling and remediation?

- Analyse the training and development plans to upgrade the skills and professionalism of counsellors. Comment on the quantity and quality of those who have been so trained.

10.4.5 Student Representation and Participation

Evaluation on Benchmarked Standards

- Comment on the HEP policy on student representation and participation.
- Comment on the statement of student rights and responsibilities, and its availability.
- Comment on the clarity of the jurisdiction of judicial bodies, the disciplinary responsibilities of HEP officials, and all disciplinary procedures, and their dissemination.
- Evaluate the policy on student participation and how students are encouraged to participate in matters affecting their welfare. What are the opportunities made available to students to participate in academic and non-academic activities?

Evaluation on Enhanced Standards

- Evaluate how the acquisition of student skills and experiences are promoted through student activities and organisations, and how it is facilitated by the HEP.
- Comment on the policy regarding student publication.
- Comment on the channels to allow student participation in the formulation, management and evaluation of the curriculum, and in academic matters relevant to them.
- Appraise the adequacy of the available facilities to encourage student involvement in publication activities. How does the HEP ensure this?

10.4.6 Alumni

Evaluation on Benchmarked Standards

- Evaluate how the HEP encourages active linkages and continuous relationship between it and its alumni.

Evaluation on Enhanced Standards

- Comment on the role of the alumni in curriculum development, the achievement of the learning outcomes and the future direction of the HEP.
- Evaluate how the HEP encourages the alumni to play a role in preparing students for their professional future, and to provide linkages with industry and the professions.

- Evaluate how the alumni actually assist students in preparing for their professional future.

10.5 EVALUATION ON AREA 5: ACADEMIC STAFF

10.5.1 Recruitment and Management

Evaluation on Benchmarked Standards

- Comment on the policies on qualifications, responsibilities, expertise and incentives.
- Appraise the academic staff selection policy. How does staff selection emphasise recognition of academic merit?
- Assess the appropriateness of the ratio of the academic staff to student. Confirm whether the HEP has enough academic staff necessary to implement each programme.
- Appraise the role of the academic staff in teaching, research and scholarly activities, consultancy, community services, and administrative functions to show a balance of functions and responsibilities in line with academic conventions.
- Comment on the distribution of the varied roles of the academic staff in teaching, research, consultancy, community service and administrative functions. Is the workload fairly distributed?
- Evaluate the policies and procedures for recognising and rewarding the academic staff. How are they implemented?
- Evaluate the policies, criteria and processes in the appointment of, and promotion to, academic positions, particularly that of professorship and associate professorship. How does the HEP take into account national policy and international best practices on such matters?

Evaluation on Enhanced Standards

- Comment on how the HEP ensures and encourages diversity among the academic staff in terms of experience, approaches and backgrounds.
- Evaluate the nature and extent of the HEP's national and international linkages, and how these enhance its scholarly activities.

10.5.2 Service and Development

Evaluation on Benchmarked Standards

- Appraise the evidence of, and mechanisms and procedures for, professional development and career advancement of the academic staff.

- Appraise how participation in staff development programmes is encouraged.
- Comment on the existence of, or academic staff access to, institutions, centres or activities that supports academic staff development.
- Comment on the support available to assist academic staff to develop teaching skills and instructional materials.
- Comment on how the HEP assure that academic staff, including part-time staff, possess the required skills to teach and evaluate students.
- Evaluate the HEP policy to retain the academic staff. Comment on the academic staff leaving the institution in the last five years.
- Comment on the institutional policy on service, development and appraisal of the academic staff. Does the appraisal take into account participation in all relevant activities? Comment on the policy on consultancy and private practice.
- Comment on the HEP's criteria and administrative procedures for initial appointment, promotion and tenure.
- Comment on the processes and procedures in handling disciplinary cases involving the academic staff.
- Comment on the opportunities for communication among academic staff members and on activities that promote collegiality.
- Do academic staff members have sufficient input into organisational decision-making through the committee structure or directly?
- Evaluate the formative guidance and mentoring provided for new academic staff. How effective is it?
- Comment on the organised support available to assist new academic staff to develop teaching skills in line with current trends in pedagogy, curriculum design, instructional materials, and assessment.
- Evaluate the mechanisms to train academic staff to use information and communication technology for self-learning, for access to information and for communication.
- Comment on student appraisal of the academic staff and its effectiveness.

