



# Questioned accreditation status of some Walter Sisulu University Qualifications

Presentation by the Council on Higher Education to the  
Portfolio Committee on Higher Education, Science and  
Innovation

11 May 2022

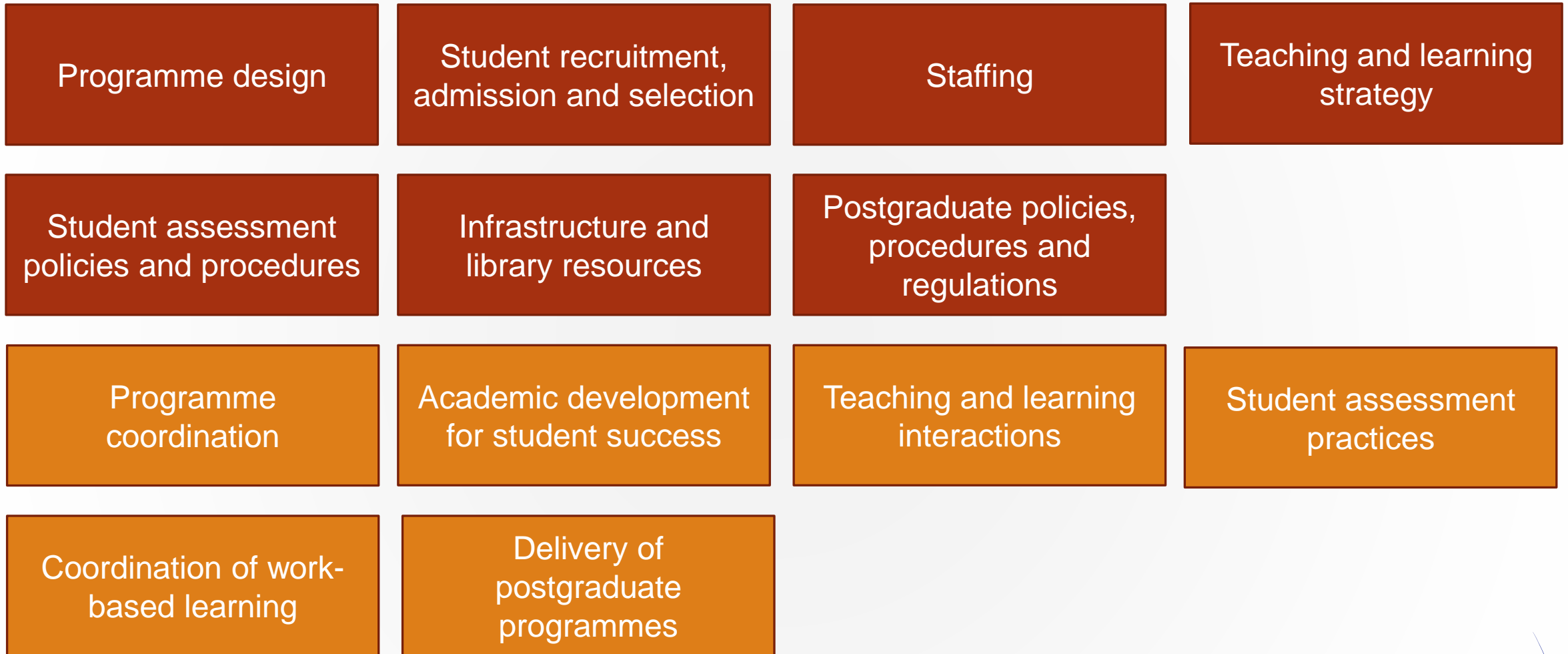


# Requirements for higher education institutions to offer qualifications

- The Higher Education Act of 1997, as amended, enjoins the Council on Higher Education (CHE) through its permanent committee, the Higher Education Quality Committee (HEQC) to:
  - ✓ Audit the quality assurance mechanisms of institutions of higher education (Part 2 of this presentation)
  - ✓ Promote quality assurance in higher education
  - ✓ Accredite programmes of higher education (Part 1 of this presentation)
- For a public higher education institution to offer qualifications, 3 regulatory requirements must be in place:
  - ✓ The qualification must be on the institution's Programme Qualification Mix (PQM) approved by the Department of Higher Education and Training.
  - ✓ The qualification must be accredited by the CHE.
  - ✓ The qualification must be registered on the National Qualifications Framework (NQF) by the South African Qualifications Authority (SAQA).
- Additionally, when qualifications lead to professional registration, the endorsement /approval of the qualification by the relevant professional body may be required.



# CHE Criteria for Programme Accreditation



**KEY:**

Programme input criteria

Programme process criteria



# The Higher Education Qualifications Sub-Framework Alignment Process

- Higher Education Institutions in South Africa can only offer qualifications that are on the Higher Education Qualifications Sub-Framework (HEQSF), one of three sub-frameworks of the NQF.
- The Higher Education Qualifications Framework (HEQF) was first published in 2007, and then revised and published as the HEQSF in 2013.
- In order to ensure that all the qualifications/programmes offered by universities were aligned to the new HEQSF, a comprehensive HEQSF alignment process was implemented from 2011 and completed by end of 2015, managed through a digital platform – HEQSF Online which captured outcomes of the process as a record for the CHE and for institutions. **10 131** qualifications were reviewed.
- Institutions had/have access to all the HEQSF alignment decisions through access to HEQSF Online, including through access to a HEQSF Institutional Offerings Report – a source document confirming its list of HEQSF-aligned programmes. This was the platform for communication of HEQSF alignment outcomes and this was communicated to institutions via an individual letter to each vice-chancellor.



