



Institutional Audits for South African Higher Education in the Era of 4IR

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Outline

- A very brief re-cap of 4IR
- The legislative and policy framework for the CHE
- The CHE methodology for Institutional Audits
- The operational incorporation of 4IR into the methodology and logistics of conducting Institutional Audits
- Focus Areas, Standards and Guidelines
- The substantive incorporation of 4IR into the standards and guidelines of Institutional Audits
- A future view: The QAF in 2024



A brief recap of 4IR: for these purposes only

- “fusion of technologies that is blurring the lines between the physical, digital and biological domains” (Butler-Adam, 2018:1).
- Two implications of AI in HE, namely for the world of work generally (that needs to be reflected in curriculum) and for teaching and learning (through teaching technologies)
- Zelesa (2020:18-19), warned that:

Technology is always historically and socially embedded ... [and] technological changes ... produce and reproduce both old and new opportunity structures and trajectories that are simultaneously uneven and unequal because they are conditioned by enduring social inscriptions of class, gender, race, nationality, ethnicity and other markers, as well as the stubborn geographies and hierarchies of the international division of labour.

...concludes that technologies “are all means, not ends, and we need to ask ourselves what is the end”, and whether we are “simply consumers or are we also creators?””



The legislative and policy framework for the CHE

- Drivers of HE in SA: planning, funding and QA
- *White Paper for Post School Education and Training (WPPSET)* (DHET, 2013) and the draft *National Plan for the Post-School Education Sector (NPPSET)* (DHET, 2019)
- Explicit outcomes (DHET, 2019:79) in terms of improving quality, through:
 - a) improved quality of teaching and learning;
 - b) improved quality of research;
 - c) well-managed and governed institutions;
 - d) well-qualified staff;
 - e) improved quality-assurance capability;
 - f) improved quality of infrastructure; and
 - g) safe and healthy environments for students and staff.



Mandate conferred by the Higher Education Act No. 101 of 1997

- Advising the Minister on HE matters, at the request of the Minister, and proactively.
- Arrange and coordinate conferences.
- Through the HEQC, to promote QA in HE, **audit the QA mechanisms of HEIs**, and accredit programmes of HE.
- Publish information on HE including reports on the state of HE.
- Promote access of students to higher education institutions
- Perform any other functions designated to it by the HE Act, the NQF Act or by the Minister through notice in the *Gazette*.



Mandate conferred by the National Qualifications Framework Act No. 67 of 2008

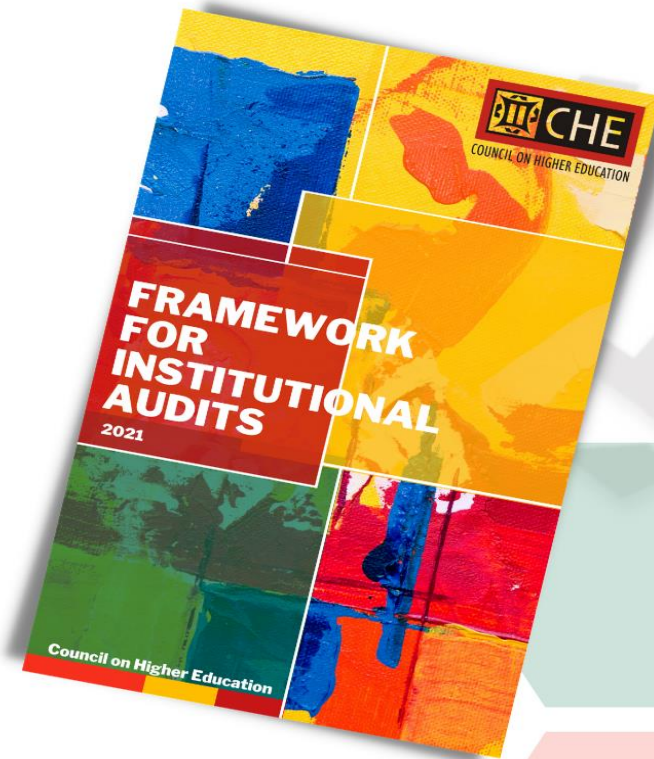
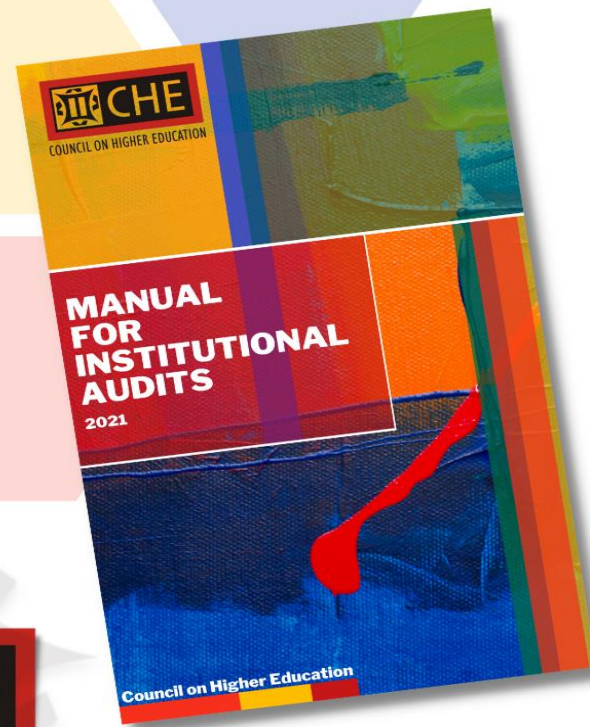
Sets up the CHE as the Quality Council for higher education as provided for in HE Act, with responsibility for the HEQSF

