

Report on evaluation of programmes and their documents submitted to CEQUAM by Faculties for NQF registration.

(September 10, 2010)

The Centre for Quality Assurance and Management (CEQUAM) undertook a pre NQA submission evaluation of programmes and their documents submitted by Faculties for NQF registration of qualifications. The following are the general outcomes of the evaluation. These outcomes or findings apply to more than 95% of the submissions:

1. Developers of these qualifications and submissions thereof seemed not to have familiarized themselves with the NQF regulations. Because of lack of familiarity with the regulations, the qualifications that were submitted do not meet minimum NQF registration standards, especially Bachelor Honours degrees. The NQA validating panel will need to be satisfied that the proposed programme requires students to achieve appropriate standards of work at each level of the award.
2. There seem to be confusions about the difference between exit programme outcomes and outcomes of individual courses. The essential difference is that exit programme or qualification outcomes relate to *the outcomes of the whole qualification upon completion of the learning programme, while course learning outcomes are used to inform the definition of learning outcomes and assessment criteria at the levels of individual courses in a programme*. Students exit at programme level but not at course level.
3. There are too many courses at level 4 yielding more than 40 credits at this level in Bachelors programmes. According to NQF regulations (p. 25), *“the number of contributing credits from level 4 is restricted to 40 credits”* for B. degree programmes such that the integrity of the qualification at the higher level is maintained.

It was observed that in some degrees there are up to 160 credits at level 4. In this instance, 120 credits do not count towards the total credits of the programme, which is a waste of effort and resources. The University and Faculty Core courses are the main culprits. This implies that our first year is equivalent to grade 12 and university level starts in year 2.

It is recommended that these core courses be upgraded to level 5. Upgrading of the level will not only mean changing the level number but would also entail realigning the learning outcomes of these courses to meet the requirements of level 5 and above. This will also impact on facilitation of learning and assessment.

4. It is also evident from the submitted qualifications that level 8 courses lack progression from level 7 that would lead to specialization at level 8. New courses are still introduced at level 8 and they do not seem to manifest a continuum or progression in complexity of learning from level 7 to level 8, leading to specialization. The NQF regulations stipulate that *“the Bachelor Honours should consolidate and deepen expertise in a particular discipline beyond that recognized in a level 7 ordinary Bachelor programme”*. The learning outcomes of our level 8 courses do not manifest any difference in complexity from those of level 7 courses. This creates room for external evaluators, i.e. NQA to judge our Bachelor degree programmes as not honours but merely ordinary level 7 bachelors.

5. It should be noted that the fact that these courses (at 4 above) are taught in year 4 does not necessarily mean they are level 8 courses. Generally the reference to years of study would not convey the complexity of teaching, and the demands of learning and assessment that the learner would be experiencing. Likewise, it is not the importance of the course that gives it an advanced level but rather the complexity of the expected learning outcomes or competencies. Progression through the levels should be shown in terms of increasing level of
 - demand/competence
 - standard (how well)
 - complexity/degree of sophistication and depth of skills of knowledge and understanding
 - student autonomy or independence of the learner and amount of guidance required by the learner

Exit programme outcomes of Bachelor Honours programmes need to be revisited to manifest advancement of level 8. Bachelor Honours must demand a high level of theoretical engagement and intellectual independence (NQF regulations, p 26). The exit programme outcomes must express what a person awarded the qualification knows and can do. The target audience for this statement is learners and trainees, their advisors, potential employers, and education and training providers, so it must be readable and give a clear indication of the role a person with the qualification is able to fulfil. The exit programme outcomes must express what a person awarded the qualification knows and can do, and they should be expressed in terms of the applied knowledge, understanding, skills (cognitive/intellectual, key/transferable, practical/professional skills), and attitudes that the qualification recognises.

Typically holders of a level 8 qualification will be able to:

- a review critically, consolidate and extend a systematic and coherent body of knowledge;
- b critically evaluate concepts and evidence from a range of resources;
- c transfer and apply subject-specific, cognitive and transferable skills and problem solving strategies to a range of situations and to solve complex problems;
- d exercise considerable judgment in a range of situations, accepting accountability for determining and achieving personal and group outcomes;

- e communicate solutions, arguments and ideas clearly and in a variety of forms;
- f reflect critically and analytically on personal and work place experience in the light of recent scholarship and current statutory regulations;
- g undertake self-directed study, research, and scholarship in a subject area, demonstrating intellectual independence, analytic rigour, and sound communication.
- h have qualities and transferable skills necessary for employment requiring;
 - the exercise of initiative and personal responsibility
 - decision-making in complex and unpredictable contexts; and
 - the learning ability needed to undertake appropriate further training of a professional or equivalent nature.