# How the HEQSF alignment process happened

## Three categories informed the HEQSF alignment process:

- **Category A**, where the changes in the programme to enable alignment were nominal in nature (e.g. name changes etc).
- **Category B**, where the changes in the programme were less than 50% and the structural integrity of the offering did not change fundamentally.
- **Category C**, where major curriculum development was required that would result in a 50% or more change to the programme design and would thus require a new application for programme accreditation to be made.

## The HEQSF alignment process:

- Cat As were submitted and processed first (2011-2013) and an outcome could be:
  - o recategorization to B for the HEI to submit again using the more comprehensive application,
  - o HEQSF-aligned or
  - o Not HEQSF-aligned (recategorized to Cat C).
- After all Cat As were processed, the Cat Bs were submitted (or updated) and processed (2013 to 2015). Outcomes could be:
  - o HEQSF-aligned or
  - o Not HEQSF-aligned (recategorized to C).

- By end 2015, all qualifications that came through were categorized as HEQSF-aligned or not, and this was captured on, and communicated through HEQSF-Online and the Institution's HEQSF-aligned qualification record.



# The Data Validation Project – a further confirmatory process

- CHE, DHET and SAQA initiated a data validation project (DVP) in November 2017 which seeks to ensure a single record of HEQSF aligned qualifications across three entities.
- Once a record is created for an institution, it is sent to the institution with the request that the institution confirms the record. This process also serves to pick up any discrepancies between what is being offered, what is on the PQM, what is accredited and what is registered.
- Feedback from the institution allows the regulators, together with the institution, to address any anomalies.
- The record for Walter Sisulu was completed in 2019 and communicated to the institution on 11 November 2019.
- CHE and DHET were working with WSU to address potential anomalies that were identified by the institution
  - The issues that we are addressing now have their roots in the HEQSF alignment process and they have come to the fore as a result of the data consolidation work in the DVP.