- Developing and managing the HEQSF.
- Developing and implementing policies and criteria for advancement of the HEQSF.
- Recommending higher education qualifications to SAQA for registration on the NQF.
- Maintaining a database of learners' achievements and submitting the data for recording on the NLRD.
- **Take responsibility for quality assurance in relation to the HEQSF.**
- Conducting or commissioning and publishing research of importance for the further development of the HEQSF.
- Advising the Minister on matters relating to the HEQSF.
- Informing the public about the HEQSF.



Framework and Manual for Institutional Audits 2021

Institutional Audits 2021



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Audits with a Review Methodology

**Self
reflection**

**Peer
validation**

Evidence-based

Draft Audit Report:
Factual corrections
Representation on outcomes

Final Audit Outcomes (will be placed on the CHE website):
16 Standards: not functional, needs substantial improvement, functional, mature
Recommendations & Commendations

Improvement Plans



Principles of Institutional Audits (2021)

1. Consultation and peer academics through CoP
2. Foundational approach of the CHE and HEQC has not changed, and still focuses on the definition of quality in higher education as: fitness of purpose, fitness for purpose, value for money and transformation (CHE, 2001). A variety of critiques and other definitions of *quality* and *quality culture* in higher education can be found in Zawada (2019).
3. Based on the principle that HEIs are ultimately responsible for their own quality
4. Quality and quality assurance system is evaluated and validated by peers. (Nomination and approval of audit panels by the HEQC)
5. Improvement phase



Operational incorporation of 4IR into IAs

- ▶ Pandemic has forced us into a new mode of working
- ▶ All meetings online (with institutions, with audit panels and all CHE governance meetings)
- ▶ Correspondence and contracting done digitally
- ▶ Capacity development for Institutional Audits done on online platforms
- ▶ ***The submission of institutional SERs and PoEs will be done electronically***
- ▶ HEIs will have to build or acquire **relevant and secure platforms and access to data** (both qualitative and quantitative) for audit panels to access externally as part of the institutional PoE
- ▶ Institutions are encouraged to include **audio-visual material** (of facilities, for example) in their PoE, which would minimise the need for and duration of physical site visits
- ▶ Audit panel meetings (for pre-audit preparation and post-audit report writing) will be done using digital online platforms and **collaborative writing tools**



