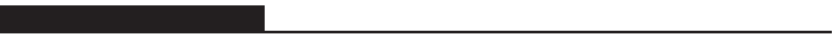


**Designing and
Delivering
Distance Education:
Revised Nadeosa
Quality Criteria**





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Dedication

This publication is dedicated to the memory of the late Tessa Welch, an inspiring Saide colleague and friend, who led the initial process of development of the quality criteria and supported extensively the Nadeosa process which resulted in this revision.

Acknowledgements

The Nadeosa Secretariat for coordinating the revision process.

Saide Education staff for making valuable input into the revised criteria through an internal workshop.

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The entire Nadeosa community for contributing during the workshops

Introduction

The brief introductory section to the Nadeosa Quality Criteria below is adapted from the CHE Good Practice Guide¹. It aptly captures how post-school education is affected by new educational technologies and the wide range of possibilities that have been ushered in by use of the technologies. Whilst the affordances of educational technology offer a great opportunity for increasing the flexibility of programme delivery, experience shows that there are many challenges that many institutions still face in ensuring that technology is used to enhance the quality of such education. These challenges largely relate to considerations that institutions should take into account when undertaking various programme planning and delivery processes, like enrolment size, support for a decentralized and widely diversified student body, and assessment strategies, including work integrated learning (WIL). The following section from the CHE Good Practice Guide helps providers interpret the Nadeosa Quality Criteria more appropriately, based on the analysis that is done on the various ways in which technology can be used.

Although it is clear that an increasing number of institutions are using a blend of face-to-face, e- and on-line learning as well as distance methods, the revised funding policy for higher education provision maintains a distinction between contact and distance provision and it seems sensible also to maintain the distinction from a quality assurance perspective. When the intended target students for a programme are located remotely from the institution and may never attend a meeting on a central or even decentralised campus, it is then necessary to make informed decisions about how such students will be able to access the curriculum and its resources, how they will be supported through the learning process and how they will be assessed in a valid and reliable way. In addition, the management of Work Integrated/Work Based Learning as well as practical work needs more careful planning and support if students are more widely distributed. There are many ways in which technology can be used to support distance provision as outlined in the following discussion.

When using technology, it is important for the provider to be clear on the mode of delivery used for a programme, and the implications therein. The mode of education provision is typically viewed on a continuum from purely face-to-face tuition through to education purely at a distance, the latter traditionally conceptualised as correspondence tuition with no face-to-face interaction between teachers and learners. However, there is now more resource-based (independent) learning in face to face programmes, and more face to face interaction in distance. With the increasing use of supporting educational technologies there is likely to be rapid movement to the centre, which makes the distinction between distance and face-to-face very blurred. This trend is signified by increasing blended learning in many institutions.

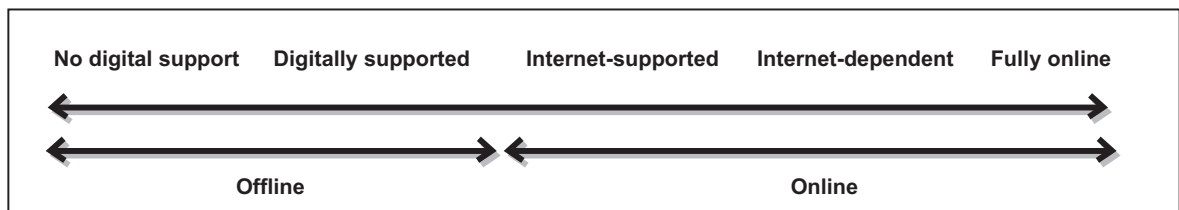
Spatial or geographic distribution of teachers and learners



¹Council on Higher Education (CHE). 2014. Distance Higher Education Programmes in a Digital Era: Good Practice Guide. Pretoria: CHE.

A second continuum could represent another dimension by plotting the extent of supporting ICTs - ranging from fully offline to fully online. In internet-supported programmes, participation online is an option or alternative for students. In internet-dependent programmes, participation via the internet is a requirement, and could include online interaction, communication and access to course materials via the web. In fully online programmes, there is no physical face-to-face component, although there could be a virtual face-to-face component

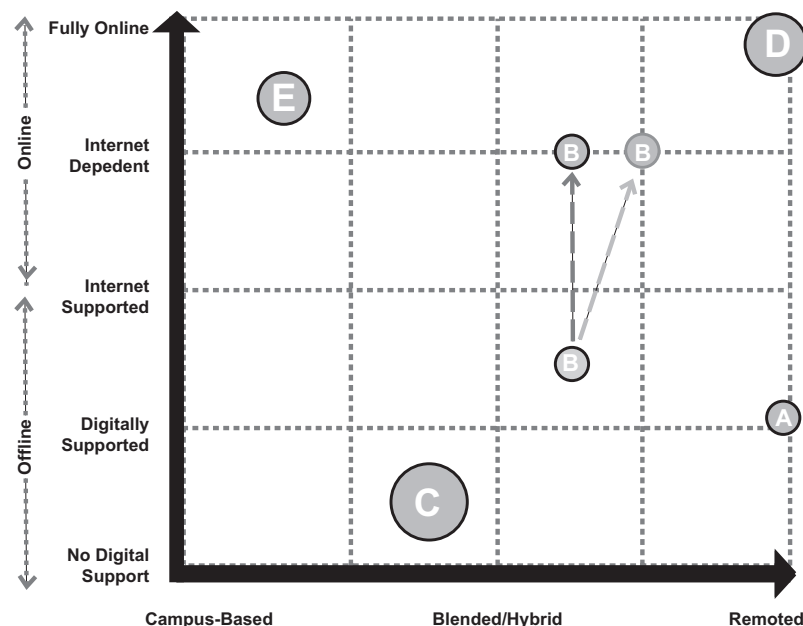
Extent of ICT support



In our African context, it is pertinent to also consider digital forms of support that do not require internet access, for example learning supported offline via CD/DVD/flashdrive. Of course, within a particular course or module, learning could be supported both online and digitally offline at various stages. Nonetheless, the physical location of students and their access to appropriate resources and technology remain important considerations in the design and delivery of programmes.

It is useful to conceptualise these two continua in relation to each other as horizontal and vertical axes.

