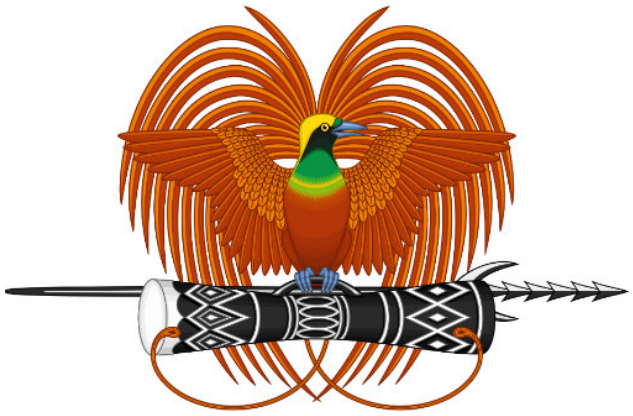

PNG National Standards for Higher Education Programme Accreditation

Made pursuant to the
Education (General Provisions) (Amendment) Act, 2020
Higher and Technical Education Reform Act, 2020

19 July 2024

PNG National Standards for Higher Education Programme Accreditation for PNG Higher Education Institutions

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FOREWORD

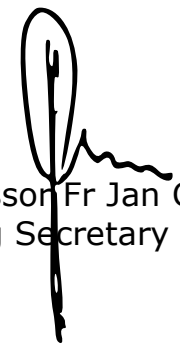
As Papua New Guinea continues to advance its higher education landscape, it is imperative to underscore the significance of accreditation standards in ensuring quality and excellence in academic programmes. Accreditation stands as a cornerstone of educational assurance, offering a pathway for institutions to uphold rigorous standards and enhance the educational experience for students.

Understanding Accreditation Standards in Higher Education is paramount for academics and higher education stakeholders as it delineates the fundamental criteria that underpin quality assurance and improvement in educational institutions. Accreditation standards serve as a comprehensive framework, encompassing various facets such as teaching methodologies, curriculum robustness, faculty qualifications, and institutional resources, among others.

Accreditation bodies, duly recognized by Department of Higher Education, Research, Science and Technology, play a pivotal role in reviewing and validating institutions against these standards. Through rigorous evaluation processes, accreditation bodies foster a culture of continuous improvement, promoting excellence in teaching, research, and institutional governance.

The adherence to accreditation standards goes beyond mere compliance; it embodies a commitment to excellence and continual improvement. Accredited status not only validates an institution's commitment to quality education but also instills confidence in students, employers, and the broader academic community. Moreover, it opens avenues for students to access Government financial aid through TESAS or HELP, thereby enhancing accessibility and affordability in higher education.

As Papua New Guinea Higher Education Sector embarks on its journey towards academic excellence, understanding and embracing accreditation standards are indispensable. By upholding these standards, institutions demonstrate their dedication to delivering high-quality education and contribute to the overall advancement of the nation's higher education landscape.



Professor Fr Jan Czuba
Acting Secretary

PURPOSE OF PNG NATIONAL STANDARDS FOR HIGHER EDUCATION PROGRAMME ACCREDITATION OF PAPUA NEW GUINEA HIGHER EDUCATION INSTITUTIONS

The purpose of the Papua New Guinea (PNG) National Standards for Higher Education Programme Accreditation is to safeguard the interests of students, parents, academic institutions offering accredited programs, prospective employers, and the general public. These standards are designed to ensure that accredited educational programs meet or exceed minimum performance levels in various areas, as established by subject matter experts. While accreditation does not guarantee individual student success, it does attest that graduates possess a defined set of requisite skills and competencies outlined in the accreditation standards. Graduation from an accredited programme may not guarantee professional success, but it is often deemed essential in certain disciplines.

Authentication

Programme accreditation serves as validation for graduates, indicating that they have met minimum standards endorsed by a recognized accrediting body. These standards shall be developed through collaborative consultation with educational institutions, professional associations, and relevant industries where graduates are expected to work.