It is therefore expected that as students progress towards advanced levels, the degree of independence and taking responsibility of one's own learning increases. This implies that there should be less contact hours at honours level and more notional hours allocated to independent learning. Assessment methods should also be diversified rather than just the traditional approach of two assignments and one pen and paper examination.

6. Our courses seem to be heavy on lecturing than independent study and only contact hours seem to count towards NQF credits. NQF credits should count from the workload or learner effort towards achieving a certain competence. An explanation of how to determine notional hours and NQF credits is found on page 72 of the NQF regulations.

Notional hours = learning time, which entails all learner effort towards achieving a certain outcome but **NOT** only delivery time. This includes:

- Formal, directed learning including classes, training sessions, coaching, seminars and tutorials
- Practical work in laboratories
- Information retrieval, e.g. from library or through Web
- Self-directed study, such as private study, revision, remedial work
- Work-based activities that lead to formal assessment
- Practice
- Undertaking all formal assessments
- Counseling, mentoring, reflection

1 NQF credit = 10 notional hours

According to NQF regulations (p.71), "learning time is *notional* as it is not linked to any one individual learner. A learner who achieves the required performances in more time than anticipated for the 'average learner' will not receive more credits – they will only receive that number of credits deemed appropriate by the qualification developer. Similarly, a learner who achieves the

requirements in less time than average learner will not be awarded less credits – they will receive the stated credits”.

7. For programmes where electives are applicable, the credits of the electives that a student is not selecting should be subtracted from the total credits of the entire programme to avoid double earning of credits which students did not work for.
8. Each qualification should have a clear and meaningful purpose and rationale.

The purpose statement should state what the qualification is intended for. It should give a clear indication of the role a person with the qualification is able to fulfil.

The rationale should contain statements that aim at the

- contribution to national economic, social, cultural and/or technological goals
 - contribution to the quality and coherence of education and training in Namibia
 - identification of target candidates (NQF Regulations, p. 60)
9. A review of a qualification must be informed by full consultation with industry and related stakeholders (NQF regulations, p. 66), and evidence of these consultations should accompany application for registration. Although our programmes were “reviewed” with the intention to align them with NQF, there is a lack of evidence of demand of qualifications and national support. It is mandatory that qualifications submitted to NQA for NQF registration should be accompanied by proof of relevant stakeholder consultations during programme development or review and evidence of national support.
 10. In the case of UNAM where an integrated honours degree is offered, the B. Degree programme should carry a total of 480 credits or more. A minimum of 120 credits should be at level 8 to recognise advanced or distinguished study that is above level 7 of the Bachelors degree, of which 30 credits should be from research. These 30 credits do not include research methodology theory as students are expected to have already done research methodology theories at level 7 in preparation for advanced research at level 8 and above. It was observed that research credits of most of our honours programmes is just 16, which does not meet NQF requirements. Please take note that level consolidates B. Degree work of level 7 and deepens the understanding of the content that leads to specialization.
 11. Faculties need to find a common understating of qualification nomenclature to ensure consistency in the naming of qualifications. The NQF regulations (p. 12) provide a guideline in this regard. A qualification title will include a “*designator*” (or the broader field), e.g. Bachelor of Arts, and a “*qualifier*” (or specialist area), e.g. in Anthropology. A designator is prefixed by ‘of’ and qualifier is prefixed by ‘in’. Additional sub-qualifiers may be added to show increase in subdivisions.

12. It is mandatory that NQF qualifications are reviewed regularly and reviews must, at a minimum, take place at least every five years; and reviewed qualifications must meet the same quality criteria as new qualifications if they are to be re-registered on NQF (NQF regulations, p. 66). It was observed that our current “review” cycles are not linked to the purpose of registration and re-registration of qualifications on NQF.

13. Please take note, it is one thing to review programmes for NQF registration and it is another to review programmes for accreditation by e.g. NCHE. We have already given you the tools for the latter which also encompass all other administrative and support services and divisions.

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