



ZIMCHE

Quality Assurance in Higher Education

ZIMBABWE COUNCIL FOR HIGHER EDUCATION

**STANDARD OPERATING PROCEDURES FOR COMPLIANCE
MONITORING, INSTITUTIONAL ACCREDITATION, PROGRAMME
ACCREDITATION, QUALIFICATION ASSESSMENT, AND
REGISTRATION OF INSTITUTIONS WHICH NEED TO PROVIDE HIGHER
EDUCATION SERVICES**

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Preamble

This booklet is on the Standard Operating Procedures which have been adopted by the Zimbabwe Council for Higher Education. The booklet is intended to assist stakeholders to understand the procedures which are followed by the Zimbabwe Council for Higher Education in providing service in the following areas:

- Compliance Monitoring;
- Institutional Accreditation;
- Programme Accreditation;
- Qualification Assessment; and
- Registration of Institutions.

COMPLIANCE MONITORING STANDARD OPERATING PROCEDURES (SOP)

INTRODUCTION

All institutions offering degrees and post Graduate Diplomas should be registered with the Zimbabwe Council for Higher Education (ZIMCHE) in accordance with the ZIMCHE Act. The purpose of compliance monitoring is to ensure that no local institution operates outside the law and offer unaccredited degrees to unsuspecting Zimbabweans.

1. Prepare schedule of sites to be visited.
2. Get signed and stamped Order of Closure forms.
3. Visit each site and obtain information, if possible this should be documented evidence of the operations of the institution and its registration status.
4. If evidence proves the institution is operating without registration issue the Order of Closure, which the recipient must sign in duplicate.
5. File the Order of Closure.
6. Prepare an advert to notify the public about the status of the institution.
7. Make follow up visits to check on status until the institution has regularized its status.

INSTITUTIONAL ACCREDITATION STANDARD OPERATING PROCEDURES (SOP)

INTRODUCTION

The ZIMCHE Act Section 18 (1) and (2) stipulates that the Council shall evaluate the performance of institutions regularly in accordance with the institutional quality assurance standards prescribed by the Minister on the recommendations of the Council. Hence all HEIs in Zimbabwe registered with ZIMCHE have to undergo an evaluation process referred to as Institutional Accreditation.

The Process

1. ZIMCHE advises the Institution to conduct a self-assessment exercise using the Accreditation instrument developed by ZIMCHE with assistance of experts in HEIs.
2. Institution submits the completed accreditation instrument form to ZIMCHE.
3. An accreditation visit to the institution is carried out by a ZIMCHE team comprising of members of the ZIMCHE Secretariat (Either the CEO or the Deputy CEO will be the leader of the delegation, members of the Directorate of Registration and Accreditation, and representatives of each of the other Directorates) and selected peer reviewers who are experts in the various disciplines offered by the specific HEI. Some members of Council may participate in the accreditation visit.
4. The team is broken down into smaller units, to allow closer attention to each of the eight areas of focus indicated in the accreditation instrument, which are: Establishment of the Institution; Governance Procedures; Physical Structures; Staffing; Student Admission; Student Welfare and Academic Staff Promotion. Each unit must include a peer reviewer preferably one conversant with each the area of focus.
5. Once at the HEI the small units, in the company of the relevant personnel for each unit from the HEI, verify the claims made by the institution on each of the areas of focus.
6. The small units in the absence of the HEI personnel produce a report.
7. The secretariat compiles the Institutional Accreditation report, constantly liaising with the institution to fill in any gaps that may have been missed at the time of the visit.
8. The report is presented to the institution for an institutional reaction and commitment to a programme of action to address any areas of concern that may have been noted.
9. Subsequent visits are made to verify any claims of addressing the concerns expressed by ZIMCHE.
10. An accreditation report is presented to ZIMCHE.

11. An accreditation certificate is issued to the institution if it meets the requirements for accreditation.

The accreditation report is published in the media to inform the public.

PROGRAMME ACCREDITATION STANDARD OPERATING PROCEDURES (SOP)

INTRODUCTION

Every programme that a Higher Education Institution (HEI) would want to offer must be accredited by ZIMCHE. It is important to note that any changes to any existing programme must also be accredited. The purpose of programme accreditation is to ensure the quality of all degrees offered by all HEIs in Zimbabwe.