Improvement

Accreditation offers educational programs the opportunity for self-assessment and improvement, providing valuable feedback on program content and direction. A key aspect of the accreditation process involves the preparation of a self-study report by the programme, enabling an evaluation of its performance against accreditation standards and facilitating longitudinal assessment of progress. Periodic re-evaluations are established to promote continuous enhancement.

General Guidance on Programme Design and Development

See also the requirements under **Standard 2** and the Guidelines for Higher Education Institutions towards the end of this document.

Accreditation enables the profession, via accrediting agencies, to offer guidance to both new and established academic programmes. Standards undergo periodic review and adaptation to address changes in technical, social, and economic contexts. This iterative process provides programmes with direction on adjustments necessary to remain responsive to evolving environmental factors.

1. **Establish Clear Goals and Objectives:** Define the specific goals and objectives of the programme, including the intended level within the Papua New Guinea Qualifications Framework (PNGNQF).
2. **Alignment with Institutional Vision, Mission and Propose:** Ensure that the programme aligns with the overarching vision, mission and propose of the institution, reflecting its values and educational objectives.
3. **Identify Target Audience and Needs:** Determine the target audience for the programme and analyze the needs it should fulfill within the educational landscape of Papua New Guinea.
4. **Professional Accreditation Considerations:** Assess whether there are professional accreditation or licensing requirements that graduates must meet, and ascertain the corresponding standards that the programme must adhere to.
5. **Industry Trends and Demands Analysis:** Conduct thorough analysis of current trends and demands in the relevant industry or field to inform curriculum development.
6. **Stakeholder Engagement:** Engage stakeholders through surveys, interviews, and research to understand employer and industry needs, technological advancements, and skill requirements in the job market.
7. **Curriculum Development:** Develop a comprehensive curriculum that aligns with the programme's objectives, integrating theoretical knowledge with practical application.
8. **Unit Structure and Content:** Define the core units, elective units, and practical training components, ensuring a logical sequence of units and consideration of prerequisites.
9. **Learning Outcomes Definition:** Clearly define expected learning outcomes for students, indicating the knowledge, students attributes, skills, and applications graduates are expected to possess, consistent with the PNGNQF.
10. **Assessment Methods:** Develop assessment methods that validly and reliably measure the achievement of these learning outcomes.
11. **Integration of Practical Experience:** Partner with industry professionals and organizations to incorporate real-world insights into the programme, including internships, apprenticeships, or industrial training programs.
12. **Ethical Considerations:** Emphasize educational integrity and honesty, integrating ethical considerations and professional standards relevant to the field of study.
13. **Student Support Services:** Ensure the availability of student support services, including counseling, to facilitate student success in their academic endeavors.
14. **Programme Length and Structure:** Design an appropriate programme length and structure that allows for comprehensive

coverage of the subject matter, with an adequate volume of learning and credit points.

15. **Community Engagement:** Some programmes may include community engagement or service-learning components that contribute to the overall educational experience, fostering civic responsibility and societal impact.

By adhering to these guidelines, institutions shall develop programmes that meet the needs of their stakeholders, align with industry standards, and provide students with a robust educational experience conducive to their personal and professional growth.

STANDARD 1

ALIGNMENT WITH THE PAPUA NEW GUINEA QUALIFICATIONS FRAMEWORK (PNGQF) AND INTEGRITY IN THE AWARD OF ACADEMIC CREDIT

1.1 Alignment with Programme Title and Level:

The programme's nomenclature and educational level must conform precisely to the descriptors delineated within the Papua New Guinea Qualifications Framework (PNGQF).