# The questioned accreditation status of some WSU qualifications

- A list of qualifications that the institution was using to work through possible anomalies was leaked and was published in several newspaper articles.
- Of the list of about 30 qualifications, the CHE working together with SAQA and DHET were able to confirm that all except 6 qualifications did not have HEQSF alignment accreditation status. The six are listed below:

Qualification	Accreditation status
Advanced Diploma in Internal Auditing	Submitted for HEQSF alignment – outcome Category C
Advanced Diploma in Journalism	Submitted for HEQSF alignment – outcome Category C
Bachelor of Science Honours in Zoology	Submitted for HEQSF alignment – outcome Category C
Master of Medicine in Obstetrics and Gynecology	Was not submitted as part of the realignment process.
Postgraduate Diploma in Chemical Pathology	Was not submitted as part of the realignment process.
Postgraduate Diploma in Library and Information Services	Was not submitted as part of the realignment process. Ceased to take in new students after 2019.



- The PGDip in Library and Information Sciences is not a challenge since it has not taken in any new enrolments after 2019, and any pipeline students in teach-out will still be able to graduate.



## Review processes undertaken by the CHE, as agreed to by the HEQC

1. Regarding the 5 programmes (3 of which have HEQSF alignment outcomes, and 2 which do not), an evaluator was appointed to undertake a new review of the programmes, using the methodology used during the HEQSF alignment process, and using the programme designs/descriptions as they are currently being offered, as well as with reference to the issues that the first review identified, to determine a HEQSF alignment categorisation for each programme at this point in time, and on the basis of this, to make recommendations to the HEQC on a categorisation for each programme.
  2. Conduct a full audit of all the programmes that the university is offering, to confirm that all meet the compliance requirements of the three regulatory bodies, and to address any further issues that may be identified.
- Both processes are underway.





# Advanced Diploma in Internal Auditing

- Deemed to be a Category C programme in the HEQSF alignment process.
- The programme is not on the WSU PQM for 2020 and 2022. (There was no finalized PQM for 2021.)
- WSU continued to enrol new students in the programme after 2019 on the basis that they have received a SAQA letter in June 2017 indicating the programme as a Category B programme and a new SAQA ID was issued . The registration was renewed in 2021.
- WSU submitted an application for accreditation of a replacement programme and this is still in process.
- The evaluator reviewed the current programme offering using programme documents submitted by WSU and with reference to the first review and concluded that the programme could be considered to be aligned to the HEQSF, provided that the institution addressed the identified issues in the short term.
  - **Evaluator recommendation:** Recategorize the programme as a Category B programme with short term conditions to be addressed by the end of 2022, and approved by the HEQC, failing which no new students to be admitted from 2023 pending a new accreditation application process.
  - Adoption of this recommendation will mean that students who were enrolled in 2020, 2021 and 2022 can graduate.



# Advanced Diploma in Journalism

- Deemed to be a Category C programme in the HEQSF alignment process.
- The programme is not on the WSU PQM for 2020 and 2022.
- WSU continued to enrol new students in the programme after 2019 on the basis that they have received a SAQA letter in June 2017 indicating the programme as a Category B programme and a new SAQA ID was issued . The registration was renewed in 2021.
- WSU started an application for accreditation of a replacement programme but it was not formally submitted.
- The evaluator reviewed the current programme offering using programme documents submitted by WSU and with reference to the first review and concluded that the programme could be considered to be aligned to the HEQSF, provided that the institution addressed the identified issues in the short term.
  - **Evaluator recommendation:** Recategorize the programme as a Category B programme with short term conditions to be addressed by the end of 2022, and approved by the HEQC, failing which no new students to be admitted from 2023 pending a new accreditation application process.
  - Adoption of this recommendation will mean that students who were enrolled in 2020, 2021 and 2022 for the 1<sup>st</sup> time and who complete the programme successfully, can graduate.