Situating various courses or programmes on the resulting grid allows one to describe both the extent of spatial or geographic distribution and the ICT supported dimensions of a course or programme. The circles positioned on the grid represent examples based on courses or programmes at actual higher education institutions (HEI). This would enable a HEI to position a particular course or programme (such as B) on the grid in terms of where they are situated right now, and then determine where the institution would like them to move to over a period of time. This could assist in identifying what changes would be required in order to move or reposition the course in terms of this grid, and the other influencing factors or aspects of the course would need to be taken into account.



One particular factor emerges as being particularly important in defining what the possibilities are in how a course is delivered. This is believed to be the group or class size i.e. the enrolment for a particular instance of delivering a particular course. The size of the cohort enrolled for a course or programme would appear to be a major determinant of the nature and extent of the interactions possible between the lecturer and the students and amongst students themselves. This also determines the need for the deployment of tutors, the level of mediation employed by the lecturer and tutors, the level of support for the students, the nature of the assessment, and could in fact be the determinant for the pedagogical approach. In addition to class size, access to stable internet and data is also a significant factor determining teaching and learning interactions.

It would therefore be opportune to depict class size when locating a course or programme on the grid in order to indicate the extent to which the underlying aspects identified and discussed would need to be considered. In addition, if the plan is to migrate a course to a different position on the grid over time, an indication of this aspect would provide a cautionary flag to prompt examination of the practical aspects that would need to be considered to effect such a migration. This aspect is important in reminding providers against the practice of making overnight decisions to change the mode of provision of a programme before sufficient planning is done. It also cautions against increasing course enrolments substantially without making appropriate provision for a bigger group of students. The class size could be depicted on the same grid by simply varying the relative size of the circles denoting a particular course. For example, it can be easily seen that the group for course C, is larger than the group for course D, which in turn is larger than E.

These Nadeosa Quality Criteria are mainly concerned with programmes that fall to the right-hand side of the grid explored above, although they are also applicable even to campus based courses in many ways. As we move from the left to the right, so traditional distance education concerns come to the fore with respect to ensuring an equivalent learning experience for an increasingly distributed student cohort through provision of access to appropriate learning resources as well as decentralised support, assessment and, in some programmes, work-integrated learning.

In most instances, the review process will begin with a consideration of an institution's online accreditation application. Experience suggests that it is often difficult to get a clear sense of how providers have designed their programme with the needs of remote distance students in mind. This means that how curriculum resources are designed and shared; the ways in which the programme will be assessed and how students will be supported through the process; as well as how staff are prepared and supported for teaching in new ways, become critical lenses for interrogation. In all this, important factors to consider is the profile of students, the technology that is used and ability of students to access data. Where technology is used to enable some of these functions, it is necessary to assess whether appropriate use is made of relevant technology for the intended purposes and whether the implications for students and staff have been sufficiently thought through: the learning purpose should drive the use of ICTs and not the other way round. The following quality guidelines therefore seek to provide indicators for good practice of distance provision related to the general criteria that apply to all programmes.

Quality Criteria

1. Policy and Planning

Quality Criterion

The educational provider has a clear sense of purpose and direction, which is informed by national and international priorities, the regulatory framework, as well as by the quality demands of cost-effective post school educational provision to reach large numbers of students. There is a rationale and relevant systems for the use of open and distance education to enable access and success.

Quality Elements	Reviewer's Observation and/or Feedback ²
1.1 The mission statement of the educational provider sets out clear and unambiguous goals that resonate with open learning principles ³ within the local, national and international context, and which adequately address equity issues in educational opportunities and achievement.	
1.2 Policy statements and strategic plans are aligned with the mission, goals and principles of the educational provider which are used to guide the design, development and review of programmes, within an open distance education framework.	
1.3 There are relevant policies and evidence of institutional support which cover the quality criteria and elements within them.	
1.4 The provider or programme management team can provide a rationale for the use of technology in deploying education at a distance.	

² This column is for use by the evaluator who gives feedback on each quality element.

³ Key open learning principles include:

- Learners are provided with opportunities and capacity for lifelong learning;
- Learning processes centre on the learners and the contexts of learning, build on their experience and encourage active engagement leading to independent and critical thinking;
- Learning provision is flexible, allowing learners to increasingly determine where, when, what and how they learn, as well as the pace at which they will learn;
- Prior learning and experience is recognised wherever possible; arrangements for credit transfer and articulation between qualifications facilitate further learning; and, most importantly,
- Providers create the conditions for a fair chance of learner success through learner support, contextually appropriate resources and sound pedagogical practices.

Quality Elements	Reviewer's Observation and/or Feedback ²
1.5 Prior to offering programmes of study students at a distance, the provider has explicitly designed systems for administering and teaching students at a distance.	
1.6 There is a cost-effective and appropriate technological infrastructure for design and delivery, student support and assessment.	
1.7 There is a published student charter declaring commitments to students, their access and success. This statement details how the commitments will be measured.	
1.8 Policy and programme implementation plans are realistic, aligned with learning and teaching goals and enabling targets to be met.	
1.9 Policy statements and methods of implementing them are recorded, readily available, and fully understood by members of staff.	
1.10 There are mechanisms to support and monitor staff in the implementation of these policies (e.g. quality assurance policies, student support policies, staff development policies).	
1.11 There are monitoring procedures to ensure that all policies are implemented, evaluated and amended as and when necessary.	
1.12 Equitable opportunities are ensured for all students, staff and other stakeholders.	
1.13 The provider has systems in place to integrate risk management into planning.	

Overall evaluation of this quality criterion on policy and planning

The educational provider has a clear sense of purpose and direction, which is informed by national and international priorities, the regulatory framework, as well as by the quality demands of cost-effective post school educational provision to reach large numbers of students. There is a rationale and relevant systems for the use of open and distance education to enable access and success.

Overall, reflect on whether this criterion is met, and identify any strengths and necessary improvements.

2. Student Information

Quality Criterion

Information and Management System provides for the tracking of student performance (for example, in assignments, examinations, or even attendance at contact sessions) and can be used to identify at risk students and those students who, though registered, are inactive. It is also used to determine completion and throughput rates.