The Process

1. The HEI submits to ZIMCHE hard and electronic copies of an application to introduce a new programme. Attached to the application letter should be the hard and electronic copies of the general academic and programme regulations as well as other documentation to include: -
 - ❖ Name of the programme;
 - ❖ entry requirements;
 - ❖ course outlines for each course to be taught in the programme, which should address the following; Rationale, Aims, Course objectives, Course content, Teaching approaches, Assessment Criteria/procedures and Reading list;
 - ❖ staffing positions with details of names of staff, their qualifications, awarding institutions and the courses they are to teach;
 - ❖ evidence of stakeholder consultation and support,
 - ❖ evidence of institutional support in the form of a supporting letter from the Registrar and letter from the Bursar indicating institutional budget allocation for the proposed programme;
 - ❖ proposed student enrolment for the programme;
 - ❖ size and quality of library resources and equipment available for the programme;
 - ❖ ICT infrastructure and resources available to support the programme; and
 - ❖ Infrastructural resources available at the disposal of the institution for use by the programme.
2. Scrutiny of documents by Secretariat staff;
3. Three appropriately qualified and experienced peer reviewers who are selected from the academia of other HEIs as well as from the relevant professional fields scrutinize the

documents and express an opinion on the programme in terms of soundness of the programme in relation to: -

- ❖ name of programme;
- ❖ entry requirements for the programme;
- ❖ duration of the programme;
- ❖ structure of the programme;
- ❖ number of courses;
- ❖ combination of courses;
- ❖ reference to the Minimum Body of Knowledge (MBK) for the particular academic discipline;
- ❖ Number of credits or contact hours;
- ❖ appropriateness of course title and course content, assessment procedures and reading resources for each course;
- ❖ relation to institutional mandate.

Peer reviewers are expected to be persons who hold at least a Master's Degree in the relevant discipline and have at least five years working experience as an academic lecturer in HEIs, for experts drawn from professional bodies the condition of work as an academic lecturer may be waived.

4. Peer reviewers submit a report in soft and hard copy format which should detail their observations on the programme and make suggestions to improve the programme if necessary.
5. ZIMCHE Secretariat synthesizes the comments and compiles a peer reviewers' report for despatch to the applying institution.
6. Revised copies of the documents are sent back to ZIMCHE, whereupon they are sent to the same peer reviewers for further review.
7. While the above process is on course, the ZIMCHE Secretariat in the company of Peer Reviewers and possibly one or two members of Council or HEQAC visit the institution to ascertain the readiness of the institution to start offering the proposed programme, in terms of the infrastructural resources, library resources, ICT resources, human resources etc.

8. Constant submission of status reports to HEQAC and Council until all are satisfied that the institution is ready to offer the programme.
9. Accreditation of the programme is granted.
10. A letter granting accreditation is written by the Chairperson of Council, a copy of which is kept in the Directorate of Registration and Accreditation.
11. The letter is used to feed the data base of accredited programmes in the HEI.
12. The database is maintained and updated by ZIMCHE.

Note that no accreditation takes place unless the prescribed fees are paid.

QUALIFICATION ASSESSMENT STANDARD OPERATING PROCEDURE (SOP)

INTRODUCTION

This Standard Operating Procedure (SOP) details the process that pertains to the assessment of qualifications. The process starts with the applicant and goes through a rigorous and credible vetting process until finalized.