Evaluation on Enhanced Standards

- Comment on the conferences organised by the HEP.
- Comment on the participation of the academic staff in major conferences in the last five years. Comment on how the HEP support the participation of academic staff in national and international activities. How useful is the participation for the enrichment of the learning experience?

- Comment on the extent of research activities in the HEP by looking into the number of academic staff members who are principal investigators, the value of research grants and the priority areas for research.
- Evaluate the provisions on advanced development for academic staff.

10.6 EVALUATION ON AREA 6: EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES

10.6.1 Physical Facilities

Evaluation on Benchmarked Standards

- Comment on the appropriateness, adequacy and quality of the HEP's general facilities.
- Describe the major facilities used for practical experiences.
- Comment on the measures taken to ensure that the academic staff have sufficient and appropriate physical facilities for effective delivery of the curriculum.
- Comment on how educational resources are distributed and scheduled according to educational needs.
- Comment on whether the space for educational activities is adequate, appropriate and well organised for the number of students, for current or desired curriculum structure, for the number of existing and desired academic staff, and for anticipated research expansion.
- Comment on whether the physical facilities comply with the relevant laws, and with health and safety regulations.
- Evaluate the adequacy of the library holdings, hours, services, staff and facilities. Do they meet the needs of the students and the academic staff?
- Evaluate the adequacy and suitability of study and small-group discussion space in and around the library.
- Comment on the quality of the library's automated databases and bibliographic search, computer and audio-visual capabilities.
- Evaluate how adequately stocked is the library.
- Comment on whether the library is adequately funded.
- Show the mechanism to ensure users provide input on library policy and procedures.
- Evaluate the facilities provided to promote research activities.
- Evaluate the HEP's use of computer-assisted learning, particularly as an integral part of programme delivery.

- Comment on whether there are adequate information communication technology facilities to support the students and faculty in teaching and learning activities. How effective is the use of computer-assisted learning as an integral part of the programme delivery?
- To what extent are the resources utilised to cultivate self-learning behaviour?
- What resources are available to assist the academic staff to identify or develop educational software?
- Comment on the policies regarding the selection and effective use of computers, internal and external networks and other effective means of using information and communication technology in the educational programmes.

Evaluation on Enhanced Standards

- Comment on evidence of verification of the maintenance and calibration records.
- How is the students' learning environment regularly improved to keep up with the development in educational practices and changes in society?
- Assess how suitable and up-to-date are the facilities and services provided to ensure its quality and appropriateness for current education and training.
- Evaluate how students are provided access to various and most current methods to obtain information.
- Comment on the appropriateness of the facilities provided to students with special needs.

10.6.2 Research and Development

(Please note that the standards on Research and Development are largely directed to universities and university colleges)

Evaluation on Benchmarked Standards

- Comment on the policy and planning that identifies the priorities, facilities and development in research and commercialisation.
- Comment on the major research interests at the HEP and on the facilities to support these areas of interest.
- Comment on the programmes on ethics in research for staff and graduate students and on the policy related to scientific misconduct in research and how it is disseminated.
- Evaluate the amount of internal support for research and the level of assistance available to staff members in securing external support.

- Comment on the major research activities and the academic staff involved in them in the last five years.
- Comment on how the interaction between research and education is reflected in the curriculum. How does it inform current teaching, and prepare students for engagement in research, scholarship and development?

Evaluation on Enhanced Standards

- Comment on how the HEP links research, development and commercialisation.
- Comment on the research, development and commercialisation activities and achievements in the last five years.
- How does the HEP review its research resources and facilities? Comment on the steps taken to enhance its research capabilities.
- Evaluate the major publications of the academic staff and the incentives given to them to publish, including in reputable refereed journals.

10.6.3 Educational Expertise

Evaluation on Benchmarked Standards

- Appraise the policies and practices on the use of educational expertise in curriculum development and in new teaching and assessment methods.

Evaluation on Enhanced Standards

- Comment on how access to experts is provided and utilised by the HEP for staff development and educational research in the various disciplines.