1.2 Adherence to Volume of Learning (time to learn):

The programme's minimum volume of learning meets the requirements of the PNGQF, annually for full-time students, encompassing a diverse array of learning activities. **1.5 Integrity in the Award of Academic Credit**

a. The program meets the requirements of the PNGNQF.
b. The institution's degrees and other academic awards adhere to established norms and practices common to institutions of higher education across the world, in terms of duration, content, and academic level. The institution exercises prudence in requiring credits beyond the stipulated minimum for undergraduate degrees.
c. The institution ensures the integrity and comparability of its academic programmes through meticulous evaluation and oversight of various educational components, including units' content, faculty selection and development, student admission and progress evaluation, and credit awarding processes. This commitment extends to programmes offered through transfer agreements, prior learning assessment, or other non-traditional educational pathways.
d. The institution maintains academic rigor and integrity across all its academic endeavors, irrespective of modality or delivery method. This entails ensuring that students completing programmes offered through alternative delivery modes acquire levels of knowledge, understanding, and competencies equivalent to those achieved in traditional programmes. The institution affirms its commitment to academic integrity by fostering an environment conducive to preventing and addressing instances of cheating and plagiarism.
e. The institution ensures coherence and consistency in academic recognition, including certificates and badges based on competencies or credit-bearing programmes example, micro-credentials or skill sets, ensuring alignment with the institution's degree programmes in terms of academic quality and rigor.

STANDARD 2

PROGRAMME DESIGN AND EXCELLENCE

2.1 Institutional Processes:

The institution must establish robust internal procedures for the design and approval of programmes, ensuring:

- Realistic projections of programme demand and resource requirements are made.
- External standards and requirements, including published discipline standards, professional accreditation criteria, input from relevant external stakeholders, and comparable standards at reputable tertiary institutions, are taken into account.
- Key graduate attributes, including English language proficiency, are appropriately developed.
- Peer review is conducted prior to programme approval.

2.2 Programme Content:

Programme content must be derived from a substantial, coherent, and current body of knowledge, scholarship, or practical application in one or more academic or practical disciplines. In cases where the programme is in an emerging or highly specialized field or is multidisciplinary, the institution must demonstrate that programme content draws appropriately from established bodies of knowledge or application.

2.3 Pathways and Equivalence:

The programme design must consider entry and exit pathways, including mechanisms for credit transfer and articulation from and to other studies. It must ensure equivalent student learning outcomes irrespective of the student's place or mode of study.

2.4 Documentation Clarity in Academic Programme Specification:

The program must have a Programme Specification Document (PSD) and accompanying documentation as set out in 2.4.1 below. This documentation plays a crucial role in ensuring clarity and coherence in academic programmes within higher education institutions (HEIs). These documents serve as comprehensive guides outlining the rationale, objectives, structure, delivery methods, assessment strategies, and student workload requirements of a programme. Furthermore, they delineate the expected student attributes and any compulsory completion requirements, contributing to a comprehensive understanding of the programme's design and intent.

2.4.1 Purpose and Components of the Programme Specification Document:

A Programme Specification Document serves as a concise yet comprehensive description of the learning outcomes and key features of an academic programme. It encapsulates the essence of the programme, providing insights into its aims, learning outcomes, structure, teaching and learning methods, assessment strategies, and progression requirements.

a. **Programme Description:** The PSD elucidates the nature and scope of the programme, adhering to standard descriptors while articulating its purpose and relevance within the academic landscape.
b. **Aims and Objectives:** It delineates the overarching goals and specific objectives of the programme, elucidating the intended outcomes and aspirations for student learning and development.
c. **Learning Outcomes:** The document articulates the expected knowledge, skills, and competencies that students are expected to acquire upon completion of the programme, aligning with the students' attributes and broader educational goals.
d. **Programme Structure:** It provides a detailed outline of the programme's structure, including the sequence of modules, units, or courses, and their interrelation, facilitating a coherent understanding of the curriculum framework.
e. **Teaching and Learning Methods:** The PSD outlines the pedagogical approaches and methodologies employed in delivering the programme, ensuring alignment with the desired learning outcomes and fostering an enriching educational experience for students.
f. **Assessment Methods:** It delineates the strategies and criteria utilized for assessing student performance and achievement, ensuring the robustness and validity of the evaluation process.
g. **Progression Requirements:** The document specifies the criteria and benchmarks that students must meet to progress through the programme and ultimately graduate, providing clarity on academic milestones and expectations.
h. **Additional Information:** Optionally, the PSD may include supplementary details such as entry requirements, employability prospects, or references to relevant literature and resources, catering to the unique aspects and contextual nuances of the programme.