Criterion Elements	Observations and/or Feedback
<p>2.1 The provider has a student profile that identifies the profile and situation of distance education students. This profile includes:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● demographic factors - for example, age, gender, geographic location, and occupation/employment; ● language profiles - including language ability in the main language of teaching and learning, language background, and multilingual ability; ● motivation for learning - for example, for career purposes or personal interest; ● educational background/learning experience - for example, prior learning and experience, prior qualifications, experience of distance learning, learning skills and styles, and language background; ● special needs - for example, barriers to learning, physical disabilities or learning difficulties; ● resource factors - for example, financial resources, place of learning, times available for learning, access to electricity, access to media and technologies; ● experience and knowledge of technology; and ● success rates of past and present students. <p>2.2 Research into students and their needs is a high priority and is used to inform all aspects of policy.</p>	

Criterion Elements	Observations and/or Feedback
2.3 Student information is used to design programmes, courses, materials, student support, and counselling services that are flexible and student-centred.	
2.4 Mechanisms are in place for promoting access to students from marginalized groups, inter alia, through the provision of academic development programmes.	
2.5 Tutors have access to information about their students and contribute to the collection of such information.	
2.6 Systems exist to maintain the confidentiality of information about students.	
2.7 Special needs (for example, physical disability) are considered in the design of course materials, assessment arrangements, and communication with tutors.	
2.8 The educational provider is aware of and caters for students with learning difficulties.	
<p>Overall evaluation of this quality criterion on student information</p>	
<p>Information and Management System provides for the tracking of student performance (for example, in assignments, examinations, or even attendance at contact sessions) and can be used to identify at risk students and those students who, though registered, are inactive. It is also used to determine completion and throughput rates.</p> <p><i>Overall, reflect on whether this criterion is met, and identify any strengths and necessary improvements.</i></p>	

3. Programme Development

Quality Criterion

Programmes are flexible and designed with national needs as well as the needs of prospective students and employers in mind. They are designed coherently and articulate with other relevant programmes; their form and structure encourage access and are responsive to changing environments; learning and assessment methods are appropriate to the purpose and outcomes of the programmes.

Criterion Elements	Observations and/or Feedback
<p>Programme planning</p> <p>3.1 The programme is developed in terms of a needs analysis and is reviewed on a regular basis to keep it up to date with latest developments in the economy and in society. Relevant stakeholders are involved in the design and delivery of the programme where appropriate.</p> <p>3.2 The programme offered is in line with the provider's mission and plans.</p> <p>3.3 For each programme, there is a publicly accessible description of:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● the qualification to which the programme leads; ● the appropriate qualifications framework level and exit level outcomes; ● student selection criteria and admission requirements; ● alignment between the purpose and the exit level outcomes; ● the rationale of the programme; ● target students; ● teaching and learning strategies (including, work integrated learning as required by the learning outcomes); ● features of the learning environment and resources; ● assessment strategy; ● courses or modules in the programme; and, ● where appropriate, accreditation arrangements and articulation with other programmes offered by the educational provider, in the workplace or other educational providers. 	

Criterion Elements	Observations and/or Feedback
<p>3.4 There is a careful analysis of the most appropriate technologies to support:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● the provision of course materials to students; ● other teaching and learning processes; ● management and administration of the programme; ● assessment of the programme. 	
<p>3.5 The selection of technologies is based on the needs, resources and capabilities of the students and the provider, and the purposes of the programmes on offer.</p>	
<p>3.6 Wherever possible, courses/modules are used in more than one programme.</p>	
<p>3.7 Human resource planning is an integral part of programme development.</p>	
<p>3.8 Programme planning and budgeting are aligned, with potential income clearly identified, and appropriate levels of resources set aside for course design, development and implementation for administrative systems and for supporting students.</p>	
<p>3.9 Clear and effective procedures are in place (including internal and external peer review) to monitor and evaluate programmes on a regular basis.</p>	
<p>Programme approval</p>	
<p>3.10 Procedures for the approval of programmes meet the requirements of the relevant bodies, and allow for and encourage innovation and flexibility.</p>	
<p>3.11 Where programmes are offered outside the jurisdiction of South Africa, procedures are in place for ensuring that legal and quality regulatory requirements for the receiving country are met before the programme is offered.</p>	

Criterion Elements	Observations and/or Feedback
<p>Programme curriculum</p> <p>3.12 The outcomes, content, teaching and learning strategies and assessment methods in the programme are aligned and appropriate for the level and purpose of the programme.</p> <p>3.13 In the case of professional and vocational programmes, work-based learning forms an integral part of the curriculum, and, where appropriate, placement in a work-based environment is an essential component of the programme.</p> <p>3.14 The various courses (or modules) of the programme are integrated and together help the students achieve the exit-level outcomes of the programme as a whole.</p> <p>3.15 To facilitate conceptual pathways through the programme, due attention is paid to the appropriate sequencing of modules/courses in a programme.</p>	
<p>Admissions and student support</p> <p>3.16 To facilitate access, entry requirements for the programme are as open as possible, and include recognition of prior learning and experience.</p> <p>3.17 Where entry requirements are flexible, care is taken to provide sufficient academic support to students who may be under-prepared. This may be by the provision of access or bridging courses, additional units within existing courses, or increased face-to-face or virtual support.</p> <p>3.18 Numbers of students enrolled in a programme do not exceed the capacity of the staff and the administrative infrastructure to provide for student support and assessment needs in terms of the criteria in this document.</p>	

Criterion Elements	Observations and/or Feedback
<p>3.19 Care is taken that students admitted to programmes which require the use of technology have sufficient access to that technology and data to make it possible for them to succeed in the programme.</p> <p>Accreditation, articulation and flexibility</p> <p>3.20 Students are made aware of credit requirements of the programme and the possibilities for transfer to other programmes offered by the same or other educational providers.</p> <p>3.20 Assessment is linked to learning outcomes and fulfils the requirements of external quality assurance bodies.</p> <p>Quality assurance</p> <p>3.21 Review findings are disseminated appropriately and used for staff development, curriculum improvement and increasing student access.</p> <p>3.22 Should a decision be taken to discontinue the programme, due attention is given to meeting the provider's commitments to the students registered on the programme.</p>	
<p>Overall evaluation of this quality criterion on programme development</p>	
<p>Programmes are flexible and designed with national needs as well as the needs of prospective students and employers in mind. They are designed coherently and articulate with other relevant programmes; their form and structure encourage access and are responsive to changing environments; learning and assessment methods are appropriate to the purpose and outcomes of the programmes.</p> <p><i>Overall, reflect on whether this criterion is met, and identify any strengths and necessary improvements.</i></p>	

4 Course Design

Quality Criterion

The course is designed to take account of student contexts and needs; it is well-researched, with aims and learning outcomes appropriate to the level of study; content, teaching and learning and assessment strategies facilitate the achievement of the aims and learning outcomes; there is an identified process of development and regular review of courses.