10.6.4 Educational Exchanges

Evaluation on Benchmarked Standards

- Evaluate the policy of the HEP on educational exchanges. Comment on the dissemination of the policy to students and faculty. Comment on the achievement of these exchanges in the last five years.
- Comment on how this benefits the HEP.

Evaluation on Enhanced Standards

- Comment on future plans to strengthen international collaboration.
- Comment on how this would benefit the HEP.
- Comment on the provisions for facilities and financial allocation to support educational exchanges.

10.6.5 Financial Allocation

Evaluation on Benchmarked Standards

- Evaluate the budgetary and procurement procedures to ensure that resources are sufficient and that they are utilised efficiently and responsibly to achieve the objectives of the HEP and maintain high standards of quality.
- Comment on the financial standing and the sources of funding of the HEP. Are they adequate to support the educational programmes?
- Comment on the trend in revenue sources and expenditures over the recent years and describe the current and predicted fiscal condition.
- Comment on the priority areas in financial allocation. If there is a current or potential fiscal imbalance, does the HEP have a credible plan to address it?
- Comment on the line of authority for budgeting and resource allocation in the HEP.
- Are there indications that the quality of programmes is being compromised by budgetary constraints?
- Comment on the policy on tuition and other payments, and the policy of refund to students who withdraw or who are dismissed from the institution.
- Comment on number of students who are funded through loans, grants or scholarship, and the major sources of student funding.

Evaluation on Enhanced Standards

- Comment on the extent of the autonomy given to those responsible for academic programmes to appropriately allocate the resources.

10.7 EVALUATION ON AREA 7: PROGRAMME MONITORING AND REVIEW

10.7.1 Mechanisms for Programme Monitoring and Review

Evaluation on Benchmarked Standards

- Evaluate the effectiveness of the processes, procedures and mechanisms for monitoring and reviewing a curriculum.
- Comment on the structure and workings of programme review committees. Does the review involve faculty and students?
- Comment on the nature of the relationship and the responsibilities of the parties involved in collaborative arrangements in programme monitoring and review.

- Comment on how the findings of a self-review exercise are utilised in the improvement of academic programmes.
- Evaluate the mechanisms by which quality control is assured, including oversight of programmes and teaching quality, and avenues for student input.
- Comment on how various aspects of student performance and progression are analysed to ascertain that programme learning outcomes have been achieved.

Evaluation on Enhanced Standards

- Comment on how the HEP utilises the analysis of student performance and progression to provide feedback to committees responsible for student selection, curriculum planning and student counselling.

10.7.2 Involvement of Stakeholders

Evaluation on Benchmarked Standards

- Comment on the extent of stakeholder involvement in the evaluation and development of a programme and the mechanisms used by the HEP to consider their views.

Evaluation on Enhanced Standards

- Comment on whether stakeholder feedback particularly that of the alumni and employers are incorporated into a programme review exercise. Do stakeholders have access to the final report of a programme review?
- Comment on the involvement of professional bodies and associations in programme monitoring and review.

10.8 EVALUATION ON AREA 8: LEADERSHIP, GOVERNANCE AND ADMINISTRATION

10.8.1 Governance

Evaluation on Benchmarked Standards

- Comment on how the HEP ensures that its policies and practices are consistent with its statement of purpose.
- Comment on the stability of the HEP's leadership and its consistency and direction.
- Describe briefly the leadership style (manner of leadership, interaction with academic staff members, and communication with other HEP's officials, staff and students).

- What are the leaders' perceptions of HEP's strengths and their agenda of strategic issues, directions, and plans for the future?
- Describe the leadership support for, and commitment to, the HEP's academic programmes.
- Comment on the governance structures and functions of the HEP, and the relationship between them. How are these communicated to all parties involved?
- Comment on the structure and composition of the major institutional committees.
- Comment on the composition and the role of the board of management of the HEP, the Senate and other principal committees of the HEP. Comment on the effectiveness of these committees. How is the effectiveness of these committees evaluated?
- Evaluate the role of academic leaders and their relationship with the HEP's officials. Evaluate the effectiveness of these relationships and note any problems.
- Appraise the appointment process of the principal committees dealing with student-related matters, and whether there are student representatives in these committees.
- Evaluate the effectiveness and autonomy of the policy-making body of the HEP and comment on any factors relating to clarity of charge, responsibilities, size, representation, and relationship with the academic leadership and management.
- In campuses that are geographically separated, comment on the administrative relationship between the main campus and the branch campuses, including on the quality control mechanisms by the parent provider. Comment also on what mechanisms exist to assure functional integration, and achieve comparability of educational quality and the evaluation of students across various sites of instruction.
- Comment on how student support services (academic and career counselling, financial aid, administration, health service and personal counselling) are provided at the branch campuses. How well does this work?
- Comment on the internal quality assurance system and the unit or department responsible for it. Evaluate its effectiveness.
- Comment on the community engagement activities of the members of the HEP. How are such activities recognised?