A) Requirements to facilitate the Assessment of Qualifications

1. Letter specifying the need for assessment. This should include the applicant's contact physical address, telephone numbers (land line and cell), and e-mail address.
2. Payment of prescribed Qualification Assessment Fee in cash or bank cheque.
3. Four copies of the 'O' level certificate or equivalent.
4. Four copies of the "A" level certificate or equivalent.
5. Four copies of each of any other certificate the applicant acquired which may assist the peer reviewers to make a reasonable determination of the equivalency of the qualification under assessment.
6. Four copies of the certificate of qualification(s) to be assessed, whether it is a postgraduate diploma, certificate (if awarded by a degree granting institution) or degree.
7. Four copies of the transcript(s) of qualification(s) to be assessed. *This should show the courses that were studied, duration of the programme of study, the passes attained supported by a key to the grading system applicable and the awarding institution's official stamp and signatories.*
8. Four copies of institutionally certified syllabus or course outline where possible.
9. All documents should be in English or in authenticated English translation bearing the official seal of Embassies accredited to Zimbabwe or the Embassy of Zimbabwe accredited to the country where the qualification was awarded.
10. All copies of documents that are submitted for determination of local equivalency/assessment of qualifications should be certified by the commissioner of Oaths.
11. Supply the website address of the institution where you obtained the qualification(s) to be assessed.

N.B. *Original copies of all certificates should be presented to the officer receiving the request for assessment to verify and certify their authenticity before processing. However, these should not be left behind under any circumstances.*

The applicant should make sure that all information found at the back of any of these documents is on copies submitted. This is crucial information for assessment purposes.

B) Verification of the Status of the Awarding Institution

When assessing international degrees the aim is to ensure that the degree is of such quality that it fulfils the prerequisites for qualifying to be recognized as a degree.

- The first step is to establish the status of the institution that has issued the credentials.
- The institution must exist.
- There must be evidence that the institution actually does offer the programme in question.
- The institution must have legal authority to issue the degree in question.

C) Sources for Verification of Status of Institutions of Higher Education

- Technology/The Internet
- The national Ministry of Education (MoE) is most often the responsible body for keeping records of each county's recognised educational institutions and may provide national university rankings.
- Quality Assurance Bodies.
- The official web site of the relevant MoE is often the best and most up-dated source of information.
- Examples of useful sources of information are: -
 - China - China Academic Degrees & Graduate Education Information (CDGDC). CDGDC which is a representative of the Chinese Ministry of Education.
 - India - the National Assessment and Accreditation Council (NAAC).
 - The International Association of Universities (IAU), which operates under UNESCO, offers a free on-line database that contains information on education systems of most of the world's countries.

- A book entitled *World List of Universities* published by the (IAU)
- In Europe the Nuffic is the database for international recognition for diplomas.
- The German Anabin, Anerkennung und Bewertung ausländischer Bildungsnachweise, is also a database for country profiles and information on education systems. Anabin provides detailed and up-to-date information on universities, programmes, degrees etc. Anabin's operational language is German.
- Country Education Profiles (CEP), which is managed by the Australian Ministry of Education.

The National Academic Recognition Information Centres (NARIC), which provide guidance to educational institutions. NARICs are connected to one another by European Network of Information Centres (ENIC).

D) Identification of Assessors

Assessors of qualifications are identified from the academic experts in the given field found in universities in Zimbabwe. If necessary there may be need to source these from outside Zimbabwe.

1. Principle

- The Zimbabwe Council for Higher Education (ZIMCHE) is dependent on experienced professionals to carry out the assessment of different qualifications.
- Assessors are selected for their experience and qualifications in the relevant professional discipline.
- They are considered to be well informed on the different programmes in the discipline particularly with respect to curriculum, accreditation and pre-requisites to certain key/core courses, period of study of specific courses and their content.

2. Process involves

- Identification, by the responsible officer, of three appropriately qualified and experienced experts in the field to be assessed.
- This follows an examination of the Register of Institutions of Higher Education, Their Associates and Programmes offered to find out which institutions offer similar programmes.

- ZIMCHE calls on the University relevant dean's office or chairperson's office to provide the names of people who are appropriately qualified to assess the qualification.
- A name is given as well as the contact details.
- The individual is contacted to find out if they can do the job in about a week. Assessors must submit their CVs if they are not already on the ZIMCHE database.
- The name has to be entered into a database of assessors of qualifications for future reference.