Criterion Elements	Observations and/or Feedback
4.1 The course is designed with national needs as well as the needs of prospective students and employers in mind and in line with constitutional principles.	
4.2 The elements of the course (see 4.3 and 4.4 below) and the relationships between them are consciously planned and are coherent.	
4.3 For each course/module, there is a publicly accessible and student-friendly description of the aims and learning outcomes; entry-level skills, knowledge and experience; credit rating and/or notional hours of learning; target students; teaching and learning strategies; items in the learning package (including elements such as study guides, textbooks, tutorial letters, multi-media); assessment strategy; administrative and support systems for students; contact details of relevant staff; and a year plan containing key dates for students.	
4.4 Geographical location and numbers of students enrolled as well as technology appropriate for the course purpose determine mode of engagement.	
4.5 Choice of media and technology is justified in the light of the aims of the course, required learning outcomes, student needs, capacity to access and available facilities and services.	
4.6 There is a stated language policy for the course, which is based on the national language policy, language profiles of students, career context and curriculum. The policy is implemented in course materials, assessment and student support.	

Criterion Elements	Observations and/or Feedback
<p>4.7 The list of courses offered by an educational provider is limited to a number that allows for quality investment in course design and development in the context of budgetary limitations.</p>	
<p>Course curriculum</p>	
<p>4.8 The amount and complexity of work required to complete the course merits the credits which it has been allocated. This also applies to the assessment for recognition of prior learning and experience.</p>	
<p>4.9 Where a course is imported or exported, account is taken of the needs of local contexts, and, where necessary, the course is adapted accordingly (for example, by the inclusion of local case studies or a glossary of terms).</p>	
<p>4.10 Content, teaching and learning and assessment strategies are carefully structured to facilitate the achievement of the learning outcomes.</p>	
<p>4.11 Various forms of student support are built into the design of the course.</p>	
<p>4.12 Teaching, learning and assessment activities encourage critical and creative thinking and independent learning.</p>	
<p>4.13 The teaching and learning strategies of the course acknowledge students' existing knowledge and experience, and provide opportunities for guided integration of new knowledge.</p>	
<p>4.14 Where appropriate, work integrated learning opportunities are designed into the course. There are suitable methods of recording and assessing this (such as portfolios, logbooks, project reports, student interviews, or reports from the mentor).</p>	
<p>4.15 Courses, especially those that aim to develop professionals, integrate foundational, practical and reflective competencies.</p>	

Criterion Elements	Observations and/or Feedback
<p>Quality assurance</p> <p>4.16 The educational provider requires relevant competence of course developers and reviewers that are brought into the course design and development process.</p> <p>4.17 The educational provider gives course developers the necessary guidance and training for learning design appropriate for the mode of engagement.</p> <p>4.18 Appropriate infrastructure exists within the educational provider to administer the range of elements of the course efficiently.</p> <p>4.19 There is a policy on the regular revision and updating of courses.</p>	
<p>Overall evaluation of this quality criterion on course design</p> <p>The course is designed to take account of student contexts and needs; it is well-researched, with aims and learning outcomes appropriate to the level of study; content, teaching and learning and assessment strategies facilitate the achievement of the aims and learning outcomes; there is an identified process of development and regular review of courses.</p> <p><i>Overall, reflect on whether this criterion is met, and identify any strengths and necessary improvements.</i></p>	

5. Materials development ⁵

Quality Criterion

The content, assessment, and teaching and learning approaches in the materials support the aims and learning outcomes of the course; the materials are accessibly presented; they teach in a coherent way that engages the students regularly and meaningfully; there is an identified process of development and evaluation of materials.

Criterion Elements	Observations and/or Feedback
<p>Planning</p> <p>5.1 The development of course material is based on:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • a project plan which describes, for example, finances and other resources, the delegation of responsibility among those involved, and an adequate time schedule for the work: • there is a course outline showing content selection (aligned to outcomes, credits and notional hours), activities, recommended references and resources including multi-media. • there are pedagogical approaches agreed by the team and resulting style and structure • clarity of the format (print, web-based, app etc.) in which the materials will be provided must be agreed <p>5.2 Profile of the target audience and their context should be articulated and agreed.</p> <p>5.3 The materials development plan includes provision for evaluation during the developmental process in the form of critical commenting, developmental testing, or piloting.</p> <p>5.4 Effective mechanisms are in place to prevent plagiarism when developing materials.</p> <p>If existing course material is used for a particular course, there is proper acknowledgement of the source of all quotations and no breach of local or international copyright laws.</p>	

⁵ Refer to criteria on course design when you use these guidelines

Criterion Elements	Observations and/or Feedback
<p>5.5 The materials are periodically reviewed in the light of ongoing feedback from students and tutors and advances in knowledge and research.</p>	
<p>5.6 While the provider holds copyright for course materials developed by employed or contracted staff, the individual author's intellectual property rights are protected.</p>	
<p>5.7 Where materials are developed using public funds, they should be published under an open licence to promote access, re-use and adaptation.</p>	
<p>Quality materials</p>	
<p>5.8 Materials are developed and reviewed in terms of the following criteria:</p>	
<p>5.8.1 There are clearly defined and aligned aims and learning outcomes,</p>	
<p>5.8.2 There is an explicit indication of study time (notional study hours per section of the material) which allows students to adopt sensible study plans.</p>	
<p>5.8.3 The content and teaching approach support students in achieving the learning outcomes.</p>	
<p>5.8.4 Student support is built into the design of the different forms of materials (for example, student friendly introductions, glossaries of difficult terms, or a 'help' function in online courses).</p>	
<p>5.8.5 Learning materials are developed in such a way that they start by giving an overview of what is covered.</p>	
<p>5.8.6 Teaching and learning content is designed and developed in a coherent way that promotes self-directed learning.</p>	
<p>5.8.7 The content of the course is accurate, current, is problematized, and reflects the diversity of the South African society and gender sensitivity.</p>	