Evaluation on Enhanced Standards

- Comment on the comprehensiveness and effectiveness of the committee system in the HEP and how it utilises consultation and feedback for programme development.

- Comment on how stakeholders are represented in committees in the HEP.
- Comment on the role and function of the Chair of the governing board.
- Comment on how free is the governing board from undue external pressures.
- Comment on the HEP's policy pertaining to conflict of interest.
- Comment on the HEP's participation in the socio-economic activities of the community in which it is located.

10.8.2 Institutional and Academic Leadership

Evaluation on Benchmarked Standards

- Comment on the selection criteria, selection process, job description, and the qualification and experience required of members of the institutional executive management team of the HEP.
- Comment on the current leaders of academic programmes and departments in terms of their qualifications, experience and expertise on issues of curriculum design, delivery and review. Comment on the procedures and criteria for their selection, appointment and evaluation.
- Comment on the mechanisms and processes to allow for communication between the HEP leadership and the academic leadership of departments and programmes in matters such as recruitment and training, student admission, and allocation of resources and decision-making processes.
- Appraise how the performance of the academic leadership of departments and programmes is evaluated.

Evaluation on Enhanced Standards

- Comment on how the HEP leadership and the academic leadership create a conducive environment for innovation and creativity in the institution.
- Comment on the policies to strengthen the leadership capabilities of the HEP leadership and the academic leadership. Comment on the programmes that the HEP and academic leadership have undergone for this purpose in the last five years.

10.8.3 Administrative and Management Staff

Evaluation on Benchmarked Standards

- Evaluate the mechanisms that are in place to ensure the appropriateness and sufficiency of the administrative staff to support the implementation of the educational programmes.

- Do students and the academic staff perceive the administrative staff to be accessible and able to solve problems?
- Evaluate the mechanisms for training and career advancement for administrative and management staff of the HEP. Evaluate the achievement of the training programme in the last five years.
- Evaluate how the HEP reviews the performance of its administrative and management staff.

Evaluation on Enhanced Standards

- Evaluate the effectiveness of the training scheme and how it fulfils the needs of the educational programmes.

10.8.4 Academic Records

Evaluation on Benchmarked Standards

- Comment on the policies and practices on security of academic records.
- Evaluate the policy on privacy and confidentiality of records and its implementation.

Evaluation on Enhanced Standards

- Comment on the HEP's review of its policies on security of records and safety system, and its effectiveness.

10.8.5 Interaction with External Sectors

Evaluation on Benchmarked Standards

- Evaluate the mechanisms for cooperation between the HEP and the external sectors, including its external stakeholders.

Evaluation on Enhanced Standards

- Evaluate the agreements between the HEP and its external sectors.

10.9 EVALUATION ON AREA 9: CONTINUAL QUALITY IMPROVEMENT

10.9.1 Quality Improvement

Evaluation on Benchmarked Standards

- Comment on the policies and procedures for regular reviewing and updating of the internal quality assurance activities of the HEP.
- Are significant stakeholders involved in quality improvement efforts? Evaluate the effectiveness of changes that have been made to enhance quality.

- Evaluate the efforts taken by the internal quality assurance unit or department to keep abreast with the changes and best practices in quality assurance.
- Comment on the mechanisms employed by the HEP to implement recommendations for quality improvement and to record the achievements of such implementations.
- Comment on the HEP's effort to ensure the achievement of enhanced quality standards.
- Evaluate the link between the quality assurance processes and the achievement of the institutional goals.