Guidance: Utilizing the Programme Specification Template:

a. HEIs are encouraged to utilize the Programme Specification Template provided by the Department of Higher Education, Research, Science, and Technology (DHERST) to ensure consistency and standardization in the development of academic programmes. This template serves as a valuable tool for guiding institutions in crafting clear, coherent,

and academically rigorous programme specifications that align with established standards and best practices in higher education.

b. The Programme Specification Document is an indispensable tool for promoting transparency, coherence, and quality assurance in academic programme design and delivery. By adhering to the prescribed guidelines and leveraging the available resources, HEIs can enhance the clarity and effectiveness of their programmes, thereby fostering an environment conducive to meaningful learning and scholarly inquiry.

2.5 Supervision and Support:

For Master's Degree (Research) or Doctoral Degree programmes, the institution must ensure that:

- Academic supervisors are actively engaged in research and publication within relevant discipline areas.
- Students can participate in a scholarly intellectual community within their discipline.
- Adequate policies, supervision, services, resources, and support are available for students.

2.6 Quality Assurance in Partnerships:

If the programme is offered through arrangements with another entity, whether domestic or international, detailed quality assurance arrangements must be specified in the programme documentation. These arrangements should ensure that student learning outcomes are equivalent to those achieved when the programme is offered directly by the partnering entity.

STANDARD 3

ADEQUACY OF PROGRAMME RESOURCING, INFORMATION PROVISION, ADMISSION TRANSPARENCY, CONSISTENCY AND INTEGRITY

3.1 Resourcing Adequacy:

The institution must allocate sufficient resources to meet projected enrolments and ensure students achieve expected learning outcomes. This includes provisions for teaching spaces, laboratories, consumables, and funding.

3.2 Academic Staffing:

Appropriate numbers, qualifications, experience, and expertise among academic and teaching staff must support programme delivery. Staffing and workload allocations should align with the programme nature, level, and delivery mode.

3.3 Access to Learning Resources:

All students must have access to necessary library, information resources, and software, and any specialist equipment as relevant to the study area. The institution must ensure accessibility directly or through arrangements.

3.4 ICT Resource Availability:

Adequate ICT resources must support student learning in line with programme requirements and delivery modes.

3.5 Programme Information Provision:

Accurate and comprehensive programme information, including tuition fees, and awarding institution, must be provided to prospective students.

3.6 Career Opportunity Information:

Students must be informed of potential career opportunities related to the programme.

3.7 Work-Integrated Learning Support:

Arrangements for work-integrated learning, practicums, or placements must be appropriately resourced and supervised.

3.8 Budgetary Considerations:

The institution must budget adequately to meet enrolment projections and learning outcome expectations.

3.9 Admission Transparency:

The institution ensures transparency in the admission process by communicating requirements, criteria, procedures, and timelines to prospective students.

STANDARD 4

ASSURANCE OF TEACHING AND LEARNING QUALITY

4.1 To uphold high standards of teaching and learning, the institution must establish clear protocols and designate a qualified staff member as the programme coordinator responsible for the overall management, coordination, and updates of the programme. Adequate staffing, comprising qualified academic personnel and support staff, is essential to ensure the effective delivery of the programme and the achievement of expected student learning outcomes.

4.2 Qualifications and Responsibilities of Teaching Staff: Teaching staff members must possess appropriate qualifications and expertise aligned with the programme's discipline and level. Specifically, they should:

a. Hold qualifications at least one level higher than the programme they teach, or possess equivalent professional experience, with particular emphasis on academic proficiency.
b. Demonstrate requisite qualifications and research involvement for supervising students in doctoral programmes.
c. Exhibit a sound understanding of current scholarship and pedagogical principles relevant to the programme's student cohort.
d. Engage students in intellectual inquiry commensurate with the programme's level and unit being taught.
e. Be receptive to student feedback and committed to continuous improvement in teaching methodologies.