E) The Task of Assessors of Qualifications

Assessors of qualifications are professionals who should

- observe strict confidentiality;
- recognise that the assessed documents and opinion given is confidential and is the property of ZIMCHE;
- appreciate that details of the assessor are never revealed to the applicant and vice versa;
- determine the accreditation status of the conferring institution;
- check for any possible fraudulent indicators on the documents submitted;
- evaluate/assess qualification(s)/courses against a standard accredited programme in terms of: -
 - number of courses,
 - the names of courses,
 - nature of the programme; if possible
 - content of the courses/syllabus of the courses,
 - duration of programme, and
 - entry level qualifications for the programme for their suitability for the stated programme;
- Establish whether qualification(s) meets the minimum requirements when **compared** to equivalent qualification within the specific or related academic/professional discipline in Zimbabwe.

- Compare to other known qualifications elsewhere within Zimbabwe and abroad.
- Equate qualification(s) to local standard.
- Complete the Assessment Forms that come with the request for assessment. The purpose of these forms is to standardise the assessment of qualifications to ensure that all assessors focus on the same issues and come up with a rational decision. The form is the Qualifications Assessment form QAF2 which has to be returned to *The Principal Director, Registration and Accreditation. Zimbabwe Council for Higher Education.*
- Assessors are expected to be part of the ZIMCHE continuous improvement agenda by sharing their views and expertise on the qualification assessment processes and procedures.

F) Despatch and Follow up of reports from Assessors

- Once assessors are identified documents are despatched by street delivery or by DHL.
- After a period of two weeks, there is a follow up with the assessors.

G) Turnover Time

- The turn over time is expected to be roughly a maximum six weeks.

H) Final Determination of the Equivalency of the Qualification

- Given the differences in the experiences of the different assessors as well as their approach to the assessment exercise their opinions quite often contradict each other, hence brief reports of the submissions of the different experts from different institutions are compiled.
- To ensure that there is transparency in the determination of the local equivalency and collective ownership of decisions, the senior management of ZIMCHE Secretariat sits as a Panel of Assessors to consider the opinions expressed by the experts and make a final determination.
- If there are any inconsistencies, the meeting resolves to follow up the issues of concern and clear them up, then resubmit these to the Panel once again.
- Recommend to HEQAC what the Secretariat has agreed.
- HEQAC reports to Council or EXCO of Council where a determination is made.

- Once a determination is made the client is informed in a letter that announces the determination and details the supporting reasons.
- The Principal Director, Registration and Accreditation signs the letter, carrying the official stamp of the directorate.
- There is provision for an appeal if a client is not pleased with the determination.

I) The Appeal Process

- An aggrieved person can lodge an appeal against a decision made by the Panel of Assessors.
- Payment of Prescribed Qualification Assessment Appeals fee in cash or bank cheque
- The Panel of Assessors meets to consider the appeal and its merits.
- Three other experts are identified by the Panel this time, to assess the documents once again.
- On receipt of reports from the three assessors, the Panel sits again to consider the assessment reports for another final determination.

THE PRINCIPLE IN ALL THIS IS TO PRESERVE THE INTEGRITY, REPUTATION AND PROFESSIONALISM OF ZIMCHE.

REGISTRATION OF INSTITUTIONS OF HIGHER EDUCATION STANDARD OPERATING PROCEDURES (SOP)

INTRODUCTION

This Standard Operating procedure caters for all Higher Education Institutions intending to operate in Zimbabwe which are required to register with ZIMCHE. The SOP details the process of registering a new degree granting institution in Zimbabwe. ZIMCHE has to satisfy itself that the proposed institution has the capacity to deliver quality Higher Education.

- Provision of information on registration options and requirements for each option.
- Payment of application fee.
- Collection of application forms.
- Submission of duly completed Application forms and attendant required documentation.
- Scrutiny of application forms and attendant documents based on the Assessment Criteria.
- Institutional visits to assess ability, capacity and readiness to operate a university.
- Constant Liaison with applicants to ensure total adherence to ZIMCHE requirements, following the Assessment Criteria detailed in (PRC1), before final approval can be granted through Presidential Proclamation in a Statutory Instrument for Private Universities and through an Act of Parliament for State Universities.
- A Provisional Certificate of Registration is issued to those who have made substantial progress towards meeting the requirements.
- A Certificate of Registration is issued to those applicants who have met all the requirements for registration.