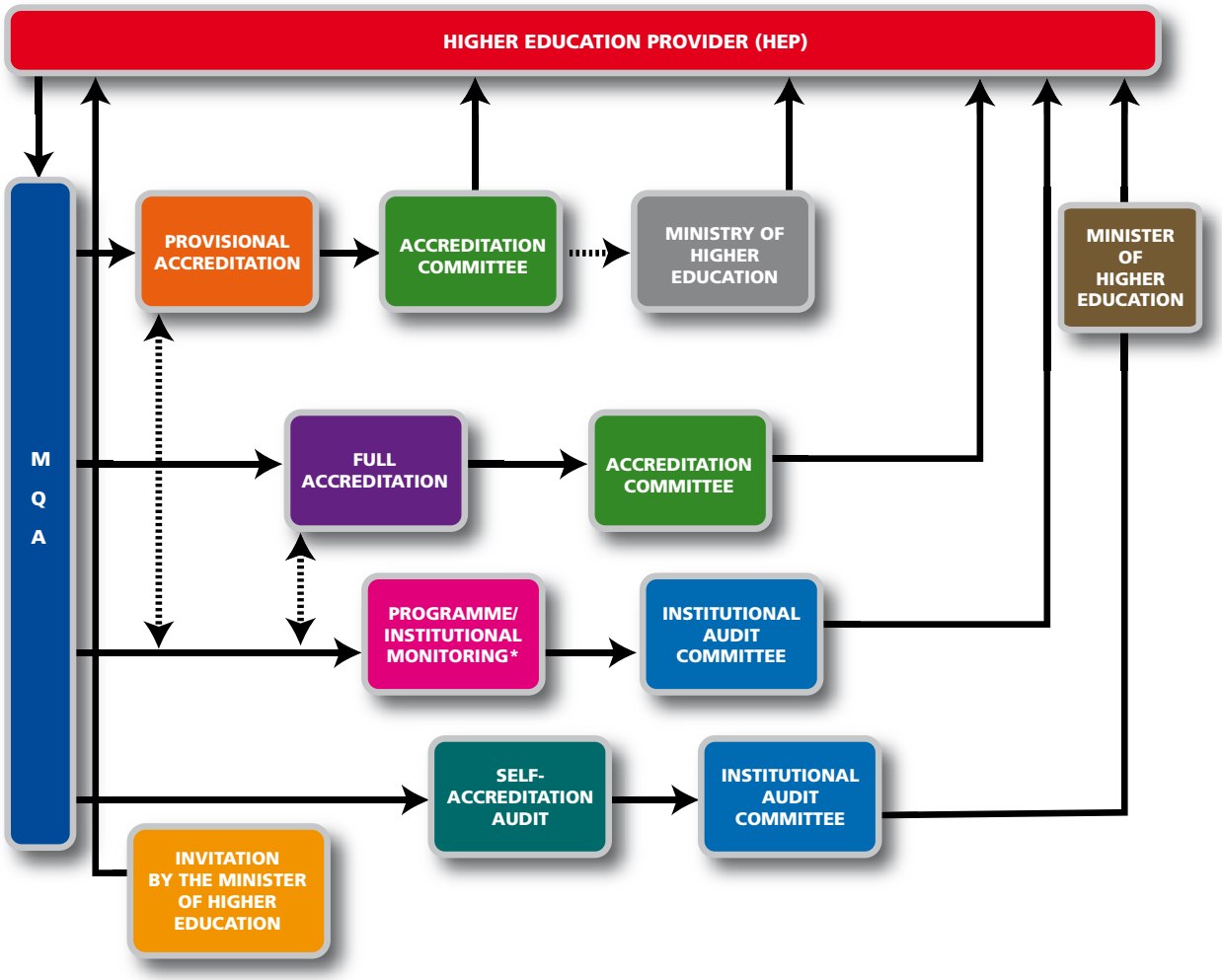
Evaluation on Enhanced Standards

- Assess the status of the quality assurance unit or department vis-à-vis other units in the HEP.
- Assess how the HEP drives the spirit of quality and encourages a shared vision of quality imbued learning environment among all its constituents.
- Evaluate the attempts made by the HEP to have its internal quality assurance system accredited and recognised by a relevant, external and authoritative accreditation body.