Criterion Elements	Observations and/or Feedback
<p>5.8.8 The design of learning materials takes into account constitutional principles, (eg in relation to gender, religion and race).</p> <p>5.8.9 The language level of the materials should be accessible to the target students.</p> <p>5.8.10 Care is taken to ensure that the contexts in which students live and work, as well as their prior knowledge and experience is taken into consideration.</p> <p>5.8.11 Active learning and teaching approaches are used to engage students intellectually and practically, and cater for individual needs.</p> <p>5.8.12 Pages in both print and online courses are designed for consistency, readability, accessibility and appropriately laid out.</p> <p>5.8.13 Content and constituent resources are easy to find and use - with access devices such as table of content in printed materials or site maps in online materials.</p> <p>5.8.14 The overall layout of the materials facilitates student use: reasonable print quality, and/or minimum technical faults in online materials.</p> <p>5.8.15 In web-based/online courses:</p> <p>5.8.16 the site is easily navigable, has a sitemap with clearly marked links, and the different elements integrate seamlessly with each other.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - The site is up-to-date, with minimum technical faults, and continuously managed. - The site clearly displays its institutional links and acknowledges sources of materials used. - Support in the use of various functions on the site is provided both in the site itself and from external technical assistance. - The site encourages interactions with other students as well as with the tutor/mentor. <p>5.9 If existing course material is used for a particular course, its suitability is evaluated in terms of required learning outcomes, the appropriateness of the teaching and learning approach, and its relevance for the target students.</p>	

Criterion Elements	Observations and/or Feedback
5.10 Learning materials are developed at a level appropriate to course and learning outcomes; and content is presented in a way that encourages critical thinking and problem solving. 5.11 It is clear in the materials whether they are optional or compulsory for the relevant course.	
Overall evaluation of this quality criterion on materials development	
<p>The content, assessment, and teaching and learning approaches in the materials support the aims and learning outcomes of the course; the materials are accessibly presented; they teach in a coherent way that engages the students regularly and meaningfully; there is an identified process of development and evaluation of materials.</p> <p><i>Overall, reflect on whether this criterion is met, and identify any strengths and necessary improvements.</i></p>	

6. Assessment

Quality Criterion

Assessment is an integral part of the teaching and learning process; is valid, reliable and fair; is properly managed, and meets the requirements of statutory and regulatory bodies and stakeholders irrespective of the mode of provision.

Criterion Elements	Observations and/or Feedback
6.1 Assessment is recognized as a key motivator of learning and an integral part of the teaching and learning process. It is used to inform teaching practice and improve the curriculum.	
6.2 There is an overall assessment strategy that informs the assessment process and validly assesses all the learning outcomes.	
6.3 Assessment information (including learning outcomes, assessment criteria as well as assessment procedures and dates) is provided in all courses, modules or topics.	
6.4 The level of challenge of the assessment in a programme is appropriate for the level of the qualification to which it leads.	

Criterion Elements	Observations and/or Feedback
6.5 There is a range of formative and summative assessment tasks and methods, which ensure that all learning outcomes are validly assessed. Where integrated learning is involved, equally effective and credible assessment takes place.	
6.6 Assessment of work integrated learning is designed in terms of predetermined outcomes and criteria such as portfolios, logbooks, project reports, student interviews, or reports from the mentor.	
6.7 A range of parties is involved in assessment of students; for example, there might be self-assessment, peer assessment, tutor assessment and/or assessment by workplace mentors.	
6.8 There are effective procedures for recognizing prior learning and for assessing current competence.	
6.9 Where students may be located in different countries, care is taken that the assessment activities are designed and administered in ways that do not disadvantage students in a range of contexts, and do not compromise the credibility of the assessment process.	
6.10 Where assessment is online, measures are taken to ensure that it is valid, it covers high-level cognitive skills on the Bloom's Taxonomy, and the correct students do the assessment tasks.	
Quality assurance of assessment	
6.11 Staff involved in assessment are assessment-literate and competent to assess learning at the level required for the programme.	
6.12 Where part-time tutors are involved in assessment, they are trained for the task, and academic staff monitor and moderate both formative and summative assessment to promote reliability and fairness.	

Criterion Elements	Observations and/or Feedback
<p>6.13 The assessment strategy includes systems for internal and external moderation that meet the requirements of the accreditation body.</p>	
<p>Assessment management</p>	
<p>6.14 Marking procedures for both formative and summative assessment promote consistency and accuracy of marking, grading, and provision of feedback to students.</p>	
<p>6.15 Feedback is a critical aspect of formative assessment and is used to inform practice and improves student support.</p>	
<p>6.16 There are clear procedures to receive, record, process, and return marked assignments to students. The turnaround timeframe allows students to benefit from feedback prior to submission of the next assessment tasks.</p>	
<p>6.17 An appeal system is in place to enable students to complain when they feel there is lack of fairness in the assessment.</p>	
<p>Security</p>	
<p>6.18 Appropriate arrangements are in place to ensure that locally-administered summative assessment is secure.</p>	
<p>6.19 Particularly when electronic methods are used, there are adequate systems to ensure security of personal information and security of identity during assessment processes.</p>	
<p>6.20 Documented procedures assure that security of personal information is protected in the conduct of assessments and evaluations and in the dissemination of results.</p>	
<p>6.21 Assessment results are recorded securely and reliably and are available to all stakeholders including students (as is appropriate).</p>	

Criterion Elements	Observations and/or Feedback
6.22 Clear and efficient arrangements are in place to ensure that the integrity of certification processes is not compromised.	
Overall evaluation of this quality criterion on assessment	
<p>Assessment is an integral part of the teaching and learning process; is valid, reliable and fair; is properly managed, and meets the requirements of statutory and regulatory bodies and stakeholders irrespective of the mode of provision.</p> <p><i>Overall, reflect on whether this criterion is met, and identify any strengths and necessary improvements.</i></p>	

7. Student support

Quality Criterion

Students are provided with a wide range of support to ensure access and success. The provider places the student at the centre of all its business.

Criterion Elements	Observations and/or Feedback
7.1 The provider encourages students to interact with one another through the creation of a “community of learning”, particularly during the introductory phase of the course. This can be managed through online contact or by using a learning management system, social media, etc.	
7.2 Learning support is built into the design of the course materials.	
7.3 Students are carefully oriented to the digital skills they need to fully engage in the learning process.	
7.4 The development of competence in the use of digital technologies is built into the high level learning outcomes of the programme.	
7.5 In making decisions on student support mechanisms, expenses that will be incurred by students to access student support (for example, data costs for streaming video or downloading content; and travel time and expense for	