# Bachelor of Science Honours in Zoology

- Determined to be a Category C programme in the HEQSF alignment process.
- The programme is not on the WSU PQM for 2020 and 2022.
- WSU continued to enrol new students in the programme after 2019 on the basis that they have received a SAQA letter in June 2017 indicating the programme as a Category B programme and a new SAQA ID was issued . The registration was renewed in 2021.
- The evaluator reviewed the current programme offering using programme documents submitted by the university and with reference to the first review and concluded that the programme is in broad accordance with HEQSF specifications and can be considered to be HEQSF-aligned provided that the institution addressed the identified issues in the short term.
  - **Evaluator recommendation:** Recategorize the programme as a Category B programme with short term conditions to be addressed by the end of 2022, and approved by the HEQC, failing which no new students to be admitted from 2023 pending a new accreditation application process.
  - Adoption of this recommendation will mean that students who were enrolled in 2020, 2021 and 2022 for the 1st time and who complete the programme successfully, can graduate.



# Postgraduate Diploma in Chemical Pathology

- This programme was not submitted through the HEQSF alignment process and so was not categorized. It is not on the final HEQSF Institutional Offerings Report, and so is not part of the HEQSF aligned programme record for the institution.
- The programme is on the WSU PQM for 2020, but the discrepancy was picked up and the programme was struck off the 2022 version of the PQM by DHET.
- WSU continued to enrol new students in the programme after 2019 on the basis that there is an active SAQA ID for the programme.
- As there was no HEQSF alignment submission, there is no alignment process that could be reviewed.
- The evaluator reviewed the current programme offering using programme documents submitted by the university for alignment with the HEQSF and concluded the programme can be considered to be HEQSF provided some identified issues are addressed in the short term by the institution.
  - **Evaluator recommendation:** The Postgraduate Diploma in Chemical Pathology could be classified as an HEQSF category B programme and be regarded as aligned with HEQSF with short term conditions to be addressed by the end of 2022, failing which no new students to be admitted from 2023 pending a new accreditation application process.
  - Adoption of this recommendation will mean that students who were enrolled in 2020, 2021 and 2022 for the 1st time and who complete the programme successfully, can graduate.



# Masters of Medicine in Obstetrics and Gynaecology

- This programme was not submitted through the HEQSF alignment process and so was not categorized. It is not on the final HEQSF Institutional Offerings Report, and so is not part of the HEQSF aligned programme record for the institution.
- The programme is not on the WSU PQM for 2020 and 2022.
- There are current enrolments in the programme.
- Pre-HEQSF alignment, WSU offered a generic M Med and during the HEQSF alignment process, the university decided to split this into separate programmes and packaged and submitted the separate programmes for alignment. The M Med Obstetrics and Gynaecology was omitted. The other submitted M Meds were classified as Category A.
- The evaluator reviewed the current programme offering using programme documents submitted by the university for alignment with the HEQSF and concluded that the purpose, exit level outcomes, teaching and learning strategy and assessment criteria for Obstetrics and Gynaecology are in order. Furthermore, the programme curriculum and assessment are specified and linked to the particular professional body that also regulates the content, assessment and registration of specialists in this field, via the College of Gynaecology COG (CMSA).
  - **Evaluator recommendation:** the programme Master of Medicine in Obstetrics and Gynaecology be classified as HEQSF category A and regarded as accredited and HEQSF aligned.
  - Adoption of this recommendation will mean that students who were enrolled in 2020, 2021, and 2022 for the 1st time and who complete the programme successfully, can graduate.



# Update on progress in implementing the 2<sup>nd</sup> round of national Institutional Audits of all Higher Education Institutions.

Presentation by the Council on Higher Education to the Portfolio Committee on Higher Education Science and Innovation

11 May 2022



# Institutional Audit History

## First cycle of national audits

- 2004 – 2011 audits (23 public HEIs – some private HEIs volunteered to be audited during this time.)
- 2004 – 2011 (12 public HEIs audits closed)
- 2012 – 2018 (8 public HEIs audits closed)

(A few private HEIs volunteered to be audited during this time)

## Special Audit

- 2017 – 2019 (1 special audit: University of Zululand)

## Pilot Audits

- 2018 (2 pilot audits to check draft framework for 2<sup>nd</sup> cycle: Vaal University of Technology and Boston City Campus)

## Second cycle of national audits

- 2021/2022: Audits of all 26 public universities initiated
- 2022/23: All PHEIs to be audited in this cycle, and first set will be initiated in 2022/23.