Appendices

Appendix 1

The Quality Assurance Process: An Overview

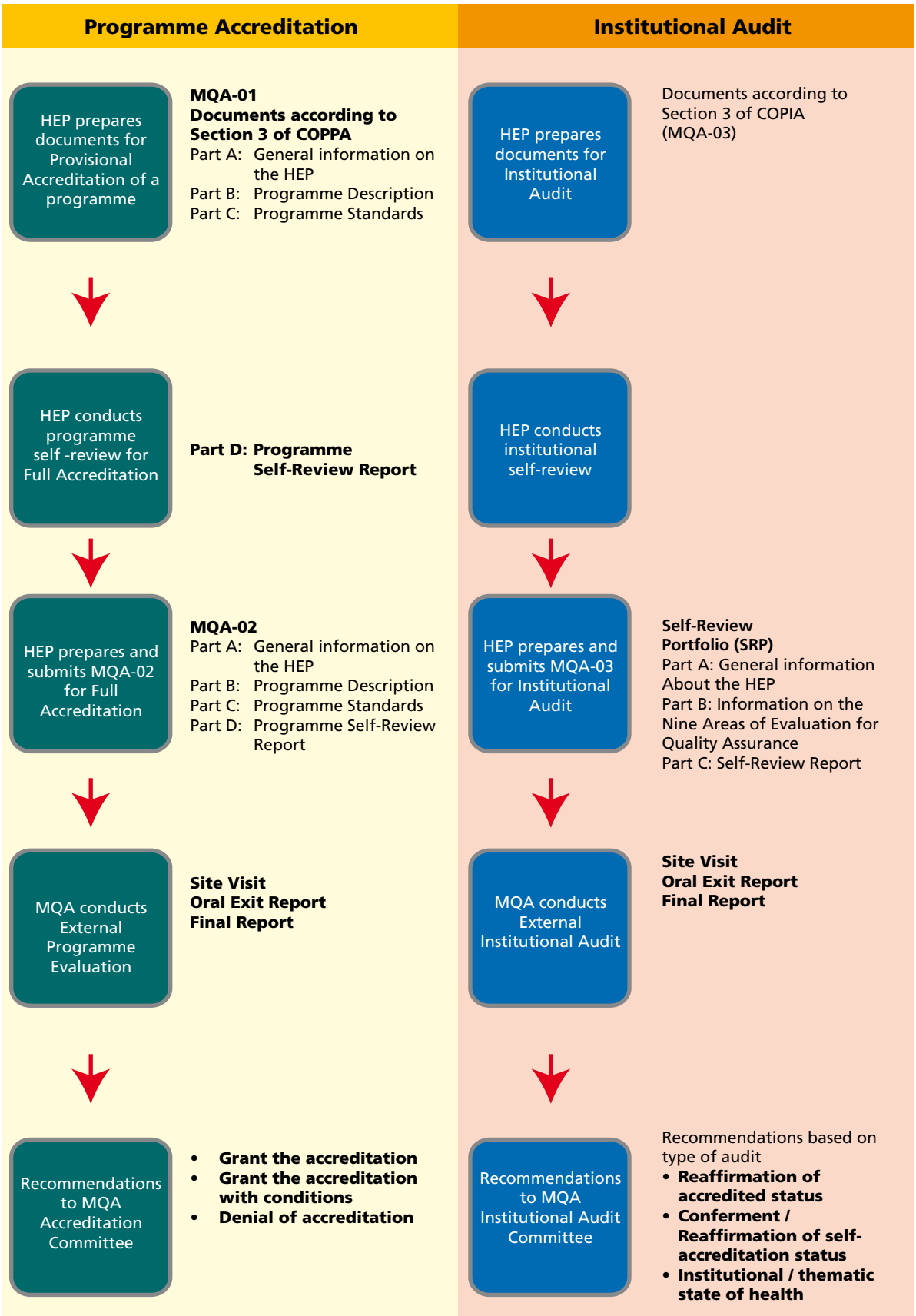


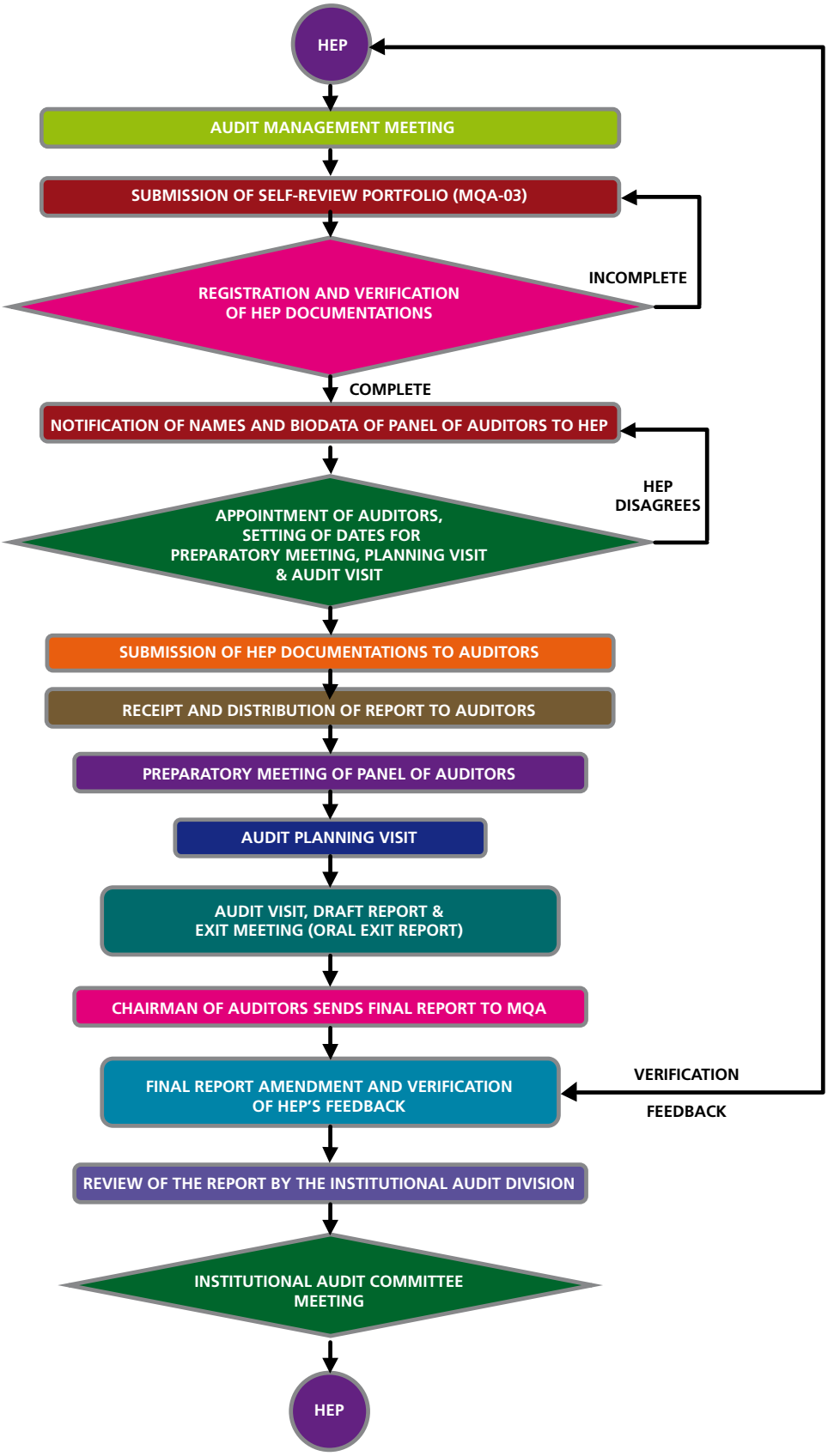
* Monitoring shall be triggered by one or more of the following:

1. Set duration or period for monitoring;
2. Request by stakeholder;
3. As part of Provisional Accreditation, where required; and
4. Any other factor that necessitates monitoring.

Appendix 2

General Comparison of Programme Accreditation and Institutional Audit Processes



Appendix 3

Flow Chart for Institutional Audit Process