Criterion Elements	Observations and/or Feedback
<p>attendance at contact sessions) are considered in the design of the course, and adjustments made where necessary.</p>	
<p>7.6 Facilitators are selected and trained for their role in mediating learning.</p>	
<p>7.7 Facilitator training places particular emphasis on equipping tutors to assist students with language and learning difficulties and to identify at risk students.</p>	
<p>7.8 Tutors are trained to teach through assignments by giving constructive and timeous feedback.</p>	
<p>7.9 The tutor/student ratio is sufficiently small to enable tutors to know their students as individuals, be able to support them in their study and monitor their progress. Where learning is online, appropriate tutor/student ratios that allow effective student support are used.</p>	
<p>7.10 Student support is integrated into course design, rather than being an add on extra.</p>	
<p>7.11 There are a variety of ways in which students can receive learning support (e.g. group chats via social media, communities of learning, discussion groups, online or face to face, tutor feedback, group chats, email, and telephone).</p>	
<p>Counselling</p>	
<p>7.12 Students have access to counselling for personal difficulties/advice related to their study before and during their course or programme, as well as after its completion. Where necessary, students are referred to professional counsellors for support.</p>	

Criterion Elements	Observations and/or Feedback
<p>Administrative support</p> <p>7.13 Administrative staff are trained to be helpful, clear and consultative in the way they relate to and handle students.</p> <p>7.14 The obligations and responsibilities of students and the educational provider are made clear at registration. It is clear what resources and equipment the provider will supply, and what the student will have to supply personally.</p> <p>7.15 Where necessary, arrangements are made to meet students' needs for physical facilities for study, tutorial, and other learning purposes. This includes meeting the needs of students with physical disabilities.</p> <p>7.16 The provider makes available the necessary facilities, resources and equipment to support successful learning, irrespective of the mode of provision.</p> <p>7.17 Students are provided with technical support for educational technology hardware, and software, and delivery system required in a programme.</p> <p>7.18 Where appropriate, students should have access to publicly funded learning centres like internet hubs and libraries.</p> <p>Monitoring/quality assurance</p> <p>7.19 Student performance is tracked and monitored and those at risk are identified and provided with support interventions timeously.</p> <p>7.20 Performance of tutors and activities of both tutors and students at contact sessions and online is monitored regularly. The provider also monitors the work of mentors in supporting and assessing students in the workplace (WIL). Monitoring data is analysed and acted upon.</p>	

Criterion Elements	Observations and/or Feedback
7.21 Student structures, such as student representative councils and faculty associations, are established, recognized and empowered to represent students on structures of institutional governance.	
<p>Overall evaluation of this quality criterion on student support</p> <p>Students are provided with a wide range of support to ensure access and success. The provider places the student at the centre of all its business.</p> <p><i>Overall, reflect on whether this criterion is met, and identify any strengths and necessary improvements.</i></p>	

8. Human Resource Strategy

Quality Criterion

The staff structure as well as the experience, qualifications, responsibilities and job descriptions of staff are appropriate for the education and training services provided; staff development programmes equip staff to perform their roles and tasks effectively.

Criterion Elements	Observations and/or Feedback
<p>Staff complement</p> <p>8.1 Distance education teaching tasks are distributed among separate functional responsibilities; for example, course design, online learning design, materials development, electronic media use, editing, student support, monitoring of tutors, counselling, assessment, and management of the distance education learning system.</p> <p>8.2 The institution has sufficiently qualified and experienced staff to carry out key activities like programme development, course design and monitoring of programme delivery.</p>	

Criterion Elements	Observations and/or Feedback
<p>8.3 There is enough part-time staff to support full-time academic staff and provide for individual needs of students. The ratio of fulltime to part-time staff is appropriate and enables the former to monitor the latter.</p>	
<p>8.4 The educational provider employs sufficient administrative, technical and support staff to handle specialized tasks of registry, despatch, management of assignments, administrative support, as well as providing technical IT support to students and staff.</p>	
<p>Staff development</p>	
<p>8.5 Staff are trained, monitored, and supported for the specialized roles and tasks they perform, including design, management and delivery of electronically-offered programmes.</p>	
<p>8.6 Staff engaged in online tutoring and moderation of online discussions are qualified and trained for the intensive engagement and direction which is required.</p>	
<p>8.7 Staff development, particularly in relation to the use of digital technology supported learning methods is regarded as the responsibility not only of the individual, but also of the provider in which the individual works.</p>	
<p>8.8 There is an induction programme for new staff and ways in which existing staff can share knowledge and skills they have gained.</p>	
<p>Workload</p>	
<p>8.9 In planning workloads, it is recognised that online learning design, particularly with multimedia resources is more complex and time-consuming than other forms of course design for students at a distance.</p>	

Criterion Elements	Observations and/or Feedback
<p>8.10 The workload of staff involved in online support for students is carefully monitored.</p> <p>HR systems</p> <p>8.11 Arrangements are in place for the proper recruitment, training, monitoring and payment of necessary part-time and contract staff.</p> <p>8.12 Staff selection and promotion criteria give priority to quality of performance in all appropriate areas, including but not limited to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● course design; ● management of courses ● materials development; ● piloting of courses; ● devising and participating in assessment strategies; ● tutoring, particularly online tutoring; ● student support ● supervision of part-time staff; ● monitoring the success of the course; ● research and evaluation; ● contact hours with students. <p>8.13 There is an effective performance management and appraisal system for all staff.</p>	
<p>Overall evaluation of this quality criterion on human resource strategy</p> <p>The staff structure as well as the experience, qualifications, responsibilities and job descriptions of staff are appropriate for the education and training services provided; staff development programmes equip staff to perform their roles and tasks effectively.</p> <p><i>Overall, reflect on whether this criterion is met, and identify any strengths and necessary improvements.</i></p>	

9. Management and administration

Quality Criterion

There is effective and accountable management of communication and information as well as human and material resources; democratic governance structures are in place; efficient administrative systems support the activities of the educational provider; the educational provider is financially sound and can make reliable educational provision.