4.3 Accessibility and Support for Students: The institution must ensure that teaching staff are reasonably accessible to students seeking academic assistance or further information related to programme units. Additionally, effective mechanisms should be in place to identify and support students who may be at risk of academic progression challenges.

4.4 Quality Assurance in Work-Integrated Learning: The institution is responsible for maintaining effective arrangements to ensure the quality of student work placements, practicums, and other forms of work-integrated learning within the programme. This includes ensuring the quality of supervision provided during these practical experiences.

4.5 Detailed Standards:

a. **Formal Programme Coordination:** The institution formally designates a staff member as the programme coordinator to oversee programme management, coordination, and updates.
b. **Adequate Staffing:** The institution ensures sufficient staffing levels, including both academic and support staff, to meet the programme's learning outcomes effectively.

c. **Continual Professional Development:** Teaching staff regularly update their knowledge of evolving industry practices or scholarship in their disciplines.
d. **Student-Centered Approaches:** Teaching and training methods prioritize student engagement and utilize student-centered approaches to enhance learning outcomes.
e. **Accessibility for Students:** Teaching staff are reasonably available to students seeking assistance or further information related to programme content.
f. **Student Support Mechanisms:** Effective mechanisms are in place to identify and support students who may face challenges in academic progression.

STANDARD 5

ASSESSMENT AND ACHIEVEMENT OF STUDENT LEARNING OUTCOMES

5.1 Compliance with Assessment Policy: Assessment practices within the programme must align meticulously with the institution's approved assessment policy, emphasizing criterion-referenced assessment as a primary methodology.

5.2 Prevention and Addressing of Educational Misconduct: The institution implements robust procedures to proactively prevent, identify, and address instances of educational misconduct, encompassing all forms of cheating, including plagiarism.

5.3 Demonstrative Assessment Tasks: Assessment tasks embedded within the programme and its constituent units afford students ample opportunities to exhibit attainment of the anticipated student learning outcomes.

5.4 Development of Assessment Plans: Each unit (course) of competency within the programme is supported by a comprehensive assessment plan.

5.5 Ongoing Review and Moderation of Assessment: Assessment tasks for individual units undergo periodic review and updating as necessitated, coupled with meticulous moderation procedures to ensure reliability and validity.

5.6 Integration of Formative and Summative Assessments: Assessment activities within the programme encompass both formative and summative assessments to provide holistic evaluation of student progress.

5.7 Clarity in Evaluation Criteria: Assessment tasks are accompanied by transparent evaluation criteria aligned with the learning outcomes for the respective unit, with the incorporation of rubrics where applicable.

5.8 Post-Moderation of Assessment Outcomes: Assessment outcomes undergo post-moderation to verify their fidelity in accurately reflecting student achievement.

5.9 Provision for Assessment Appeals: The institution maintains a clear and transparently communicated policy delineating the process for students to appeal their assessment outcomes.

5.10 Accurate Recording and Reporting of Assessment Outcomes: Student assessment outcomes for both units and the overall programme are meticulously recorded and reported within the institution's systems.

5.11 Timely and Constructive Feedback: Students receive prompt and constructive feedback on their assessed work and practical tasks, fostering an environment conducive to understanding strengths, identifying areas for improvement, and nurturing active engagement in learning and development, including in research studies.

Guidance:

In addition to the aforementioned standards, assessment tasks within the programme and its units must facilitate the demonstration of student achievement in alignment with the expected learning outcomes. Academic staff responsible for assessment must possess appropriate qualifications, ensuring the credibility and integrity of the evaluation process. The programme management is tasked with ensuring consistent and appropriate assessment practices, ideally incorporating comprehensive moderation procedures. The institution is expected to maintain and analyze comparative data on student performance, including attrition rates, progression, completions, and grade distributions, benchmarking academic standards against similar accredited programmes offered by reputable tertiary institutions.