Focus Areas, Standards and Guidelines

- The institution responds to the 16 Standards; the Guidelines are there to assist and guide, not necessarily to be responded to individually
- The new set of standards and guidelines are not just based on the existence of an IQA system in an institution and input quality, but also focus on coherence, efficiency and effectiveness, and impact in terms of outcome quality
- A focus on learning, teaching and assessment
- **The use and role of technology, and 4IR, has been included throughout, for example, in how institutions make decisions based on data, how technology is incorporated into the curriculum, how technology is used in learning and teaching, and 4IR in society**
- *A strong focus on data-, information- and research-based and evidence-based decision-making by institutions has been introduced*
- Each Standard will have an outcome in the following categories: *not functional, needs substantial improvement, functional, mature*



Substantive incorporation of 4IR into IAs

1. ***HEIs will be expected to develop, maintain and use adequate and relevant Information and Communication Technology (ICT) infrastructure and to support both staff and students with both access and training***

➤ **Standards 6 and 7**

- a) information and communication technology infrastructure, appropriate to the nature and size of the institution, exists to facilitate quality management in the institution;
- b) adequate and appropriate ICT facilities are provided for staff and students; and
- c) staff should be trained and supported to teach online.

- **SAULM (2020): Connectivity remains a serious problem for students, especially in rural areas and everywhere in terms of cost**

2. HEIs will be expected to develop, maintain and use adequate and relevant data and data management to support their core functions and their internal quality assurance

➤ **Standards 7 and 8**

- a) An electronic, protected and legally compliant data-management and retrieval system in the institution has the capacity to provide accurate, complete and on-time information to support the quality management of the core functions.
- b) A variety of different types and sources of data are used by the institution, e.g. quantitative and qualitative data, input and output data, data required by legislative agencies (such as data on the Higher Education Management Information System [HEMIS] and the Higher Education Quality Committee Information System [HEQCIS]) and specifically-sourced data (such as through student and staff surveys).
- c) The institution develops the capacity to interpret the data and to act on the results.
- d) An evidence- and data-led approach is used to improve teaching, student success, the student experience, differential success rates, etc.
- e) Decision-makers at all institutional levels have ready, but appropriate and protected, access to sufficient, reliable and current electronic evidence (data, information and institutional knowledge) that allows them to make informed decisions on the quality management of the core academic functions of the institution.
- f) Not only will institutions be required to create, maintain and interpret quality data, but they will also be required to create levels of data literacy and awareness amongst staff at all levels. Ethical and compliant use and storage of staff and student data will become part of the institution's Portfolio of Evidence (PoE), but changing raw data into business intelligence to assist in decision making for quality purposes, will be important



3. **HEIs will be expected to show evidence of serious engagements with the notions of 4IR in the curriculum, in pedagogy and in the world of work, and in society in general.**
- a) Formal consultative and decision-making structures in the institution, at institutional, faculty/school and departmental levels, allow for engagement by staff and students on the transformation and/or reform and renewal of curricula, on innovation in learning and teaching approaches, including the role, function and administration of assessment, and the role of ICTs in the attainment of graduate attributes.
 - b) Formal structures include curriculum transformation, reform and renewal, as well as methodological innovation and the use of ICTs in teaching and learning as standard items on meeting agendas.
 - c) The institutional culture is such that discussions on curriculum transformation/reform/renewal, teaching/learning innovation and ICTs in learning and teaching occur regularly between staff, and between staff and students, and other stakeholders, such as professional bodies and the community.