Criterion Elements	Observations and/or Feedback
<p>Accountability and governance</p> <p>9.1 There are clear lines of accountability within the educational provider, between the educational provider and its governing structures, and between governing structures and the community.</p> <p>9.2 Proper accountability structures and mandates for responsible officers are in place.</p> <p>9.3 Staff, students, and external stakeholders are represented on governance structures.</p> <p>9.4 Mechanisms are in place to prevent staff from using their position of power within the institution to generate extra revenue for personal benefit or double payment for the same work. Management of communication</p> <p>9.5 There are effective systems for communication with current and potential students, with key outside bodies, with governance structures, and with all staff and tutors involved in courses.</p> <p>9.6 Enquiries, applications and complaints are dealt with quickly and clearly within a structured administration system.</p> <p>9.7 Students' questions are answered quickly, clearly, and supportively.</p> <p>9.8 Management supports administrative staff and structures to ensure efficient and effective delivery systems.</p>	

Criterion Elements	Observations and/or Feedback
<p>Management of the curriculum</p> <p>9.9 Appropriate schedules are developed for all activities forming part of the distance education system, with due attention given to lead times needed to meet deadlines.</p> <p>9.10 Enrolment practices include provision of accurate, helpful information to prospective students, as well as efficient handling of money and registration information.</p> <p>9.11 Production and delivery of course materials is fast, accurate, and reliable. Where existing systems prove inefficient, creative alternatives are found.</p> <p>9.12 There are systems to organize decentralized support for remote students - grouping of students, allocation of tutors, location of suitable sites of learning.</p> <p>9.13 There are clear procedures to receive, record, process, and turn around assignments.</p> <p>9.14 The turnaround time on assignments is kept to a minimum.</p> <p>9.15 The examination system, where it is necessary, is reliable and valid.</p> <p>Management of Information Systems</p> <p>9.16 Student records (for example, contact details, assessment results) are detailed, up-to-date, and accessible to tutors, academic and administrative staff where appropriate. Ethical procedures that are in line with the Protection of Personal Information (POPI) Act are followed in the use of student data.</p>	

Criterion Elements	Observations and/or Feedback
9.17 Tutor records (for example, qualifications and experience of tutors) are detailed for each tutor and available to tutor-monitors.	
9.18 Records of course results and other management information can be analyzed to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● give completion rates for each group of students; ● identify at risk students; ● identify inactive students. 	
9.19 Pass, throughput and retention rates are monitored.	
Management of facilities and equipment	
9.20 Facilities and equipment support the student and are appropriate for the education and training services provided.	
9.21 In the case of electronically-offered programmes, the provider ensures the reliability and predictability of a 'fit-for-purpose' teaching and learning delivery platform, and there is a budget for regular upgrading.	
9.22 Equipment and facilities are well-managed and maintained and secure against damage or theft.	
9.23 There are emergency methods of communication for use in the event of a failure of the primary channel of communication, and these are fail-safe.	
9.24 Staff and students are trained in the use of the equipment, facilities, and communication and information systems.	

Criterion Elements	Observations and/or Feedback
<p>Management of finances</p> <p>9.25 Proper budgetary processes are in place to ensure that allocation of resources reflects the goals, values and principles of the educational provider.</p> <p>9.26 Financial procedures (for example, handling of fees, orders, accounts, receipt of external funds, and part-time and full-time salaries) are known and adhered to.</p> <p>9.27 Budgeting procedures are in place to deal with allocation of resources and monitoring of expenditure. Budgeting procedures are flexible enough to promote and enable constructive experimentation in design and delivery methods.</p> <p>9.28 Proper evaluation systems are in place to compare estimated goals and budgets with actual achievements.</p> <p>9.29 Clear decision-making structures exist for seeking and receiving funds and allocation and control of resources.</p> <p>9.30 Financial aid and information about criteria for its allocation are provided for students, external funding and donations permitting. Information about financial aid is clear to all students.</p>	
<p>Overall evaluation of this quality criterion on management and administration</p>	
<p>There is effective and accountable management of communication and information as well as human and material resources; democratic governance structures are in place; efficient administrative systems support the activities of the educational provider; the educational provider is financially sound and can make reliable educational provision.</p> <p><i>Overall, reflect on whether this criterion is met, and identify any strengths and necessary improvements.</i></p>	

10. Collaborative relationships

Quality Criterion

In the interests of cost-effective provision of education and training, collaborative relationships are formed and collaborative projects are undertaken wherever possible.

Criterion Elements	Observations and/or Feedback
<p>10.1 Wherever possible, collaborative relationships (involving public and private institutions, governmental and non-governmental educational providers, stakeholders and/or community structures as well as agencies or providers outside of the country) are formed for:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● sharing developed courses; ● jointly developing programmes & new courses; ● sharing facilities such as libraries and learning centres; ● sharing regional centres for student registration, distribution of study material, and examinations; ● jointly developing and sharing tools; ● collaborating in research. <p>These collaborative relationships are aligned to national regulatory requirements.</p>	
<p>10.2 Membership of relevant associations and forums is encouraged.</p>	
<p>10.3 The programme plan includes criteria for selecting partners and the means to monitor and evaluate their work.</p>	
<p>10.4 To facilitate workplace learning, partnerships are built with employers that enable productive experiential learning opportunities for students.</p>	
<p>10.5 In the organization of consortia for programme development or delivery, structured contractual relationships are formed to protect the interests of all parties including students. Performance expectations are defined in contracts and agreements.</p>	

Criterion Elements	Observations and/or Feedback
<p>10.6 In cases in which providers offer programmes developed externally (either by an e-university or other external sponsoring agencies), there are clear procedures for programme approval in which quality assurance requirements of both provider and the external body are dovetailed.</p> <p>10.7 In programmes delivered collaboratively, responsibility for performance remains with the provider that certifies students.</p> <p>10.8 In the case of public-private partnerships, the public partner takes full academic and quality management responsibility, and ensures that student rights are protected⁶.</p>	
<p>Overall evaluation of this quality criterion on collaborative relationships</p> <p>In the interests of cost-effective provision of education and training, collaborative relationships are formed and collaborative projects are undertaken wherever possible.</p> <p><i>Overall, reflect on whether this criterion is met, and identify any strengths and necessary improvements.</i></p>	

11. Quality Assurance

Quality Criterion

There is an integrated framework at a policy and practice level that informs a clear cycle of planning, implementing, monitoring, reflection and action to ensure that students' and staff needs as well as the needs of other clients are met. The provider is duly registered with DHET and all its programmes are accredited by the relevant national quality assurance body before they are rolled out.

Criterion Elements	Observations and/or Feedback
<p>11.1 The provider ensures that day-to-day activities are aligned with its mission, goals, principles and policies in relation to national and/or regional priorities.</p>	

⁶In June 2001, the South African University Vice Chancellors' Association produced a Code of Conduct for Public/Private Partnerships in Higher Education. This element represents a much-condensed version of this Code of Conduct which contains statements under the following headings: Student Rights and Obligations, Dispute Resolution, Intellectual Property, Employment of Academic Staff, Student Support, Quality Assurance, Marketing, Assessment, Enrolment Reporting.