# This 2<sup>nd</sup> cycle of national Institutional Audits undertaken against 16 Standards in 4 Focus areas approved by the HEQC

## Focus area 1: Governance, strategic planning, management and leadership support the core academic functions

**Standard 1:** The institution has a clearly stated vision and mission, and strategic goals that have been approved by appropriate governance structures, subject to comprehensive stakeholder engagement.

**Standard 2:** The stated vision, mission and strategic goals align with national priorities and context (e.g. transformation, creating a skilled labour force, developing scarce skills areas and a critical citizenry and contributing to the fulfilment of national goals as informed by the NDP and related national planning), as well as sectoral, regional, continental and global imperatives (e.g. Africa Vision 2063 or the Sustainable Development Goals).

**Standard 3:** There is demonstrable strategic alignment between the institution's quality management system for core academic activities across all sites and modes of provision, and its vision, mission and strategic goals, as well as its governance and management processes.

**Standard 4:** There is a clear understanding of and demonstrable adherence to the different roles and responsibilities of the governance structures, management and academic leadership.



## Focus area 2: The design and implementation of the institutional quality management system supports the core academic functions

**Standard 5:** A quality assurance system is in place, comprising at a minimum of:

- (i) governance arrangements
- (ii) policies
- (iii) processes, procedures and plans
- (iv) instructional products
- (v) measurement of impact, and
- (vi) data management and utilization;

as these give effect to the delivery of the HEI's core functions.

**Standard 6:** Human, infrastructural, knowledge management and financial resources support the delivery of the institution's core academic functions across all sites of provision along with the concomitant quality management system, in accordance with the institution's mission.

**Standard 7:** Credible and reliable data (for example, on throughput and completion rates) are systematically captured, employed and analysed as an integral part of the institutional quality management system so as to inform consistent and sustainable decision-making.

**Standard 8:** Systems and processes monitor the institution's capacity for quality management, based on the evidence gathered



## Focus area 3: The coherence and integration of the institutional quality management system supports the core academic functions

**Standard 9:** An evidence-based coherent, reasonable, functional and meaningfully structured relationship exists between all components of the institutional quality management system.

**Standard 10:** Evidence-based regular and dedicated governance and management oversight of the quality assurance system exists.

**Standard 11:** Planning and processes exist for the reasonable and functional allocation of resources to all components of the institutional quality management system.

**Standard 12:** The quality assurance system achieves its purpose efficiently and effectively.



## Focus area 4: Curriculum development, learning and teaching support the likelihood of student success

**Standard 13:** An effective institutional system for programme design, approval, delivery, management and review is in place.

**Standard 14:** There is evidence-based engagement at various institutional levels, among staff, and among staff and students, with:

- a. curriculum transformation, curriculum reform and renewal
- b. learning and teaching innovation; and
- c. the role of technology (1) in the curriculum, (2) in the world of work, and (3) in society in general.

**Standard 15:** The students' exposure to learning and teaching at the institution across all sites and modes of provision is experienced by them as positive and enabling of their success.