A future view: The Quality Assurance Framework (QAF) to be implemented in 2024

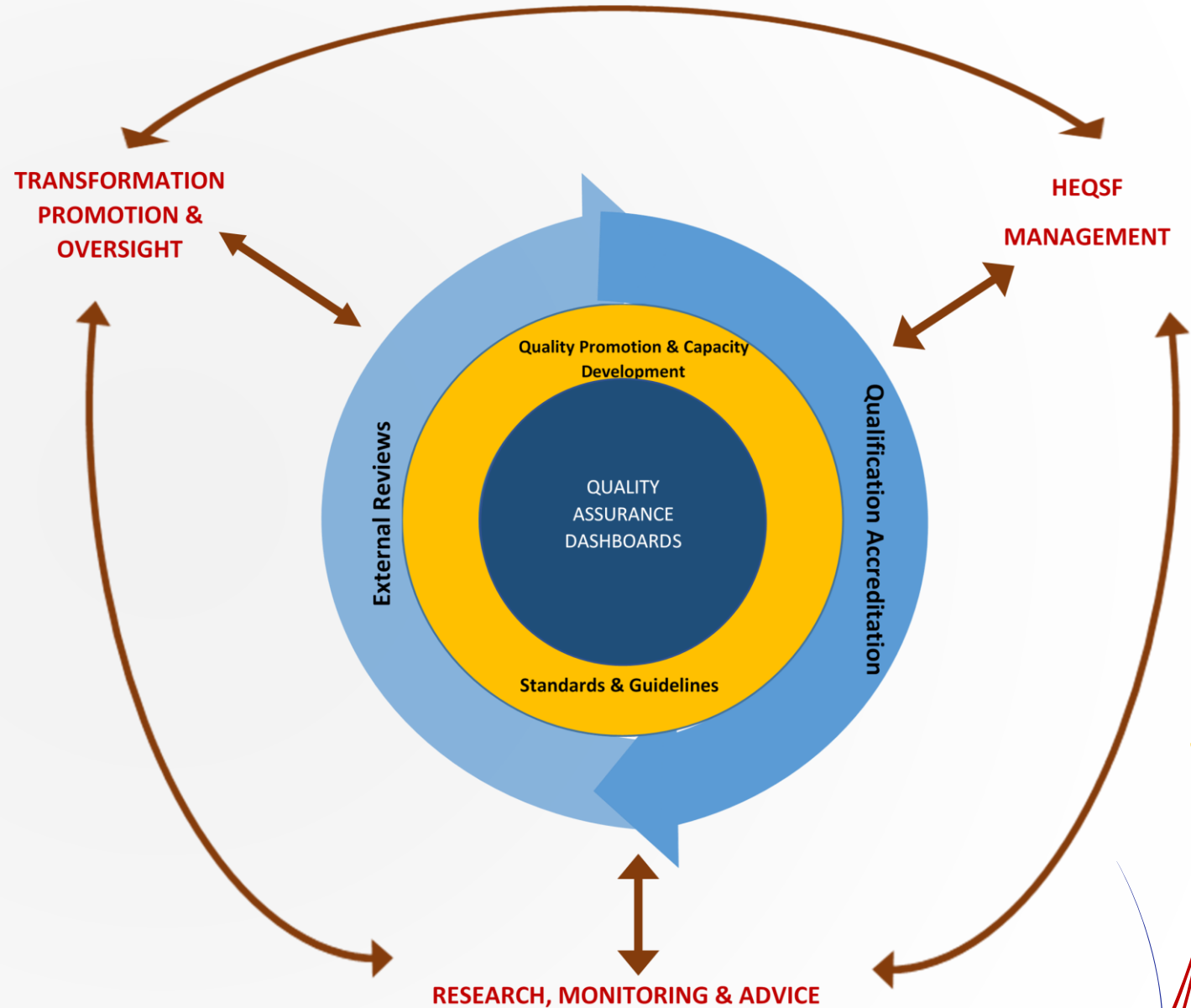
- New processes and tools, in addition to the current
- Focus on transformation
- Strong links to the HEQSF Management mandate
- Strong links to Research and Advice mandate
- Institutional QA Dashboards as QA track records
- Underlain by a QAF-MIS



The Quality Assurance Framework as a lever for transformation

The QAF positions the quality assurance function as interconnected to, supporting of and supported by the mutually supportive and interconnected functions of HEQSF Management, Research, Monitoring and Advice, and Transformation Promotion and Oversight.

A strong focus on transformation to be built into all the CHE functions- will enable an integrated and holistic approach to advancing and monitoring transformation.
(Green, 2021)





In conclusion

Kennedy (2021: 285) in her paper on Quality Assurance 4.0 in the SAQA Bulletin of 20(1) concludes that **“quality professionals are perfectly positioned to lead digital transformation efforts”**.

The CHE, together with all HEISs in SA are indeed / hopefully using 4IR in EQA to ***create better tools and instruments to serve the students of South Africa***