Criterion Elements	Observations and/or Feedback
11.2 Internal quality assurance processes are articulated with external processes as laid down by the relevant quality assurance bodies.	
11.3 There is a clear cycle of planning, development, documentation, reporting, action, and review of policy and procedures.	
11.4 In the case of technology- supported programmes, mechanisms for monitoring student participation and performance are designed into the technical platforms used in electronically-delivered programmes. For example, systems may be designed to track: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● the time spent by different students on components of the materials; ● choices made by students in accessing web-based files; or ● student participation in online discussions. 	
11.5 The provider engages in benchmarking and uses appropriate monitoring and evaluation techniques to gather and analyze data to use as a basis for setting priorities and planning for quality improvement.	
11.6 There are demonstrable processes and ongoing efforts to improve the quality of teaching and learning according to priorities identified through monitoring and evaluation processes.	
11.7 Staff development is a fundamental strategy to promote quality service provision.	
11.8 Staff, students, and other clients are involved in the process of quality assurance and quality review.	
11.9 There are clear routines and systems for quality assurance, and staff are familiar with those that relate to their work.	

Criterion Elements	Observations and/or Feedback
11.10 Quality management mechanisms are in place to ensure that exported programmes are of equivalent quality to those offered in South Africa, and that there is compliance with the requirements of the importing country.	
<p data-bbox="284 645 1428 689">Overall evaluation of this quality criterion on quality assurance</p> <p data-bbox="284 707 1428 880">There is an integrated framework at a policy and practice level that informs a clear cycle of planning, implementing, monitoring, reflection and action to ensure that students' and staff needs as well as the needs of other clients are met. The provider is duly registered with DHET and all its programmes are accredited by the relevant national quality assurance body before they are rolled out.</p> <p data-bbox="284 898 1428 965"><i>Overall, reflect on whether this criterion is met, and identify any strengths and necessary improvements.</i></p>	

12. Information dissemination

Quality Criterion

The provider maintains an ethical advocacy and information dissemination strategy at all times. Various channels of disseminating information about the provider's programmes and services are used to ensure the widest possible reach. Where appropriate, local languages are used in order to avoid excluding marginalised groups of society that do not understand English.

Criterion Elements	Observations and/or Feedback
12.1 The publicity provided for each programme is accurate and sufficiently detailed to enable applicants to make an informed choice. (The following is a suggested list of such information: target students, entry requirements, aims and learning outcomes, content, learning material, teaching and learning activities, scope of programme, student support services, assessment and accreditation procedures, price, payment conditions, right to return course materials, recommended time limits for completion).	

Criterion Elements	Observations and/or Feedback
12.2 In the case of programmes using electronic methods, the student is informed regarding access to technologies used in the programme, technical competence required, and the nature and potential challenges of learning in these environments.	
12.3 Employers and others who enter into agreements to collaborate in the provision of education or training receive sufficient and correct information about the content and outcomes, entry requirements, implementation and aims of the programme.	
12.4 The provider's advertisements are truthful, objective and informative and meet the potential clients' needs.	
12.5 In the case of public private partnerships, partners jointly develop advertisements to ensure alignment.	
12.6 Information about programmes reaches as many people as possible of those who can be expected to have a need or use for these programmes.	
12.7 The institution uses adequate information for student recruitment, selection, support and development procedures to ensure that sufficient numbers of adequately-prepared students enter and succeed in the programmes.	
12.8 These strategies form part of the institution's management of information system and are subjected to institutional cyclical reviews.	

Overall evaluation of this quality criterion on information dissemination

The provider maintains an ethical advocacy and information dissemination strategy at all times. Various channels of disseminating information about the provider's programmes and services are used to ensure the widest possible reach. Where appropriate, local languages are used in order to avoid excluding marginalised groups of society that do not understand English.

Overall, reflect on whether this criterion is met, and identify any strengths and necessary improvements.

13. Results/ Provider Outcomes

Quality Criterion

The educational provider fulfils its mission, and individual programmes achieve valid teaching and learning goals in cost-effective ways that have a positive impact on society and meet the needs of students, other stakeholders and national priorities.

Criterion Elements	Observations and/or Feedback
13.1. The educational provider is fulfilling its mission and attaining its transformation goals.	
13.2. Students are attaining the intended outcomes specified by the provider in the design of the programme.	
13.3. Stakeholders including professional and statutory bodies are satisfied with the quality of the graduates.	
13.4. Students and alumni are generally satisfied with the programme (in particular its student support and assessment practices) and its staff.	
13.5. The programme team is satisfied with the leadership and management of the programme, as well as the resources and facilities allocated to run the programme.	
13.6. Staff and students collaborate in various ways with communities to address economic, social and moral challenges faced by communities.	
13.7. Sufficient numbers of students complete their programmes of study and courses successfully and within the shortest possible time. Pass, throughput and retention rates are monitored.	
13.8. The provider has financial results that afford the students a reasonable prospect of completing their studies, and sufficient surpluses to ensure future development of products and services.	

Criterion Elements	Observations and/or Feedback
<p>13.9. Programmes achieve equity in access, retention and success rates for graduates in terms of requirements of relevant authorities.</p> <p>13.10. Feedback and results of the programme review/evaluation are used to effect improvements in the programme's design and delivery and to develop further educational expertise of academic staff.</p>	
<p>Overall evaluation of this quality criterion on results/provider outcomes</p>	
<p>The educational provider fulfils its mission, and individual programmes achieve valid teaching and learning goals in cost-effective ways that have a positive impact on society and meet the needs of students, other stakeholders and national priorities.</p> <p><i>Overall, reflect on whether this criterion is met, and identify any strengths and necessary improvements.</i></p>	

Who is NADEOSA?

On 2nd August 1996 fifty-eight organisations involved in distance education formed an association committed to promoting access to lifelong learning of high quality. Participating institutions included public, private-for-profit and non-governmental organisations. All were united in their belief that distance education methods could play a major role in facing South Africa's enormous educational challenges. Over years, this mode of provision has increasingly become so popular that almost every higher education institution in the country has some distance education offerings. In recent years, increasing distance education has also been supported by more use of educational technology. Issues of quality therefore remain a matter of concern if the credibility of these offerings is to be maintained.

What are the aims of NADEOSA?

The overarching aim of this Association is to provide a forum for South African organisations and individuals who are committed to increasing access to an affordable, cost-effective and quality learning environment to share ideas and support each other in keeping pace with international developments in the area of distance education. In pursuance of this aim, the Association seeks to empower learners to become self-sufficient members of society.



NADEOSA Contact Details

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