**Standard 16:** Institutions engage with and reflect on the employability of their graduates in a changing world.

# Outcomes against each standard

<b>Not functional</b>	<b>Needs substantial improvement</b>	<b>Functional</b>	<b>Mature</b>
<p>Areas of serious concern exist in the institution's quality management system in that there is either no quality management system in place or the quality management system is not considered to be functional in terms of the identified standard.</p>	<p>The institution's quality management system is not fully developed or functional in terms of the identified standard and needs substantial improvement.</p>	<p>The quality management system in the institution meets the expected thresholds in terms of the identified standard but some minor areas may need further improvement.</p>	<p>The institution's quality management system, as measured against the identified standard, is generally mature, integrated and coherent, and is effective in achieving its differentiated purpose of enabling student success; good learning and teaching practices; ground-breaking research, including local research; impactful, integrated and ethical community engagement, and demonstrates good, sustainable governance (as appropriate for the institution).</p>



# Audits with a Review Methodology

Framework and Manual  
approved  
March 2021

Initiation of the institutional audit: commitment  
from the institutions  
21 institutions initiated in March / April 2021  
5 institutions initiated in April 2022

Extensive and  
continuing  
Capacity  
Development

Institutional self-reflection through  
the compilation of self-evaluation  
reports (SERs) :

9 institutions have submitted all on time  
12 due to submit May- July 2022, on track  
5 due to submit in 2023

Validation through peer audit panels  
based on site visits:  
UNISA in April  
20 site visits from May – Nov 2022  
5 site visits in 2023

Evidence-based audit reports  
Improvement Plans



# Progress for each institution

Institution	Initiation date	SER submission date	Site visit	Final audit report expected
CPUT	31/03/2021	30/06/2022	10-14 October 2022	June 2023
CUT	31/03/2021	29/04/2022	1-5 Aug 2022	March 2022
DUT	31/03/2021	24/06/2022	3-7 Oct 2022	June 2023
MUT	31/03/2021	30/06/2022	14-18 Nov 2022	June 2023
NMU	31/03/2021	17/06/2022	29 Aug- 2 Sept 2022	June 2023
NWU	31/03/2021	15/06/2022	22-26 Aug 2022	June 2023
RU	08/04/2021	30/06/2022	19-23 Sept 2022	June 2023
SMU	13/01/2022	30/11/2022	TBC	Nov 2023
SPU	13/01/2022	30/11/2022	TBC	Nov 2023
SU	08/04/2021	30/06/2022	31 Oct – 4 Nov 2022	June 2023
TUT	31/03/2021	25/04/2022	25-29 July 2022	March 2022
UCT	08/04/2021	31/03/2022	15-19 Aug 2022	June 2023
UFH	08/04/2021	30/06/2022	17-21 Oct 2022	June 2023
UFS	08/04/2021	14/01/2022	9-13 May 2022	March 2022
UJ	31/03/2021	10/12/2021	16-20 May 2022	March 2022
UKZN	08/04/2021	31/05/2022	12-16 Sept 2022	June 2023
UL	31/03/2021	01/04/2022	11-15 July 2022	March 2022
UMP	13/01/2022	30/11/2022	27-31 March 2023	Nov 2023
UNISA	31/03/2021	30/11/2021	4-8 April 2022	Nov 2022
UNIVEN	31/03/2021	31/01/2021	23-27 May 2022	March 2022
UP	08/04/2021	31/05/2022	5-9 Sept 2022	June 2023
UWC	08/04/2021	31/03/2022	30 May-3 June 2022	March 2022
UZ	13/01/2022	30/11/2022	2024 March 2023	Nov 2023
VUT	13/01/2022	30/11/2022	TBC	Nov 2023
WITS	08/04/2021	31/05/2022	26-30 Sept 2022	June 2023
WSU	31/03/2021	31/05/2022	7-11 Aug 2022	June 2023



# Next steps

- Final audit reports for the public higher education institutions expected between November 2022 and November 2023.
  - Executive summaries of the audit reports will be placed on the CHE website as part of its accountability function.
  - Institutions will submit Improvement Plans based on the recommendations in the audit reports.
  - Regular reporting on progress with improvements.
  - Final close-out reports for institutions.
- NB: All the private higher education institutions will also be audited in this cycle, with their audit timeframes coinciding with their re-registration cycles. The first set of PHEI audits are being initiated this year.



THANK YOU