STANDARD 6

PROGRAMME MONITORING AND QUALITY ASSURANCE ARE ADEQUATE

6.1 Robust Policies and Procedures for Quality Assurance:

The institution establishes and upholds rigorous policies and procedures to ensure the quality of programmes, encompassing annual monitoring, periodic review, updating mechanisms, and provisions for discontinuation as necessary.

6.2 Annual Monitoring and Data Analysis:

Annual monitoring conducted by the institution entails meticulous analysis of student cohort performance data, including enrolments by cohort and demographic details, attrition rates, progression statistics, and programme completion metrics. Monitoring is required by Section 168 of the *Higher Education (General Provisions) Act 2014, (amended) 2020*.

6.3 Analysis of Grade Distributions:

For units incorporating graded assessment, there is a systematic annual monitoring and analysis of grade distributions to discern trends, identify potential issues, and mitigate the risk of grade inflation.

6.4 Ongoing Updates to Teaching Delivery:

Teaching staff engage in annual updates to the delivery and teaching methodologies of their units, reflecting evolving best practices, advancements in knowledge, and emerging technologies.

6.5 Comprehensive Programme Review:

A comprehensive internal review of the programme is conducted at least once every five years or prior to the next application for programme accreditation by NHTEB or a professional accreditation or licensing body.

6.6 Incorporation of Stakeholder Feedback:

Internal programme reviews incorporate stakeholder and graduate feedback, counsel from external experts, and benchmarking exercises to assess alignment with comparable programmes.

6.7 Collection of Student Feedback:

Regular solicitation of student feedback on unit experiences and teaching effectiveness is conducted for all units within the programme, with results disseminated to faculty to inform continuous improvement efforts.

6.8 Effective Transition Planning:

In the event of programme discontinuation, the institution develops and implements robust teach-out or transition plans to mitigate adverse impacts on enrolled students, ensuring equitable treatment and minimal disruption to their academic pursuits.

The institution must ensure systematic programme updates through a combination of internal revisions and external reviews, while maintaining overall programme coherence. Adequate consideration must be given to benchmarking practices, stakeholder input, and feedback from students and other pertinent stakeholders throughout the programme's lifecycle.

The institution must issue appropriate and verifiable certification documentation, implementing processes to authenticate awards and safeguard against fraudulent use.

CONCLUSION

In navigating the accreditation process, Papua New Guinea Higher Education Institutions (HEIs) are embarking on a journey towards excellence and quality assurance in academic programmes. By embracing accreditation standards, HEIs demonstrate their commitment to delivering high-quality education and fostering continuous improvement.

The National Standards for programme accreditation, ratified by the National Higher and Technical Education Board (NHTEB) on August 09, 2024, and formally instituted for implementation since January 02, 2025, mark a pivotal milestone in Papua New Guinea's educational governance framework and quality assurance. Governed by the provisions delineated in the *Higher Education (General Provisions) Act 2014 (amended) of 2020*, all higher education institutions within Papua New Guinea are mandated to undergo programme accreditation and registration or recognition as a higher education provider in PNG.

The accreditation process entails rigorous self-studies, where institutions meticulously assess their compliance with established criteria and pinpoint areas for enhancement. This introspective examination serves as a cornerstone for institutional growth and development, facilitating a culture of accountability and excellence.

Furthermore, the engagement of peer-review teams in on-site evaluations adds a layer of validation to the self-study findings. Through collaborative assessment and constructive feedback, HEIs receive external validation of their adherence to accreditation standards, thereby enhancing transparency and accountability in the educational ecosystem.

Ultimately, achieving accreditation status signifies more than mere compliance; it symbolizes a dedication to educational quality and student success. Accredited HEIs not only inspire confidence among stakeholders but also contribute to the advancement of Papua New Guinea's higher education landscape.

As HEIs in Papua New Guinea navigate the accreditation process, they embrace a commitment to academic excellence, innovation and continuous improvement. By adhering to accreditation standards, HEIs pave the way for a brighter future, where quality education serves as a catalyst for societal advancement and prosperity.

THESE STANDARDS HEREBY REPLACES THE STANDARDS SET FORTH ON MARCH 29, 2017.